

THE EMBASSY MURDERS

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. FOOTSTEPS TO CRIME

IT was midnight. From the brilliance of one of Washington's broad avenues, the lights of a large embassy building could be seen glowing upon the sidewalks of the street on which it fronted.

Parked cars lined the side street. One by one they were moving from their places, edging to the space in front of the embassy, where departing guests were ready to leave. An important social event was coming to its close.

The broad steps of the embassy were plainly lighted. Upon them appeared two men dressed in evening clothes. One was a tall, gray-haired individual; the other a stocky, square-faced man who leaned heavily upon a stout cane as he descended the steps. The two men paused as they reached the sidewalk.

"You have a car here, Mr. Rochelle?" inquired the tall man, as a uniformed attendant approached.

"No, senator," returned the man with the cane. "It is not far to my residence. I prefer to walk. If you should care to accompany me –"

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"Gladly," interposed the gray-haired man. "Your headquarters is on the way to my hotel. The night is mild. We can talk as we stroll along."

The pair headed from the direction of the avenue. Side by side, they followed the route that Rochelle indicated. The embassy attendant watched them as they moved along the street. His gaze centered upon the man whom the senator had addressed as Rochelle.

Coming down the embassy steps, Rochelle's manner of locomotion had seemed quite normal. Upon the sidewalk, however, the man who carried the cane formed an odd and conspicuous figure. Every stride caused his body to incline heavily to the right, where its sagging stopped by Rochelle's pressure on the strong walking stick.

Then came a momentary stop. Rochelle's right leg, swinging forward, resumed its pace. His whole body seemed to twist with the effort. The halting limp continued with regular precision; yet despite it, Rochelle kept pace with the man beside him.

The man with the limp!

The embassy attendant knew him by sight. He was Darvin Rochelle, founder of the International Peace Alliance. His halting, sagging figure could be seen at all the important functions which took place at foreign embassies, for Darvin Rochelle was noted as a student of international problems.

TURNING a corner, Darvin Rochelle and his companion arrived upon a well-lighted street. Their faces showed plainly beneath the shadowy crisscross of broad-branched trees.

The tall, gray-haired senator was listening with dignified pleasure to the words which his limping companion uttered. Darvin Rochelle, his firm face gleaming with the fire of enthusiasm, was talking in modulated tones that carried real conviction.

"World peace!" Rochelle's declaration came with emphasis. "It is not a dream, senator! It is reality. Look at the world today. Do you see war? Only in scattered portions of the globe. Peace is the predominating desire of our present era."

"Perhaps," maintained the senator dryly. "Yet the world has not changed. Nations – races – all have differences. War, despite its futility, seems to be the only choice when difficulties must be settled."

"Agreed," stated Rochelle, turning his head as he limped. "Next, you will point out to me the failure that seems to have gripped the League of Nations. I shall agree with you there. Nevertheless, world peace can be maintained. To further it is the work that I have chosen."

"Commendable," remarked the senator. "Let us hope, Rochelle, that your plans will succeed. From what you have told me, I realize fully that your work is worthy of support. The International Peace Alliance is unquestionably a new idea."

"Yet a simple one, senator. It seeks to produce international understanding. That is all. We have representatives in every country. All are pledged to throw their influence into the scale that will bring the balance in favor of worldwide peace. They are workers in a common cause.

"There are barriers between countries. Such barriers were natural once, but today, with international communication a matter of great ease, the barriers are falling. The International Peace Alliance has stimulated trade relations between different countries. That, more than any propaganda, is the first step to permanent

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peace."

"Certainly," rejoined the gray-haired senator. "When nations depend upon one another commercially, their trend will be away from warfare. Yet international trade is handicapped –"

"By language," interposed Rochelle. "More than by any other single cause."

"You are right," agreed the senator.

"Therefore," resumed Rochelle, "the International Peace Alliance has found the way to remove that barrier. We are preparing our new universal language, called Agro. With its completion, there will be a positive form of international communication."

"Will it work?" questioned the senator. "The same attempt has been tried before. Esperanto –"

"Esperanto?" Rochelle's question was scornful. "Bah! Esperanto was a poor attempt at an international tongue. It was launched before its time. It died a natural death. Today, however, when all languages are becoming modern, the time is ripe for a universal system. Agro will fill the need."

"Agro will receive endorsement in every land. It will be taught in elementary schools. Each year, its vocabulary will be expanded. Agro is designed to grow until it will predominate. Then, senator, world understanding will be complete!"

THE two men had turned into another street. Rochelle's halting limp came to a stop. Resting upon his cane, the enthusiast waved his hand toward a pretentious building.

"My residence," he stated simply. "Also the headquarters of the International Peace Alliance. Will you come in, senator?"

"I should be back at my hotel –"

"Step inside for a few minutes. I shall order my limousine to take you to the hotel."

The senator agreed. With Rochelle, he ascended the stone steps. The door opened as the two men arrived at the top. A bowing servant admitted Rochelle and his companion.

"Order the limousine, Gaillard," instructed Rochelle. Then, to his companion: "Let me show you our arrangements, senator."

There were two doors on each side of the hall. Rochelle led the senator through the door to the right. He pressed a switch; the light showed a room that was fitted like a museum. Shelves and show cases held specimens of curios and products that came from all the world.

"Our display room," explained Rochelle. "It familiarizes all visitors with the customs and products found throughout the world. This" – he paused as he opened a door at the rear of the room and led the senator into what appeared to be an office – "is where all our detail work is done. At present, we have but a small force. That is all that we can accommodate. Later, we shall take additional offices elsewhere."

Crossing to the left, Rochelle limped through a door that showed another rear room of the huge ground floor. This place was equipped with tables covered with magazines and newspapers; its walls were lined with books.

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"Our international library," informed Rochelle. "Current publications from all the world. These" – he was pointing to the books – "will all be translated into Agro."

"A great undertaking," commented the senator.

"Yes," admitted Rochelle, as he led the visitor through to the front room on the left, "but a worthy one. Our publications will go everywhere. Here, senator, is our meeting room."

They were standing in the front room. The senator stared at the walls. Beautifully decorated in many colors, they formed maps in mural style. The entire world was depicted. Darvin Rochelle smiled as he observed the keen interest which the visitor displayed.

The senator was still walking about the room from map to map when Gaillard entered to inform Rochelle that the limousine was in front. The senator heard the servant's statement. He glanced at his watch. He walked toward the hall.

"Sorry," he said, "but I really must get back to the hotel. When I have the opportunity, Rochelle, I shall come to see you. I want to hear more about your peace plans. You are here most of the day?"

"Nearly all the time." They were in the hallway, and Rochelle waved his hand toward a broad marble staircase that led directly to the second floor. "My private office is above. Call at any time you wish, senator. Good night, sir."

AS soon as the visitor had departed, Darvin Rochelle turned and limped toward the stairway. His halting stride ended as he moved up the steps. It began again when he reached the top.

The man with the limp opened a door and entered a large anteroom, where chairs lined the walls. He passed through to another door and stepped into an office that was furnished with expensive mahogany. Here, Rochelle seated himself at a huge desk near the center of the room.

Directly to the left of the desk was a huge globe of the world. It was more than three feet in diameter; it rested in a circular mahogany cradle atop a heavy metal tripod. Pausing by the globe, Rochelle rested upon his cane. With his free hand, he spun the big sphere and watched it revolve.

A strange smile appeared upon Rochelle's face. Here in the lighted room, his features showed a curious change of expression. From those of an idealist, they became the countenance of a gloating schemer.

The spinning globe slowly dawdled to a stop. Rochelle seated himself behind the desk. He opened a drawer and reached inside. His fingers found a buzzer hidden at the top of the drawer. Rochelle pressed the button and waited. He was looking toward a mirror at the right side of the room.

The glass showed the reflection of a doorway at the back of the office. While Rochelle watched, the door opened and a stoop-shouldered creature entered with stealthy tread.

The newcomer was a dwarf, twisted in body, vicious in face. An ugly smile was on the deformed man's puffed lips.

"Over there, Thurk," ordered Rochelle quietly. He indicated the opposite side of the desk.

The dwarf complied. He took his stand in front of his master. Resting both hands upon the desk, he formed a grotesque monster with long, scrawny arms and head that seemed too large for the skinny shoulders which

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supported it.

Wild eyes gleamed from Thurk's pasty face. Bloated lips moved while the hideous creature spoke in a harsh, strange tongue:

"Kye kye rofe kye."

"Sovo," returned Rochelle, in a quiet tone. "Reen kye kye doke?"

"Sake alta alta. Seek alta eeta."

"Kye kye kode?"

"Fee."

"Dake."

With this syllabic utterance, Rochelle arose from his chair. He walked directly to the door where he had seen Thurk's reflection. As the master limped in that direction, the dwarf followed with bounding steps.

BEYOND the door, Rochelle came to a spiral staircase. He descended, without the aid of his cane. Thurk continued, creeping downward, until they reached a small room at the bottom of the steps. Here Rochelle unbarred a steel door. He turned out the single light and opened the barrier amid darkness.

Rochelle limped out into the cool air of a walled courtyard. Directly ahead, showing dimly in the vague light that came from above, was an iron fence with a little gate. It formed the rear of Rochelle's property. Beyond it was the back of a dilapidated house, for Rochelle's mansion was on the fringe of a decadent district.

Through the gate, Rochelle unlocked the back door of the house in the rear. He entered and groped his way to a flight of stairs. At the bottom, Thurk, still following, could hear the click of his master's cane against the stone of a cellar floor. Rochelle turned on a light.

Lying on the floor was the body of a young man. The blood-incrusted front of a tuxedo shirt showed where a bullet had ended the victim's life. Rochelle sneered as he gripped a post beside him and used his cane to poke at the body.

Thurk, approaching his master, produced a large envelope from a pocket. He handed it to Rochelle and pointed significantly to the body on the floor.

"Rike zay folo folo," declared the dwarf.

"Sovo," returned Rochelle.

He took the envelope, thrust it in a pocket of his evening clothes and pointed to the body with his cane.

Thurk understood the gesture. He stooped; with a display of remarkable strength, he hoisted the corpse to his shoulders and carried it through an archway in the cellar. Rochelle, still gripping the post, was listening. He heard a splash as Thurk dropped the body into some hidden vat.

A soft, insidious snarl came from Rochelle's lips. Leaning upon his cane, the man with the limp clicked back across the cellar. He retraced the course that he had taken; back into his own house; up the spiral stairway to

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his finely furnished office.

There, he opened the envelope that Thurk had given him. Within it was another envelope which bore the typewritten statement:

South American Correspondence.

Documents came out upon the desk. With eager eyes, Rochelle began to study them. His visage showed an evil gleam, as he perused these papers which had been purloined from a murdered man.

Completing his inspection, Rochelle arose and moved to a safe in the wall. He turned the combination, opened the safe, then placed the papers within. He closed the door and turned to find that Thurk had come back. Rochelle dismissed the dwarf with a wave of his hand.

Alone again, Rochelle indulged in a fiendish smile that gradually faded from his lips to restore his benign expression. Then, with the aid of his cane, he clumped through another door at the back of the office.

The hollow taps of the walking stick faded. Darvin Rochelle had retired for the night. Yet the echoes of that clicking cane seemed to leave their mark.

Those clicks had told of the footsteps of Darvin Rochelle, a man whose life, presumably, had been devoted to ways of peace and friendship. Such, however, was a pretense.

The footsteps of Darvin Rochelle had led to crime. The man with the limp was a monster whose ways were those of murder!

CHAPTER II. WORD TO THE SHADOW

LATE the next afternoon, a man appeared upon the fifth floor of the old Wallingford Building. He strolled through an empty corridor until he reached a door which bore this title:

NATIONAL CITY NEWS ASSOCIATION

CLYDE BURKE, MANAGER

The visitor opened the door. Inside he found a young man seated at a desk. This was Clyde Burke, manager and entire staff of the National City News Association. The visitor grinned as Burke looked up.

"Hello, Burke," he said.

"Hello, Garvey," returned Burke. "What brings you here so late?"

"Nothing special. Just thought I'd drop in."

The visitor sat down. He watched Burke going over piles of clippings, while he puffed at a cigarette. The visitor lighted one of his own. Like Burke, Garvey was a free-lance journalist who had chosen Washington as a place to make a living through news correspondence.

Several minutes drifted by. Clyde Burke, stacking clippings in envelopes, paid no attention to his visitor. That proved to be the best way to start Garvey talking. The visiting newspaperman gave up an attempt to blow smoke rings and began to drawl in casual fashion.

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"Heard another hot rumor today," he said.

"What's this one?" quizzed Burke, in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Another attache gone haywire," remarked Garvey. "Here in Washington yesterday. Not here today. That makes number five."

"And I suppose," declared Burke, "that he disappeared with important documents on his person."

"You guessed it," rejoined Garvey. "Same as the others, Burke. Laugh it off if you want to – but I'm telling you this is no hokum. I know the guy's name – and I know what's missing."

"Yes? When did you begin to rate so high with the state department?"

"Never mind that. I've landed some good stories. But it's always my luck to pick up something that can't be used. The fellow that's missing is named Glade Tromboll. The documents that he had were correspondence with South American countries."

"Is that all you found out?"

"All?" Garvey snorted. "Say – that's too much. What can you do with it? Nothing. Like those other birds that flew the coop, this one is being kept quiet. Boy! You can't touch a story like that without official permission. You know what would happen if I tried to get it?"

"Sure," responded Burke. "You'd find out that there never was anybody by the name of Glade Tromboll here in Washington."

"That's it." Garvey grinned sourly. "You're wise to the way things work in this town. Land something that looks real – you can't touch it. It's lucky that newspapers like feature stories on the extermination of Japanese beetles and construction of irrigation canals. If it wasn't for old stand-bys like that, I'd starve to death."

Garvey flicked his cigarette through the open window and strolled to the door. He waved good-bye to Burke and left the office.

AS soon as the door had closed, Clyde Burke reached for pencil and paper. He wrote out the information which the other newspaperman had just mentioned.

Unwittingly, Garvey had brought important news to Clyde Burke. Garvey was but one of many free lances who dropped into the National City News Association. Ever since he had opened his office, a few weeks previous, Clyde Burke had been buying news items from those who had them to offer.

Why a young man like Clyde Burke should have come to Washington to compete with other news bureaus in the already overburdened capital, was a mystery that had bothered no one. Others before Burke had fallen for that same lure. Journalism had the mythical tradition that one might gain fame and fortune by opening a Washington news service.

Thus Clyde had been classed simply as another hopeful who was predestined to failure. Men like Garvey had not even attempted to veil their opinions concerning his enterprise. They had seen others of Burke's ilk come and go. They allowed the National City News Association a few months of existence – that was all.

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Little did they realize the true purpose of Clyde Burke's presence in Washington! The answer lay in the quickness with which Clyde had seized upon the rumor which he had heard from Garvey. Facts like the disappearance of Glade Tromboll were what Clyde Burke was seeking!

Less than a month ago, Clyde Burke had been working as a news reporter on the staff of the New York Classic. While serving in that capacity, he had heard the rumor, whispered among newspapermen, that four men had mysteriously disappeared from Washington.

No names had been given. Two men, it was said, were minor members of South American legations. Two others had been government employees. Each disappearance had been a matter of serious consequence.

Rumors that circulate through newspaper offices are usually well supplied with background. These stories which Clyde Burke had heard while working for the Classic had not been printed. But to Clyde Burke, they had proven more important than the greatest scoop he might possibly have made. Clyde had sent them on to one who would find use for them.

That one was The Shadow.

A STRANGE being who dwelt in unknown surroundings, The Shadow spent his life fighting in behalf of justice. A sinister figure whose ominous power had spelled doom to ways of evildoers, The Shadow had gained an amazing reputation as a battler of crime.

Through agents – men who, though faithful, did not themselves know the identity of their mysterious chief – The Shadow kept his finger upon the pulsebeats of crime. One of his active agents was none other than Clyde Burke. Through Clyde, The Shadow had learned these rumors of mysterious disappearances in the national capital.

Clyde Burke had come to Washington at The Shadow's bidding. This office, in which he acted as a news correspondent, was a blind. It was Clyde's duty to learn more about the rumored disappearances. Until today, however, Clyde had uncovered nothing.

Another rumor! A new disappearance! This was a double discovery. To a clear thinker like Clyde Burke, it carried a special significance. Four men had previously vanished from view: two were government employees; two were attaches of South American legations.

This fifth case – involving Glade Tromboll – was a link between the others. Tromboll, according to Garvey, was a government employee; the documents which the missing man supposedly possessed were South American correspondence!

Seated at the desk in his little office, Clyde Burke set his lips grimly. He realized that he had been negligent. In two weeks at Washington, he should have gained some data prior to the disappearance of Glade Tromboll. Instead, Clyde had learned nothing; now, while he was on the very ground, another man had vanished.

In fact, Clyde had come to believe that the previous disappearance had been mere matters of coincidence. He had said so in his past reports. This time he would be forced to retract his statements. His own inability to get past the fringes of rumor meant that there could be but one way of getting further. Clyde would have to pass his work on to The Shadow.

Taking a telephone book, Clyde Burke looked up the name of Glade Tromboll. He did not find it listed. He consulted other reference books – those which contained the names of government employees – and still found no mention of the man he wanted.

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Clyde brought out a fountain pen. On white paper, he wrote a brief report in coded language. Oddly ciphered words appeared in ink of vivid blue. As the writing dried, Clyde hastily folded the sheet and thrust it in an envelope. Using another pen, he wrote this address:

Rutledge Mann,

Badger Building,

New York City.

RUTLEDGE MANN was contact agent for The Shadow. A message sent to him would be forwarded to The Shadow himself. The ink in which Clyde Burke had written his message was a special type of fluid provided by The Shadow. Its dried writing would vanish a few minutes after the letter was unfolded.

This meant that The Shadow alone would have opportunity to read the coded lines. Should it fall into other hands, the message would prove useless; it would be gone before a person could begin to decipher it.

Clyde placed a stamp upon the envelope. He left the office, dropped the letter in a mail chute and returned. He closed the news bureau and strolled from the building. A short walk brought him to the hotel where he was stopping.

Seated in a room high above the street, Clyde watched the glittering lights as they appeared below. Washington, of all cities, seemed placid and law-abiding. Yet Clyde Burke felt convinced that somewhere in the nation's capital lay a problem that would prove difficult even to The Shadow.

While he was staring from the window, a sudden thought struck Clyde Burke. The young man went to a table and opened a drawer. He brought out a neatly printed card which bore the legend:

Club Rivoli

Across the Potomac

Open All Night

This was a spot that Clyde Burke had visited shortly after his arrival in Washington. He had learned that it was frequented by attaches of various legations, together with persons connected with the government.

Clyde had seen nothing at the Club Rivoli to arouse his suspicions. He had made the acquaintance of the proprietor – a genial fellow named "Whistler" Ingliss. Tonight, however, with thoughts of previous negligence disturbing him, Clyde Burke decided that a new visit to the Club Rivoli would be wise. He realized that he must pass up no opportunity while waiting for new orders from The Shadow.

Clyde Burke felt elated as he donned a tuxedo for his visit to the swanky bright spot across the Virginia border. He had hopes that tonight he might uncover some bit of information that would furnish The Shadow with a clew when he arrived.

Little did Clyde Burke realize that he was proving every bit as negligent as before. That was because he could not foresee tonight's events. Had he been able to do so, Clyde would not have trusted to the written report that he had sent the Shadow.

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Instead, he would have put in an emergency call to The Shadow in New York. For Clyde Burke, without knowing it, was starting for a spot where lurking crime awaited!

CHAPTER III. THE CLUB RIVOLI

IT was nine o'clock when Clyde Burke reached the Club Rivoli. Located several miles from Washington, the bright spot appeared to be a large but obscure road house. The expensive cars parked at the side showed, however, that the Club Rivoli must have some unusual attraction.

Clyde had come in one of the cheap taxis so prevalent in Washington. He paid the driver, then entered the front door of the Club Rivoli. A modestly furnished lounge showed on one side; on the other a small, deserted dining room.

Clyde kept on through the hall. He came to a door farther on and rang a bell. A little wicket opened. Clyde held up his card for the man behind to see.

Bolts grated; the door opened. Clyde Burke passed through a small room. The chatter of people; the clicking of chips – both greeted his ears as he entered a long and well-thronged room.

The place was a gambling hall. The patrons were dressed in evening clothes. Women as well as men were gathered about two roulette tables where croupiers were spinning the wheels and raking in stacks of chips.

The near end of the room was lined with slot machines which took coins of half-dollar size. Several players were squandering their cash in these devices. Along the other walls were little curtained booths to which busy waiters were carrying trays laden with food and drinks.

There was a single opening at the right. This, Clyde knew, led to rooms where poker players gambled for high stakes. The office of Whistler Ingliss, the proprietor, was located in that direction. Clyde, however, was chiefly interested in what was going on in the main gambling room.

The Shadow's agent was quick to note that most of the players were foreigners, with Spanish Americans predominating. This was something that he had observed on previous visits.

Clyde knew that the Club Rivoli catered chiefly to legations and visitors from other lands. A Pan-American convention was beginning in Washington; it was only natural that many of the visitors had learned of the Club Rivoli.

Clyde made a particular study of the Americans who were present. Taking a vantage point between the tables, he studied his fellow countrymen one by one while he made a pretense of watching the roulette play.

WHILE Clyde was thus engaged, he became conscious of a soft, melodious whistling close beside him. The sound took on a symphonic trill. Clyde turned quickly to see a man in evening clothes standing a few feet away. He met the other's gaze and recognized the suave face of Whistler Ingliss, the proprietor of the Club Rivoli.

The recognition proved mutual. Ingliss smiled as he ceased his light trilling. He advanced and extended a hand which Clyde accepted. Ingliss, a tall, good-looking man in his middle forties, possessed a friendly personality that had accounted much for the success of his gambling club.

"Burke," remarked Ingliss. "That's the name, isn't it? I gave you a card the last time you were here."

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"Right," agreed Clyde. "Thought I'd drop in and watch the roulette roll. Like most newspapermen" – he was smiling wistfully – "I don't have much to gamble."

"Quite all right," assured Ingliss. "My friends are welcome here to watch as well as to play. We want everyone to feel completely at home at the Club Rivoli."

Conversation ended for the moment. Ingliss, watching with Clyde, began to trill a meditative tune. There was a charm about the soft music that came from the gambler's lips. It was this habit of melody making that had given him the sobriquet of "Whistler."

In fact, the tune was provocative of a soothing lull. Clyde Burke began to feel as he had felt on his other visits to the Club Rivoli: that the place was a mere pleasure resort which had no connection with any other enterprise. He turned to speak again to Whistler Ingliss. At that moment, there was an interruption. An attendant approached the proprietor and handed him a small envelope.

"What's this?" inquired Whistler.

"Card inside, sir," explained the attendant. "A gentleman came to see you – by the side entrance. He sent this in to you."

Clyde watched warily while Whistler opened the envelope. He saw a sudden frown upon the gambler's brow as Whistler removed and read the card. Clyde glanced away as Whistler raised his head.

From the corner of his eye, The Shadow's agent caught Whistler's quick look. Ingliss, apparently, wanted to know if his momentary discomposure had been noticed.

Seeing no indication on Clyde's part, Whistler calmly turned to the attendant. He began to tear the card and envelope into small bits which he dropped in his pocket. He told the attendant:

"Ask the gentleman into the office. I'll drop in there to talk with him."

The attendant left. Resuming his trill, Whistler Ingliss strolled from table to table. He had adopted a perfect poker face. He showed no signs of hurry. Glancing toward Clyde Burke, Whistler noticed that the reporter was looking at the other table. Strolling away, Whistler headed for the archway and passed slowly into the hall beyond.

THE gambler descended a short flight of steps. Here a passage went off to the right. Two doors – one in each passage – indicated Whistler's office. The gambler opened the one from the central passage. He entered a neatly furnished room. Seated beyond a desk was a languid-looking man; he rose to display his lankiness as Whistler Ingliss entered. The gambler closed the door.

"Sit down, Dolband," suggested Ingliss, in a cordial tone. As the visitor obeyed, Ingliss took his own chair and brought out a box of cigars. "Have a real Havana and tell me what's the trouble. This is kind of unusual – a secret-service operative dropping in on me."

Dolband took a cigar. Whistler Ingliss eyed him as he bit the end. The gambler had met Carl Dolband in the past. He knew the secret-service operative to be a cagey individual. The flicker of Dolband's match showed a white, intuitive face.

"Want to look at the cash in my till?" quizzed Whistler, in a crafty tone. "I've got plenty of mazuma – but I'll bet you won't find a queer bill in it –"

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"I'm not bothering counterfeiters," interposed Dolband. "There's something else I want to talk about, Ingliss."

The gambler assumed a perplexed attitude. Carl Dolband, leaning back in his chair, spent a full minute in studying Whistler's face. Then, satisfied, he began to speak in a confidential tone.

"How's business?" was his question. "Good receipts? Lots of people coming in and out?"

"Take a look," returned Whistler, with a smile, as he pulled a ledger from a desk drawer. "If it's income tax you're checking on, this will satisfy you. I keep the books on the level."

"Don't worry about that," rejoined Dolband, as he studied the entries in the ledger. "Here – this satisfies me. Put the book away. The money is coming in all right – that's all I wanted to know."

"What's the idea?" asked Whistler, with a puzzled laugh.

