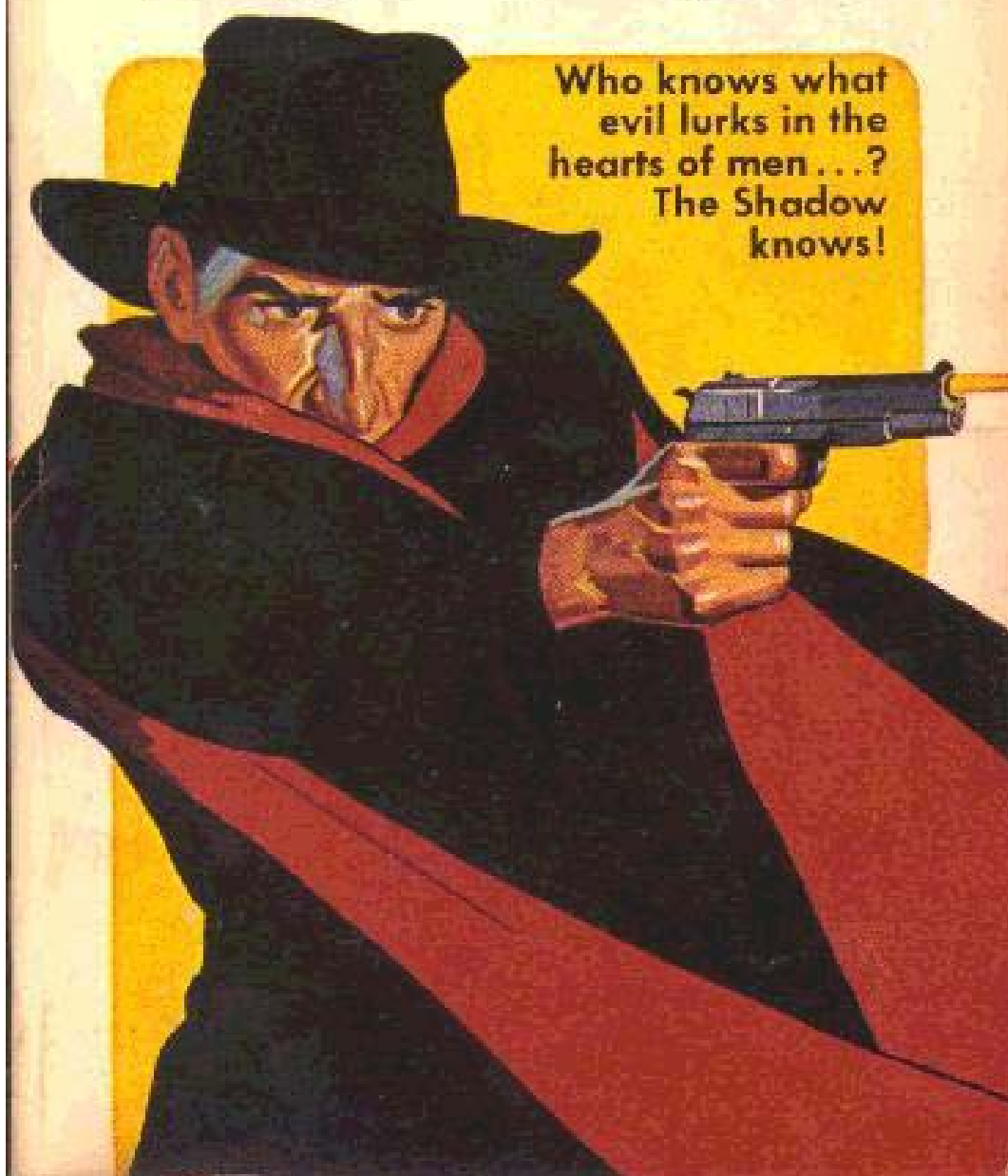


Maxwell Grant

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THE *Shadow's Revenge*

Who knows what
evil lurks in the
hearts of men...?
The Shadow
knows!



THE SHADOW'S REVENGE

A BELMONT BOOK—October 1965.

In the tall grassland, between the mountain and the jungle wall, a lion roared. At that moment the sun jaded from the purple African sky and dusk rose up from the hot land itself. Then silence.

An uneasy silence. The heavy purple sky held its breath. The mountains and the jungle waited. Animals lay flat against the ground or moved furtively. The air itself hovered thick, waiting.

In the village at the edge of the jungle the people stopped their work to look up at the sky. They looked at the mountains and the silent jungle. They looked behind them, uneasily. Their eyes showed white as they searched the gathering darkness.

At the instant of total night the drums began.

Distant drums from many corners of the night.

The people of the village moved together to the open, sunbaked heart of the village where the ground had hardened to the smoothness of stone under the years of dancing feet. An old man stepped to the pyre of tall logs and set it afire. The fire blazed up. In the night. The people moved close to the flames despite the thick heat of the night.

A distance away, at the edge of the village, a tall man stood on the covered verandah of a house much larger than the huts of the village. The flames of the fire flared up from time to time revealing his thin, pale face and European clothes. His dark eyes were staring out into the night toward the south and the jungle wall.

The man had been standing on the verandah for some time—since before the drums began far off. There was more than uneasiness on his pale white face as he listened to the drums. He knew what they told. They told of the coming of the Demon.

The Demon came.

The sound came.

A sound torn from the dark throat of the jungle. A sound like a long, violent scream. Wailing, rising, echoing through the night and out across the grass-land to the mountain wall. A sound as sharp and piercing as a knife. Steady, rising higher and higher.

The Demon appeared in the blazing light of the fire.

High, floating in the air.

The single shining eye glistening down at the cowering people of the village.

It hovered—floated in the air as if suspended on the long, screaming sound that filled the dark night sky of Africa.

On the verandah of the house at the edge of the village the tall man gripped the rail and stared toward the glare of the fire and the demonic figure that floated in the night.

A giant figure shimmering in the flames. Black boots on its glistening feet. Skirt of shimmering feathers and the long tail of a lion. Tunic of a soldier gleaming with the color of medals. The head of a giant bird with the sharp, hooked beak of an eagle. In the center of the head the single shining eye.

The Demon floated, hovered, swooped high above the dancing flames.

A wide, shimmering, undulating halo above its eagle head. The tall man on the verandah at the edge of the village turned quickly and went into the large house. Inside, he bent over a small radio transmitter. He manipulated dials, spoke urgently. He spoke for no more than a moment.

He stopped. He listened. Quickly he stepped to a corner of the room, bent, raised a small section of floor, and vanished beneath the floor. The trap door closed behind him.—

Moments later the silent men entered the room of the large house. Six men, dark-skinned, wearing pieces of uniforms and the skins of animals and the feathers of jungle birds. They moved in silence from room to room. Then, in the empty house, they began to smash. They smashed, and tore down, and ripped off the walls, and laughed like insane beasts as they smashed.

In the village the people broke before the Demon. They ran, terrified, to escape into the night beyond the fire. Frantic, they ran for the cover of the darkness.

They ran into a wall of firing rifles, of automatic weapons. A single long volley. Then silence. The natives of the village who had not fallen huddled again near the fire.

From the night on all sides of the village men began to walk into the light of the fire, their weapons pointed, the Demon above.

1

THE COUNTRY is new. One of the many colonies in the heart of Africa that has become a country, master of its own destiny. The former Belgian Congo is near, the countries where the white man still rules are not far away.

The country is bordered on the west by a chain of high mountains, on the east by thick jungles that reach to the distant Indian Ocean. The great river, the Lubilana, runs north through the land, rising in the swamps below the Kanda Tract and ending somewhere to the north in the mighty Congo. There is a single railroad from the capital in the southeast to the border in the north where the mines are: the tin mines, and copper mines, and once rich but now abandoned silver mines.

The second city, Marianville, is in the north near the mines. The railroad connects Marianville and the capital in the south. There is now a highway between Marianville and the capital, once named Frederick Augustus Town, now renamed Zambala in honor of the fierce warriors who roamed the country before the white man came. Zambala is a modern city. There are wide streets with cafes shaded by trees, and the buildings are tall and of white stone. The clothes are European in Zambala, and there are buses and automobiles, and slums for the poor who live in the wooden shacks that surround the glistening white buildings.

In the rest of the country there are only small dirt roads and frontier-like towns and the grass villages of the country tribes.

Mukulu is one of the frontier towns, the administrative center for the most backward and poor district of the country. It is north and west of Zambala, on the Lubilana, and close beneath the mountain wall at the northern edge of the desolate Kanda Tract. The railroad line from Zambala to Marianville passes through Mukulu, but the highway is many miles to the east, connected by only a rutted dirt road impassible during the rainy season.

The village where the Demon appeared is not far from Mukulu. A week passed since the Demon appeared in the village. Now the village is deserted. The grass huts are empty. The fires are out. The people have gone, vanished in an instant, their tools and cooking pots and weapons and clothing left where they had been last used as if the people have only gone for a moment and will return the next moment. But it is a week, and the people have not returned. The large house with the verandah stands empty at the edge of the village.

On this hot day, in the thick and silent afternoon, the men of the patrol of the country's army are out in the grass and jungle searching for some trace of the vanished people. A small United Nations patrol of Ghurka soldiers from India are with them. They have found nothing in a week, and the few men left behind in the deserted village doze in the sun and do not think that their comrades will find anything this day.

In the village nothing moved. The soldiers left on guard rested in the shade of the grass huts where it was cooler. Dust, stirred by a faint and sporadic breeze, hovered in the air and heat. Even the lions on the grassland lay in the shade, their tails flicking at the flies that hovered about them. No one looked up when the flight of birds rose from the bushes at the edge of the village.

The birds circled in the hot sun.

In the bushes the heavy shadows of the thick afternoon seemed to move. Blending with the shadows of the African sun, a black-cloaked figure appeared, emerged from out of the sun and stood observing the silent village. Beneath the wide brim of a black slouch hat, piercing eyes watched the open area of the village. A fiery red gem glistened on the long finger of the cloaked figure.

The Shadow watched the empty village, and then began to move through the bushes in a wide circle. His black cloaked figure moved in and out of light and shadow, blending with the shifting pattern of light and dark, like some wraithlike mirage of the light itself. His keen eyes searched the ground as he circled the village unseen by the few yawning soldiers left on guard in the hot afternoon.

From time to time the cloaked Avenger bent to study the ground as he circled. He was peering closely at the marks of many feet in the bushes all around the deserted village. Once he bent quickly and his long fingers picked up a small, shiny object. He put the object into his pocket and continued his careful circuit of the village.

In the thick jungle growth to the south of the village, his circuit almost completed, the silent crime-fighter suddenly stopped and bent down again. His glinting eyes studied a small black stain on the grass and on the bushes beneath the tall jungle trees. He touched the black stain, smelled it. He stood up, a tall black shadow among the myriad jungle shadows, and turned to stare toward the village.

The Shadow froze immobile.

His keen ears had heard the soft footsteps.

They came swift and silent. The Shadow stood tall and black, a part of the jungle, and they passed too far away to see their faces. Four figures in khaki uniforms; small men moving fast and silently around the village. At the edge of the jungle they stopped to study the somnolent village. Then they moved on around and vanished in the direction of Mukulu. The Shadow returned his .45 automatic to its hiding place inside his cloak and glided through the jungle again. He came to the large house with the verandah on the edge of the deserted village. The verandah leaned, and a wall lay fallen-in from some fury that had ripped through the house. The Shadow floated across the open space between the bushes and the house, a black shape in the moving pattern of sun. He climbed the sagging steps, crossed the leaning verandah, and entered the main room of the house.

The room was a chaos of destruction. Chairs had been smashed, the walls themselves torn open, tables broken, the missionary cross ripped down from the shattered wall and broken. The Shadow found the small radio in the far corner of the room away from the door. It had been pounded into a useless mass of twisted metal and broken glass.

The bedrooms and dining room of the house looked like a pack of wild animals had stampeded through them. Everything had been ripped open, smashed, and there was nowhere for anyone or anything to hide or be hidden.

The Shadow returned to the main room.

His burning eyes searched the room. There was no trace of blood, and no trace of a body. He began to cover the room inch by inch. He saw nothing. He reached the corner of the room farthest from the entrance and nearest to the smashed radio. His eyes saw nothing but the debris of destruction. He turned to move away—and stopped. His trained hearing had heard the faint difference of sound. A difference of sound when he walked here in the corner. He stepped again, and moved away, and listened to the sound of his footfalls. In the corner near the radio there was a difference of sound. A hollow sound. Faint, but unmistakable to the ears of The Shadow. He returned to the corner, bent, and began to clear away the debris. He lifted a rattan rug.

Beneath the rug was the bare floor. Even the eyes of The Shadow saw nothing at first. Then the faint outline of the trap door became clear to him. He lifted the hidden door and gazed down into the blackness beneath.

There was a narrow ladder. The Shadow swung onto the ladder and plunged below.

The Shadow stood in a small, dark room. His piercing eyes, with the power to see in the dark learned long ago in the Orient, searched the bare room. The walls were only dirt, and the room was empty. From the age of the dry dirt walls The Shadow guessed that the room had been dug long ago as a hiding place in the days of the wild Zambala warriors. But it had been used recently. The Shadow detected the signs of someone having walked across the dirt floor. But there was no one in the black room, dead or alive, and the signs led to a blank wall.

The Shadow glided close to this blank wall, his burning eyes glowing in the dark from the reflected red fire of the girasol ring on his finger. His long fingers touched the hard earth wall. He found the break low down near the floor. A small section of the wall came away and revealed a dark passage. The section of wall was just big enough for a man to crawl through, the passage hidden by an old iron plate cleverly covered with earth to match the dirt walls themselves.

The Shadow bent, crawled, and entered the small opening. He crawled for ten yards, and then stood up. The narrow entrance had opened into a tunnel large enough for a man to stand up in. There was no trace of light. Nothing but blackness made red now by the glow of the fiery opal girasol on The Shadow's finger. The Shadow glided swiftly along the dark passage, his eyes searching as he went. The Shadow moved on through the blackness beneath the earth until, at last, there was a faint light ahead. Light and noise. A distant roaring sound, low but steady. The sound grew louder as The Shadow approached the circle of light. He reached the exit from the tunnel and emerged through a screen of thick bushes into the light and heat of the African afternoon. The noise was loud now, and he saw the great river less than fifty yards away. The Lubilana was high and moving fast toward the north.

Between The Shadow and the river was the dense growth of the river bank. Thick, tangled bushes and trees that drew their sustenance from the water of the river's edge. A narrow path led from the hidden opening of the tunnel to the bank of the river and a wide sand bar that jutted out from shore into the heavy water. With the river high, the sand bar was half covered with the rushing water.

Heavy twisted logs and other debris brought down by the river littered the sand bar.

From the shore The Shadow's eyes searched the debris-strewn sand bar. He turned away to search the bushes between the exit from the tunnel and the river bank. Then, suddenly, he turned back.

Something was not right out on the sand bar. Among the twisted and grotesque logs brought down by the rushing Lubilana, The Shadow had seen something else. He looked out across the wide sand bar.

The body of a man lay there with his feet covered by the lapping water.

The Shadow moved swiftly out and across the sand bar to the body. It lay among the driftwood logs, all but hidden from sight. The body of a tall man in European clothes. Impressions in the sand, filled with seeping water, led up to the body. The dead man lay on his back in the African sun. The Shadow bent closer to inspect the body.

There was nothing in any of the dead man's pockets except some pieces of dry straw. The pockets had been searched and emptied. The Shadow opened the dead man's bush jacket and looked at the single bullet hole directly over the heart. There were no other marks on the body.

His clothes and shoes were intact. No debris from the river clung to the body. The Shadow stood up.

The black-cloaked Avenger stood there in the African sun for some time. His piercing eyes stared down at the dead man who lay as if asleep. With the bush jacket pulled over the single wound there was no way to tell that the man had been shot. Slowly, The Shadow looked over the sand bar. The water-soaked debris of the river reached far up the bar past where the body lay with its feet in the water.

Absorbed in his study of the sand bar and the body, The Shadow did not hear the boat until it had rounded a curve in the wide river and was approaching the sand bar. The secret Avenger looked up and saw the boat. An outboard motor boat coming fast toward both the sand bar and The Shadow who stood black and clear in the sun. Five men were in the boat, all armed, and one man stood pointing toward the black apparition of The Shadow.

"You there! Remain where you are!"

The call came from the man who stood in the bow of the boat with a pistol pointed toward The Shadow.

The boat came closer. The Shadow could see the men clearly now. Small, dark men wearing the British-made uniforms of the Indian Army. Ghurkas, their curved kukris visible at their belts. All the Ghurkas wore United Nations armbands on their uniforms. The Shadow turned and began to float away across the sand bar.

"Halt! You! Halt!"

The Shadow moved through the debris and driftwood, his black-cloaked form blending with the twisted shapes of the logs. The Ghurka officer raised his pistol to fire. The soldiers fired. A single volley that shattered the stillness of the jungle. Birds flew up, crying out, and crocodiles scrambled into the river. The soldiers prepared to fire again. They did not fire.

The Shadow had vanished.

In the boat that now touched the sand bar the soldiers stared around them. The Shadow had melted into the sunlight itself. The bushes at the edge of the jungle did not move now, there was no sound anywhere except the steady roar of the river.

The Ghurka officer still held his pistol pointed toward the edge of the jungle. The officer rubbed his eyes and looked all around again. He turned toward his men to ask them if they had seen where the black figure had gone. But the officer did not speak. He was, suddenly, not sure whether or not he had seen the weird black figure at all.

Angrily, the officer holstered his pistol and turned his attention to the dead body of the tall man where it lay on the sand bar at the edge of the river.

2

LESS THAN a quarter of a mile away from the river and the body of the tall man, a covered jeep drove slowly along a dirt road that wound narrowly between the tall jungle walls on either side. The driver was alone in the vehicle. But not for long. As the jeep passed a thick clump of trees close to the road, a tall black figure glided from the shadows and slipped into the empty front seat beside the driver. "All right, Stanley," The Shadow said, "back to Mukulu." Stanley—chauffeur, bodyguard, agent, and friend of The Shadow—stepped on the accelerator. The jeep began to move fast along the dusty dirt road. The Shadow climbed quickly into the back seat.

Hidden from any observer, The Shadow swiftly removed the long black cloak, the wide slouch hat, and the fire-opal girasol ring. He folded the special garments into amazingly small size and hid them in the secret pockets inside the clothes of the man who now sat in the back seat. The Shadow was gone, and in the Avenger's place was Lamont Cranston, wealthy socialite, businessman, and close friend of Police Commissioner Weston of New York.

Lamont Cranston returned to the front seat of the jeep. Where he sat beside his chauffeur, Stanley, he looked straight ahead along the winding jungle road. The immobile face and half-closed eyes of the socialite and businessman were in marked contrast to The Shadow's piercing gaze. His hawklike features were impassive, immobile, and his hooded eyes were quiet and steady as he spoke.

"He's dead, Stanley."

"Dead?" Stanley said. "Mr. Vickers?"

"Shot, Stanley," Cranston said grimly. "From the look of the body I'd say he's been dead a week."

"The same night he disappeared—right, Boss?" Stanley said.

"It looks that way," Cranston agreed. "There were many tracks around that village. Some bare feet and some heavy boot marks. There must have been a lot of them. It looks like Vickers was interrupted while he was trying to send that message, and escaped through a trap door under the floor. A tunnel led out to the river bank. That was where I found the body."

"Any ideas who they could have been, Boss?" Stanley asked.

Cranston shook his head. "Not yet, Stanley. But I found a black patch in the jungle, motor oil from the smell of it. And I found this." Cranston held out a small, circular, brass object. It was a button. Stanley glanced down at the button as he drove on through the dim afternoon jungle.

"A uniform button, right?" Stanley said.

Cranston nodded thoughtfully. "Some Naval uniform, French I should say. It's odd, Stanley, I can't think what a French naval officer would be doing here. As far as I know the French had nothing to do with this country, and we're a long way from the sea."

"I guess uniforms can be stolen or bought, Boss," Stanley said.

"I'm sorry about Mr. Vickers, he was a good man."

"And a good friend, Stanley," Lamont Cranston said.

Stanley drove on through the dim jungle light, the dirt road deserted between the tall jungle walls, and Cranston sat in silence now. He was thinking about Gerald Vickers and how this had all begun. How The Shadow had come to Africa.

It was a week ago now that Commissioner Weston had called Cranston to the private room in the elegant Cobalt Club in faraway New York. Weston had not been alone.

The impeccable, white-haired Commissioner waved Cranston to a seat. Weston's face was concerned, worried. The Commissioner nodded toward the third man in the room.

"This is Kurt Rohrbach, Lamont," Weston said. "He's from Interpol. I'm afraid he's got some disturbing news. Gerald Vickers is missing."

"Vickers missing?" Cranston said. "From his Mission?"

"He wasn't at his Mission, Mr. Cranston," the Interpol man, Kurt Rohrbach, said. "He was doing some field work at a small village on the edge of the Kanda Tract. The Missionary Society says that Vickers was particularly interested in the legends and taboos of the Kanda area, so he went down there. He was living in a house in a village right on the edge of the Tract. The place is

rather isolated, about fifteen miles from the administrative center of the district at Mukulu, and the house had a small radio transmitter.

"Last night someone, or something, attacked that village. Vickers started to send a radio message through to Mukulu. He must have been surprised because he only got a few words through. After that the District Commissioner of the area, a Colonel Mnera, tried to call Vickers back but Vicker's radio was out of commission. Mnera sent a patrol immediately. When the colonel and his patrol got there they found everyone gone, the whole village including Vickers. The whole population is missing, and there were no bodies nor signs of struggle except that Vickers' house had been ransacked."

Cranston looked at Weston when Rohrbach finished speaking. The Commissioner seemed more than concerned or worried. Gerald Vickers had been a friend of Weston's. Cranston, too, had known Vickers well. The missing man had been a dedicated missionary, a very human man of God, and a man who had spent all his life trying to help the less fortunate of the world both spiritually and with more practical aid. Both Weston and Cranston were members of the Board of the Missionary Society that had sent Gerald Vickers out to Africa this last time.

"And he is still missing, Mr. Rohrbach?" Cranston asked.

Rohrbach nodded. "Without a trace. They all are. There are tracks, signs in the village, of an attacking force of some kind, but there is no trace of where they came from or where they went. They've just vanished into thin air."

Cranston's hooded eyes were impassive. "What were the conclusions of the local authorities?"

"None," Rohrbach said. "They claim to have no idea who, or why, or how."

"You don't believe them?" Commissioner Weston broke in. "I'm not sure," Rohrbach said. "There's something very strange going on in that area."

"Strange?" Cranston said.

Rohrbach nodded, "Yes, and I'm afraid that is all I'm at liberty to divulge."

Cranston leaned forward in the silent room, his impassive features set in a slight frown. "Just why is Interpol interested in the disappearance of a missionary, Rohrbach?" he asked. "Vickers is hardly a man to be involved in international crime.

It would seem more a concern of the local authorities and the United Nations in the area."

Rohrbach stood up in the quiet room of the Cobalt Club and began to pace. The Interpol man was small and dark, and his face took on a grim expression as he paced. He seemed to be trying to decide just how much he should reveal.

"Let me put it this way, Cranston," Rohrbach said at last. "We don't know what Vickers may be involved in. All we know is that he has vanished along with all the inhabitants of a village. I am not authorized to tell you just why Interpol is working in the country, but I can tell you that Vickers is not the first man to disappear there. In fact, two of our agents have vanished right in the Mukulu district."

"Two agents?" Weston said. "Disappeared?"

"Without a trace," Rohrbach said. "That is why we're so interested in Vickers. You see, his abortive message is the first hint we have of what might be going on down there."

"What was his message, Rohrbach?" Cranston asked.

Rohrbach continued to pace. "It was only a few words, Cranston, he did not have time for more, it seems. It said only, *'Village attacked. Don't know who or why. The Demon leads. Send help at once. Demon flies, I think I know. . .'* And that was all."

This time the silence in the elegant club room had an ominous feeling. Commissioner Weston stared at Rohrbach as if not sure he had heard correctly. Cranston's hooded eyes flashed once

with a hint of the power of The Shadow. Rohrbach continued to pace slowly, uneasily. Weston was the first to break the heavy quiet of the room.

"The *Demon*?" Weston said. "A Demon that flies?"

"Yes," Rohrbach said.

"What does it mean? Was Vickers all right? Perhaps he was under some strain." Weston said.

"I don't know what it means." Rohrbach said, "and I don't know what condition Vickers was in. That is one thing we want to know. We want to find Vickers, if he is still alive."

"You think he is still alive?" Cranston asked.

"We think there's a chance," Rohrbach said. "As I said, his house was ransacked but there was no trace of blood, and no sign of Vickers. Until we find him, there is hope."

Weston nodded slowly. The Commissioner looked at Lamont Cranston. It was Cranston who asked the important question.

"Just what do you want us to do, Rohrbach?"

Rohrbach paused in his pacing, hesitated and stared for a long minute out the high window of the Cobalt Club room at the sharp and jagged towering skyline of New York. Between and beyond the tall, sky-reaching buildings, the wide Hudson River was visible with its piers and the ships bound for the ends of the earth. Rohrbach turned to Cranston.

"We want you to go down there," Rohrbach said. "We want some private citizen who knew Vickers well, who was involved with the missionary work, to go down there and help find him. The Commissioner says that you are our man, Cranston. You knew Vickers, you're a member of the Missionary Society Board, you're known to travel a great deal."

"Why a private citizen, Rohrbach? Why not continue to handle it yourself? After all, I would have no official standing, and I'm not familiar with the situation," Cranston questioned.

"Precisely because of that, Cranston. As I said, two of our men have vanished. We think whoever, or whatever, is down there is on to us, perhaps knows most of our men by sight. But more than that, we have a strong idea that Vickers is no more than an innocent bystander caught up in something by accident. If he is still alive he may be in hiding, frightened, and with no idea of who to contact, who to try to reach. You see, as far as we know Vickers knows nothing about Interpol, and he may not know who he can trust down there."

"And you think that if I appear, someone he knows, he will try to contact me?" Cranston said.

"Exactly."

Cranston considered. "But you can't, or won't, tell me just why Interpol is down there?"

"We think it safest not to, Cranston," Rohrbach said. "As I said, we don't think Vickers has any connection with our problems. We think he was just caught in the middle. We also think that whoever attacked that village may also know that Vickers is no more than an innocent pawn. We don't want to jeopardize Vickers by trying to reach him ourselves in case they know us. And we think that the less you know, the more you are simply a private friend looking for Vickers, the safer both you and Vickers will be."

Cranston smiled. It made sense, and yet he knew that the Interpol man was not telling the exact truth. Interpol did not know Gerald Vickers, and they did not know whether or not Vickers was innocent or involved in whatever it was they were investigating. They did not want to reveal anything that might give aid to their enemies down there. The less Cranston knew, the less he could tell Vickers or anyone else.

"In short," Cranston said, "you want me to try to find Vickers, and keep my eyes open for you while I'm at it."

"We could use help," Rohrbach said simply.

"What do you say, Lamont? You've worked with me so often, another time should interest you," Weston said.

Cranston nodded. There was too much about this that he did not know, but Vickers was a friend and something very strange and very evil appeared to be going on down there. It was The Shadow's chosen work to battle all evil wherever he found it. Vanished villages and strange Demons were The Shadow's work, and The Shadow did not believe in evil Demons, only in evil men.

"You can help your friend," Rohrbach said, "and law and order." "Very well," Cranston said. "I'll start today."

Now, a week later, he had found Gerald Vickers—dead. He had found the vanished missionary after waiting days, and after a long search. And Gerald Vickers had not died naturally or by accident. He had been shot through the heart. Vickers had been dead all the time, even while Rohrbach had been talking back there in New York in the quiet room of the Cobalt Club.

In the jeep, approaching the tiny outpost of Mukulu that was the administrative center of the district, Cranston frowned behind his impassive gaze.

"A week, Stanley," Cranston said. "Dead a week, and yet the body was not found. I would have thought that one of the patrols would have discovered the body much sooner. That sand bar is quite open." "Maybe it was out of sight and only got washed out there recently," Stanley said as he drove.

"Perhaps, Stanley," Cranston said. "But I must know more about what happened here that night of the attack. Was Interpol here? And how was Vickers killed? From the look of that house I don't think anyone found that trap door, and yet Vickers was found and killed after escaping through the trap door and the tunnel."

"He probably walked into a gang of stragglers, Boss," Stanley said. "Native attacks are like that. Chaotic, bands of killers wandering all over the jungle."

"Possibly, Stanley," Cranston said, "but I . . ."

Behind the quiet and hooded eyes of Lamont Cranston the keen vision of his true self, The Shadow, was still there. And now, as Cranston spoke to Stanley, this keen and darting vision saw the faint glint, the small flash of reflected evening sunlight, an instant before the shot was fired. A flash of light from a gun barrel or the lense of a telescopic sight, high and off to the left of the dusty road as the jeep neared the edge of Mukulu.

The shot rang through the silent jungle.

As Lamont Cranston, or as any of the other alter-egos of The Shadow, all the secret and mystic powers of The Avenger were still part of him—except one. The power to cloud the minds of men, learned long ago in the Orient from the great Chen Ta Tze, required the black cloak, the black slouch hat, and the fire-opal girasol glowing on the finger of The Shadow. A power of the mind, its true source unknown even to the Master Chen Ta Tze himself, it could never be used without the presence of The Shadow as his true self, as the Avenger of Evil. Only one man in each generation could use this power, and Chen Ta Tze had chosen The Shadow long ago in the Master's hidden retreat high in the mountains of the Orient. The Avenger had never betrayed the Master's trust.

But the keen sight, the super hearing, the great muscular control, and all the other powers learned in the Orient were still there behind the impassive face of Lamont Cranston, and now he moved.

The faint flash glinted. The shot rang out.

Between the flash and the shot Cranston had moved and jerked the wheel, swerved the jeep, and the bullet smashed through the windshield two inches to the right of Cranston and ricocheted whining through the silent jungle.

Cranston was out and running.

Stanley lay in the cover of the jeep, his automatic drawn and covering the running Cranston.

Cranston ran swift and alert toward where he had seen the brief flash that had saved his life this time. His keen eyes searched the dim jungle as he ran. He saw nothing, and there was no second shot. There was, now, no sound at all in the ominous jungle. Cranston reached the spot where he was sure the shot had been fired.

Nothing moved.

His sharp eyes searched the jungle above him. He saw the platform high in a tall tree to the left. A hunter's platform, used for night hunting at stakeout. The platform was old and partially overgrown by climbing vines, but there was no doubt that the shot had come from the platform—the vines were torn to show where someone had recently climbed up to the platform. A single cartridge case lay beneath the tree that held the platform. The .30 caliber cartridge of a high-powered rifle.

Cranston found nothing else. The socialite turned and walked back through the darkening jungle to the jeep. Stanley stood warily to meet him, the alert eyes of the chauffeur still scanning the jungle for any further possible danger. Cranston climbed back into the jeep behind the shattered windshield.

"No luck?" Stanley asked.

"He did not wait to greet me, Stanley," Cranston said grimly. "I think we will say nothing of this for the time being. Leave the jeep out of sight from Doctor Arthur's hospital. If Colonel Mnera asks any questions, the windshield was smashed while we were away from the jeep, presumably by boys throwing rocks."

"Okay, Boss," Stanley said. "You think someone in Mukulu shot at us?"

"Perhaps, Stanley, or perhaps it was whoever attacked that village," Cranston said slowly, "but there is something very strange here. Interpol has some problem that has brought them to this country, Stanley, and it's time we found just what that is. There is work here for The Shadow!"

Stanley nodded but did not speak again as the jeep drove out of the jungle and into the open street of the district capital—Mukulu. The deep Lubilana ran loudly to the right of the village, and the railroad line, a single track, cut across the single wide main street. Two soldiers stood on guard in front of the headquarters of the District Commissioner, Colonel Mnera.

Stanley drove on past the commissioner's headquarters, across the railroad track, and down the dusty street in the fading evening sun toward the hospital of the medical mission. Nothing moved on the streets, but Lamont Cranston felt eyes watching them as they drove slowly to the hospital through the African heat and dust. Mukulu was a frightened town, and it was work for The Shadow to learn why.

3

IT WAS NIGHT. In the kitchen of the hospital living quarters there was the sound of the servants washing the dinner dishes. The thick night of the jungle hovered heavy over Mukulu. In the

spacious living room of the medical house the fans whirled in the dim light. There was only one lamp alight to keep the insects to a minimum. But the five people in the dim living room were not thinking about insects. They were talking about Gerald Vickers.

"Horrible, Cranston, simply horrible," Doctor James Arthur said. "I've seen men die out here, but Vickers!"

"These are very bad times, unsettled," Colonel Mnera said. "It's the Tract," Angus McNair said. "I warned him about the Tract!"

Doctor Arthur nodded slowly. The Doctor was a tall, slender man of fifty. His thin, ascetic face concealed far more strength than his wiry body would have indicated. Arthur was the chief medical missionary of Mukulu District, an expert on tropical diseases, and Lamont Cranston's host in Mukulu.

"A dangerous place for white men, the Tract," Doctor Arthur agreed.

"And for black men," Colonel Mnera said.

The District Commissioner of the new government of the country was a dark-colored man of medium height. Mnera's face bore the scars of his long service as a sergeant in the old Colonial Army, and his uniform displayed the ribbons to show that that service had been both violent and honorable, had taken the colonel to many places far from his native land. Cranston could read the record of the ribbons—World War II in Europe, Indo-China, North Africa, and the hills of Korea. Mnera had fought in all those places. But his wrists showed also that he had served his time in prison in the battle for the liberation of his country.

"I warned him," Angus McNair said again.

Owner of the trading store, the main businessman of Mukulu, Angus McNair was a small man, nervous. The pale-skinned Scot drank his whiskey straight and from large tumblers. Dour and bitter, McNair had once been a noted hunter and leader of safaris, but had retired years ago to become a storekeeper and now owned the single source of supplies in Mukulu District. The Interpol Agent, Kurt Rohrbach, had told Cranston that McNair was a rich man, and that had interested Rohrbach very much.

The fifth person in the room was a woman. Margo Lane, dark-haired and slender, was the right-hand of Lamont Cranston, and of The Shadow. Officially Cranston's executive private secretary, the gifted woman had many other roles in her true identity as the first agent of The Shadow. Her poise, her beauty, her many skills, and her training as an actress all stood her in good stead in her work with the secret Avenger. Now she sat silent, listening, watching Cranston and the other men—the perfect private secretary.

"It was a bullet, not disease, that killed Vickers," Lamont Cranston said drily. "And a whole village has vanished. There must be something you can tell me."

