

THE INVINCIBLE SHIWAN KHAN

Maxwell Grant

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THE INVINCIBLE SHIWAN KHAN

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. SPELL OF THE PAST

STRANGE was the golden room, singular the hush that lay within its squarish walls. Windowless, it formed a metallic cubicle pervaded by a rich, yet dullish, gleam.

Golden, too, was the attire of the room's lone occupant. He was robed in the richly woven cloth, its hue relieved only by the purple trimmings of a kingly jacket. Purple, too, was the skullcap that topped his head.

His face placed him as an Oriental. Saffron in shade, it produced a chameleon effect, blending with the golden light to render his features almost colorless.

Oddly, though, the result was a sharpness of those features. Absorbing the light about them, they stood out with a clarity that revealed every line in the man's demoniac countenance.

No brush could have portrayed a face so fiendish as that which the gold-robed man produced in life through his own emotionless effort.

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Wide of forehead, tapering to pointed chin, the face was an inverted triangle. Its eyes were greenish, like those of a night-prowling beast. Above those eyes were brows that made curved streaks, clear to the wide temples. Between the eyes a sharp, downward line marked a thin, high-bridged nose.

Brownish lips, scarcely discernible until they opened, were topped by thin, drooping mustaches; while a tuft of beard, dabbed to the thin-pointed chin, gave the final touch to a human physiognomy that a Satan could have envied.

The monstrous master of the golden room reclined in a gilded throne. He was resting his chin upon an elbow propped hand; his body, slanted across the broad throne, looked snakelike in the folds of the ornamented robe.

His free hand stretched its long-nailed fingers to a gilded taboret, plucked a small vial from the tiny table. Like a bird's claws, those fingers clutched the vial snapped between them. Instantly, the square-walled room was filled with the perfume of lilacs.

Catlike eyes fixed in a glistening stare. Brownish lips opened; from them dripped words that carried a clear tinkle, like ice against the sides of a glass.

"I am Shiwan Khan," spoke the man in gold. He paused, as though his words were directed to a gallery of listeners. Then: "I am Shiwan Khan, the Golden Master!"

The hush returned to the golden room; yet, from his expression, Shiwan Khan seemed to catch the faint hum of a city's roar. It was as if he had cast a mental message upon the wind, and all New York had answered!

Livid eyes bored toward the opposite wall. Amazing in their sharpness, they could have detected the cracks of a sliding door that the reflected shimmer hid from ordinary sight. But Shiwan Khan was looking beyond that barrier.

Though solid obstructions could not melt before his gaze, Shiwan Khan's mental efforts could produce the same effect. The perfume that filled the golden room tuned his brain to its objective. From the leer that spread upon his lips, it was plain that he had completed a process of mental television.

He spoke again, his tone clear as a bell:

"Lana Luan... Lana Luan... You hear me... you will obey... Lana Luan –"

The repeated words stood out amid a low murmur, which faded curiously under the power of the Golden Master's tone.

Shiwan Khan, himself, was no longer conscious of the walls about him. Even the atmosphere was icy, like his voice. But the chill still held the odor of lilacs.

STRANGE, the fragrance of lilacs. Standing by a train gate in the Pennsylvania Station in New York, Beatrice Chadbury breathed the aroma of the flowers that she held. She favored lilacs, and it was thoughtful of Paul Brent to present her with this bouquet as a farewell gift before he left for Washington.

Somehow, when Beatrice smelled the lilacs everything else faded away. The vast spaces of the great railway terminal absorbed the murmurs of the passing throngs. The girl's eyes seemed to close of their own accord. Beatrice was in a void, a pleasant one, where distance seemed endless.

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The through train from Boston was ten minutes late. People crowded close as the attendant opened the gate. Then the throng was pressing through. Brushed aside, Beatrice stood unnoticed, except by a few persons who happened to glance her way.

They were a bit puzzled when they saw a very beautiful raven-haired girl whose face was inclined toward the lovely bouquet of lilacs that she carried. Primly attired in a dress of midnight blue, with large white cuffs and collar, Beatrice looked quite young and sentimental. Perhaps that was why passers smiled.

They did not hear the voice that spoke to the girl in a far-away, frigid tone. It was speaking a name that Beatrice remembered from long ago:

"Lana Luan... Lana Luan –"

"Yes!" The girl's lips barely opened. "Yes! I am Lana Luan."

"I am Shiwan Khan," announced the voice. "I am the Golden Master –"

"Yes!"

As Beatrice's lips moved in reply, a young man detached himself from the throng that was going through the gate. He was carrying magazines and newspapers that he had hurriedly purchased for his journey.

The arrival was Paul Brent. His tanned squarish face lost its serious expression, his eyes showed sympathy, as his lips relaxed into a smile. Paul was starting on a journey that might lead to a longer one; he could understand why Beatrice felt sentimental over the lilacs that were his parting gift.

Impulsively, Paul gathered the girl into his arms, along with the newspapers and magazines.

"Good-by, darling," he said softly. "Maybe I won't be gone long. Even if I am, I'll write often. We certainly won't have to postpone our wedding day. I can promise you that!"

The lilacs were pressed deep against Paul's shoulder, and Beatrice's face was buried with them. Paul wondered if she was crying because of his departure. Gently, he whispered:

"Do you hear me, darling?"

Beatrice didn't hear him. What she heard was that cold, far-away voice that alone could reach her brain amid the overwhelming fragrance of the lilacs. It was a spell from the past, repeating the name that seemed her own.

"Lana Luan –" As the voice paused, Beatrice waited breathless. "You hear me... Lana Luan?"

"I hear you!" gasped Beatrice. "Yes, I hear you!"

Paul thought that the reply was addressed to him. He tilted Beatrice's chin up toward him, smiled as he saw the girl's closed eyes. Paul's kiss was earnest; Beatrice's seemed the same, though her response was almost mechanical.

The gateman was about to close the gate. Anxious for a few parting words, Paul ended the caress too soon to notice Beatrice's lack of ardor.

"Good by," he said. "You'll go right back to your apartment, won't you, darling? You know how tired you've been all day –"

Again, it was another voice that Beatrice heard. A voice repeated:

"Lana Luan... you will obey –"

"Yes." Beatrice's closed eyes were turned toward Paul. "I shall obey."

TURNING, the girl walked away from the gate, toward the exit leading to the taxicabs. Though her reply had fitted Paul's final question, it struck him as quite odd. But there wasn't time to ponder over Beatrice's curious statement; the train gate was about to close. Besides, there was something else that caught Paul's attention at that moment.

A lilac had dropped from Beatrice's bouquet. It was lying near the train gate. Scooping up the precious flower, Paul turned, dashed through the gate and down the steps to the waiting train.

A conductor was shouting, "All aboard," but it didn't matter. Paul was through the gate; they'd have to wait for him. As he neared the bottom of the steps, the young man smilingly raised the lilac and breathed its perfume.

Then Paul Brent was stopped stock–still, staring with fixed gaze, oblivious of the platform, the train, or the conductor's final call. Like Beatrice, Paul had caught the spell of the past.

He heard the voice – distant, like a bell, fainter, perhaps, than it had seemed to Beatrice, yet clear enough to awaken horror as it repeated the name: "Lana Luan... Lana Luan –"

Train doors clanked shut. Under the smooth tug of an electric locomotive, the limited glided from the station. Passing porters grinned at the unseeing man, who stood entranced, a lilac in his hand. Like the conductor, they thought that Paul had been too late to bid farewell to some girl who was leaving on the train.

"Lana Luan!"

Mechanically, Paul spoke the name, as the flower dropped from his listless fingers. A forgotten name, that Paul had never expected to hear again. A name that Beatrice Chadbury had accepted while under the control of an insidious master.

To Beatrice, the name of Lana Luan could be irresistible, when uttered in the icy tone that she had heard; whereas to Paul, it was a token of dreadful recollection.

That distant call had not been meant for Paul Brent. Nevertheless he, too, had heard it. Only with a fearful shudder was he able to wrench himself from the partial trance that had accidentally gripped him.

Then, in a tone that sounded hollow and sepulchral in the cavernous depths surrounding the underground platform, Paul voiced another name that, to his mind, meant evil incarnate and all–powerful:

"Shiwan Khan!"

CHAPTER II. DEATH'S CHOICE

RIDING in a taxicab, Paul Brent found himself wondering how he had got there. He could remember dashing frantically about the Pennsylvania Station, looking everywhere for Beatrice. He knew that he must have finally reached the taxicabs, the only place where Beatrice could have gone.

Leaning through the partition, Paul repeated the address of the girl's apartment. The driver gave a sympathetic grin.

"I'm getting you there, bud," he said. "That's the fifth time you've told me where you want to go. Your girl friend took a cab, all right; the porters remembered her when you told them what she looked like. Maybe I'll get you there ahead of her. So sit back and relax."

Paul couldn't relax. He was remembering too many monstrous things. He was thinking of Shiwan Khan, the Oriental crime wizard, whose return to America meant calamity. Paul knew how Shiwan Khan could sway the minds of men and make them parties to schemes of evil.

In such plans, Shiwan Khan used go-betweens, choosing other dupes to play the part. He made them forget their real personalities, to become mental slaves who adopted other names and subjected themselves to his insidious bidding.

Of such dupes, Beatrice Chadbury had been Shiwan Khan's first choice. She had served him as Lana Luan, working to enmesh others in his toils. Beatrice had been freed of that mental bondage, when Shiwan Khan had been forced to abandon his schemes and flee to his homeland of Sinkiang near Tibet. (Note: See "The Golden Master," Vol. XXXI, No. 2.)

But the menace of the Golden Master had not been ended, even in defeat.

Shiwan Khan had returned, to attempt new evil. Again defeated, he had managed escape. (Note: See "Shiwan Khan Returns," Vol. XXXII, No. 1.) On that second venture, he had ignored his former targets, Paul Brent and Beatrice Chadbury. But he was back again, with all his wizardry, and Beatrice had already succumbed to his far-reaching sway!

One being, alone, had managed to cope with Shiwan Khan. He was a fighter whose ways of mystery rivaled those of the Golden Master, and he stood for justice, as opposed to evil.

The Shadow!

Superfoe of crime, The Shadow moved beneath the shroud of night itself. In this hour of despair, Paul could only hope that The Shadow had somehow learned of Shiwan Khan's return. It was already evening; the cab was speeding along darkened streets. To Paul, night's encroachment was not a thing to fear.

It symbolized The Shadow, rather than Shiwan Khan. If harm had actually befallen Beatrice, perhaps The Shadow could rescue her, as he had once before!

Jamming to a stop in front of a secluded apartment house, the cab actually disgorged Paul Brent. The young man tossed a bill to the driver and dashed into the little entry. There, Paul fumbled with the bell to Beatrice's apartment.