"I just wanted to be sure," stated Dolband, "that your joint was bringing in the gravy. I see that it is. So far as your gambling racket is concerned, that's a matter for the State authorities. So far as I'm concerned, I wanted to make sure that your place was doing so well that you'd like to keep it going. The reason I say that is because I want your cooperation on a little matter."

"You mean –" Whistler paused with well-feigned indignation.

"A shakedown?" Dolband laughed as he completed the words that appeared to be on Whistler's tongue. "Not a bit of it. I don't work that way, Ingliss. I'm after other game – and I want to know what you know about it. Straight. Do you get me?"

"Spill it, Dolband," urged Ingliss. "Say – if there's anything I can do to help you on a job –"

"You can," interrupted Dolband. "That's why I'm going to give you the exact lay. Listen, Ingliss: I'm on the trail of a fellow who disappeared last night – a man named Glade Tromboll. Did you ever hear of him?"

"Can't say that I have." Whistler shook his head. "I'd know the name if I'd heard it, Dolband. Who is Tromboll?"

"A government employee," returned Dolband cautiously. "One who happened to have some important papers on him. South American correspondence, Ingliss. There's a lot of South Americans come in here, aren't there?"

"Plenty of them."

"Not only that. Glade Tromboll, the man who is missing, was last seen just before he came to the Club Rivoli."

"Last night?"

"Last night."

"I don't think he could have come here, Dolband." Whistler again shook his head as he spoke. "No one gets in here without a card. If this fellow Tromboll cleared town, he must have done it before he headed for the Club Rivoli. Unless –"

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"Unless what?"

"Unless someone brought him in. I give that privilege with guest cards."

"Listen, Ingliss." Dolband's tone was severe. "I've got every reason to suppose that Glade Tromboll was here last night. It's up to you to prove to the contrary. I want a close check-up – and you've got to get it for me."

"If I fail?"

"It may be bad for you. I'm trying to be friendly, Ingliss, but I've got to report what I find. If you can convince me that Tromboll wasn't here, I won't mention your place when I report. If he was here, find out what became of him. That will keep you in right.

"But a halfway answer won't help you or me. I've traced Glade Tromboll to this club. I'm going to trace him beyond. What can you do to help me – especially when you know that you may be in a fix if you can't aid the cause?"

"Hm–m–m." Whistler became speculative. "Have you got a description of this fellow Tromboll?"

Dolband tossed a photograph upon the desk. Whistler examined it and shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't remember ever seeing this fellow," he remarked. "If he was out here last night, though, I'll find it out. Things will ease off in the roulette room. Then I can talk to the attendants, one by one."

"Do you want me to be here?"

"Better not. Listen, Dolband, I'll do all I can to help you. I've got a good thing here; I don't want it spoiled. You're sure, though" – Whistler paused anxiously – "that you haven't mentioned the Club Rivoli to anyone –"

"To no one," interposed Dolband. "I'm working on my own, Ingliss."

"That's good. Where can I reach you?"

"Hotel Starlett."

"All right. Wait here about five minutes – until I'm back in the roulette room. Then stroll out by the side door you came in. By midnight, I'll be able to tell you all I can. If this mug" – Whistler had picked up the photograph and was pointing at it – "was here last night, I'll know it!"

Whistler turned and walked from the office. He closed the door behind him. He strolled toward the steps that led up to the roulette room. He was trilling a familiar tune as he walked along.

Whistler stopped moving just after he gained the roulette room. His whistle, however, trilled a trifle more loudly. The tune changed.

CLYDE BURKE, eyeing the doorway where Whistler stood, saw a motion at one of the curtained booths not more than ten feet from the spot that Whistler had chosen. Two men in tuxedos stepped out. Clyde could see the hardness of their faces. He knew the pair for ruffians.

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Indifferently, the two men strolled past Whistler. The gambler did not appear to notice them. The two men went through the doorway that led to the cardrooms and to the office. Another pair – in appearance they matched the first duo – came from a second booth.

Whistler Ingliss was strolling to the roulette tables. He passed within a few feet of Clyde Burke. Whistler's tune had lessened; it still carried an intriguing obbligato. The men who had gone through the doorway did not return.

Minutes passed. Clyde Burke, feeling conspicuous, approached a roulette table. He took his stand close to the spot where Whistler Ingliss, now silent, was watching the play. Clyde produced a small roll of bills and joined the game. His luck was alternating.

Whistler Ingliss had strolled away. The men had not returned from the direction in which they had gone, although fully a half hour had passed. Clyde decided that they must have left the Club Rivoli by the side entrance.

Clyde left by the front. He called a taxi that was outside. Riding back to Washington, The Shadow's agent stared from the window. Almost unseeing, he viewed the glow about the dome of the capitol building; with no impression he gazed toward the Washington Monument, which towered fingerlike amid its encircling illumination.

Beating through Clyde's brain was the lilt of that final melody that had come from the lips of Whistler Ingliss. Somehow, Clyde Burke attached significance to that tune which had throbbed simultaneously with the appearance and departure of four sturdy ruffians.

Clyde Burke vainly sought the answer. He had gained an inkling of the truth. The whistled tune had been a signal, of that Clyde felt certain; but the purpose had escaped him. He did not know that Whistler Ingliss, with his trilling lilt, had signed a death warrant for Carl Dolband of the secret service!

CHAPTER IV. THE SHADOW HEARS

ON the following evening, a tall, keen-faced man arrived in the lobby of the Hotel Starlett. A bell boy took his bags. The arrival registered as Henry Arnaud and asked for a room that fronted on the side toward The Mall. He was given Room 817.

When he reached his room, Henry Arnaud tipped the bell boy. He placed his suitcase upon the bed. A thin smile appeared upon lips that were firm beneath a hawklike nose. As soon as the bell boy was gone, Henry Arnaud turned out the light.

The room had French windows that opened on a balcony. Arnaud approached them in the darkness and drew the two sections inward. A dim glow came from the city; the rolling of traffic sounded from the street below. Moving stealthily through the semidarkness of the room, Arnaud reached the spot where he had placed the suitcase.

There was motion in the gloom. Black cloth swung like a shroud above a head. Something swished as a black-cloaked figure approached the balcony. A tall, silhouetted form appeared within the rail; its shape was no more than a vague outline of a broad-brimmed hat above a spreading cloak.

The Shadow had come to Washington. From the balcony on the eighth floor of the Hotel Starlett, he was staring across the open spaces toward the tremendous obelisk which forms the most conspicuous landmark in

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the national capital – the Washington Monument.

Shrouded in the darkness of the balcony, The Shadow turned his keen gaze directly upward. The balcony above seemed to lure him to a test. Long arms stretched upward; gloved hands gripped the projection. Invisible against the darkened brick front of the hotel, The Shadow swung outward, high above the street. His gripping arms were firm; his strong arms drew his lithe body toward the objective. A dozen seconds later, The Shadow was on the ninth-floor balcony.

A projecting cornice formed a line between this balcony and the next. The same arrangement continued along the entire wall of the building. Pressing close to the wall, The Shadow swung over the rail. With firm, sidewise step, he moved to the next balcony. He crossed it and continued to the balcony beyond. There his progress ceased.

A light showed beyond the curtains of the French windows. The Shadow's hand tested the barrier. Inch by inch the windows spread until they formed a crevice through which peering eyes could see.

The Shadow spied a rotund, baldheaded man seated at a writing desk. Beside this individual was an opened briefcase. A stack of papers were at the man's right hand.

THE SHADOW knew the identity of this man. That was why The Shadow had chosen to register at the Hotel Starlett, under the name of Henry Arnaud. The man at the writing table was Fulton Fourrier, a divisional chief of the secret service.

In response to Clyde Burke's report, The Shadow had come to Washington. Knowing, through Clyde's statement of Glade Tromboll's disappearance that this was a case for the secret service, The Shadow had chosen to watch the man to whom operatives would report.

Long minutes passed. The Shadow's vigil went unrewarded until a telephone rang beside the writing table. Fourrier answered it. The Shadow heard him give instructions to come up to the room. The Shadow waited.

There was a rap a short while later. Fourrier arose and waddled to the door. He opened it to admit a stocky, heavysset man whose stolid countenance announced him as one who dealt with decisive action.

A soft, almost inaudible laugh came from The Shadow's lips. The watching phantom at the window had expected the very man who had appeared. The stocky individual was Vic Marquette, secret-service operative.

Fourrier was brusque as he waved his visitor to a chair. The chief finished his reports; then wheeled and spoke to Marquette.

The Shadow viewed their profiles: Fourrier, though pudgy-nosed and concave in features, had a firm-set jaw; Marquette showed a straight line from forehead to jaw.

Words came to The Shadow's ears; it did not matter when the distant rumble of a passing vehicle drowned them. The Shadow's eyes were upon moving lips, reading them as plainly as though they had been speaking close beside him.

"So you haven't heard from Dolband?" Marquette was anxious in his question.

"No," returned Fourrier soberly. "I don't like it. He should have reported tonight. So far as I can learn, he did not return to the hotel last night."

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"Carl should have reported, chief."

"I know it." Fourrier arose to his feet and stood with arms akimbo. "Vic, I shouldn't have put Dolband on that Tromboll case. I'm afraid I know what has happened to him."

"You mean –"

"The same thing that happened to Tromboll, whatever that is. The same that happened to the others. We haven't found a trace of any of them. There's murder in the wind, Vic.

"I gave Dolband carte blanche. I told him to work alone until he got something. That's where I made my mistake – sending Dolband out alone. Poor fellow; I'm afraid he's gone, Vic. It was a great mistake – sending him alone."

"Who should you have sent with him, chief?"

"No one."

"I don't quite get you, chief. You say first that you shouldn't have sent Carl alone – then you say that you shouldn't have sent anyone along with him –"

"I mean," interposed Fourrier soberly, "that I should not have sent Carl Dolband at all. It was a one-man job and he was the wrong man. I used Carl because he was a smooth operative. I know now that that was a mistake.

"This job requires one man, and it wants a chap who can take care of whatever comes along. There's just one man for it" – Fourrier paused emphatically – "and you're that man, Vic!"

THE operative stared. Vic Marquette had not expected this assignment. He was, in a sense, new to work in Washington.

Vic had dealt with the toughest of cases. He had landed Reds and counterfeiters. The work of secret assassins who struck from under cover was something that fazed him for the moment. Fulton Fourrier seemed to read the operative's thoughts.

"It worries you, doesn't it, Vic?" questioned the divisional chief. "Well, don't let it throw you, old man. You've dealt with cutthroats before. They're all alike – no matter how smooth they seem. At the same time, don't forget that it's a big job.

"You've got a great record, Vic. You've tackled them alone, out in the sticks, when all the odds were against you. But I'll tell you something right now: here in Washington, with thousands of people about you, with police as well as secret-service men to aid you, you're going to be in the greatest danger you've ever faced.

"We've linked five cases. Bolero – Piscano – both of them were South American attaches. Their papers went with them. Rexton and Clifford – like Tromboll – were Americans. But all of them had documents pertaining to South America. It's part of the same plot – and we can't even guess what it is."

"Espionage," suggested Vic Marquette.

"It looks like it," admitted Fourrier. "Yet where's the game? Some important documents were stolen; but murder seems an overstrong measure to obtain them. The people behind this game are using measures that

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would have been alarming even during the World War!

"I'll tell you the nature of those stolen papers. They consisted chiefly of correspondence between South American ambassadors, our state department and the official governments of the countries involved. Singly, not one document is worth a picayune. Assembled, they might mean calamity. That's why we know that the game is one and the same.

"Who's behind it? Don't ask me. I can only tell you that they're not through yet. If they're springing something, they'll have to get more than they have. If I cut loose to stop them, they'll close up like clams. The game will wait.

"That's why it's a one-man job. Dolband was after it in the right way. He was due to get results. They got him instead. That's why it's your job, Vic. Frankly, I expect you to blunder. Dolband must have blundered. Any man I put on the job will blunder. You're the one man who can get yourself out of a jam."

Fourrier paused. He turned toward the French windows. He seemed to notice that they were ajar. He moved in that direction to close them.

THE SHADOW did not stir. Fourrier changed his mind as he neared the windows. He swung and pointed directly at Vic Marquette.

"Vic," he declared solemnly, "any man who goes into this is likely to get himself into a terrible situation. The man who gets into it – and out of it – will bring back the goods on the people we want.

"I'm giving you the same lead I gave Dolband. Get to the spots where you're liable to find South Americans. Not around the embassies, but elsewhere. That's how Dolband started. He never came back with his report. Is that sufficient?"

"That's plenty, chief," asserted Marquette, rising. "Dolband talked Spanish; so do I. I'll stay at the Hotel Darma, where I am now. You'll get my reports."

"I'm counting on you, Vic," nodded Fourrier. "Let me know any data you may need. I'll be ready to help out."

As Vic Marquette turned toward the door, Fourrier swung toward the French windows. He pressed the barriers tightly shut. He saw nothing amid the blackness beyond.

As the windows clicked, a form moved upon the balcony. It rose over the edge, followed the cornice, then swung from the edge of a balcony beyond. Swaying outward; then in to the wall, The Shadow loosed his hold. He dropped silently upon the balcony outside of Room 817.

A soft laugh sounded from the windows of the room which Henry Arnaud had taken. A weird, whispered tone, that laugh was carried through the cool night air. The strange mirth, restrained in volume, was as prophetic as the words of Fulton Fourrier.

Vic Marquette had started on a dangerous task. Alone, he was sallying forth to seek the answer to six mysterious deaths. He was taking up the task in which Carl Dolband had failed.

Yet in his task, Vic Marquette would not be alone. Paralleling the efforts of the secret-service operative would be another investigator whose ways would remain unseen.

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The Shadow, too, had taken instructions from Fulton Fourrier. Invisible investigator of the night, the black-garbed sleuth was faring forth in search of insidious crime!

CHAPTER V. BIRDS OF A KIND

THE next morning, a taxicab pulled up before the door of Darvin Rochelle's massive residence. A portly, red-faced man alighted and noted the banner which hung above the entrance. He recognized its odd insignia as that of the International Peace Alliance.

Ascending the steps, the visitor rang the bell. A servant admitted him. The man looked curiously about the pretentious hallway. He eyed the marble stairs that led to the second floor.

"I want to see Darvin Rochelle," he rasped.

"Very well, sir," returned the attendant. "Your name, please?"

"Croydon Herkimer."

"Wait here, sir."

The servant went upstairs. He rang the door of the anteroom. A buzzer clicked. The servant went through the anteroom to find Darvin Rochelle seated behind his office desk. The man with the limp was dictating letters to a stenographer.

"Mr. Croydon Herkimer is here, sir," announced the attendant.

"Ah! Excellent," exclaimed Rochelle. "Tell him to come up at once. Usher him here right away."

Rochelle nodded to the stenographer and motioned toward the door. The girl followed the attendant.

As soon as the door to the anteroom had closed, Rochelle pressed the secret buzzer. The door at the rear of the office opened. Thurk, the dwarf, bounded in.

Rochelle went to the door of the anteroom. He turned and spoke low, jargoned words, in the language which he used with Thurk. The dwarf nodded.

Rochelle opened the door of the anteroom and crossed the outer apartment. As he opened the door to the hall, Croydon Herkimer appeared at the head of the stairs.

"Welcome," declared Rochelle, extending his hand. "Come into my office, Mr. Herkimer."

HERKIMER received the handshake. Rochelle hobbled through the anteroom and leaned on his cane while he opened the door to the office. Herkimer entered. Rochelle followed and guided his visitor to a chair at the left side of the desk.

Thurk had disappeared. Rochelle, seating himself behind the desk, was alone with the man who had come to see him.

Croydon Herkimer was fascinated by the appearance of the office. He turned to eye the massive globe behind his left shoulder. His gaze roamed to the expensive mirror across the room. It finally reached the desk; then

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centered upon the benign faced man behind it.

"You like my furnishings?" questioned Rochelle.

"Yes," returned Herkimer. "This peace alliance business appears to be profitable."

Rochelle smiled at the slur.

"The International Peace Alliance," he declared, "has many worthy contributors. Ours is a philanthropic enterprise, Mr. Herkimer. At the same time, we have money to spend – for those whom we consider to be in accord with our motives. That, I hope, applies in your case, Mr. Herkimer."

"That's why I came to Washington," returned Herkimer bluntly. "I hope you remember the terms of the agreement that you sent me. Here is the itemized list for the goods on which I negotiated. I am to receive the five percent that you promised me as purchasing agent."

"Exactly." Rochelle smiled as he took the list. He checked item after item; then looked up with a quizzical expression. "Two hundred and forty thousand dollars?"

"That's the total," returned Herkimer.

"Quite odd," remarked Rochelle. He drew another list from his desk drawer. "I gave you this assignment, Mr. Herkimer, because I anticipated that you could obtain better prices in the Middle West. At the same time, I received estimates here in Washington.

"Flour for the Far East. Woolen goods to Turkey and Armenia. Machinery to South America. On all these items you are higher. Why, the total of my list is sixty thousand less than yours. I expected it to be twenty thousand more."

A stern look appeared upon Croydon Herkimer's bloated face. The portly man said nothing as he adjusted a pair of spectacles to his nose. He drew a paper from his pocket, unfolded it and began to read.

"This is your letter, Mr. Rochelle," he declared at last. "My lawyers in Chicago tell me that it constitutes a contract. Your International Peace Alliance will be liable to a lawsuit if it fails to go through with these purchases."

"A lawsuit?" quizzed Rochelle. "For what sum, Mr. Herkimer – the amount of your commission – twelve thousand dollars?"

"More than that."

"Naturally." Darwin Rochelle laughed harshly. "For the amount, I presume, that you intended to take as graft. I know your game, Herkimer!"

SEIZING his cane, Rochelle arose to his feet. With his left hand, he pointed an accusing forefinger at the man across the desk.

"One hundred and sixty thousand dollars," announced Rochelle, "should be the purchasing price that you require. Instead, you ask two hundred and forty. That means a profit to you of eighty thousand – to say nothing of the exorbitant commission you would receive – twelve thousand against the eight which is your rightful due."

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"I have your figures, Herkimer." Rochelle's teeth gleamed in a sudden, vicious smile. "They are all the proof that I need. They fit in" – Rochelle triumphantly produced a file of papers – "with these!"

Herkimer stared at the packet in Rochelle's hand. The man with the cane laughed in raucous fashion.

"Mr. Croydon Herkimer!" Rochelle sneered as he announced the name. "War-time profiteer – the man who made half a million by swindling the United States government – then lost it through foolish speculation. I wanted to test you, Herkimer. I did. I have found you out. Herkimer" – Rochelle's tone was lowered – "I could send you to prison for life!"

Croydon Herkimer was trembling. Slouched in his chair, the portly man stared bewildered. He looked as though he wanted to snatch the file of papers from Rochelle's hand. Leering, Rochelle forestalled such effort.

"There are duplicates," he laughed. "The original portfolio is in my safe. Back to your old game, eh, Herkimer? You profited through war – now you seek to profit through peace."

Terror showed on Herkimer's bulbous face. Rochelle threw the file of papers on the desk. Dropping his cane, he squared in his chair and leaned both elbows on the desk while he tilted his head forward.

"I tested you, Herkimer," he said, in a new and confidential tone, "because I need you. Do you understand? I need you. Not for this list. Bah!" Rochelle tossed aside the tabulations that Herkimer had given him. "That is trifling. Take your eighty-four thousand and let the peace hounds pay for it. That is the blind for the real game.

"War, Herkimer! There lies the real profit. Millions, man! Think of this – a continent at war – munitions and supplies coming from a single source! You and I tapping the unending spring of wealth. Does that interest you, my friend?"

Herkimer's jaw had dropped. The man was gaping in profound astonishment. Rochelle arose, seized his cane and hobbled around the desk. Herkimer turned and watched him reach the big globe.

ROCHELLE spun the sphere, then stopped it. With his left hand he pointed to the enlarged map of South America.

"Here is my plan," he asserted with a gleaming grin. "Bolivia and Paraguay are at war. Why? Over a strip of useless land called Gran Chaco. A boundary dispute – which seems small to us here in the States – but it is only one of many that exist through South America.

"Let us start here with Colombia. That country has never forgotten Panama. Should Colombia begin a war, mediation from the United States would be of no avail. What has Colombia to gain? This portion of Brazil. See – the Colombian claims are here plainly marked.

"Ecuador, which adjoins Colombia, claims this portion of Peru. Suppose that those two nations should be stirred to work together, each to claim its own desired portion of another country. I shall tell you exactly what would transpire."

Rochelle's finger ran down the map to indicate a territory marked Acre, on the Brazilian side of the Peruvian border. He tapped that spot with significance.

"Brazil and Peru," he stated, "would settle their boundary dispute in amicable fashion, so that they could form a natural alliance to resist Colombia and Ecuador. Bolivia, who feels that Paraguay started the Gran Chaco

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dispute, would join the alliance. So would Venezuela, for that country claims a portion of Colombia.

"Four countries: Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, and Bolivia, forming a belt across South America. Listen to the next step. Bolivia and Peru, gaining tremendous power and backing, would seek to regain the territory that they lost to Chile during the disastrous War of 1879 to 1883. Bolivia would seek Antofagasta, the port that she lost. Peru would fight to settle the Tacna–Arica dispute once and forever!

"A continent at war! All except Argentina and Uruguay, with reason to suppose that they would become embroiled in conflict. In every country, Jingoists would rule. And I, Herkimer" – Rochelle swelled proudly – "control a secret cabal of Jingoism throughout the continent of South America."

Croydon Herkimer was gripping the arms of his chair. Darwin Rochelle's change from enmity to friendship had captured the profiteer's imagination. Herkimer was nodding like a toy figure, drinking in every word that Rochelle uttered.

"South America," resumed Rochelle, in a tone both confident and persuasive, "would become a vast empire. Only through that step could peace be guaranteed. Those out of power would come in – for official governments would break as they did in Europe."

"And then –" Herkimer's voice was breathlessly expectant.

"I shall be the emperor," announced Darwin Rochelle, in a solemn tone. "By proxy, perhaps even, if circumstances so decide, through my affiliation with different men who will rule portions of the continent. But whatever the ultimate outcome, I shall be heralded as a bringer of peace – I – the man who shall have brought chaos to a continent!"

TURNING from the spot where he stood, Rochelle gave the mammoth globe a parting spin. While the sphere revolved, the dreamer of empires stumped back to his chair behind the desk. Crouching there, he eyed Croydon Herkimer with challenging gaze.

"Remember!" Rochelle's tone carried a fierce warning. "I hold you helpless, Herkimer!" The speaker clenched his fist with a crushing motion. "I am giving you the opportunity to gain millions only because your past record shows you capable of playing the game that I have played.

"As soon as war is launched, we shall begin a tremendous scale of profiteering. By building fortunes while war is in progress, I shall be able to dominate when peace arrives. You will be rewarded for your part."

"I understand."

"Remain in Washington. While you are here, prepare a complete scheme for the furnishing of padded supplies to the nations which will be at war. When men fight, they forget expense. Munitions, tractors, field equipment, uniforms – everything, Herkimer, must be provided. You will be my appointed agent to handle the profits that will come through war."

Rochelle arose and limped to the front of the desk. He gripped Herkimer's arm and drew the visitor toward the anteroom. All the way to the marble steps, Rochelle was buzzing encouragement into his new agent's ear.

"The scheme is ready," was his final statement. "I have gained nearly all that I require. The making of war is my task; the reaping of the harvest will be yours. But remember!" Again Rochelle's voice took on its tone of insidious threat. "One false step will prove your ruin!"

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"I am with you," affirmed Herkimer, in a positive tone. "With you, Rochelle, to the finish!"

The man with the limp rested on his cane while he watched his portly visitor descend the marble staircase. Then, with a quick twist of his body, he swung back toward the anteroom, halting with each of his peculiar strides.

When the stenographer arrived in Rochelle's office, in answer to a ring, she found the head of the International Peace Alliance beaming benignly as he sat behind his mahogany desk. The mask of kindness had replaced the face of evil. Once again, Darvin Rochelle had become an advocate of world-wide peace.

There was no sign of Thurk, the dwarf. The monster who aided the fiendish master had departed. Schemes of murder were on the shelf. Darvin Rochelle, man of integrity, was ready to resume his day's routine in the cause of international welfare.

CHAPTER VI. AGENTS OF MURDER

THE brilliance of early evening had come anew to Washington. Darvin Rochelle's headquarters showed somber in the gloom of its side street when a young man, strolling from the bright lights, ascended the steps of the mansion.

He was evidently an expected visitor, for the door swung open as he arrived. The servant who served as usher bowed and indicated the marble stairs. The young man ascended. He pressed a button at the entrance to the anteroom.

A minute passed. The door popped open. Darvin Rochelle, leaning upon his cane, smiled a cheery greeting as he beheld the visitor.

"Maurice Twindell!" exclaimed the man with the limp. "Come in my friend. Come in."

Rochelle led the way into the office. He took his place behind the desk. The young man seated himself at the side.

In the light of the office, Maurice Twindell presented a gentlemanly appearance. His evening clothes were faultless. His face, friendly in appearance, was a handsome one. His only fault was a shiftiness of gaze – a habit which he seemed anxious to overcome.

"Tonight," began Rochelle in a quiet, but emphatic tone, "I want you to go out to the Club Rivoli. Play the part of a habitue of the place. That is all."