"I wish there were, Cranston," Doctor Arthur said. The tall man sat erect, rigid as a ramrod in his cane chair. "We have had no trouble here such as they have had up in the Congo. The transition from colony has been smooth and peaceful for the most part. Why, a white man has not died here for many years. No, I can't understand it."

"Rebel troops? Mercenaries?" Cranston suggested. He let his hooded eyes turn toward Colonel Mnera.

The stocky, uniformed native leader shook his head. "As the doctor said, we have had no rebels or mercenaries. Possibly some could have crossed the border from the north or east, we are not loved by the blacks in the north or the whites in the east. But this raid, if it were a raid, is not like the attacks of rebels or mercenaries. There were no bodies and little destruction. The

people of the village have simply vanished. Rebel troops do not take prisoners, Mr. Cranston, and poor native villagers are not taken as hostages."

"Perhaps some warlike tribe?" Margo put in from her seat in the far corner of the low, dim living room.

Angus McNair laughed. "We have no warlike tribes here, Miss Lane. Never did have. They're a scurvy lot, begging your pardon, Colonel Mnera. It's the Tract. You'll find no Masai, or Watusi, or Zulu in our history. Even the Zanibala were in the south."

"We never had Mau-Mau type sentiment here," Colonel Mnera said. "No trouble like that. Most of our people are of one tribe, the Zambala, and we were not terrorists. We are a rich country, Mr. Cranston, we were advanced for the most part, and we fought our battle of liberation with political weapons. We have no local tribal chiefs like Kalonji and his Balubas in the Congo."

Doctor Arthur leaned forward in his chair. "Perhaps I had better explain this district, Mr. Cranston. As Mnera says, the people of the country are almost all Zambala. They lived largely in the south where the land is open and rolling, good for hunting and farming. In the north are the mountains and the mines. There were few people there when the mines were found, and most of the people now are Zambala from the south.

"But here we are on the edge of the Kanda Tract. The local people are a poor, debilitated lot from the remnants of many small tribes driven here in past times by the stronger Zambala. They have clung for a long time to the edge of the Tract. They survived in the past because no one else wanted to live near the Tract. Few could live near the Tract. Somehow these locals managed to adjust to the Tract, even to live in it for a brief time if attacked."

Cranston nodded impassively. "Just what is the Kanda Tract?"

"A terrible wasteland," Doctor Arthur said. "A waste of swamps, bogs, impossible mountains, disease and death at every turn. It is trackless, undrainable, useless to support or even permit life. It is infested with snakes and insects, even the larger animals cannot be found inside it. In all the centuries no tribe has ever survived there. It is taboo in Zambala legend, the hell where evil men go. The Zambala version of the devil lives in Kanda. Actually, of course, it is not the abode of a devil, but of malaria, sleeping sickness, blackwater fever, swamp fever, and almost every other tropical disease."

"You seem to know a great deal about it, Doctor Arthur," Cranston said.

The doctor nodded. "I do. It is one of the main reasons I came to Mukulu. I am an expert on those tropical diseases, and there is no better place on earth to study them than the Kanda Tract. But even I have not gone into Kanda for a long time, Cranston. No one has that we know of. Ten years ago it was barred for all white men, and for most natives. I gave the order myself with the cooperation of the Colonial Government."

"And we continued the ban," Colonel Mnera said. "Despite what many of the world's people may think, Mr. Cranston, we are not immune to these diseases, and we are not anxious to have white men die in our country. After that last safari Doctor Arthur convinced the Colonial Government to lay a complete ban on entry into the Kanda Tract until such time as we can see if it can be reclaimed at all. My government saw no reason to lift that ban."

Cranston's quiet eyes studied the three men for a long moment. "What last safari? I understood this district was noted for its hunting."

"It was, Mr. Cranston, and much of it still is," Colonel Mnera said. "Game has been largely driven from the south, and the mountains in the north are not much good for game."

"Then why the last. . ." Cranston began.

It was Angus McNair who spoke. The small, red-faced Scot broke in, his harsh voice hoarse and bitter as he gulped his whiskey. The small man grimaced as the raw liquid burned down his throat, but the pain in his bloodshot eyes came from more than the burning taste of whiskey.

"Ask me, yes! They mean me!" McNair rasped. "They blame me, all of them, but the fools insisted on going in there!"

"No one blames you, Angus," Doctor Arthur said softly.

"You knew no better, Mr. McNair," Colonel Mnera said.

McNair laughed. "Knew? Of course? Of course I knew! You think I'm daft, man? I knew, but the bloody fools insisted, you hear? They wanted Kanda and naught else!"

Doctor Arthur looked at Cranston. "McNair led that last safari into Kanda, Cranston. There were ten white men, and twenty-five natives. McNair told them that there was no game in the Tract, but they had heard the legend of game larger than anywhere else. You know the kind of tales that grow up around a place like Kanda. Lions as big as elephants, elephants as big as walking hills. So they went into the Tract. Two months later McNair came out. Alone."

McNair's eyes were deep with horror. "All of them, within days! I watched them die. All of them. That was the end for me. No more. I never went into the bush again."

"He was half dead himself, but he had had blackwater and swamp fever before," Doctor Arthur said. "He was immune. All he caught was a touch of malaria."

"I never wanted to see the bush again," McNair said, his hoarse voice low, broken.

There was a long silence in the dim room. In the kitchen the native servants still worked on the dishes from dinner. Knives clinked and scraped against china. The servants chattered, happy at their work. From the hospital section an occasional groan of pain broke the silence of the heavy night. Someone laughed somewhere out in the jungle darkness. There was distant music from the barracks of the local soldiers through the thick air. In the low, wide living room Cranston shifted in his seat. He was thinking about the deserted waste that had, it seemed, reached out to consume an entire village.

"Then no one lives in the Tract now?" Cranston asked.

"A few renegades, perhaps, some escaped criminals," Colonel Mnera said. "Otherwise, we have left it to The Demon."

Cranston sat up straight. In her corner Margo Lane showed no surprise but leaned forward, her slim legs crossed and the top leg swinging lightly in the dim light of the single lamp. McNair laughed. Doctor Arthur smiled. Only Colonel Mnera did not appear to be amused or surprised by his own words.

"The Demon?" Cranston said. "Then The Demon has been seen, reported, before this time?"

McNair laughed again. "Aye, for centuries, Cranston. Your Vickers must have been drunk! The Demon is a local legend, a superstition." Colonel Mnera shrugged his powerful shoulders. "The Demon legend has existed for as long as we know, Mr. Cranston. Everyone in the country knows it. The appearance of The Demon changes from generation to generation, of course. Only a year ago one stupid witch doctor saw a picture of a Soviet space capsule and declared that the capsule was The Demon of Kanda and was up there circling in the sky! Every fool who believed him began to run screaming from every falling star! That is the kind of thing we have to fight to bring our country out of the past! And now Vickers. . ."

"Vickers was not a witch doctor," Cranston said, "or a superstitious native. If he saw a Demon, there was a Demon."

Doctor Arthur coughed lightly. The medical missionary seemed embarrassed as he looked across the low room toward Cranston. Arthur glanced at Colonel Mnera. Then the tall doctor shrugged and smiled at Cranston.

"Perhaps he saw something, true," Doctor Arthur said. "But McNair is probably right. Some kind of hallucination."

"Vickers did not drink," Cranston snapped.

The doctor shrugged again. "A touch of fever, then. He was there on the edge of the Kanda Tract. Perhaps a touch of fever, it could cause such an hallucination."

"Vickers was shot," Cranston said sharply. "Fever rarely uses a gun to kill a man, Doctor."

"There was some kind of attack, yes," Colonel Mnera said angrily, "but there is no Demon! It is a stupid legend, a stupid superstition! I have spent my life driving such superstitions from my country, Mr. Cranston! There is no such thing as the Kanda Demon!"

"Vickers was drunk!" McNair said again, laughed. "Even the holy men get drunk out here. Sure, it does that to you, this place. Why not? Get drunk, that's the only way. Stay drunk and maybe you can forget where you are."

"Vickers did not drink," Cranston said to Mnera, "and I don't believe he had fever. He saw something out there, something he understood."

"He had been out here a long time," Doctor Arthur said gently. "The jungle, Africa, plays strange tricks, Cranston. The Kanda Tract has done such things to men before this."

Margo Lane spoke quietly. "Perhaps the doctor is right, Lamont. Vickers could have been sick."

"And the village?" Cranston said. "A whole village that has vanished? There are boot marks out there."

Cranston did not add that there had also been a uniform button and a patch of oil. He did not want to reveal what he had found just yet. Vickers had died near Mukulu, and Interpol was investigating something in the area, and Cranston did not trust these men yet. Then, too, sooner or later the Ghurka patrol would report having seen a strange, black shape on the sand bar. He did not want them to know that The Shadow was closer than they realized.

"There was an attack," Colonel Mnera agreed again. "But it could have been renegades, criminals from the Tract. It is possible that such a band exists in there now."

"Have you any reason to suspect that?" Cranston said.

"No, we do not," Colonel Mnera admitted. "Perhaps the people of the village simply ran away into the Tract of their own accord. They are a stupid, superstitious lot, who knows what ridiculous fears could have made them run away?"

"You mean no attack at all?" Cranston said. He watched the native colonel closely from beneath his hooded eyes. "Then who shot Vickers?"

"If the villagers panicked, they could have shot him. The boot marks could be their boot marks. We never know what these villagers have hidden away," Mnera said.

"And the message Vickers started to send?" Cranston said. The colonel blinked, shrugged, and said nothing. Cranston studied Mnera. Doctor Arthur seemed lost in his own thoughts. McNair still mumbled to himself, drunk and drinking more. Cranston turned to speak to Margo. He saw the sudden startled look in Margo's eyes. The dark-haired woman was staring at something behind Cranston. Cranston whirled, stood up.

"Stop! Don't move!"

It was the first of the three intruders who spoke, snapped out the order. Cranston froze where he was. The others all turned to face the three men who stood just inside the wide doorway that led out onto the verandah that surrounded the medical mission building.

"Line up! Quick! Against the wall. Move!"

The voice was strange, light and high-pitched, but its commands were clear, sharp and unmistakably serious. The three men held Sten guns pointed at all five people in the low living room. The Sten guns were held steady, and the three men in khaki uniforms held the small submachine guns as if they knew exactly how to use them, had probably used them many times before this.

"Line up! Now!" the leader said again.

The leader stepped into the light of the single lamp. Cranston had already recognized the three as three of the men The Shadow had seen earlier that day in the jungle near the attacked village. The same khaki shirts, khaki shorts, overseas caps and Sten guns. They were three of the same men—only they were not men!

The sharp-talking leader stood in the light now. And Cranston saw why the leader's voice was strange. A woman's voice.

The three were women!

4

THREE WOMEN in khaki uniforms and carrying Sten guns they knew how to use. Small woman, dressed like men, with their dark hair cut short and pushed beneath the overseas caps. Their faces were smooth and tanned from the sun. They moved with the speed and precision of trained soldiers, and yet behind the facade of military bearing they were pretty women.

"Which is McNair," the leader snapped.

Colonel Mnera took a step toward the three women. The Sten guns swung toward him. Mnera stopped. The native colonel spoke angrily.

"What do you want here? Who are you? I'll have my men. . ."

"Silence!" the leader said.

Her dark eyes flashed at Mnera. The colonel stopped speaking. The leader stared around the room at the five people. She fixed her hard gaze on the shivering Angus McNair. The small Scot was still drunk, but the shock of the sudden appearance of the armed women was draining the whiskey away. McNair shook. Doctor Arthur sat motionless, neither standing to obey the orders, nor showing fright. Margo sat alert and watched Cranston. The leader of the women nodded toward McNair.

"That's him. Search the others," she said to her companions. She waved her Sten gun again. "I told you all to stand up and against the wall. I will not say it again. We do not mean to harm any of you, we want only McNair. Now stand up and face that wall. Quickly!"

This time Cranston turned and faced the wall. Time was what he wanted now, time to catch the women offguard. The others saw Cranston obey and followed his example. The women searched them expertly. One woman searched while the other and the leader covered them with the Sten guns. The woman who did the searching left her Sten gun with her companions, she knew her business and was giving the prisoners no chance to grab her weapon away while she was close to them.

She found the first pistol on Colonel Mnera. A large, military revolver in the colonel's pocket. The woman also found a small, deadly dagger the colonel carried strapped to his leg. The women handed the weapons to her companions and turned to search Margo. The solidier-woman removed the small, snub-nosed automatic Margo carried under her skirt. Cranston noticed that Mnera and Doctor Arthur seemed surprised to see that Margo was armed. Cranston was annoyed at himself for letting Margo carry the automatic this time. Mnera and Arthur might now realize that Lamont Cranston was more than a simple "friend" of Gerald Vickers. McNair noticed nothing. The small Scot was too terrified to notice anything.

It was Cranston's turn to be surprised when the woman took an automatic from the pocket of Doctor Arthur. The gun was a deadly-looking 9mm Neuhausen—a Swiss, Danish and German army automatic. When the woman took an old WebleyVickers pistol from the shivering McNair, Cranston narrowed his impassive eyes. Everyone in the room had been armed! Except himself, since he had taken the precaution of leaving his automatics in the jeep. He had not wanted anyone to know that he, the wealthy socialite and friend of Vickers, was armed. Not for a dinner and discussion with official strangers. But they had all come to the dinner armed. Africa was, or could be, dangerous. But was it usual for them to carry weapons to a small dinner? Or did they have more reason to be wary than they had admitted?

Cranston got no farther in his thoughts of what reasons the three men might have to be armed, of what they might know that they had not told. The three woman placed all weapons in a canvas bag they had obviously brought for that purpose, and the leader turned again to McNair. The small Scot's red face had gone grey. His bloodshot eyes stared at the woman from where he stood with his back to the wall of the dim living room. The leader gestured again with her Sten gun.

"None of you will be harmed if you do not try to stop us or follow us," she said crisply. "But I warn you that if you do try to stop us we will not hesitate to shoot. We have come far for this man, and we mean to take him. Is that clear? Good." She faced McNair. "Come, you!"

Cranston had been listening closely to her. Her English was excellent, and yet there was the hint of some accent. It was an accent he could not place. A trace of Middle-European intonation, and yet that was not quite the sound.

"Leave me alone!" McNair cried out.

"Quiet!" the leader snapped. "We will not hurt you, but we have to talk to you. If you don't resist, if you cooperate, you will be freed soon. Now come, and be quick about it!"

While McNair protested, and the attention of the three women was on the small Scot, Cranston edged toward the opened window to his right. The window opened onto the verandah on the opposite side of the medical mission building from where the three women had entered. His quiet eyes flashed imperceptibly at Margo. The dark-haired woman nodded faintly to show that she understood. Cranston edged closer to the window, and stopped. One of the women had turned to watch them all again. The leader was still concerned with McNair.

"Will you come, you fool?!" the leader said.

McNair shook. "No! I . . . no . . . no . . ."

The leader of the women wasted no more time. She stepped up to McNair and clubbed him once with the Sten gun. A short, hard, quick stroke of the heavy weapon to the side of McNair's head. The Scot crumpled to the floor. The other two armed women stepped toward McNair to pick up his inert form.

Margo screamed loudly and fell to the floor in a faint.

The three women turned quickly toward her.

It was all the time Cranston needed.

He took two quick steps and dove through the opened window. Shots ripped through the window above his head where he lay for an instant on the open verandah. Wood splinters flew from the window frame. Cranston rolled off the verandah onto the ground. The women were shouting inside the room. One appeared at the window. Cranston rolled under the verandah and crawled swiftly away around the house. He could hear the women out in the night searching the darkness. Cranston reached into his secret pockets.

Moments later the black shrouded figure of The Shadow appeared in the night near the house.

The burning eyes of the Avenger searched the dark. The three women ran through the night after Cranston. A small, covered truck stood on the road in front of the house. Two men were dragging something toward the truck—the unconscious McNair. The Shadow realized that the women had not been alone, they had left two men in the waiting truck. The Shadow moved through the night toward his hidden jeep.

The three women, their Sten guns ready, saw the black shape in the night. They pursued, firing as they came, but they fired into emptiness, the black shape blending and vanishing in the dark African night. Like the shifting shadows of the night itself, The Shadow floated and faded, appeared and merged with the dark, keeping always a safe distance from the three women.

A mocking laugh hovered in the night, coming from nowhere.

The three women knew their work. They moved steadily and carefully, they fired only when they seemed to see a target, they neither panicked nor pursued recklessly. The weird laughter that filled the African darkness did not make them quail nor run. They moved steadily on in pursuit of the chimeric shadow that appeared and disappeared and was never in the same place or where they had expected it to appear. The Shadow led them on in the night, always moving closer to his hidden jeep and farther from their truck. He never lost sight of them, but moved like a wraith in the darkness, seen for moments only when he wanted to be seen, luring them on. He reached the jeep. His automatics in his hands, the fire-opal girasol gleaming red in the night, The Shadow turned to become the hunter and not the hunted. Now he would stalk the three women.

The sound of the truck motor filled the dark, its lights blazing up on the road.

"Go!" the leader of the women cried.

The three women turned as one and ran for the road. The truck appeared on the road. The three women jumped into the rear of the slowly moving truck. The truck motor roared as it moved into high gear and began to race away down the single dirt road of Mukulu. In another moment it would vanish into the jungle beyond the town.

The Shadow leaped away from his jeep and toward the road. Even as he ran he felt admiration for the three women, for their leader. They had pursued him partly to try to catch him, but more importantly to keep him from the truck and to gain time. They worked like a smooth, well-oiled, precision machine. They had pursued, carefully, and waited until the exact moment their truck would appear on the road to pick them up without more than slowing down. They disengaged so quickly and surely at the single command from the leader that they almost made their escape. From anyone but The Shadow they would have.

The truck had already passed, accelerating, sending up a cloud of dust in the dark night, when The Shadow reached the road. Unseen where he stood blending with the shadows of the trees and the sparse houses at the side of the road, The Shadow had time to take careful aim with both pistols. The two heavy automatics blazed simultaneously. In a brief moment The Shadow hammered four shots from each weapon directly at the rear tires of the truck. There was a sharp

report in the night. The truck lurched, swerved, its rear tires shot away. With a sickening crash it smashed into a thick tree and came to a steaming halt.

For a long second there was silence.

Then the five attackers jumped unhurt from their truck and spread out close to the ground in skirmishing order. Coolly the woman leader spoke her orders to her people. The Shadow moved toward them. Before he was close enough to begin firing with effect, another two trucks roared up along the road behind him. Uniformed men leaped out in the glare of their own headlights.

The voice of Colonel Mnera began to bawl in his native tongue. Clearly lighted by his own headlights, the stocky colonel furiously waved his pistol and ordered his men forward to the attack. A single shot cracked from the skirmish line of the five attackers. Colonel Mnera swore in pain and went down. His troops hesitated in their advance toward the now hidden five. Mnera bawled more orders in the language The Shadow did not know. The native troops moved cautiously forward.

They met a withering fire that retreated slowly before them.

From the hidden night The Shadow watched the brief battle. Mnera's men moved forward with determination. But they were no match for the five strangers. Cool and careful, the five made a slow but expert retreat, laying down a murderous fire from their automatic weapons as they went. The fire, and the organization, were too much for Mnera's green troops even though they outnumbered the intruders ten to one. They went to ground, and moments later the five attackers were gone. The Shadow returned silently and unseen to his jeep. Mnera would not find the five strangers this night.

A few minutes later the wounded Colonel Mnera stood beside the wrecked truck of the strangers and watched Lamont Cranston appear from the jungle beside the road. Cranston looked down at the tires that had been shot.

"I was lucky," Cranston said. "I remembered I had an automatic in my jeep. Just lucky to hit the tires."

"Yes," Mnera said, a peculiar expression on his face that showed a certain suspicion of Cranston. But the wounded colonel had more on his mind than questions of Cranston's purpose or identity. His wound was painful but not serious, and one of his own men was cutting away the sleeve of his uniform to expose the flesh wound.

Another of Mnera's men brought a groggy Angus McNair from the truck. So closely pursued by larger numbers, the five strangers had been forced to run without the man they had come to get. McNair was conscious, but the wound on his head was still bleeding slightly, and he was cut and bruised from the truck crash.

Doctor Arthur, Margo and Stanley came running up. Stanley was still sleepy after his sudden awakening at the sounds of the baffle. Margo was worried until she saw Cranston standing unhurt over McNair. Doctor Arthur had his medical bag with him. The doctor went to work on McNair first. Cranston looked down at McNair as Doctor Arthur worked over his cuts and bruises.

"Who were they, McNair?" Cranston asked.

"Damned if I know," the small Scot said. "I need a drink. They would have killed me!"

"No," Cranston said, "I don't think so. They could have killed you at any time. No, they really wanted to talk to you. That seemed important to them, very important. Why?"

McNair swore. "How the devil do I know? I told you I never saw them before in my life, I don't know what they wanted me for. Hasn't anyone got a drink?"

"No whiskey just yet, McNair," Doctor Arthur said sharply. "You'll probably have some shock out of all this. Whiskey would be poison for you."

The doctor stood up and turned to Colonel Mnera. Arthur went to work on Mnera's flesh wound.

"You have no idea who they were?" Cranston said to McNair.

"I told you I did not," McNair snapped sullenly.

The small man seemed nervous as well as badly shaken by his experience. His hands were shaking again, and the expression on his face was something very close to fear. But, then, McNair was badly in need of a drink of whiskey, which could explain the shaking hands. Cranston did not think he would learn anything more from McNair now. He turned to Arthur and Colonel Mnera.

"What about you two? Any ideas as to just who our visitors might be, or what they wanted?" Cranston asked.

"Not a glimmer, Cranston," Doctor Arthur said.

Colonel Mnera thought a moment or two longer. "No," the wounded colonel said at last, "I didn't recognize them. The guns were simple Stens, used by almost any partisan group, and the uniforms told nothing. No markings, did you notice? I heard them speak nothing but English, so that doesn't help."

"Have you ever seen or even heard of such people before in the area?" Cranston asked.

"Never," Mnera said.

"They certainly were not native renegades or criminals," Cranston pointed out to the Colonel. "And they are operating in this area."

"Yes, that is true," Mnera said, "But they also did not come from the Kanda Tract, and there were only five of them. That is hardly enough to attack an entire village."

"There could be more," Cranston said drily, "and what makes you so sure they did not come from Kanda?"

"The truck, Mr. Cranston. There are no roads in the Tract, none at all."

"Unless someone has built some roads," Cranston said. "How long since your government has looked into the Kanda area?"

"Many years," Colonel Mnera admitted, "but we fly over it, and there are no roads. No, our attackers are much more likely to have come across the border. When I make my report, perhaps my headquarters in Zambala will have more information."

"Perhaps," Cranston said, but he did not think the people in the capital would know any more about the efficient five than Mnera appeared to.

"Anyway, it is unlikely they have been in the area over a week. We have patrols all over the area," Mnera pointed out.

Cranston, again, did not mention that The Shadow had seen four of the five strangers near the attacked village earlier that day. The village was close to the Kanda Tract, and the four had been coming from the direction of the Tract when he had seen them. There was still far too much he did not know about Mnera and all the others in Mukulu. And the five could have come across the border in that last few days. There was much more for The Shadow to learn before he could begin to know what was happening in Mukulu that had cost Gerald Vickers his life.

When Doctor Arthur had finished his first aid on the colonel, Cranston went with the others back to the living room of the medical mission residence. McNair got his whiskey at last, and both Arthur and Colonel Mnera also had a drink for their nerves. Margo, too, accepted a small drink, but Cranston had a few more questions to ask before they went their separate ways.

"Just where was everyone the night the village was attacked and Vickers vanished?" Cranston asked. "Perhaps someone saw something that would help me find out just what happened to Vickers?"

Colonel Mnera shook his head slowly. "I doubt it very much, Mr. Cranston, but I'm sure we all want to help. As far as I know, none of us saw Vickers at any time that night. I myself was in my office working late. It was I who took Vickers' message, what he got through. I attempted to call him back for some ten or fifteen minutes, then I alerted my men and we went out to the village. We found nothing in the village at all; it was deserted."

"You were alone until you called your men?"

"I was," Mnera said. "I had given my radioman time off, my orderly was busy, and I prefer to work alone."

"I see," Cranston said, but he wondered about this way for a commander to operate his post. He turned to Doctor Arthur. "What about you, Doctor?"

"I happened to be operating, Mr. Cranston," the doctor explained. "Two of my assistants took the colonel's message and prepared medical supplies. They accompanied him to the village, we rather expected casualties. My surgery took some time longer than I expected, and I did not get out to the village until about an hour after the colonel."

"You were actually operating?" Cranston said.

"Yes, a somewhat complicated appendix case. It's in my records, and the patient is still in the hospital."

"And McNair?" Cranston asked.

"No help there," Doctor Arthur said. "Angus was at his home all night. He didn't even know about the attack until next day. I imagine he was drunk as usual."

McNair giggled, the whiskey restoring all his normal manner. "You bet I was. Drunk as old Nick himself. Never knew a thing until Mnera told me."

"Then none of you saw anything, really?" Cranston said.

Colonel Mnera shook his head. "No, and neither did the UN men."

Cranston showed no surprise. "United Nations men? I thought the UN patrol didn't get here until after you reported the attack?"

"Not the patrol," Mnera said, "Major Bain and his men, they're United Nations Security in the capital."

"Bain? Security?" Cranston said. "What were they doing here?"

"I don't know, Mr. Cranston," Mnera said simply. "They were not in Mukulu, at least not officially and I did not see them. They appeared at the attacked village about half an hour after I arrived there. Major Bain is Chief of UN Security in the capital, and Captains Paulus and Johnson are his assistants."

"And you don't know why they were here? Or how they happened to go to that village?" Cranston asked.

"They said they were on a mission to Mukulu, and heard about the attack when they got here. They did not happen to tell me why they had come to Mukulu," Mnera said somewhat stiffly.

Cranston heard the stiffness in the native colonel's voice. He suspected a certain resentment between the new government's men and the United Nations personnel. That would not be unusual, it happened in most of the new countries.

"Perhaps they saw something that would help?" Cranston said.

"Perhaps," Mnera said coldly. "I suggest you ask them."

"I think I will, Colonel," Cranston said.

Soon after that they all left. Mnera returned to his headquarters, McNair staggered off to the comfort of his own whiskey supply, and Doctor Arthur went to tend to his patients. Left alone with Margo, Cranston became grim and thoughtful. His hooded eyes flashed briefly with the fire of The Shadow as he talked with his beautiful secretary and agent.

"There is something here I don't like, Margo," Cranston said. "Something evil under the surface."

"Those people, the women, wanted McNair for some reason," Margo said. "And the UN Security men were here that night for a reason."

"Precisely, Margo," Cranston said. "United Nations Security, and Interpol. are both concerned with this area. And a village has vanished."

"And Mr. Vickers is dead," Margo said.

"Yes," Cranston said. "I think I will learn little more here just now though. It is time to go down to the capital and see what our man has found there."

He did not add that he wanted to also find out just what Major Ham, United Nations Security Chief, had been doing so fortuitously on the spot that night. And there was little time to waste. At the very least, the five unknown attackers were moving rapidly. There was something ominous in the air, and he suspected that The Demon, if it existed, would soon strike again. He, and The Shadow, would fly down to Zambala this night.

5

DAWN WAS just breaking over the capital city below as Stanley guided the small plane toward the Zambala airport. The plane, placed at the disposal of the eminent Lamont Cranston through the secret influence of Interpol, had left Mukulu in the dark and flown low over the thick jungles and the wide and winding Lubilana until now, at dawn, it had reached the sprawling capital city with the rising sun. Cranston looked below.

The city gleamed in the morning light. A white city from the sky, its buildings clean and white, built of stone and washed by the clear African air that was not yet filled with the smoke of industry that hung like a pall over the north of the country. Zambala lay in a great curve in the Lubilana, and bridges of white stone crossed it in the morning light. The streets were wide, patterned after the great boulevards of Paris, and lay deserted in these early morning hours. A heavy mist was rising from the Lubilana which lay like a smoking snake touched by the white stone buildings. The city and the smoking river, were surrounded by the thick green of the jungle itself. But on all sides, in the distance away from the river, open grassland extended to the mountains and the horizon.

Even as Cranston watched, as the small plane approached the Zambala airport, the capital city began to awaken. Buses moved along the wide streets, cars began to dart around and past the buses, and the hordes of workers rode through the streets on bicycles going to their work. From the sky the scene reminded Cranston of ants spreading out from their nest—only in the city below the ants converged rather than spread out. From all the poverty-ridden slums that surrounded the white heart of the city the people, on foot and on bicycles, streamed from their hovels into the center where the stone buildings towered and where they worked.

As he watched this scene, Cranston frowned to himself. It was the same scene, the same movement of workers from hovels where they lived to fine stone buildings where they worked

for the rulers, as it had been when the country was a colony. Only the rulers had changed. Not even the owners. Below, on the highest land above and away from the river, he saw the houses and green lawns and sprawling golf clubs of the old European Section. They were still there, most of them, the men who had always *owned* the city and the country. They no longer ruled it in their own names, but they still owned it, if somewhat uneasily at times, their wary eyes on the chaotic Congo to the north. But it would change, someday, if the new country were allowed to grow in peace. And that was what The Shadow was here to make sure of—that the land would be allowed to grow, to develop.

"Fasten your belt, Boss," Stanley said.

Cranston fastened his seat belt. "After we land, Stanley, go to the Augustus Hotel and arrange rooms for us. A suite for you and me, and an adjoining room for Margo. You may tell them she will arrive later today by car. Let it be known that I am here for the Missionary Society, and that I hope to meet with my friend Kent Allard. In case we need Allard in a hurry, you understand?"

Stanley nodded as he peered ahead to make his approach when the tower cleared them for landing. "Where are you going, Boss?"

"For a short talk with one Major Bain. I think the friend of the murdered Gerald Vickers should make a call on the Chief of United Nations Security, don't you?"

"Definitely, Boss," Stanley said. "You want me to pick you up later?"

"No, stay at the hotel until I call you. I have a feeling we are not going unobserved, and I think we should not appear either suspicious or too careful. After all, I am supposed to be a very amateur private citizen sent by a Missionary Society."

"Right," Stanley agreed just as the small plane touched down with the lightness of a feather. Stanley had not lost his pilot's touch.

Twenty minutes later, Lamont Cranston sat in the office of Major Eric Bain, Chief, United Nations Security Section. The major was a short, peppery man with a thin blond mustache and the thinning hair of a man of forty-odd. Cranston recognized the uniform of the Swedish Army, and the UN armband. The small Swede was not pleased to see Cranston. But Cranston's credentials were VIP first class, also arranged in secret by Interpol, and the major was polite.

"Anything I can do to help, of course, Cranston," Major Bain said as pleasantly as possible.

Cranston smiled at the edge under the pleasant manner.

"Thank you, Major, I'm sure you're very busy and don't like VIPs bringing you extra troubles. I'll try to be as unobtrusive as possible, but. . ."

Major Rain cut him short with an abrupt wave of his hand. The small major leaned across his desk, his weatherbeaten and sunburned face angry.

"Don't butter me, Cranston. All right, you know I don't like you here, and I know you think I'm a typical lazy bureaucrat. Let me tell you that I don't mind trouble or VIPs. What I mind is nosy amateurs looking into matters they don't know how to handle, such as disappearances up country, and private organizations who should keep their people out of trouble areas! I. . ."

Cranston broke in. "Then you consider Mukulu a trouble area? Just why is there trouble up there, Major? What kind of trouble? How does Vickers fit in?"

Rain scowled. The peppery major leaned back in his swivel chair and lighted a short cigarillo. Rain blew slow smoke into the warm air of the morning office. Behind the major the mist was burning off the river with the heat of the higher sun, and the thick growth in the distance beyond the city steamed in the glare. The major swiveled once to look out the window, and then swiveled back to face Cranston.

"I did not say Mukulu was a trouble area. What is or is not trouble here is none of your business, nor the business of your Missionary Society. As for Vickers, I have no idea what his disappearance may or may not mean. As far as I know, Vickers is a missionary who vanished up country. For all I know he may have wandered into the Kanda Tract and fallen into a bog. I have a patrol looking for him, the government has a patrol up there, and that is the end of it until we find him."

Cranston watched Major Eric Rain from behind his impassive eyes. He did not allow his face to show anything. But it was suddenly clear to him that Bain either did not yet know of the discovery of Vickers' body, or was pretending not to know. It seemed impossible that Major Rain would not know. The Shadow had discovered Vickers' body more than twelve hours ago. The Ghurka patrol had found the body at the same time. Why had they not yet reported their discovery. And why had Mnera not reported the fact of Vickers' death? It was possible that Mnera had decided to wait until morning, especially with the attack of the five strangers, but even then the report should have reached Rain by now. Or should it? Cranston remembered that Colonel Mnera had not shown great eagerness to cooperate with the UN Forces. Mnera would have reported to his own government. It could be a simple, and very common, matter of who got the credit for the first report. Perhaps Mnera's superiors were in no hurry to inform Rain. Or the major could be lying all the way.

Bain continued to swivel in his chair and stare straight at Cranston.

"You ask about a trouble area? Well, the whole country is a trouble area." Ham said emphatically. "Oh, we're peaceful enough here at the moment, but we're surrounded by powder kegs that could go up any moment. I've got mercenaries up in Katanga just itching to get down here. I've got Mobutu and his troops aching to 'liberate' us up on the Congo border. There's Gizenga and his rebels, to say nothing of their Chinese friends. The white leaders over in Rhodesia would just love to come to our aid against anyone, and down in South Africa they don't sleep nights with their intrigues to get sway over the new government. And you ask about troubles? Hah!"

Cranston smiled. "And now you even have a Demon to worry about."

"Demon?" the major snorted. "Demon? Cock and bull! Some ridiculous native nonsense. Superstition. Your Vickers was either drunk or demented. Probably saw some witch doctor, if he saw anything. Who says Vickers really sent that message anyway?"

Cranston's quiet eyes remained impassive, the smile fixed on his immobile face. Rain's suggestion was not a great shock to him. That Vickers had not really sent that message had crossed his mind before. But he did not consider it true. The message had sounded authentic, and had sounded like Vickers. And up in Mukulu they had not questioned that the message had come from Vickers, and Mnera certainly knew Vickers' voice. If Mnera could be trusted to be telling the truth. Only Mnera had heard the actual message.

"We think it was Vickers," Cranston said. "Mnera says it was Vickers."