As he spoke into the telephone, Paul thought that he heard the girl reply. It didn't occur to him that he had

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called there so often before that he might, in his present stress, be imagining echoes from the past.

Strange moods, uncontrollable hallucinations, could grip persons who cut in on the mental pronouncements of Shiwan Khan, as Paul had tonight!

At least Paul's ring was answered, for the door buzzed to release the automatic lock. Pushing through, Paul hurried up to the third floor, and knocked at the door of Beatrice's apartment. There was no response until he rapped again; then the door swung open under his hand.

DESPITE his anxiety to find Beatrice, Paul halted on the threshold. He remembered the traps that Shiwan Khan could lay; how the Golden Master employed mighty fighting men in the shape of huge Mongols, who were murderers by trade.

The place was lighted by a floor lamp in the corner. A quick inspection of the little apartment showed that the girl was not there.

Stopping by a writing desk, Paul happened to gaze beyond the furniture piece.

Something stirred. Grabbing the desk telephone as a weapon, Paul made a lunge past the desk.

The thing rose to meet him, a human monstrosity that seemed the outgrowth of a tropical nightmare. Paul was faced by a creature that could be termed human only for want of another description.

Its baldish head was fronted by a face of yellow-brown, with features that were chiefly eyes and teeth, all glistening white. The head was mounted on a scrawny body that looked like a tawny drumhead stretched over struts that served as ribs.

Clawish hands, on the ends of arms that seemed as thin as polo sticks, lunged into the light. About its waist, the unlimbered creature wore a drab-gray loin cloth. Its legs, long and spidery, looked like skeleton limbs.

Paul Brent was husky. He expected little difficulty with this scrawny foe. His charge was powerful, but he didn't complete it. Half way to the corner, Paul was stopped by a numbing shock that floored him.

He thought, at first, that it came from the telephone; but when the instrument clanked the floor, away from him, Paul still felt the paralyzing pangs that racked his whole body.

The spidery man was a human electric eel, who could deliver a staggering impulse even without contact!

As he hissed a triumphant snarl between his gleaming teeth, the human skeleton whisked a long-bladed knife from his girdling belt. The weapon seemed to leap forward in his clawish clutch; he was restraining it, not thrusting, as he poised the point above Paul's heart.

Paul Brent was marked for doom. No living hand could have stayed death's choice. The thing that saved him was a token that seemed more than human, a shuddering challenge that demanded answer ahead of any other deed.

Helpless though he was, Paul recognized that weird mockery, knew the rescuer that it represented.

The Shadow!

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WITH a quick half-jerk, the brownish killer wrenched his poised blade away from Paul's breast and gave his bony hand a twisting thrust toward the door. The knife seemed to launch from his fingers like a living thing unleashed.

In the doorway was a moving target, a tall black-cloaked form that was actually driving in to meet the knife when the brownish assassin loosed it.

The blade scarcely flashed along its course; judged by eyesight alone, it might have been traveling at bullet speed. Yet it missed despite the accuracy of the throw.

The lunging figure in the doorway was twisty, too, when occasion demanded it. With his taunt, calculated to save Paul's life, The Shadow was taking measures to preserve his own.

He knew what the brownish assassin was, the moment that he saw the fellow's livid eyes. The man was a naljorpa, an ascetic reputed to have magic powers, the sort who could be met in the Himalaya Mountains, on the borders of Tibet.

Familiar with others of that ilk, The Shadow had made his rapid lunge, not to start a useless attack, but to clear the doorway and make a sideward dive to the floor. His forced sprawl was under way when the knife blade zipped through the folds of his coat sleeve, slashing the arm beneath it.

Cold steel produced a red-hot sensation as it slithered past. As The Shadow rolled across the floor, he heard an oncoming hiss. An instant later, the wiry naljorpa was flinging hard upon him, intent to complete the murderous work that his blade had begun.

Whatever the power of the naljorpas – whether it existed in themselves, or in the minds of those they met – there was no question that it worked.

The numbness that had flattened Paul Brent was a common thing in Northern India, encountered often by those unwise enough to trouble wandering mystics from Tibet. Just as Paul had expected easy victory over the brownish man, so, in his turn, did the naljorpa plan a quick end for The Shadow.

Claws shot for the cloaked throat, hoping to choke a numbed foe into oblivion. But there was no paralysis in the hands that clamped the Tibetan's forward-driving arms. The Shadow had a peculiar ability of his own – he was immune to the shocking current that emanated from the naljorpa.

Undeterred by his wounded arm, he twisted the spidery assassin, as if about to tie him into knots. His spindly body bent almost to the breaking point, the naljorpa writhed in helpless fury until, by a lucky side twist that drove his shoulder against The Shadow's gashed arm, he gained release.

It was exactly as if a huge steel coil had sideslipped under the increasing pressure of a binding machine. Bent double, the naljorpa suddenly lengthened, shot from The Shadow's grip and arched through the door, out into the hallway.

Straight ahead, the knife was sticking in the baseboard. The Tibetan's lurch carried him to it; he grabbed the blade and wrenched it from the woodwork.

Again, it seemed that the weapon was swifter than the hand, as it came slashing back across the brownish shoulder. But the naljorpa had taken too long, despite the swiftness of his moves.

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PRONE on the floor, The Shadow had whipped an automatic from beneath his cloak. Aiming the weapon with a speed that outdid his opponent's fling, the cloaked fighter fired.

Ribs crackled under the bullet's impact. The naljorpa emitted a high-pitched cry: a shriek of anger, not of pain. Anguish was a thing unknown to his breed; in their years of training, they tortured all such sensations from their systems.

Up from the floor, The Shadow lunged through the doorway, his gun shoved ahead of him, ready to beat his foe to the next thrust. Recoiling from the jabbing muzzle, the wounded naljorpa made another of his tremendous bounds; not amazing, considering that he had strength proportionate to more than twice his weight.

Catlike, the creature reached the ledge of an open window nearly twenty feet away. His body lighted, twisting; the hand that held the knife was whipped about as if by the weapon's weight. The blade slid loose as The Shadow's automatic blasted.

Again The Shadow had won, by the fraction of a second. The slug from his .45 carried a bone-crushing wallop that swept the withered assassin clear across the sill. The knife, launched a few degrees before the required angle, went through the cloak again, slicing a harmless path between The Shadow's body and the half-raised arm beside it.

Hurtled out into the darkness, the naljorpa sent back a trailing cry as he plunged to the concrete courtyard, three floors below. The call was one that carried malice, not terror; it was a plea for revenge, that must be meant for someone close enough to combat The Shadow.

Swinging full about, The Shadow helped Paul Brent to his feet. He hastened him down a stairway and out to the courtyard.

Spreading the beam of a tiny flashlight, he looked for the fallen Tibetan. The courtyard was empty; amazingly, the dead man had vanished.

Unquestionably, there had been others, in reserve; for a dead naljorpa could not have vaulted a ten-foot wall.

Of all the incredible fighters that The Shadow had encountered during his exploits, never had he found foemen more unusual than these naljorpas. Torn from the solitude where they dwelt, they had come half around the world, to reach New York.

There were sounds of sirens from the distance. The Shadow's shots had been heard in the neighborhood; police would soon be here. But on the way, the officers would not encounter traces of a brown-skinned squad, carrying away a fallen member. The naljorpas were too well versed in ways of stealth to be detected, even with a burden.

The Shadow, too, had ways of blending into darkness. Aiding Paul back into the building, he steered him through a rear door on the ground floor, out into an alleyway.

They reached a waiting cab that whisked them away just before a patrol car turned the corner. Slumped in the rear seat, Paul was pressing his hand to his head, while he muttered disjointed words. He had suffered a slight concussion in his fall to the floor; he would need a rest before he could remember facts and relate their details.

But The Shadow did not need to hear the name that Paul so vainly tried to utter. He already knew it.

Those naljorpas could never have been induced to leave the Himalayas and come to America, except by some supermind who knew their ways; who actually dwelt among them as a tulku, or living deity.

Even in Tibet, tulkus were rare; and The Shadow knew of only one who had ever deserted his native land, to come to America. He was a master mind who had turned his Oriental wizardry to crime.

A superfoe who had met defeat, yet whose return The Shadow had expected as positively as the dawn of a coming day:

Shiwan Khan!

CHAPTER III. THE MASTER SPEAKS

BEATRICE CHADBURY was still riding in a cab. It wasn't the same cab that she had taken from the Pennsylvania Station; she had transferred from that one, near Times Square.

In fact, this was the fourth cab that she had used in her zigzag journey up and down Manhattan. Each time that she left one cab to take another, Beatrice had responded to the call of a mental voice that addressed her as Lana Luan.

The lilacs were still with her. Breathing their perfume, the girl stared fixedly ahead when she spoke an address to the driver. The motion of her lips was mechanical, as though actuated by some one other than herself.

Nodding wisely, the cab driver watched the mirror as he drove southward. He recognized the address in question. It was just within the borders of Chinatown; he had taken other fares there, before. The cabbie didn't regard it as any of his business that the place was an opium den, managed by a Chinaman named Loo Dow.

The cab reached the entrance of a too-narrow Chinatown alleyway.

Mechanically, Beatrice placed a wadded bill in the driver's hand and stepped out into the darkness.

With hurried pace, she reached a doorway deep in the alley, where she could scarcely be seen. The door was of the sliding type, fitting into a wall of grimy brick.

Beatrice rapped. A singular thing happened. The cab driver didn't notice it; if he had, he would have gaped, instead of driving away.

The door did not move. Instead, a portion of the brick wall slid across and covered the metal barrier. As Beatrice stepped through the opening, the grimy surface slithered back in place again, so neatly that the protruding bricks interlocked like clenching teeth.

Instead of entering by the narrow passage that led to Loo Dow's opium house; Beatrice had taken another route that ran beside it, separated by a thick partition, She was in a passage unknown to Loo Dow's patrons, as well as to Loo Dow himself!

The passage was short. It ended in a steep stairway that descended below a blocking wall. At the bottom, it turned left, twice, setting Beatrice on a reversed course that led beneath the alley. Beyond that were other steps, upward.

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All along the route dim lights appeared, subsiding after the hurrying girl had passed them. Breathless, Beatrice took no notice of the many turns that she followed, seemingly by sheer instinct. She was repeating the name that she accepted as her own:

"Lana Luan... Lana Luan –"

She wanted to be Lana Luan again. The history of these underground channels, once used in tong wars and forgotten afterward, did not interest her in the least. Her goal was at the end of the maze; nothing else counted.

There, Lana Luan could be rid of the ridiculous American attire that didn't belong to her. Once clad in Oriental garments she would be a true Chinese. Seeing an open door at the top of a short flight of steps, the girl gave a glad cry in a singsong pitch that befitted Lana Luan.