"There is no one tonight?"

"Yes." Rochelle smiled. "There will be a victim. I have arranged, however, for Anita Debronne to take care of him. An attache of a South American legation."

Rochelle paused to smile.

"You have done your share, Maurice," he said reflectively. "Bolero, Rexton, and Tromboll. Anita, however, has figured in only two cases: those of Piscano and Clifford. It is her turn again tonight."

"Who is the victim?"

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"A young chap named Lito Carraza. Anita arranged to meet him early. Hence he has committed the folly of not going back to his embassy. He will have papers which he was supposed to copy. He does not know their value. That is fortunate.

"Tonight, Maurice, I want you to be cordial to any Spanish-Americans whom you may chance to meet. There will be convention delegates at the Club Rivoli. Make friends with any who may be of use."

The telephone rang as Rochelle completed his statement. Rochelle picked up the instrument. He listened to words that came through the receiver; then answered in his odd language.

"Key zay kire golo?" His tone was questioning. "Sovo... Fee... Kay zay rike. Kay deek rema... Fee. Alk fare kay ake robole gomo."

Rochelle hung up the receiver. He turned to Twindell, who put a casual question, pointing to the telephone as he spoke.

"Whistler Ingliss?" inquired Twindell.

"Yes," returned Rochelle. "Anita is out at the Club Rivoli. I told Whistler you would be there soon. Remember what I have told you, Twindell. Keep your eyes open at the Rivoli. So far, I have confined our work to definite tasks. Now, with the goal in sight, we may need special information; we may also be able to use other aids."

ROCHELLE was tapping thoughtfully upon the table. His conversation with Whistler Ingliss had brought a sober expression to his face.

"A few nights ago," remarked Rochelle, "Whistler was forced to dispose of a troublesome visitor. The man was a secret-service operative. He came to the Club Rivoli to question Whistler regarding Glade Tromboll."

Maurice Twindell started in momentary alarm. He regained his composure and stared hard at Rochelle.

"Bugs Ritler was at the Club Rivoli," resumed Rochelle, "with members of his crew. Whistler gave Bugs the signal. Bugs did the rest. Whistler called me afterward, to tell me how he had acted. I commended him upon his promptness.

"That is why I phoned you, Maurice, and told you, in Agro, to stay away from here until this evening. The fact that a secret-service man had gotten as far as the Club Rivoli made it advisable for us to be cautious.

"However, there has been no recurrence. Whistler is sure that Dolband – the secret-service man – was working on his own. If another investigator should take up the trail, Whistler may be forced to act again.

"So be wary, Maurice. Call me before you visit. Use Agro as usual; and avoid mention of names over the wire. Initials – in Agro – of those whom we know will suffice; for strangers, spell the names in Agro letters."

Rochelle opened a drawer as he finished speaking. He pulled a stack of bills into view and tossed the money to Twindell. The young man's face gleamed. There was a thousand dollars in the bundle.

"Keep track of any losses if you play roulette," reminded Rochelle. "I shall make them good, as usual. If you win – keep the profits for yourself. But remember – do not play too heavily. It would not look well."

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Maurice Twindell nodded as he pocketed the money. An avaricious smile appeared upon the young man's face. Rochelle noted it and repressed a smile of his own.

He knew Twindell's weakness. He had bought this man as he had bought others. Rochelle indulged in a chuckle as the door of the anteroom closed behind the departing form of Maurice Twindell.

Outside of Rochelle's mansion, Maurice Twindell strolled to the nearest avenue. There he hailed a taxicab. He ordered the driver to take him to the Club Rivoli, across the Potomac. The cab rolled along. Twindell, lighting a cigarette, stared from the window as the cab passed the Hotel Starlett.

ODDLY, a taxi parked close to that hotel had just picked up a passenger for the same destination that Twindell had chosen. The driver of the second vehicle, however, had not been hailed from the street.

His first inkling that he had a passenger came when a voice spoke quietly from the rear seat of the parked cab. A whispered monotone ordered the taximan to drive over the Potomac to the Club Rivoli.

The driver started his cab. He wondered, as he drove along, how that passenger had entered without his hearing. The cab driver had been quite alert, watching for possible passengers. Had he known the identity of the fare who occupied his cab, he might have gained the explanation.

The passenger was The Shadow. He, too, had chosen the Club Rivoli as his objective. The Shadow had divined the truth of Carl Dolband's disappearance. It had not taken him long to gain that trail.

Since his arrival in Washington, The Shadow had received a report from Clyde Burke. It had told of mysterious happenings which Clyde had observed at the Club Rivoli. The Shadow had spotted hidden crime.

Coupled to this was the talk that The Shadow had overheard between Vic Marquette and Fulton Fourrier. Clyde's report of a special visitor to see Whistler Ingliss; the departure of men who looked like thugs – these had been sufficient for The Shadow to assume that Carl Dolband had met with misfortune at the gay night club across the Potomac.

Moreover, the Club Rivoli was a logical spot. It was a meeting place that attracted many South Americans. This was not the first visit that The Shadow was making to the gambling hall run by Whistler Ingliss. He had traveled to the Club Rivoli each night since his arrival in Washington.

The Shadow's cab made a rapid trip. The driver pulled up near the front door of the Club Rivoli. A hand came through the partition and tendered a bill. The driver took it and began to make change. When he looked for his passenger, he found the cab empty.

Perplexed, the driver scratched his head; then pocketed the bill that he had received and started the trip back to Washington.

As the cab swerved in the driveway, its headlights threw a beam toward a walk that led to the little used side entrance of the Club Rivoli. Long streaks of shaded blackness showed in the gleam. The driver did not notice them. Mere shadows did not interest him.

When the cab had passed, however, there was motion at the spot where the driver had viewed nothing but blackened streaks. There was a slight swish in the darkness. A being who moved with invisible stealth was making his way to the side entrance of the Club Rivoli.

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A SPECTRAL form reached a locked doorway. A slight click marked The Shadow's prying efforts with a pick. The door opened. The Shadow entered the little side passage that led by the office which Whistler Ingliss used.

Reaching the secluded door of the office, The Shadow performed another silent operation with the pick. The door opened inward, by inches. Peering eyes gazed into the lighted office. The room was empty. The door closed. The Shadow moved toward the main passage.

With ghostly strides, the mysterious visitant ascended the short flight of steps. He paused by a niche just before he reached the roulette room. Here, totally unseen, he watched, his tall, black-garbed form merged with the darkness of the niche.

The roulette room was well thronged. Yet The Shadow, with piercing gaze, singled out each person one by one.

He spied Whistler Ingliss, standing near a roulette table. Beyond, he saw Clyde Burke. The newspaperman was playing a cautious game of roulette.

Farther away, The Shadow observed a third man. It was Vic Marquette. The secret-service operative was wearing a tuxedo. He was playing the part of a chance visitor to the Club Rivoli. A soft laugh came in an almost inaudible whisper from The Shadow's hidden lips.

Vic Marquette was playing a wise game. He was one operative who was not known in Washington. He had not made the blunder of announcing himself to Whistler Ingliss. Like Carl Dolband, Vic Marquette had picked the Club Rivoli as a spot to watch; but he was following a course that showed discretion.

New patrons were entering the club. The Shadow spotted them with steady gaze. One was a young man in faultless evening attire. It was Maurice Twindell. The Shadow's eye followed the direction of Twindell's gaze. He saw the young man stare toward Whistler Ingliss; he caught the gambler's return glance. That was all.

Then, with a quick turn of direction that seemed intuitive, The Shadow stared toward a booth on the other side of the room. A waiter was approaching with a tray that held bottles and glasses.

A curtain opened; The Shadow sighted two persons within. One was a woman, whose lighted cigarette formed a white streak before her handsome, dark-complexioned face. The other was a young man whose sallow skin and heavy black mustache identified him as a South American.

Once again, The Shadow caught a momentary exchange of glances. The woman's gaze went toward Whistler Ingliss. The gambler gave a nod that was barely discernible.

The Shadow had spotted Anita Debronne, the second of Darwin Rochelle's agents. A soft laugh came from The Shadow's lips. It stilled as Whistler Ingliss came across the roulette room, heading for the passage in which The Shadow stood. The gambler passed within two feet of the spot where the lurking watcher waited unseen. He continued toward his office.

The Shadow followed. Whistler had entered the office through the door from the main passage. The Shadow took the other way. He softly opened the side door and peered into the office. Whistler was seated at his desk, going over accounts. The Shadow watched.

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Evidently, Whistler was here to stay a while. The gambler did not know that he was under observation. He had no reason to be acting in other than natural fashion.

A clock on the wall beyond Whistler's desk showed twenty-five minutes after nine. Slowly, the door closed; its lock turned noiselessly. The Shadow's form dwindled as it moved toward the end of the passage, to the door that led outside.

A FEW minutes later, Clyde Burke strolled from the roulette room. He, too, had noted the time; he had observed the big clock in the gambling hall. Clyde was following instructions – a mysterious message which had come to his office from The Shadow.

Posted at the Club Rivoli, Clyde was supposed to stroll to the front veranda at half hour intervals from nine o'clock on.

Reaching the spacious veranda, Clyde extracted a cigarette from his pocket and placed it between his lips. Standing by a rail near the steps – beyond him darkness – Clyde felt positive that eyes were studying him. He looked about nervously; then thrust his hand into his pocket to obtain a match.

His fingers encountered an envelope!

Someone, from beyond the rail, had placed this message here during the brief interval between Clyde's removal of the cigarette and his reaching for the match. The envelope could be but from one source: The Shadow.

Clyde opened the envelope. He removed a folded sheet of paper. He brought a match from his pocket, struck it to light his cigarette, and at the same time unfolded the message. By the glare of the match he saw coded lines which he read as easily as if they had been in ordinary script:

Watch people in Booth 6.

Observe young man who entered at 9:15; now playing roulette at Table 1.

Stocky man at Table 2 is Vic Marquette. Secret Service. Report his actions.

Await call.

Vivid blue ink faded as Clyde finished his perusal of The Shadow's message. Puffing his cigarette, The Shadow's agent thrust the blank paper and envelope in his pocket, as he strolled back into the Club Rivoli.

Clyde Burke had observed all persons mentioned. He had suspected nothing regarding any of them. It had remained for the Shadow to discover the participants in the new drama of crime that was unfolding at the Club Rivoli.

The Shadow had departed – somewhere in the darkness. Clyde Burke, as his agent, was intrusted with the work of keeping observation until the master might return.

Agents of murder were at work. The hand of their hidden employer was concealed. The Shadow had found no lead to Darvin Rochelle. Yet The Shadow knew that any deeds of crime would begin here at the Club Rivoli.

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It was his purpose to match the schemer's craft with his own. Before this night was ended, The Shadow would deliver the first counterthrust to the plotting of an insidious supercrook.

CHAPTER VII. TRAILS DIVERGE

NEW patrons were arriving in the roulette room of the Club Rivoli when Clyde Burke returned. The Shadow's agent noted a predominance of South Americans. He realized that more arrivals in Washington were paying a visit to the exclusive gambling place maintained by Whistler Ingliss.

Clyde quickly spotted the two persons whom The Shadow's message had mentioned as being at the roulette tables. Maurice Twindell – whose name Clyde did not know – was gambling heavily on the turn of the wheel. Vic Marquette, at the other table, was playing a conservative game.

Clyde drifted toward the booth which The Shadow had marked. As he neared that spot, he spied a newspaper correspondent entering the roulette room. Clyde waved to his friend; the other journalist approached.

"Hello, Burke," greeted the newcomer. "What are you doing out here?"

"Hitting bad luck," laughed Clyde. "Just about ready to try a sandwich. How about you, Logan?"

"I'm with you."

Clyde drew back the curtain of booth five. He found it empty. He invited his friend to enter. Logan complied. Clyde took the seat that adjoined booth six. He left the curtain of his own booth open so that he could watch what happened in the roulette room. Logan seemed interested in the gambling. Thus, as the two men awaited the arrival of a waiter, Clyde could overhear the buzz of conversation that came from the next booth.

A man and a woman were talking. They were speaking in English – the man, however, had a foreign accent. Clyde caught the name "Anita;" a few moments later, he heard the woman address her companion as "Lito;" later came the name "Carraza."

Clyde was making progress by the time sandwiches and cool drinks had arrived. He knew that a South American named Lito Carraza was in the next booth; his companion a woman called Anita. Moreover, from snatches of conversation, Clyde was sure that Lito Carraza was an attache of some South American legation.

Thus Clyde was content to keep no more than an occasional watch upon the two men at different roulette tables. He knew that the more important quest lay here. He listened for any bit of talk that might give information. Bits of Spanish, intermingled in the conversation between Carraza and Anita, made the task quite difficult.

MAURICE TWINDELL was having poor luck at roulette. The tall dilettante stepped back from the table and strolled about in dejected fashion. He glanced at various players, nodded to occasional South Americans who seemed to be acquaintances, and finally moved over to the second table.

Here Twindell noted considerable commotion. Among the players was a tall South American who was leaning forward with a gleaming smile. The man's sallow face showed keen delight at the success which he was gaining.

"Caramba!" The exclamation came from a watcher. "The man has luck. Diablo! He has won a thousand pesos in less than a dozen minutes!"

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"Who is he?" came a question.

"Alvarez Menzone." Twindell heard the name. "From the Argentine, they say. Each night that he has come here he has won. Follow his play if you wish luck."

Twindell studied Menzone. He knew that the shrewd-faced South American was probably a visitor who had come to the Pan-American Convention. The man had money; he was willing to hazard it. He was the very type of person whom Twindell was here to observe.

Edging close to Menzone, Twindell obtained a stack of chips. Menzone, clicking his own chips, began to set them in methodical fashion: some on the odd, others on the black; finally a stack of chips on the corners of four squares.

As the wheel began to whirl, Twindell duplicated the other's hazard. Menzone looked toward the American and gave him a gleaming smile. The wheel came to its stop. The ball was resting in a pocket that was odd and black; its number corresponded to one of the four that Menzone had chosen.

The croupier pushed chips across the table. Menzone collected his in matter-of-fact fashion. Twindell withheld his eagerness as he gathered up his own winnings.

"You share my luck, eh?" Menzone spoke in excellent, but accented English as he looked toward Twindell. "Well senor, let us try again. Two hundred pesos – one hundred of your dollars – upon the odd. One hundred pesos here" – Menzone's long-nailed fingers hovered above the squares – "upon the No. 13!"

Others, about to follow Menzone's bet, hesitated superstitiously at the choice of the No. 13. They were not willing to hazard their money on the doubtful odds offered by a single square. Twindell, however, did not falter. He duplicated Menzone's bet.

"Buenos!"

The exclamation came from Alvarez Menzone, as the wheel ended its spin. The ball was resting beside the No. 13.

Menzone had won more than fifteen hundred dollars on a single turn of the wheel. Twindell, by following Menzone's lead, had made an identical gain.

WITH eagerness unrepressed, Twindell awaited Menzone's next wager. The dark-faced South American glanced at the man beside him and laughed.

"You are looking for the next play, senor?" he questioned. "This is it!"

Menzone pushed his accumulated winnings toward the croupier, with a gesture that signified that he wished his chips to be cashed. The croupier was quick to comply. He had been wondering when Menzone's winning streak would end.

In fact, Whistler Ingliss had appeared, summoned by news that a lucky player had started out to break the bank. Seeing Menzone cashing in his chips; observing Twindell by the South American's side, Whistler strolled away, trilling a soft melody as he feigned indifference.

"We have been lucky, amigo," laughed Menzone, clapping Twindell on the back. "We must not expect luck to last forever. Another night, I shall try. Should you be here to follow me – perhaps you may win if I should

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win."

"Si, señor." Twindell paused as he was counting the money that he had received. Then, in Spanish, he added: "You have but recently come to Washington?"

Menzone's eyes lighted as he heard these words in his native tongue. He nodded in reply to Twindell's question. Twindell watched as he saw Menzone add his winnings to a large roll of bills – all of high denominations, all probably gained here.

"I have other friends from South America," purred Twindell, in excellent Spanish. "It is a pleasure to meet you. My name is Maurice Twindell –"

"And mine" – Menzone was receiving Twindell's handshake as they stepped away from the roulette table – "is Alvarez Menzone."

New players were thronging about the table which the two had left. Twindell and Menzone were forgotten by those who had watched – with the exception of one. That was Vic Marquette.

The secret-service operative had kept his eye on Alvarez Menzone from the moment of the South American's arrival. He had watched Menzone win; he had observed the approach of Maurice Twindell.

Moreover, Marquette had heard the introduction which the two had exchanged. He knew their names; and he was convinced that of all persons at the roulette tables, these two – particularly Menzone – would bear further watching.

The two were strolling toward the front door of the roulette room. Warily, Vic Marquette followed. Clyde Burke, watching from his booth, felt a secret satisfaction. He could not follow Maurice Twindell and still remain here at the Club Rivoli. The fact that Vic Marquette was on Twindell's trail relieved Clyde Burke.

An odd culmination! To Clyde Burke, Alvarez Menzone was simply a man accompanying Maurice Twindell. To Vic Marquette, Menzone was the quarry with Twindell merely his companion.

WHEN the two men reached the driveway in front of the Club Rivoli, they hailed a taxi. There were several cabs in view, for this resort was a profitable place to pick up fares. As soon as the cab had started, Vic Marquette hurried from the veranda. He entered the second vehicle. He flashed a badge in front of the driver's eyes and gave this order:

"Follow the cab ahead."

The driver obeyed. In response to Vic's occasional growls for caution, he kept well behind the other cab until both cars had reached the Potomac River.

Bridge traffic became heavy as the cabs neared the glowing city. Near the long block of buildings of the Bureau of Engraving, Vic's cab closed in on the taxi ahead. When the glare of blue-lighted windows had been passed, the second cab was so close behind the first that Vic could distinguish the heads of Maurice Twindell and Alvarez Menzone.

The lead cab passed the monument. It threaded its way along cross streets until it reached one of the broad avenues that form the pattern of a spider's web upon the map of Washington. The cab swung along the avenue.

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Vic Marquette, peering almost from the driver's side, observed that neither Twindell nor Menzone were conscious that they were being followed. Their cab took another side street. It pulled up near a secluded apartment building.

Vic growled to his own driver to slow down, then to stop. The secret-service man alighted half a block behind as the first cab came to a stop.

Alvarez Menzone and Maurice Twindell appeared upon the sidewalk. The cab waited at Twindell's bidding while the two were concluding a conversation. Vic Marquette, approaching, could overhear their talk, which was in Spanish.

"Then you do not intend to return to the Argentine?" Twindell was saying.

"Not for some time to come." Menzone wore an odd smile as he spoke. "Perhaps not at all. I have found the United States to be a very healthy place."

"But you say you have chosen Washington –"

"Why not?"

"It is an expensive city in which to live; one that offers very little opportunity, except to those connected with the government."

"Expensive – yes." Menzone laughed. "My apartment on the third floor of this building costs much more than I ever paid in Buenos Aires. But there are times, señor, when extravagance brings return."

Menzone's lips were smiling as the South American placed a cigarette between them. Menzone applied a light; delivered some thoughtful puffs of smoke, then extended his hand.

"Buenos noches," he said to Maurice Twindell. "It has been a pleasure to meet you, amigo mio. Let me express the hope that we shall meet again."

"We shall," responded Twindell, as he turned toward his cab. "Buenos noches, señor."

Menzone, still puffing his cigarette, remained watching while the taxi pulled away. Then the South American turned and entered the apartment building. Hardly had he disappeared before Vic Marquette followed.

THE lobby was a pretentious one. It lacked attendants, however, and Vic Marquette strolled about for a few minutes, undecided whether he should pay a visit to the third floor. Finally, the secret-service man decided to the contrary.

Leaving the apartment house, Vic stopped on the sidewalk and noted the name above the door. He drew pad and pencil from his pocket. Methodically, he jotted down the name: Athena Court.

Even then, Vic was loath to leave the vicinity. He went across the street and stared toward the third floor, hoping that he might be able to locate the apartment occupied by Alvarez Menzone. Failing to gain any clew, the secret-service man stepped out into the street and whistled to a cab that was coming along.

"Hotel Starlett," was the order that Vic gave to the driver.

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As the cab rolled away, there was motion in the gloom at the side of Athena Court. From a narrow, cement passageway that led toward a rear fire tower, appeared a figure garbed in black. Outlined by dim light, this figure watched the departure of the cab.

A soft laugh came from hidden lips. The Shadow had observed Vic Marquette's actions. He had heard the order given by the secret-service operative. He knew that Vic Marquette did not intend to follow Menzone again tonight.

More than that: The Shadow knew that Vic had not concerned himself with the affairs of Maurice Twindell. Should Vic, in the future, come to deal with Twindell, it would result because of Vic's keen interest in the affairs of Alvarez Menzone.

Strange trails had begun tonight. Clyde Burke, back at the Club Rivoli, was watching two persons in booth six. Vic Marquette had taken up the trail of Alvarez Menzone. The Shadow, too, had found a quarry. Unknown even to Clyde Burke, The Shadow had left the Club Rivoli with the express purpose of watching Maurice Twindell.

After Twindell's parting with Menzone, The Shadow's course had changed. His figure, moving swiftly away from Athena Court, was retracing his way to the spot where crime still hovered.

CHAPTER VIII. ON THE SPEEDWAY

CLYDE BURKE was alone in the booth at the Club Rivoli. Logan had strolled away to play roulette. Clyde had dropped the curtain. He had been listening intently to the conversation which he had heard from the adjoining booth.

"So sorry, Lito." The woman's voice was speaking. "I thought we could stay here for a few hours longer. I haven't played a single chip at the roulette table!"

"It is nearly eleven," came Carraza's reply. "I must go to the legation. I was told to be there by ten. It is important, senorita. I have papers –"

"Can you leave them there?"

"Si, senorita. They were to have been copied. I shall have to say that I did not have time."

"And then?"

"The papers will be placed in the safe. Perhaps I shall be told to continue my copying tomorrow. Perhaps the work will be intrusted to another. I cannot tell."

"Can't you return here?" Anita's tone was urging. "Leave the papers, senor. Come back to see me. I shall play at roulette while you are absent."

"Very well." Carraza's tone was one of agreement. "But I must go quite soon. A few turns of roulette; then I shall leave, senorita."

Clyde Burke rose from his seat. He opened the curtain and strolled toward a roulette table. He realized that a prompt report to The Shadow would be essential. The clock in the gaming room showed five minutes before eleven. If only The Shadow would be outside by the veranda at the end of his half hour!

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THUS thinking, Clyde swung from the table and moved toward the outer door. An attendant was talking in a telephone booth; the man dropped the receiver and turned toward the roulette tables. At the same moment, he spied Clyde Burke.

"Ah!" exclaimed the attendant. "Mr. Burke! A call for you, sir, from the newspaper office."

"Thanks," returned Clyde. Entering the booth, he picked up the receiver.

"This is Burke speaking," he informed.

"Report." The word came in a weird, whispered tone. Clyde knew that this was not the voice that the attendant had heard. Used expressly for Clyde's benefit, this eerie tone was a token of identity. Clyde knew that The Shadow was on the other end of the wire.

"The roulette player left," began Clyde, in a low voice. "He was followed by Marquette –"

"The others."

"They have just left their booth. The man is Lito Carraza, attache of a South American legation. The woman's name is Anita."

"Where are they now?"

"At the roulette table."

"Watch them." The Shadow's monotone was an order. "Tell me what is happening. Look all about. Report."

Clyde obeyed, half wondering. Suddenly, he caught the import of The Shadow's order. Something was happening within the roulette room – something which Clyde Burke alone observed.

Whistler Ingliss had strolled from the doorway at the side of the room. Clyde could see the gambler's lips pursed as they trilled a tune. Events of another night were undergoing repetition. Clyde was quick to whisper what he saw.

"Whistler is giving a signal," he informed. "Men are coming from the side booths. The same men that I saw here before. Two – four of them."

"Watch Whistler."

"He is looking toward the roulette table. He has caught Anita's eye. She is talking to Lito Carraza. The man is preparing to leave –"

"Report received. Off duty."

Clyde Burke stood dumfounded as he heard the click of the receiver at the other end. He hung up his own receiver and stepped from the booth. The reason for The Shadow's quick termination of the telephone call was dawning on Clyde Burke.

Lito Carraza, heading into Washington, was to become the prey of mobsters! Anita had lured the South American attache into a trap. Whistler Ingliss, receiving a sign from the woman, had ordered thugs to action!

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The Shadow must have called from the city. That fact seemed obvious to Clyde. Could he reach here before Lito Carraza had left? That seemed impossible. The young South American was already on his way to the front door of the Club Rivoli.

Clyde watched Carraza's departure. The attache seemed a trifle anxious; Clyde knew that his expression was brought about purely by the thought of the reprimand that might be awaiting him at the legation.

The door closed. Whistler Ingliss had retired to his office. The woman with whom Carraza had dined, was playing roulette. The attache's departure had been observed by no one except Clyde Burke. The Shadow's agent alone had seen a man start forth to doom!

OFF duty!

Such had been The Shadow's order. Yet Clyde felt worried. Following Carraza's path, he reached the veranda at the front of the Club Rivoli. The lights of a large, foreign roadster had been turned on; a man at the wheel was pressing the starter. It was Carraza, leaving. Clyde was tempted to leap forward and warn the man to stop. His confidence in The Shadow prevented him.