"Ah, the good colonel, yes," Rain said. "Well, Mnera is a good soldier, and not a bad man, but good soldiers take orders, and good men have changed sides before, Cranston. And I have another thought—how do I know just who Vickers might really have been working for? Eh? Certainly, he worked for the Missionary Society, he is a man of God, but all that could be a cover, eh? He could be working for anyone, stirring up trouble!"

"You trust very little, Major," Cranston said.

"Trust? My dear Cranston, what does 'trust' have to do with my work? I have to look at every possibility, that is my job. This is a new country, and every man's hand can be against his neighbor's throat by tomorrow! Vickers could be working for any group."

"Do you have a specific group in mind, Major?" Cranston asked quickly.

"No. As I said, at the moment. . ."

"There has to be something more than abstract dangers to bring Interpol down here," Cranston said.

Major Eric Rain blew smoke into the silent room. The small Swede had not jumped startled, or bitten off the end of his thin cigarillo, but Cranston's keen eyes had detected the truth—Major Rain had been surprised. The Swede had not known that Interpol was engaged in work down here! That could only mean that Interpol had some reason for not informing the major. Rain was UN Security Chief, he should have been informed of Interpol's presence, unless Interpol had not wanted him to know. Cranston was annoyed with himself. He had made a mistake, but, then, Rohrbach had neglected to tell him that the UN authorities did not know. Or was it just Rain and his department that did not know about Interpol?

"Interpol? Down here? That's ridiculous," Rain snapped.

"Perhaps I was misinformed," Cranston said brazenly. "I imagine I am an amateur, I must have heard it incorrectly. You don't have any idea, then, why Interpol would be working here?"

"I don't have any idea, and I don't particularly care. Police work is not my problem just now," Bain said, but Cranston saw something in the eyes of the major that told him that Rain was not telling the truth—Bain was worried.

Before Cranston could pursue the subject any further, there was a sharp knock on Major Rain's door. The door burst open before Rain could tell anyone to come in. Two uniformed soldiers entered. One was tall and slender and wore a British-made uniform with the rank of captain but no other markings except those of the United Nations. The second man was shorter and heavier. An older man, perhaps fifty, the second man, and he also wore a British-made uniform with markings and insignia Cranston did not immediately recognize. The second man, too, was a captain. But it was the first man, the tall one, who spoke as they dashed into the office.

"That missionary, Vickers, they've found him dead. The patrol just brought his body down from Mukulu!"

Major Rain sat up straight. The peppery man swore softly in Swedish. The second man, in the uniform Cranston did not recognize, spoke up.

"Ruddy fools found the body last night, but that Gburka lieutenant was so excited he packed it up in his ruddy boat and hauled it all the way down here without reporting it first!" the second man said.

"Ten minutes after he deposited the damned body, we got the report from the government. Colonel Mnera sent in his report earlier this morning," the first man, the tall one, said acidly.

"Mnera?" Major Rain said slowly. "Last night?"

The major turned to look at Lamont Cranston. "You knew this, didn't you, Cranston? You were up there in Mukulu last night. You knew Vickers was dead?"

"Yes, I knew," Cranston admitted. "I was surprised that. . ."

Major Rain roared, jumped up. "What the devil do you think you're doing? Playing games with me, eli? I'll have you tossed right out of this country! You hear? Just what is your game? Who was Vickers, and who are you!"

"Vickers was a missionary, Major, nothing more. As for me, I'm just a friend of the murdered man, and so is Police Commissioner Weston of New York who sent me here," Cranston said. "We only want to know what happened to Vickers un there in Mukulu."

The major began to pace the sunny office. He stood with his back to Cranston and his two men and stared out the window at the Lubilana that sparkled now in the sun. He paced again, his face a choleric red that slowly returned to normal under its burn. Then the small major seemed to remember who and what he was. He turned to his men.

"How was he killed?"

"Shot." Cranston said.

"Once through the heart," the tall captain said. "Dead a week at least."

Rain looked thoughtful. "The same night then. He's been dead all along. Just shot? No mutilation? No torture?"

"No," the second man said, the older officer.

Cranston asked. "Is that important, Major?"

"It could be," Rain said slowly. "I don't know for sure. I'll talk to that Ghurka officer myself. But meanwhile, Cranston, is there anything else you've forgotten to tell me?"

It was the tall captain who spoke before Cranston could. The tall man had been looking at Cranston for some time now.

"Is this man Lamont Cranston, Major Rain?" he asked,

"What?" Rain said, and then, "Yes. I'm sorry gentlemen, I forgot you don't know each other. Cranston, these are my assistants in this pest hole. The tall one is Captain Paulus, and the old boy there is Captain Johnson. Cranston, gentlemen, is a 'friend' of the dead man. You could call him an official unofficial investigator. He has no standing, but apparently a great deal of influence."

"Well, sir," the tall man, Captain Paulus, said, "if he's Cranston he does know something he hasn't apparently told you. . ."

"He must mean the raid on Mukulu last night, Major," Cranston said mildly. "I was getting to that when your men came us."

Rain blinked. "Raid? On Mukulu? Why wasn't I. . ."

"Colonel Mnera reported it at the same time he reported the discovery of Vickers' body," Captain Paulus said. "That was just this morning, and the government did not inform us until the same ten minutes ago. The usual cooperation, sir."

Rain nodded in disgust. The small major looked again at Cranston. "You were going to tell me?"

Cranston smiled. "I really was Major. You see, it was hardly a real *raid*. It was more in the nature of a kidnaping. Or to be precise, I think it was some sort of interrogation sortie on the part of those mysterious five." And Cranston went on to explain the events of last night in Mukulu in detail. He left out, of course, the appearance of The Shadow, and his own part in shooting the tires of the truck.

"Women?" Bain said. "You said three *women*, with Sten guns? And in unmarked uniforms?"

"Three women and two men," Cranston said. "And in a truck, a British-made truck from the look of it. Do you think you know who they were?"

"Perhaps, Cranston," Rain said. "What do you think, Captain Paulus?"

"Mercenaries from over the border, probably from Katanga," Paulus said promptly.

"What would mercenaries want with McNair?" Rain asked. "Well," Paulus hesitated. "I don't know for sure, but McNair knows that area better than any man alive. That must be it, they wanted him to lead a raid. I think we should get men up to the border and quickly!"

Major Rain nodded slowly and turned to his other assistant, Captain Johnson. The older man had been listening carefully but had said very little up until now.

"They don't sound much like mercenaries to me, sir," Johnson said. "We've had no report of women mercenaries up in Katanga or anywhere else. I'd say women makes it sound more like some partisan type operation, patriotic and all that. Perhaps they're some action terrorist group from Rhodesia or South Africa."

"What about McNair?" Rain said.

Johnson thought. "He's a strange chap, you know? He knows that country, I'll give Paulus that much, but he hasn't been in the bush in ten years. Not since that last safari into Kanda. I happened to be out here at that time, I remember the uproar over that. If McNair hadn't retired I think he would have lost his ticket anyway, the government was very angry. Kanda was really rather off limits even then."

"Before Doctor Arthur had it made official?" Cranston said.

Johnson nodded. "The doctor raised a bloody awful stink. Good thing, too. That safari lost thirty-five men! McNair opened that store, did very well, though I can't say how he did it. I mean, the chap's been drunk just about every day since, and yet he makes pots of money. Funny, too, McNair was no drinker until it happened. Went to pieces but stayed on up there, very odd."

Major Rain had listened to both his assistants. Now he began to pace again. The small Swede seemed to be wrestling with some decision. Cranston and the two professional soldiers watched him. Finally, Rain stopped pacing and stared out the window at the green land across the shining Lubilana.

"We can't take chances. We'll have to send some men to the border in case Paulus is correct," Rain said. "Paulus, you take care of that, better send at least a battalion. Take the Ghurkas."

"Yes sir," Paulus said. "You think one battalion will be enough, sir?"

"It will have to be, we don't have an Army Group here," Rain said drily. He turned to Johnson. "Johnson, you take my Swedes, the whole battalion, and see if you can find those raiders. I suppose Mukulu is a good place to start. Contact Mnera and get his help if you can. Take a good look at that truck, if Mnera's men haven't stripped the thing clean by now."

"Yes sir," Captain Johnson said. The grizzled older man then hesitated. "Sir? I'd rather have the Ghurkas for my end. begging your pardon. They do better at jungle work, especially tracking raiders."

Rain nodded. "Very well. I agree. My Swedes will sit on the border better, you're right. Paulus takes the Swedes. Is there anything I've forgotten?"

"About the murder of Vickers," Cranston said. "What are you doing about that?"

Rain raised an eyebrow. "Vickers? My dear Cranston, those raiders and your Vickers are obviously connected. We'll take care of the matter."

"I'm not so sure they are connected, Major Rain," Cranston said, "at least not directly. More than five people were involved in the attack on that village."

Major Rain sat down behind his desk and tilted back in his chair. His small eyes bored into Cranston. "Kindly let me run my own affairs, Cranston. You understand? Now if you have no more to tell me, I suggest you leave us to do our work. The sooner you do, the sooner we'll find who killed your friend."

Cranston leaned across the desk toward Rain. "Just one more thing, Major Rain. Just what were you and your assistants doing in Mukulu the night of that attack?"

Major Rain did not blink. "None of your business, Cranston."

"You just *happened* to be there?"

"Routine inspection," Rain said.

"Without informing Colonel Mnera?" Cranston asked.

"You better go now, Mr. Cranston," Rain said.

"All right, never mind why you were there on the spot," Cranston said. "What did you find? Did you search the whole area around that village?"

"We found nothing, Cranston. No more than you did."

"Nothing at all?"

"Nothing!" Rain snapped. "Now will you let us. . ."

Cranston nodded. "Very well, Major. You know where to reach me. The Augustus Hotel. I'll be waiting for information."

With that, Cranston turned and left the office. Behind him Rain was already hard at work instructing Paulus and Johnson, working out the details of their assignments. In the dim and shaded corridor of the building being used by the United Nations team, Cranston walked slowly as he considered what he had learned. Rain had no intention of telling him why he had been in Mukulu that night. Rain said he had found no more than Cranston, but Cranston, or The Shadow, had found the body of Gerald Vickers. Rain was not happy to know that Interpol was working secretly in Rain's territory. There was much more Cranston wanted to know about Major Eric Rain, and about his assistants who did not seem to agree on just who the five raiders could have been.

Cranston began to look for a public telephone. He would call Stanley to pick him up now. It was time for The Shadow to meet with his special agent he had planted in Zambala a week ago. He smiled to himself when he thought of how Major Eric Rain would react to that—an agent of The Shadow in his own ranks. The major would not be pleased. Cranston wondered if perhaps the Major would also be frightened.

6

ON A SIDE STREET a few doors off one of the wide Boulevards of Zambala, the gaudy lights of a cafe glared red and yellow in the night. It was after nine o'clock now, and the cafe was bursting with light and noise. A soldiers and workers cafe, the large room was crowded with government troops and UN troops in uneasy camaraderie. They were drunk by now, most of them, and Military Police personnel kept a watchful eye on them. One British sergeant seemed particularly drunk.

The sergeant was a stocky man of average height. He stood alone at the bar, swaying slightly, lowering his glass after a drink with the care and slowness of a man too drunk to be quite sure just how far away the bar top was. His heavy-jawed face was set in a perpetual half-smile. The half-smile, with the broken nose spread thick across his battered face, gave him the appearance of some strange gargoyle. To his new comrades in the UN Forces the sergeant looked like a half-punchdrunk ex-prizefighter. But they liked him, even after only a week, because he was fair on duty, and off-duty he bought drinks and drank with the best of them. Soldiers like a sergeant who will drink with them, buy drinks for them, and complain about the officers and the stupidity of their work. With such a sergeant the soldiers like to compare "inside" information. They thought of it as a harmless letting off of steam.

But the sergeant was not harmless. Nor was he ever drunk. When the sergeant was off-duty he was really on-duty—his real duty. The soldiers in the cafe would have been surprised, even shocked, to know that when he stood drunk at the bar of the cafe, the sergeant was working. They would have been equally surprised to know that he had once been middleweight boxing champion of England, and far more surprised to learn that behind his battered exterior all the skills of his former profession in the ring remained intact. A few of the soldiers might even have remembered him, if they had heard his real name: Bombardier Bill Mace, former champion, and now—an agent of The Shadow.

In the week The Bombardier had been in Zambala he had gained the full confidence of the men in his unit who had hated their former sergeant. (The former sergeant had been transferred by UN Headquarters in New York through the influential friends of financier Henry Arnaud.) So when Corporal Lundstrom of the Swedish Battalion arrived at the cafe this night he made straight for Sergeant Mace to give him the latest news.

"Evenin', Sergeant," Corporal Lundstrom said.

"Lundstrom," the disguised Bombardier said. "Join me, eh? 'Ave a whiskey, wash this ruddy dust from your gullet. Go on, my pleasure."

"Don't mind if I do, Sergeant. Did you hear the latest word on my esteemed major?"

"Rain? No, what's 'e done now?" Bombardier said innocently.

"It's not what he's done, Sergeant, it's who is after him. He just found out that Interpol is down here investigating! The major is very worried. He's started a search of his whole staff to see if Interpol has planted already someone on his staff! So disturbed I've never seen the major."

"Probably they suspect 'im of stealin' the men's rations! That's all," the disguised Bombardier said.

"It's short rations I'll be on," Lundstrom said. "We're off for the border in the North. That Paulus is taking us. And the Ghurkas are going to beat the bushes for some stragglers from over the border. I tell you, Sergeant, something really seems to be brewing. We may get some action yet."

"I can do without it," the bogus sergeant said. "Came down 'ere for a bloody rest."

Corporal Lundstrom laughed, and the Bombardier was about to continue in his jokes to impersonate the sergeant, when he saw Corporal Lundstrom suddenly look down.

Lundstrom was staring at a ring on Bombardier's finger. The small opal ring on Bombardier's right hand seemed to be glowing.

"Acts up like that when the light 'its it funny on, you know?" Bombardier said casually. "Got it on a tour in Malaysia. Cost me a tin of biscuits and a broken watch."

"I'd swear it had a light inside it, yes," Lundstrom said.

"Just a trick of the bloody light," Bombardier said. He drained his drink. "Well, I'm off. With 'alf the bloody outfit in the field, there'll be 'ell to pay tomorrow."

The Bombardier weaved his way out of the cafe and stood for a moment in the gaudy light in front of the place. Then he turned right away from the wide boulevard and walked along the dark side street. The night was dark, and soon Bombardier had left all signs of life behind. He reached a narrow cross street that was as deserted as the dark street he was on. The ring on his finger glowed more brightly at each step. He crossed the side street. The ring began to fade. He turned back and entered the side street toward his left. The ring glowed brighter again. He passed the dark mouth of an alley.

"Here, Bombardier," a voice said quietly.

The voice was strong but low in the dark night. It hovered in the air, directionless and seemingly without human origin. It was a low and quiet voice that was strangely commanding in its soft tones. The Bombardier stepped into the dark alley. He did not hesitate a moment, but stepped into the alley and vanished from the sight of anyone who happened to pass on the deserted street of Zambala.

"Good evening, Chief," Bombardier said. "I've been waiting for you."

There was a sound of movement in the alley and a hawklike face appeared bathed in a low red glow. In the eerie light only the eyes and a sharp, swordlike nose could be seen. The piercing eyes burned from beneath the wide brim of a slouch hat. Below the sharp nose the face was hidden, and the great black shape seemed to blend away into the night. The Shadow stepped closer to his agent.

"Take the microphone," The Shadow said.

The Bombardier felt the small, round object placed into his band. A faint whirring sound began inside the alley. The Bombardier knew the sound of the microrecorder. Far away in the perpetual blue light of The Shadow's secret headquarters in New York every report of every agent of the Avenger was filed and ready for any future use. The reports of his agents were the heart of The Shadow's system.

"Report," The Shadow intoned.

Bombardier raised the microphone. "Agent 109 reports from Zambala. Investigation has shown that agents of Interpol are engaged in operations in this area in connection with two occurrences. First, sizeable quantities of missing UN supplies that have apparently been hijacked from central supply depots, all within the last six months. Second, evidence of small-scale smuggling of some types of heavy equipment over the north and east borders."

The Shadow broke in. "Hijacking and smuggling? What kind of supplies, Bombardier?"

"Apparently all kinds, Chief, but mostly military. Food, medical supplies, guns, ammunition, and gas. Also parts of uniforms, tunics for the most part," the Bombardier said. "The heavy stuff coming over the border seems to be vehicles of some type. It's small quantity, but I think it has them worried. Trucks mean only one thing to Major Rain."

"And to me," The Shadow said. "Somewhere there are men waiting to use those trucks."

"What about those stragglers I heard about tonight? The ones they're sending the Ghurkas out after?" Bombardier said.

"Yes, the trucks could be theirs. They came in a truck, and Captain Paulus thinks they came over the border," The Shadow said, and stopped. His burning eyes seemed to flame up in the dark of the alley. His gaze fixed on Bombardier. "You said something about Major Rain! That the trucks meant only one thing to Major Rain. Is Bain also investigating these things?"

"Yes, Chief," Bombardier said. "Interpol is looking into the problems, but so are Rain and his men. They are not working together. Interpol knows what Rain is doing, but Bain did not know about Interpol until tonight. Someone told him."

"I fear that was me, or Lamont Cranston," The Shadow said from the dark.

"It has the Major worried," Bombardier said.

"Go on with your report," The Shadow said.

"Very good, sir," Bombardier said quickly. "To date Agent 109 has been unable to discover any further information on the reason for the hijacking and smuggling, or on the people who are doing same. Neither Interpol nor United Nations Security appear to have found any solution to the problems. In my opinion, neither investigating body has located the cause of these events. Both are continuing their activities."

Bombardier released the trigger on the microphone and waited. The eyes of The Shadow glowed in the alley. Through the night of the city all was quiet. Faintly in the distance a high laugh suddenly drifted from the cafe Bombardier had just left. The face of The Shadow, bathed in the red glow of the fire-opal girasol, was set in grim lines as Bombardier finished his formal report and waited.

"Were Rain, Paulus and Johnson in Mukulu the night of the attack on some business about the missing supplies?" The Shadow asked slowly.

"I think so, Chief," Bombardier said. "But more the matter of the smuggling."

"We do not know for sure that the smuggling and hijacking are being done by the same people, do we?" The Shadow said, his low, hard voice speculative. "We do not know that either have any connection to Vickers or the Demon."

"No, we don't, Chief, but. . ." The Bombardier began. "I'm not certain, Chief, but there was a report of some material coming across the border up that way. They found nothing, that village was attacked before they could reach the border. I've seen Bain's report, he said they went to the village first and then to the border. They found nothing at the border."

The Shadow moved through the silence of the alley. His eyes burned above the collar of his black cloak as he paced the stones. Rain had been at Mukulu supposedly on a mission—a mission that failed! He had been side-tracked to the attacked village. It could be true, or it could be a cover-up story. And Interpol had some reason for not informing Major Rain or his men about their involvement in the investigations of the missing supplies and the smuggling.

"Do you know the source of the report, the tip, about the smuggling that night?" The Shadow asked.

"No, Chief."

"Or how long Major Rain had had such a report?"

"No," Bombardier said.

"What can you report about Bain and his two assistants?" The Bombardier clicked on his microphone. "Major Eric Rain, Swedish career officer on detached service with United Nations Security. The Major is forty-four years old, has served in the Swedish Army since 1940 when he was commissioned, his service being continuous except for a six year period in the fifties."

"And still only a major?" The Shadow said.

"Yes, Chief. His six years out cost him two promotions," Bombardier explained. "The Swedes are tough, and they haven't lost many men in wars."

"Go on," The Shadow said.

"Captain Anton Paulus, a Dane, serving as a paid member of the United Nations Forces. Paulus served in the Danish Army just before World War U. During the war he was in the Danish underground, his record seems good. After the war he worked in various civilian capacities and then joined the French Foreign Legion and fought in Indo-China. After Dienbienphu he offered his services to the UN."

"How does he get along with Rain?"

"Very well, Chief. They seem pretty close. It's Johnson who seems the odd man on the team. Maybe because Rain and Paulus are both Scandinavians."

"All right, Bombardier," The Shadow said, "what about Johnson?"

Bombardier clicked on his microphone. "Captain Walter Johnson, English, serving on detached service with the UN. An English career officer, Sandhurst and Grenadier Guards during World War II. Johnson is over fifty, he had trouble during the war and was taken out of field command. He retired from active service in 1950 still only a captain. He came out to Africa for

some years, became an expert on the northern part of this country. Four years ago he offered his services to the Army of Ghana. Officially he is now a captain in the Ghana Army, is detached from them. He came down here with the Ghanese unit, but stayed on when they went home."

In the dark The Shadow nodded. "Ghana, that is why I did not recognize the insignia on his uniform. They are all career soldiers serving with other armies, mercenaries you could say, Bombardier. And each of them has failed to advance as far as might have been expected."

"Yes, Chief, I noticed that. You think one, or all, of them could be playing a double game?"

The burning eyes glowed above the heavy collar of the black cloak. "It is possible, Bombardier. I want you to continue to watch them as closely as you can. If you cannot watch all of them, stay close to Major Rain."

"That won't be so easy now, Chief. Since he found out about Interpol he's started looking into his staff people. My cover is good, but perhaps not good enough. I'll have to be careful."

"We will have to risk it, Bombardier," The Shadow said. "I must know what Major Rain is. . . *Down!*"

In the dark of the alley The Shadow pushed Bombardier to the ground. The Avenger stood hidden and listening. The sound was odd, a light tapping and a sound of singing. The Shadow glided to the mouth of the alley and looked out, his black-shrouded shape invisible against the blackness of the alley opening. His sharp gaze saw them coming slowly down the dim side street toward the alley. Bombardier crawled up behind him to look out.

The two men were laughing as they came. They were an odd sight. One walked slowly ahead, his eyes covered by dark glasses, a cane tapping the stone of the street. The second leaned against the blind man. He leaned heavily, his head back and singing loudly. The second man was drunk. They were both natives, their black faces barely visible in the night. The blind man laughed as he held up his companion, and the drunken man sang as he steered his blind partner like a small ship in a heavy sea. As they neared the alley, they suddenly decided to cross the street and pass the alley on the far side. Soon they were past the alley opening and moving away on the far side of the street. Their voices, the singing, faded away into the distance.

"They're gone," Bombardier said.

"Yes," The Shadow said. "I was worried for a moment. I did not like the look of them. I do not trust strange coincidences where we are meeting, Bombardier."

"I was worried too, Chief," Bombardier said. "For a while I was sure that blind man wasn't blind at all, and I'm not so sure about how drunk the other one was. They looked fake to me."

"They did. They. . . Quick, Bombardier! I see. . ."

But The Shadow realized his mistake and heard the new sound an instant too late.

There were two of them this time, too. They stood for a quick moment before the mouth of the alley. Two men who had crawled silently up under the cover of the noise and bizarre appearance of the first two. The ruse was clear now to The Shadow, but it had become clear a split instant too late.

The two natives paused, hurled an object into the alley, and fled. The Shadow hurled the Bombardier backward into the alley and fell to the ground himself.

The bomb exploded with a shattering roar and a great sheet of flame that lighted the narrow confines of the alley.

The Shadow leaped up and raced in pursuit of the fleeing natives.

7

THEY RAN, the two natives, and behind them the great black figure of The Shadow bounded through the night. At first the natives ran easily, unaware of their pursuer. Then one turned and saw the billowing black figure as The Shadow passed beneath a single street lamp.

The native screamed in terror.

The mocking laugh of The Shadow reached across the distance like a slashing whip.

The two natives turned again and ran in a mad frenzy of fear. They skidded, and tripped, and crawled up to run again, their terror-stricken eyes turned constantly behind at the giant black figure that seemed to fly after them like some avenging eagle in the night. The black cloak spread wide as if to engulf the two men, the street, and the entire city as The Shadow loomed closer and closer.

One of the natives never stopped, never slackened in his mad dash to escape the pursuing Shadow. But the second native was made of sterner nerves. The second native stopped suddenly, knelt, and fired a small, automatic weapon.

The Shadow dodged.

The native ran again.

The Shadow leaped up and continued the grim pursuit. At each powerful bound he gained on the two fleeing natives. Once again he drew close.

The native with the automatic weapon stopped, turned, and fired a spraying burst.

The Shadow dodged again, laughing his chilling laugh into the dark night. His automatics were out now, one in each hand, and he readied to fire at the braver native. Not to kill, he wanted the two men alive. Carefully he took aim at the armed man who had just turned to run again.

But he did not fire.

Before The Avenger could fire, a jeep suddenly roared around the corner from a side street. The jeep skidded, and the men in the jeep opened fire with their submachine guns. They fired at the fleeing natives—and at The Shadow. The two natives vanished into the night. The jeep turned all its fire on The Shadow who stood alone in the night. Crouched low in the night close to the silent buildings of the city, The Shadow saw the United Nations markings on the jeep.

Silently, The Shadow faded away into the night.

In the jeep the men stopped firing. They seemed to stare about them. The black figure they had seen was gone, vanished. There was now nothing for them to fire at. They peered down the length of the dimly lighted street, and saw nothing at all. The Shadow, where he stood unseen against a building, watched them. They were talking, and his secret powers of hearing carried their words to him.

"What was it, Major?"

"I swear it had wings!"

"And claws, red claws!"

"Shut up, all of you!"

The Shadow recognized the voice of Major Eric Bain.

"It was flying, did you see? Those black wings!"

"Where did it go? Nothing could get out of that street!"

"Of course not, you fools, it's still there. Spread out and find him! It's no monster, just a man!"

The men climbed slowly from the jeep and moved down the street. The Shadow smiled grimly where he stood hidden. The four men came closer, spread out to cover the entire street. The street was narrow, and there was no way into the dark and locked buildings. On this block were no alleys. The four men came closer to The Shadow.

Where he stood hidden, the ring on his finger began to glow more brightly beneath the folds of the great cloak. Beneath the wide brim of the slouch hat The Shadow's eyes burned in the night. His gaze fixed itself on the man who would pass closest to him. The power of his mind, learned so long ago from the Master Chen Ta Tze, slid like a thick fog into the brain of the soldier nearest to him.

The soldier neither stopped nor blinked. A fog rolled into the man's mind but he did not know it. Ahead and to his right as he moved carefully, alertly down the dim street, the street was clear and empty. To his left all was dark, black, like a wall that had moved out. The buildings themselves seemed to have moved closer, and the soldier moved away farther out into the street, sure that he had simply walked too close to the walls. The soldier did not pause. His eyes, seeming to him as alert as ever, searched the street and the shadows near the buildings. But he saw nothing to his left but shadows and a blank wall. The soldier passed within a few feet of the mocking eyes of The Shadow, and passed on unaware. Later, his head would ache, and he would never know why.

The jeep came down the street behind the walking men. Its lights on. The driver looked straight at The Shadow and saw only a black shape against the wall, no more than the shadow cast by a ledge on the first floor of the building. The jeep, too, passed on, and the men gathered around it again. Major Eric Rain was swearing angrily.

"How could he have gotten out of that street!" Rain's voice said from the far end of the dim street.

"I tell you he had wings!"

"Shut up, all of you. Somehow he got out. All right, back to that alley. On the double into the jeep!"

The men climbed back into the jeep and it drove away down the narrow street. The Shadow came from his hiding place against the wall of the building. They were going to the alley. Then they had heard the bomb, and that was what had brought them. The Shadow suddenly knew that Bombardier had been hit. His black shape floated swiftly through the night after the jeep.

They were clustered around the dark mouth of the alley. There were two jeeps. Major Rain commanded the first, and The Shadow saw Captain Johnson in the second. And he saw Bombardier on the ground. They had carried Bombardier from the alley and laid him down beneath the feeble streetlamp. A doctor worked over him. The Bombardier lay with his head propped up and a cigarette in his hand. Major Rain stood over him.

"All right, Sergeant Mace, what is this all about?"

The Shadow watched from the dark, his cloaked figure unseen, his sharp ears alert and listening. He could see the pain etched on Bombardier's face, but the eyes of the ex-fighter were clear and under control. Bombardier would reveal no secrets to Major Rain.

"I really couldn't say, sir," Bombardier said. "I was out takin' a stroll, you might say, sir, when I 'eard this 'ere noise. I sounded like it came from that alley there, so I goes in to take a look around, see? Well, I'm not in there a bloody minute when these two blokes tosses a bomb in and up I goes. After that, you came, and 'ere I am."

From where he was hidden in the night, The Shadow smiled. Bombardier was a first-class agent. Bombardier knew that Rain had seen the two attackers running, and had accounted for

them. The ex-fighter also knew that Rain had probably seen The Shadow, so had left an opening, the noise in the alley, as a possible explanation of the presence of The Shadow.

"You expect me to believe that, Sergeant?" Rain said.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, it's the truth and I guess we're both stuck with it," the Bombardier said blandly.

"So you claim you have no idea why anyone would want to throw a bomb at you?"

"At me, sir? Lor' Blimey, sir, it wasn't meant for me! Now I ask you, who would bomb me? You know what I think, sir? I think there was someone hiding in that alley and the bomber boys just made a mistake."

The Bombardier grinned up at Major Rain. The major did not seem amused. Bain stared down at Bombardier for some time before he spoke again.

"Just an accident, eli?" Rain said at last.

Captain Johnson stepped up. "Terrorists perhaps, Major. What about that gang that attacked at Mukulu? After all, gangs are throwing bombs at soldiers, especially UN soldiers, all over the world."

"But not here, Captain. Have we had a single incident of anyone bombing or doing anything else to our people?"

"Well, sir, no, but. . ."

"Then don't be a fool! You don't make a reign of terror out of one bombing attempt!" Rain said angrily.

"Perhaps this is the first, sir," Johnson said.

"Perhaps it is, Captain. That we'll wait and see, eh?" Rain said acidly. "But in the meantime do you know what I think? I think this man was the proper target. I think he knows it, and I think he knows why!"

Bombardier protested. "Not me, sir!"

But in the Bombardier's voice The Shadow could hear the uneasiness. Bombardier was watching Major Rain, and the exfighter seemed to expecting the major to say something else. The Shadow waited, too. The crime-fighter had a shrewd idea of just what Bombardier expected, and of what Rain would say. Rain was no fool.

"Yes, Sergeant Mace, you," Bain said. "Has it occurred to you, Johnson, that Sergeant Mace has only been with us a week? A rather sudden replacement, weren't you, Sergeant? I'm sure none of us had any idea that your predecessor would be transferred so unexpectedly. After all, he'd been with us for two years, and even the UN Army rarely moves quite so fast, eh?"

"I just got my orders, sir," Bombardier said warily.

"Yes, Sergeant, I imagine you did," Rain said. "The question is, from whom did you get those orders? Just where were you serving before you came to help me? In Burindi, wasn't it? An out of the way post for a security expert wouldn't you say? Still, that's what your records say, I remember."

"Yes, sir," Bombardier said.

"You know what I really think, Sergeant?" Rain said. "I think you're an Interpol agent! I think you were planted here, and I'm going to prove it. When I do, there's going to be hell to pay!"

Where he watched from the dark street, The Shadow went over Bombardier's false records in his mind. With his total recall, The Shadow checked the records page by page. They would stand up under an inspection for a short time, longer with good luck. But if Rain were thorough, the records would stand for exactly five days—the time it would take Rain to check with, and

receive an answer from, London, where the records said Bombardier had been stationed three posts ago. And Rain would be thorough, which made the time short for The Shadow. The wounded Bombardier would have to be rescued and spirited away before Rain discovered that he was, indeed, an impostor, but not Interpol. Rain had created a problem for The Shadow, but The Shadow was not the only one concerned by Rain's charge. Captain Johnson seemed stunned by the mention of Interpol.

"Interpol, sir?" Johnson said, "are they here?"

"I'm pretty sure they are, Johnson," Rain said.

"That changes things, doesn't it?" Johnson said. "We'll have to work faster."

"A lot faster now," Major Rain said.

The burning eyes of The Shadow glowed alert. The cryptic words, innocent enough, could have many meanings. Rain and Johnson could simply be talking about solving the problems faster to beat Interpol—or they could be talking about finishing some plan before Interpol could stop them! The Shadow knew what evil lurked in the hearts of men! All Rain's questions to Bombardier, all the talk of an Interpol agent, could be a cover. Perhaps Rain had already discovered that Bombardier was an impostor, and it had been Rain himself, or Johnson, who had ordered the bomb thrown! The two Security Officers had appeared very quickly and conveniently on the scene immediately after the bombing. They had also very conveniently allowed the two native bomb throwers to escape!

Major Rain's next question made The Shadow come even more alert in the dark night of the city. Not the question itself, but the casual way it was asked, as if Rain already knew more about Bombardier than he was trying to show.

"By the way, Sergeant, the noise you claim to have heard in the alley. Did you by any chance see if it was made by a rather tall man in a black cloak?"

Bombardier feigned perfect bewilderment. "Black cloak? Lor, sir, not me. I don't go much for spooks."

"A tall man, all in black," Rain said. "We saw him with the two natives who threw the bomb."

"Damned strange-looking chap," Johnson said. "Weird. Seemed to just vanish into thin air."

"Vanish, sir?" Bombardier said innocently. "Sounds like that Demon Vickers reported, doesn't it? Maybe a witch doctor, sir. I've 'eard tell they can do very peculiar things."

Major Rain rubbed his chin as he studied Bombardier. The Major was unconvinced.

"Witch doctor, eh? That's what you think? Well, possibly, but if there was no other person in this alley, then the bomb had to be meant for you, right? You can't have it both ways, Sergeant."

"No sir," Bombardier said, "but I didn't say there wasn't no one in this 'ere alley, I just said I didn't see no one."

"I see," Rain said with disgust. "Very well. All right, take him up and let's get out of here. Johnson, you see to it that the sergeant is well taken care of in the hospital, we wouldn't want to lose him just yet. Post a very good guard, eh?"

"Yes, Major," Captain Johnson said.

Rain's men lifted Bombardier into one of the jeeps. They all climbed into their vehicles. The motors started, and the jeeps prepared to move off and out of the dark side street of the city.

The high, chilling laugh of The Shadow rose in the dark night and echoed along the narrow street.

In his jeep Rain jumped up and stared into the dark. Johnson licked his lips, his face pale. All the other men began to whisper.

Along the dim street there was nothing to see. There was only the eerie laugh that hung in the air.

Swearing, Major Rain ordered his men to drive off. The jeeps roared away and vanished into the night. The Shadow smiled where he stood hidden by the shadows of the buildings. His laugh had been to tell Bombardier he had been watching and had heard all that was said. To tell Bombardier that The Shadow was close by and would come to his aid. For the moment, Bombardier was safer where he was—under guard. Whatever Major Rain might suspect, The Shadow knew. The bomb had been meant for Bombardier. Someone had discovered that Bombardier was only posing as the sergeant—someone who wanted no spies around. And whoever it was may or may not have seen The Shadow. In any case, Bombardier was of no further use in this affair. He had been discovered, and was now out of action. And The Shadow had less time than ever to find the killer of Gerald Vickers—and the secret of The Demon.