She had tugged her arms from the dress sleeves by the time she reached the open room. She was letting her hair fall across her bare shoulders as she closed the door.

The room was a tiny boudoir fitted in Chinese style; draped in a corner were the gorgeous silk pajamas and Chinese slippers that belonged to Lana Luan.

Soon, the transformation was completed. As Lana Luan, Beatrice actually appeared to be a Chinese. Her oval face, with languorous lashes and ruddy lips, gave her an Oriental expression. The silken costume, embroidered with poppy leaves and peacocks, seemed the proper garb for a daughter of Old Cathay.

Even her complexion had changed; due, probably, to the subdued yellowish light that filled the boudoir. Under a different glow, the face of Lana Luan would certainly have shown American traces; but that was no disadvantage, so far as the schemes of Shivan Khan were concerned.

The Golden Master needed a messenger who could go from place to place without attracting too much notice. A type like this was therefore suitable, in a city like New York. She had become a chameleon, who could pass as American or Chinese, according to whichever appearance might be required by circumstance.

AS Lana Luan stood admiring her new guise in the mirror, her eyes took on a fixed expression. Through her mind, clear as a bell, came the tone of a voice that ordered:

"Come!"

The girl opened the door. On the threshold, she stepped back, as a small procession came along the passage. The advancing group would have horrified Beatrice Chadbury; but Lana Luan merely surveyed the procession with a mild curiosity.

Scrawny brown-skinned men made up the parade. One, with glaring eyes and large glistening teeth, was in the lead; others were bringing a crude stretcher on which lay the distorted figure of a comrade.

They were the naljorpas bringing in the shattered corpse of the assassin who had failed in battle with The Shadow. In death, the Tibetan still wore his ugly expression; if anything, it was more pronounced.

The whitish eyes were glazed, shrunken lips drawn back from the bulging teeth they surrounded. Bashed ribs, broken limbs, gave the body a mangled look. Yet the dead Tibetan's fists were clenched.

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One locked claw, poked crazily upward from his disjointed body, kept wagging as the bearers took the stretcher forward, as if its owner were still expressing hate toward the formidable foe who had bested him.

Lana Luan let the procession pass. The human caravan was marching toward a golden door that shone from the passage end. While the girl waited, the Tibetans finished their march and ascended curved steps leading to the door. The portal slid back to admit them.

In his gilded room, Shiwan Khan was lounging on his throne. The bearers propped their burden at the doorway, so that the Golden Master could meet the glare of the dead naljorpa.

Attentively, Shiwan Khan heard the story that one naljorpa told. The speaker had evidently been near the scene of combat between his now dead comrade and The Shadow.

"You have done well, Ramjan," declared Shiwan Khan. "Later, you shall have opportunity for vengeance. As for Kushod" – he bowed toward the gruesome figure on the litter – "he has already completed his long journey.

"Kushod was a delog, like yourselves. A delog who, in his trances, had visited the bardo, or land beyond. No delog can find peril in the bardo; therefore, all is well."

The listeners joined in a chorus of strange, gargly cries, expressing elation over Shiwan Khan's words. Turning toward them, Ramjan pointed to the Golden Master and exclaimed:

"Shiwan Tulku! Shiwan Tulku!"

With a peculiar sidelong gait, the naljorpas filed from the throne room, carrying the dead Kushod with them. As the golden door slid shut, Shiwan Khan let his slitted lips form a strange smile.

His Mongol servitors called him Shiwan Khan; for to them, he was Kha Khan, the great ruler. But the Tibetans knew him as Shiwan Tulku, a title that actually pleased him more, considering that the term tulku signified a being to be worshipped, as well as obeyed.

Soon, the golden door again slid open. This time, it admitted Lana Luan. Gleaming their steady green, Shiwan Khan's eyes held the girl fascinated.

As she entered the room, she wavered; then her whole body seemed to incline toward the robed figure in the throne. Slowly, as if drawn by a hypnotic force, Lana Luan advanced and knelt near the little taboret.

"Greeting, Lana Luan," spoke Shiwan Khan. "It has been long since we have met."

"Too long, Kha Khan."

"Yet you have no recollection of the life between. Soon, Lana Luan, you will forget that it ever existed."

"I shall be grateful, Kha Khan."

Confident that his domination gripped the girl completely, Shiwan Khan drew a squarish ivory casket from the taboret. He extended it, and Lana Luan received it. The casket bore a wax seal stamped with the Khan's own signet.

"You will keep this casket," he told Lana Luan, "and deliver it when and where I command. Meanwhile, you will dwell here among the chosen few who serve me in this temporary domain.

"Later, Lana Luan, you will be rewarded. With others, you will accompany me to Xanadu, my hidden city in the heart of Asia. There, through measureless, deathless years we shall create a new dominion that will spread to all the world!"

A LONG-FINGERED hand waved dismissal. Carrying the ivory casket, Lana Luan walked from the throne room. As before, she wavered near the doorway; but her step became steady when she had passed through.

As the portal closed, Shiwan Khan contemplated the past. His lips grew bitter at the thought of Kushod's failure; his eyes glared as he muttered the name of The Shadow.

Slowly, Shiwan Khan's thoughts returned to Lana Luan. Remembering the ivory casket and its promised delivery to someone, the Golden Master drew a large-bowled pipe from the taboret. Lighting the pipe, he let thick tobacco smoke trickle from his lips.

The aroma was pungent. Amid the wreaths of smoke, Shiwan Khan began to speak, while his eyes fixed in a faraway gaze, as though penetrating the golden wall.

His words were few, but they must have brought mental answers from somewhere, for there were long intervals when Shiwan Khan listened, his greenish eyes half closed.

Then as if settling a conference between himself and a distant speaker, Shiwan Khan lifted his head, stared through the thickening smoke and pronounced, in English: "Tomorrow night."

His mental conversation ended, the Golden Master put away the pipe. Smoke filtered through tiny openings in the gilded walls. The air was clear again, ready for some new aroma with which Shiwan Khan controlled the minds of dupes and tuned their thoughts to his.

A laugh, jangling like a discordant bell, was Shiwan Khan's expression of contempt for any who might try to balk his plans. It was a message of malice, sent upon the wind.

But there was one for whom it was meant, above all others.

The Shadow!

CHAPTER IV. THREADS TO CRIME

PAUL BRENT sat in an easy-chair, his head propped against a pillow. It was mid-afternoon, and he was telling last night's story to two attentive listeners. One was Dr. Rupert Sayre, in whose office the conference was being held; the other was Lamont Cranston, noted world traveler.

Sayre was a taciturn physician, whose understanding manner had helped him build up a Park Avenue practice. Cranston, in his turn, was quite as calm-mannered; it was seldom possible to trace a change of expression upon his hawkish, masklike features.

They listened seriously to everything that Paul had to tell; as a result, the young man did not miss a single detail. When he had finished, however, he wondered if these sober-faced friends could believe his bizarre account.

Apparently, they did.

Sayre handed Paul a telegram, with the simple comment:

"This came to your Washington hotel. It was relayed here this afternoon."

The telegram was signed Beatrice. It stated briefly that the girl had gone for a trip in the Adirondacks; that she would answer any of Paul's letters after she returned. His face troubled, Paul queried:

"Do you think" – he stammered over the words – "that some one... perhaps Shivan Khan... could have sent this?"

"Very probably," replied Cranston, in a calm tone. "We phoned Washington and learned that you were to be sent immediately to California, to offer technical advice on some new fighting planes."

Paul nodded. He was an aircraft technician, by profession; his firm had completed several government contracts.

"Obviously, then," continued Cranston, "this telegram would have kept you from wondering why you did not hear from Miss Chadbury during the next few weeks."

Another nod from Paul. In anxious fashion, he looked from man to man.

"From which we may conclude," completed Cranston, "that Miss Chadbury will return after that period. As I understand it, she encountered Shivan Khan once before –"

"But that time," blurted Paul, "The Shadow rescued her!"

"And by your own account," Cranston inserted, "The Shadow was on hand again last night."

Gradually, Paul relaxed. He saw the logic. The Shadow's mysterious arrival, last night, seemed proof absolute that the black-cloaked investigator held control. The Shadow had saved Paul; he could rescue Beatrice also.

"Rest another day, Brent," advised Dr. Sayre, "then start for California. If Shivan Khan supposes that you have already gone there, you can help matters best by preserving his impression that you learned nothing."

Agreeing to the plan, Paul went back to the little hospital room that adjoined Sayre's office. The physician turned to Cranston with a look of query, that might have enlightened Paul had he been present to see it.

Sayre's whole expression gave away a most important secret: The physician knew that the visitor who called himself Lamont Cranston was actually The Shadow!

LONG ago, Sayre had decided that there were two Cranstons: a real one, and another who played the part when the actual owner of the name was traveling in remote lands. There wasn't a doubt that the present Cranston who stood in Sayre's office was the mysterious member of the duo. That made him The Shadow.

"The girl has disappeared, Sayre," declared The Shadow, quietly. "You did well in helping me allay Brent's fears."

"But she must have called you, last night –"

THE INVINCIBLE SHIWAN KHAN

"No." The Shadow slowly shook his head. "There was a message at my club, presumably from Beatrice Chadbury, asking me to come to her apartment. It was a trap, set by Shiwan Khan."

"You suspected it?"

"Yes. Even though I had no evidence that Shiwan Khan had returned to America. Yet the trap was so clever, Sayre, that I really owe thanks to Brent. I did not rescue him; he rescued me."

Sayre understood.

By blundering in ahead, Paul had been unlucky enough to spring the trap. Mistaken for The Shadow, Paul had unwittingly turned the game about. By his own timely arrival, The Shadow had been able to return the favor.

Opening a tightly wrapped package, The Shadow produced a bunch of faded lilacs. Sayre gave a jubilant exclamation; then saw Cranston's headshake.

"The girl switched cabs," said The Shadow. "She finally took an independent cab, as I considered probable. I had Moe Shrevnitz make the rounds today."

Sayre nodded. Moe was The Shadow's own cab driver, and one of his secret agents; a great hand at making friends with other hackies.

"She went to Loo Dow's," explained The Shadow, "but there, the trail ends. I called Dr. Tam. He talked to Loo Dow. Beatrice Chadbury was not seen there."

Mention of Dr. Tam meant much to Sayre. He was acquainted with Roy Tam, the Chinese physician. He knew that Tam was a power in Chinatown; one who worked for good. Such men as Loo Dow feared him.

"Tam's men have investigated," continued The Shadow. "They think that the girl must have gone through a gate at the end of the alley and reached another street. She might have reached any one of several shops whose owners are questionable."

"Is Tam checking on them?"