As Carraza's car began to roll away, Clyde realized a new angle to the situation. Men had been dispatched to attack the South American, but they would certainly avoid an encounter in the neighborhood of the Club Rivoli. They would try to get Carraza between here and his legation.

The Shadow had foreseen that fact! There lay the reason for his prompt action. The idea brought quick decision to Clyde Burke. Off duty, The Shadow's agent had become a news seeker. He would follow into Washington.

Clyde called to the driver of a cab. The taxi rolled to the steps. Entering the vehicle, Clyde told the man to take him into the city. He added that he was in a hurry. The jehu grinned.

"Wait'll we hit the speedway, boss," he said. "I'll show you some fast time."

"All right," agreed Clyde. "I'd like to see it."

The Shadow's agent knew that speed would be necessary to keep up with the pace that Lito Carraza could make in his foreign roadster. In this surmise, Clyde was correct. Carraza, leaving the Club Rivoli, had stepped on the gas with a vengeance.

Heading toward the broad speedway, the South American attache was counting on a clear road for his quick trip back to the legation. The glow from the dashboard of his roadster showed his fuming lips. Carraza was annoyed because he had lingered so long at the Club Rivoli.

The roadster swerved as it reached the speedway. As Carraza pressed the accelerator, another car shot out from a side road. It was a rakish touring car. It took up Carraza's trail. From a hundred feet behind, the pursuing car began to lose ground as Carraza piloted his roadster at a speed of eighty miles an hour.

The attache, eager to get back to headquarters, had figured that his position would serve him should traffic police observe his speed. The road ahead was clear. Beyond the bright lights that lined the Potomac was the glow of the city, dominated by brilliance that showed the capitol building and the monument.

Carraza slackened slightly for a long turn. Then, as he pressed the accelerator for a straight stretch, he muttered angrily. An old sedan was backing crosswise to block the speedway. Its erratic motion, in the path

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of Carraza's blinding lights, was a signal for immediate caution.

There was time to avoid a collision, even at the speed with which the roadster was traveling. Carraza stepped on the brake. His lunging car swerved, but held to the road as it came to a rapid stop. Intuitively, the South American turned the wheel so that the nose of his car pointed at an angle behind the balking sedan.

A TONGUE of flame spat from the sedan. A bullet zipped against the windshield of Carraza's roadster. The glass cracked, but did not shatter. Another flash of flame. Carraza flung open the door beside the driver's seat and leaped to the speedway, on the side away from the stalled sedan. His eyes opened wide with fright.

Looming down from the direction which he had come was a rakish touring car. Its headlights showed Carraza plainly. From the side of the approaching automobile came an opening shot that missed its mark, but battered the side of the roadster.

Caught between two fires, Carraza leaped frantically to the front of his car. As his cowering form clutched the radiator, another shot came from the sedan. Certain doom awaited the attache. It would be but a matter of seconds.

Then came the interruption that neither Carraza nor his pursuers had expected. The roar of a powerful motor surged from the bend just ahead of the sedan. With terrific speed, a roadster of greater power than Carraza's came hurtling down upon the sedan.

Gunmen, about to aim at their prey, turned to see this arriving car. The roadster, bearing down at ninety, seemed driverless! Behind its wheel loomed a spectral shape that seemed like a monstrous creature of the night!

Death was the driver of that car. Death, in the person of The Shadow! The bark of a huge automatic was the answer to the gunmen's challenge. The puny spats of revolver fire, directed at a hurtling target were wild attempts to meet the power of the automatic.

Hot lead seared into the midst of crouching mobsters. Hoarse screams were the replies as useless revolvers clattered to the concrete of the speedway. As deadly as a crushing Juggernaut, The Shadow had hurled vengeance into the ranks of men who were here to murder.

As The Shadow's car swerved past the front of the sedan, men in the touring car opened new and closer fire upon Lito Carraza. The attache screamed as a bullet clipped his shoulder. Blindly, he plunged forward, staggering directly toward the blocking sedan.

But for The Shadow's quick and precise action, Carraza's course would have led him to sure death. A few seconds before, the sedan had contained four men whose hands were ready with revolvers. That circumstance had changed. The Shadow's perfect shots had done their work. Not a single hand could rise to shoot down the victim who came staggering into the death trap.

The touring car had stopped. Gangsters, leaping from its doors, were on Carraza's trail. They swung as The Shadow's car swerved past Carraza's roadster. Blindly, they fired into the glare as jamming breaks brought the car of vengeance to a stop.

Revolver bullets spattered against the windshield. They might as well have driven against steel as that thick, bulletproof barrier with which The Shadow's speedy car was equipped.

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With left hand on the wheel, The Shadow answered with his right. His automatic, thrust from beside the windshield, picked out the ruffians who snarled before the brilliance of The Shadow's headlights.

One ugly faced ruffian sprawled. A second, firing vain shots, staggered as a bullet reached him. Another gangster crumpled. Two who remained took to flight.

They were too late. A timely bullet clipped the first as he dodged beyond Carraza's roadster. A second shot caught the second man as he sought to clamber back into the roadster. On the step, the gangster screamed, threw out his arms and toppled backward to the concrete of the speedway.

Only one of the would-be assassins found opportunity to escape. He was the leader of the two-car mob – the man at the wheel of the touring car. "Bugs" Ritler, trusted henchman of Darvin Rochelle, had sensed the presence of a mighty menace as he had seen his squirming minions fall.

Springing from the wheel, Bugs went through the door on the left as The Shadow was dropping the last pair of snarling rats. Without pausing to fire a single shot, Bugs took a flying leap over a fence at the side of the speedway and gained shelter amid a clump of trees.

To the ears of the terrified gang leader came the strident sound of a taunting laugh. It was a weird cry that sounded like a knell when it broke the silence which had followed the stilling of gunfire.

The laugh of The Shadow!

SINISTER, mocking mirth, it rang out as the token of swift triumph. In quick, emphatic seconds, The Shadow had spelled doom to men of crime. Single-handed, he had turned the odds in his own behalf.

From the wheel of his powerful roadster, The Shadow could see Lito Carraza. The attache whose life The Shadow had saved, was clutching his wounded shoulder as he stood, white-faced, close by the sedan where bullet-riddled mobsters lay.

Carraza was safe. No one remained to make a new attempt upon his life. The Shadow, turning his gaze along the speedway, spied the lights of a taxicab approaching from the direction in which Carraza had come.

The big roadster moved backward. Its rear wheels gripped the dirt that edged the far side of the speedway. The car roared forward. Swerving a foot from the rear of Carraza's stalled car, it shot along the broad road, back toward Washington.

Above the roaring throb of the powerful motor came a final burst of mockery. The laugh was repeated, like a distant echo, as the big roadster took the bend. The tail-light twinkled from sight, just as the taxicab rolled up to the spot where three driverless cars were stretched across the speedway.

The Shadow's hand had struck. His strident laugh had marked his victory. Triumphant, The Shadow had departed into the darkness from which he had emerged!

CHAPTER IX. MARQUETTE REPORTS

ON the evening following the affray on the Virginia speedway, Vic Marquette appeared in the lobby of the Hotel Starlett. The secret-service operative approached a room telephone and called Fulton Fourrier.

Vic Marquette had a habit of noticing people everywhere he went. He also possessed the peculiar ability of

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spotting those who seemed to be worthwhile watching. He had used this propensity at the Club Rivoli when he had observed Alvarez Menzone. He looked about him tonight, as he passed through the lobby of the Starlett.

On this occasion, however, Vic's ability failed him. He saw no one in the lobby who impressed him as important. He stared squarely at a tall, thin-faced man whose hawklike nose and keen eyes gave him a dignified expression. But Vic saw nothing about that individual to make a second look necessary.

The personage whom Vic Marquette passed by, was the guest who had registered as Henry Arnaud. He was located in the lobby for one definite purpose: to await the appearance of Vic Marquette.

As soon as the secret-service operative had taken one elevator, Arnaud arose and entered another. Alighting at the eighth floor, he moved swiftly to his room. In the darkness, a black cloak swished. A weird, shrouded figure appeared upon the balcony and began its precipitous and sidewise ascent to the outside of Fourier's window.

Henry Arnaud had again become The Shadow. Crouched on Fourier's balcony, his gloved hands eased the trifling space that he needed between the doorlike halves of the French window. Peering keenly through the crevice, The Shadow again became a silent listener to what was passing between Vic Marquette and his chief.

MARQUETTE was making his report. Fourier, seated sidewise at the writing table, was ready with his questions. The Shadow took in every word.

"The Club Rivoli," remarked Marquette. "Yes – I was there. I spotted a South American."

"Not Lito Carraza?"

"No. That's where I slipped up, chief. The fellow I picked is named Alvarez Menzone. He made friends with a young chap named Maurice Twindell. I trailed the pair to the apartment where Menzone is living – Athena Court. Twindell went on; Menzone turned in."

"And all this while," interposed Fourier sourly, "crime was brewing out at the Club Rivoli. You've read the newspapers" – Fourier picked up a journal and tapped it – "and you know what happened there. They tried to get Lito Carraza, an attache who had important legation correspondence on his person. He's the man you should have been watching."

"I know it," admitted Marquette. "I might have been watching him – if I'd seen him. I picked another man, chief, and I think I've got a lead."

"Let us discuss Carraza first," decided Fourier. "According to the newspapers, he was attacked by gangsters, purely as a holdup proposition. Carraza was driving an expensive car. He was coming from the Club Rivoli. They tried to kill him, but some other persons opened fire. The one explanation seems to be that gangsters battled among themselves.

"The first people to arrive were two men: a taxi driver and his passenger, a news-bureau man named Clyde Burke. They took Carraza to a hospital. He refused to talk.

"That's why the real meat of the story was suppressed. The legation informed me of what had happened. I went over there; I kept the facts out of print and I listed them for reference. Here they are:

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"Carraza was dining with a woman named Anita Debronne. He left her at the Club Rivoli. She evidently induced him to go there so that he would have to return alone along the speedway. I sent two men out to the Club Rivoli. They learned that Anita Debronne was known there; that she had been seen to leave shortly after Carraza's departure."

Vic Marquette stared. This was news to him. He realized now why Fourrier was disgruntled. Had Vic been on the job at the Club Rivoli, the sequel to last night's happenings might have been different.

"So here is the story," resumed Fourrier. "I've put more men to work. One is looking for Anita Debronne. Two others are watching the Club Rivoli. If that's where attaches have been going before they disappear, we're going to put a stop to it."

"You're not closing the place?"

"No. We're crimping it – that's all. We've got a lead on the Debronne woman. We've found a crew of dead mobsters. But we're no closer home than we were before."

"Thanks to me," observed Vic moodily.

"Don't take what I have said as a reprimand," declared Fourrier, in an easier tone. "On the contrary, Marquette, I am highly pleased with what you have accomplished."

Vic looked up questioningly.

"There is no doubt," announced Fourrier, "about one thing. You picked the Club Rivoli as a starting point. That's where trouble was waiting for Lito Carraza. I want you to keep on from there. I think you're the man who can trail it farther."

"I've had to put other men on the case. It's obvious that the attempt on Carraza's life is linked with the disappearances that we've been trying to trace. This is still your job; the other operatives are covering you. Find some new clues. Go anywhere – everywhere. Back to the Club Rivoli – to legations – wherever you choose. I'll fix all that's needed. But bring in results."

"Thanks, chief," said Marquette. "You can count on me. I'll follow the same tactics that I tried last night. All these cases involved South American activities. I'm watching South Americans. That's why I picked Alvarez Menzone."

"The wrong man –"

"I'm not sure about that. He's an odd customer. He left the Club Rivoli right while his luck was running good. I followed him last night. I dropped around at the apartment house this afternoon."

"What did you find out?"

"Nothing. Menzone has a Filipino servant – evidently one whom he hired here in Washington. The servant is dumb. Menzone was not at home."

"Yet you still think that he may figure in this?"

"I'd like to know more about him."

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"That's simple. I'll get any information that's available. In the meantime, don't waste too much time on the man. Find others that may appear suspicious. We'll trace them all down."

"That's just what I intend to do, chief. At the same time, I'm going to keep my eyes open for this fellow Menzone. If he crosses my path, I'll give him more than just a once-over."

THERE was a pause. Fourrier was thinking. A frown appeared upon the divisional chief's forehead.

"There's one thing I'd like to know," declared Fourrier. "That fight last night was a mighty brief one. It left Carraza bewildered. All that he can remember was gunfire – from two sides. Then he heard a car come driving up – brakes grinding – more shots. He was clipped in the shoulder; but in the meantime, his rescuers mopped up the entire crew that had him trapped.

"The car must have made a quick getaway. Carraza heard it drive off; and he heard something else, too. He says he heard a laugh – a weird laugh – one that he will never forget. Some of these South Americans are superstitious, but when Carraza told me about that laugh, I knew he meant it –"

Fourrier paused. He looked with alarm toward Vic Marquette. The operative was staring at his superior; his face was rigid.

"What's the matter?" questioned Fourrier. "You look like you've seen a ghost!"

"I haven't seen one," responded Vic, in an awed tone. "I've just heard of one."

"Heard of one? From whom?"

"From you. That laugh you mentioned. Chief, I know what it meant. You're right that this affair is getting big. I know who it was who washed out that crew of mobsmen."

"Are you going to tell me it was a ghost?"

"The next thing to it. Chief, it was The Shadow who got those mobsters. He's the only person who could have done a job like that."

"The Shadow?"

Vic Marquette smiled grimly. He nodded; then began his explanation. Fulton Fourrier listened half doubtingly. His interest increased as Marquette continued.

"They know about The Shadow in New York," declared Marquette. "Who he is – what he is – that's a mystery. The point is that The Shadow battles crooks. The underworld is afraid of him – more than they are the police."

"I've heard something of it," admitted Fourrier, in a tone of recollection. "But this isn't New York."

"It's a case involving gangsters."

"Yes. You're right on that. But the theory ends there, Marquette. If this fighter you call The Shadow, is out to end gang rule, he's accomplished what he's after. Give him credit for wiping out that ugly band. But that ends his part."

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"Not a bit of it." Vic's tone was emphatic. "Chief, you can believe me or not when I tell you that The Shadow has played his part in putting down some of the greatest crime that this country has ever known.

"I've taken credit for some mighty big jobs. I'll tell you, chief, that I'd never have come through some of them if it hadn't been for The Shadow. He's pulled me out of some tight jams."

"And yet" – Fourrier's tone was incredulous – "you don't know who he is?"

"I've seen him." Vic was speaking in a tone of serious recollection. "I've heard his laugh. He is a ghost – The Shadow – a phantom completely cloaked in black. He moves with incredible swiftness. He strikes without mercy. He leaves as he comes. You can't trace him, chief."

Fourrier's brow was wrinkled. Vic noted his chief's expression. He realized that Fourrier doubted these statements; that the chief was worried about his operative's sanity.

"I'm not dreaming," asserted Marquette, as he rose to his feet. "I'm telling you of things I've witnessed, under unbelievable circumstances. The Shadow is a power; and he fights for justice. If he is here in Washington, it's not to handle a bunch of imported gangsters and then quit.

"It looks to me like The Shadow was in this deal. He has agents, and I'm mighty sure I know who one of them is. Maybe I'll get a line on The Shadow while I'm working on this case. If I do, it's going to help.

"Chief, the break is coming. I'm convinced of it; and you can count on me. I'm starting out tonight with more confidence than I've ever had – and if you want the reason, I'll give it to you. It's because Lito Carraza heard that laugh out on the speedway."

Fulton Fourrier smiled indulgently. Marquette's determination had put his chief's mind at ease. Fourrier followed Vic to the door; there, he clapped his operative on the shoulder.

"I don't disbelieve you, Marquette," he declared. "Your record shows what you have done; and you wouldn't take credit from yourself if you weren't convinced that it belonged elsewhere. If you've received aid from some mysterious source and think you're going to get it again, so much the better.

"Don't worry too much about Alvarez Menzone. I'll look up the fellow's record. And don't bank too much on The Shadow. Maybe you have a trend toward exaggerating his prowess.

"Get results. I'm counting on you. We're going to get to the bottom of this plot that has taken off six men and failed only when it struck the seventh."

Vic nodded his agreement. He went out through the door. Fulton Fourrier closed the portal, then turned back to his writing table, shaking his head in new doubt. It was evident that Vic Marquette's talk of The Shadow had not been entirely convincing.

At the writing table, Fulton Fourrier felt uneasy. He glanced back over his shoulder. He noted that the French windows were ajar. He went and closed them.

For one brief second, while his hands were upon the window frames, Fulton Fourrier was face to face with the very being whose existence he doubted!

Beyond those windows stood the black-garbed being of whom Vic Marquette had spoken. Fourrier, however, did not see the sable-hued form. Merged with outer darkness, The Shadow was a creature invisible.

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Fourrier returned to the writing table. As he sat down, he started as a surprising echo reached his ears. It seemed like the faint, hollow tone of a whispered laugh. It reminded him of the mockery which Lito Carraza had described; of the mirth which Vic Marquette had corroborated.

Fulton Fourrier sat motionless. At last, he shrugged his shoulders. He attributed that weird sound to a touch of imagination. He decided to forget it.

Yet, as he studied report sheets, the chief could not shake off that haunting sound. It persisted as a chilling recollection.

Small wonder! That was a laugh which no one could forget. Fulton Fourrier, though he did not realize the truth, had heard the laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER X. BURKE'S INTERVIEW

ON the following morning, Clyde Burke entered his office to find an unposted letter in the mail box. He opened it and scanned blue-inked lines that were inscribed in The Shadow's code. The message contained concise instructions:

Interview Alvarez Menzone, Athena Court. Suggest that he may become a man of consequence in Washington. Offer to obtain a competent secretary to handle his correspondence. Return to your office and await a call.

The name of Alvarez Menzone was not familiar to Clyde Burke. The newspaperman picked up the telephone book and looked for the name. He did not find it. He located the apartment house, however, and decided that a visit to Menzone's residence would be the best step.

Clyde picked up the paper which had contained The Shadow's message. The sheet had turned blank while Clyde had been consulting the telephone book. The Shadow's agent tossed the paper into the wastebasket. He took his hat and left the office.

Arriving at Athena Court, Clyde looked over the name plates and discovered that of Alvarez Menzone. The apartment number was 3-D. Clyde entered the deserted lobby, took the automatic elevator to the third floor, and found the apartment that he wanted. He pressed a button beside the door.

A minute passed. The door opened. A dull-faced Filipino, clad in white coat and black trousers, stared at the visitor.

"What you want?" he asked.

"I have come to see Mr. Menzone," replied Clyde.

"Nobody is home," informed the Filipino. "Mr. Menzone, he is away."

The servant was about to close the door in Clyde's face when a voice called from an inner room:

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"Who is it, Jose?"

"Man to see you, sir," replied the Filipino, in a dull monotone.

"Tell him to come in," repeated the voice. The accents showed the speaker to be a foreigner.

Jose complied. He stepped aside and reluctantly allowed Clyde Burke to enter.

THE newspaperman found himself in a well-furnished living room. As he stood within the door, a man attired in a dressing gown appeared from another doorway.

Clyde Burke could not repress a stare. He had seen this man before. He was the South American whom Clyde had viewed from the booth at the Club Rivoli – the one who had gone out with an American whom Clyde had watched – the one whom Vic Marquette had followed!

"Buenos dios, senior," greeted Menzone, with a gleaming smile. "I am Alvarez Menzone. You have come to see me?"

"Yes," answered Clyde. "My name is Burke. I am manager of the National City News Association – a Washington organization that corresponds with journals in other cities."

"Ah!" Menzone's tone showed interest. "You have come to interview me?"

"Exactly," returned Clyde.

Menzone seated himself in an armchair and waved Clyde to another seat. He picked up a wooden box, opened it to extract a cigarette, and offered one to Clyde Burke. The newspaperman accepted.

"You must excuse my servant," remarked Menzone, as he was lighting his cigarette. "He is very stupid, sometimes. I told him that I wished to see no one until later. He should not have told you that I was out, however. Gentlemen of the press are always welcome.

"An interview." Menzone smiled reminiscently. "I have given many of them, senior, but always in South America. This is my first experience in the United States. I suppose you wish to know why I am in Washington?"

"Yes."

"I have come" – Menzone seemed very serious – "to aid in the promotion of international good will. I am an internationalist, senior, so far as South America is concerned. The entire continent is familiar ground to me.

"Ah! What a future lies there! Through peace and harmony, South America could lead the world. Communication. Better communication. That is the first step that we must make. Not communication, senior – that is not exactly the word I want. Let me see what –"

"Transportation?"

"That is it, senior! Transportation. Let me explain."

Menzone went to the corner of the room and brought back a huge stack of papers. He produced a large printed map of South America. He pointed to lines of different colors.

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"Here, señor," he said, "are the railroads as they now exist. These – in red. Here are the ones that we should have. Those, you see, are in green.

"We have neglected this form of transportation. Why? Because each nation, if it builds a road to the border of another country, is aiding a different nation. Take this green line from Bogota, in Colombia. It would be a wonderful form of transportation if it went southward; but to be of value, it would have to cross Ecuador and pass into Peru.

"Who must begin it? Colombia. Then Ecuador must follow. Peru could start it if she wished; but again, Ecuador and Colombia would have to cooperate.

"You see the problem? International effort is the only answer. How can it be gained? Through American capital. The countries of South America would welcome railroads."

"Here in the United States," remarked Clyde, "rail transportation is meeting with heavy competition."

"Because you have highways," explained Menzone. "But they come after the railroads. Great profit is there, for those who are the first to seek it. Years and years of successful rail transportation lie ahead in South America."

MENZONE passed the map to Clyde. He produced mimeographed sheets. Some of these were statements; others contained statistics. They gave reports on existing rail lines of the South American continent; also the potentialities of others that could be constructed.

"This will make good copy," remarked Clyde. He nodded as Menzone passed him photographs of South American locomotives and other rolling stock. "Yes. Coming at the time of the Pan-American Convention, I can sell this as feature material. You intend to bring up this subject at the convention?"

"So I hope, señor. I shall visit the legations and discuss the matter. But I wish to do more. I want this information to be just so. I want it so it will interest North Americans. There is the trouble."

"In what way?"

"I think as we think in the South. My wording is not good. I need someone who can understand to put it in the style that is accepted here."

"Why don't you hire a competent secretary?" Clyde Burke was prompt with the question, when he had gained the wedge. "That is all you need, Mr. Menzone."

"Buenos," agreed the South American. "But where am I to find such a man? I am here in Washington. I did not see the difficulty until I arrived. I know how secretaries go. Some are good; most are bad. You understand?"

"Perhaps," offered Clyde, "I could obtain the very man you need. It would not prove difficult, since you speak English so fluently. You want a man to handle your correspondence in the United States –"

"Exactly, señor. You believe that you could do that for me? Do so, I beg you."

"You have a telephone," remarked Clyde, as he looked across the room. "Let me take the number. You will hear from me within a few hours."

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Clyde jotted down Menzone's number. He folded the data which he had received and extended his hand to the South American. Menzone received it warmly. Impressed by Clyde's promise of publicity and aid in obtaining a secretary, Menzone was gracious to the extreme. He accompanied his visitor to the door and bowed as Clyde departed.

As he took the elevator, Clyde's last glance toward Menzone's apartment showed the South American still standing in the opened doorway. Menzone was smiling, apparently pleased because he had been interviewed. Yet there was something sardonic about his expression that made a distinct impression upon Clyde Burke.

The Shadow's agent, as he strolled from Athena Court, was convinced that Alvarez Menzone's interest in South American transportation was not the only reason for his presence in Washington.

There was a shrewdness about Menzone that was difficult to analyze. Among the pictures which Clyde had received was one of Menzone himself. Studying the photograph, Clyde could observe the peculiar, lurking smile that appeared permanently upon the lips of Alvarez Menzone.

Clyde had missed this out at the Club Rivoli. He had not seen Menzone closely there. Since his interview with the South American, however, Clyde was convinced of The Shadow's wisdom in covering this stranger in Washington. The photograph – Clyde studied it more intensely as he traveled toward his office in a cab – gave Menzone the sleek, crafty expression of a villain in an old-time melodrama.

AT the office, Clyde began to arrange his material for a syndicated story. This was Sunday-feature stuff without question. The Pan-American Convention had not yet begun its preliminary meetings. This story would break before the subject of extended transportation would come before the members of the convention.

Clyde visualized graphic pages: Menzone's portrait – pictures of South American railway equipment – boxed tables of statistics – a huge map of South America with its dotted lines of proposed railway systems. His first task, however, was to prepare a news story that the Washington journals would gobble. Opening the case of a portable typewriter, Clyde began to pound the keys in two-finger reporter fashion.

The ringing of the telephone came as an interruption. Clyde lifted the receiver. He announced his name; also that of his news bureau. A single word, uttered in a strange, whispered voice, came to Clyde's ear:

"Report."

It was The Shadow! Clyde gazed toward the door, to make sure that no chance visitor was about to enter. Then, in brief, concise words, he gave the details of his interview with Alvarez Menzone. He stated that he had obtained a story which was marketable; he added that Menzone was ready to employ a secretary, if he could find the man.

"Call Menzone." The Shadow's order came in a sibilant hiss. "Tell him that you are sending him the man he needs. Harry Vincent – a friend of yours – recently arrived from New York."