The black shape of The Avenger turned and vanished into the night.

In the suite of the Augustus Hotel, Margo Lane crossed her slim legs and smiled at Lamont Cranston. The wealthy socialite had just returned to the suite where Margo had been waiting since early evening. She had listened in silence while Cranston had told her of his visit to Major Rain and of the attempt on the life of Bombardier.

"He's all right, Margo, and safe enough for now, but he's useless to us on this affair," Cranston said.

"I hired the small car and equipped it with your kits and weapons, Lamont," Margo said. "It's in the hotel garage."

"Good. Any further word on those raiders?"

"No, and nothing unusual up in Mukulu before I left. Colonel Mnera drove down with me to report to his superiors. Doctor Arthur and McNair were planning to come to Zambala by the river to pick up the doctor's monthly supplies."

"No hint of The Demon?" Cranston asked.

"No, Lamont. Mnera inspected that truck but said he found nothing. It was a common British Army truck, there are hundreds like it in Africa. Mnera said there was no telling where it came from."

Cranston nodded slowly. His face was as impassive as ever, his hooded eyes only half visible. He let his gaze rest on his beautiful secretary and agent for a moment. Then he looked at the empty serving cart that had contained their dinner. He studied the elegant preliberation furniture of the room. He let his eyes take in the papered walls and the ornate fireplace and woodwork. He was concentrating his thoughts. Margo waited quietly, she knew the way her chief worked.

"We have five areas of investigation, Margo. First, the murder of Gerald Vickers. Second, The Demon and the vanished village people. Third, those five raiders last night and their interest in McNair. Fourth, the hijacking and smuggling with Interpol and Rain's office interested in them. And fifth,—the role of Major Rain and why Interpol kept him in the dark about their involvement. Five separate problems, Margo, all or any of which may or may not be connected."

Margo thought for a time. "Aren't we sure that Vickers' death and The Demon are the same problem? Also all the things Interpol and Rain are connected in?"

"No, Margo, not necessarily," Cranston said. "Vickers could have escaped The Demon attack, and been killed for some other reason entirely. Then, Rain and Interpol could both be working on the hijacking, but Interpol could have a totally separate reason for checking on Rain. We have far too many loose ends. Nothing connects yet. The purpose of The Demon has to be to scare the

natives, but did those villagers go of their own free will, to join some cause, or were they taken away for some purpose? How does McNair tie in? Those raiders had the look of some army, but why did they want McNair? And who tried to kill Bombardier? Which one of our problems caused that?"

"He was working in Rain's office," Margo pointed out.

"True, but he had been asking questions about Mukulu and The Demon," Cranston said. "There is something ominous at work here, something very evil. Vickers saw The Demon, and thought he could explain it. But as far as I can tell The Demon never saw him! Then why and how was he killed?"

"Could Stanley be right, that Vickers simply stumbled into raiding natives and was shot? A pure coincidence?" Margo said.

"Possibly, Margo, but that raid on the village seems too well organized, too efficient, to have been no more than a native raid," Cranston said.

Margo thought again, and was about to answer when Cranston sat up rigid. He raised his hand in warning. But Margo, too, had heard the sound out on the open terrace of the suite. A faint step. Cranston stood and glided silently to the wall to his left and moved quickly along the wall to stand behind where the French doors opened onto the terrace. Margo remained seated in her chair, her back to the terrace. She seemed to be motionless, but her small automatic was in her hand, and her taut body was coiled like a spring and ready.

A man appeared in the terrace doorway.

Margo went down, twisted, and came up in the cover of the chair. Her automatic was ready and aimed at the terrace doorway.

Cranston jumped toward the man from where he was hidden.

"Hold it!" the man cried.

Cranston stopped, smiled, his hand already on the man's shoulder. The man was Kurt Rohrbach, the Interpol agent.

8

LAMONT CRANSTON laughed. "You walk too lightly, Mr. Rohrbach."

"Not lightly enough, it seems," Rohrbach said wryly.

Margo stood up. She had already returned her automatic to its hiding place. The Interpol man watched her quizzically, the expression on his face showing that he was beginning to guess that Margo was something more than a private secretary.

"It wouldn't do for me to be seen visiting you," Rohrbach said. "But I'll be careful how I sneak up on you two again. I have an idea there are some things Commissioner Weston failed to tell me about you two."

Margo laughed. "Not really, Mr. Rohrbach, but Lamont has done work for the Commissioner before, and we have learned to be prepared."

"And Vickers is dead, shot, so there is reason to be careful," Rohrbach said, and nodded. "Yes, I heard the report this afternoon. Dead ever since the night of that attack, it seems, so he never was really missing. I've brought you down here for nothing. There is nothing you can do now, Vickers can't talk to anyone."

"We can find who killed him, and why," Cranston said.

"That's my job, not yours. Much too dangerous," Rohrbach said.

The Interpol man crossed the room and sat on the elegant brocade couch. Cranston sat again in the chair he had been in. His impassive face watched Rohrbach. Only Margo saw the brief flash of The Shadow in his quiet eyes. Rohrbach was too busy with his own thoughts. The Interpol man could not sit still. As soon as he sat, he stood again, and began to stride about the room.

"I don't like it at all, Cranston," Rohrbach said harshly. "There's something rotten going on, and Vickers got caught in the middle of it. Did you see anything up there? Notice anything at all strange?"

Cranston shook his head. "Nothing that we didn't know already. Except that body of Vickers. He had been shot once. He was on a sand bar at the edge of the Lubilana. Apparently he had escaped through a trap door and tunnel from that house. The body was not far from the mouth of the tunnel."

Rohrbach nodded. "He escaped from the house, but they got him at the tunnel exit."

"Perhaps," Cranston said. "One thing is peculiar, Rohrbach. Why wasn't the body found sooner? There are government troops, and a UN patrol, all over the area. They should have spotted him sooner."

"Washed up by the river, perhaps," Rohrbach said. "Or carried out there from the bush by some animal. It happens, Cranston."

Cranston frowned. "Possible, I suppose. But there's another thing. Everyone up in Mukulu was armed, carrying pistols. Even McNair and Doctor Arthur."

Rohrbach paced. "Why shouldn't they be? After that attack I would have been sure to go armed, too. Nothing else?"

"Only the missing villagers and the boot tracks in the village itself," Cranston said. He did not add that he had found an oil patch and a strange uniform button. At the moment, only The Shadow knew those things.

"Boots and a whole missing village, just the same," Rohrbach said. He stopped pacing and looked at Cranston. "There have been four other similar raids, Cranston. Boot marks, the village deserted, no bodies, and rumors of The Demon going through the bush country like a plague!"

"Others? I didn't hear of any others!" Cranston said.

"No, none of us had. They all happened *before* the Mukulu attack," Rohrbach said, "but not in this country. They were over the border in the Portuguese territory. Just over the border on the other side of the Kanda Tract. It's very backward country over there, and the reports took a long time getting to the Portuguese authorities. They didn't report to us until they had sent patrols in to check. Just native raids, superstition, they thought, until they finally realized that there had been *four* raids, and that the boots did not sound like natives."

"But they must all have been fairly recent to only show up now," Cranston said.

"They were. All within the past two months. The Portuguese move slowly, they don't like to report on what goes on in their colonies, you know? They have the last colonies, and they want no trouble from outside," Rohrbach explained.

Cranston rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "In every attack, all the villagers were missing?"

"Yes, that was one reason it took so long to get to us. There were no real witnesses, not like Vickers. All the villages were very isolated, no radios."

"Which makes the Mukulu area attack unusual," Cranston said quickly. "It doesn't quite fit the pattern of the other raids. It was close to Mukulu, an administrative center with a permanent

garrison. And the attackers must have known that Vickers was there, probably they knew about the radio also. It was a much more dangerous attack."

"All right," Rohrbach said. "What do you have in mind?"

"I'm not sure, but Major Rain and his two assistants were up around Mukulu that night. They. . ."

"Rain, Johnson and Paulus were here?" Rohrbach snapped. "You're sure?"

"I'm sure. They admitted it," Cranston said. "They refused to tell me why, of course, it's none of my business. But I have an idea it was because of a tip on some smuggling. They expected something to be brought across the border, only they were sidetracked by the attack on that village. Perhaps it was done specifically to sidetrack them, the attack. Perhaps the attack was designed to cover the smuggling that night."

Cranston did not mention that he had more than an idea about the smuggling tip, or that his information had come from Bombardier. Even Rohrbach could not be told the activities and methods of The Shadow. But Rohrbach did not ask him where he had gotten his information. Rohrbach was concerned with another part of the matter.

"You know about the smuggling?" Rohrbach said.

"And the hijacking of supplies," Cranston said.

"I see. Then you've guessed that that is what Interpol is working on?"

Cranston nodded. "I've guessed that Rain is working on it too, but that Interpol had some reason for not working with Rain's office. I'm afraid I let the cat out of the bag." And Cranston explained his meeting this morning with Major Rain.

Rohrbach was not pleased.

"That's unfortunate, Cranston," Rohrbach said. "We did not want our involvement to be known. United Nations Command called us in because the stealing and smuggling had been too smooth, too efficient. The smugglers always seemed to know just where to cross the border safely. And the supplies stolen were always just from the right place at the right time—trucks making deliveries no one should have known about, material taken from a depot hours after it arrived, pinpoint accuracy of what was wanted with nothing else looked into. You see?"

"A leak, some inside informant," Margo said suddenly.

Rohrbach nodded. "That was our thought, and Bain's office had all the necessary information. Now you say Rain and his men were in Mukulu that night."

"And perhaps the attackers knew they were," Cranston said. "Another leak?"

"Unless Rain or his men are involved in the whole thing," Rohrbach said. "They are all soldiers, good ones, and those attacks were very efficient."

"So was the raid on us last night at Mukulu," Margo said. "Those women were very efficient."

Rohrbach stood rigid. The Interpol man stared at Margo and then at Cranston.

"Raid? Last night? Women?" Rohrbach said slowly.

Cranston described the raid of the three women and their two men in the truck. He left out the part where The Shadow had battled the women soldiers. Rohrbach blinked. The Interpol man was highly excited.

"Three women with Stan guns? And they wanted Angus McNair?"

"They did," Cranston said.

"You did not recognize anything about them?"

"No, except that they had slight accents," Cranston said. "Major Rain had an idea though, I think. Paulus suggested some mercenary unit from the north. Johnson seemed to think they were more likely an action group from the white areas."

"You told Rain and his men? And that it was McNair they wanted?" Rohrbach demanded.

"Yes, was that wrong?"

"I'm not sure, Cranston, but McNair is in danger! I want you two to remain here, there's nothing more you can do now!"

Rohrbach turned to leave. The Interpol man was both grim and excited.

"Do you know who those women were?" Margo asked.

"I have an idea," Rohrbach said. "Stay out of it, you hear?"

And Rohrbach was gone. Lamont Cranston started after the Interpol man. At the door he stopped and turned back for a moment.

"Margo, contact Burbank and have him do a complete check on everyone involved in this affair, from Bain to Doctor Arthur. I want the information as soon as possible."

"You're following Rohrbach?" Margo said.

But Cranston was gone. Only his running footsteps, heading down toward the garage of the hotel, echoed back along the hail into the elegant room of the suite.

When the small, black Mercedes drove out of the hotel garage it was not Lamont Cranston behind the steering wheel—it was The Shadow.

The black-cloaked Avenger drove the rented car close behind the Ford of the Interpol man. But not too close. On the empty night streets of the African city there was little traffic. Zambala after dark was as dim and deserted as it might have been if it had never been carved from the jungle. The white city seemed to rest uneasily on the banks of the great river, as if the jungle would reclaim it at any instant. The tall stone buildings seemed perched precariously on the surface of the land, while underneath the old Africa lay waiting to rise again. A silence on the city that was the silence of a tomb, the eternal silence of the Dark Continent that was not really silence but only the stillness of a million hidden and waiting shapes.

The small Ford drove swiftly through the dim side streets and along the wide but empty boulevards. Only on Lubilana Way, the main boulevard of Zambala, was there light and life. The cafes were open and garish with neon light. Soldiers shouted their way to the peace of a drunken oblivion. The Ford did not stop or slow down on Lubilana Way. The Interpol man drove on through the night, out of the gaudy cafe area, and into dark streets again. Behind the wheel of his Mercedes, The Shadow followed, his burning eyes fixed on the speeding car ahead.

Soon the Ford led The Shadow out of the dark again into a second area of light. Brighter streetlights, and lights in large, sprawling houses. But here there was no gaudiness, no cafes or shouting soldiers. The laughter here, and the voices and hours of drunkenness, were behind closed doors, hidden away behind elegant walls. It was the old European section. The part of the city The Shadow had seen from the air. It was still the European Section, the area of money and of power. And it was here Kurt Rohrbach was going. The Ford slowed and turned into the parking lot of a well-lighted large white house. The Shadow knew where they were—The Safari Club.

The Shadow knew The Safari Club. It was once the most exclusive Club between Nairobi and Johannesburg, and was still the private preserve of the men who really owned Africa. The social center of Zambala for the Europeans who still lived in the country. The Shadow knew it well—he was a member. Not as his true self, but as the famous explorer Kent Allard. Many times Kent Allard had come here on his trips into the heart of Africa. Now, perhaps, Kent Allard would have to Visit The Safari Club once more on a trip into the heart of another kind of darkness.

But Kurt Rohrbach did not enter the Club. The Ford parked in a far corner of the crowded parking lot. The Shadow guided his Mercedes silently into another corner hidden from the Interpol man. His black-robed figure emerged into the dark and floated toward where the Ford had parked. Like some giant black bird from a distant past, The Shadow moved silently across the parking lot, among the crowded cars of the Europeans, until he again found Kurt Rohrbach.

The Interpol agent was moving from car to car—searching. Rohrbach did not stop at just any car, the man seemed to know just which cars he wanted to search. Unseen and unheard, The Shadow followed and watched, his fire-opal girasol hidden beneath his cloak, but his eyes glowing as he observed the actions of the Interpol agent. Rohrbach moved from car to car with crisp purpose. The agent was looking for something specific; something he expected to find. The Shadow followed, aware that whatever Rohrbach was after had to be related to the women who had tried to kidnap McNair—or to McNair himself. That was what had sent Rohrbach running from the hotel suite to this parking lot.

Rohrbach found it in the trunk of a small, black Austin.

The Interpol man opened the trunk of the Austin and stopped. He bent and reached inside the trunk. When he straightened up again he held two Sten guns! Rohrbach stood there for a moment looking at the Sten and nodding to himself. Then the Interpol agent looked quickly around, returned the guns to the trunk of the Austin, and walked around to the front door of the car. He opened the front door and leaned in. Rohrbach searched the small black Austin for some time. The Shadow crouched in the dark next to a larger car ten yards away, his black-shrouded shape blending into the contours of the large black car. The Shadow was waiting for Rohrbach to complete his search—then it would be time to find out what Rohrbach knew.

Rohrbach came out of the car. There was a sheet of paper in his hand. The Interpol man, even from where The Shadow watched, was obviously excited again. By the dim light in the parking lot Rohrbach studied the piece of paper in his hand, reading it closely. The Shadow began to steal silently toward the agent, his powers reaching out into Rohrbach's mind. The Shadow must know what Rohrbach knew and what he had found that had so excited him. The secret power over the minds of men reached out and rolled like a cloud into the mind of the Interpol man. Rohrbach brushed his eyes and looked up. The Interpol man squinted around the dim packing lot.

The Shadow stopped, his black figure looming in the night but merging into the shapes and shadows. His mind rolled the cloud thicker over the brain of the Interpol man.

Rohrbach saw him.

The Interpol man stared at the looming black figure tall and indistinct in the night. Rohrbach started to reach for his gun, and stopped. The Shadow's eyes burned through the dark like two flaming points above the spreading black cloak.

Suddenly another shape, figure, person, appeared in the night. Close to Rohrbach. On top of Rohrbach. A figure that rose up from the shadows of the parked cars and stepped close to the motionless Interpol man.

Rohrbach grunted, groaned once, and collapsed. The paper was gone from his hand.

The Shadow leaped forward, his cloak streaming out behind him.

Rohrbach lay on the ground beside the small black Austin. Along the lines of cars the third figure was running toward the side wall of The Safari Club.

The Shadow floated in pursuit, his cloak flying out like great bat wings in the dark of the parking lot. There was no sound but the sound of running feet and the heavy breathing of the fleeing figure ahead. The grim chase went on, The Shadow gaining at every stride. The fleeing

figure never looked back, never paused in its direction. But The Shadow pursued relentlessly, looming closer and closer until the running figure ahead reached the side wall of the club. There was a flash of light. A door opened—and closed. The light was gone.

The Shadow reached the wall.

There was no handle or knob on the outside of the door. The door was locked. A fire door that could only be opened from the inside. The Shadow turned without a sound and glided back to where Rohrbach lay on the ground beside the black Austin. The Avenger bent over the fallen man. Rohrbach had been stabbed once. A single stroke under the rib cage, silent and final. The weapon was not there. The killer was not one to leave clues behind. But even this careful killer was not perfect.

Rohrbach was dead.

The Interpol man opened his eyes. His lips moved. The Shadow knew that the dying man could not see him, Rohrbach only knew that someone was there, someone he sensed, in his final moments, was not the killer.

"Mc. . . Nair. . . saf. . . safari. . . not. . ."

Rohrbach was dead.

The Shadow's burning eyes stared down at the dead agent for a long moment. Another murder must now be avenged. He began to search the dead man's clothes. He found nothing that could tell him anything he did not know. His long, darting fingers probed every possible hiding place in the clothes.

He found the tiny scrap of paper in Rohrbach's hand.

A small corner of the large sheet the killer had snatched away. The paper was crisp and heavy, like some official report, and on the torn scrap there were four words typewritten. . . *The Angel of Death*.

There was nothing else.

The Shadow rose from the ground and crossed the parking lot to his small car. The Avenger placed the scrap of paper in the secret false bottom of his attache case. He returned and dragged the body of Rohrbach into the bushes at the edge of the parking lot where it would not be immediately found. Then he sat in his car with his piercing eyes deep in thought.

Rohrbach had been killed by someone inside the Club, someone who had seen the Interpol man searching and had not wanted what Rohrbach had found to be known. Or had simply not wanted Rohrbach to know it. It was time for Kent Allard to appear and claim his rights of membership in The Safari Club. The Shadow opened his special makeup kit, the special suitcase that contained the clothes of his alter-egos, and removed his black garments. Then he went to work on his face.

9

THE MAN who limped into The Safari Club bore no resemblance to Lamont Cranston or to The Shadow.

Kent Allard stood in the plush and rich lobby of the Club, his eyes studying the large clubroom straight ahead and the bar to the right. Allard's dark hair was brushed straight back. The famous hunter and explorer wore a heavy mustache. His nose was thick and broad, transformed by a special waxlike fluid injected under the skin. His clothes were bright and

casual, not at all like the more formal attire of socialite Lamont Cranston. His entire face seemed to have a different shape, a different aspect and cast—and effect achieved by The Shadow's complete control over his facial muscles. There was no way anyone who watched could have guessed that Kent Allard and Lamont Cranston were one and the same man—and that both were The Shadow.

Allard was shorter than Lamont Cranston, his powerful shoulders bent from the years of carrying heavy loads on his many expeditions. He limped, the limp the result of a tiger attack years ago. An attack that had been carefully reported, and was well known to everyone who had even heard of the famous explorer. It was a limp that returned to him automatically when he became Kent Allard. A limp that drew the immediate attention of a very tall, very gaunt old man with white hair and a bristling white mustache. The tall man's face burst into a magnificent smile as he hurried toward Allard who stood just at the entrance from the lobby into the main clubroom. The tall man walked with the ramrod erect bearing of an old soldier.

"Allard, bless my soul!"

Kent Allard smiled in return and limped forward. "How are you, Colonel Forsythe? It's been a long time."

"Damned fine, yes, by Jove! The old days, eh, damn! How long? Well now, let me see, that lion hunt six years ago, the maneaters we had to bag! Damned sticky, but a good run, eh?" The colonel beamed at Allard the entire time he was talking. "Well, what brings you down from Kenya, eh?"

Allard smiled, listened, but his eyes were searching the crowded room of the club. An elegant room filled with elegant people. Not quite as it had been, the elegance less ostentatious now, less offensive, less obvious, and here and there a dark face that would have used the servants' entrance not long ago. There was, after all, some progress, a beginning at returning something to the people it belonged to. To sit in a plush and exclusive club was not an end, but it was a beginning.

"I had a report of another maneater up near Mukulu," Allard said, and he watched the old colonel for a reaction. Colonel Forsythe was the steward of The Safari Club, and if there were anything known to the Europeans in Zambala, Forsythe would know it.

"Mukulu? Not that I've heard, eh? Not a bit of it. Still, I'll look into it. Damn! Another maneater, that would be a run!"

As he looked slowly about the room, Allard became aware that they were all in the club! In itself that was not unusual. The Safari Club was where everyone went who came to Zambala if they could get in. Particularly the first night, and it did not surprise Allard at all to see Doctor Arthur seated at a table with Angus McNair. The small Scot was drinking too fast and too much, as usual. The same was true of Colonel Mnera—it did not surprise Allard to see the colonel's dark face alone at a corner table. It did not surprise him that Mnera was there, the colonel had just come to the capital for a day or so. And it did not surprise him that the colonel sat alone. Change comes slowly. The colonel was in the club, but there would be many who would still not be ready to like that.

"I see we have changes, Colonel," Allard said.

Colonel Forsythe glanced toward Colonel Mnera. "Change has to come, Allard, eh? I'll have to join him soon. We have our share of dinosaurs and other stupid fools so its up to a few of us who know. Not that I like Mnera, a bard man, too damned serious for me. Good man, though. A gentleman even if he was in Russia those years. Had to go to Russia, damned idiots in the West

wouldn't help him. A good sergeant and a good colonel, not so much difference really, and I know."

The presence of Bain, Paulus and Johnson was more suspicious. The major and his two captains were stationed in Zambala, they undoubtedly came to the Club often. But, then, both Paulus and Johnson had been ordered into the bush tomorrow. It could simply be a last night on the town for a time. And yet someone had killed Kurt Rohrbach only minutes ago in the dark parking lot of the club. Allard watched them to detect any suspicious actions, movements. Neither Doctor Arthur nor McNair were even looking at him nor at anyone else. They did not know Kent Allard, and would have no reason to look at him. Major Bain was looking at him, and so was Captain Paulus. They did not know him either, but, then, they were UN Security, and Kent Allard was a stranger. Policemen have a way of studying strangers. Colonel Mnera was watching someone else. Allard followed the direction of Mnera's gaze. What the colonel was watching did surprise Allard!

"Excuse me, Colonel, but I see some friends," Allard said Colonel Forsythe.

"Of course, my boy. Young and pretty, I hope, eh?" the old soldier said. "I'll have my talk with Mnera. Too old for the young and pretty, damn!"

The colonel left and walked toward Colonel Mnera. Allard looked again at what was interesting Mnera.

They were seated at a small table at the edge of the dance floor. The orchestra was not playing just now, and the floor was empty. Allard could see them clearly. There were two of them. They were both young and both pretty. Their slim evening dresses revealed the smooth curves of youthful, but not too youthful, females. Their clothes were good, their bodies fine, and their faces almost beautiful. Their hair was long and dark and shined in the bright light of the main clubroom. But Allard knew that the hair could not be their hair. They were wearing wigs. Their hair was cut short and severe beneath those wigs. They were two of the women who had tried to kidnap Angus McNair. And one of them was the crisp and efficient leader of that raid in Mukulu.

Allard had been standing too long in the same place. He walked into the bar and ordered a gin sling. The drink in his hand, he stood in a hidden spot from where he could look out again onto the dance floor. There was no doubt in his mind that the two women had been behind Sten guns only last night. His eyes turned to watch Colonel Mnera. The government officer was in earnest conversation with Colonel Forsythe. From time to time Mnera's eyes strayed back to the two women. It was clear that Mnera was not quite sure. The colonel thought he had recognized the two women, but he was not sure enough. Allard was quite sure.

The two women were not alone. Two young men were with them. The young men had all the air of local playboys. Whatever the men were, the two women did not seem to be very interested in them. The men at the table were talking, laughing, having a good dine with two pretty girls. The girls were covertly watching Angus McNair.

McNair seemed to have no suspicion that he was being observed. The small Scot drank his whiskey and looked neither tight nor left. When he spoke it was to say a few short words to Doctor Arthur. The doctor leaned back relaxed in his chair, his slender fingers toying with his glass. If he was doing anything, Doctor Arthur appeared to be observing the general behavior in the crowded club, his ironic smile judging the elegant people working so hard to enjoy themselves. As if in answer to both Allard's thoughts, and Doctor Arthur's ironic smile, the band returned and the gay crowd poured out onto the dance floor. Music blared out and through the room.

The two women stood up to dance with their young escorts. Before they had gone ten steps they were cut-in on. The two girls were both popular and, apparently, well known in the club. Allard looked for Colonel Forsythe. The old soldier had just left Colonel Mnera's table and was entering the bar. Allard motioned to him. The colonel came up.

"Troubles, Kent?"

"Who are those two girls, the good looking ones out on the floor?"

Colonel Forsythe laughed. "You too? The belles of our little world, those two. Maria and Lili Berger, they've been down here for some months now. Work for a German mining equipment firm, I believe. They've certainly given our young bucks a lift!"

"Germans?" Allard asked.

"As far as I know," Forsythe said. "Lovely women the Jerries turn out, I must say."

"Very lovely. Are they here often?"

"Practically live here, my dear Kent. Terrible flirts, too. Why, they must have been escorted by half the chaps in Zambala, perhaps *all* the chaps between them."

"Major Bain, too?" Allard said, nodding toward the distant table where Eric Bain and his two captains sat.

Major Bain and his assistants seemed to have considerable interest in the two girls on the dance floor. Bain was all but twirling his thin mustache as he watched the girls. Captain Johnson watched them the way a panhandler watches the approach of a well-dressed businessman—hopefully. But it was Paulus who watched them most closely. The tall Dane seemed unable to take his eyes from them. Patilus watched their every movement, his eyes following them up and down the dance floor, watching them return to their table.

Colonel Forsythe snorted. "The major, too, and both those captains. Johnson is an old fool! Damn me, but the man's almost as old as I am."

"Not much chance for me then," Allard said with a grin.

"My boy, you would dazzle them!" the old soldier said. "Shall I introduce you? At my age that is about as close as I get to romance, eh?"

"Not just yet," Allard said. "I see a man I used to know." "Just say the word, eh?" Forsythe said.

The old soldier went off to tend to his steward duties, and Allard left the bar. He walked casually through the main clubroom carrying his gin sling, nodding to the many casual acquaintances he knew from past years. As he approached the table where Angus McNair was still trying to drink the world dry of whiskey, Doctor Arthur looked up and saw him. The doctor did not know Kent Allard, and gave no sign of recognition. There was even a certain surprise on Arthur's face when he realized that Allard was coming to his table. The doctor half rose, his eyebrows raised questioningly. But it was Angus McNair that Allard spoke to. He touched the small Scot's shoulder.

"You're Angus McNair," Allard said.

It was not true that he knew McNair, not as Allard, and not prior to meeting the Scot at Mukulu, but it could have been true. Allard certainly could have heard about McNair, although as it happened he had not, and McNair almost surely had heard of the famous Kent Allard. This was what he was what he was counting on, that McNair had heard of Allard. How right he was he soon learned.

The small Scot jumped a foot into the air at the touch of Allard's hand on his shoulder. McNair looked up paled, and then half stood up.

"Mr. Allard, is it?" McNair said shakily.

"It is," Allard said. "May I sit down?" And he looked politely toward Doctor Arthur.

McNair mumbled an introduction. "Kent Allard, Doctor James Arthur."

"The famous explorer?" Arthur said. "I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Allard."

"And I've heard of you, Doctor. You've done good work up there in Mukulu," Allard lied pleasantly. "As a matter of fact, I'm glad I ran into you too. It was Mukulu I wanted to talk to McNair here about. Or more precisely, the Kanda Tract."

Allard's keen eyes, half hidden under a sleepy look, watched the two men carefully as he mentioned the Kanda Tract. As he had expected, McNair became paler than ever and gulped at his whiskey. Doctor Arthur showed nothing but polite interest. Allard sat down at the table and spoke to McNair.

"I've heard of you for years, McNair, it's strange we never happened to meet before," Allard said in his most friendly voice.

"I've heard enough about you," McNair said. "But I haven't done safari in years."

"You mentioned you wanted to talk about the Kanda Tract, Mr. Allard," Doctor Arthur said. "What did you have in mind, if I may ask?"

"An exploration," Allard said promptly. "I've been doing some checking, and do you know that there hasn't been a party into the Tract for ten years? Before that there hadn't been an official expedition for almost fifteen years."

Doctor Arthur nodded. "I'm well aware of that, Mr. Allard. I was instrumental in placing the ban on entry into the Tract. There is nothing there, and it's far too dangerous for white men, or for natives for that matter. Just why did you want to talk to McNair?"

"He was the last man to go into the Tract," Allard said. "Isn't that right, McNair? That last safari, we've all heard about that. I'd like to hear just what did happen?"

In his years of fighting evil across the face of the earth, The Shadow had seen much fear and terror in the eyes of men. And it was sheer terror he saw now in the whiskey-soaked eyes of Angus McNair. The small Scot held his glass in both shaking hands, gulped, saw that his hands were trembling, and set the glass down. McNair hid his hands beneath the table. The little man licked his lips as if they were as dry as a desert despite the whiskey.

"I don't talk about that! You hear?" McNair said.

"But I'd just need to know how. . ." Allard began.

"They died! That's all! That's all! They died!" McNair cried.

At the other tables the people turned to look. The two pretty girls, women, were looking toward McNair again.

"All of them?" Allard said. "Thirty-five?"

"All of them! Like wildfire it was! Yes."

Doctor Arthur explained, "Jungle fevers are like that, Mr. Allard. You must know that. Without help, all of them sick, they died like flies within days."

"McNair was all right," Allard said. "Couldn't he have gone for help?"

"He did," Doctor Arthur said, "but they were too far into the Tract. You see, they insisted on pushing on even after most of them were already sick. McNair was. . ."

The small Scot gulped his whiskey, nodded eagerly, his voice a low and hollow monotone like some small child reciting. "Too far inside, yes. Aye, that was it. They were sick, some already dead and buried. I told them to turn back. They refused, aye. Just kept on and buried them when they died. Then they were all dying and we could go no further. I couldn't nurse them all. Medicine was gone. Less than half left when I went for help. No good, aye. Too late. Too late."

The small Scot stopped, blinked, looked at his half empty glass of thin, amber fluid. McNair shuddered and drank. Doctor Arthur watched the small Scot sadly.

"McNair was half dead himself when he came out," the doctor said. "I was new at my mission then. Mukulu was a very out-of-the-way place. The Colonial Government had little interest in the area. There were no mines and the Kanda Tract is useless except for a little hunting and safari-trips to the north. The resident had twice as much area as now, and he was away at the time. We took what medicines we had and went in after them. There was me, and Walter Johnson the hunter, and McNair, and Mnera with two men. Mnera was a sergeant then, but one of the few who had been into the Kanda Tract. McNair was so feverish it took us days to find the last camp they had made. More than half had been buried all over the Tract, and those we found were half-eaten or carried off by animals. We buried what was left. There were a few bodies, all natives, to bring back. Nothing else."

"Colonel Mnera was there? And Captain Johnson?" Allard asked.

"Yes, Johnson was a hunter then," Arthur said. "Mnera was a great help in getting Kanda put off limits to everyone. I pushed for it, and the Colonial Government agreed. The present National Government has wisely continued the ban with our prodding."

"Then you think I should not consider making an exploration?" Allard asked slowly.

"Mr. Allard," Doctor Arthur said, "I was out here one year then and I have never forgotten those days. McNair could never bring himself to lead a safari again. Look at him. You see what it has done to him? He lives with a kind of fear, and he was the best safari leader in the area."

"But we have new medicines now," Allard said. "We know so much more. You yourself have created some medicines."

"Don't you think I want to go back in?" Arthur said. "Tropical diseases are my life work. Kanda spreads its blight for hundreds of miles. I've been working on those diseases for years, and we are almost ready. Perhaps a year, two years. Yes, we have many new medicines and methods. Soon, yes. But immediately? I just can't be sure."

"It would take at least three months to prepare," Allard said. "With your help maybe less. A really careful expedition."

Doctor Arthur stared at Allard. "Really careful, complete? Well, perhaps it is time. You could be right. We'll have to get permission, and we should talk it over much more, but you may be the man I've been waiting for."

"Then you think we could do work in there now?" Allard said.

"A risk, but it could be worth it," Arthur said. "There may be secrets in there about the diseases that will save millions of lives all over Africa! Mr. Allard, you've given me new hope!"

"What about the ban?"

"Well, it won't be easy to get permission, but with my recommendation, and Colonel Mnera's help, we should get it," Arthur said. "Why not come up to Mukulu and we can discuss it?"

"I think that's just what I should do, Doctor," Kent Allard said.

"Good," Arthur said. "It's settled then."

All this time McNair had said nothing. The small Scot was slumped in his chair deep in whiskey and apathy. He seemed to hardly have heard the discussion. Allard was about to ask McNair if he would join the expedition when the booming voice of Colonel Forsythe broke in.

"Damn me, Kent, but you're a devil with the luck!" the old soldier boomed. "They asked me to introduce you!"

Allard looked up at the white-haired old soldier. "They?"

"Well, Maria anyway. Wish I were ten years younger again, yes I do!" Forsythe boomed. "Come on, the good doctor will excuse you, eh Arthur?"

"Of course, but I want him back. We have plans," Doctor Arthur said with a smile.

Allard allowed Forsythe to walk him away toward the bar. He glanced at the table where the two women had been sitting with the young men. Only one of them was still there. The other, Maria Berger according to Forsythe, was waiting in the bar. The woman smiled a warm, very enticing smile as Forsythe led Allard up to her. The smile was both strong and soft, forward and eager, and yet somehow still shy and very female. Forsythe was enjoying his role as arranger of romance.

"Here he is, my dear, and I don't know who is luckier, damn me if I do!" the old soldier said. "The prettiest woman in Zambala, and the last of the real explorers."

"The colonel exaggerates as usual, Miss Berger," Allard said.