"Yes," replied The Shadow, "but they are the sort who would lie to him, because they are at present not engaged in legitimate business. Important, too, is the fact that Tam has no evidence whatever that Shiwan Khan is in Chinatown."

"But he must be there!"

Cranston's thin lips responded with the faintest of smiles. He agreed with Sayre's opinion, but he knew the difficulty of gaining proof. There was danger, too, in seeking Shiwan Khan; not to the hunter, but to those like Beatrice, who were under the Golden Master's control.

"Under Shiwan Khan's control," The Shadow reminded, "the girl will become Lana Luan. We know therefore, that Shiwan Khan needs an intermediary, which, in turn, proves that he is trapping other dupes."

"But who are they?" demanded Sayre. "How can they be found?"

THE INVINCIBLE SHIWAN KHAN

"I shall soon have a lead," concluded The Shadow. "I heard from Shiwan Khan last night, through the message requesting that I call on Beatrice Chadbury. Since that trap failed, I shall hear from Shiwan Khan again."

THERE was a letter waiting for Lamont Cranston when he reached the exclusive Cobalt Club, an hour later. It was postmarked London, and when The Shadow opened it, he found that it was from a man named Ralph Fayden.

The letter was quite brief:

DEAR CRANSTON:

You will be interested in the curios that I have shipped to the Oriental Museum. The curator, Isaac Newboldt, is usually there from twelve to three, and from seven to nine. This letter will be a sufficient introduction.

Cordially,

FAYDEN.

Everything about the letter passed muster. The stamp was British; the postmark, if faked, was a perfect counterfeit. An express liner from England had arrived that morning; the letter could have come in its mail.

The letter was written in Fayden's style; when The Shadow studied the handwriting, it stood the test. But there was one flaw in an otherwise iron-clad situation.

The letter had reached the Cobalt Club just after three o'clock. The Shadow was positive on that point, because he had looked in the box marked "Cranston" when he left the club at three, to go to Sayre's.

He had returned before five, another fact that was highly important. Mail deliveries to the Cobalt Club came at two thirty and five, with none in between. Thus it was plain that someone other than a postman must have brought the letter; had lain it on the desk, where it was noticed later.

Why?

The answer was in the letter itself!

Had it been delivered at half past two, there was a chance that The Shadow would have gone directly to the Oriental Museum, reaching there before three o'clock. For some reason, he wasn't wanted there until evening.

Therefore, the letter had been held until after three. But it hadn't been kept until the five o'clock delivery for another very good reason, this one quite obvious. Once three o'clock was past, it had been imperative to get the letter into Cranston's box, so he would be sure to find it and fall for the seven-o'clock bait.

Yes, The Shadow was wanted at the Oriental Museum this evening; and, remembering last night's experience, he knew just who wanted him there.

Shiwan Khan!

Many persons would have been so pleased with that deduction, that they would have carried the quest no further. But The Shadow looked for facts beyond. He was considering the case of Ralph Fayden, the man who had supposedly sent the letter.

Originating in New York, not in London, the letter was faked; but did that apply to the thing in its entirety?

The Shadow decided in the negative. He granted, of course, that the postmark was a fraud; but it struck him that Fayden might have written the letter. If so, two facts were positive.

First, that Fayden had not gone to England at all; second, that Fayden, still in New York, was a party to the scheme involving this letter. Those two points produced a total. Ralph Fayden must be under the domination of some master hand, who could be no one other than Shiwan Khan!

Fayden was a successful inventor. Having accumulated wealth, he had retired and gone into collecting curios, most of which he gave to museums. But his inventive genius was as powerful as ever. He was the sort of man who could prove useful to Shiwan Khan, who liked to filch ideas from other people's brains.

In one step, The Shadow had placed his finger upon the Golden Master's present game. Shiwan Khan was in America to accumulate brains; not dead ones, but live ones – brains belonging to Fayden, and other men of genius.

Just as he had used Beatrice to ensnare The Shadow, so was Shiwan Khan using Fayden.

RISING, The Shadow strolled into the club foyer; it was approaching six. Time for a few telephone calls, a light dinner, then a trip to the Oriental Museum. Seven thirty would be the best time to arrive there; whatever Shiwan Khan's scheme, it would be best to let it wait a half hour.

Had The Shadow surmised what chance already was producing, he would have changed his schedule to reach the museum no later than seven o'clock.

Death's hand was due – before The Shadow!

CHAPTER V. FROM SIX TO SEVEN

THE Hotel Claybourne was a small establishment, located some twenty blocks distant from the Cobalt Club.

The well-dressed gray-haired man who came into the lobby at dusk, noted the clock above the desk read six o'clock. The gray-haired man inquired if there was any mail for Mr. Halmers, Room 812.

There being no mail for Mr. Halmers, the clerk simply handed him the key. Crossing the lobby, the gray-haired man was approaching the elevators, when a tall, bleary-eyed customer lurched from the taproom. Seeing Halmers, the bleary chap loped forward and gripped him by the arm.

"Hello, Fayden!" he hiccuped. "Say – what're you doing here? Thought you were in England."

The gray-haired Mr. Halmers looked squarely into the broad face that confronted him. Testily, he said:

"My name is not Fayden."

THE INVINCIBLE SHIWAN KHAN

"Haw!" ejaculated the accoster. "If you're not Ralph Fayden, I'm not George Endle. How d'you like that?"

Mr. Halmers didn't seem to like it. Still insisting that he wasn't Fayden, that he'd never heard of Endle, he tried to draw away.

Endle grabbed him all the tighter, until a corps of bellhops entered the scene. With apologies to Mr. Halmers, they overwhelmed Endle, dragged him through the lobby and deposited him outside.

Parked against a convenient fire plug, Endle drew a sobering breath, looked up at the revolving door and muttered:

"If that wasn't Fayden, I'll –"

Endle happened to be right. The man who called himself Halmers was Ralph Fayden. The reason why Endle didn't complete his statement, was because he saw something that intrigued him quite as much as the question of a friend's identity.

A cab had stopped at the hotel entrance. A girl was alighting, and Endle could see her face peering from the high fur collar of a long coat. It was a beautiful face, in Endle's besotted opinion, particularly because it lacked expression.

Endle had a habit of eyeing the world from gutters, and people usually gave him contemptuous glances when he chose such resting places. This girl didn't; her gaze met his with total unconcern. Then she was gone, into the hotel, leaving Endle with the recollection of alluring eyes, ruddy lips, and jet-black hair.

Grinning, Endle realized that he wasn't quite in the gutter. He decided that the fire plug belonged there, so he gave it a shove. The push did the opposite of what Endle expected; it brought him to his feet. Catching his balance unsteadily, he muttered:

"She got in the hotel easy enough, huh, Endle? What about you doing the same? Gotta see Fayden and find out what's wrong with him. Must be drunk, calling himself Halmers."

Nobody stopped Endle as he entered the lobby. The girl was gone; bellhops were busy at their usual duties. Managing to steady his gait, Endle crossed to the desk and asked for Mr. Halmers.

Busy sorting mail, the clerk didn't notice Endle's thick tone. He simply gave the room number, 812. Steadying for another stroll, Endle headed toward an elevator.

MEANWHILE, Ralph Fayden was pacing the floor of Room 812, anxiously wringing his hands. The room was strewn with luggage, and from a corner, a single witness watched the gray-haired man's nervous pacing.

The witness was a brown-skinned man, who sat upon a cushion in the bow-legged fashion of a Hindu mystic. He looked very much like Ramjan and the other naljorpas who served Shiwani Khan, except that he was better clothed and better fed.

In addition to a tunic, he wore a small turban, with a jewel glistening from its front. Somehow, his calmness had its effect upon Fayden. The gray-haired man halted suddenly and stared toward the corner.

"I am glad that you came here, Marabar Guru," he said. "Your presence helps me. I was very worried when I met that chap down in the lobby. He recognized me, I tell you!"

THE INVINCIBLE SHIWAN KHAN

"Be calm." The words seemed to drift from the lips of Marabar Guru. "All such problems have been foreseen."

Fayden nodded.

"They threw Endle out," he declared. "He's probably gone his way, figuring that he was mistaken. The only name I gave him was Halmers. But there's something else that worries me, Marabar Guru."

Brown eyes widened in placid query. Fayden decided to state his case. Stopping by a table, he drew a brier pipe from his pocket and began to stuff it with tobacco from a handy humidor.

"The voice which I have heard so often," said Fayden, "has promised me great reward if I obey its commands."

"It is the voice of a tulku," reminded Marabar Guru. "A great tulku, who calls himself Shiwan Khan."

Again, Fayden nodded.

"Yes, Shiwan Khan is a great tulku," he agreed, "and you are a great guru. It was your teaching, Marabar, that cleared my clouded vision when the messages from Shiwan Khan grew dim."

Marabar Guru received the praise without sign of elation. The squatting Hindu took it as a matter of course that he was superior to the other mystics that Shiwan Khan had brought from the Orient.

Like them, he was a naljorpa, possessed of startling physical powers. But he was a guru, or teacher, as well. He had the ability of transmitting his forceful faculties to persons who were in a receptive mood to learn them.

Fayden was lighting his pipe. The pungent odor of strong tobacco floated through the room. There was a gleam from the dark eyes of Marabar Guru.

"I believe that there is a city of Xanadu," affirmed Fayden, seriously, "where Shiwan Khan wishes me to accompany him. Otherwise, I would not have obeyed his commands so far. I have jeopardized my reputation, staying here in New York and sending false curios to Newboldt, writing a misleading letter to Cranston.

"But Shiwan Khan has promised a reward; treasures of the sort I value. Always, I have heard one thought" – Fayden tapped his forehead – "namely, that I would receive samples of those treasures, as proof that a great store of them exists in Xanadu."

"Harken!" croaked Marabar Guru. "The tulku speaks!"

Fayden cocked his head in listening attitude. His eyes opened wide as he sensed the tone of a distant voice, that Marabar Guru could also hear. It was the chiming voice of Shiwan Khan. The aroma of the thick tobacco smoke from Fayden's special blend was the odor that produced contact between the Golden Master and his dupe.

"Shiwan Khan!" Fayden's tone was awed. "He says that his messenger is here –"

MARABAR GURU had risen. Crossing the room, the turbaned mystic opened the door. In stepped the girl that Endle had seen downstairs.

THE INVINCIBLE SHIWAN KHAN

She let the long cloak fall from her shoulders; instantly, her appearance altered from American to Chinese. Room lights gave her complexion a yellowish tinge that went with the Oriental costume that she wore.

"My name is Lana Luan," spoke the girl in singsong manner. "I bring a gift" – she extended an ivory casket with both hands – "that is sent by Shiwan Khan."