Clyde's eyes opened wide. Harry Vincent! Clyde had not known that Harry was in Washington. Clyde had worked with Harry before; he knew Harry to be one of the most capable agents in The Shadow's employ.

The Shadow had foreseen the possibility of Clyde Burke making a successful suggestion to Alvarez Menzone. He had summoned Harry Vincent here to be in readiness!

"Place story immediately." This was The Shadow's added order. "Menzone's purpose in Washington must become known."

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The receiver clicked as Clyde was acknowledging the instructions. Clyde hung up; he waited a few minutes, then called Alvarez Menzone. He heard the persuasive voice of the South American across the wire.

"This is Burke," informed Clyde. "I've found the man for you, Mr. Menzone."

"To serve as my secretary?" Menzone's question showed eager interest.

"Yes," announced Clyde. "His name is Harry Vincent. He'll be out to see you some time today. He's a man from New York. Highly competent."

"Excellent," was Menzone's rejoinder. The South American concluded the telephone conversation with effusive thanks.

CLYDE began to pound the typewriter. His story was shaping rapidly. The Shadow's agent remembered the instructions. He glanced at his watch; it was not yet eleven.

Dropping the story for the moment, Clyde called the office of one of the Washington evening newspapers. He was connected with the city editor. Briefly, Clyde sketched the story that he had obtained from Alvarez Menzone. He read the lead paragraph of the copy that he had already written.

"Great stuff, Burke!" came the city editor's commendation. "You say you're still working on the story?"

"Yes."

"I'll have a copy boy over to your office in fifteen minutes. Give him the story – and photographs. We're going to break this in the next edition. We want it as an exclusive interview. You understand?"

Clyde acknowledged. He smiled as he hung up the receiver and went back to his typewriter pounding. He knew what this would mean: a first–page story of timely interest. Coming on the heels of recent railroad legislation in the United States; appearing in advance of the Pan–American Convention, this interview with Alvarez Menzone would bring the South American's name into the limelight.

A new outlet for American millions! Clyde could see the editorial comment that the story would bring. The other Washington newspapers would pounce upon it. Alvarez Menzone would be interviewed by many before this day was ended.

Harry Vincent, already on his way to Menzone's, would have immediate duties as secretary to the South American. Clyde smiled as he pounded out the concluding paragraph of his story, to complete the article before the copy boy's arrival.

Alvarez Menzone was crashing the limelight. Why? Because The Shadow so desired. Somehow, The Shadow had foreseen this possibility. What was The Shadow's purpose? Only The Shadow knew.

Spiderlike, The Shadow was spinning an invisible web. Here, in Washington, the being who battled crime was meeting craft with craft. Some master plotter of evil was lurking in the background. The Shadow sought to bring him to light.

Through the exploitation of Alvarez Menzone, the South American who had gained the acquaintanceship of Maurice Twindell, The Shadow was tending toward his goal. Action on the speedway was being followed by under–cover progress in Washington.

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Through Clyde Burke, The Shadow had gained the points he needed. He was bringing Alvarez Menzone into prominence. He had placed his own man – Harry Vincent – close to Menzone.

The Shadow knew that this would bring results. The ultimate was something which The Shadow, alone, could foresee. The Shadow, master worker, was seeking to bring crime from its lair.

CHAPTER XI. ROCHELLE RESPONDS

DARVIN ROCHELLE was seated behind his huge, flat-topped mahogany desk. His lips were firmly set. His gaze was harsh as his eyes turned toward the man who was sitting close to the huge globe of the world.

Rochelle's companion was Maurice Twindell. The habitue of the Club Rivoli was attired in a business suit; he still retained the debonair manner that was characteristic when he appeared in evening clothes.

"We have met with difficulty, Maurice," observed Rochelle. "The final goal was within attainment, until that trouble struck on the speedway."

"I didn't think Bugs Ritler would fail you," remarked Twindell glumly. "It was a set-up – to kill Lito Carraza and get his papers. I don't see yet how Bugs missed out."

"I have the explanation," asserted Rochelle. "Bugs managed to escape. That is fortunate. He reported back to Whistler Ingliss – in Agro – and told him what had happened. Bugs knows who it was that broke up his mob so swiftly."

"Another crew of gangsters?"

"No. A lone fighter, Maurice. The one whom all mobsmen fear. The Shadow."

Twindell showed signs of bewilderment mixed with apprehension. Rochelle smiled.

"The Shadow, Maurice," explained the man with the limp, "is a power unto himself. His usual habitat is New York City, but he has frequently been encountered elsewhere. His pastime is to fight whole gangs; to down them single-handed. He has been despicably successful. That is why I state again that Bugs Ritler was lucky to escape."

"You mean," interjected Twindell, "that this one man mopped up a whole crew?"

"I did not say one man," returned Rochelle. "I said The Shadow. He is more than a man, Maurice. He is a phantom of the night. A ghost that comes to life. For months, my schemes have been marked by steady success. Months narrowed to days; days to hours; hours to minutes. Then, when seconds only lay between me and the culmination of my scheme, The Shadow intervened!"

"To destroy your plans?"

"To balk them. From now on, Maurice, my old methods will be useless. Had we trapped Lito Carraza, I would have needed nothing more. Now, however –"

The telephone bell interrupted. Rochelle picked up the instrument and spoke. He changed from English into Agro.

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"Kye kye zo kire?" he questioned. "Kye zay voso... Voso voso... Bole zee thone... Fee. Thone thone... Bole vake eef... Alk beeta bole reen kye zee sovo... Fee. Rema."

Rochelle hung up the receiver. He turned to Maurice Twindell.

THE young man seemed to understand the reason for the annoyed expression which was on Rochelle's face. Agro was plain to Twindell. But he had heard only one end of the conversation.

"Whistler Ingliss," remarked Rochelle. "He tells me that secret-service operatives were at his place last night. You heard my answer. I told him to be very careful. Things are bad, but I promised to let him know when all is well."

"With the operatives covering," observed Twindell, "it's a cinch you can't make a move from the Club Rivoli."

"Operatives?" Rochelle spat the question. "Bah! If another man should appear at the Club Rivoli with those papers that I want, I could snatch him out from under the noses of secret-service men.

"It is The Shadow who could prevent it!" Rochelle pounded the desk emphatically. "He scents mobsters as a fox trails a hare. Gangsters cannot thwart him. What is more, Maurice, The Shadow is a sleuth extraordinary. It is on his account – more so than that of the secret service – that I sent Anita Debronne into hiding.

"That is where you are going, Maurice. Out of town, to await my summons. This is your final visit here until my plans have been completed."

"But how –"

"Listen." Rochelle held up his hand for silence. "I am changing tactics, Maurice. I have used direct tactics because they succeeded. I needed you and Anita to lure victims to their doom. Such mechanism is useless now. I shall reserve it for the final stroke – the deeds which will follow the gaining of the documents which I have not yet obtained.

"Stealth is required. Real espionage, the art at which I am so skilled. The correspondence which Lito Carraza carried is stowed away in safety – deep within the safe at Carraza's legation.

"Mob raids would be futile. I need a new instrument: one that I can use to full advantage. You, Maurice, have provided me with such an instrument."

"I?"

"Yes." Rochelle smiled with evil expression. "On the night of Bugs Ritler's failure, you met a man from South America. Alvarez Menzone. You told me about him – a man of wealth, here in Washington to promote American capital for rail development in the southern continent."

"Yes. He talked with me as we rode back from the Club Rivoli. I saw nothing of value, except that he had international experience."

"That was sufficient." Rochelle was tapping the desk as he smiled. "I have consulted my files, Maurice. I have learned facts that interest me concerning Alvarez Menzone. I saw how he might prove useful. There was only one drawback."

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"What was that?"

"His nonentity in Washington. A man may be important in South America, yet remain unrecognized here. Conversely, certain men of little repute in their own lands may be feted and lionized in this foolish city.

"Publicity is the deity which Americans worship. Let a man reach the news – his reputation is established. Since your acquaintance with Alvarez Menzone, his name has come into print."

ROCHELLE reached to the side of the desk and tossed three newspapers to Twindell. The young man nodded as he noted Menzone's picture on each front page.

"I saw these," remarked Twindell. "Menzone has crashed the front page all right. You mean that this is to our advantage?"

"Positively. I should like very much, Maurice, to receive Alvarez Menzone as a visitor. Let me suggest that when you leave here, you call upon our friend from South America.

"Suggest that his scheme for continental transportation in South America is dependent primarily upon favorable international relations. Its success should, therefore, be greatly aided through cooperation with the International Peace Alliance.

"Give him a bit of information: namely, that the International Peace Alliance has begun a drive for millions of dollars to be spent on commodities that will be shipped to foreign lands. The lack of inland transportation is the one factor which may prevent South America from gaining the chief benefit of these funds.

"Our promise to ship steadily to South America, should rail facilities be provided there, will certainly be of interest to Alvarez Menzone."

Maurice Twindell nodded. He glanced at his watch and noted that it was half past five. Darwin Rochelle smiled.

"Try to get Menzone before dinner," he suggested. "Call there in person. Report to me by telephone."

Maurice Twindell departed.

Shortly before six, he arrived at Athena Court. He went up to the third floor and rang Menzone's bell. A young man of keen-cut appearance answered. It was Harry Vincent, Menzone's new secretary. Twindell inquired for the South American. Harry informed him that Menzone would not be in until half past seven.

Twindell promised to return at that time. He went down to the street, found a drug store and entered a telephone booth. He called Rochelle and made a brief report.

"Kay zay eef kire," declared Twindell, in Agro. "Kay zee kire rema. Sake goda. Seek coda joda. Alk keed."

Twindell went on to a restaurant.

It was just half past eight when he returned to Athena Court. This time, Harry Vincent announced that Alvarez Menzone was at home. The South American was seated in the living room; he recognized Maurice Twindell immediately and arose to greet the man whom he had met at the Club Rivoli.

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A few words passed in Spanish. Harry, partly familiar with the language, grasped that Twindell wanted to discuss some matter privately. Menzone ushered the visitor into a small room that served as his study. He closed the door.

HARRY, listening from outside the barrier, could not distinguish the low, buzzing words. He slipped back into the living room when he heard the scuffle of chairs. Menzone and Twindell appeared. They shook hands at the outer door.

"Tell him," declared Menzone, in Spanish, "that I shall call shortly after nine o'clock tonight – it is almost nine now. You are sure that the hour will not be too late –"

"No, indeed," interposed Twindell. "He will be glad to see you, Senor Menzone. Buenos noches."

Menzone returned to the living room. He remarked to his new secretary that he intended to go out for a short while. He did not, however, mention his destination.

Maurice Twindell, when he reached the street, entered the same drug store where he had gone before. He put in another call to Darvin Rochelle and this time reported:

"Alk oto kay. Kay deek exat vodo. Sake ita."

This done, Maurice Twindell strolled from the drug store. He hailed a passing cab and ordered the driver to take him to the Union Station. In accordance with Rochelle's order, Twindell was taking a trip out of town.

Meanwhile, Alvarez Menzone was dressing for an evening visit. He called Harry Vincent and ordered the secretary to bring maps and mimeographed sheets. Harry left these on the study desk. Menzone appeared from his own room, carrying a bulky brief case. Harry saw him thrust the printed data into its interior.

As soon as Menzone had gone, Harry sat at the desk in the study. Drawing a pen from his pocket, The Shadow's agent inscribed a coded message in blue ink. Sealing the message in a small envelope, Harry carried it to the hall outside of the apartment.

Beyond the elevator, at a corner of the stairway, hung a fire extinguisher. Harry tucked the envelope behind the big cylinder and returned to the apartment.

MINUTES passed. Blackness moved on the obscure and little-used stairway. A shrouded form appeared; a gloved hand that seemed like a thing of living blackness extended to the wall. It plucked the envelope that Harry had placed in readiness.

Shortly afterward, a cab driver pulled up at the curb near Athena Court in response to a whistle. He looked about for the person who had summoned him. He saw no one. He was startled, however, to hear a voice from the interior of the cab. He realized that despite his alertness, his passenger had entered without his knowledge.

The driver nodded, as a voice gave him an address. He started the cab. Paper crinkled in the rear as hands opened an envelope. Harry Vincent's message appeared between black-gloved fingers.

By the light of street lamps which the cab was passing, The Shadow read the meager report which his agent had been able to obtain regarding Alvarez Menzone's visitor and the subsequent departure of Menzone himself.

The coded writing faded. The paper and the envelope fluttered from the window. Blackness shifted within the gloom of the cab. Then came a whispered laugh. It was a token of keen understanding.

The Shadow, despite the little that he had learned through Harry Vincent, seemed satisfied with the way affairs were going. The meshes of his web were strung. The unseen network was ready to ensnare its prey!

CHAPTER XII. THE NEW GAME

"BE ready, Thurk."

Darvin Rochelle uttered these words as his dwarfish servant came creeping through the door at the rear of the office. Rising, with a smile, Rochelle gave new instructions: these in Agro.

"Co kay dake." Rochelle was limping toward the anteroom as he spoke. "Bole zee fela. Bole teeba teen alk bata."

With these words, Rochelle clumped through the doorway. He crossed the anteroom, opened the further door and held out his hand as a man arrived at the top of the marble stairway. It was Alvarez Menzone.

"Senor Menzone?" Rochelle's welcome was a friendly one. Then: "Come in, senor. You are welcome."

Limping through the anteroom, Rochelle conducted his guest to the office. Thurk was no longer in sight. Rochelle motioned Menzone to the chair beside the huge globe of the world. Menzone, like every other visitor, seemed intrigued by the huge sphere with its large scale map.

Rochelle seated himself behind the desk. Menzone, turning, picked up the briefcase that he had brought with him. From it he extracted his own map and its accompanying papers.

"My friend Twindell" – Menzone was using English, the language which seemed familiar to Rochelle – "has told me that your plan and mine have mutual points. Both of us are concerned with the creation of international good will."

"My plans are philanthropic, senor."

"And mine are commercial. That does not change the fact that they are very much alike."

Rochelle began to eye the plans which Menzone had shown him. He shook his head, half doubtingly. Finally, he faced Menzone and smiled as he saw a steady gleam in the South American's eye.

"Futile!" exclaimed Rochelle. "These plans could never work! The transportation facilities that you suggest would take rail lines to districts that will never thrive, even though developed. Millions would be lost through your plans, senor."

"You are wrong!" retorted Menzone, in harsh accents. "You do not know the facts, senor! You are not acquainted with the work that I have done!"

"No?" Rochelle's utterance showed contempt.

Rising from behind his desk, Rochelle limped in halting fashion to a large filing cabinet in the corner of the office. Menzone could hear him mutter as he opened a drawer.

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"L – M –" Rochelle paused on the second letter. "M – E; M – E – N; ah, here it is, Menzone!"

ROCHELLE drew a file from the cabinet. He moved swiftly, despite his limp, as he returned to the desk. He threw down the folded file with triumph and showed elation as he stared at the perplexed South American.

"I say," repeated Rochelle, with emphasis, "that millions would be lost through your plans. I also maintain that I am acquainted with your work. Let me add: millions lost by some are millions gained by others. You, Alvarez Menzone, would gain where others would lose."

"You accuse me –"

"I have the facts." Rochelle grinned fiendishly. "This file, senor, is a complete record of your past. Let us see what Alvarez Menzone has done!"

Rochelle opened the file. While Menzone clenched and unclenched his fists, the man with the limp calmly proceeded with his denunciation.

"The great nitrate swindle," he remarked, "had its inception at Antofagasta, in 1919. A certain Alvarez Menzone was the originator of that hapless scheme. It passed into other hands – with profit to Menzone – who left Chile shortly afterward. The bubble burst; those who remained were the ones who took the blame.

"We turn to Bahia, in 1921. We find Alvarez Menzone engaged in the promotion of a steamship line for the Amazon River. This comes close to transportation, senor. Half a million was subscribed; yet steamships were never purchased. The funds of the Amazon steamship line disappeared very mysteriously.

"The defunct airport at Asuncion, Paraguay. That was another scheme of transportation which failed in 1924. Presumably, the time for such development of air lines had not yet arrived. Actually, the failure of the Asuncion airport can be attributed to the scheming of its promoter – Alvarez Menzone."

Rochelle paused to study his visitor. Menzone's face was set. Rochelle waited.

"Continue," ordered the South American.

"Bogota, Colombia, 1926," read Rochelle. "An expansion of the traction lines, to develop the outlying sections of the city. That was a double swindle. Rusted tracks – vacant lots – those alone remain as testimony to the loss of many thousands.

"Lima, Peru, in 1929. A remarkable scheme to develop air lines radiating from the Peruvian capital. Such lines now exist, but they are not the ones proposed by Alvarez Menzone. The overthrow of the existing government in Peru was given as the cause for failure; actually, the swindling methods of Alvarez Menzone were responsible."

"Continue." Menzone's tone showed confidence.

"La Paz, Bolivia, 1930," remarked Rochelle. "You were there at that time, Menzone; but something went wrong with your plans. You appeared in Caracas, in 1931. You started plans for a coastal steamship line in the Venezuelan city. That, too, came to an unexpected conclusion.

"From then on – nothing until now. But I can fill the gap, thanks to our mutual friend, Maurice Twindell. He tells me that you have come from Buenos Aires. That is quite likely. Argentina would naturally have attracted you. It was one country which you had not favored with your swindling presence.

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"Financial conditions have not been good in the Argentine. So we find you here in Washington, Senor Swindler, ready to start a gigantic project in a country where your ways are not known."

Rochelle rested back in his chair, when he had finished his impeachment. He was studying Alvarez Menzone as he had studied Croydon Herkimer. The swindler, however, was less perturbed than the profiteer had been.

"Your facts are interesting," declared Menzone. "What do you intend to do with them, senor?"

"That," returned Rochelle, archly, "depends entirely upon you, my good friend."

MENZONE appeared mildly quizzical. Rochelle chuckled. Menzone was the type of man whom he had expected. A swindler deluxe, unperturbed by thoughts of exposure: such was the surface impression. Yet Rochelle knew that his visitor was actually playing a bold, though losing, game.

"Perhaps," mused Rochelle, "I could find a way to endorse your present plans, senor. It may be that you are a leopard who can change his spots. Tell me – what has been your reception at the South American legations?"

"A welcome one," returned Menzone calmly. "In fact, senor, I can say that they are more friendly toward plans for commercial development than they are for proposals of mere peace.

"Perhaps – this is only a suggestion, senor – I might make the way easy for someone such as yourself. The legations, senor, do not have those files which you have showed me."

"But should they gain them," parried Rochelle, "your visit to Washington would be ended, senor."

Rochelle had struck home. Menzone knew it. The South American bowed. It was his signal of defeat. Rochelle understood the gesture. He arose and stamped around his desk. He came to a limping pause as he neared Menzone's chair. Leaning on his cane, he clapped his free hand upon his visitor's shoulder.

"Look!" he ordered.

Menzone turned in the direction of Rochelle's gaze. The man with the limp turned out his hand and pointed to the globe of the world. He gave the sphere a twirl; he stopped it so that the continent of South America was predominant.

"There," declared Rochelle, "is the empire which I intend to rule! Ah, senor. You are surprised! You do not see how a man of peace can gain a continent. That is because I have deceived you. I am a man who seeks war – not peace.

"You said that we had much in common. You were right – but you did not know that your pretended statement was a true one. Your game has been to talk of South American development while you pocket profits. My game has been to further international strife while I scheme for warfare.

"Look! You who know South America will understand. Paraguay has warred upon Bolivia, in hope of gaining Gran Chaco. Let us suppose that Colombia and Ecuador should ally to gain disputed territory from Brazil and Peru. What would then result, senor?"

"An alliance for defense," responded Menzone, with a leer that matched Rochelle's. "The Acre dispute would be forgotten."

"And Venezuela?" Rochelle laid his finger on the globe.

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"Ah, señor!" exclaimed Menzone, in crafty delight. "I see it now! Bolivar freed Colombia from Spain. He was from Venezuela. His countrymen have not forgotten the land which they think is theirs. Venezuela would join with Brazil and Peru!"

Half rising, Menzone thrust a long finger forward and tapped the portion of the map which represented Bolivia. A second finger extended widely, to rest upon Peru. Menzone's hand moved.

"An alliance here!" expressed Menzone. "Peru and Bolivia, to regain provinces wrested from them years ago by Chile. South America torn by war, señor!"

"Exactly," smiled Rochelle. "What do you think of Argentina, señor?"

"Neutral – for a time," returned Menzone. "The same with Uruguay. Buenos Aires and Montevideo are close, señor." He clasped his hands together in an indicative gesture. "But they will join, señor, on one side or the other."

"Good," decided Rochelle. "I value your opinion, señor. But I can tell" – he was limping back to the desk – "the question that is in your mind. A continent is ready for war. How will it start? Am I right? Is that your question?"

"Si, señor," nodded Menzone eagerly.

"The making of war," declared Rochelle, "is in my safe. Documents – chiefly correspondence – have been obtained to set a continent ablaze. Messages have passed between the governments of South American nations and their Washington legations. Other messages have come to the state department of the United States.

"Singly, these documents are of little value. Released at once, in different capitals, they will create havoc. In preparation for the Pan-American Convention, the authorities of every South American country have expressed their views very plainly – too plainly – on the matter of boundaries."

"I can see," laughed Menzone.

"Yes," resumed Rochelle. "What, for instance, would happen in Colombia and Ecuador if the people of Bogota and Quito learned that Peru, in settling the Acre question with Brazil, should express a desire to extend northern and western boundaries into Colombia and Ecuador?"

"There would be excitement in Colombia and Ecuador," decided Menzone.

"Excitement?" Rochelle laughed. "There would be riot! Jingoists in Bogota and Quito would dominate popular thought. Those factions, Menzone, are waiting for my word. Only one step prevents the completion of my plan.

"A few nights ago" – Rochelle eyed Menzone narrowly – "the attache of a certain foreign legation was attacked while on the speedway – across the Potomac River. I am speaking of Lito Carraza. You have heard the name?"

"I read about him in the newspapers, señor. In fact, I had passed the very spot not long before."

"You know the man I mean. That is sufficient. My plans, Menzone, have passed the mere state of creating havoc in Colombia and Ecuador. They are also ready to cause retaliatory measures in Peru, Brazil, and

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Venezuela. To reach perfection, they must justify Bolivia's entrance into the grand alliance.

"The correspondence which Lito Carraza carried would have created the result that I desired. The papers are now safely guarded – in the vault of Carraza's legation. To obtain them, I need a man who can gain access to that embassy: one whose craft is equal to the task of entering the vault unseen."

"Difficult," suggested Menzone. "You would need a man, senor, who could discover the combination of the vault."

"No. I possess the combination. My espionage has been far-reaching. But I am afraid to intrust the task to mere safe-crackers. Failure would disturb my final plans. Suppose" – Rochelle was tapping the file on his desk – "that this information should be forgotten. Would that promise spur you to do the work I want?"

Menzone smiled broadly. This was an offer that evidently pleased him.

"I am at your service, senor," he declared. "But you have forgotten one thing. What good will it be for me to interest American capital in railways for the southern continent? If war is to break loose –"

"You are wise," interposed Rochelle. "But you need have no worry of the future. First, by working swiftly, you can start your scheme. War will end it; you will not be blamed when millions of dollars are lost.

"Then afterward – if you continue to serve me well – your opportunity will come. You will have a place in my empire, Menzone! Beginning with tonight" – Rochelle's tone brooked no opposition – "you are in my service. If you succeed in gaining the correspondence that I require, there will be further work for you.

"Your activities will be covered by your railway promotion, just as mine are covered by the International Peace Alliance. If you succeed, Menzone, you will become my chief aid. Then you will learn the secrets of my system. Do you accept?"

"Si, senor," responded Menzone, with a knowing smile.

"That is well," laughed Rochelle. He tapped the file in significant fashion. "If you had refused, the publication of the truth about you would be my answer. Remember, Menzone" – Rochelle was adopting the tone that he had used with Herkimer – "that you have no alternative. I hold you thus."

Leering, the limping fiend extended his left hand and clenched it like a fist.

AGAIN, Menzone bowed. His smile, however, showed that the arrangement was satisfactory to him. Rochelle gleamed with evil satisfaction.

"You are in my service." Rochelle reached into a desk drawer and produced a small pamphlet. "Therefore, you may receive communications from me. You may also be forced to talk with me, by telephone – or with others in my service.

"For this purpose, we use the rudiments of the new international language – Agro. You can learn it from this little book. It is simple and easily understood. Keep the pamphlet until you have learned its contents. Be sure that it reaches no hands other than your own.

"Between now and the night when I shall require your aid, you can master this simple language. When I give the word for action, you will obey."

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"With pleasure, señor," declared Menzone, with another bow.

"Come." Rochelle arose. "Our meeting is ended. Remember its details, Menzone. You can come here, when necessary. Our pretended activities in the cause of peace will be sufficient coverage."

Limping to the anteroom, Darvin Rochelle conducted his visitor to the marble staircase. Leaning on his cane, Rochelle watched Menzone's departure. As an attendant opened the front door, Menzone turned toward the stairway. At the top, he saw Rochelle, his left hand raised in token of farewell.

As Menzone gazed, Rochelle's clinging fingers formed a fist. It was a reminder of Rochelle's power. Menzone's answer was a glittering smile: the recognition of one schemer for another.