"About me, perhaps," the woman said with a dazzling smile. "Hardly about you, Mr. Allard. I've heard a great deal about the famous Kent Allard."

The woman, girl because she was hardly more than twenty-seven or so, was beautiful up close. She was small and slender, but with the soft curves and slight heaviness of the hips a woman must have to be really beautiful. There was a fine strength to her body that needed no artificial support, but—without that support there was the fluid softness that made her dark evening dress cling softly to her body. Her face was oval and with a slightly dark tint, and her eyes were large and luminous. Dark eyes that showed warm depths as she smiled at Allard.

"I've wanted to meet you very much, Mr. Allard," the girl said with her faint accent.

"Not as much as I have wanted to meet you," Allard said truthfully. It was clear that the girl did not recognize him as the Laniont Cranston she had held a Sten gun on only a day ago.

"Really? Since when, Mr. Allard?" she said. "Since I saw you tonight," Allard said.

Colonel Forsythe laughed. "There, that should do it, eh? I will now leave you two to arrange the details."

Allard smiled at the old soldier as Forsythe walked away. He turned back to the girl. She smiled warmly. She was close to him.

A small pistol was in his stomach. Her voice was low.

"Walk very casually, Mr. Allard. Hold my hand. That's it. Now, side by side, and smile at me."

The pistol was small enough to be invisible to anyone who watched. She never lost her warm, sensual smile as she looked into his face. He held her left hand like a man telling a woman romantic things. The pistol pressed firmly against him.

"Very casually, Mr. Allard. The pistol is silenced, and I am strong enough to carry you as far as the door if I have to kill you here," the girl said.

Allard walked beside her out of The Safari Club and into the dark night.

10

OUTSIDE the Safari Club the woman dropped all pretense of her flirtation. She pushed Allard ahead of her toward the parking lot, the small pistol with its ugly silencer pointed at his back. She did not speak again. Her movements had become crisp and military, contrasting oddly with the soft curves of her body and the slim black evening dress.

The small black Austin Rohrbach had searched drove up to the exit from the parking lot. The second of the supposed Berger sisters was behind the wheel. A third woman, one Allard had not seen since Mukulu, was in the back seat. This third woman got out and walked behind Allard. Swiftly she blindfolded him with a thick cloth and tied his hands firmly behind his back. Allard made no resistance. He wanted to know much more about these women before he escaped from his bonds. With the powers of The Shadow, he could escape any time he wished—once the pistol was no longer trained on him. Bound and blindfolded, he was hustled into the front seat of the car. The women knew their work well. In the front seat he would have the pistol behind his head and could make no sudden move. The car drove off. None of the women had spoken a word.

The small car drove through the night. Allard sat in silence, making no move, but his keen ears were listening. He heard first the faint sounds of the European section of the city—cries of babies in houses, the faint music from radios and record players, even the distant clink of glasses. Then there was a zone of silence before the gaudy noises of Lubilana Way. After Lubilana Way the car turned left toward the great itself. Allard heard the moving of the wide water. The car turned right again, driving along close to the river. Perhaps two miles, a little more, with the sound of the Lubilana to the left. Then the car stopped. Allard was pushed out and across some soft, grassy ground toward the flow of the river. Boards beneath his feet. Narrow boards with spaces between them and moving, the boards moving as if laid loosely on the soft earth. Then more boards but firm now, and a slight incline upward. A loose door opened and he was pushed through. His footsteps echoed in a large empty space. He was seated in a chair. Beneath him he heard the sound of the river.

"Now, Mr. Kent Allard, just who are you, why are you here, and where are you from!"

It was the voice of the girl who had captured him, the one who called herself Maria Berger. He sensed the other two women close by. And there were other people. He heard the sound of a man's footsteps, two men. The men were standing close behind him. There was a light, a strong light shining on him, but he could not see through the blindfold. The blindfold was more than a simple cloth, it had inside it a thin layer of something very opaque, something like metal. The blindfold was specially prepared for its purpose with thin metal foil inside the cloth. The woman called Maria Berger stepped closer to him.

"There are no more safaris in this country," the girl said crisply. "Why did you talk to Angus McNair?"

"I'm planning an expedition into the Kanda Tract," Allard said. "McNair is the last. . ."

"Stop it!" the woman snapped. "Kent Allard might plan an expedition into Kanda, but you are not Kent Allard!"

Before he could speak again, Allard felt the woman's hands on his face. His false mustache was torn off. Fingers rubbed against his hair, and pressed against his nose. There was the sound of low and angry voices in the large room. The woman stepped away again. Her voice was grim when she spoke.

"A false mustache, the hair has been dyed, and there is something under the skin of your nose," the woman said. "I suspect that you have no real limp, either. You are in disguise, Mr. Allard! Why? it is an excellent disguise, but not quite good enough for us. Why are you?"

"That you will have to find out for yourself," Allard said coldly.

"You will not explain yourself?"

"No."

"Or tell us some reason for your association with Angus McNair?"

"No," Allard said.

"We have checked on you, Mr. Allard," the woman said slowly, carefully, from the dark beyond his blindfold. "You live in Kenya, but you are often away. You go on strange trips and seem to vanish at times. Why?"

"That is my business," he said.

"Do you admit you are not Kent Allard?"

"Of course not. I am Allard," he snapped.

"Perhaps you are, but who else is Kent Allard," the woman—said, her voice smooth and low.

For an instant he almost showed his surprise. Had they guessed that Kent Allard and Lamont Cranston were the same man, and that both were The Shadow? No, that was not possible. They were looking for someone, something. If they had been looking for The Shadow he would have known them. But they were looking for something, someone!

"You don't want me," he said, "you want someone else. Who are you, and what importance is Angus McNair?"

"We think you know who we are and why we want McNair," the woman said.

Another voice broke in. "We are wasting time, Captain. Make the test!"

There was movement in the large room. Footsteps echoed hollowly, and the voices spoke low. A few minutes passed, and then Allard felt his hands being untied. A gun was pressed into his back. He sat rigid. Someone took his left hand and pressed the fingers against something soft and moist, faintly sticky. His left hand was moved and the fingers pressed against a flat piece of cardboard. They were taking his fingerprints! The same operation was performed with his right hand.

Then his hands were bound again and there was a long silence in the room.

Allard waited.

The voices whispered low in the large room. Allard heard the river flowing close and below where he sat. Somewhere far off there was the sound of a motor moving along the highway. And through the flow of the river, and the sound of the motor, he heard the noises of Mrica. A crocodile coughing in the river. A faint and distant lion across the river where the *veld* still came down to the water's edge. The great and ominous silence of the Dark Continent.

Footsteps approached him.

The woman stood close over him, he could smell her perfume and the warmth of her body.

"Perhaps you tell the truth, Mr. Allard, and perhaps not. We will watch you. If you tell anyone about this we will deny it, and you have no proof. You do not know all of us, but we now know you. We have looked for a long time, and we will not be easily stopped. We will not harm you, we are not people who hurt others. If you are our enemy, we will learn that. You might stop us, but others will come. Remember that."

He was helped to his feet, and hands guided him through the large room and back through the loose door. He was helped across the narrow boards, down the incline, across the moving boards, across the soft earth, and into the small Austin. The doors closed and the car drove away. Allard sat unmoving through the trip back exactly the way they had come. He heard the noises of the city, and at last the low music of The Safari Club. They had returned him to the club. He was helped out of the small car. He stood on the gravel of the parking lot. His hands were loosened in their bonds. Quick footsteps ran away and a car door slammed in the night. The car roared away. Allard quickly freed his hands and tore off the blindfold. He saw the taillights of the small Austin vanishing into the dark.

In the parking lot Allard watched the car vanish. He turned and walked to his own car. There he affixed another false mustache and walked across the parking lot and back into the club. He

went straight to the telephone. Margo's voice answered the moment the hotel switchboard rang Cranston's suite.

"Margo? I want you to get me another car, right away. A very different car. Park it at the rear of the hotel near the service entrance. Then take a room for Kent Allard."

"Immediately, Lamont," Margo said.

He hung up and again left The Safari Club. He walked back across the parking lot to his small Mercedes. He drove slowly from the parking lot and turned toward the Augustus Hotel. As he drove he watched in his rearview mirror. Soon he smiled grimly. Another car, one he had never seen, had the parking lot and turned to follow him. As he had expected, they had left someone to watch him. He had been released that he could be followed. He was not the man they want but they did not believe he knew nothing.

He drove straight to the Augustus Hotel, the car followed behind him all the way. He drove into the hotel garage and went upstairs. In the lobby he paused long enough at the door to get the key to the room Margo had taken, and to make sure his followers would observe him. Then he took elevator to the proper floor. He turned quickly for the stairs and went through the door.

Moments later a figure emerged from the rear service entrance of the Augustus Hotel. But it was not Kent Allard. It was The Shadow. The black-cloaked Avenger moved silently in the night to the large grey car parked behind the hotel. The keys were in the ignition. The car rolled away from the hotel. In the car the burning eyes of The Shadow peered ahead. They would watch Kent Allard, and The Shadow would watch them!

The large warehouse was set on pilings out over the flowing Lubilana River. A wooden building, it was surrounded by water and a soft, grassy lawn. Wooden duckboards were laid across the wet turf from the riverside roadway to the wooden ramp that sloped upward to a wooden platform that ringed the large warehouse. A wooden door showed light in the darkness. More light showed above, coming from the open slats of a ventilator in the side of the warehouse out over the water.

For a time nothing moved outside the warehouse. There was no sound but the sudden splash of a crocodile in the river. Then the black shape crossed the roadway and moved close to the tall warehouse. A shape, only vaguely visible in the dark, the figure loomed motionless and silent in the night. Piercing eyes beneath a wide slouch hat studied the warehouse with the faint light streaming from it into the night.

The Shadow had returned to the place of Kent Allard's interrogation.

Guided by the knowledge gained by his sharp ears while bound and blindfolded, The Shadow had driven unerringly to the warehouse. Now he stood in the night and studied the empty building where light showed his captors were still hiding. His piercing eyes saw the light streaming from the slats of the ventilator halfway up the wall over the river. Swiftly he moved out and across the soft grass to the edge of the river.

The platform that surrounded the warehouse loomed above him. His sure fingers reached up to grip the platform and himself up and onto the platform. Like some apparition from the wide river itself, The Shadow glided silently to the wall beneath the ventilator. In the red glow of his fire-opal girasol the Avenger inspected the wooden wall. It was built with long, vertical boards that had twisted and warped over the years in the humid air of Africa. The boards had separated, leaving cracks and crevices. Small holds, but enough for the steel fingers and muscles of The Shadow.

Silently the great black form moved up the wall.

The Avenger reached the slatted ventilator, one hand hooked over the top slat. His piercing eyes looked into the space of the warehouse interior.

The chair where Kent Allard had sat still stood alone in the center of the wide floor. To the left, around a long table, four people sat. They were two men and two women, all dressed in the khaki shirts and shorts The Shadow had seen at Mukulu. Sten guns lay on the table, and beside the guns were small cardboard cards and sheets of paper. The four people were deep in study of the cards and papers. They were all young except one of the men. The women were two of the three who had tried to abduct McNair from Mukulu. The third woman, the leader, was not in the warehouse. The Shadow smiled grimly where he hung against the wall in the darkness. She, then, would be the one watching Kent Allard back at the Augustus Hotel.

It was the single older man the glowing eyes of The Shadow watched now. A short man, heavy and muscular, but with iron grey hair and two long scars on his face. Of the people in the room, this man seemed to now have the authority. He pointed to cards, and to entries on the papers. The others listened to him and nodded from time to time. The Shadow, clinging to the outside wall like some great bat, watched carefully, and his sharp ears strained to hear. But they were speaking too low. It was not English they were speaking. Some foreign language The Shadow could not identify at the distance across the wide space of the empty warehouse. The older man suddenly leaned forward and his forearm protruded from the sleeve of his uniform shirt.

There was a small tattoo on the forearm of the older man. The tattoo showed, and then was gone. The older man had pulled his arm back and his shirt again covered the mark.

A car drove up on the highway. The older man moved quickly. He barked sharp orders. The four of them took up their weapons and faded into shadows of the empty interior of the warehouse. For a moment there was silence. Then a sharp knock came on—outside door. Two short knocks, a long, another short and two more longs. The four appeared from their hiding places. The door opened and the pretty leader stepped in. She was still dressed in the slim black evening dress she had worn in The Safari Club. She walked to the table. The others gathered around her. Their voices were louder now, and they spoke in English.

"Did you follow him?" the older man said.

"Yes, to his hotel. He went to his room. I watched the car, but he did not come out again. He is registered as Allard, but his room was reserved by a Margo Lane, secretary to Lamont Cranston."

"We know they are friends. You checked, Captain," one of the other women said.

The leader nodded. "True, but we also know that Cranston was at Mukulu with McNair!"

"You think this Cranston could be him?" the older man said.

"Perhaps, but I doubt it," the beautiful leader said. "Still, they may know more than they have told us. We will continue to watch them."

"And McNair?" the older man said.

"He is being very careful, but we will get him. We must, he is our only hope," the woman leader said. "He will return Mukulu soon, he must, and when he does we will be ready."

"We go to Mukulu again?" one of the girls said.

"We do, and immediately. I want to be waiting for McNair this time. There will be no more mistakes."

"That strange man in black, he stopped us that time," one of the girls said.

"He will not stop us again," the leader said grimly. "Now we will leave here. We have been here too long. Return to your places. Lili and I will go back to our apartment. Hide your weapons. I will join you when I have changed from this dress."

The pretty young woman walked away into the shadows of warehouse. The others clustered around a board in the floor that had been lifted out. They placed their weapons beneath the floor and closed the board over them. Then they began to gather up their papers.

High on the outside wall The Shadow watched them. He learned one thing-they had not come across a border. They lived, and worked, here in Zambala.

Suddenly The Shadow became aware of the others. His keen ears heard, sensed, their presence in the night. They were all around him, all around the warehouse. Many men in the night. Men moving, silently, stealthily. He slid down from the wall to the platform around the building. His night sight saw them. Soldiers all around the warehouse. Two were coming directly toward where he crouched on the platform hidden by the shadow of the wall. They were too close, there would be no time to cloud their minds before they were on him. Quickly he floated across the platform and slid into the water of the river.

The soldiers passed above him on the platform. They wore UN armbands. They whispered to each other. The whispers were in Swedish. Major Bain's men!

On the far side of the building there was a sudden crash and shouting voices. The Shadow listened. The door had been kicked in and the voices were shouting to the people in the warehouse to surrender.

"Get your hands up, quick! Don't move!"

The voice had a familiar sound to the ears of The Shadow. Captain Paulus.

"All right, men, round them up. Give me those papers."

The Shadow heard a quick, light step on the platform above him. He stroked away from beneath the platform and looked up. Standing in the night was a slender figure, pale and indistinct at first. Then The Shadow saw what it was. There was a loose board the UN soldiers had not noticed when they had come around this side of the building checking on any other doors. And she had come out of the warehouse through the opening created when the board was moved.

She stood there for an instant, wearing only her thin and pale underwear. The leader. Her slender body stood clear in the night above the river. The Shadow guessed that, changing her clothes in a distant corner of the warehouse, she had not been seen by the soldiers when they entered. Caught undressed, she had not hesitated. A trained soldier, she had taken her only escape. Now, as The Shadow watched, she let herself silently over the edge and down into the river. began to swim and soon vanished into the darkness. Shadow did not pursue her. She had a mission, and would not go far.

The Avenger swam to shore and emerged from the river. Hidden in the dark he watched the UN soldiers lead out four prisoners. The prisoners were marched to waiting trucks. Captain Paulus came last, carrying the papers and cards had been on the table. Paulus climbed last into a truck the trucks drove away.

Alone in the dark, The Shadow glided along the roadway beside the river to where he had hidden his car. He drove through the now sleeping city to the Safari Club again. It was time to report the murder of Kurt Rohrbach. But there no need. When he drove up to the Safari Club, the parking lot was a blaze of light. Police cars and UN jeeps were all over the empty lot. The Shadow could see Major Bain and Captain Johnson among the crowd of soldiers and police

looking down at the body of Rohrbach. The Interpol man had been found. The Shadow did not stop.

There was nothing more for him to do tonight. They would discover that Rohrbach was an Interpol man, and Bain's already had captured the four Mukulu raiders.

The Shadow drove off into the night. Ten minutes later the car drove up to the Augustus Hotel, and Lamont Cranston walked into the lobby and went up to his room where he would sleep and wait for Burbank's report from the distant blue room of The Shadow's New York headquarters.

11

THE AFRICAN SUN dazzled through the opened windows of the hotel suite as Margo came into the room. Cranston looked up from his second cup of coffee. Margo carried her transcript of Burbank's report. Cranston poured a third cup of coffee and sat back, his impassive face waiting.

"Burbank reports our agents had little trouble obtaining the information on everyone, Lamont," Margo said as she sat down in the sunny room.

"They were all in the war, Margo?" Cranston said.

"How did you know? They were, all except McNair," Margo said.

"Go on with the report," Cranston said.

Margo nodded and began to read her notes. "Doctor Arthur was born in Colmar, Alsace. He was in the French Army but was captured early in 1940. He escaped from a prison camp in Germany, and joined the Resistance. Near the end of the war he was caught and sent to Dachau, but survived when the Allies liberated him. He practiced medicine in Strasburg for some years after the war. He came down here to open his medical mission at Mukulu eleven years ago. He always said that if one Alsatian could do it, a second would be twice as good, a reference, of course, to Dr. Schweitzer. He has since remained at Mukulu running the hospital and studying the diseases of the Kanda Tract. His work has had the backing of both the old Colonial Government and the new government."

"Not much there we don't know," Cranston said. "The good doctor seems quite anxious to get to work inside Kanda. It seems to be an innocent enough project, and yet I have the feeling that Kanda is the key to our whole problem. We'll watch the doctor."

Margo nodded and read on. "Colonel Mnera is a former sergeant in the Colonial Army here. He fought in Europe in World War II, in Indo-China, in North Africa, and in Korea with the colonial unit. After Korea he engaged in rebel activities here and was imprisoned for two years. Then he escaped and fled the country. He went to Moscow where he studied military subjects and political affairs. He returned secretly to this country some time in 1955 and organized an underground army. When liberation came he was commissioned a colonel and given a border command. Just two years ago he was made Commissioner of the Mukulu District. Burbank reports that there are those who say this was a demotion for Mnera."

Cranston's hooded eyes were thoughtful. "Removed from an active command, put on the shelf. Yes, that is the way they have of dealing with ambitious and dangerous men. Perhaps the colonel did not get either the power or the position he wanted. You say he had his own underground army? I wonder if he ever really disbanded it? He's youngish, but a man with his

record and experience in the field might have expected more after self-government came. I think we can watch the colonel, too."

Margo laid down her notes. "He's also an expert on the Kanda Tract, Lamont. He's one of the few men who ever went all the way through more than once and survived. He was born in a village in the area, too. I wonder if his underground army operated in the region?"

"A good point, Margo. We might see if we can find anyone who served in that underground army," Cranston said. "What else does Burbank report?"

Margo picked up her shorthand notes. "Major Eric Rain is exactly what Bombardier reported, with two important additions. First, that six years he was out of the Swedish Army he was working in Germany and then in Argentina, as a salesman for a German book publisher. He applied for United Nations service almost as soon as he returned to the Swedish Army. Second, during the war, when he was just a lieutenant, he was with a Swedish mission observing the war in Germany! He was with the German Army through most of the war."

Cranston's eyes flashed quickly. "Well, well, so Bain is strongly tied to the Germans. Our lady attackers are also supposed to be German, although I have an idea they are not really German. Bain was there at The Safari Club last night. He was also conveniently close to the attempt on Bombardier's life, and really let those native bombers get away. What about his two right-hand men, Margo?"

"Captain Paulus checks out as Bombardier said," Margo reported, "except that he was also captured by the Germans when he was in the Danish Resistance. He, too, managed to survive. He seemed to have had no success as a civilian, and in Indo-China with the Foreign Legion his record was only fair. He was accused of profiteering, but no charge was made. He. . ."

"Indo-China? That makes two of them, Mnera and Paulus," Cranston said. "I wonder if they met there? Doctor Arthur would also have connections in the French Army. Bain could have had friends in Indo-China. Most of the Legion were Germans then, and Rain was close to the German Army."

"If Indo-China is important, Lamont, Captain Johnson doesn't fit," Margo said. "He is a career British officer with a very good background. But his trouble during the war cost him a great deal."

"What was the trouble?"

"He failed to get a message to withdraw, or failed to obey it, they never actually proved which. His company was captured, and only he escaped."

"Where was this?"

"Very early in the war, in Belgium," Margo said. "He was given desk jobs after that. When he retired he came down here and lived up near Mukulu for many years. He hunted and led safaris for a time, and he knew McNair quite well. After the country gained independence he went home. Then he offered his services to Ghana and was accepted-mostly in training commands. He came here with a Ghanese unit in the early days of the UN force. You remember Nkrumah ordered home, but Johnson decided to stay on and work with Rain."

Cranston sat forward in his chair. "So he knows the area up there, he never got as far as he should have, he purposely stayed here when his unit went home, and he's a friend of Angus McNair! He also apparently doesn't care for the natives being their own government. You notice how he went back to England as soon as the country was independent?"

"But he joined Ghana," Margo said.

"He joined Nkrumah, who may have some big ambitions! What about McNair. What could he know that those women wanted so badly?"

Margo consulted her notes again. "Absolutely nothing we don't know, Lamont. He's lived up in Mukulu since before the war. He never served in the war. He was a leading hunter safari boss until that terrible safari ten years ago. As you know he was the only survivor."

Cranston nodded. "Doctor Arthur found the remains. What about that safari, was there anything unusual about it? Poor Rohrbach tried to say something about it all, the safari and McNair. Somehow I just know McNair is the key to all of this."

"Well," Margo said, reading Burbank's report, "it was an unusually large safari. Too large according to the reports at the time, especially to get through Kanda. Too few medical supplies, too many to travel fast. They were all from hunting club of some sort, in Cairo, but all Europeans. Ten of them, mostly Scandinavian and Dutch. I think. . ."

Margo stopped. The slender secretary and agent stared her chief. Cranston had stopped listening and his normally impassive face was suffused with repressed excitement. For a long minute he said nothing, he sat hunched forward a staring into space. His quiet eyes seemed to burn with the fire of The Shadow. Behind the piercing eyes it was plain that his keen mind was racing, calculating, remembering. Suddenly he turned to Margo and stood up.

"Ten men, Europeans, from Cairo! And our women raiders are looking for someone. Margo, McNair is the key! At least to part of it all. Rohrbach knew that. Remember how he was out of here when I told him about those women trying to take McNair from Mukulu?"

"Yes, Lamont, I do!"

Cranston nodded grimly. "Get Stanley, Margo, we're flying up to Mukulu at once!"

It was the work of minutes to find Stanley and start for the Zambala airport where the light plane was ready. Cranston took time only to make sure that they were all well-armed, own automatics secure in the holsters inside his jacket.

It was a wise precaution.

The desolate waste of the Kanda Tract behind the town. Stanley guided the small plane into a smooth landing at There was no true air field, only a rough landing strip for light planes and helicopters that would use it. The town was no more than a narrow dirt street and a few buildings clustered around the bend in the great river. The only buildings of any size from the air were the medical mission and its hospital, the District Headquarters of Colonel Mnera, an McNair's store with its pier jutting out into the wide expanse of the Lubilana.

Stanley set the small plane down with barely a bump, and taxied toward the single grass-roofed hut that was the office. The jeep they had left there earlier was still parked and waiting behind the hut. Stanley brought the plane to a stop and they got out. Stanley went to work securing the plane with wheel chocks and ropes, while Cranston led Margo toward the waiting jeep.

The jeep was not all that was waiting.

They came quickly around the corner of the hut. Two of them again. They were both natives, dressed in the simple breech cloths, and simple strings of rattan neck and chest decorations of the poor natives of the Mukulu district. The guns in their hands were not simple. They had shoes, but the guns gleamed with military care.

"Down, Margo!" Cranston cried out.

He pushed the supple woman to the grassy earth with a quick push. He went down himself. His automatics were out. One in each hand. Margo struggled to take her pistol from its small holster beneath her skirt. They lay behind a rise of earth.

The two natives opened a lethal fire.

At the plane, Stanley had turned, started toward them with his automatic drawn.

Bullets tore the tall grass above and all around where Cranston and Margo lay on the ground behind the small mound.

Cranston returned the fire, blazing coolly, accurately with both hands at once.

One of the natives screamed and fell. The second withdrew, firing, to the shelter of the jeep. There he continued firing, bullets kicking dirt from the crest of the small mound in front of Cranston and Margo, snapping and whining through tall grass. Behind them Stanley had hit the dirt and was crawling up. Margo could not raise herself high enough to her pistol and bring it to bear. Only Cranston, on his stomach behind the small mound of earth, could fire.

At the far end of the airstrip, toward Mukulu, two jeeps and a truck were racing along the dirt road toward the firing. They swerved off the road onto the airstrip itself, their wheels squealing as they turned at high speed. Behind the jeep the native must have heard them, seen them. Cranston saw them and held his fire.

The second native suddenly leaped out from behind the jeep again and charged screaming straight toward where Margo and Cranston lay. He came firing. Cranston lifted both automatics above the small mound and fired twice with each hand. The native pitched forward on his face, skidded, and lay still. By the time the two jeeps and the truck came up, Cranston, Margo and Stanley were standing over the two men. They were unhurt, not a scratch on any of them.

Colonel Mnera was the first to run up, followed by six of his men from the truck.

"Are you safe, Cranston?" Mnera said, panted, as he came up.

"We're all right, Colonel. I'm afraid they're not, though, and they might have told us something," Cranston said as he looked at the two dead men.

Doctor Arthur, who had driven his own jeep, bent down over the two men. He felt their pulses and listened to their hearts. The doctor stood up slowly. He turned to face Cranston and Margo. Major Bain and Captain Johnson ran up now.

"Both quite dead. You're sure you three are all right?"

"We're all right, Doctor," Cranston said.

The doctor again looked down at the two dead men. "You're rather handy with those guns, aren't you."

"Not really," Cranston said. "They were particularly stupid. They took very little cover until one of them was hit. The second one hid until he heard all of you coming. Then he charged us. I don't think they wanted to be taken alive."

Major Bain looked at the dead men, and then at Cranston and Margo. "Do you have any idea what this could have been all about, Cranston?"

"No, Major," Cranston said, "unless it has something to do with Vickers and The Demon."

"I hope to God it's not the beginning of some Mau-Mau down here," Captain Johnson said.

"Or some rebellion," Colonel Mnera said. "I'll have to report this at once. I'll need anything you can tell me, Mr. Cranston. The poor devils! I don't like it, not at all. We'll take the bodies into Mukulu, and I'll need your statements, all three of you."

Cranston nodded and Colonel Mnera waved to his men to come forward for the bodies of the two dead natives. The colonel bent down over the dead men. Major Bain had been listening, and now the small major rubbed his chin and looked quizzically at Cranston.

"You were well-armed, Mr. Cranston. Well prepared. Did you by any chance expect such an attack?" Bain asked.

"Not expect, Major, merely apprehensive," Cranston said.

"I see," the major said. "Tell me, Cranston, do you by any chance know a Kurt Rohrbach?"

"Yes, Major, I do. Rohrbach is the Interpol man who asked me to come here and help locate Gerald Vickers."

"I thought so!" Bain said. "I believe you also know a man named Kent Allard?"

"Kent is a friend of mine, yes, Major," Cranston said. His face gave no hint that he knew exactly what Bain was talking about. As Cranston there was no way he could have known of Rohrbach's death—except from Kent Allard. He did not want Rain to guess how close he really was to Allard.

"Do you know where he is now?" Captain Johnson asked.

"As far as I know he's in Zambala, at the Augustus Hotel. I spoke with him early yesterday evening," Cranston lied.

"Not late last night?" Bain asked.

"No, I went to bed rather early last night," Cranston said. "Is Allard in some kind of trouble?"

"He could be in a barrel of. . ." Johnson began.

Major Bain cut the captain short. "For your information, Mr. Cranston, in the case that you do not already know, Kurt Rohrbach was killed last night at The Safari Club. Your friend Allard was there, now he seems to have vanished as mysteriously as he came to Zambala. Colonel Forsythe vouches for him highly but the colonel knows no more than we do about where he may be. Perhaps you can help us?"

"Rohrbach dead?" Cranston said. "Do you have any. . ."

"He was working on a case," Rain said. "He expected danger. Now about Kent Allard?"

"I have not seen Kent since yesterday. This case Rohrbach was working on, did it involve Vickers? Were you working with Rohrbach?"

"Of course we were working together," Rain snapped. Cranston's hooded eyes considered the small major. Bain was lying, but why? Simply to save face? It was possible. Before Cranston could delve further, Colonel Mnera stepped away from the dead men and touched Major Bain on the shoulder. The colonel was staring after the two bodies his men were carrying to the truck.

"Something wrong here, Major Rain," the colonel said.

"Two dead men? An attack on Mr. Cranston? Damn it, Colonel, of course there is something wrong!" Rain said.

"No, Major, I do not mean that," Colonel Mnera said.

"What do you mean, Colonel?" Cranston asked.

"Those two men you killed, they were dressed as people from this district, poor villagers," Mnera said. "But they are not from this district, and they are not poor villagers."

Doctor Arthur rubbed his chin. "They looked like all the others to me, Colonel. They were dressed the way our people dress here."

Mnera shook his head. "No, Doctor, this is my district. Those men are not from here. One of them is not even from this country. He was not from any neighboring country, Doctor. He is a Kikuyu, from Kenya! The other was from a branch of the Zambala far to the south."

"Hired killers?" Rain said.

"It looks that way," Mnera said. "Another thing, both of them had been in prison recently. They had the marks of leg irons. Only military prisons still use leg irons here. I'd say they were both ex-soldiers, too, and I don't like it at all."

Major Rain rubbed his chin. "We better get our reports in. Doctor, you take Cranston and his party into Mukulu, his jeep is rather shot up. I'm afraid."

The doctor nodded, and Cranston, Margo and Stanley followed Arthur toward his waiting jeep. Cranston was thinking about two disguised killers who were really ex-soldiers, criminals

perhaps, and from distant places. Somehow, he thought they were more than just hired killers. Perhaps McNair could tell him what he had to know.

It was really only then that he realized that Angus McNair had not come out to the air strip to investigate the gun battle. McNair was the only one in Mukulu who had not come. Perhaps McNair did not have to come out to the strip because he knew what was happening there! Or perhaps he could not come.

12

THE MID-AFTERNOON SUN of Africa blazed down on the single dirt street of Mukulu. Nothing moved in the town. The only sound was the heavy flow of the Lubilana. The town and all the people in it rested away from the heat of the sun. Its broad expanse empty, the great river flowed between its thick jungle-covered banks, its surface glistening like a **polished-steel** mirror. On the far right bank the animals of the bush and veld lay somnolent in the shade of the thick growth. Nothing moved at all on the far right bank.

On the left bank, at the edge of Mukulu, there was something that moved.

If there had been anyone awake to see they would have said that it was the shifting shadows of the thick growth itself that moved beneath the tall trees at the edge of the great river. The dark shadows of the jungle growth itself.

But it was only one shadow—The Shadow.

He had silently left the room where, to all appearances, Lamont Cranston was taking his siesta just as everyone else. Unseen he glided through his window and across the small open space into the jungle. In the jungle he moved in a wide circle toward the river. When he had reached the river he turned again and carefully worked his way through the heavy growth of the dimly lighted afternoon jungle toward the outer buildings of the sleeping town. Blending with the heavy shadows of the thick growth itself, The Shadow moved unseen and unheard past the first small buildings of Mukulu. The pier of Angus McNair's store jutted out into the wide river ahead.

Heavy growth reached all the way to the rear door of the trading post. The Shadow floated stealthily through the bush beneath the tall trees until he reached the rear door of McNair's post. The Avenger paused to listen. There was no sound above the flow of the river. The trading post was silent and seemingly deserted in the afternoon heat. The Shadow gilded like a wraith across the few feet of open space between the rear door and the jungle growth. The rear door was unlocked and The Shadow went inside.

The Avenger stood inside the door and his piercing eyes glowed as he studied the interior. He was in a kitchen. Dirty dishes lay everywhere—in the sink, on the single table, on a heavy oak sideboard. Food rotted in the heat. Empty tin cans lay open on the floor. The kitchen had all the appearance of the kitchen of a drunken bachelor. The Shadow crossed the kitchen and went through a doorway into the next room.

The next room was a living room, its windows tightly covered. The living room was dim, the only light filtering through cracks in the window coverings. It was sparsely furnished, the chairs ragged and mildewed. Dust rose from them at a touch. The Shadow moved on through the living quarters. All in all there were four rooms behind the main space of the trading center. They were all as dirty and shabby as the kitchen and living room. The bed had been slept in but had not

been made; empty whiskey bottles lay in corners; dust rose at a touch from the clothes in the closets. The clothes had once been good clothes but were old now and had not been worn for a long time. Only a single closet of work clothes showed the signs of recent use.

The Shadow stood again in the dim living room and his hard eyes looked around—again. Angus McNair lived alone—and tended to himself. McNair had no servants! For a bachelor in Africa that was very peculiar. But no servants worked here, no cook cooked the Scotsman's meals, no housekeeper took care of the small man. Why? McNair wanted to be alone. In Africa no white man lived without servants, not a man who owned a trading post. What was McNair hiding? There had to be some reason for McNair to shut himself away like this. The Shadow crossed the dim living room and went out into the large room of the store.

The trading room was empty. Supplies lined the shelves, guns hung from racks, safari supplies stood stacked in the corners. But the room was empty. Where was McNair? The Shadow turned to reenter the living quarters when the jeep pulled up outside. Like a ghost, The Shadow blended into the dimness of the large trading room. The outside door opened.

Colonel Mnera stood in the large room.

Two of his soldiers were with him, and the colonel motioned them toward the rear living quarters. The colonel himself seemed puzzled as he looked around the silent interior of the trading room. Moments later his two men returned.

"Not here, Colonel," one of the soldiers said.

"Not here? Where could he have gone?" Mnera said, more to himself than to his men. "Damn it, he should be here and half drunk by now. You say there were five of them?"

"Yes sir. They go away, south," one of the soldiers said. "Maybe one hour, not so long."

"And they came from the direction of this post?" Mnera said.

"Yes sir. They near river, go south."

"You never saw them before this?"

"No sir. Never see them."

Mnera looked around, his eyes passing over the spot where The Shadow stood unseen against the wall in a dim corner of the large room.