Fayden broke the casket's seal. He shrieked his delight as he lifted the lid. Trinkets of green, rich in hue, varied in design, poured into the inventor's eager hands. Like his eyes, those objects glistened in the light.

"Jade!" he exclaimed. "Finer than any I have ever seen! True apple-green exquisite in its carving. These come from Xanadu –"

"They are trifles," interposed Marabar Guru. "In Xanadu, you will live in an apartment walled with jade. Once you have acknowledged Shiwan Khan as master –"

"He is master!" Fayden lifted his head, fixed his eyes in a distant stare. "Do you hear me, Shiwan Khan? You are master. I shall follow you to Xanadu. You have heard me, tulku!"

As Fayden paused, a thumping came from the closed door. The sound jarred the gray-haired man from his trance. Pouring the jade carvings back into the casket, he swung to Marabar Guru in alarm.

"It's Endle!"

"Admit him," said the guru calmly. "I shall assume the trance condition of samdhi. When my thoughts are stilled, no eye can observe me."

"But Lana Luan –"

"Will accompany me into the land of the invisible. I am a guru; I can impart my power. We shall both be far away, having visions of the bardo, while you dispose of your visitor."

When George Endle stumbled into the room, Marabar Guru was back on his cushion, staring steadily across the room. Straight opposite was Lana Luan, motionless as a statue, her gaze riveted by that of the guru.

His attention centered on Fayden. Endle didn't notice the room's other occupants. Eyeing the gray-haired man, Endle renewed his downstairs argument.

"You're Ralph Fayden," he insisted. "Supposed to be in England, but you aren't. Listen, Fayden, I'm a pal. Be a good guy, admit you know me. That'll square everything."

"There's nothing to be squared," insisted Fayden, in a testy tone. "My name is Halmers; I have never met you before this evening. If you leave here quietly, and meddle no further in my affairs, I shall consider it a favor."

As he advanced, Endle spied the ivory casket. With a lurch, he grabbed the box and opened it. Angrily, Fayden wrested it away, but not before Endle saw the glittering jade ornaments within.

"So you're not Fayden!" sneered Endle. "Funny you go in for jade, like Fayden does. Remember the night you were talking jade to Newboldt, the guy who runs the Oriental Museum? I was there that night. Yes, you're Ralph Fayden, even though you call yourself Halmers. All right, I'm satisfied."

THE INVINCIBLE SHIWAN KHAN

With a sudden semblance of dignity, Endle veered tipsily about and started toward the door. During the minutes of argument, he had become oblivious to the presence of Marabar Guru and Lana Luan.

The Oriental system of invisibility through lack of notice had apparently been working, since Endle, too, had overlooked the presence of others in the room.

But the spell was broken when Endle faced Lana Luan. He ended his stagger, stared straight ahead and demanded:

"Say – who's the girl?"

FAYDEN actually didn't notice Lana Luan until Endle spoke. He saw his former friend thrust closer and study the girl's expressionless face as though eyeing a wax figure. Reeling about with a thick laugh, Endle gave another stare.

This time, he was looking at Marabar Guru.

"Am I seeing things?" he muttered. "Whatta you got here, Fayden? A couple dummies? This Hindu guy looks like he was stuffed. Wait'll I find out."

He approached Marabar Guru. Ignoring the power of the mystic, Fayden expected Endle to recoil from a shock. Instead, he had almost reached the seated figure when Marabar Guru raised his hands and snarled. The fingers that the guru jabbed toward Endle should have loosed a numbing force. Somehow, the formula failed.

Angered by the total failure of his accustomed powers, Marabar Guru whipped out a bronze knife from the folds of his robe.

In true naljorpa style, the weapon seemed to leap ahead of the brown hand that manipulated it. It was the tightening of the swift following fist that stopped the dagger point scant inches from Endle's ribs. Actually, Marabar Guru had launched death, then plucked it back from midair.

His bravado gone, Endle reeled away, staring back at the glittering blade. He saw that it was a dagger; but that didn't lessen his alarm.

Fayden caught the staggering man by an arm and steered him toward the door. In the hallway, Endle forgot his animosity and began to stutter about the things that he had seen.

"That's right, old chap," Fayden told him. "You've been seeing things. What you need to do, is go home and sleep it off."

Stammering his agreement, Endle headed toward the elevator. Fayden went along with him, saw him into the car, and returned to the room. He met Lana Luan coming out; she had put on the cloak that served to cover her Chinese costume.

Marabar Guru was standing near his corner, still gripping the knife. He was showing anger because his mental forces had failed with Endle. Then, calming, the guru spoke:

"I have told all to the tulku," he said. "Our master, Shiwon Khan instructs you to leave at once. Concentrate, and you will learn your next destination."

Fayden nodded. He was practically packed; all he had to do was add the ivory casket to his luggage. Picking up his pipe, at the guru's suggestion, he puffed the thick smoke. Again, he heard the bell-like tone of Shiwan Khan.

When Fayden looked about, Marabar Guru was gone. His darkish robe drawn about him, the chief naljorpa had sidled out of the room, to leave the hotel by the gloomy fire tower that he had previously used for entrance.

Five minutes later, the clerk downstairs received a call from 812 and learned that Mr. Halmers was checking out.

Again, Shiwan Khan was taking precautions to keep the whereabouts of a dupe unknown. Should George Endle report strange doings at the Hotel Claybourne, and find persons who would believe his tale, one thing, at least, was certain.

No one would find Ralph Fayden in Room 812 should they decide to go there and look for him.

No one – not even The Shadow!

CHAPTER VI. THE BRONZE KNIFE

AT precisely seven o'clock, a portly, pudgy faced man arrived at the Oriental Museum. He was Isaac Newboldt, the curator, and he was pleased to see that the doors were already open.

Immediately he was in his office, someone knocked. It was Kent, the chief attendant, making a formal report. Kent had found the extra key to the mezzanine storeroom; it had been missing for some time before the storeroom had been put in use. Newboldt received the key, just as another knock sounded at the door. Importantly, the curator ordered:

"Answer it, Kent."

Two men entered. One looked as self-important as Newboldt. He was a bluff-faced man, who wore a shortclipped mustache. His companion was a swarthy, stockily built individual, whose features displayed a pokerfaced expression.

Rising from behind his desk, Newboldt extended a hand to the bluff-faced man, exclaiming:

"Commissioner Weston! What brings you here?"

"We shall come to that directly, Mr. Newboldt," returned the police commissioner, briskly. "First, let me introduce Inspector Cardona. I thought it wise to bring him along."

Newboldt had heard of Inspector Joe Cardona, ace of the Manhattan force. He was the chap who usually tackled the toughest cases. The fact worried Newboldt considerably, for it indicated that the Oriental Museum might be concerned in some important crime.

"Don't worry," said Weston with a smile. "We are here on a rather trifling mission. One that was inspired by my friend Lamont Cranston. You know Cranston, don't you, Newboldt?"

The curator nodded.

"It's about some curios shipped here," Cardona said. "They came from a man named Ralph Fayden. It seems that Mr. Cranston thinks they may be fakes."

"Cranston may think that they are fakes," rejoined Newboldt emphatically, "but I happen to know that they are. That is why I put them in the old storeroom on the mezzanine floor. Only one genuine item in the entire lot! Some clever swindlers must have taken Fayden over very thoroughly, since he went to England."

From the desk, Newboldt lifted the key that Kent had brought him. He suggested a trip to the mezzanine storeroom. It was Cardona who suggested that they wait.

"Mr. Cranston said he'd like to look them over with us," declared the police inspector. "Maybe we ought to wait until he arrives."

Newboldt agreed. He proffered cigars; they were lighting the perfectos when Kent arrived to announce another visitor. Before the attendant could state the arrival's name, the man shoved himself through the doorway. His bleary appearance brought reproval from Newboldt.

"George Endle!" exclaimed the curator. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm not drunk, Newboldt," insisted Endle. "I was, a little while ago, but right now I'm cold sober. What I ran into put me on the water wagon for keeps! Listen, Newboldt, I've just talked to Ralph Fayden!"

"By transatlantic phone?" queried Newboldt. "From here to London?"

"No. Fayden is in New York! He's staying at the Hotel Claybourne. Calls himself Halmers."

Newboldt smiled indulgently. Endle slammed a big fist on the desk.

"I'm sober, I tell you! But I want another drink, bad! Give it to me, and I'll tell you something that will make your eyes look like a pair of goggles!"

Catching a nod from Weston, the curator produced a bottle and glass from the desk drawer. Endle poured himself a drink and swallowed it. Then he began to pour out his story.

LIMITED though it was, the tale sounded fantastic. Endle told of meeting Fayden in the hotel lobby; how he had later gone up to his friend's room.

He described all that happened there; told of the ivory-filled jade casket; of the Chinese girl, and how the Hindu had suddenly pulled back the knife, after making a pass at him.

"Describe the knife, Endle," Newboldt said, his voice serious.

"It was bronze," declared Endle, slowly. "Yes, all bronze, blade and handle, both. It was long, too. It must have been, because at first I took it for a snake."

Shuddering at the recollection, Endle poured himself another bracer. He was swaying tipsily; a few more drinks would render him incoherent. Rising, Newboldt declared:

"I would rather not wait until Cranston arrives. I would like to show Endle a certain item that Fayden sent us. The one which I said was genuine."

They started to the mezzanine. Endle was a bit unsteady on the stairs, but Kent helped him along.

Newboldt unlocked the storeroom, turned on a light. The room was partly filled with a collection of assorted junk. On the floor stood queer stone idols; near them, placed upright, was a battered mummy casket. A huge, cracked vase was in one corner.

The walls showed other items: odd paddles, used in Malay war canoes; big spears that might have come from Africa; boomerangs and other weapons, including some Turkish scimitars. Picking up a list that lay on top of a moth-eaten war drum, Newboldt shook his head.

"The stuff is spurious," he insisted. "It looks as if it came from a dime museum. Why, it wouldn't take an expert to tell that there were imitations, with one exception."

Tapping the list, Newboldt lifted his finger and pointed to a side wall. "Look over there, Endle, and see if you recognize that item."

Squinting, Endle muttered that he saw nothing but a blank space on the wall. When Weston and Cardona corroborated the statement, Newboldt stared in surprise.

"Why, it's gone!" he exclaimed. Then, swinging to Kent, he demanded: "What did you do with that bronze Tibetan knife? I said that it was valuable, but I did not order you to place it elsewhere."

"It should be here, sir," began Kent. "I haven't touched it –"

"There it is!" Wrenching from Kent's steadying grip, Endle pointed toward a corner near the battered mummy case. "It's the twin to the dirk the yogi drew on me!"