The outer door closed. Darvin Rochelle strode haltingly back into his office, to find Thurk, the dwarf awaiting.

"Sovo," declared Rochelle. "Exat vodo zo sovo sovo. Co kay zee toko, Thurk. Kay zay sovo sovo."

A pause; then with a wise gleam in his eye, Rochelle added, warningly:

"Alk alk zee thone, Thurk. Bole zee fela – foro."

The dwarf grinned and nodded. Darvin Rochelle, still thinking of Alvarez Menzone, clenched his left fist. Thurk copied the gesture.

Rochelle chuckled. His agents had never attempted to betray him, for he held them in his power. Alvarez Menzone would be like the rest. But should a final emergency arise, there was one upon whom Rochelle could rely without fail. That one was Thurk.

The evil-faced dwarf was completely the creature of the insidious fiend whom he served.

CHAPTER XIII. THE THEFT

THE lights of a large embassy were aglow. A diplomatic function of consequence was taking place upon this evening. Situated near a broad avenue, the building formed a spot of interest to people who were driving past in the direction of the northwest.

This embassy housed the legation of which Lito Carraza was a member. The gay function now in progress was a prelude to the opening of the Pan-American Convention, which was scheduled to begin upon the morrow.

The ambassador, a dignified, bearded South American, was attired in military uniform. Formerly a general in the army of his native land, he adopted this attire at important receptions. Kindly-faced, this elderly ambassador lacked the warlike pose that might have been expected by those who viewed his medalled chest.

As proof that his thoughts turned to peace rather than war, the ambassador was listening with nods of approval to the talk of Darvin Rochelle. The head of the International Peace Alliance, surrounded by a lionizing throng, was beaming with good will as he discussed his favorite subject – that of friendship between nations.

"South America!" Rochelle was enthusiastic, as he leaned upon his cane. "One great country, gentlemen. A

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continent divided into separate nations, it is true, but all have the same purpose. All but one speak the same language; and that one has a kindred tongue. All are republics. It is the new world that shows the example to the old!"

Murmurs of approval greeted this statement. Most of the listeners were Spanish-Americans; diplomats, they understood the English phrases which Rochelle uttered. The spirit of good will seemed to prevail, with Darwin Rochelle as its sponsor.

Alvarez Menzone was present. A guest at the embassy function, the shrewd-faced adventurer was avoiding the limelight. Although away from the group of which Rochelle was the center, Menzone could catch the words that the other said. Also, Menzone was close enough to overhear the talk between two other men – Americans – who had drawn away from the group about Rochelle.

"Fine words," one was saying. "Rochelle is an idealist. That is all."

"They're drinking it in," commented the second American.

"What of it?" questioned the first. "It's the kind of talk they like. Libertad! Shout that word among a lot of South Americans and they raise a bigger cheer than a Japanese banzai. But when they come to settle things among themselves, nationalism runs riot."

"This Pan-American Convention is –"

"Bah! Soapsuds! It looks good because they're away from home. Wait until they get back where they belong. I'm giving you the truth when I say that the undercurrent of South American antagonism is tremendous."

The speakers moved away. Alvarez Menzone smiled. These Americans were discussing the very facts that Darwin Rochelle had mentioned. South America, like a volcano with a dozen craters, was ready for eruption.

MENZONE strolled past groups of courteous diplomats and attaches. Men in resplendent uniforms; others in evening dress; all were bowing and exchanging greetings. Spanish and English were intermingled languages.

Again, Menzone stopped by a spot where two Americans were speaking in low tones. He flicked his cigarette into an ornate receiver as he paused to listen.

"Do you catch the chatter?" one man was asking the other. "Nothing about Bolivia and Paraguay. You'd think that Gran Chaco didn't exist."

"I heard Rochelle spouting peace and good will," was the reply. "It was going over big. Two thirds of the listeners were in uniform. That's irony, isn't it?"

"They like their wars in South America. Things have been too quiet there. Old-fashioned warfare was their business. Believe me, they're all watching modern methods in Gran Chaco. If they like them, it may be just too bad."

Menzone strolled onward. He reached a side room, and drew a cigarette case from his pocket. He extracted a cigarette, placed it between his lips, and looked for a match. He had none. Moving a few paces, he approached a stocky man who was staring toward the reception hall.

"A match, señor?"

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The man turned at Menzone's question. His hand, moving to his pocket, stopped. Menzone's keen eyes met those of a firm-faced fellow, who could not conceal the sudden recognition that had gripped him.

The man whom Alvarez Menzone had accosted was Vic Marquette. In an instant, the secret-service operative had recognized the South American as the one whom he had trailed from the Club Rivoli.

"A match, senor?"

The manner in which Menzone repeated the question showed apparent failure to observe the look of surprise upon the face of Vic Marquette. The secret-service man produced a pack of matches. Menzone accepted them with thanks. He lighted his cigarette and returned the pack. He strolled onward. Vic Marquette watched him.

A thin smile crept over Menzone's lips. The man's sallow face seemed craftier than ever.

Menzone had been more observant than Vic Marquette had supposed. Placing his cigarette between his lips, Menzone puffed in thoughtful fashion as he returned toward the group with which Darvin Rochelle was stationed.

"It is late." Rochelle was beaming as he spoke. "I have a busy day tomorrow, gentlemen. I am preparing a copious report upon the subject of international relationship. It will be read in full at the Pan-American Convention."

Warm, enthusiastic handshakes were extended. All moved away with the exception of the ambassador. Side by side with Darvin Rochelle, the uniformed diplomat moved toward the doorway.

The pair paused close by the spot where Alvarez Menzone was standing. An attache approached the ambassador. As the bearded man turned to speak to him, Rochelle edged closer to Menzone. He did not look at the suave South American; Menzone, in turn, was staring toward the door as he puffed his cigarette. The words that they exchanged, however, were audible.

"Alk kade," murmured Rochelle, in Agro. "Bole zee rike. Bole veek rema. Deek ake alkro gomo exat vodo. Bole reef folo folo."

"Fee," returned Menzone, scarcely moving his lips. "Alk zay fela."

Rochelle was turning to the ambassador. He limped beside the diplomat as they continued toward the door. Alvarez Menzone remained, totally indifferent to the passage of the pair.

NO one had overheard the conversation in Agro. No one would have understood the words had they been overheard. Secretly – yet with positive surety – Rochelle had told Menzone that he was leaving. He had instructed Menzone to remain at the embassy; to act later. He had added that Menzone was to come to his home tonight, bringing the papers.

Menzone, in return, had given an affirmative reply of understanding, with the added statement that he was ready.

Menzone's long fingers dipped into his pocket. Apparently, they were seeking a match or a cigarette. Actually, they were obtaining a most important slip of paper: the combination to the embassy vault.

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Watching eyes were on Alvarez Menzone. They were the eyes of Vic Marquette. The secret-service operative was peering from the adjoining room. He had not noticed the exchange of words between Alvarez Menzone and Darvin Rochelle. He was watching Menzone alone.

The tall South American strolled away. Vic kept him in sight. There was nothing in Menzone's actions that could excite new suspicion; yet Vic was determined to pursue his quarry. The longer he watched, the more decided he became.

The very fact that Menzone was moving about in purposeless fashion convinced Marquette that the South American had a special reason for being here. Vic was determined to learn that reason. He saw Menzone pass into a side room. Vic waited, then followed.

The secret-service operative went by a huge curtain. He kept on. The moment that he passed, Menzone stepped into view and doubled on his tracks. Keeping to the wall of the reception room, the sallow-faced South American gained a hallway. He followed it and reached a door.

Slowly, Menzone turned the knob. He opened the door cautiously. He saw a heavy-browed attache seated at a table, reading a Latin-American newspaper. With catlike stealth, Menzone crouched. As he launched himself for a spring, the attache turned.

The man started to cry out; he was too late. Menzone's swift attack bowled over the man and the chair in which he sat. So powerful was the sweeping spring that the attache did not catch a glimpse of his attacker's face. A springing form that overturned him helpless, upon the thick carpeting. That was the only impression that the victim received.

Pinning his powerless opponent face downward on the floor, Menzone clamped the victim's hands behind his back. With a quick sweep, he snapped the man's belt buckle and whisked the belt away. His knee in the fellow's back, he bound the man's wrists.

The attache started to cry out. Menzone flattened him and suppressed him with a firm hand. He used the man's handkerchief for a gag. Then, with snarled words in Spanish that warned his victim not to struggle, Menzone arose.

THIS room had heavy curtains. They were held with stout, ropelike cords. Menzone removed these and returned to the man on the floor. He completed the binding in expert fashion. Trussed hand and foot, the attache could not escape.

All the while, the cowed captive had lain face downward. He had not caught an identifying glimpse of the attacker. Menzone, turning his eyes toward a huge vault at the other end of the room, saw that his coming work would give the prisoner a chance to observe him. With a slight laugh, Menzone settled that matter. He turned out the light, as he drew a flashlight from his pocket.

By the glimmer of a small torch, Menzone approached the vault. He drew forth the paper that bore the combination. Working smoothly, he turned the knobs. He swung the door open and focused his flashlight within.

The interior of the vault showed various compartments, marked with South American titles. Menzone found the one he wanted. He opened it and rapidly fingered sheaves of papers. He drew forth the packet that he sought.

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A few minutes later, Alvarez Menzone appeared at the door of the darkened room. He regained the hall, made his way along it and reached the reception room. Pressing a cigarette between his lips, he plucked a match from a stand. The flicker of a flame showed a thin smile on Menzone's lips.

The South American strolled across the reception room. Vic Marquette, coming from a side room, suddenly spied the man whom he had been seeking. To all appearances, Menzone had not been out of the reception room. Yet Marquette had searched there, without finding him.

Chagrined, the secret-service operative watched Menzone stroll about, then prepare for his departure. Vic, although his suspicions still persisted, decided not to follow. He had made one bull trailing Alvarez Menzone upon another night. He knew where the man could be reached. Vic remained as Menzone left.

TEN minutes afterward, an excited attache appeared in the reception room. Most of the guests had left. Hence the man's wild gestures were not noticed as he passed the word to another member of the legation. The second man gesticulated, motioning the informant away. Calming himself, the man who had received the news, started off to speak to the ambassador.

Vic Marquette hurried to the passage which the first attache had taken. He saw a light from an opened door near the end of the hall. He hastened to that spot. He viewed two men: one the attache who had brought the news; the second, a helpless attache bound and gagged upon the floor. Beyond was an opened vault.

The ambassador arrived. With alarmed eyes, he stared at the two men; one freeing the other from his bonds. He saw Vic Marquette. The secret-service operative showed his badge. The ambassador nodded. He made for the vault, with Vic beside him.

Scurrying attaches were entering. The ambassador addressed them in Spanish. He told them to go back to the reception room; to give no indication of the fact that trouble had occurred here. All left, save the ambassador, the first two attaches, and Vic Marquette.

As the ambassador began his inspection of the opened vault, a motion occurred at the end of the darkened hall. A window moved noiselessly upward. A dim form was outlined in the space. Silent footsteps approached the lighted doorway. Like a specter, The Shadow viewed the scene within the room.

The ambassador had turned to Vic Marquette. Soberly, the grizzled diplomat was announcing his discovery.

"Important correspondence has been stolen," he declared, in English. "It is serious, senor. Very serious."

The ambassador paused, then resumed:

"It is the correspondence, senor, which was carried by Lito Carraza, the night that men sought to kill him across the river."

"So they got it, eh?" growled Vic. "What's this fellow got to say?"

He pointed to the attache who had been found on the floor. The ambassador quizzed his aid in Spanish. The man replied. Vic understood the words; the ambassador, not knowing this, went on to translate them.

"He cannot identify his assailant, senor," explained the ambassador. "He says that he was struck down suddenly. The man who opened the vault, turned off the lights. He used a little light of his own."

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"Senor Fourrier must learn of this. We must notify him at once. Nothing must be said. Those papers are important, but their existence must be kept a secret. It would be a terrible mistake, senor, to let this be known just before the Pan-American Convention."

"I understand," nodded Marquette. "Do you suspect anyone of this robbery?"

"No, senor," returned the ambassador with a shake of his head. "It is incomprehensible."

Vic Marquette stood silent while the ambassador closed the vault. Evidently the head of the legation was anxious to suppress the news of robbery. It was Vic Marquette's duty to comply. Nevertheless, the operative could not restrain an assurance which he felt.

At the doorway of the room, he stopped the ambassador and made a cautious statement of the suspicions which he held.

"I was watching a man who was here tonight," explained Vic. "A South American – not connected with an embassy. He was out of sight a while before this happened. If he's the robber, you can count on me to get him."

"His name?" questioned the ambassador eagerly.

"Alvarez Menzone," replied Marquette.

"An invited guest," explained an attache, who had overheard the name. "He is here to obtain capital for railroads in South America –"

"I recall him," interposed the ambassador. "I would not have suspected him of theft. Do you feel sure –"

"I'm going to trace him," interrupted Marquette. "I'll take the matter up with my chief. I simply wanted you to know that I'm starting with a clew."

They had reached the hall. The ambassador was nodding with a show of satisfaction. Side by side with Vic Marquette, the uniformed diplomat moved toward the reception room, with the attaches following.

DARKNESS moved in the hallway past the door from which the men had come. Keen eyes beneath a broad-brimmed slouch hat watched the departure. The quartet reached the reception room. The Shadow stood alone.

With piercing gaze, The Shadow stared into the lighted room which held the closed vault. Then, with a quick turn that brought a swish from the black cloak which shrouded his form, the mysterious visitor departed by the way he had come.

The window closed noiselessly. A figure glided through the gloom at the side of the embassy building. The whispered tone of a weird, knowing laugh came from concealed lips.

The Shadow had arrived after the theft had been completed. He had seen the ambassador's discovery that the correspondence had been stolen. He had heard the plans to keep the matter quiet. He had learned of Vic Marquette's new suspicions of Alvarez Menzone.

The Shadow's own agent – Harry Vincent – was covering Menzone. The Shadow, himself, had appeared in the vicinity of Athena Court. Yet The Shadow had not made his secret entrance into the embassy until after

Alvarez Menzone had left, with stolen correspondence in his pocket.

Why had The Shadow failed to appear beforehand? What was the answer to the passive, hidden part that he was playing?

Only The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER XIV. THE CODE BOOK

ON the evening following the robbery at the embassy, Harry Vincent was seated in Alvarez Menzone's living room going over statistics which pertained to the South American's railway projects.

Menzone was also present. He had assigned this duty to Harry. Relieved of detail, Menzone was reading newspaper accounts that concerned the opening of the Pan-American Convention.

"Ah!" Menzone spoke to Harry. "Here is an account of the embassy affair. The one that I attended last night. It was very fine, Vincent. Sorry that I could not take you along."

There was a dryness in Menzone's tone that caught Harry's prompt attention. It seemed as though Menzone were enjoying a little joke of his own. Harry was unconvinced of Menzone's actions on the preceding night. Menzone had left early to attend the embassy function. He had returned about midnight. Harry, supposedly asleep, had heard him enter the study. Harry had sneaked to the door to watch.

He had seen Menzone studying a stack of papers. He had noted a gleam of satisfaction on the South American's face. Then Harry had dropped out of sight, to watch Menzone tiptoe from the apartment. It was after one when Menzone finally returned.

What was the purpose of these secretive actions? That was a question which baffled Harry Vincent. He had left a coded report for The Shadow, behind the fire extinguisher in the hallway. But there had been no word from The Shadow in return.

Working on statistics, Harry found his thoughts reverting to Menzone. He was convinced that the South American's railroad plans were a cover for some other operation. Yet Harry had discovered nothing concerning Menzone's secret business.

The telephone bell began to ring from the study. Harry arose from his chair. Menzone, also rising, waved his secretary back.

"Keep on with your work, Vincent," he said, in his peculiarly accented style. "Allow me to answer the telephone."

Was Menzone expecting the call? Harry decided that such must be the case. He saw Menzone enter the study. He saw the door close – but it did not fully shut. Laying his work aside, Harry tiptoed to the study door.

MENZONE was at the telephone. Harry could see him through the opened crack. The South American had drawn a small booklet from his pocket. He had it in readiness as he spoke.

"Fee," Menzone was saying. "Alk zay fela."

For a moment, Harry took the words for Spanish. Then the unfamiliar sound impressed him. Drawing a

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pencil and an envelope from his pocket, Harry jotted down the odd words that he had heard, spelling them in phonetic fashion.

"Sovo," Menzone was saying. "Bole bota atex vodo of alta... Alk rofe folo folo bole rojo..."

Menzone was listening. His smile increased as he thumbed the little book on the table before him. Then, in a tone of finality, he declared:

"Alk deek kire... Fee... Sake hoda. Seek alta eeta... Kye kye deek rema. Reen alk kode... Alk deek deek rema."

Harry was copying these words as the receiver clicked. He looked up hastily, just in time to see Menzone open a desk drawer and thrust the little book away. Menzone locked the drawer. This delay was fortunate. It gave Harry, still copying the final words, time to scurry back to the living room.

When Menzone arrived, Harry was back at work. The envelope was in his pocket. Menzone glanced at his watch. He noted the time as eight o'clock.

"I am going out," he announced. "I shall be back within an hour. Remain here, Vincent."

The moment that Menzone had left, Harry sprang to his feet. He approached the window. He saw Menzone arrive on the sidewalk below. The South American was carrying his briefcase of papers. Harry saw him hail a cab.

Apparently, Menzone was on his way to hold a conference with persons interested in his enterprises. Such would have been Harry's final decision, but for one fact – the oddly worded phone conversation which Menzone had held.

Harry realized that he had listened to an unintelligible language. The words which he had heard would prove useful in deciphering it; but they were comparatively few. The real key lay in the little book that Menzone had dropped in the desk drawer.

Hurrying to the study, Harry extracted a set of keys from his pocket. He found one that fitted the lock. He opened the drawer. He discovered the pamphlet. There was no wording on its paper cover. The title page, however bore this statement:

Rudiments of Agro.

On the next page, Harry discovered short explanatory paragraphs. They were followed by a vocabulary of words. Seizing pencil and paper, Harry began to jot down notes in shorthand, that he might copy the body of the pamphlet and leave the little booklet for Menzone's return.

These were specimens of the notations which Harry made: (Note: When he reached this point of his narrative, The Shadow supplied me with a copy of the Agro code book. It consisted of a pamphlet of some 28 pages, printed in small type. In preparing this chronicle, I have not attempted to provide the complete vocabulary as copied by Harry Vincent, as space would not permit. Instead, I have included only those words required to translate all the Agro conversations which appear in this story. MAXWELL GRANT.)

Agro, a phonetic language... Certain letters omitted... C, hard

like K... Vowels pronounced as the letters themselves... Spelling "za"

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to be read as "zay."

Opposites expressed by a reversal of their syllables. "Doto" –

"large." "Todo" – "small." Plurals, a repetition of the word... "Sak"

– "hour"; "sak sak" – "hours"... Possessives, add "ro" before or after

the word... Example: "Ki" – "they;" kiro" – "theirs."

Harry began to study the vocabulary. Here he found a list of words and began to write them as rapidly as possible. In capital letters, he noted the Agro words; after them, words in parentheses that were evidently the pronunciations as they would sound in English; these pronunciations appeared only where necessary:

all.....OPO

always.....FORO

at.....OD (ode)

bad.....VOSO

bring.....RAF (rafe)

will bring.....REF (reef)

brought.....ROF (rofe)

careful.....THON (thone)

come.....DAK (dake)

will come.....DEK (deek)

came.....DOK (doke)

day.....DOVO

do.....VAK (vake)

will do.....VEK (veek)

did.....VOK (voke)

go.....CAD (kade)

will go.....CED (keed)

went.....COD (kode)

good.....SOVO

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have.....PANO
will have.....PENNO
had.....PONNO
heard.....TABAA
will hear.....TEBA (teeba)
heard.....TOBA
hour.....SAK (sake)
house.....GOMOO
here.....RIK (rike)
is.....ZA (zay)
will be.....ZE (zee)
was.....ZOO
later.....REMA
minute.....SEK (seek)
no.....EF (eef)
now.....GOLO
need.....RAJO
will need.....REJO
needed.....ROJO
night.....VODO
paper.....FOLO
ready.....FELA
see.....ATO
will see.....ETO
saw.....OTO
second.....SOK (soke)

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send.....FAR (fare)
will send.....FER (feer)
sent.....FOR (fore)
sooner.....AMER (ameer)
tell.....BATA
will tell.....BETA (beeta)
told.....BOTA
then.....LOGO
there.....KIR (kire)
this.....EXAT
that.....ATEX
to..... AK (ake)
useful.....TOKO
when.....REN (reen)
yes.....FE (fee)

HARRY was impressed by the vocabulary, as he jotted down these words among many more. He noted how words were opposites: dovo and vodo – day and night; rik and kir – here and there. He was also impressed by the verbs; how the simple change of a single letter made the tense present, future, or past. While wondering about adjectives, he came across a notation which stated that the repetition of such a word gave it comparative or superlative degree. The example was "voso" for "bad;" "voso voso" for "very bad."

Then came the table of pronouns and numerals. These formed a simplified group:

I.....ALK.....me.
we.....ALK ALK.....us.
you.....BOL (bole)
he.....KA (kay).....him.
she.....KE (key).....her
it.....KI (kye)
they.....KI KI (kye kye) ...them

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one..... ALTA six.....FODA

two..... BODA seven.....GODA

three.....CODA eight.....HODA

four..... DODA nine.....ITA

five.....ETA (eeta) zero.....JODA

more.....FO (foe)

less.....OF (oaf)

Harry noted the alphabetical arrangement of the numerals. The entire pamphlet contained but a few hundred terms and he rapidly completed his copying. Then, with eagerness, Harry brought the jotted envelope from his pocket. He was anxious to learn what Menzone had said over the telephone.

"Fee. Alk zay fela."

Harry wrote this first in simplified Agro; then beneath it, the English translation, gained from a search through the vocabulary.

Fe. Alk za fela.

"Yes. I am ready."

Harry continued:

Sovo. Bol bota atex vodo of alta.

"Good. You said that night less one."

Harry pondered. The phrase "night less one" puzzled him. Then he caught the meaning. He inscribed, the corrected sentence: "You said that last night."

Alk rofe folo folo bole rojo became: "I brought the papers you needed."

Harry took the last phrases more rapidly:

Alk deek kire... Fee... Sake hoda. Seek alta eeta. Kye kye deek rema. Reen alk kode... Alk deek deek rema.

"I shall come there... Yes... Hour eight. Minute one five. They will come later. When I have left... I shall return later."

Harry saw quickly that "hour eight, minute one five" simply meant fifteen minutes after eight. The system of notation, in Agro, was reduced to nine digits and a cipher, numbers being formed as one would give a telephone number in English.

He also observed that "deek deek," literally "shall come shall come" signified "shall come back." The word "the" was not used regularly in Agro, but Harry found a notation that "co" meant "the" whenever necessary.

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A simple example was given: "co ka," literally "the him" meant "the man." "Co ki ki," literally "the them," meant "the men."

Harry deposited the code book back in the drawer. He knew that he had made a remarkable discovery. This unfamiliar language, Agro, was obviously the means of communication between crooks who were working toward a common cause. Alvarez Menzone was a member of that band. He was keeping an appointment at present – where, Harry did not know – with some other malefactor.

These facts must go to The Shadow!

Harry glanced at his watch. It was nearly nine o'clock. Menzone might be back at any time. Harry began to fold the sheets that he had copied. He stopped, fancying that he heard footsteps in the hallway.

It could not be Jose. The lazy Filipino had retired before eight o'clock. Was Menzone making a surreptitious return?

Harry listened intently. He decided that his imagination must be working. He turned his gaze downward toward the papers that he was folding. Again the sound. Harry looked up quickly. The door to the room was open. Standing there, a revolver in his hand, was a stocky, hard-faced man.

"Where is Menzone?" came the rasped question.

A dawning recognition completed itself as Harry heard the words. He knew this intruder. It was Vic Marquette, of the secret service!

THE man at the door sensed Harry's expression. He advanced into the room. He eyed Harry closely. He lowered his revolver.

"Hello, Vincent," said Marquette. "What're you doing here?"

"Working as secretary for Alvarez Menzone," returned Harry promptly. "I've only had the job for about a week. Menzone is out at present."

Marquette became thoughtful. Harry Vincent was the man of whom he had spoken to Fourrier – the one whom Vic Marquette had good reason to class as an agent of The Shadow. Already Vic had come to a conclusion, namely that Harry's presence as Menzone's secretary was final proof that The Shadow was watching affairs in Washington.

Vic knew well that Harry would not – perhaps could not – make any statements that involved The Shadow's activities. At the same time, Harry Vincent could be sworn in as Vic's aid – and the secret-service operative was ready to trust this man with whom he had teamed before.

"How soon will Menzone be back?" asked Vic.

"Any minute now." Harry's tone was anxious. "If he finds you here –"

"He's going to find me," interposed Marquette. "I'm going to nab that fellow, Vincent. What's more, you're going to help me."

Harry nodded. There was no alternative. The Shadow had given no instructions to cover an emergency such as this. On occasions where choice was needed, it was the part of The Shadow's agents to use their own

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discretion. Duty prompted Harry to side with Vic Marquette, in preference to Menzone.

"What's this?" Vic Marquette had spied the code book in the drawer. He brought it out. "Does this belong to Menzone?"