"Well, there's nothing wrong here," Mnera said at last, "except that McNair should be here. We better see if we can find him. Sergeant, you take two men and search the town."

"Yes sir," the soldier said.

Colonel Mnera turned on his heel and strode from the room. Outside the jeep motor started. The jeep drove away.

The Shadow came out into the center of the room.

His burning eyes seemed to glow with an even greater fire than usual. Something was wrong here. Five men! Or had they been *men*? Colonel Mnera and his soldiers had said nothing about men. *There were five of them*. That was what Mnera and his men had said. And where was Angus McNair? Colonel Mnera was obviously worried, or was it that the colonel had some other reason to want to find McNair?

The Shadow heard the sound.

A faint sound, and the Avenger held his breath as his sensitive hearing strained to make it out, to find where it came from.

It was a voice—talking.

The voice was very low, the words indistinguishable even by the ears of The Shadow. And yet there was something familiar about the voice.

It had begun suddenly, and it seemed to come from the rear, from the living quarters. The Shadow glided across the large trading room and into the shabby living room.

The voice was a little louder but still faint as if from a great distance. A muffled voice and with a strange, fuzzy quality. But now The Shadow's keen ears recognized the voice. It was the voice of Major Eric Rain!

And it came not from a great distance away, but from somewhere beneath where The Shadow stood in the dim and shabby living room of McNair's trading post. The voice was beneath the floor. There was a cellar beneath the trading post—a cellar that Colonel Mnera apparently did not know was there!

The Shadow began to search the living quarters. There was nothing in the living room to show a secret door. There was nothing in the bedroom, dining room, or kitchen. In the kitchen The Shadow stood in thought. Then he went to the window and looked outside. The narrow wooden pier jutted out into the wide river. The pier began close to the rear of the trading post, and beneath the pier the bank dropped sharply like a small cliff. On the other side of the pier was storage warehouse of the trading post.

The Shadow studied the pier and the warehouse. There, then, was where McNair stored his stock and inventory. But there was a cellar beneath the house. The Shadow let his gaze return to the jutting pier. He looked at the open area beneath the pier made by the sharp drop of the river bank. Thick bushes grew beneath the pier. Something was hanging on one of the bushes beneath the pier. The Shadow glided out of rear door, crossed the open space in the glaring sun, and down the bank to the edge of the river beneath the pier.

A small piece of grey cloth hung on the bush. Heavy cloth, wool. The Shadow bent to study the ground under the pier. There were faint footprints—boot prints. The Avenger stared at the bushes under the pier. Behind the bushes the bank was shored up with large, flat boards. They were loose. He removed the boards and saw the opening behind them. A short tunnel, high enough for a man to stand up easily.

At the far end of the short tunnel there was a heavy wooden door. Now The Shadow heard the voice again. Major Rain, talking to someone, the voice fuzzy, and a low ringing sound blending with the voice.

The heavy door was open.

Cautiously, The Shadow went through the open door.

The cavernlike cellar was low. It had stone walls and a floor, and a short flight of stairs led up along the left wall in the center. Stairs that ended nowhere. They had been closed off. The cellar had been a normal cellar once, but had closed off from the house above and the only entrance was through the short tunnel beneath the pier. There were windows, but the lights were on. The voice of Major Bain came from the far end of the room where there were a desk and filing cabinets.

"Have the captain report to me as soon as he can," Rain's voice said.

But there was no one in the far end of the room.

There was no one in sight in the cellar at all.

"Yes sir," a strange voice said.

"Keep a sharp eye out, and tell Quist to cover the area," Major Rain said.

The Shadow approached the desk and cabinets carefully. His great black figure loomed in the cellar. Then he saw the source of Major Rain's voice. Behind the desk, between two cabinets, was a field radio. Major Rain's voice was instructing his patrols, probably through the radio at

Mnera's headquarters, or through a radio in his jeep. But this was not what made the eyes of The Shadow burn in the silent and cavernous cellar.

The radio, hidden here in the cellar of Angus McNair's trading post was tuned to receive local military calls. Which meant that Gerald Vickers incomplete message from the attacked village could easily have been picked up here by McNair or anyone else who used the cellar! Colonel Mnera, then, was not necessarily the only person in Mukulu who had heard that message.

The Shadow moved around the desk to inspect the filing cabinets. It was possible that the cabinets contained information on who else knew about this hidden cellar, and why McNair had such a hidden storage area. Smuggling? It looked very much that way. It was a question McNair would have to answer when the Scot returned. The Shadow approached the two filing cabinets.

Angus McNair would not return.

The Scot had never left the cellar. McNair's body lay on the floor behind the desk. The Scot lay in a pool of his own blood, his head almost severed from his body, his body hacked and slashed as if it had been caught in some massive chopping machine. Angus McNair was very dead.

The Shadow would learn nothing from the small Scot.

Hunched down like some great black bird of prey, The Shadow felt the body of McNair. Still warm. McNair had been killed within the last few hours, probably less than an hour ago. The number of wounds, and the savagery of the murder, told The Shadow that there had been more than one killer. And the killing had not been the work of some straggling savage band. The killers must have known about the hidden cellar, and McNair's pockets had been pulled out, everything on the dead man taken away. The Scot's pockets were empty. The Shadow had a strong premonition as he stood and turned to the two filing cabinets.

They were both empty.

The Shadow turned his attention to the desk. The desk had not been searched and emptied, but there was little in it. Beyond the normal papers and pencils, some books on Scotland that showed that McNair had been, perhaps, homesick for the country he had not seen for so long. A count McNair would now never see again. The drawers contained nothing of use until The Shadow opened the bottom drawer on the right. There was nothing in this drawer either except papers of no importance-but the drawer itself was unusual.

The Shadow peered closely at this bottom drawer. His keen eyes told him that the drawer was peculiar. It was too shallow. Carefully his fingers probed along the interior floor of the drawer. He found a small crack between the bottom and the sides. He found the secret button underneath the drawer. The bottom slid open as he pressed the button carefully. In the secret compartment The Shadow saw the bankbook. His long fingers lifted it out. The book was for an account in a Swiss bank. Nothing on the book identified its owner except a number. But the amount made the glowing eyes of The Shadow open wide: the book showed a balance of over a quarter of a million dollars!

The Shadow stood over the desk and looked down at the body of Angus McNair. Where had the Scot gotten so much money? If the account were McNair's. If it were not McNair's account, what was it doing here in the drawer of his desk? Was this money what the soldier-women had been after? It was possible, although from what The Shadow had overheard, the women seemed to be after a person rather than a thing like money. Still, the money and the person could be connected. Someone had killed McNair, and the five unknown raiders had been after McNair. Only they were armed with Sten guns, and McNair had been hacked with some kind of native sword like a Kikuyu panga.

The Shadow replaced the bank book and closed the secret drawer. He turned his scrutiny onto the cellar itself. It was completely bare now, but it had not been. He roamed over the low room. He found patches of oil, thick stains of cosmoline, the marks of crates and packing cases. From the size and shape of the marks on the stone floor, The Shadow suspected that cartridges had been in many of the boxes. From the oil and cosmoline, it looked very much like guns of some kind had also been stored in the cellar. This could easily be where the stolen UN supplies had been hidden. Brought here, and taken away, in the night either by boat on the river or by land through the jungle. Or even moved openly, mixed in with legitimate loads and not separated until later.

For whom and for what? Where did the supplies go when they were taken from this cellar? McNair had been the key, but it seemed that someone else knew this. Someone had not wanted The Shadow or anyone else to talk to McNair.

The Shadow returned to stand for a long minute over the backed and slashed body of Angus McNair. Who had so viciously killed the small, drunken man? McNair had been afraid, very afraid and more than a little guilty. Had the two men who had attacked Cranston, Margo and Stanley had companions? That was more than possible. Colonel Mnera had said that those two dead men were strange, that they did not come from this area. Two such men with submachine guns could have had others with them to make a simultaneous attack on Cranston and on McNair.

Or had the three women and their two male comrades finally found Angus McNair? The Shadow had seen them captured, four of them, but perhaps they had not remained prisoners for long. It was time for The Shadow to be certain of this one way or the other.

As the black-cloaked Avenger glided out of the hidden cellar into the afternoon heat, he was more certain than ever of one fact—that Angus McNair had been, somehow, the key to both the attack on the village and the death of Gerald Vickers. He had learned one important thing from McNair after all, that the small Scot had had something to tell. Something important enough to be killed for.

13

MAJOR ERIC RAIN flipped the key on Colonel Mnera's radio transmitter and sat back with a sigh. Rain looked at his watch where he now sat alone in Mnera's headquarters. It was getting late, the sun low outside above the wide river, and Mnera had still not returned from his search for Angus McNair. Rain sighed again. There was little he could do to help find McNair, and his patrols had all the instructions he could give. The major was not optimistic about his men.

"If Johnson finds anything, it has to be luck," Rain said aloud to himself.

The major neither saw nor heard the looming black figure that seemed to rise up out of the floor of the dim radio room. With the shutters closed against the heat of the African afternoon, no light on in the room to keep as much coolness as possible, the only light in the silent room came from the thin rays of sun through the slats of the shutters. The major stretched wearily in his chair.

"Johnson won't even find their trail," Rain said aloud and to himself again. The tone of his voice did not show whether he wanted Johnson to find their trail or not.

The chilling laugh of The Shadow slashed through the dim and silent room.

Major Rain leaped up. "What the devil! Who. . ."

The weird, shivering laugh mocked the small major who stared around the empty room. Rain could see nothing. The major swore and clawed at his pistol.

"Stop! Sit down!"

Major Rain blinked. The voice seemed to come from behind where he stood. He whirled. There was nothing behind him but the radio and a blank wall.

"Sit down, Eric Rain!"

The harsh voice was commanding. Rain whirled again, the voice now seeming to come from the door on the far side of dim room from the radio. The door was closed and no one stood in front of it. Rain blinked again, rubbed his eyes. His eyes scanned the entire room. All he saw were the shadows cast by the rays of sunlight through the slatted shutters. Moving shadows and dust motes floating in the hot and silent air.

"Where the devil *are* you!" Major Rain demanded.

But the major had not drawn his pistol. His hand still hung in the air above his holster as if held there by some unseen force.

"I am here in the room, Major Rain, but you cannot see me."

Rain rubbed his eyes and stared. "What do you want?"

"Answers, Eric Rain! It is time for answers. Do not try to fool me, The Shadow knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men. Sit down, Major!"

"The Shadow? I. . . No, damn you, if you can talk I can see you! I don't talk to apparitions! Show yourself or. . ."

The Shadow laughed, the eerie sound floating detached and without visible origin in the dim room.

"Or what, Eric Rain? Will you destroy me with a bomb?"

"What? A bomb? Why you. . ."

The small major's hand strained for his pistol. But his hand could not move. Rain's face grew red with effort, but the man did not lower a fraction of an inch closer to his holster. The Shadow's voice laughed its cold laugh once more.

"Sit down, Major!"

Rain sat down. The small major seemed to wilt, crumble, and he sat in his chair again. His eyes blinked, and, from the shifting, moving shadows of the silent radio room The Shadow loomed up. Rain saw the giant black shape appear as if from out of the walls. The major stared up into the burning, piercing eyes, the hawk nose and stern face bathed in the red glow of the fire-opal girasol beneath the wide brim of the slouch hat. Rain shuddered but made no other move in the silent radio room.

"Do you like to throw bombs, Major Rain?" The Shadow said harshly.

"I threw no bomb. No. You mean that sergeant, Sergeant Mace. Yes, of course, it was you we chased. We couldn't find you. That laugh, it comes from nowhere. Who are you?"

"I am called The Shadow, Eric Rain, and I avenge wrong! I fight all evil. The men who threw that bomb will pay for their evil deeds."

"I threw no bomb," Rain said.

"You were very quickly there! You allowed the actual throwers to escape!"

"That sergeant, I suspected him. I was watching him. When the bomb was thrown we were close by. I suspected him of being an Interpol agent. They did not tell me they were working here."

The ominous black shape of The Shadow towered close above the seated major. The eyes of the Avenger bored into Rain, his hawk nose moving closer, his face moving in, bathed in the red glow of the fire-opal girasol.

"And the night Gerald Vickers died?" The Shadow demanded. "The night of the attack on the village? Why were you here then?"

"A tip," Bain said. "Johnson had a tip. They were going to smuggle something over the Portuguese border. We came to see, but the attack was close and we went to help."

"What did you find at that village?"

"Nothing."

"You did not perhaps find Gerald Vickers?"

"No," Rain said, and the small major blinked, moved in. seat, looked up. "If you think that I killed. . ."

The Shadow's voice was stern. "The weed of crime bears bitter fruit, Eric Rain. When a man begins his journey on the path of evil, he must follow where it leads, For you, perhaps, it led to murder."

"No!" Rain cried.

"Why did Interpol work here in secret? You were all working on the same job, the stolen supplies and the smuggling!"

Rain shuddered. "There had to be a leak. They did not trust us. I knew there had to be a leak somewhere. I am working on it, you see? I will find it myself! But they had to come here, and now the fool is dead! That fool Rohrbach!"

"A leak of vital information, Major Rain," The Shadow intoned. "A leak that could have been you!"

"Me? No! I will find the leak myself!"

"And be rewarded? A promotion, perhaps?" The Shadow mocked.

"Yes! It's time! I deserve a promotion. I should have been a Colonel long ago. Someday I will be a general in Sweden!"

"You would do anything for that?"

"Of course! I would do. . ." and the major stopped, blinked. His eyes looked up at the looming apparition above him in the dim radio room. "No, not anything. You are trying to trap me!"

"If the leak is not you, who is it?"

"I don't know," Rain said sullenly.

"But you have suspicions?"

"Yes."

"Who?" The Shadow demanded.

Rain looked sly. "You want the credit, don't you? Well I will catch him. I won't tell until I catch him."

The Shadow watched the major. There was a vein of resistance in Rain. The powers of The Shadow could break that resistance, but the Avenger wanted more than the facts, he wanted to know all about Rain's character, and he would not learn what the man was made of if he forced answers. The black-garbed crime-fighter changed his line of questioning, lulling Rain into a false security.

"What does Angus McNair know, Major?" The Shadow asked.

"I don't know. But something. There is something wrong about McNair, and I will find it out!"

The Shadow was grim. "No, Major, you will not find it out! Angus McNair is dead!"

The piercing eyes of the Avenger watched Rain closely as he delivered this shock. He searched the sudden surprise in Rain's glazed eyes to see if the surprise were real. It seemed real. Rain did not appear to have known that McNair was dead.

"Dead?" Rain said.

"Hacked to pieces. In his own secret cellar!" The Shadow said.

"Hacked? Cellar?"

"McNair had a secret cellar under his post."

"The stolen supplies," Rain said quickly. "The smuggling!"

"Perhaps," The Shadow said slowly. And he looked at Major Rain with his piercing eyes. "Do you know who killed McNair?"

"Who? Why, it must have been them! The ones who tried to kidnap him, of course! Mercenaries. Johnson is after them, and we'll get them!"

The icy, mocking laugh of The Shadow filled the silent air of the radio room. A mirthless laugh that shivered the room with its eerie power. The Shadow's stern eyes transfixed the small figure of Major Rain.

"You know it was not them, Eric Rain. You have them in your custody! Perhaps you found out what they were after and you wanted it for yourself! Perhaps it was you who killed Angus McNair!"

This time the surprise was very real in the countenance of Major Rain. The small Swede's mouth dropped open, his eyes were perplexed, mystified.

"Custody? Those raiders? No! We don't have them! We don't even know who they are! I tell you. . ."

The major stopped. His small face suddenly scowled. His eyes lighted with a hard, cold light. The Shadow watched this transformation, the sudden play of shifting thoughts on the face of the major. Rain looked up.

"How do you know we have them in custody?" Rain said.

"I was there, Major Rain, I saw Paulus capture them!"

Rain's voice was both incredulous and yet strangely eager.

"Paulus! Yes, Paulus!"

"What about Paulus?" The Shadow intoned.

"Paulus, yes! Don't you see? He never turned in those people! Yes, Paulus. I suspected but I could not be sure, I had no proof. It has to be. I suspected, but I needed time. Interpol had no right to. . ."

But The Shadow broke in sharply. "Paulus never turned those people over to you?"

"No. Don't you see, Paulus is the leak! Paulus and McNair! They were looking for McNair, those women raiders, and Paulus wanted to stop them from finding McNair."

The Shadow nodded to himself in the dim radio room. It made sense. One of the women had escaped. With her still loose, perhaps still trying to talk to McNair on her own, there was nothing more for Paulus, and whoever else was involved, to do but kill McNair to prevent him talking.

"Where is Captain Paulus?" The Shadow demanded.

"On the Portuguese border. I sent him there with my men,~ Rain said. "But. . ."

"But?"

"He has not reported to me since I sent him!"

"Check it! Now!" The Shadow ordered.

Major Rain nodded and turned to the radio. It was a matter of minutes for Rain to contact his soldiers on the border. The Major snapped out his questions. The answers came promptly from

the distant troops. Major Rain clicked off his radio. The small Swede looked at the looming black figure of The Shadow.

"Paulus is not there, has not been there," Rain said. "He sent Lieutenant Quist up with the troops, said he would follow, but he has not appeared. He told Quist that I had ordered him on a special task, but I gave Paulus no such order!"

The Shadow moved, towered closer above Major Rain. The power of his mind reached out in all its strength. Rain sank down in his chair and went to sleep. The Shadow watched the small major for a moment. Rain would sleep perhaps an hour, and would awaken with his clouded mind only vaguely aware of what had happened. But now The Shadow was not thinking of Major Rain. The Avenger was thinking about Captain Anton Paulus. If Paulus had revealed himself by deserting, then it was time. Whatever evil force lurked here

Mukulu was ready to make its move. Soon, The Demon would appear again.

The Shadow glided silently from the radio room where Eric Rain slept now. When The Demon moved this time, it would be in full strength, in full pursuit of whatever the goal and purpose was. The Shadow had to stop that. When The Demon moved, he would find The Shadow in his path.

The black-garbed avenger stole silently through the late afternoon toward the room of Lamont Cranston.

Margo Lane sat up on her bed. The slim body of the dark-haired woman was hidden by her light sheet. Awake, she smiled at the black-shrouded figure of her chief. The Shadow was not smiling, his great figure tall in the room, his glowing eyes piercing the dim bedroom light.

"I must go now, Margo," The Shadow said. "I must find The Demon before it is too late. McNair is dead and Captain Paulus is part of the evil."

The Avenger explained all that had happened. The dark-haired woman listened closely, her long hair falling about her slender shoulders. She had not moved from the bed of her siesta, her attention given only to The Shadow.

"A pattern is forming, Margo," The Shadow said. "An evil and deadly pattern."

"Major Rain must be innocent, though," Margo said.

"Perhaps, Margo, but I cannot be certain. Perhaps the major knows more than even I found out. He is not a weak man," The Shadow said grimly.

The giant black figure floated back and forth in the quiet bedroom of the medical mission as The Shadow paced the floor of the room. His burning eyes were aflame with the inner power of the Avenger.

"It is that safari, Margo. The safari led by McNair and where they all died. Rohrbach spoke of the safari as he died. He had guessed its importance, and its meaning. Those soldier women wanted McNair-because they, too, had guessed the meaning of that safari. It is all clear now, Margo. Now I understand the fear of McNair. It was that lost safari that was the key all the time."

"But if they all died, what. . ."

"They did not die, Margo! That is the secret McNair was killed to hide forever! The truth is there inside the Kanda Tract. The evil behind the stolen supplies, the smuggling, and the strange natives who attacked us today! I must go there, Margo, there is no time to lose. Perhaps it is already too late."

Margo shivered on the bed even in the heat of the early evening. The dark-haired woman had apprehension in her eyes as she watched the black-garbed figure of The Shadow.

"You are going in there alone?" Margo said.

"I must, Margo."

"What should I do?"

The Shadow paced through the room like some caged black bird. "Contact Burbank and have him alert Interpol and the United Nations command in Zambala. Tell Burbank to have them prepare troops to surround the Kanda Tract. Do not tell Major Rain or Colonel Mnera or anyone here, do you understand?"

"Yes," Margo said.

"Watch them, Margo, all those here. Watch Major Rain, Doctor Arthur, the colonel and Johnson. Do not let them leave Mukulu if you can help it."

"I won't," Margo said.

The Shadow stopped pacing. He stood still and silent in the quiet room of the medical mission. His eyes burned as he looked at his friend and assistant.

"If I do not come back, send the soldiers into the Kanda Tract," The Shadow said.

"No! You will come back!"

"But if I do not, Margo, send them in!"

"But what can I tell them? What would they look for in there?"

"A Demon, Margo, a Demon that flies through the air!"

The dark-haired woman shivered again in her thin nightgown. Where she sat on the bed the apprehension in her eyes grew greater.

"Then Gerald Vickers told the truth?"

"Yes, Margo, Gerald Vickers saw a Demon that soared on air, an Angel of Death! A Demon that killed him, and now it is time for The Shadow to revenge that murder."

The last words of The Shadow seemed to hang in the hot air of the dim room. Margo sat alone on the bed. In the medical mission there was the sound of movement. The heat of the afternoon was over, and the work of the evening and night had begun. In the distance there was the sound of a jeep motor starting. Voices began to be heard in the streets of Mukulu. But in her silent room Margo sat alone on the bed. The Shadow had gone on the frail of The Demon.

14

THE FIRST thick rows of twisted trees towered like a wall at the edge of the Kanda Tract. The river flowed close here, still wide, but curved away east soon after. Even the great Lubilana seemed to cringe in fear from the desolation of Kanda. Miles below this northern edge the river began inside the Tract, but no river flowed through Kanda. There was no movement of clean life inside the Tract-only the aimless and feeble moving of stagnant waters, of vine-choked trees, of sucking bog boles, of the slithering snakes that infested the slime. All that grew inside the Tract moved weakly, lived a brief moment, and sank again to become a part of the slime itself. The great stone mountains jutted up from the slime like giants in a titanic struggle to survive the slime that clutched to pull them down beneath the surface. In the twisted trees no birds sang.

Here at the northeastern edge, just at dusk, five men sat on the ground around the flames of a blazing fire. In the hot evening there was no need of a fire, but the five men sat close and fed the blaze. It was not wood they were feeding, it was paper-many sheets of paper from a mound of papers they had before them on the soft earth. They fed each sheet one at a time and watched

until it had been consumed before they reached out to drop another sheet into the flames. They worked in silent efficiency. They did not see the black-shrouded figure that crept close to them in the growing darkness.

The Shadow lay on the soft jungle earth watching the five men. Where they sat hunched and close to the ground his piercing eyes could see only five shapes, human but formless. Beyond them he saw the towering trees at the edge of the Kanda Tract. Near where the men all sat close to the fire he saw the swordlike long knives. Each long knife was stuck blade-first into the earth, the blades reflecting the dancing flames of the fire. These, then, The Shadow knew, were the men who had hacked and murdered Angus McNair. He had known they would be, he had followed their trail from the hidden exit beneath the pier of the murdered Scotsman's trading post. He had not hoped to find them so soon.

But they had stopped, paused in their flight. They had stopped to burn the papers taken from the dead Scotsman's files. To burn them carefully one by one and stir up the ashes so that the ashes flew light and useless into the darkening sky. They worked in silence, but it did not look like the silence of fear. It was the silence of purpose. Only two of the five men sat close to the fire and burned the papers. The other three sat farther away, their backs to the fire, their eyes watching the gathering dark. Even as The Shadow lay watching, two more men appeared from nowhere. These two silently took the places of the two men at the fire. The two men who had been at the fire took the places of two of the watchers. The two former watchers loped off into the darkness. This was repeated once more until the papers were burned. The one who did not take part in this transfer of roles, a man who sat away from the fire and watched the darkness around him, was clearly the leader.

The Shadow observed the whole scene and action. They were careful and skilled men, skilled soldiers. They had the alert inner perimeter defense of three men, and an outer perimeter of the two men who patrolled through the bush far beyond the circle of light from the fire. They knew what they were doing, and they were well-trained. It was clear that they were prepared for pursuit. They had waited until they reached the edge of the Kanda Tract to burn their stolen papers. Alert and ready in an instant to plunge into the Tract itself. To the keen eyes of The Shadow they had all the appearance of disciplined and well-trained troops performing their job with smooth efficiency. They did not fit with the horrible, slashing murder of Angus McNair. Until, the papers all burned, the last flames of the fire dying away, they stood up and gathered around their leader close to the last light of the fire.

The Shadow stared at them as they stood clear in the final light of their fire.

They were wild, grotesque, like some madman's nightmare.

Each of the seven men wore part of a uniform-but only part. Three of them wore British Army battle jackets hanging open. Two wore the uniform coats of the old Colonial Army of the country. One wore what seemed to be the mess jacket from a Naval officer's uniform, and The Shadow remembered the naval button he had found in the attacked village. The last man, the leader, wore a heavy grey tunic with a high, choker collar—the jacket of a German field officer! All of them wore boots. On all the uniform jackets and tunics medal ribbons were still attached, and some of them wore the actual medals angling from above the pockets of the tunics. The leader wore six medals, all glinting in the last firelight, and around his bare throat another medal hung on a bright silk ribbon.

Beneath the tunics and jackets they were all naked.

Their bare chests shone darkly under the tunics as if oiled, their black faces glistened with scars and the heavy welts of native tattooing.

Each man wore a military hat. Four of them wore the dark berets of British paratroopers, or Belgian paratroopers. Two wore the light helmet liners of the American Army. The last, the leader, wore the high-crowned and leather-peaked cap of a German officer. But jutting up and out of all these hats were tall plumes, pieces of animal bone, the feathers of jungle birds. The long tail of a lion hung down from the rear of the leader's German officer's cap. The severed head of a python jutted from the front of one of the American helmet liners. A string of hacked-off human fingers, dried and turned to leather, formed a fringe on one red beret.

Between the military tunics, and the heavy boots, they were naked!

Below the tunics each man wore only a breech cloth of some material-cotton, lion skin, leopard skin. Their bare legs glistened with sweat and oil. Around their legs, above the boots there were fringes of colored hair and feathers. As The Shadow watched, they each drew their long knives from the earth and inserted them beneath the cords that held up the loin cloths. They handled the knives lovingly, carried them as from long experience. But each man also carried another weapon. Two of them had German machine pistols. Three carried the issue rifles of the former Colonial Army. One carried a Sten gun. The leader carried a British Army revolver, the long lanyard around his neck, and across his back another German machine pistol. Their bodies were crisscrossed with bandoliers of ammunition.

They stood there by the final light of the fire, a macabre mixture of military and savage appearance-as if some force had plucked them from the depths of savagery trained them to be an army. An evil power that had no desire to remove their savagery, but only to add to it the discipline of military skill. The worst of two worlds blended and merged in their grotesque façades as they stood in the flickering light with the ominous wall of the Kanda Tract behind them. And as the last flicker of the fire died away, the leader grunted some sharp but unintelligible command, and the seven turned as one and plunged into the looming silence of Kanda Tract. In an instant they had vanished-from all eyes but those of The Shadow.

Moments after they had entered the Tract, the black-garbed form of The Shadow followed them into the silence of great Tract that lay like a festering sore across the face of the country.

Many hours had passed. The seven grotesque soldiers marched slowly on in the dark of the thick swamplike land. Beneath the twisted trees of Kanda there was no light little sound. They moved slowly, carefully, skirting treacherous bog holes that waited to suck down the unwary and the unfamiliar. They neither hurried like men who sure of their path, nor hesitated like men following a new and dangerous course. It had become clear to the pursuing now, soon after entering the Tract, that the seven men were following a marked trail. A carefully concealed trail, but definitely a trail. A trail intended to lead the initiated and informed safely through the tortuous and deadly dangers Kanda, while giving no help to those who did not know the secret markings. It was a trail that could be followed in safety, but could not be followed swiftly, and so the seven marched with care but without the hesitation of men who were on strange and unfamiliar ground.

The Shadow followed the seven. He would not have needed them to guide him. Quickly, he had learned and the markings of the trail. Seemingly innocent marks on trees. A carelessly broken bush. A barely visible stake could have been no more than a stick accidentally in the muck but was not an accident. Twisted vines that had not grown naturally. None of the trail markers was new, the trail had been in Kanda for a long time. And many hours passed slowly along this devious and deadly trail, the bogs sucking right and left, the snakes slithering across the path to vanish into the slime, the fallen logs that seemed so solid but were rotted and hollow

and would break under the weight of the lightest man to send him screaming to a slimy death. Many hours that abruptly ended.

The Shadow stood in the night on solid pound, a vast savannah-like grassland that stretched far and wide in the night. The seven men ahead moved more rapidly now. They had made a turn, and were marching due west toward a distant mountain that stood up high and black in the sudden moonlight of the open plain. The Shadow floated in silent pursuit, his great black figure unseen and unheard. The march went on. The seven men moving steadily toward their unknown destination, and The Shadow behind them waiting to learn that destination. A march that never changed direction now, but that was not without its sudden surprises. On the grassy plain, here and there, The Shadow found the tracks of tires. Large tires, and, twice, the marks of some vehicle with tracks instead of wheels. Not all the denizens of Kanda walked. The eyes of The Shadow gleamed with their inner fire. He knew now that the secret of The Demon could not be far away.

The seven men ahead stopped.

The Shadow moved cautiously closer. The seven men stood at the edge of another bog. On the distant far side of this new bog a tall mountain towered stony and barren. The six macabre soldiers were clustered about their leader. The leader grunted out some command. The six men moved quickly into perimeter defense and dropped to the grassy earth. They were resting before they began the passage of this next swamp. One of them struck a match. The leader leaped like a savage lion onto the man. The match was snuffed out and the leader pointed up to the sky. The Shadow knew that they did not want even the light of a match to reveal their presence to some passing aircraft on its way across the supposed uninhabited Kanda.

Then The Shadow knew, too, that he was not the only one who was following the savage soldiers through the moonlit night.

Far to his left he sensed the presence of another person. The soldiers were unaware of this new danger to them. The Shadow's senses, trained so long ago in the Orient by The Master, told him that there was only one other person. Someone who had to be of great skill to have come this far, almost as skilled and silent as The Shadow himself. The Avenger glided swiftly through the darkness toward this new intruder. He used all his great skill and training, and his night vision saw the stranger in the night. The new pursuer lay flat on a small knoll watching the seven men. A figure in Khaki carrying a Sten gun. Khaki shorts, a khaki shirt, and the body of a woman!

The Shadow recognized the ladder of the raiders who wanted to abduct Angus McNair, the slender woman he last seen standing slim and pale in her underwear above the wide Lubilana in Zambala. A woman her comrades had called *Captain* and who was so clearly now a well-trained soldier herself. A woman The Shadow wanted to talk to. Here and now. His black figure moved low in the night, and then was gone.

Where The Shadow had been, Lamont Cranston crouched low near the woman who was still unaware of him. He wanted to talk to her, but he did not want to scare her or reveal The Shadow to her. And it was Lamont Cranston crept up close to her in the dark, his automatic in his hand. At the last second the woman heard him. She turned swiftly, silently, her Sten gun moving to cover Cranston.

"Lay it down," Cranston hissed softly but sharply. "Now!"

The woman hesitated, moved the Sten gun an inch farther.

"No, down! I am a friend!" Cranston whispered. The gun stopped but did not go down. Moonlight glint on the automatic in Cranston's hand. The woman slowly lowered her Sten gun.

"I am a friend, Miss Berger," Cranston whispered. "I will put my gun away, too. Make no sound at all. They are not amateurs no matter how they look."

The woman laid her gun down. "No," she said.

"How long have you been following?"

"From Mukulu. I found McNair. You know me, but I not know you," the woman said. "How do you know me?"

"I have ways. We met once before."

"I know, but that would not have told you my name. Why are you here?" the woman said.

As she talked she had turned to again watch the seven resting out on the edge of the swamp. Cranston crawled lay beside her.

"I am after them," Cranston said. "You are after them, too?"

The woman was silent for a moment as she peered through the moonlight to where the seven men lay on the ground, resting but alert and careful even here deep inside the Kanda Tract. They had been trained well.

"I do not know," the woman said at last. "I am after something else, I think they will lead me to what I want."

"Your comrades?" Cranston said.

The woman almost jumped. She caught herself after a faint movement. They both held their breath and watched the seven savage soldiers. But this time the faint movement had not been heard. The woman breathed slowly.

"How do you know my friends have been captured?"

"I have a friend, too," Cranston said. "Kent Allard. He returned to that warehouse and saw Paulus take them. Paulus is a traitor of some kind."

"So I discovered," the woman said. "My friends were not taken to UN headquarters, that much I learned. I decided to try to question McNair again. He was the only one who could know where they had been taken. But he was dead! I found the trail of these seven. When I saw them burn those papers I knew they had killed McNair and would lead me to the man I must find."

Cranston nodded in the moonlight. He had already guessed the mission of this woman. Now he spoke softly.

"The Angel of Death," Cranston said.

The woman peered toward him in the night, her hand close to her Sten gun.

"Who are you!?" she hissed.

"That does not matter," Cranston said. "Let us say I work for an Avenger against evil, that I want to destroy this Angel of Death as much as you do."

The woman waved her hand. "What can you know of him? We have brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, to avenge. I and my comrades have dedicated our lives to finding and capturing this devil. For twenty years one or the other of us has been on his trail. The older ones have given up, but I will find him!"

"As your men found Adolph Eichmann?" Cranston said.

The woman nodded. "As we Israelis will find them all!"

"And the trail led you here?" Cranston said slowly.

"Yes," the woman said, "to this country and a man named Angus McNair. That is why we tried to take him that night. We did not know how he is connected to Von Walthar, but we know there is a connection. Or there was—McNair is dead."

"Heydrich Von Walthar?" Cranston said. "I remember his name."

"Not many do," the woman said bitterly. "They forget easily. It is over, they say, the war. Yes, it is over, and revenge is not a motive of civilized people, but our motive is not revenge. Men like Von Walthar do not change. He is a monster, and he will never change. He killed millions, and will kill again."

"He has," Cranston said. He told the Israeli agent of the death of Kurt Rohrbach. "That must be how Paulus knew who you were and what you wanted here. Rohrbach guessed who you all were. He searched your car to be sure. He was seen and killed. His killer got one of your reports on Von Walthar, and soon after Paulus captured you. Perhaps Paulus himself killed Rohrbach, but I don't think so. He is just a tool."

"An Interpol man? I did not know. I knew the man had been killed, yes, but I did not know who he was," the Israeli woman captain said. "It will go on and on until Von Walthar is stopped!"

There was movement across the grassy plain. The seven men were moving. The leader was walking from one man to the other. The leader gave each man something. The men began to eat. It was food the leader had given them. They would not start into the swamp for a few more minutes. Cranston turned to the Israeli woman.