"I can't understand it," said Newboldt, slowly. "I can't understand how it moved from one wall to the other, unless –"

Pausing, the curator shook his head, as though he regarded the only explanation as more fantastic than the occurrence itself. He looked back to the blank space on the other wall, then toward the knife again. It was during the second glance that Newboldt cried a warning:

"Don't touch it, Endle!"

Endle had started forward. His own thick utterance was loud enough to drown Newboldt's call.

"I'll show you what the yogi did!" Endle was promising. "I'll show you the way he shoved that dirk at me, then snatched it back. I'll show you –"

CARDONA, alarmed by Newboldt's shout, was starting after Endle. Kent was hurrying forward, too, for he recognized real danger in the curator's excited manner. But they were a dozen feet short of Endle when he grabbed the knife and pulled it from the wall.

Half reeling, Endle tugged the blade toward himself. Instantly, he shrieked, and sidled close to the corner. His arms were twisting with all their strength, as if trying to control a living thing.

As he doubled himself above the bronze blade, obscuring it from sight, Endle's arms pumped inward, toward his body.

Jolted as if by the power of his own jab, Endle's toppling figure hit the floor, his arms outstretched.

But the witnesses to that heavy fall were not looking at Endle's outspread hands. They were staring at an object that protruded from the man's breast: the handle of the bronze Tibetan knife. The blade was no longer visible.

It was buried to the hilt, in Endle's heart!

George Endle was dead, slain by the bronze blade from Tibet. Dead from the very sort of thrust that he had described; one that only a powerful, expert hand could have stayed.

The bronze knife had done its work, despite Newboldt's warning, before the arrival of the only person who could have prevented such a tragedy: The Shadow!

CHAPTER VII. THE SECOND SUICIDE

THEY stood about Endle's body, a silent, awed group. The spell was not broken until Inspector Cardona voiced the single word:

"Suicide."

Commissioner Weston agreed. Nevertheless, he insisted that Endle's death had been considerably more dramatic than an ordinary suicide case.

"The poor chap was delirious," declared Weston. "The story that he told us proves it. He was thinking of bronze knives; when he saw one he went berserk."

"Funny, about that knife business, though," returned Cardona, moodily. "Endle must have seen before, a dirk that looked like this one."

"Not necessarily," argued Weston. "He may have heard of this knife, from Fayden. Probably by letter, however, since we know that Fayden is actually in England."

At that same moment, footsteps sounded outside the storeroom. Jittery men swung about in alarm; Cardona quickly drew a revolver, then lowered it. He recognized the figure that stood on the threshold. The arrival was Lamont Cranston.

Within a few minutes The Shadow had heard the entire story from men who were anxious to tell it, in order to convince themselves that they were sane.

When all details had been given, Cranston started to speak, only to be interrupted by a call from downstairs.

Isaac Newboldt was wanted on the telephone. It was a long-distance call.

The Shadow waited until the curator returned. Newboldt explained that the call had come from London. He had talked with Fayden, recognized the man's voice. Fayden had been anxious to know if all his curios had arrived at the museum.

"I guess that settles matters," said Newboldt, with a sigh of relief. "Fayden is actually in London. Of course, I didn't worry him by telling him what had happened here, nor did I mention that the curios he purchased were

fakes."

A smile showed on Cranston's lips.

"Good judgment, Newboldt," declared The Shadow, in Cranston's dry, even tone. "If you had told him your suspicions of the curios, he might have feared that you suspected the phone call, too."

"You mean –"

"That you just received a faked call, Newboldt," emphasized The Shadow. "It came at too timely a moment. It is plain that Fayden wants to alibi himself, by making us think that he is in London."

"That's right!" inserted Cardona. "A call like that, coming just after Endle's suicide –"

"I doubt that Fayden knows of Endle's death," interposed The Shadow, with a smile. "He was probably thinking in terms of someone else."

"Who?" queried Cardona, in surprise.

The Shadow's answer was a single word, delivered in a most leisurely style:

"Myself."

THE statement electrified the listeners. Calmly, The Shadow produced Fayden's letter, showed it, and related its history. His deduction regarding the letter's false delivery seemed a very simple thing, the way he related it, suited much more to the deliberate Mr. Cranston than to the mysterious being called The Shadow.

No one caught the deeper inferences. They were thinking of other things – particularly Commissioner Weston, who ejaculated:

"Then you believe that Endle's story was true?"

"Unquestionably," replied The Shadow. "From all you have told me, the man was anything but demented."

"If Endle wasn't crazy," put in Cardona, "why did he commit suicide?"

The Shadow's eyes took on a far-away gaze. Only Newboldt seemed to understand it. The others waited, expectantly; finally, they saw Cranston's eyes lower. He pointed to the knife that still penetrated Endle's dead heart. Turning to Cardona, The Shadow said quietly:

"Let me examine that blade, inspector."

Obligingly, Cardona wrenched the knife from the victim, wiped off the blood and extended the bronze weapon from the folds of a handkerchief. Receiving the dagger, The Shadow studied it carefully, then announced:

"My conjecture was correct. This is a phurba."

Only Newboldt recognized the term. The curator's hesitancy had changed to eagerness. He stood alert, while The Shadow explained his statement to the others.

"A phurba," he said, "is an enchanted dagger. It is supposed to possess the power of delivering death of its own accord. In brief, the blade possesses life, given to it by the mystic influence of a naljorpa, or man of magical ability."

"Poppycock," exclaimed Weston. "You can't expect us to believe such rot, Cranston!"

"Not unless you have been to Tibet," returned The Shadow, "or made a study of conditions in that strange land. Newboldt can support whatever I have said."

The curator gave an eager nod.

"Let me emphasize one point," continued The Shadow. "It is quite possible that the supposed life of the phurba is due entirely to the imagination of the victim, not to any evil potency of the naljorpa who magnetized the blade. Am I correct, Newboldt?"

"Quite correct."

"In fact, the naljorpas may be quite limited in everything they do. I can testify, however, that persons who have attempted to attack such mystics have found themselves stopped by a peculiar force that resembles an electric shock."

Weston gave a belittling smile, then asked: "Do you speak from personal experience, Cranston?"

"No, I am immune," replied The Shadow, "because I, too, am versed in the mystic methods of the East. But I have witnessed the effect on others."

Hearing that, Cardona remembered something.

"The yogi that Endle talked about!" exclaimed Joe. "He could have been a naljorpa. But from the way Endle spoke, the guy didn't give him a jolt. I wonder why?"

The Shadow did not answer. He had formed a theory which might prove extremely valuable, later. Endle's immunity, earlier that evening, applied only to the sort of experience encountered by Paul Brent, and not to actual death from a bronze dagger. It was something to be remembered; but, at present, The Shadow was considering another type of case.

"Let us accept Endle's entire story as accurate," suggested The Shadow. "He met Fayden, here in New York. We know, therefore, that Fayden is playing some double game. His purpose, presumably, is to acquire jade, of the rare sort that Endle saw in the hotel room."

"Whoever is behind the game wished to dispose of me. Probably" – The Shadow voiced the explanation very calmly – "because I know too much about Tibet. Endle's life was spared at the hotel because he seemed unimportant. But this phurba" – he passed the dagger back to Cardona – "was waiting here for me. Endle happened to find it, instead."

Newboldt was nodding agreement to everything that The Shadow said, but Weston argued otherwise.

"It's ridiculous, Cranston!" declared the commissioner. "Impossible that a knife stab could be delivered without the agency of a human hand."

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AT that moment, Cardona provided one of his characteristic interruptions. He was holding the phurba in one hand, his revolver in the other. Anxious to clear up the case, Joe thrust his gun into the nearest hand, which happened to be Cranston's.

"Hold it," he told The Shadow, "while I reconstruct the suicide. The knife was here" – Joe strode to the wall and clamped the bronze blade upon the hook near the mummy case – "and Endle made a grab for it. Just like this."

Stepping back, Cardona lunged toward the wall and snatched the bronze dagger with both hands. He reeled, doubling in Endle's fashion. The men who had witnessed Endle's death thought that Cardona was overacting the part when he started to pump his hands toward his heart, shoving the blade point first.

Only one pair of eyes saw what actually happened. Those eyes were The Shadow's. They spied the brownish, clawlike hand that snaked suddenly into sight, as if from nowhere, to add an impetus to Cardona's jab.

In a trice, the inspector was powerless to prevent the coming stroke, for his pressure was in the wrong direction!

Another hand could act: The Shadow's. It did act, with Cardona's gun. A quick trigger finger pumped bullets into a strange target: the fake mummy case that Cardona was shouldering in the midst of his frantic, losing struggle.

With those blasts, Cardona reeled away. Wrenching at the bronze dagger, he twisted it aside, slashing, his coat in the action. The blade didn't reach Joe's heart, because the hidden hand was no longer there to shove it.

But the murderer's fist was visible, and a scrawny body with it. Actuated by The Shadow's timely shots, the mummy case split open at the side, to send a spidery naljorpa flinging to the floor, where he writhed in dying agony!

The naljorpa was Ramjan, the assassin that Shivan Khan had assigned to special duty. Ramjan had gained one kill this evening, without detection. He had almost maneuvered another, when the stream of bullets felled him!

In the midst of Ramjan's clatter, a mirthless, whispered laugh issued from the immobile lips of Lamont Cranston, to fade before anyone overheard it.

They could call Endle's death a suicide, if they liked. In a way, it was suicide for anyone to grab the bronze dagger that Ramjan had placed so conveniently at hand before hiding in the mummy case.

But if Endle's death remained classed as a suicide, Ramjan's finish belonged in the same category. It could be termed the second suicide; for a very simple reason.

Any and all of Shivan Khan's killers would be committing suicide when they attempted murder in the presence of The Shadow!

CHAPTER VIII. QUEST OF MISSING MEN

BACKED against the wall, Joe Cardona stared at the dead forms of Endle and Ramjan, then at the bronze knife which lay between the bodies. Joe's fingers were twitching, as though they still held the handle of his deathdealing dagger.

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The riddle of the phurba was explained. The enchanted dagger possessed no life of its own; it needed the hand of a naljorpa to thrust it to the mark.

Cleverly hinged at the side, the mummy case had a secret aperture, through which Ramjan's thrust had come. The upright casket had broken open under the weight of the killer's falling body, when The Shadow's shots had flayed him through the splintering woodwork.

Isaac Newboldt recalled the missing key to the storeroom. It explained how the naljorpa had entered.

"He must have come in this afternoon!" exclaimed the curator "Once he had opened the door, he needed the key no longer, so he left it where Kent would find it."

Newboldt's finding was correct. The room had an automatic latch. Ramjan had locked the door when he closed it. But there was more to the mystery.

"It was the naljorpa who moved the dagger," said Newboldt, soberly. "I noticed it the moment I entered. Had you been with me, Cranston, you would probably have been the man who plucked it from the wall."