"Yes," returned Harry, seizing the opportunity. "Menzone is a crook – so far as I can see. He was talking on the telephone tonight, using an odd language. I unlocked the desk drawer after he had gone. I found the code book. I copied it in shorthand."

"Keep your copy," chuckled Vic. "I'm keeping the original. Say, Vincent – you've uncovered something. I know you're on the level. This is another time you'll be working with me on the showdown."

Harry produced the copy of Menzone's conversation. Vic Marquette chuckled and clapped his companion on the shoulder. He began to read Harry's translation. Harry watched him intently.

Neither man was observing the door. Neither saw the figure that appeared there, plainly framed: A tall, spectral form, clad in black cloak and hat. The Shadow, like Vic Marquette, had arrived at the apartment, occupied by Alvarez Menzone.

Watching with burning eyes, listening to the words that passed between his agent and the secret-service operative, The Shadow was divining what had occurred. He heard Vic Marquette muttering the sentences which Harry had translated. As completely as if he had received a report from his agent, The Shadow was gathering the details that had brought about this scene.

"So that's the game, eh!" Marquette was saying. "No wonder those foxes have been dodging us. Agro – an international language. Say – I've run into some cuckoo lingo, but this has them all stopped.

"There's a bigger bird in back of this, Vincent. This fellow Menzone is working for him. That's where Menzone has gone tonight – to see the big shot. We'll be ready for Menzone – you and I. When we meet him, we'll be on our way. We won't stop until we've met the big bird that's in back of him."

Vic Marquette arose as he spoke. The secret-service man was ready to spread the snare for Menzone's return. The figure of The Shadow faded into darkness beyond the door. Silently, it issued from the hallway; swiftly it reached the living room and crossed to the outer door.

The final barrier closed behind The Shadow. The black form merged with the darkness of the stairs. Leaving Vic Marquette and Harry Vincent to trap Alvarez Menzone, The Shadow had left for the street below.

A whispered, sibilant laugh came from the darkness where The Shadow had passed, unseen.

CHAPTER XV. THURK STRIKES

DARVIN ROCHELLE was walking up the marble steps that led to the second floor of his palatial residence. He was carrying his cane; as he reached the top, he used it to aid his halting limp.

A smile beamed on the face of Darvin Rochelle. He had made his trip downstairs in company with Alvarez Menzone, after an excellent interview with that capable worker. He had spent a while on the ground floor; now he was returning to his office. It was nine o'clock and Rochelle was expecting another visitor.

Reaching the office, Rochelle found Thurk, the dwarf, crouching in a corner. Chuckling, Rochelle addressed

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his trusted minion:

"Kay kode. Kay zay sovo. Sovo sovo, Thurk. Alk rojo eef bole. Co kay atex deek golo. Kay zay voso. Alk rejo bole."

Rochelle's use of Agro displayed an interesting variant in the term, "rojo eef." The use of the negative "eef" with the verb "rojo" signified "not." In English, the statement signified in full: (Note: Although Rochelle adapted English idioms to Agro, the language itself followed a form patterned after languages of Latin derivation. This was true of verbs. The word "bata," for example, could be interpreted as "come" or "is coming." Similarly, the past tense "bota," meant "came" or "have come." Agro, as Rochelle himself stated, had not reached its completed stage. Rochelle had evidently postponed its further development while he used its simplified rudiments for the purpose of communication with his agents. MAXWELL GRANT)

"He has gone. He is good. Very good, Thurk. I did not need you. The man that is coming now. He is bad. I shall need you."

Thurk's eyes bulged. It was the dwarf's way of expressing eagerness. Crouching in his corner, Thurk's shape seemed monstrous. Long, thin arms, attached to a dumpy body, gave him the appearance of an octopus. Rochelle returned to the door of the anteroom. He made a significant gesture and spoke the words:

"Bole kade golo."

Thurk understood the meaning: "Go there now." The dwarf arose. Rochelle continued through the anteroom and waited, steady as a statue, at the top of the stairs.

A FEW minutes passed. Rochelle saw his alert attendant step forward to open the front door. The servant below had spied someone approaching the house. Croydon Herkimer appeared as the door opened.

The bulky visitor saw Rochelle standing at the top of the stairs. He ascended to receive a welcome greeting. Rochelle limped toward the office, with Herkimer following.

The man with the limp pointed to the chair at the side of the desk. Herkimer took it; Rochelle occupied his accustomed seat behind the desk.

"You have completed the arrangements?" he asked promptly.

"Yes," returned Herkimer. "Here is everything."

The profiteer produced a small portfolio that he had carried under his arm. He placed it upon the desk. Rochelle opened it. He began to go over sheets of statements. He chuckled.

"Companions in crime, eh?" he questioned. "The old guard – the others who shared your profiteering years ago. This is excellent, Herkimer. Excellent. You have done great work, providing me with these names."

"That was not my purpose!" exclaimed Herkimer in alarm. "I chose those firms because I knew they would work under cover –"

"You have simplified my task," interposed Rochelle serenely. "I can deal with them directly now. All that I have to do is study their past record. Then I can handle them as I handled you."

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Herkimer showed repressed indignation. Crooked by nature, he was hypocrite enough to worry about his own reputation. He realized that he had played into Rochelle's hands.

"Do not be perturbed." Rochelle's tone was a suave purr. "All will go well with you, Herkimer. I am making matters easier for you. I shall reward you for your services. But first" – Rochelle was tapping on the desk – "I am going to take you into my confidence."

Herkimer shuddered as he met Rochelle's insidious gaze. He had a feeling that he was about to learn facts that he would prefer not to know.

"My plans are completed," declared Rochelle. "Six men have died, Herkimer, because I wanted them silenced. My only failure came with the seventh. I needed correspondence from a certain legation. I failed to obtain it through murder."

Again Herkimer shuddered. Rochelle continued:

"Then I obtained the services of a first-class lieutenant. Alvarez Menzone – a man from South America. He robbed the embassy vault. He gained the needed correspondence.

"I have sent the papers to the proper places. The first ones were of minor consequence. The final ones that Menzone brought were remarkable in their revelations. Their publication will create chaos – provided only that an act of violence is first committed.

"Tonight, Herkimer, I shall strike. I am assembling all of my minions. Each one will have an appointed task of murder. I shall depend upon my gang leader, Bugs Ritler, to show the way. He has assembled a crew of first-class cutthroats, Herkimer."

Rochelle drew a sealed envelope from his desk drawer. He flourished it before the eyes of his visitor.

"The names of nine men are in this envelope!" cackled Rochelle. "All are South Americans who at present are in Washington. Some are connected with legations. Others are here for the Pan-American Convention."

Rochelle's eyes steadied. His voice lowered to an insidious tone.

"All nine shall die tonight," he rasped. "Wholesale assassination. Their deaths will create tremendous indignation. Murder will be attributed to the agents of other South American nations. Then will come my revelations.

"You see the result, Herkimer? War – impending now – will be unleashed. Millions will be our profit. Millions, Herkimer! Wealth for you – an empire for me!"

Herkimer steadied his hands against the edge of the desk. He was gasping in horror.

"Not – murder!" Herkimer's voice showed fear of consequences. "I – I do not deal in murder, Rochelle!"

"What is warfare?" sneered Rochelle.

"Murder – perhaps," admitted Herkimer. "But it – it is not assassination. No – no – I can not be a party to these crimes –"

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"I talked with Menzone," remarked Rochelle quietly. "He left just before you arrived. He seemed pleased with my scheme. He will be here, with my other henchmen. When I choose men, Herkimer" – Rochelle's tone had hardened – "I pick those who prefer more than halfway measures.

"This is my ultimatum. You are with me – or against me. There is no middle course. Which is your choice?"

"I am against you!" exclaimed Herkimer. "That is my answer. You think that you hold me in your fist. You do – so long as you desist from your plan. If you attempt to expose my past, you will be forced to answer the charges that I bring against you."

"I shall deny them."

"Yes? I hardly think so. Your own activities will be curtailed. Your dreams of an empire will be ended."

ROCHELLE had arisen. He was leaning on his cane, as he glowered at Herkimer. The profiteer, encouraged by his own outburst, no longer feared the man before him.

"I shall make a bargain with you, Rochelle," he said shrewdly. "Give me back my list – give me the files which you hold concerning my past. Pay me a reasonable compensation for my silence. Then I shall do nothing to disturb your schemes of murder. Afterward, if your plans have succeeded, I shall be willing to deal with you –"

"Hypocrite!" snarled Rochelle. "It is not murder that repulses you. It is your own safety that you are considering. You want to make sure of profit – with no danger. You would like to hold the upper hand.

"You think that you can balk me. Try it. Compared to you, Herkimer, I am a benefactor of mankind. I cover my crimes, but I do not try to salve a selfish conscience. I refuse your terms. Again, I ask you for your answer."

"You shall get it," retorted Herkimer. "I have given you your last chance. You have refused it. I am leaving, Rochelle, and my first act will be to inform the Washington authorities of your insidious scheme. You have gone too deep to crawl out now. Try to expose my past. You will not be believed. That is my answer, Rochelle!"

Rochelle was gripping the desk with his free hand. He held his cane in his right. Herkimer, leaning forward, was watching it. Contemptuously, he was ready to risk a physical battle with Rochelle. It was in tune with Herkimer's character. Big and powerful, he was a coward at heart. A man of weak appearance – as Rochelle – was the only type with whom he would seek a struggle.

Rochelle dropped the head of his cane against the desk. It seemed like a gesture of resignation. Herkimer laughed. He did not know that Rochelle had given an appointed signal. He did not know what was happening behind his back.

AS Rochelle's cane thudded against the desk, the upper hemisphere of the big globe opened. From its interior came the form of Thurk, the dwarf. The evil creature popped forth with the speed of a jumping jack.

In his long, scrawny hand, he held a long, thin-bladed knife. With only an instant's pause, Thurk swung forward and downward, to bury the death-dealing weapon deep between Croydon Herkimer's unprotected shoulders!

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The profiteer sank without a gasp. His body crumpled to the floor upon a square rug that rested beneath his chair. Thurk leaped from the globe and scrambled forward to crouch above his victim. Rochelle stood with an evil smile upon his face.

"Bole voke sovo, Thurk," commended Rochelle. "Bole kade. Logo dake dake."

Properly interpreted, Rochelle had said:

"You have done well, Thurk. Go. Then come back."

The dwarf hoisted Herkimer's body upon his shoulders. Gleefully, he staggered from the room through the door that led to the spiral staircase in the rear. On the small rug where Herkimer had lain, a pool of blood remained as evidence of murder.

Rochelle went to a closet and brought out a rug of the same size, but of different pattern. He moved the chair aside and placed the rug upon it. He went behind the desk. When Thurk returned, Rochelle pointed to the original rug with its blotting blood.

"Alk rajo eef kye," he said; in English: "I do not want it."

Thurk grinned. He folded the bloodstained rug and carried it from the room. The slight trace of crimson had seeped through. Rochelle covered it with the new rug and put the chair back in position. He closed the huge globe and resumed his customary chair.

The insidious leer on Rochelle's features betrayed the fiend's anticipation. To Darvin Rochelle, the violent death that Thurk had dealt to Croydon Herkimer was a mere appetizer to the feast of murder that was planned for this night of doom.

CHAPTER XVI. THE TRAP THAT FAILED

DARVIN ROCHELLE, most insidious of schemers, had laid a perfect death trap for Croydon Herkimer. Through it, the supercrook had dealt doom to a lesser exponent of evil. Herkimer had been willing to countenance death. His own demise was scarcely undeserved.

While Rochelle was still gloating over the crafty fashion in which he had disposed of the profiteer whom he no longer needed, another trap was awaiting a victim – elsewhere in Washington.

In the apartment on the third floor of Athena Court, Vic Marquette and Harry Vincent were lying in wait for Alvarez Menzone. Had Darvin Rochelle known this, his gloating would have turned to apprehension. Alvarez Menzone had become a most important cog in the criminal mechanism controlled by Rochelle.

Vic Marquette, swearing in Harry to service, had assumed full charge. Picking Menzone's living room at the strategic point, Vic had posted Harry behind a table opposite the door. In turn, Vic had chosen a corner by a bookcase. Vic had provided Harry with a revolver. Waiting, the pair was ready to trap Menzone the moment that he might appear.

Through the hush of the room came Vic's inquiring undertone – a question addressed to Harry Vincent:

"This Filipino of Menzone's – can he make trouble?"

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"No." Harry's whisper was reassuring. "Jose is always asleep. We have not disturbed him. We can handle him easily if we raise a commotion in capturing Menzone."

"All right." Vic seemed satisfied. "I'm going to cover this fellow Menzone the moment he walks in. You back me up – and be ready to handle Jose if he appears."

"There's a back door," remarked Harry. "It leads to a hall by the fire tower. Jose could scramble that way; but he'll have to come into the passage from his room."

"Watch the passage then," ordered Vic. "After we bag Menzone. We're going to haul in the Filipino, too – even if he is stupid."

MINUTES ticked by. Vic had raised a window to a space of several inches. He heard a sound from the street. He motioned to Harry.

"Sounds like a taxi," warned Vic. "Maybe it's Menzone coming home."

"Listen for the automatic elevator," whispered Harry.

A minute; then came the dull, mechanical sound of the elevator. Both Harry and Vic were timing it. Both were sure that the elevator had reached the third floor when it stopped.

Had Alvarez Menzone returned? Or had some other dweller on this floor come up by the elevator? No footsteps could be heard. The answer depended upon whether or not the click of a key would sound at the apartment door.

A full minute. Harry and Vic decided that Menzone had not arrived; nevertheless, they were tense. Some trifling delay might have caused the South American to pause outside the door of his apartment.

Then came the unexpected. Harry Vincent, startled by the sound of a fierce snarl, turned quickly toward the opening to the passage that led by Menzone's study. Vic Marquette copied Harry's example.

Both men were staring at a tall, sallow-faced intruder who had appeared from the passage. It was Alvarez Menzone!

In his hand, the South American held a stub-nosed revolver. From his position, he had Harry Vincent and Vic Marquette on an almost direct line. The gleaming grin on Menzone's face; the fierce challenge that showed in his eyes – these were sufficient.

Helplessly, Harry Vincent and Vic Marquette dropped their revolvers and raised their hands. The trappers were trapped. Menzone's sneaking arrival had caught them unaware. The South American had entered from a direction that Vincent and Marquette had not considered.

"Ah, senores." Menzone's velvet tones showed hidden venom. "You have been awaiting me? Very kind of you. I regret that I was unable to oblige you by entering through the door which you were watching.

"Sometimes, senores, one remembers a trifling mistake that may cause trouble. Tonight, I recalled a little book which I had left in my desk. What if someone should have found it!

"Ah, senores, that is why I decided to come in from the back door, after I had ascended in the elevator. I was wise, eh? I have found a traitor and an enemy."

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Menzone was moving into the living room as he spoke. An emphatic gesture of his gun hand brought understanding to Harry Vincent and Vic Marquette. With hands raised, the trapped trappers followed a beckoning motion. Menzone stepped aside and herded his prisoners toward the passage. Keeping them constantly covered with his revolver, he marched them into the study and forced them up against the wall.

Standing beyond the open door, Menzone uttered a sharp, hissing call for Jose. He repeated the cry. Its noise was penetrating. Menzone stepped into the study as Jose appeared. The Filipino entered, sleepily rubbing his eyes.

"Be ready, Jose," ordered Menzone, in Spanish. "I shall need you."

CALMLY keeping Harry and Vic covered, the South American seated himself at the desk. He called a number on the telephone. His eyes gleamed as he recognized the voice at the other end.

"Alt Mode," announced Menzone. These words, Harry recalled, were letter symbols of the Agro alphabet. A. M. – evidently an initialed proclamation of Menzone's identity.

"Boda co kye kye," stated Menzone. "Rike... Ode alkro gomo... Fee... Teeba alk alk kye kye?... Sovo... Bole feer co kye kye..."

Harry was grasping the meaning as Menzone hung up the receiver. The South American had been talking to his chief. This was the import of his words:

"Two men. Here... At my house... Yes... Shall we question them?... Good... You will send men..."

Vic Marquette stared blankly. He had not examined the Agro code book closely enough to gain even a crude understanding of the phonetic language. Menzone smiled. With a bow, he explained:

"You are fortunate, senores," he declared, in a sarcastic tone. "I have just talked with a man who is interested in your capture. He likes my suggestion that you be sent to him. He is making the necessary arrangements.

"You will have the pleasure, senores, of being present at a most important meeting that will be set for midnight. I shall be there – with many others. You will be questioned at that time. Perhaps, when persuaded, you will find it wise to talk."

He turned and spoke to Jose. The Filipino went from the study. He returned, bringing two lengths of rope, which Harry remembered having seen about a large, old-fashioned trunk in Menzone's bedroom.

Gripping Jose's right hand with his own left, Menzone drew it to his gun hand; with a deft movement, he passed the short-barreled revolver to Jose without uncovering the prisoners.

While Jose held Harry and Vic at bay, Menzone went to each in turn. With rapid skill he trussed the prisoners and left them seated on the floor. He whisked handkerchiefs from a desk drawer and used them as gags.

Vic Marquette recalled the bound attache whom he had seen at the legation. He realized how cleverly the bonds had been applied to that man. He knew that Menzone was unquestionably the robber who had opened the ambassador's vault.

"Guard them," ordered Menzone, speaking in Spanish to Jose. "I shall leave the back door open. Men will come to take the prisoners. Remain here, Jose, until you hear from me. Be careful not to harm these prisoners. They will be needed later."

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Jose grunted his understanding. Alvarez Menzone turned and leered viciously as he faced Harry Vincent and Vic Marquette; then his suave smile returned. The shrewd South American bowed ironically and strolled from the study, leaving Jose in charge. Harry and Vic heard the front door close, announcing his departure.

Vic Marquette's prediction was to be realized. Through an encounter with Alvarez Menzone, he and Harry Vincent were to meet the conspirator behind the schemes in which Menzone had played a single part. But they were not to meet that enemy as Vic had hoped. Helpless prisoners, they were to be carried to his domain!

Harry Vincent's thoughts were bitter. If only he had been able to notify The Shadow. Harry did not know that The Shadow had been here. He did not realize that he and Vic Marquette had been left to prepare their trap for Alvarez Menzone.

Two against one: snarers in ambush! The odds – seemingly – had been with Harry and Vic, yet the waiting pair had failed.

How much had The Shadow banked on their success? That was a question. The fact remained that Alvarez Menzone was unconquered.

Darvin Rochelle's lieutenant would keep the midnight meeting with his chief, despite the efforts of Harry Vincent and Vic Marquette. The two men upon whom The Shadow could most certainly rely had failed to ensnare Alvarez Menzone!

CHAPTER XVII. THE SHADOW WITHDRAWS

IT was nearly eleven o'clock. Clyde Burke was at the Club Rivoli. He had come here at The Shadow's bidding – in response to one of those mysterious communications that came at unexpected intervals.

Clyde's task tonight was a simple one. He had merely to keep an eye on events in the roulette room. Two men mentioned by The Shadow were under his observation. They were the secret-service operatives whom Fulton Fourrier had placed at the gay night club.

Clyde had also looked for gangsters in the booths close by the side entrance from the roulette room. Those booths were empty. Clyde had decided why. Whistler Ingliss unquestionably knew that secret-service men were on the job. He was not chancing gunmen in the place.

Whistler, himself, was free from surveillance. The secret-service men had evidently passed him. Clyde Burke, however, had not. On two or three occasions, he had seen Whistler saunter through the opening toward his office. Clyde was suspicious of those trips.

The Shadow's agent had a hunch. Beyond the doorway at the side were cardrooms. What if Whistler had a new crew of mobsters stationed in one of those rooms! Out of sight of the secret-service operatives, the thugs would still be at Whistler's beck!

That was why, as eleven neared, Clyde Burke decided to end his passive observations. Although The Shadow had ordered him to remain in the roulette room, Clyde felt the urge to extend the field of his inspection.

Whistler Ingliss had gone to his office. Clyde Burke decided to follow. The roulette room was well thronged. Clatter of chips and cries of croupiers caused considerable din, broken by the exasperated exclamations of losers at the tables.

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Clyde made an easy circuit of the room, reached the doorway at the side and stepped into the passage. He had hopes that he would gain some valuable information to give The Shadow, should communication with his mysterious chief be established at eleven.

Clyde descended the steps. He went by a side passage that led off to the side exit from the Club Rivoli. He noted a door that was ajar; light issued from within. Clyde peered inside.

It was Whistler's office. The gambler was seated at his desk, telephoning.

"Fee." The words that Whistler uttered were in Agro. "Kye kye kode. Sake alta joda. Seek boda joda... Kye kye deek ake bole... Fee... Kye kye reef co kye kye..."

Clyde did not understand the strange jargon. Whistler Ingliss was reporting to Darvin Rochelle. The gambler was telling his chief that they – the mobsmen – had gone; that they had left at twenty minutes after ten; that they would come to Rochelle and would bring along the men whom they had been sent to get.

This meant that Bugs Ritler and his new squad of mobsters were probably at Athena Court, picking up Harry Vincent and Vic Marquette, the prisoners who had been trapped through the cunning of Alvarez Menzone.

Whistler Ingliss hung up the receiver. The gambler opened a desk drawer and removed a revolver which he pocketed. He was preparing to leave the Club Rivoli. He had not mentioned the hour of midnight over the telephone; but he had an appointment at that time. With the others of Darvin Rochelle's evil horde, he was due for the important conference.

Whistler was trilling a soft tune. Never perturbed, the gambler was as methodical and unconcerned as he would have been if starting to an ordinary social affair. A proof, however, of Whistler's keenness was already on the way. The soft lilt that he was trilling was but a covering for a suspicion which he had gained.

Dropping hands into pocket, Whistler stood in meditative fashion. Suddenly he wheeled. In quick fashion, he bounded to the door of his office; at the same time, he whisked his gun from his pocket. A second later, he had yanked the door inward and was standing with revolver pressed against Clyde Burke's ribs.

Clyde's hands went up. Gripping Clyde's shoulder, Whistler yanked The Shadow's agent into the room and closed the door. He forced Clyde to the opposite side of the desk.

"So you're a wise guy, eh?" demanded Whistler. "Snooping into my business. What's the idea?"

Clyde was at loss for a reply.

"I know your game," rasped Whistler. "You're no government dick, but you've been around this place too often to be on the level. I figured that the Feds weren't the only blokes on the job. Speak up. What do you know?"

"Nothing," retorted Clyde.

"Nothing, eh?" questioned Whistler. "We'll find out about that."

He glowered fiercely. Clyde Burke felt that his life was in the balance. Whistler seemed ready to loose the fire of his revolver. Yet the danger which Clyde sensed was purely imaginary.

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The side door of the office had opened, silently, by inches. Peering into the room were a pair of blazing eyes; beneath them, the muzzle of a leveled automatic. Beyond that was blackness.

The Shadow had arrived. A hidden witness of this scene, he was covering Whistler Ingliss. Had the gambler sought to press finger to trigger, doom would have been his lot. The Shadow's automatic was ready to bark before Whistler could fire.

THE gambler's glare faded. Whistler laughed. He sat down at the desk. He lifted the telephone receiver. He put in a call. He heard Darvin Rochelle on the wire. In Agro, Whistler explained that he had taken a prisoner.

Rochelle's instructions were the response. Whistler checked them in brief phrases:

"Fee... Alk reef kay reen alk dake... Alk alk teeba kay reen kay beeta... Alk dake golo..."

Freely translated, Rochelle had declared:

"Yes. I shall bring him when I come. We shall hear him, when he will talk. I am coming now."

Whistler Ingliss arose. He made a gesture to Clyde Burke. The words that he uttered in English were a partial explanation of the instructions which he had corroborated in Agro.

"You're going with me," Whistler informed Clyde. "If you know what's good for you, you'll sit tight. You'll have a chance to do some talking where we're going. And listen, bozo – I'm a guy that's ready with the rod. See?"

Clyde saw. He knew that his only course was to do exactly as Whistler commanded. By such action, he would be safe – at least until he and Whistler had arrived at their destination.

Whistler approached Clyde and nudged him with the revolver. The Shadow's agent willingly complied with Whistler's order that they leave.

"We're going out the side door," stated Whistler. "No squawk out of you – see? Walk along like you were a friend of mine. Come on, now – this way –"

Whistler edged Clyde toward the door to the side passage. That door was closing. It locked. Whistler did not see the motion of the door nor did he hear the lock turn. The Shadow had withdrawn.

Producing a key, Whistler unlocked the little-used door with his left hand. With Clyde Burke at his side, the gambler pointed the way to the exit from the Club Rivoli.

He marched Clyde to a coupe. Taking the wheel, Whistler drove from the driveway, growling a warning threat that made Clyde rest motionless.

After the coupe had departed, a dim figure appeared in the glow that came from a side window of the Club Rivoli. A tall, spectral figure stood silent; then from hidden lips came a soft, weird laugh that was forbidding in tone.

The Shadow had seen all. Yet he had not moved to aid his captured agent! Instead, he had withdrawn from the scene! Clyde Burke had gone away a prisoner!

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WHAT strange motive had withheld this king of action? The Shadow's failure to aid Harry Vincent and Vic Marquette was explainable: they had been capable of caring for themselves. But Clyde Burke had been entirely helpless.