"Perhaps much more than you know will happen soon if Von Walthar is not stopped," Cranston said grimly. "Tell me all you know about this man." The woman soldier watched the seven men eating there across the grassy plain. Seven military-trained savages. She shuddered as she began to talk.

15

"HEYDRICH VON WALTHAR was commandant of Molsburg. The Angel of Death. They called him that because he was a pleasant man. He liked to play chess. When he found an inmate who was a good chess player, he always gave the man extra food, was kind, and played chess until minutes before he sent the man to his death! Once he found a string quartet, all four players, in his camp. He arranged a fine concert—and the next day all four went to the gas chambers!"

"I don't recall Molsburg," Cranston said slowly.

"No?" the woman said. "It was special. At first it was just a camp, a place to settle the Jewish problem, or the Polish problem, or just the prisoner problem. Then it became a place where the Nazis destroyed those they never wanted discovered. It was carefully eradicated before the end of the war, all trace hidden. But long before that Von Walthar had transferred. He moved up in the SS. He was given a job below Muller but above Eichmann. A very secret position. Walthar was clever, few knew of him.

"When the war ended he could not be found. Neither he, Muller nor Eichmann. They had planned well. He was reported to have been a suicide. There were witnesses, and a grave in Neuburg where he had definitely had his last headquarters, and all his records were still there. There was, then, reason to doubt that he had killed himself. His chief, Muller, had done the same. The books were closed. But there were many who did not believe, it was too simple, too final. It was too convenient. There were no pictures of Von Walthar, no description that could be used. He left no victims alive to identify him. So we did not stop looking for him.

"At last one of our people, Moishe Tannen, discovered a trace. A diamond ring, known to have been part of a collection of jewels Von Walthar could have stolen, turned up in Lisbon.

They opened the grave where he was supposed to be. They found two bodies, and neither of them could have been Von Walthar! Moishe Tannen began to hunt, and he is still hunting, if Von Walthar has not killed him by now. He was one of the four Paulus captured."

Cranston watched the seven savage soldiers still eating across the grass at the edge of the swamp. They would soon move. That did not make him unhappy. The sooner they moved, the sooner The Shadow could find Heydrich Von Walthar. He knew now that it had to be Von Walthar who was behind all the killings. And he knew that there was more than a few murders at stake. The aura of evil, of some ominous danger, that he had felt ever since he had come to this country, was thick in the air as the Israeli woman captain talked of Heydrich Von Walthar.

"We will save them all," Cranston said. "Go on."

The woman shrugged bitterly. "Perhaps we will save them, but it is more important that we find Von Walthar. Ten years, a little longer, we have been on his trail. Many before me, but now it is my job, and I will do it! Ten years, and he was reported seen everywhere—Sweden Denmark, France, England, Spain, Egypt, Paraguay, Argentina, Indo-China! He was said to have been seen in the French Foreign Legion, in North Africa, in Ghana. He was reported serving as an orderly in a Cairo hospital, as a salesman in Argentina, as a soldier in fifty armies! But it was never him." The slender woman captain paused, her voice bitter and hard. She watched the seven men at the edge of the swamp who were on their feet now preparing to move on. "We know he had work done on his face, how much we don't know. We are sure that he assumed the identity of someone who had been in World War II on the Allied or some neutral side. He had to do this to cover bullet wounds he had received. We are also certain that he took the identity of some poor victim he himself had killed, to be certain the man did not exist. He was a clever man, Von Walthar, he would have taken an identity he could learn well, one that would fit him, and one that would allow him to move around alone!"

Cranston watched the seven soldiers as the leader brought them together at the edge of the swamp. But he was thinking of the men in the affair. The woman's description could fit any of them, or all of them! They had all been captured, or in Germany, during the war. They were all ex-soldiers, or were still soldiers. One or more of them had been in all the countries where Von Walthar had been reported. They had all moved around a great deal and alone! And they were all here in this country where three men had died and The Demon had appeared.

The woman tensed as she watched the men ahead prepare to march on. "Only last year we found our first real trace—an old letter to a gun club in Cairo. All it said was that The Angel suggested the club contact a man named Angus McNair in Mukulu. The club no longer existed, most of its members seemed to have vanished, but we found that Angus McNair still lived in Mukulu, and that he had been a leader of safaris. Since then we have watched McNair, but all the man did was drink. Then we tried to abduct him, but we failed, and now he is dead!"

"And you are here," Cranston said.

Cranston's impassive face still looked toward where the seven men had formed in marching order. But behind his hooded eyes Cranston was puzzled.

"If no one knows him, how will you identify him?" Cranston said.

The woman smiled. "He made one mistake. No, not a mistake, simply an unfortunate accident. Long before he was a Nazi, before the war, Von Walthar was arrested in Germany. He went to prison for assault—and his fingerprints are on file. We have them. That is why we fingerprinted your Allard. We do not think he will have removed his fingerprints, that would have been far too dangerous. A man without any fingerprints is sure to cause wonder. No, we

would have found a man without any fingerprints long ago. And Von Walthar does not plan to be caught. He always had grand delusions, dreamed even of taking The Fuhrer's place someday." "Perhaps that is just what he is now trying to do," Cranston said. He started to tell the Israeli woman about The Demon and the vanished villagers. There was no time. "They're going!" The seven savage soldiers moved into the swamp. They went in single file. Cranston and the Israeli woman moved silently after them. As she plunged into the treacherous swamp behind Cranston, the Berger woman took out a pair of thick, odd-looking glasses, and she put them on. Cranston realized how she had been able to follow the trail in the dark. The glasses were specially made, with infra-red lenses for night vision. With such glasses her night vision would be almost as good as The Shadow's, and now they followed the faintly-marked trail behind the seven men. The trail, like the first one, skirted half-hidden bog holes, avoided the pitfalls of rotten logs, and snaked its way along the narrow path of firm ground. Even with Cranston's night vision, and the Berger woman's glasses, they had to follow closely, and neither spoke again as they moved through the dark swamp. But Lamont Cranston, The Shadow, was thinking. His piercing eyes burned behind his impassive exterior. Heydrich Von Walthar had to be the man behind all the events of the past weeks. It all fitted. The Kanda Tract would be a perfect hiding place for a man on the run who had dreams of glory. The efficiency of the attacks on the isolated villages was just what he would have expected from a former Nazi officer. The gun club from Cairo that had been "lost" in the Kanda Tract made sense now, and so did the murder of McNair and Rohrbach and the other Interpol agents who had vanished in this district. The "gun club" members were never found because they had never been lost, that was what Rohrbach had guessed, what the Interpol man had tried to tell him. Those ten Europeans were still here somewhere in the vastness of the desolate Tract itself. McNair had guided that safari, and had reported them all dead. Obviously, McNair had joined the whole scheme in some weak moment ten years ago. McNair had covered for the vanished "gun club," prepared the secret cellar for storing supplies for them, and acted as the "outside" contact with a large and anonymous account in the Swiss bank. But McNair had regretted his weakness, and had taken to drink. A drunken man was dangerous. With the UN and Interpol investigating, and the Israeli agents and Cranston getting too close, McNair could not be allowed to live. There was too much at stake. It was all only too clear now. The whole evil plan.

Cranston let his burning eyes look ahead at the seven savage soldiers leading them on through the silent swamp. Those macabre soldiers made it all clear. Heydrich Von Walthar was not just a man in hiding to save his life. Von Walthar had plans. Somewhere in the heart of the Kanda wasteland the ex-Nazi had gathered an army. An army of half-trained savages he would unleash when the time was ripe!

There was no other explanation.

An army led by Von Walthar himself, and by men like Captain Paulus. It would have been Paulus who arranged the stealing of necessary supplies Von Walthar could not buy without raising suspicions. Paulus would be the one who had covered the smuggling of heavy equipment, and Paulus would be the man who had suspected Bombardier and arranged the bombing attack in the alley in Zambala. But behind everything there lurked the specter of Heydrich Von Walthar. Behind The Demon, there would be Von Walthar. Behind the attacks on the isolated villages, the stealing, and the smuggling, it had to be Von Walthar. Behind the murder of Gerald Vickers who had seen too much. Behind the death of Kurt Rohrbach who had guessed too much. Behind the capture of the Israeli agents who had come too close to him. Behind the attempts to kill Lamont Cranston who was moving too near to him. Behind the death of Angus McNair who had become

too dangerous. Too dangerous—and no longer useful, because the plan was about to be launched, and, soon, Heydrich Von Walthar would come out of hiding. There was one way Heydrich Von Walthar could be safe forever—if he ruled his own country! And the ex-Nazi had planned and waited. Waited until the Colonial Government, which could have stopped him easily, was gone, and only the young and weak national government stood in his way. A quick thrust, the guise of a local freedom rebellion to cover his terrorist methods, and Heydrich Von Walthar would have his country and his safety from capture. There was no doubt now in the mind of The Shadow—behind it all was Heydrich Von Walthar, The Angel of Death.

But who was Heydrich Von Walthar?

The ex-Nazi would not have hidden himself away in the desolation of the Kanda Tract for all these years. No, that would have been too isolated, too useless for him. Von Walthar would have been where he could watch, and wait, and plan. Unknown to anyone, Von Walthar would be in some position of power, some role where he could pursue the implementation of his plan. A plan that The Shadow knew must be close to fruition now. It was in the air, the ominous evil about to strike, and only the slim Israeli woman, and The Shadow, would be able to stop it. The seven savage soldiers ahead would lead them to Von Walthar, he was sure of that.

He was wrong.

The soldiers did not lead him and Maria Berger to Heydrich Von Walthar—they led Heydrich Von Walthar to him!

It was a small, open area of thick grass. Cranston and Maria Berger reached it, an opening in the swamp, just as the seven men vanished on the other side. Cranston moved quickly across with the Israeli woman captain. They reached halfway.

The sudden light was as bright as day.

Two giant searchlights fixed high in trees, their beams illuminating the small open area with a white glare as bright as the sun.

Cranston and the woman looked for escape.

"Quick!" Maria Berger cried. "The swamp! To the left!"

But there was no escape to the left. Out of the swamp itself Cranston saw a large vehicle emerge. A vehicle like a giant tractor with enormous rear wheels—a swamp buggy. Cranston remembered the tracks he had seen out on the grassy veld. A swamp buggy with four men on it and a large water-cooled old .50 caliber machinegun trained on Cranston and Maria Berger.

There was no escape to the right where a second swamp buggy rolled into view with its machinegun ready.

There was no escape to the rear. A solid wall of men materialized all around the edge of the small clearing in the swamp. Black men dressed in the same macabre half-uniforms, half-savage finery. They all had the same long knives in their belts, and the rifles and machineguns in their hands.

There was no escape to the front.

In the front the seven men they had followed stood with their guns pointed, and behind them, above them, floating beneath its whirling halo and surrounded by its high pitched scream was The Demon!

A single enormous eye glinted on The Demon's head. Black boots shone on its feet in the blinding light. It wore a skirt of shimmering feathers and the long tail of a lion. A grey tunic gleamed with the ribbons of medals. The head of a giant bird with the sharp, hooked beak of an eagle. Above the eagle head with the single shining eye was a wide, shimmering halo that undulated in the bright light. And over all the long, wailing scream that filled the silent swamp.

"Good God!" the Israeli woman whispered. "Is it. . . ?"

"No," Cranston said as he stared up at the monstrous Demon, "it is not real. A man, only a man!"

The woman, Maria Berger, was strong, but she was not a fool or one who hid from the truth. She stared up at the grotesque apparition.

"No, not a man," she said. "The Angel of Death!"

Then there was no more time for words. The savage soldiers moved in and took them. There was no way to resist, A single Sten gun and two automatics could not win here, could not help. Only The Shadow could have helped, and there was no time now for The Shadow to appear. His face impassive, Cranston allowed himself to be taken. The Shadow would find his chance later.

Their hands bound, manacled, they were led away into the swamp ahead. The savage soldiers worked with smooth and silent precision, but they did not work alone now. They worked with the specter of The Demon still floating above on his wailing scream. And they worked under the more human eyes of leaders on the ground. Leaders who wore the field grey uniforms of the *Wehrmacht*, the Nazi Army. One officer, resplendent in the rank of colonel, stepped toward Cranston and the Israeli agent.

"Mr. Cranston, Captain Berger," the colonel said suavely, "welcome to the Third Reich. I congratulate you both—not many could have come this far."

"The Third Reich is dead," Cranston said harshly.

The colonel laughed. "An error, Mr. Cranston, one the world will perhaps soon realize."

The colonel motioned abruptly and Cranston and Maria Berger were marched away into the swamp again. The giant mountain now loomed close in the night. But Cranston was not looking at the mountain, his impassive eyes were looking up at The Demon that still floated ahead and above the column that snaked its way through the slime of the dark swamp.

The Demon—only a man, hidden behind the grotesque costume, a glass faceplate for the single eye, the blades of the one-man helicopter forming the halo, a siren creating the scream that hid the sound of the motor.

Only a man in a weird costume and flying in a tiny, one-man helicopter of the type being experimented with in many armies. A simple siren to hide the motor noise and create greater fear in the minds of the ignorant and backward.

"A toy, Mr. Cranston, but effective," the man in the uniform of a German colonel said from behind Cranston.

"For the weak and ignorant," Cranston said.

"For the others we have other weapons," the colonel said. "Less gaudy, perhaps, but more deadly, as your poor friend Mr. Vickers learned."

The colonel walked away. Cranston marched on in the long column of savage soldiers. They had, then, killed Vickers, and the revenge of The Shadow would destroy them. When the time came. Now he allowed them to march him through the swamp toward the towering stone mountain that he knew was their destination. The mountain seemed to hang over the swamp, silent and dark. But somewhere inside that mountain he would find Heydrich Von Walthar.

16

THE CELL was dark, black. Lamont Cranston sat on the stone floor, his leg chained to the stone wall in a room carved out of the interior of the mountain itself, without windows and only the single steel door. A solid steel door was without an opening. A cell as solid as the hidden cavern itself.

"There is no way out," Moishe Tannen said. The older Israeli agent, chained there in the cell with the three other Israelis when Cranston and Maria Berger had been brought in, spoke in bitter despair. "If there was a way out of this cell, there is no way out of the cave itself."

Cranston said nothing. Behind his impassive face he was remembering. They had been brought into the giant cave through a narrow entrance, no wider than two men abreast, no higher than a tall man. The entrance was totally hidden from the outside. It reached from the outside some fifty yards before it opened into the vast interior cave itself. From the central cave many small passages led off to rooms like this cell, small side caves carved from solid stone.

"Solid stone," one of the other Israelis said. "It is hopeless, Von Walthar will kill us."

"There is no such thing as solid stone," Cranston said. "All stone has flaws. Find the flaw, explode it, and the stone will shatter."

"Do we explode it with words?" another Israeli said.

"There must be explosives in this cavern," Cranston said. "An Army as to have explosives."

"Mr. Cranston is right," Maria Berger said. "We must not give up! We have come too far and too long. We came to destroy Heydrich Von Walthar, and we must do it!"

"You are brave, Maria," Moishe Tannen said. "but you are young. I am not young. I have seen what Von Walthar can do. He is not a fool. He will not let us slip from his hands now. We are dead, Maria. It is time to pray."

"We cannot give up!" Maria Berger cried.

Lamont Cranston watched her in the dark. They could not see him, but he could see them, and he watched the slim Israeli captain. There was fire in her eyes, a courage, and he knew he could count on her when the time came. With the secret powers learned from the Master in the Orient, Cranston could escape his chains at any time. But that would not free him from this stone cell. He needed a plan, and it would take more than even The Shadow to destroy this army and escape from the hidden mountain. He needed a plan, and an opportunity.

"Did you survive Dachau to die here at the hands of the same animals?" Maria Berger said to Tannen.

The older man shrugged. "There is a time to escape, and a time to make your peace with Jehovah."

The slim Israeli captain pleaded. "For yourself you can give up, yes. But what about all those who will die if this madman succeeds in his plans? Have you seen those savages out there? Von Walthar will unleash them on this country. We cannot give up!"

"We are dead, Maria! Face it!" Tannen shouted. "You hear me? Dead! Dead. . . dead!!"

"Shut up!" the other young girl who called herself Lili Berger cried. "Shut up!"

The third woman was sobbing. Her young tears wracked her body, echoing coldly from the stone walls. Like the hard drip, drip of water, echoing.

"Dead," Moishe Tannen said.

The second man had said nothing, not a word. Not for hours. He sat hunched over, his lips moving as if in prayer. Maria Berger knelt on the floor, as tall as she could get with her leg and arm chained short to the wall. There were tears in the slender captain's eyes, but her voice was steady. She tried to see her comrades through the pitch black of the room.

"Don't give up, please," she said. "Don't just give up. We've got to hope, have faith! Our mission is right, good! There has to be some way. Mr. Cranston hasn't given up. He says that help could come, we just have to try to do our share!"

The third woman sobbed. The second man said nothing, his lips moving, praying. Lili Berger turned her face to the stone wall and lay there, silent. Moishe Tannen did not move a muscle.

"Dead," Tannen said. "All dead."

Cranston sat against the wall. They would fight if there was hope. They needed hope. Few men could fight when there was no hope at all. Somehow he had to give them hope. But how? He could escape his chains, even free them with the small tools always hidden inside his shoes, inside the leather of the soles, but he could not get them out of this stone cell. And if he could get them, or himself, out of the cell, he had to get them out of the mountain stronghold itself. He could probably make his own escape, but it was not enough to escape, he had to destroy Von Waithar and his army.

"Dead," the hollow voice of Tannen said. "All dead."

Cranston sat there in the dark against the wall, his mind working, thinking.

Time stood still. In this stone tomb there was no time. Time passed, and did not pass. Faint, in some vast distance, there were noises, voices, but here there was no sound but a cough. a rattle of chains.

Hours, minutes, or days, there was no way to tell.

No one came, and no one spoke.

To keep his mind clear, to wait for the flaw, the chink in the armor of this secret army, Cranston considered what had to be done. Margo would have contacted Burbank. The United Nations in Zambala, and Interpol, would have been alerted to watch the Kanda Tract. They would not know what to watch for, but they knew of the stolen supplies and the smuggling and the attacked villages, and they would watch Kanda. Somehow, Cranston had to give them a sign and a direction. A sign to alert them to the real trouble, a signal to make them ready to move, and a direction in which to move. He had to start them and show them where to come. Somewhere on the Portuguese border that could not be too far, the Swedish Battalion of Paulus was operating. Johnson and his Ghurkas were somewhere near Kanda, if Johnson could be trusted. And Colonel Mnera had his men up in Mukulu-if Mnera was not involved in this himself. It was up to Cranston to start them all, and he needed a chink, a mistake.

Once, there was no way to tell just when, the door opened and two natives came in. These natives wore no uniforms. They sidled into the cell, their eyes downcast and afraid. There were marks on their legs and backs which showed that they had been chained and beaten. They moved quickly and placed small bowls of thin potato soup at the chained feet of each prisoner. Uniformed men watched them from the door. The half-naked natives placed their bowls of food and hurried out. The door was closed. Not a word had been spoken.

In the room there was a silence. Then the slim Israeli leader, Maria Berger, began to drink the thin soup. The other two women followed her example. The two men did not move. Cranston, too, ate his soup. Strength was necessary, and any normal action helped the mind to keep its grip on reality. That was the great danger of imprisonment in this lightless, cold stone room. The mind lost its hold, slipped, floated into a dull, blank vacuum where nothing was real. Prisoners

who have been long alone in dark cells tell of trips they took to stay sane, to keep their grip on reality. Imaginary trips, perhaps all across Europe, step by step, seeing and observing everything they passed. The concentration on remembered objects, real objects, helped the mind keep its balance. Cranston began to consider his problem again. There was help waiting, poised, it had only to be called, directed, brought. . .

The door opened again.

It could have been moments, seconds, after the food. Or it could have been days. The bowl of soup was there but empty. How long ago had he eaten it? There was no way of remembering. But the door had opened. Something real had happened. Cranston's eyes stared toward the door. Even his special vision had seemed to slip, become hazy, in the hours, or was it days, in this dark cell. He watched three armed guards enter, and leave their arms outside with four other armed men. The three who entered carried something. A man! Another prisoner. They dragged this man to the far wall away from the Israelis and chained him. They turned and left and the door closed with the sharp, echoing clang of metal in the solid stone room. Cranston stared after them. They were so careful. No man entered the cell carrying a weapon. Overpowering them would do no good, the armed men remained outside. And he did not think that capturing the savage soldiers without guns would help. Von Walther would not care if two or three of his men were torn limb from limb, as long as the prisoners did not escape from the stone cell. No, it would do no good to attack those who entered the cell. Not without overcoming the men outside at the same time. There was the problem.

Cranston stopped thinking. His mind raced for a long moment. He had seen something, but what?

Then he recalled. The man they had just brought in! There was something familiar about him. Something. . .

He turned his piercing eyes toward where the man lay on the stone floor. A familiar shape, even lying there. The keen, trained mind of The Shadow studied the figure on the floor. Tall, lean, wearing some form of uniform. The man moved, shifted, sat up against the wall slowly.

Captain Paulus!

The renegade Dane needed a shave. His uniform was torn. But it was not the face nor the uniform that Cranston's blazing eyes stared at-it was the fear on Paulus' face. The Dane was terrified.

Cranston laughed, a low laugh that was something like the chilling laugh of The Shadow.

"So, Captain Paulus, your friends have turned on you!" Cranston said.

Paulus jerked up his head. The Dane tried to see through the dark. He could not. But Paulus had recognized the voice of Lamont Cranston.

"You too, Cranston? I thought you were more than you seemed," the Dane said. "Interpol won't help you here."

"What will help you, Paulus? I, at least, did not work for them," Cranston said.

"Shut up! You hear me! Shut up!" Paulus cried, his voice cracking, shivering. There was a long silence, and then the terrified voice spoke again. "Gruber, he said I am useless, a danger now. All these years. We served together, Gruber and I. In Indo-China, the Legion. I knew him from the war, in Germany. He persuaded me to join the UN and come here. I arranged it all. The supplies, I told them where to steal. The tanks and trucks and swamp vehicles, I opened the border. I. . ."

"Tanks?" Cranston said with alarm.

"Tanks, ten of them. They are small, light, but here they will do. Armored cars and antitank guns, too. I did all they wanted! I told them about that spy in Bain's office! I brought those Israelis to them! They say I made a mistake, I am of no more use now that they know I did not turn the Israelis over to the UN! I did it for them! They were after Von Walthar, those damned Israelis!"

Cranston cut in. "You know Von Walthar? Who is he?"

"No, I dealt only with Gruber. Colonel Gruber! The pig was no more than a sergeant in the Wehrmacht! A pig of a sergeant, now he struts and preens like a Prussian Junker!"

"Gruber is one of the ten who were 'lost' in here ten years ago?" Cranston asked.

"No, he came later," Paulus said, his voice flat, hopeless. "The ten were the first, the start. It was necessary to begin, to make a base, to have supplies here. It was Von Walthar's plan to start again, to build his power, from here. But it is not easy to vanish in Africa. It is easy to vanish in a city, in a country with many people, but here it is hard. There was no way to safari from Mukulu without a guide, porters. If a man just vanished in Africa they would look for a long time to find him. Ten men? No, that would have drawn attention. So they paid McNair as they paid me. There is always someone who will betray anything for money!"

The voice of the Dane was bitter beneath its fear. A weak, venal man bitter at his own weakness, his own stupid greed that had now brought him to this stone room.

"And Colonel Gruber?" the voice of Maria Berger said.

"He came later. There are thirty of them now, the cadre. They have made the army." And the Dane stopped. Cranston could see him staring toward the place where the Israeli woman captain's voice had come from. "You! Why did you have to come here! If it weren't for you I would be safe!"

"How big is the army, Paulus," Cranston demanded.

"What does it matter?" the Dane said bitterly.

"I must know. We have to stop them," Cranston said.

"How? How do we stop them! They will murder us, torture us! I have seen them! They will kill me!" Paulus cried out.

"How many!" Cranston demanded.

There was a silence in the black stone room. Paulus' heavy breathing seemed to fill the room with a fetid stink. The heavy breathing slackened.

"A thousand, fifteen hundred perhaps," Paulus said at last. "All killers, the scum and dregs! They gathered them from the prisons, from asylums. Drunks, misfits, outcasts, deserters from half the colonial armies. Men who kill because they like it, criminals in their own countries. Men who could not get along even after their countries were freed of colonial rule. It took ten years to find enough such men, but they are here now, and Gruber knows how to train killers into at least half-disciplined soldiers. They have been promised all they can steal!"

"Why the recent raids and the kidnaping of whole villages?" Cranston asked.

"Practice, to spread fear of The Demon," Paulus said. "The Demon is worth another five thousand men among the tribes in the bush. It is a legend, and they all fear it. They took the people because they needed labor, people to prepare equipment, do the menial work."

"They are kept here by force?" Maria Berger said.

"Yes, but not inside the stronghold. They are outside, in a hidden village. We did not use such people until recently because it risked discovery, but now they do not care. They are ready to attack! It will not be hard. They will rule the country behind puppet leaders. Von Walthar will

rule. The army is trained, efficient as a regiment of Storm Troopers, and they believe in the power of The Demon."

Moishe Tannen moaned. "Dead, all dead!"

Cranston ignored the older man. "How is this stronghold built, Paulus?"

Paulus laughed a bitter laugh. "Stronger than Hitler's Berlin bunker! It is a natural cave in solid rock inside the mountain. There is only the one entrance, you have seen it. Ten men could hold it against a regiment! The entrance is invisible from the outside. Nothing can be seen from the air, they planned very carefully for that. It is honeycombed with small side caves like this one, all fixed as storage rooms, magazines, cells and living quarters. Our army does not mind living in cells, they are all accustomed to cells. There is no way out, Cranston. We are all doomed!"

"Where is the ammunition, the explosives?" Cranston said.

"What does it matter, you fool? We are doomed!"

"Dead," Moisher Tannen intoned. All dead. . . dead. ."

"I have seen what they do to a man, how they kill a man," Paulus said, his voice cracking, breaking. "I have seen!"

Cranston's voice boomed through the dark and silent cell, reverberating harshly from the stone walls.

"Where are the explosives, Paulus!"

There was again a silence. "Near the entrance. There is a larger side cavern. They closed it off and the ammunition, shells, explosives, are all kept there. There is a guard, and the door is solid steel and locked. You. ."

The Dane stopped. Through the blackness of the cell Cranston could see Paulus cringe against the wall, his terrified eyes turned toward the door. Booted feet had stopped outside the door. There was a silence. Paulus seemed to shrink into the stone walls themselves. Cranston watched Paulus and realized that the Dane knew who was out there and about to enter the cell. Probably Gruber, and they were coming for someone. It was time for The Shadow to act. But first he had to escape, and there was only one route out of this stone dungeon-the path of death.

Once again, Lamont Cranston would have to die.

17

THE CELL DOOR flung open. There was a blinding light, and four of the grotesque armed savages entered the room swiftly and efficiently to take up positions on either side of the open door. Outside in the corridor there were other soldiers of the savage army.

"Colonel" Gruber and two other men who wore the field grey uniforms of Nazi *Hauptmans* stepped into the light. The smooth former sergeant, now resplendent colonel, smiled like a wolf who sees a bleeding victim.

"So! I see we are all still here, how nice!" Gruber mocked. "I am so glad you decided to stay with us, *hein*?"

Maria Berger laughed a short laugh. "I would have thought Von Walthar himself would have come to taunt us now that we are helpless and he is safe."

Gruber turned his cold eyes toward the slim Israeli woman captain. Not a flicker of expression crossed his hard face as he looked at the woman. The self-styled "colonel" spoke to

Lamont Cranston without once looking toward Cranston or taking his cold eyes from the face of Maria Berger.

"I apologize for such company, Mr. Cranston. You are, I hear, a gentleman and an Aryan, and I apologize for making you breathe the same air as traitors and Jews!"

But Lamont Cranston neither answered nor moved. Already he lay immobile, all his muscles and the power of his brain strained, concentrated, on his effort of will. Cranston was dying. His eyes had begun to glaze, and he never moved or showed that he had heard Gruber's words.

"You have learned your imitation of your masters very well, *Sergeant*," Maria Berger said with a cutting edge in her voice.

Gruber paled, stepped toward the slim woman, stopped and turned a choleric red. His heavy face suffused with anger. The stick he carried in his hand as his only weapon raised up as if to strike the Israeli captain. Then Gruber stopped, shrugged.

"Yes, very well, I was a simple sergeant in the war. Why not? A German sergeant is better than officers of weaker armies, *hein*? A sergeant, and now I am a colonel! And soon more! Today I am a colonel, tomorrow I will be much more! When we have taken over this country I will be very much more! And who can stop us? We have the men and the weapons, and when we strike all will melt before us!"

The colonel's voice had risen slowly to a crescendo, his heavy face reddening again with effort and anger. Maria Berger only sneered in her soft voice.

"The same madness," the Israeli captain said. "The same stupid madmen, and the result will be the same! Self-delusion!"

Gruber watched the slim woman. "You are brave, *fraulein Juden*, I will grant you that. Yes, a brave Jewess. Perhaps if all your people had fought us the same way we would have found better use for them than we did. We have much the same in us.

The slim Israeli agent looked at Gruber. Her face was flat, expressionless where she sat chained to the stone wall.

"No, we have nothing the same in us. You are only garbage, nothing more. Refuse for the dung heap of history."

Gruber paled. "So? You insult me, yes. A coward's insult. You are helpless therefore you are safe to say what you will, eh? The *dung heap of history*, a fine phrase. Unfortunate it will be a history you will never read. But we waste time." Gruber snapped an order to his men. "Take Paulus and Cranston first. Women and Jews last, eh?"

Two of the native soldiers and one officer approached Paulus and Cranston. The Dane cowered against the stone wall. He moaned, his voice cracked, protesting. Gruber never glanced at the Dane. The "colonel" still watched Maria Berger where the slim Israeli agent sat against the wall with the calm defiance in her strong eyes.

"History?" Gruber said. "A strange thing, history. All true history, the destiny of the world, is shaped by single men like our leader. *We* make history!"

"History shapes you," Maria Berger said. "You are made by history. History was ready for a time of hyenas, and you appeared!"

This time Gruber swore. "You verdam . . ."

"Colonel! *Herr Oberst!*"

It was the sudden, sharp voice of one of the officers, the man in the German *Hauptman's* uniform. His voice was shocked, confused, angry. Gruber turned quickly. The *Hauptman* was standing over Lamont Cranston.

"He is dead, *Herr Oberst!* This Cranston is . . ."

Gruber strode toward Cranston and the *Hauptman*. "Don't be a fool! How could he be dead?"

"I don't know, we just came. . ."

Gruber pushed his men angrily out of the way. The colonel looked down at Lamont Cranston. Gruber began to swear a stream of violent German oaths.

Cranston lay on the stone floor. His breathing had stopped as far as any human eye could tell. His wide open eyes were glazed and immobile, flat and lifeless. His body sprawled limp, in a grotesque attitude. Gruber bent to listen to Cranston's heart. There was no heartbeat to the naked ear. Gruber stood up and continued to swear.

The trancelike state of suspension Cranston had entered by use of the powers of his mind and body could not be told from death except by the most modern and sophisticated instruments.

There was a long silence in the stone cell. Even Paulus, held now by two native soldiers, had stopped his fearful whining. They all looked toward Lamont Cranston who lay in his deathlike trance. To Cranston himself all time had slowed. Everything appeared to happen in slow motion, in a slow and thick haze. But his senses were fully alert, and he watched them all as he lay apparently dead. He saw the look of incredulous suspicion on Gruber's face turn to an expression of annoyed outrage. In the trance, Cranston could assume the symptoms of death by heart attack, the blue lips, the sharply twisted limbs. Gruber saw the symptoms and his suspicions changed to annoyance and then, finally, to simple distaste.

"Heart failure," Gruber said. "Too much for him. Well, no matter, it saves us the trouble. Unchain him and take him to the pit. We want no bodies stinking up the cavern."

The self-styled colonel turned on his heel and snapped a final order over his shoulder.

"Bring the stupid Dane!"

The soldiers dragged the protesting, twisting, Paulus out of the cell. Two others picked up the "body" of Lamont Cranston and carried it out of the cell. The door slammed behind. The two soldiers continued on with their burden. When they reached the end of the side tunnel and emerged into a narrow gallery around the enormous chamber of the main cavern, they turned right.

Cranston lay limp deep in his trance. But his mind worked. He had been carried out of the cell tunnel and into the main section of the stronghold. Not in the vast central room itself, but in a kind of low-ceilinged gallery that seemed to border the main room like a balcony. And the two men carrying him had turned right!

Right, not left—and the only way out of the vast cave was to the left!

They were not taking him out of the hidden fortress to bury him. In his plan he had counted on being taken outside for burial. Then he would escape, somehow signal the forces he knew must be watching somewhere around the edges of the Kanda Tract, and bring destruction to this secret Nazi army. But they were not taking him outside, they were carrying him deeper into the heart of the hollow mountain!

He remembered the words of Gruber—*Take him to the pit!* Then they did not bury their victims outside but in some kind of pit disposal inside the stronghold. He should have known. Von Walther had gone to immense pains to keep his operation completely hidden for some ten years, and a fresh grave could be seen from the sky. The question now was what kind of pit and how was the burial done? A deep or shallow pit? Was it earth or quicklime or both?

The two savage soldiers continued to carry him. They went around the main room, down other narrow stone corridors, and came at last to a steel door. They opened the door. Cranston was carried through, and he knew what kind of pit he faced. A deep pit of stone; a natural pit

with sheer sides and a black bottom he could barely see. It was in the center of a large cavern behind the steel door.

A pit with the stench of death.

The soldiers did not hesitate. They carried him to the edge and flung him out and down into the dark maw of the gaping pit.

As he was thrown, the instant their hands released him, Cranston came out of his trance. A powerful, superhuman effort of will, and he was alert and himself-and hurtling down through black air. He sensed the bottom. Wrenching his supple and muscular body in the air, he flipped upright and hit the bottom. The bottom was soft. Earth. He landed on his feet like some great cat.

He stood at the bottom of the pit.

Soft earth-and bones. The stink of death and putrefaction. The smell of lime. Cranston looked up. The two soldiers were peering into the pit. One held a shovel. They were about to shovel down fresh quicklime. Cranston glided across the horrible pit into a hidden corner where he began to remove objects from the hidden pockets inside his clothes. Above, the two soldiers shoveled lime down into the pit. They were intent on their grisly task, hurrying to get it over. They did not like this room of death, and they worked quickly, their minds on nothing but getting their onerous task over and leaving the pit room.