"Instead of Endle," put in Cardona. "But he got here early, and he was thinking in terms of daggers. But it certainly looked like he stabbed himself with it. I hadn't an idea that this skinny guy" – he nudged toward the dead Ramjan – "was in the mummy case, until I grabbed the knife myself."

"Nor did any of us," added Weston, soberly, "except Cranston. If that knife had reached your heart, inspector, as it did Endle's, we would have classed you as another suicide. The killer would have been free to leave the mummy case later."

Congratulations were in order for Lamont Cranston, but he chose to belittle his achievement. It was luck, he said, that placed him at the correct angle to see Ramjan's hand whip from the mummy case and add its murderous drive to the moving knife.

Chance, too, had made Cranston the temporary custodian of Cardona's revolver. He had used it impulsively and very poorly, missing the murderer's hands at which he had aimed, and hitting the mummy case instead. Wide shots had scored a lucky result; that was all. The Shadow didn't mention that Cardona's shift had made it impossible to pick any target other than the mummy case.

Stooping above the scrawny corpse of Ramjan, The Shadow observed a rounded mark upon the Tibetan's forehead. Rising, he pointed to the seared spot, and declared in Cranston's style:

"This man is not only a naljorpa. He is also a delog."

Commissioner Weston was puzzled by the term. Newboldt interpreted it.

"A delog," said the curator, "is a mystic who has had visions of the bardo, or land beyond. Considering themselves familiar with the life that is to come, they have no fear of death. Consequently, when they choose to kill others, they do so very boldly."

"What else do you know about them?" queried Weston.

"They are apt to deal in murder," recalled Newboldt, "because they feel that they belong in the bardo, and therefore should start others on the way there."

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Newboldt went on to describe the picturesque but gruesome tortures of the bardo, according to Tibetan lore. When he paused, the curator heard Cranston insert a reminder.

"You have forgotten one thing," said The Shadow. "The delogs, having no use for this life, invariably cut themselves off from the world. They are found only in the mountain vastnesses of the Himalayas."

"Quite right," agreed Newboldt.

"Which brings us to our present question," The Shadow added. "What is a delog doing in New York?"

THE curator recognized the importance of the question, and began to emphasize it. He agreed with Cranston that no delog would have come to America except at the instigation of someone greater than himself, probably a tulku, the highest of all mystics. But Newboldt knew of no tulku who had ever been in America.

"I recall one," remarked The Shadow, calmly. "He called himself Shiwan Khan."

Weston and Cardona jolted as if receiving electric shocks from the dead naljorpa. They knew that name well. Twice, they had encountered Shiwan Khan; on each occasion, they had hoped that his departure meant the end of him.

Any link to Shiwan Khan needed prompt attention. Hurrying down to Newboldt's office, Weston put in a call to the Hotel Claybourne. He learned that a "Mr. Halmers" had checked out a short while before, leaving no forwarding address.

"It must be Fayden," gritted Weston. "We know, at last, that Endle's story was correct. But why should a man like Ralph Fayden be working with Shiwan Khan?"

The Shadow promptly delved into the past.

"You will recall Benjamin Twindell," he said. "You remember him commissioner. Twindell had wealth, all he could ever have used, yet he listened to the blandishments of Shiwan Khan. It was the promise of priceless treasure that made Twindell help Shiwan Khan to employ aircraft and munitions for a reign of conquest."

The commissioner recalled those facts.

"Foiled in that enterprise, Shiwan Khan returned," The Shadow continued. "His purpose was to steal unique inventions, valuable in warfare. He obtained some, but not the ones that he cherished most. Again, on that occasion, there were men who came beneath his mental sway."

Quite familiar with the powers of Shiwan Khan, Weston tried to picture the present from his memories of the past. The moment was right for The Shadow to express a solid theory.

"On this excursion," he said "Shiwan Khan seeks neither munitions nor inventions. He is trying to enmesh men of genius, gather them together and convey them back to his hidden domain. The proof lies in the fact that he has brought a tribe of mystics with him.

"They are the sort, those naljorpas, who could help him sway the minds of victims. Moreover, they serve as buffers between dupes like Fayden and chance blunderers of Endle's sort. In work of this sort, Shiwan Khan prefers invisible assassins."

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Impressed by the theory, Weston asked Cranston if he thought there were many others like Fayden; men not listed as missing, yet who were actually out of circulation.

"I believe that there are," declared The Shadow, firmly. "It is your task, commissioner, to check on them. I would suggest that the work be started at once."

The Shadow made no further mention of Endle's testimony. It was better that the law should forget the Chinese girl who had been at the hotel along with the Hindu that Endle had described. The Shadow preferred that Fayden should be regarded as the only dupe in that picture.

The girl was unquestionably Lana Luan. As long as she played her part of messenger, she would be safe. But if the law classed Beatrice Chadbury as a missing person, Shiwan Khan might consider Lana Luan to be a liability.

Knowing Shiwan Khan of old, The Shadow was quite sure that the Golden Master would dispose of anyone whose usefulness was ended.

LEAVING the museum, Lamont Cranston entered the big limousine that had brought him there. Riding toward the Hotel Claybourne, he drew out a sliding drawer beneath the rear seat and produced garments of black: hat, cloak, and gloves.

When the big car stopped, not far from the hotel, the shape that slid from the half-opened door looked like a mammoth blot. Gliding into waiting darkness, The Shadow reached a gloomy fire tower. He was following the route that Marabar Guru had used when he entered to contact Fayden. At moments, hidden lips voiced a whispered laugh. The Shadow was recalling Endle's testimony; how the mystic power of the guru had failed in an emergency.

Endle, though dead, had provided an important clue to the limitations of Shiwan Khan's wonder workers.

Reaching Room 812, The Shadow came upon a tangible clue: the odor of stale tobacco. He noted its pungent touch, knew that the smoke must have come from some special blend. It fitted with the history of Beatrice's lilacs.

The girl had favored those flowers; Fayden probably liked his own tobacco mixture. Such subtle points of contact were sufficient for Shiwan Khan to exert his mental influence over those he chose as dupes.

Other clues were absent in Room 812. Finishing his inspection, The Shadow withdrew suddenly to the hallway and took cover in a side passage. Others were arriving – Cardona and detectives from headquarters. The Shadow could hear them talking as they made their search.

They had traced Fayden's luggage to an empty house, where it had evidently been picked up and taken away by other trucks. Finding no clues there, the headquarters men had returned to the starting point, the hotel. But their search of Room 812 was fruitless. They hadn't even noticed the tobacco smoke.

From his secluded observation post, The Shadow saw Cardona follow the others from the room. As Joe reached back to turn off the lights, The Shadow caught a gleam from the floor. It was gone the moment the lights were extinguished; but when Cardona had left, The Shadow's flashlight, moving forward, showed the same glitter once again.

Wedge between the hallway carpet and the room door was a silver coin, edge upward. Visible only from the spot along the hall, it was a talisman that had dropped from Fayden's pocket while he was helping the porter

move a trunk from the room.

On one side it showed a five-pointed star; on the other, a cobra's head. The Shadow recognized the token as a rare type of kavacha talisman, obtainable only from secluded temples in the interior of India, where they were purchased at great prices by travelers bound for Tibet.

Blackness suddenly covered the kavacha, although the flashlight still twinkled. The blackness was formed by The Shadow's gloved fist. Retaining the silver trophy, the cloaked investigator returned to the fire tower.

Again, there was a soft laugh in the darkness; one that told the value of The Shadow's find. Ralph Fayden had retained his priceless jade, the gift of Shiwon Khan; he would probably think nothing of the lost kavacha talisman, an earlier gift from the same source.

A full-fledged servitor of the Golden Master, Fayden no longer needed a token that would identify him to the members of Shiwon Khan's ruthless tribe.

But that forgotten talisman could prove a useful token to others, who might need it more than Fayden ever had.

The Shadow knew.

CHAPTER IX. THE LONE TRAIL

NEWS of double death in the Oriental Museum created a great stir; but it was nothing, compared to the startling facts that followed.

Commissioner Weston lifted the lid on the subject of Shiwon Khan, calling for any information that might lead to the apprehension of the notorious master mind.

Immediately, the bureau of missing persons was flooded with anxious queries. Sifted, those cases produced prompt and astonishing discoveries.

Ralph Fayden was but one of a few dozen New Yorkers absent and unaccounted for. Rumors came in that people who had supposedly gone to far-away points had been seen around New York.

Endle's testimony in the Fayden case was matched by at least a dozen similar reports; in every case, the police kept the names of the informants secret.

Noted physicians; key men in large industries; other inventors like Fayden, scholars regarded as mental wizards – all had gone on trips to places varying from Bermuda to Timbuktu, and the evidence of their actual whereabouts was shady.

Met by people that they knew, such individuals had denied their identity, emphatically enough to be believed. It had taken a persistent meddler like Endle to prove that mystery was actually in the air.

Finding that he had struck a gusher, Commissioner Weston called for the F.B.I.; when Federal men took over, they found that the epidemic of disappearances was nationwide.

Known cases totaled more than sixty, with many others probably unreported. They weren't confined to men of business ability or genius; they included other persons that Shiwon Khan decided would be welcome

residents in his fabled domain.

Listed among the total were two Hollywood movie actresses, who were supposed to be on vacation; several men and women, prominent in society; and a few government officials, who held posts that were little known but quite important.

Three days after the museum affair, Lamont Cranston paid a visit to Chinatown, where he talked with Dr. Roy Tam in the latter's office. Tam was a quiet, sober-faced man, who wore drab American clothes, but frequently spoke in Chinese, even when chatting with The Shadow.

"My men are capable, Ying Ko," assured Tam, using the name by which Chinese frequently addressed The Shadow. "But they have found no trace of the girl called Lana Luan. How often do you suppose that she has left the headquarters of Shiwan Khan?"

"Very often," replied The Shadow. "With the authorities tracking down so many cases, it is probable that Shiwan Khan is closing deals with all his dupes. Judging by Fayden's case, Lana Luan would be needed as a messenger."

"Very well," decided Tam. "If Shiwan Khan is here in Chinatown, he must have access to more hidden passages than we suppose. Enough to give outlets beyond the limits of this section, in places where my men cannot go without proving too conspicuous."

Unrolling a map, Tam showed the entire Manhattan area, studded with tiny dots in districts quite remote from Chinatown.

"These represent my outposts," he said soberly. "They are places, owned by Chinese – restaurants, laundries, curio shops, other places of business. In each of these places, I have a friend."

The Shadow understood. Dr. Tam was the motivating factor among the Chinese who adapted themselves to American ways. His mission was to create good will among races, to put an end to prejudice and superstition. His friends that he had mentioned were capable Chinese, in sympathy with the movement.