Some answer lay behind this riddle. Yet it was strange that The Shadow should remain passive at the moment when pursuit of Whistler Ingliss would have led him to the secret gathering of minions of crime.

The answer was The Shadow's laugh. Eerie and unfathomable as it sounded in sibilant tones, that mockery carried an ominous portent.

The Shadow had withdrawn. His gliding steps were slow as they took him into darkness toward a parked cab near the front of the Club Rivoli. The whispered laugh had failed.

Darvin Rochelle – Alvarez Menzone – Whistler Ingliss – the lesser exponents of crime – all would be free to meet. The Shadow, in his dilatory appearance, could have gained but little inkling of what lay at stake.

Apparently, The Shadow had withdrawn. Why? Only The Shadow knew. The faint echoes of his laugh had been vague. Were they significant of hidden plans – or were they acceptance of defeat?

That question could be answered by The Shadow alone!

CHAPTER XVIII. THE MEETING

DARVIN ROCHELLE was standing on the first floor of his palatial mansion. Three of his servants were close by. Rochelle was speaking to them in English.

"You are ready?"

Nods were the response. Each man showed a gleaming revolver. Rochelle smiled.

"Be on guard. Our meeting must not be disturbed. Two more are to come: Senor Menzone and Miss Debronne. Ring once when Menzone arrives; then send him up. Twice for Miss Debronne."

Chimes were tolling the hour of midnight when Darvin Rochelle turned toward the marble staircase. Rochelle limped to the steps; moved upward, then resumed his halting pace as he passed through the darkened anteroom.

The buzz of voices sounded as Rochelle entered his office and closed the door behind him. Seated about the room were trusted minions: Maurice Twindell, Whistler Ingliss, and the gang leader, Bugs Ritler. Two of Ritler's mobsmen were present as guards. They occupied a corner of the room toward the anteroom. Between them, trussed on the floor, were three prisoners: Vic Marquette, Harry Vincent, and Clyde Burke.

The gags had been removed. Yet none of the three captives attempted to voice an outcry. The presence of the mobsters, the handles of big revolvers jutting from their hips, were sufficient to command silence.

Darvin Rochelle was smiling as he sat behind his huge desk. All the gloss had gone from his sometime silky countenance. Darvin Rochelle was a fiend unmasked, gloating as he began to outline the way to final triumph.

"Two members of our band," declared Rochelle, "have not yet arrived. I shall reserve the details of our

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coming operations until they join us. A few preliminary remarks, however, may be appropriate.

"Tonight, we shall deal in wholesale assassination. Within this envelope" – he was holding up a sealed packet – "I have complete plans for the slaughter of nine prominent South Americans.

"Each death will be simple of execution. I have prepared all details and will appoint the proper workers. Moreover" – Rochelle's smile was broadening – "I have arranged for the planting of false clues that will place the perpetration of crime upon men who are actually innocent.

"After our instructions have been given, we shall proceed with another task. We have visitors tonight" – Rochelle was indicating the prisoners with a sweep of his hands – "who have responded to our urge to attend this meeting. Perhaps they may have statements of their own to make. Perhaps not. It does not matter. We shall dispose of our guests in fitting fashion whether they choose to talk or to remain silent.

"One is a secret-service operative." Rochelle pointed to Marquette. "We have dealt with his ilk before. Another is a newspaper correspondent who showed overanxiety in his quest for news." Rochelle indicated Clyde Burke; then pointed to Harry Vincent. "Here we have a secretary who betrayed his trust. He tried to delve into his employer's secrets.

"Fortunately, his employer was my competent lieutenant, Alvarez Menzone. To Menzone, my friends, belongs the credit for the final step which brought us to this time for action. He gained the last papers that I needed. Tonight, we embark upon the slaughter that will throw a continent into chaos – that will make you, the companions of Darwin Rochelle, important factors in the building of a mighty empire!"

Rochelle pointed emphatically to the massive globe, upon which the conical outline of South America showed most prominently. While the fiend who plotted war, was chuckling in unrepressed triumph, a buzzer sounded on the desk.

"Ah!" exclaimed Rochelle. "Menzone is here. He will be with us shortly. I left word for him to come directly to this meeting. You, Twindell, deserve credit for forming contact with Alvarez Menzone.

"The newest among us, Menzone has proven his competence. He will share in the deeds that I have planned for this night. We can count upon him –"

Rochelle paused. There was a rap from the other side of the door to the anteroom. Rochelle issued a friendly summons to enter. The door swung inward.

FOR a brief instant all within Rochelle's office stared blankly. Then came harsh gasps. The darkness of the anteroom was moving. Like a creature from some hidden vault of space, a form was emerging from blackness. While hushed fiends still gazed, the outline became clear.

A being clad totally in black. A form enshrouded by the folds of an inky-hued cloak; features concealed beneath the brim of a broad slouch hat. Such was the weird shape that Rochelle and his minions saw.

Beneath the hat brim were two burning eyes. Their fierce glare held a menace. From two hands incased in gloves of black projected mammoth automatics with tunneled muzzles trained upon the trapped fiends who shrank before them.

"The Shadow!"

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The gasp of recognition came from Bugs Ritler. The gang leader had seen the destructive power of this mighty fighter, the night that Lito Carraza had been saved from death upon the Virginia speedway.

Then, The Shadow had met armed mobsters and had stilled their fire with slaughtering lead from his automatics. Now, The Shadow had come upon a group that was expectant of no danger.

Fiends sat helpless as The Shadow swept into the room. Circling toward the empty chair at the side of Rochelle's desk, The Shadow kept his guns trained on his clustered foemen. The mobsters who guarded the prisoners, feared to move.

Each villain who viewed the muzzles of The Shadow's automatics, thought that both guns were directed fully upon him. The black cloak swished; its crimson lining showed momentarily as The Shadow paused, just past the huge globe of the world.

From this position, The Shadow covered everyone with the exception of Darvin Rochelle. Yet the master plotter was afraid to make a move. Rising, he had gripped the desk with his left hand while he held his cane clutched in his right. Motionless as a statue, he stared toward The Shadow – so close that a quick swing of either automatic would mean prompt doom for the man with the limp.

"I have come," hissed The Shadow, "to end your schemes. You have prisoners. Release them!"

The command was directed toward one of the mobsters. Cowering, the man stooped and, tugged at the cords which bound Vic Marquette.

"Stand up!"

The mobster ceased his work as he heard the sibilant command. With hands above his head, he stood against the wall. Vic Marquette, struggling free from his loosened bonds, looked toward The Shadow. He understood the order that showed in the glaring eyes. While helpless crooks watched, Vic released the cords that held Harry Vincent and Clyde Burke.

Three disarmed men were now at The Shadow's call. Guns were available, for they could seize them from the crooks. But as they waited for The Shadow's bidding, the sound of a creepy laugh made the released prisoners wait. Staring with the startled crooks, they heard The Shadow speak.

"You are awaiting Alvarez Menzone." The Shadow's words were directed toward Darvin Rochelle. "You might continue to wait him forever. Alvarez Menzone is dead. He died in Caracas in 1931. That, Rochelle, is why your records ended.

"Alvarez Menzone was a murderer. He died at my bidding. His death was unknown. I, The Shadow, knew his past. That was why I, The Shadow, chose to resurrect the personality of Alvarez Menzone to gain access to your schemes!"

The Shadow's head moved upward. The folds of the cloak collar dropped away. The umbra from the hat brim vanished in the light. Darvin Rochelle stared aghast. The face which he and his minions were viewing was that of Alvarez Menzone!

THERE was no need for a further word. The truth had explained itself. Not once had The Shadow appeared while Alvarez Menzone was present. The briefcase which Menzone had carried – within its bulky interior had been more than mere papers. That portfolio had included the black garb of The Shadow!

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Harry Vincent understood. When Menzone had returned to the apartment tonight, he must have come disguised as The Shadow. There he had found Harry and Vic Marquette planning the capture of Alvarez Menzone. The Shadow had departed. Returning, as Menzone, he had easily trapped the trappers!

Vic Marquette understood. He realized that The Shadow, disguised as Alvarez Menzone, had deliberately roused his suspicions to draw Vic on the trail of the plotters with whom The Shadow – as Menzone – had formed contact.

The capture of Harry Vincent and Vic Marquette had been essential, once they had pried into the affairs of Alvarez Menzone. So had Clyde Burke, spying on Whistler Ingliss, been taken prisoner while The Shadow stood by.

The Shadow, knowing that he would be present, had no fears for the safety of the prisoners. But he had not been willing to risk any step that might have caused Darvin Rochelle to postpone the meeting at which all the crooks were due.

Darvin Rochelle understood. As Alvarez Menzone, The Shadow had walked by the downstairs servants, unmolested. Briefcase in hand, he had donned his black raiment in the anteroom.

But there was another question that lay unanswered in Rochelle's startled brain. As though divining it, The Shadow answered – not by word, but by action.

While his right hand automatic covered the crooks, his left arm rose to sweep the fold of the cloak collar about the false features of Alvarez Menzone. The left hand disappeared momentarily; it reappeared, carrying a white envelope with the automatic. The envelope dropped to the table.

"The stolen correspondence," hissed The Shadow, "is within that envelope. The documents that Alvarez Menzone delivered were spurious. They will be rejected as false when they reach South America. Your schemes, Darvin Rochelle, have failed completely."

Rochelle's left hand, gripping the desk, twitched itchy. The master plotter wanted to grasp that envelope. He feared to do so. He stared at The Shadow. He saw the burning eyes – the leveled automatics beneath. Close by, Rochelle observed that the eyes which the others thought were everywhere, were directed upon him alone!

With a dejected leer, Rochelle let the handle of his cane fall heavily upon the surface of the desk. Feigning fear, he stared toward those blazing eyes, which seemed to be looking through and past him.

All eyes were upon The Shadow. No one realized that Rochelle had given a signal. Before a single crook could utter a gasp; before one of the released prisoners saw the danger, Darvin Rochelle's counterthrust had come.

The upper hemisphere of the huge globe had opened. Bobbing noiselessly from its interior was Thurk, the hideous dwarf. Poised, the monster was beginning his downward swing to drive his wicked, long-pointed knife toward the unprotected shoulders of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XIX. THE STROKE OF DEATH

THE SHADOW'S body did not move. Beneath the descending knife of Thurk it remained a perfect goal for the blade. But The Shadow, his eyes still steady, performed a motion that was swifter than that of Thurk.

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Although his back was toward the monster, The Shadow was ready. His right hand swung beneath his left arm. The right forefinger pressed the trigger of the automatic that it controlled. A burst of flame spat outward and upward, accompanied by the bark of the .45.

Thurk's forward lunge ended as a wild scream came from the dwarf's hideous lips. His ribs shattered, Thurk toppled backward in agony. His rebounding body thumped against the back-tilted top of the globe.

As the dwarf writhed, his weight upset the pedestal. Rolling from the opened, overturned globe, Thurk sprawled dead upon the rug beside the chair in which Croydon Herkimer had been slain.

The Shadow had met Rochelle's counterthrust. He had trumped the master plotter's buried ace. The laugh that came amid the echoes of the gunshot brought a dawn of understanding to Rochelle's hate-racked brain.

The Shadow had spotted the huge globe as a death trap. His visits here, in the guise of Alvarez Menzone, had been accompanied by keen observation. Had The Shadow stood on the near side of the globe, close to the chair where Rochelle guided visitors, he would not have seen the rise of Thurk.

But the Shadow had chosen the far side of the globe. His gaze, toward Rochelle, had gone beyond: to the mahogany-framed mirror on the opposite side of the room. In that glass, The Shadow had eyed the huge globe. He had chosen the very angle of vision that he needed to keep Thurk's hiding place in view.

Aiming with the mirror as his guide, The Shadow's shot had been no more than a simple test of his skillful marksmanship. His steady hand, diving beneath the upraised arm, had ended the evil life of Rochelle's murderous monster.

Yet even as The Shadow laughed, Darwin Rochelle performed an action of his own. The insidious plotter was demonish in his persistent attempts to thwart the black-garbed avenger.

The Shadow had turned one gun to finish Thurk. He had raised the other to keep the crooks at bay. Rochelle, momentarily uncovered, performed the one action which lay within his power.

LEANING forward with left hand on the table, Rochelle delivered a vicious, downward swing with his heavy cane. Had he aimed the stroke for The Shadow's body, the black-garbed fighter could have whirled away from it. But Rochelle, as he screamed an order to his minions, had chosen a more suitable objective.

His cane smashed against the automatic that bulged from The Shadow's left hand. It drove the weapon downward.

The effect of the blow was twofold. Not only did it clear the menace of that automatic, the downward drop of The Shadow's left arm clamped his second gun – the one with which he had slain Thurk.

Rochelle's quick action brought the momentary interval needed to swing his henchmen into action. As they heard their chief's cry and saw his deed, five men acted with single accord.

Whistler Ingliss and Maurice Twindell reached to their pockets for revolvers. Bugs Ritler and his mobsters shot their hands to hips. Guns flashed in the light.

The Shadow whirled. His swift turn swung him toward Rochelle. The master crook, sliding back with his cane, was about to scramble, crablike to the rear door of the office. Had The Shadow paused to end the fiend's life, it would have given the armed minions their chance.

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Instead, The Shadow, swinging his unlimbered automatics, veered to meet the onrush. Tongues of flame belched from the mighty weapons. Caught within the echo-holding walls of the room, The Shadow's shots sounded a cannonade.

Bugs Ritler staggered. One of his gangsters loosed a shot. His bullet zipped past The Shadow's head, then the mobsmen fell.

Vic Marquette was pouncing on the second mobster, who was aiming toward the weaving form of The Shadow. The bark of an automatic forestalled Vic and the mobster as well. Vic saw the gangster fall before he could grapple with the man.

Harry Vincent and Clyde Burke were alert. Each of The Shadow's agents had chosen a separate man. Harry leaped for Maurice Twindell; Clyde for Whistler Ingliss.

Twindell, thinking that the others could down The Shadow, wrenched away from Harry. Wheeling, he aimed his revolver point-blank between Harry's eyes. Harry sprang forward to forestall the shot. His effort was too late. Twindell was pressing finger to trigger.

HIS shot, however, never came. The Shadow had seen Harry's plight; a turn of his wrist with a trigger squeeze dispatched a leaden messenger to Twindell's skull.

Whistler Ingliss, fighting with Clyde Burke, delivered a glancing blow to Clyde's head. The newspaperman slumped to the floor. Whistler, his lips pursed for an imaginary trill, snapped his wrist directly toward The Shadow.

Gleaming eyes – a tongue of forking flame – these showed as The Shadow's gun barked in response to the cool gambler's calculating aim. Whistler Ingliss had delayed a split second too long. His lips widened; his hand went to his breast. Tottering, Whistler Ingliss wavered, then sprawled face foremost on the floor.

Vic Marquette had grabbed two revolvers from the floor. Plunging across the room, he caught Harry Vincent by the arm. Vic had seen the havoc of The Shadow's fire. He knew that the minions within this room were doomed.

"Come!" Vic was shouting the order as he dragged Harry along. "This way! That's where he's gone – the big shot. Out through the way they brought us in!"

As The Shadow, now near the door to the anteroom, delivered his last deciding bullet, Vic Marquette and Harry Vincent gained the door at the back of the room. Harry was clutching a gun that Vic had given him. Together, these delivered prisoners were in pursuit of Darvin Rochelle.

The final echoes of The Shadow's gunfire were broken by a new and strident sound. It was a peal of taunting laughter, a burst of freed, triumphant mirth.

The Shadow had delivered doom to minions of crime. He, too, was ready to take up the search for Darvin Rochelle, the insidious master plotter who alone had fled!

CHAPTER XX. THE DEATH VATS

HARRY VINCENT and Vic Marquette were dashing down the spiral stairway. They knew the route, for it was through this way that they had been brought to Rochelle's.

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"The house at the rear," panted Vic, as they clattered from the staircase. "That's where he's gone! Be ready, Vincent! There'll be other mobsmen there!"

The door to the courtyard was unlocked. Vic gripped Harry's arm as they reached the open. The two paused momentarily to listen. Sound of gunfire were bursting from streets all around the area.

"The police!" exclaimed Vic. "Say – how could they have got here this quick? Come on, Vincent; this will help us. They're coming in from all sides. Our man is trapped!"

Vic and Harry reached the house in back. A dim light showed in a rear room. Vic spied a doorway. He opened it to show a flight of descending stairs. With Harry Vincent at his heels, the secret-service operative led the downward dash.

A dim light showed in a cellar room; beyond it, another dimly lighted compartment. Harry Vincent clutched his companion's shoulder.

"Listen!" whispered The Shadow's agent.

Vic heard the sound. Within the stone walls of the cellar, it made a ghostly effect – a slow, steady tapping that was gradually drawing away. For a moment both men were startled by the uncanny noise. Then the explanation came in a blurted whisper from Harry's lips.

"The man with the limp! It's the tapping of his cane!"

Vic Marquette nodded. They had overtaken the villain whom they sought. Somewhere, beyond the narrow opening to the other section of this dim cellar, a fiend was seeking safety.

"Come!" Vic led a cautious advance. He and Harry crossed the first room swiftly, but with little noise. They gained the opening; off ahead, they could hear the echoes of the tapping cane.

Together, the pursuers moved foot by foot into the further room. Vic's eyes were straight ahead. Harry's wavered toward the floor. This was fortunate. Just as the tapping of the cane had ceased, Harry gripped Vic and drew him back.

The action was just in time. Vic Marquette's feet were on the edge of a stepping-off spot.

A rank odor surged to the nostrils of the pursuers. Their eyes accustomed to the gloom, Vic and Harry saw what they had just escaped. They were on the lip of a deep pit; several feet down in the uncovered hole was a murky, greenish liquid that filled the entire pit.

THEIR eyes traveled further. They saw a second pit separated from the first by a thin, dividing side. Beyond that, a gloomy wall, with a narrow edge of floor –

A chuckle brought eyes upward. With guns lowered, Harry and Vic were taken unaware. Their staring eyes saw the figure that they sought. On the narrow ledge beyond the further pit stood Darvin Rochelle!

The fiend was standing backed against the wall. His cane was in his right hand. His left was drawing it away. Before either watcher could recover, the cane had come apart. A hollow sheath was withdrawn from glimmering steel!

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Up came Rochelle's right hand. Harry and Vic were covered by the strangest weapon that they had ever seen. The interior of Rochelle's cane had formed a long-barreled gun.

The portion where the handle had been now made a hand-grip with bulging chambers. The gun which Rochelle held was a revolver of small caliber, but with a rifle barrel that gave it power.

Covered by this weapon, it was futile for either man to move. Trapped by Rochelle, they could only hope to parry. The first words that the enemy uttered showed that no mercy could be gained.

"You shall die!" Rochelle's snarl ended in a wicked chuckle. "You, like others, shall end in my vats of death. Look before you – see where I have consigned the bodies of those whose murders I have ordered!

"Bolero – Piscano" – Rochelle was gleeful as he named the death list – "Rexton – Clifford – Tromboll – Dolband! All have been dissolved within the acid which those vats contain. They were murdered by Bugs Ritler and his mobsmen. They were carried here and dropped into the vats by Thurk.

"There was another. Herkimer. Thurk slew him and threw him into a vat as well. You wonder why I tell you this?" Rochelle sneered. "Because both of you, like the others, will meet with the same fate.

"No evidence will remain of my crimes. Speculation will exist; truth will be lacking. I shall depart by my secret exit; before I go, two more victims will be bestowed to their resting places. One for each vat of death!"

As Rochelle delivered a fiendish chuckle, Vic Marquette growled a quick command to Harry Vincent.

"Spread away," was Vic's order. "Open fire – both at once. Maybe one of us will get him –"

With simultaneous accord, Harry and Vic sprang sidewise, in opposite directions, along the edge of the nearer vat. It was their only chance. One was doomed, according to Rochelle's choice; the other had a slender chance.

Rochelle had divined the move. As the springing men swung their gun arms upward, the master plotter aimed first for Vic Marquette. All odds were in his favor. A quick shot with another rapid aim – both Vic and Harry would be doomed.

At that instant a shot resounded with a roar from a point directly in back of the spot where Harry Vincent and Vic Marquette had been standing side by side. The spreading action had cleared the way for a hidden marksman.

The Shadow! He had trailed the pursuers of Darwin Rochelle. He had heard Vic Marquette's order to Harry Vincent. A spectral figure, hidden from Rochelle's view by the men between, he had been ready with the needed shot.

THE roar of the automatic, enlarged by these confining walls, awoke staccato echoes. Darwin Rochelle's right arm was drooping. The sheathing cane slipped from his left hand and dropped into the vat before him. His long-barreled gun formed a pointer as its muzzle turned toward the depths of the vat. Like an omen, the gun slipped from Rochelle's hand. It dropped and sank into the simmering acid.

Rochelle's form was slumping. The villain's left hand was to his breast. His eyes were staring downward, bulging as they saw the fate that awaited him. His wavering body seemed to twist in a futile, convulsive effort to retain itself against the wall.

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Then, as death followed the mortal wound, Rochelle's body took a rigid pose. It seemed to rise, almost as if alive. With a peculiar twist that formed a replica of Rochelle's halting stride, the body slipped from the ledge.

A splash came from the vat. A pungent odor arose as wavelets moved upon the greenish surface. The man with the limp was dead. His corpse, like those of his victims, was swallowed by the greedy acid in the vat of death!

From the archway to the outer chamber came the hollow tones of a weird laugh, that crept with ironical mockery above the vats. Even though that laugh had been uttered by their rescuer, Vic Marquette and Harry Vincent shuddered at its chilling tones.

The laugh reached a high crescendo. It broke with a shuddering gibe. Echoes rang from every wall – reverberations that seemed uttered by living, ghoulish tongues.

When the last note of that sinister taunt had died, a strange, predominating silence hung above the vats of death, where Harry Vincent and Vic Marquette stood motionless.

Triumphant, The Shadow had departed. His work was done. He had dealt just doom to Darvin Rochelle, the man with the limp!

CHAPTER XXI. THE FINAL REPORT

VIC MARQUETTE was in Fulton Fourrier's room at the Starlett Hotel. Wisely, the secret-service operative was silent, as he listened to the commendation of his chief.

"I got your call, Marquette," explained Fourrier, "just before midnight. How you managed to get it through while those crooks held you prisoner is a miracle to me."

Vic maintained his silence. He realized that The Shadow must have called Fourrier just before coming to Rochelle's mansion.

"I went with the police," resumed Fourrier. "We got there and waited – surrounding the block as you had ordered. When those first shots came, we smashed through.

"We smeared those servants of Rochelle's. We got the gangsters piling out of the house in the back. But if it hadn't been for you, Vic, and that fellow Vincent you had with you, Rochelle would have made his get-away."

Fourrier paused to smile in elation.

"We nabbed the Debronne woman coming in," said the chief. "We're adding her confession to your report. With Vincent and that newspaperman, Burke, to add their details to your story, it will be the greatest thing in the annals of the secret service.

"The papers on Rochelle's desk. Not only his plot to kill nine South Americans, but that stolen correspondence from the embassy. You've proved to be an ace, Marquette!"

The chief paused to study a stack of report papers that Vic Marquette had given him. Vic had couched these in simple, unromantic style. Yet they showed the marks of a keen imagination.

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For Vic Marquette had sensed The Shadow's wish. Wisely, Marquette had omitted all mention of the mysterious avenger whose lone hand had dealt every stroke of doom.

"No details of the fight," observed Fourrier. "Well, those aren't needed. The fact that you and the other prisoners got loose and polished off the gang is sufficient. Results are what we want in our report sheets."

Fourrier placed the report aside. He arose and clapped his hand to Marquette's shoulder.

"Your work is done, old man," he said. "I'm putting an international operative on the final job. A report came in on Alvarez Menzone today. The man was a clever swindler, last seen in 1931, at Caracas, Venezuela.

"He's probably headed out of the country. Maybe we'll get him – maybe we won't. It doesn't matter. He'll never trouble us again."

Vic Marquette smiled. He knew that Fourrier had unwittingly declared the truth. No one would ever get Alvarez Menzone, for Alvarez Menzone did not exist!

BLACKNESS moved on the balcony outside of Fourrier's windows. The barriers closed tight. A weird shape, crawling spiderlike, made its way to the floor below.

Ten minutes later, Henry Arnaud, bags packed, appeared in the lobby of the Hotel Starlett. This inconspicuous guest was leaving Washington. He paid his bill; his grips were carried to a cab.

As the taxi rolled along Pennsylvania Avenue on its way to the Union Station, a thin smile appeared upon the lips of Henry Arnaud. Eyes that flashed, were surveying the glittering boulevard. A soft laugh echoed from the lips beneath the bold, aquiline nose.

Washington seemed peaceful tonight. The lurking menace of insidious crime was ended. A monster of evil and all his insidious crew had been banished forever from the national capital.

The glow from the lighted capitol building revealed Arnaud's hawklike features as the cab swung toward the station. The lips were smiling still.

From them, again came that whispered laugh – an echo of the same weird tone that had reverberated in strident triumph at the death of a Darvin Rochelle.

The laugh of The Shadow! It was the token of the master who had played three parts in a grim, unrelenting game.

Deaths had been avenged. Lives had been saved. Justice ruled, with the threat of a continent in chaos safely ended.

These were the reasons for the triumph laugh of The Shadow!

THE END