They neither saw nor heard the figure climbing swiftly up the walls of the pit. They looked down to be sure Lamont Cranston was covered with lime. One of them shined a light down. They peered down in sudden terror-Cranston was not there!

But it was not Lamont Cranston who rose up from the pit of death-it was The Shadow.

The great black shape of the Avenger rose up from the pit like some terrifying apparition. His stygian-colored cloak spread in the death room like the wings of some avenging bird of prey. His hawk face glowed red with the light of the fire-opal girasol, the wide slouch hat looming like a giant, slashing beak.

The two savage soldiers turned to flee in terror.

They flung down their shovels. They dropped their light. They abandoned their weapons. They fled toward the single door. In four giant bounds the sweeping shape of The Shadow reached them, enveloped them, each hand crashing down unerringly on each neck at the same instant. The two men lay silent on the stone floor of the room of death, their necks broken. The Shadow dragged their bodies to the pit and dropped them over. Then he removed the suction cups he had used to scale the sheer walls of the pit and returned them to their secret pockets inside his cloak. He picked up the two machine pistols the dead soldiers had dropped. Now he was ready to battle The Demon itself. And time was the key now.

The sable form of the Avenger slipped through the open steel door of the pit room and vanished down the narrow corridors toward the main cavern. Unseen, he moved in silence along the gallery that bordered the main cavern. The cavern itself was now packed with the savage troops, a maelstrom of noise and motion. But The Shadow needed help, so skirted the main cavern, unseen, and glided like a soundless chimera into the side tunnel that led to the stone cell where he had been imprisoned.

The first guard was at the entrance to the side tunnel. This guard died without a sound as the hand of The Shadow struck his neck.

The second guard stood hidden in the dark halfway up the narrow tunnel. This guard saw The Shadow. An instant of fear, a word, "Who. . ." and the second guard fell senseless from a sharp thrust of The Shadow's band beneath his chin, angled upward.

The last guard squatted before the steel door to the cell. He tried to rise as fingers like steel claws clamped around his throat, crushing his windpipe. He rose only halfway before he died.

The Shadow stood before the steel door. He removed his shoe and took out the tool hidden there. The special lock pick, made of special tungsten carbide by the Avenger himself, opened the door in seconds. The Shadow glided silently into the room. The bent, hopeless figure of Maria Berger moved. She looked up into the glowing eyes of The Shadow.

"Do not be afraid, Maria Berger, I come to free you," The Shadow intoned.

The slim Israeli agent stared. "You! The one who saved McNair!"

There was no fear on the face of the slender woman soldier.

"Who are you? We thought. . ." she began.

"I am called The Shadow, Maria, and I am not one of them! I avenge all wrong, punish evil! There is great evil here. I need your help."

"To destroy them?"

"Yes!"

"Then tell us what we must do!" the Israeli agent said.

The others had seen The Shadow now. They all sat up where they were chained. They watched.

"It is a trick! Do not trust. . ." Moishe Tannen began.

Maria Berger's voice was steady. "We have to trust. To end Von Walthar I would trust the devil."

The Shadow faced the older man. "It is no trick, Moishe Tannen. The Shadow knows what evil breeds in men. I come to battle evil. Now I will free you all, and then you will help me. There is little time!"

"Just tell us how to help!" Maria Berger cried.

The Shadow nodded, his piercing eyes glowing with admiration for the brave young woman. His black shrouded figure moved through the room freeing each of them with his special lock pick. In seconds they all stood free around their leader, Maria Berger. The woman captain waited for the orders of The Shadow.

"I have weapons for all of you," the Avenger said, giving each of them a gun taken from the five dead guards. "We will leave here. We will find and capture the magazine first. Come! Now and quickly!"

Behind the invisible shape of The Shadow, the five Israelis moved silently along the side tunnel toward the main cavern. They were free and soldiers again, their fear and despair gone. They had weapons in their hands, and a purpose. Hope had come to them again, and they moved with the skill and courage of the soldiers they were. Automatically they assumed their trained methods. Maria Berger led them behind The Shadow. Moishe Tannen, all despair vanished, brought up the rear, alert and ready. They needed no instructions, and advanced along the dark tunnel with cool skill.

At the exit from the side tunnel into the gallery that bordered the main cavern, The Shadow peered out, his sharp eyes observing all. There were shouts and yells in the packed mass of savage soldiers in the main cavern. They all stared at something at the far end of the cavern. A thick pulse of savage excitement throbbed through the hidden stronghold, and the gallery was all but deserted. The Shadow moved out and led the Israelis toward the left and the ammunition and explosive magazine near the entrance to the hidden cavern. The Israelis fanned out in skirmishing order. Together they advanced behind The Shadow. There were only two guards near the ammunition magazine. Both died without a sound at the hands of the skilled Israelis.

The Shadow broke the lock on the magazine.

Inside, his piercing eyes looked around carefully. There was every type of ammunition stacked in the large room. The Israelis needed no instruction here. Each Israeli found the proper ammunition for the weapon he had. The Shadow motioned to the boxes of grenades. Maria Berger instructed each of her comrades to take grenades. She did not speak. There was no need for words, but only swift, silent commands by signal.

The Shadow found three light machineguns. At a nod from the black-cloaked Avenger, the Israelis picked up the three machineguns and belts of ammunition.

The Shadow motioned toward cases of plastic explosive. His eyes blazed with their inner fire. His voice was low but strong.

"Take the explosive," the Avenger commanded. "This is what you will do. From here you will take the explosive and the three machineguns and escape through the entrance. You will set up the three machineguns to command the entrance tunnel. Two of you will set charges in the tunnel. You will wait there until the soldiers in here try to leave the cavern. Before they can leave you will explode the charges and destroy the exit. It is the only way out. Those few who escape you will stop with the machineguns."

"Can we hold them? Only five of us?" Maria Berger said.

"Help will come. If you destroy the exit you can hold until help arrives. It will take them long to dig out," The Shadow said.

"And you?" the Israeli woman captain said.

"I will come out before you explode the charges. But until the charges are set I must divert these savages. You will need time," The Shadow said.

"If you do not come out in time?"

The Shadow was grim, his eyes burning. "You will explode the charges, destroy the exit, before this army can escape. Do not wait for me."

"They will not catch us," Maria Berger said. "Come with us now."

"No! I must divert them to be sure you have time. They must not escape. Now go!"

The slender Israeli leader looked at the black figure of The Shadow, at his hawklike face bathed in the red glow of the fire-opal girasol.

"Go! Now!" The Shadow commanded.

Without another word the Israeli leader nodded to her comrades. They turned and moved silently from the ammunition room toward the single exit from the mountain cavern. The Shadow lingered a moment longer inside the ammunition magazine. He laid a trail of explosive to the door, and took up two handfuls of grenades. Already he had found two automatics. With the grenades in his pockets inside the great black cloak, the automatics in his hands, The Shadow left the ammunition magazine.

He left the door open and turned right toward the main room of the mountain stronghold where the savage army shouted now in a maelstrom of macabre sound and fury.

The Shadow stood at the inner edge of the narrow gallery and looked out over the enormous main cavern. He saw a sight of horror and mad insanity.

18

THE CAVERN was a great hollow bowl of solid rock, its floor ten feet below the narrow gallery, its ceiling towering two hundred feet into the air. So large the entire native army just filled it, their shouts and insane screams echoing upward.

More than a thousand of them, all dressed in the weird half uniforms, half savage costumes. They roared and screamed, leaping and dancing on the great stone floor of the enormous cavern. They brandished their weapons, their feet pounding on the stone floor. Drummers beat a wild rhythm, their eyes glazed, their bodies shining with thick sweat in the heat of Africa. It was a scene from a savage past-but the scene at the far end was much more recent, and more savage!

All the shouting, milling, dancing soldiers faced toward, shouted toward, the distant end of the great cavern that was farthest from the entrance. There the enormous room ended in a giant flat wall of stone that towered to the distant ceiling above. At the foot of this wall there was a raised platform cut from the solid rock. On the platform there were five tall, thronelike chairs set in a row with the center chair three feet higher than the other four. Behind these chairs, attached and towering on the great wall itself, there was a giant carved image.

The image was a circle forty feet across. A twisted swastika carved inside the circle. A ten-foot high eagle carved above the circle. A giant Nazi insignia set like a God at the end of the enormous room-and beneath the image the five thrones of its priests! All intended to awe, coerce, command the savage army. The symbol of a savagery far greater than any these outcast savages could conceive. The white man's gift to the savage-a greater, more efficient savagery than any native ever dreamed of.

And on the giant swastika, hanging on the enormous, twisted cross, was the figure of a man. Captain Anton Paulus.

As The Shadow watched from where he stood unseen in the dim shadows of the gallery, the Dane moved, was not dead. Paulus was not actually hanging from the macabre symbol. The Dane was strapped to a flat board that rested somehow against the swastika and hung there above all the shouting, dancing, screaming soldiers of the savage army. The dregs, the insane, the outcasts, the scum of the whole continent. The last filth discarded by their own people. But clean and innocent when compared to the four men in grey who lounged in the throne chairs beneath the giant twisted image.

The center chair remained empty. In the chair on the right of the raised center throne Colonel Gruber sat at his ease looking out and down at the wild men of his army with a certain amused tolerance. The other three chairs also contained men in field grey uniforms and Nazi armbands, all lounging easily, all watching the savage soldiers who were whipping themselves into a wild frenzy.

And then The Shadow realized what was happening.

The four Nazis on the raised dais under the giant swastika were all armed, booted, ready! The savage soldiers milling on the enormous cavern floor were armed, carried small packs, were ready. Somewhere inside the many side tunnels there was the sound of engines starting, coughing, sputtering. They were ready, the neo-Nazi army.

They were only waiting for the signal.

The Shadow could guess the signal that would send them out into the night to spread from the Kanda Tract and engulf the country.

The Demon!

And as The Shadow thought it, The Demon appeared.

It came from nowhere. Suddenly, it was there. As if it had come out of the giant swastika itself.

It had. Just above the eagle carved atop the swastika there was a small door in the solid rock wall. The Demon now hovered in the air just in front of that door.

The Demon hovered above the figure of Captain Paulus spread out across the twisted cross. The milling throng of soldiers stopped, froze, stared upward in awe and a long, low, weird sigh went through the whole room—*Uuuuugggggggggghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!*

The four Nazi officers stood and saluted—the straight-armed Nazi salute.

They shouted, "*Sieg Heil!*"

Then there was silence. The faint rustle of feathers. The whirr of the helicopter blades above the head of The Demon.

A different Demon. The same in all respects but one. The Demon with the head of an eagle, the tail of a lion, the single shining eye, wore, now, a different military tunic. A black tunic. A tunic not grey now but black, and a black high-crowned hat, and the red armband. The black uniform of the SS Troops, the Elite of Nazidom. And The Shadow knew that this time The Demon was without a doubt Heydrich Von Walthar himself.

A Demon that circled slowly high above in the giant cavern.

Slowly, circling, slowly, around high above, circling.

The room waited.

When the room stopped waiting they would pour out into the open, into the night. And the Israelis would not yet have had time to complete their work.

The Demon suddenly whirled up high, up and up, hovered high, and swooped down to the deep sighing breath of a thousand savage soldiers—*Uuuuugggggggggggghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!*

There was a scream of horror.

Captain Von Paulus suddenly dropped. Something was released and Paulus dropped down the face of the giant swastika. Paulus screamed-and hung there. The Dane hung on the twisted cross from a thin strand of piano wire around his neck. Paulus writhed, thrashed, his neck held by the piano wire that would slowly strangle him in the most horrible way.

This, then, was the signal.

The savage soldiers let out a howl of triumph.

The Nazi cadre cried out, "*Heil!*"

The troops began to move as The Demon swooped in the air.

And The Shadow took careful aim and shot once. A single shot that severed the piano wire around Paulus' neck. The Dane dropped to the raised platform.

The Shadow appeared.

He seemed to move out along the sheer wall itself. His great black-shrouded figure, the glowing eyes, the hawk-face bathed in the red glow, moved like some giant, diabolical creature from the depths of the earth itself out on the sheer wall.

The savage army saw him and gasped, cringed, wavered where they stood ready to charge out into the night.

The chilling laugh of The Shadow filled the giant cavern.

The Demon swooped.

"Kill him! Kill him!" The Demon screamed in a voice that was deep and hollow, coming from inside some empty space.

The Shadow, supported on the sheer rock face of the cavern by his unseen suction cups, laughed again as he looked at the maddened Demon-a Demon that had to be Heydrich Von Walthar. The eerie laugh echoed through the cavern. The savage soldiers groaned, hesitated.

The Nazi cadre recovered from their shock. From the raised platform, and from all sides, the men in field grey uniforms began to fire at The Shadow. The Avenger returned the fire, both automatics blazing in his hands. Bullets whined and sang from the rock walls. The Shadow's withering fire cut them down. Gruber fell on the raised platform, his face a mask of blood from the bullets of The Shadow. Two more were down. But The Shadow was too open a target where he hung on the sheer wall. He slid swiftly back to the safety of the narrow gallery that surrounded the open cavern floor like a balcony.

The Demon hovered above, screaming in anger. "Kill him! He is just a man! Kill him! He is only a man, you fools! He needs a gun! Kill him!"

At last the savage soldiers began to move. They heard the words of The Demon, saw The Shadow duck for cover, and began to howl and run toward the single exit from the giant cavern. Above on the gallery The Shadow raced for the exit. The Israelis would have to blow the tunnel any minute.

The Shadow's great black shape floated swiftly toward the narrow exit. Ahead, two Nazi cadremen of the savage army ran into his path. The Shadow's automatics blazed and the two men went down in the hail of bullets from his withering, accurate fire. The Shadow leaped over the fallen Nazis and reached the door of the ammunition magazine. Pocketing one automatic, he pulled the pin of a grenade with his teeth and hurled the deadly little bomb into the magazine where it would ignite the prepared trail of explosives.

Behind him the savage army closed in, their macabre pieces of uniform and savage plumes and feathers pouring toward the narrow tunnel that was the only way out.

The Shadow turned, dropped to one knee, and emptied both clips from his two blazing automatics. His fire poured into the frenzied mob, and, for an instant, slowed their attack. In that instant The Shadow whirled and raced out through the narrow passage and into the open air.

"Blow it!" the voice of Maria Berger cried in the night.

The five Israelis were deployed expertly just beyond the entrance some seventy yards away. As he raced toward them, The Shadow could see that the three machineguns had been placed with great skill to both concentrate their fire on the exit, and to cover each other. The two Israelis with only hand weapons, the Berger sisters, were dug in to protect their machine-gunners. The Shadow reached the line of Israelis and tumbled down beside Maria Berger. Bullets sang around his head as he dived for cover.

Already the first of the savage army were emerging from the entrance. A deadly fire blazed out from the three machine-guns. The savage soldiers were stopped as if swept by a sudden high wind. They retreated toward the entrance. There was no cover between the entrance and the line of Israelis because the Nazi's had not wanted to give potential attackers any cover. Now it forced the Nazi soldiers back into the entrance tunnel.

And the tunnel blew up.

The whole mountain shuddered, blew up.

A great sheet of flame burst out from the mountain as the ammunition magazine, set off by The Shadow's grenade, blew out the side of the mountain fortress.

One explosion, and then another, and another.

Sheets of flame seared up through the dark sky, the shattering force shaking the ground like an earthquake.

The Israelis flattened out under the rain of rocks and debris. But they never took their eyes off the entrance. As the smoke and dust slowly cleared, they saw the entrance. It had crumbled in on itself and lay a mass of twisted stone with dust still rising. Small fires burned in the brush all around. The side of the mountain itself was ablaze, lighting the ghastly scene as bright as day. Burning debris fell into the swamp below with sickening hissing noises.

The entrance settled, shattered and sealed. After a moment one man staggered out, his uniform jacket smoldering. An Israeli gunner shot him down. Two more, and then three staggered forth only to meet the deadly fire. Soon, from the shattered entrance some soldiers began to fire at the Israelis, but they could not see what they fired at, and they were pinned down, helpless unless whatever was left of their fellow soldiers inside the mountain could dig their way out.

"You did it," Maria Berger said.

"Not alone, Captain Berger," The Shadow said, his piercing eyes blazing toward the slender woman agent.

"It should take any survivors a long time to dig out."

"Before that there will be help," The Shadow said.

Far to the north and west there was the sound of motors moving slowly into the Kanda Tract. That had to be Captain Johnson and his Ghurka patrol, they would be closest.

"Did you see Von Walther?" Maria Berger asked.

"Yes, he was The Demon. He is ended now," The Shadow said.

"I would like to be sure," the pretty Israeli said.

"We will search," The Shadow said. "Later there will be a search and he will be found. See! Look there!"

The Shadow pointed up into the dark sky still lighted by the blazing brush on the side of the shattered mountain. Coming low were many transport aircraft. Even as they watched the parachutes began to open all across the sky. United Nations and Government paratroopers were coming down onto the grassy plain no more than ten miles away. With the blazing mountain to guide them they would soon arrive. The great blast in the night that had ripped open the mountain and sealed in the army of Von Walther had also served as the signal to the troops alert and waiting at Margo's warning. The Shadow smiled grimly as he saw that his dark-haired assistant had done her job well. Already the first parachutes had reached the ground back there on the grassy plain. And the sound of Johnson's Ghurkas was coming closer.

"That is the end of another Third Reich," The Shadow said, his eyes burning in the night.

"Look! There!"

It was the older man, Moishe Tannen who shouted. The older Israeli pointed up into the sky in the direction of the blasted mountain. They all stared up. Even without the night vision of The Shadow the thing was clear in the light of the burning brush and jungle.

The Demon flew above the mountain.

"There must have been another way out!" an Israeli cried. The voice of The Shadow was hard, cold. "No, the explosion blew the mountain open high up. No one else could escape, but he had the helicopter! He simply flew out! But it will not save him!"

For another long moment The Demon seemed to hover there in the darkening sky, the light of the flames beginning to fade away. Then the weird creature circled and flew rapidly off toward the north and west. Moments later it had vanished in the darkness.

"He escaped!" Maria Berger said.

"No, Maria," The Shadow said. "He will not escape! No evil can escape The Shadow. Heydrich Von Walthar wrn pay for his evil!"

Before the slim Israeli captain could answer, she sat alone in the night. She blinked and looked around her. The Shadow was gone. The Israeli captain did not move for a long minute. Then she returned to her work. She and her four companions pinned down the few savage soldiers of the destroyed army who had not been sealed within the mountain until, a few hours later, the first elements of the paratroopers came pouring out of the swamp and up to the mountain.

Miles away, gliding swiftly through the treacherous swamps, The Shadow was on his way to finish his work. The Demon had a head start, but not by much. The one-man helicopter did not have enough fuel to get The Demon far. And The Shadow knew where The Demon was going.

19

DAWN TINGED the eastern sky far to the east of Mukulu. On the verandah of the medical mission residence, Margo Lane stood alone and stared off toward the south and the Kanda Tract. The flames had just faded from the distant sky above Kanda. There was still firing to the south, and UN planes circled low dropping supplies over the desolate Tract. With the aid of Interpol and Commissioner Weston she had managed to convince both the UN and the local government to be ready for The Shadow's signal. The great, shattering blast had done the job. Now, from the sounds coming from Kanda, Margo knew that the job had been done, all that was left was the final mopping up. And here on the verandah she was waiting for her chief.

From the predawn dark there was the sudden sound of a jeep motor driving fast, Margo looked toward the sound. The jeep was coming very fast. It loomed up out of the night and screeched to a halt. The small form of Major Eric Bain leaped out and came running up to Margo. The major was out of breath and his face was scratched and dirty in the dim dawn. He climbed the verandah steps and stood beside Margo looking south.

"It came over my radio," Bain said. "A whole clandestine army. They had a mountain stronghold down there in Kanda. Must have been there for years, perfectly hidden! Someone blew up the whole works. The reports are garbled. Something about a small force of Israeli agents looking for a Nazi war criminal."

"Of course," Margo said almost to herself. "The Angel of Death. Those three women were Israeli."

"What?" Bain said.

"Something Lamont told me, Major," Margo said. "it's not important now."

Bain looked around. "Where is Cranston?"

"I'm not sure, Major, but not far," Margo lied. "He went out to see if he could find any more clues as to what happened to Mr. Vickers that night."

"He did, eh? Well, I wish him luck. We found a trail of some kind, about seven men. Trailed them right to the edge of the Kanda. Funny thing, they had stopped to burn some papers. Must have been part of that army inside Kanda."

"Probably," Margo said.

Bain stared away to the south again where the dawn light was grey now on the circling planes, but the earth below them was still black.

"One thing still puzzles me. I wonder how the government and UN Command knew there would be trouble in Kanda tonight? I didn't know."

Margo watched the small major. Rain showed nothing on—his face as he looked south from the dark verandah. Still, the small Swede could be fishing for something. Perhaps Rain was more worried than he seemed.

"Perhaps Interpol alerted them," Margo said.

"Yes," Rain said, "Perhaps. But I wonder. I had a rather strange visitor last evening. I think there is something about all this we don't know, Miss Lane. Unless, of course, you and Cranston *do* know."

Margo was about to make some evasive answer when another figure loomed up from the dark near the verandah of the residence.

"Something damned odd, sir, let me tell you!"

The newcomer was a tired and disheveled Captain Johnson. The Britisher's Ghanese uniform was torn and dirty, his boots were thick with mud. A long scratch on his cheek still bled slightly, and his face was blackened for night fighting. Johnson came up onto the verandah to stand beside his chief. The older man also stared off to the south where there was still sporadic firing.

"Cleaning them up down there. Bloody poor devils are tombed up inside a bloody mountain. Just in time, too. They had tanks, swamp vehicles, armored cars, over a thousand men—all the scum of the prisons!" Johnson exclaimed.

Rain watched the older Britisher. "You said there was something damned odd?"

Johnson nodded. "When I got there with my Ghurkas it turned out that the only force holding them inside that mountain was a single Israeli war-criminal hunter unit! Five of them, three were women. But the whole bloody mountain had been blown up! When I asked them about how they did it, they said they had been prisoners inside and something they called The Shadow had helped them escape!"

"The Shadow?" Rain said, the small man concentrating as if trying to remember something.

"Yes," Johnson said. "I think they must have been in some kind of shock." And the older soldier turned to Margo. "They told me something else, Miss Lane. Your friend Cranston was a prisoner with them. They say he's dead, I'm afraid. I am sorry."

Margo feigned shock. "Lamont? Dead? Oh, no, Captain, he can't be!"

"I am sorry. When I heard I left my men and came up here in a UN helicopter. He may still be inside that mountain. It will take some time to open it up again," Johnson said.

"They'll find him," Margo said. "I know they will!"

Doctor Arthur came out of the residence. "Of course they will, Miss Lane. Cranston struck me as a man who could take care of himself."

The doctor stepped out to stand beside the others and look off toward the south. He wore a white lab coat that glowed in the dark before the dawn.

"Five Israelis you say, Captain Johnson," Doctor Arthur said. "That sounds like our five visitors of the other night. The women who wanted McNair."

"It does," Major Rain said.

"And speaking of McNair," Doctor Arthur said, "have you located him yet?"

"Not a trace yet," Rain said. And the major looked to the south again. "If those Israelis wanted him, maybe he's down there with that secret Army. There was always something peculiar about McNair, ever since he lost that safari. Perhaps he was one of them like Captain Paulus."

"Paulus? One of them?" Doctor Arthur said. "I seem to be out of all this. Tell me what's been going on. I've been in my laboratory all night." The doctor laughed. "When that happens I see and hear nothing. I thought I heard a loud bang, but it didn't really reach me, I'm afraid."

While Major Rain and Captain Johnson explained what they knew of the events of the night, Margo thought about Lamont Cranston and The Shadow. She could guess what had happened inside that mountain, and she knew that The Shadow was not dead, but where was the Avenger? If the affair were over, Cranston would appear soon somewhere. But Margo had a suspicion that the affair was not yet over, that The Shadow was somewhere still at work. If so he might try to contact her. She would excuse herself from the group on the verandah as soon as possible without creating suspicions. She was about to plead a morning headache, when another jeep roared up out of the predawn darkness. Colonel Mnera and two of his men walked toward the verandah. The colonel, too, looked tired and weary from a night of work.

"It's over," Mnera said as he stepped onto the verandah, "but there may be stragglers. We have to be careful, keep an eye open and go armed. That means everyone. They were ready to attack. A close thing. Every man was a criminal, and they had been trained!"

"Trained?" Major Rain said.

"Nazi trained, a whole cadre of ex-Nazi soldiers under the leadership of a man named Von Walthar!" Mnera said. "I just got the report from Zambala. Those five who attacked us here were Israeli agents looking for this Von Walthar."

Captain Johnson swore. "Heydrich Von Walthar, The Angel of Death? I've heard of that one."

"How could one not hear of Von Walthar," Doctor Arthur said. "We who fought him will not forget The Angel of Death. I was in Molsburg myself! Did you know him, Major Rain? You were in Germany."

Rain shook his head. "No, but I had heard of him. I knew Muller who was his superior, but not Van Walthar himself. I think Paulus was at Molsburg, too. Probably where they met. Is there any report on Paulus, Colonel Mnera?"

"No, they say he is still inside the mountain, probably dead," the native colonel said. "No word on McNair either."

"Perhaps McNair was really Von Walthar," Doctor Arthur said.

Colonel Mnera nodded slowly. "Perhaps so. I wonder if we will ever know?"

"Probably not," Doctor Arthur said. "Anyway, it is over and we can get back to work."

The chilling, eerie laugh seemed to fill the predawn dark of Mukulu. A weird, cold laugh that floated in the suddenly silent air.

"One of you knows that it is not yet over," an unseen voice intoned, taunted from the night. "One of you knows where McNair is, and who Von Walthar is!"

Colonel Mnera drew his pistol. The colonel's two men held their rifles ready, their white-staring eyes searching the dark for the source of the cold voice that spoke from nowhere. Major Rain held his automatic and peered into the shadows. There was nothing to see but the great black shadows themselves all around the open verandah of the mission residence. A cloudy, unclear memory of his former visitor was stirring in Major Rain's mind.

"You! I remember. . . something. . ." Rain stammered as his eyes searched.

Doctor Arthur looked slowly and carefully all about him. The doctor seemed confused, his eyes puzzled by the hidden voice. Captain Johnson began to swear softly as he held his pistol and tried to locate the source of the voice.

The Shadow laughed again. The eerie laughter echoed through the silent streets of Mukulu.

"Angus McNair is dead, murdered, and one of you knows that!" The Shadow said from the darkness where he stood unseen, his piercing eyes watching them.

"Dead?" Colonel Mnera said. "Where? How do you know that? Show yourself!"

"McNair is dead in a secret cellar beneath his trading post," The Shadow said harshly. "I know! The cellar was a storehouse for the stolen supplies and smuggled materials of Von Walthar's army!"

"Show yourself!" Mnera shouted again.

The Shadow laughed. The weird laugh was cold in the faintly greying dawn. Suddenly the hawk face of The Shadow appeared in a red glow not ten feet from the verandah. His eyes burned beneath the brim of the wide slouch hat, his body faded into the gloom like a part of the night itself.

"See me then!" The Shadow intoned.

They all stared. Margo, alone and apart, smiled to see her chief. Her hand moved unseen to grasp the small automatic beneath her skirt. There would be action soon. Major Rain was the first to speak.

"What do you mean, one of us knows who Von Walthar is?"

"One of you does!" The Shadow said sharply. *"One of you is Heydrick Von Walthar!"*

No one moved on the dim verandah. Margo held her pistol unseen at her side. The Shadow moved a step closer, his glowing eyes boring through them all. The Avenger looked from face to face.

"Gerald Vickers was a mistake," The Shadow said softly, his cold voice low and deadly. "The secret Nazi army was ready. There was to be one more important shipment over the border. The attack on the village near here was a diversion to cover the smuggling. But Vickers saw The Demon and knew what it was—a man flying in a one-man helicopter! Vickers recognized the Nazi uniforms! He was stopped before he could get out his full message, but he made his escape!"

The eyes of The Shadow blazed up in the greying dawn. "That was the key! Vickers escaped! The trap door and secret tunnel were not found by the attackers of the village. Yet someone found and killed Gerald Vickers. How? He was killed that same night, and yet he had escaped!"

Major Rain blinked. "He must have walked into stragglers when he left the tunnel."

The Shadow laughed. "No, Major Rain, he did not. He was killed that night, *but not where he was found dead!* He was killed somewhere else, some other place. There is no doubt. His body would have been found earlier if it had been there. The river had risen and gone down, and his body would have washed away had it been there. There was straw on the body, and there is no straw in the jungle. Straw comes from a place where materials have been stored—some cellar! But above all, Vickers had been shot, *but there was no bullet hole in his clothing.* His coat had been buttoned over the wound! A careless mistake no savage soldier would have bothered to make. Gerald Vickers had not been wearing his jacket when he was shot—the coat was put on again later when the body was brought out to the river and placed there to be found. This was done because Lamont Cranston had come to find Vickers, and the killer wanted Cranston to think Vickers had been killed in the jungle."

There was a silence. At last Doctor Arthur was the one who spoke. The doctor looked at the glowing red face of The Shadow with speculative eyes.

"If Vickers escaped, how would anyone know he had seen anything," Doctor Arthur said. "Only Colonel Mnera. . ."

"I did not kill Vickers!" Mnera cried angrily.

The Shadow watched Doctor Arthur. "You were going to say that only Mnera heard the partial message, Doctor? But that is not true. There is a radio set in McNair's secret cellar. McNair could have heard, and Heydrich Von Walthar could have heard! Von Walther did hear that message, or McNair told him of it. And Von Walthar killed Vickers as he later killed Kurt Rohrbach in Zambala and tried to have Cranston killed."

Captain Johnson burst out. "But if Vickers escaped, how did Von Walthar find him again to kill him?"

The Shadow loomed higher in the grey dawn. "Von Waltbar did not find Gerald Vickers, *Vickers found Von Walthar!* When Vickers escaped through that tunnel there was only one place he would go-to Mukulu where his abortive message had been received. He came here to Mukulu and went straight to a man he trusted. Rut that man was really Heydrich Von Walthar and shot Vickers! McNair had heard the message and reported it to Von Walthar, and Von Walthar was waiting for Vickers to come to Mukulu."

The eyes of The Shadow glowed fiercely. "Only two men remained in Mukulu when everyone else went to the attacked village. One of them was McNair and he is dead! The other. . ."

Doctor Arthur laughed aloud. "The other was myself. I was operating. I am not Heydrich Von Walthar."

The Shadow moved closer to the smiling doctor. "Aren't you, Doctor Arthur? There is straw in your cellar. You have been here eleven years, and Von Walthar vanished eleven years ago. Von Walthar had medical training. You were the doctor who certified the deaths on that safari where no one died! You placed the ban on anyone entering the Kanda Tract. You were in Zambala, at The Safari Club, when Rohrbach was killed. You were afraid of McNair, you never let him out of your sight. I think if we check back very closely we would find that Doctor James Arthur, Alsatian patriot, died at Molsburg Concentration Camp! You took his place at the end!"

"Don't be stupid, whatever you are! Look at you! Hiding in the dark like some criminal!" Doctor Arthur cried. "Why don't you arrest him, Rain! Mnera! Go ahead!"

The laugh of The Shadow filled the dawn. "Look at them, Doctor! They are listening to me. Now it is really almost over!"

"Stupid lies! What can you prove? Nothing!" Arthur shouted.

"I can prove nothing, Heydrich Von Walthar," The Shadow intoned, "but your fingerprints will prove everything! The Israelis have your fingerprints! You know. . ."

Doctor Arthur held the Neuhausen automatic aimed at the heart of The Shadow. Two shots tore the dim dawn light.

The Shadow had vanished before the first shot could be fired. His eerie laugh floated mockingly.

Doctor Arthur, or Heydrich Von Walthar as he really was, turned his pistol quickly on the others. They all fell to the floor of the porch. Margo Lane did not drop. The dark-haired agent of The Shadow fired her automatic. Doctor Arthur cursed as his pistol flew away, shot from his hand. He cursed once and leaped over the verandah rail. In the vague grey light the doctor ran swiftly away. Behind him they were all shooting, but in the dim light they could barely see him as he tore off his white coat and threw it away. He seemed to blend into the dawn, and he began to laugh as he ran.

The great black shape of The Shadow loomed up, rose up as if from the earth itself directly in his path.

Doctor Arthur attempted to swerve, to turn, but he could not, and the giant black shape of The Shadow enveloped the fleeing man. Arthur screamed once and seemed to disappear into the looming blackness of The Shadow.

When they all reached the spot, Doctor Arthur, alias Heydrich Von Walthar, *The Angel of Death*, lay unconscious on the ground. He was not dead, only senseless, and Colonel Mnera ordered his men to take him to a cell in Mukulu headquarters.

In the grey dawn the chilling laugh of The Shadow echoed and rang through the village. A laugh of final revenge.

Two days later Lamont Cranston, Margo Lane, and Stanley waited at the Zambala airport for their jet. Major Bain stood with them. Cranston had been found wandering alone in the jungle. He had escaped from the mountain through a small and unknown tunnel. That was his story.

"You were lucky, Cranston," Major Rain said.

"Those Israelis saved me," Cranston said. "I had only passed out when they all thought I was dead. A kind of shock state."

Rain nodded slowly. "Well, we've got all the leaders. Paulus is recovering. We'll turn Von Walthar over to the Israelis, they have earned the right to try him. The natives the Nazis abducted are back in their villages and The Demon is dead—for now. The whole army is destroyed."

"A good job then, Major," Cranston said.

"Yes," Rain said, "thanks to that man in black, if he is a man. You don't happen to know anything about him, do you, Cranston?"

"Only what I have heard here, Major," Cranston said.

Rain nodded slowly again. "He seems to appear and disappear easily. Another peculiar thing, Cranston. We had a Sergeant Mace we suspected of being an Interpol agent. He wasn't, but he was a phony. We checked. Now he, too, has vanished. Very strange."

Cranston smiled behind his impassive face. Bombardier, well again, was already on another mission for The Shadow.

"The world is full of strange things, Major," Margo said.

"Especially shadows," Rain said. "Or is there only one real Shadow?"

Cranston smiled. "Perhaps only one, Major."

"That's what I think," Rain said. "And I am glad he was on my side."

They said their goodbyes then, and Major Bain watched the three board their waiting jet. As the giant aircraft taxied away, Major Rain was sure he heard a strange sound above the noise of the engines—a weird and triumphant laugh as the great jet rose into the sky and faded toward the north.

THE END