"Our friends are the same, Ying Ko," assured Tam. "Take a copy of this map, with its key list of names. Should you need aid of any sort, the nearest of my friends will gladly give it."

LEAVING Tam's, The Shadow rode past the alley that led to Loo Dow's. The opium parlor was closed, its door barred. From his cab, the calm-eyed Mr. Cranston saw Chinese lounging about the alley and knew that they were men employed by Dr. Tam, watching for anyone who looked like Lana Luan.

Some were actually leaning against the secret wall that Beatrice Chadbury had entered several nights before, but they had not guessed that the bricks formed a sliding door. Nor did The Shadow detect the fact when he viewed the wall; he was too distant, his glimpse too brief.

Just outside of Chinatown the cab passed an old garage, closed and deserted. Cranston's lips formed a smile as he noted the garage. It belonged to Dr. Tam, and was the place where the Chinese physician stored all sorts of discarded articles that savored of the antiquated past.

It would be a bad place for a nervous man, that garage. It was filled with grinning devil masks, hatchets used in tong wars, regalia used in obsolete rituals, including the Great Dragon costume, that a hundred men could wear.

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The cab reached the Cobalt Club. In the downstairs grillroom, Cranston walked into a conference to which he had been invited. Commissioner Weston was present, Inspector Cardona with him. They were talking to a swarthy man, who wore a droopy, dark mustache; he was Vic Marquette of the F.B.I.

All were glad to see Cranston. They had some questions regarding Tibetan customs. When The Shadow had told them everything they wanted, Marquette gave the table a resounding slap.

"That was one of them, all right!" he said. "We thought the fellow was a Hindu. But I'll bet he's a naljorpa from Tibet, even though Marabar Guru sounds like a Hindu name."

Interested by the term guru, The Shadow explained that it was not a name, but a title.

"Take Shiwan Khan as an example," he said. "The term khan means ruler; but it follows the name, instead of coming first. The naljorpas, of course, would call him Shiwan Tulku, using the tulku to denote master.

"This man you mention – Marabar – is a guru, or teacher. He probably has the power of a naljorpa, the knowledge of a delog, but he is also able – as a guru – to impart his power. He would wear a robe called a zen, something like an ancient toga."

Encouraged by that flow of information, Marquette came out with all the facts. He laid a list on the table, pointed to a name that he had checked.

"We've traced Hiram Selsby," declared the Fed. "He's a chemist, who goes in for manufacturing high-power explosives. He's here in New York, living in an old house that looks like it was closed. Selsby is one of the bunch on the missing list."

"How did you trace him?" queried The Shadow.

"We smelled him!" returned Vic, triumphantly. "That is, we smelled some of those funny stink bombs that he makes. Not regular stink bombs, you understand, but a chemical mess that smells terrible until it's stowed in bombs. It goes off with an awful wham, that stuff."

"What about Marabar Guru?"

"He was around the place. A half-wit janitor ran into him; he says the guy gave him an electric shock. He told the janitor his name and ordered him to keep silence, which he would have, if we hadn't run into him ourselves and made him talk."

"Have you entered the house yet?"

"No. We're keeping it covered at a distance, from roofs and everywhere. We're going to close in tonight and find Selsby. I hope we can grab this Marabar Guru, too. From what you tell me, Mr. Cranston, he's probably Shiwan Khan's right-hand man."

ON a sheet of paper, Marquette traced a diagram showing the neighborhood of Selsby's house. He was marking the routes by which the Feds would approach the place, when Cranston strolled upstairs to make a telephone call.

Consulting the map that Tam had given him, The Shadow saw that the old house was located very close to a Chinese restaurant known as the Shantung Garden. Its proprietor, Shen Lee, was one of Tam's friends.

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When Cranston returned, Marquette was checking off the names of Federal men according to their posts. Happening to see the list, The Shadow scanned it, then remarked:

"I recall a girl named Myra Reldon who helped you once, Marquette. She used to pass herself as a Chinese – what was the name she used?"

"Ming Dwan," replied Marquette. "She worked swell out in Frisco, when we were after a crowd called the Jeho Fan. (Note: See "Teeth of the Dragon," Vol. XXIII, No. 6.) Myra was born in China, and she knows the language backward."

"That lingo always sounds backward to me," put in Cardona. "I remember Myra Reldon, though. She came here to New York, later."

"Yes, when we were after that crooked inventor named Bardsley," replied Marquette. "The fellow who called himself Li Hoang. Only, Myra's make-up didn't stand the strain. When Li Hoang found out she wasn't Chinese, she was on the spot."

Cardona remembered the case. He recalled, too, that it was The Shadow who had saved Myra from death. (Note: See "The Golden Pagoda," Vol. XXV, No. 1.)

"We couldn't risk Myra after that," added Marquette. "If this Shiwan Khan business turns out to have a Chinese angle, we might use her as an interpreter, but that's all. She's here in New York, studying Japanese at the International Language Institute."

Vic returned to his plans for the evening raid. He was setting the hour at eight o'clock, when it would be fully dark. His men would close in when the signal was passed, and take the entire house by storm.

Cardona agreed to form his own men as an outer cordon, bringing them up in patrol cars after the Feds began to move. Together, Vic and Joe traced working diagrams on the chart, while Weston nodded, remarking that the preparations appeared ironclad.

While the others were thinking in terms of Hiram Selsby, whose protection would be assured, and of Marabar Guru, who would be downed by bullets if he made a single false move, The Shadow was considering another possible factor.

He was thinking of Lana Luan.

This might be the night when Selsby would receive a reward from Shiwan Khan, as had Fayden before him. The go-between would certainly be Lana Luan, otherwise Beatrice Chadbury.

Totally under the domination of Shiwan Khan, the girl could provide no information if captured. She wouldn't remember recent experiences in the domain of the Golden Master.

Nor would she be of value if she returned to Shiwan Khan, unless –

His thoughts at that important point, The Shadow arose, made his departure in Cranston's leisurely fashion. He was thinking beyond the word "unless," considering a plan that carried hazards, which might prove worth while, despite their danger.

Stopping at a phone booth, The Shadow made three calls. One was to Dr. Tam; it concerned his friend Shen Lee, proprietor of the Shantung Garden.

The second call was answered by a quiet-toned speaker named Burbank, The Shadow's contact man, who kept in touch with active agents who served their mysterious chief. Finally, The Shadow called the International Language Institute and learned the present address of Miss Myra Reldon.

Strolling out into daylight, Lamont Cranston displayed a bored expression as he gazed at the afternoon sun.

He was looking forward to nightfall, when he would again become The Shadow!

CHAPTER X. PATH OF DARKNESS

THERE was a note with the package that lay on the table in the living room of Myra Reldon's little apartment. Myra opened the note first, scanned its inked lines and gave a slight gasp. As she gasped, the inked lines faded.

She knew who had sent that note: The Shadow.

The note carried no signature; but the proof still was present. On the sheet that had lost its writing, Myra saw a hawkish silhouette. As it absorbed the light, the profile faded also.

Myra remembered that The Shadow was expert in the use of inks that rapidly disappeared.

She had read the note, however; that was why she pursed her lips and murmured, reflectively:

"Ming Dwan."

Looking at herself in a mirror, Myra saw a face that was anything but Chinese in appearance. She had the light complexion of a blonde; her hair, though brown like her eyes, was not deep in shade. Furthermore, her eyes were large, and though her features were alluring, they were distinctly American.

Nevertheless, Myra was ready to play the role of Ming Dwan.

She opened the package. In it, she found a dark Chinese costume, a make-up kit, and a box that contained a yellow powder. The final item interested her most.

Turning on the hot water in the bathtub, Myra faced a mirror and carefully adjusted a bathing cap on her head, fitting it so that it followed the exact line of her hair. That done, she began to undress, watching the filling bathtub.

When the water had reached its highest possible level, Myra sprinkled the yellowish powder on the surface. The water absorbed it.

Gingerly, Myra dipped one foot into the steaming tub; then, finding the temperature bearable, she plunged completely under. After a half minute, her bathing cap poked above the surface. Thirty seconds before, it had been white; now, it had changed to yellow.

So had Myra. As she drew a white towel about her, she observed the contrast. From a distinct white, her sleek body had taken on a saffron hue. There wasn't any chance that this make-up would be discovered. It was complete.

Half draped by the towel, Myra sat in front of the bedroom mirror and busied herself with the make-up kit.

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Like the yellow dye, the black that she applied to her eyebrows had a permanent look. She removed the bathing cap and treated her hair with a liquid that rendered it dark and glossy.

Using strips of transparent tape and applying them to the outer corners of her eyes, Myra completed the makeup. Drawn outward, the strips changed her eyes from a roundish shape to an almond slant. Flesh covered the strips, rendering them invisible.

Even without her Chinese costume, Myra Reldon was Ming Dwan. She had used the disguise often, but for the first time, it was foolproof. Putting on the Chinese clothes, Myra surveyed herself in the mirror and gave a bubbling laugh.

It was dusk outdoors, allowing Myra opportunity to leave the apartment house unnoticed and arrive at the Shantung Garden, where she was due on the job before eight o'clock.

The Shantung Garden had another new employee, a huge African, attired in a resplendent uniform, who served as doorman. His name was Jericho Duke; he had been assigned to the job at The Shadow's order.

There were customers, too, who knew The Shadow, for they were his agents. Some of them arrived in Moe's cab, to have dinner at the Chinese restaurant.

All such arrivals, including Ming Dwan, passed inspection from a group of silent watchers who were stationed throughout the zone. Feds were on hand, in plenty, observing everything from roofs and windows. They were making sure that people looking for the Shantung Garden did not go elsewhere.

Away from the restaurant's lights, the street was gloomy, yet people who passed were discernible, with one exception. In that semidarkness, no eye could have spied the black-cloaked shape that crossed the street, some fifty feet from the Garden, and chose a route through the nearest alleyway.

THE SHADOW had arrived in person, to take up special vigil. A one-man squad, he was closing in upon the house where Hiram Selsby was a temporary resident. From a half block distant, he could scent the disagreeable odor that represented the missing chemist's bomb mixture.

The house was shuttered. Most conspicuous were the windows on the third floor; their barriers looked more solid than the rest. But The Shadow was not interested in the interior of the house; at least, not as yet.

Weaving in and out among narrow passages between old buildings; he was looking for the logical route by which a visitor could quickly reach the house. He finally found it – a passage leading in from a side street, where the low awning of a small book store formed shelter against street lights.

At twenty minutes of eight, a cab rolled up just past the book store and paused, as if waiting for traffic to pass along another street not far ahead. During that brief halt, the cab door opened and a darkish figure stepped nimbly across the sidewalk.

It was Lana Luan!

She passed, with a stride that was almost stately, her gaze centered ahead. Pressed against the wall, The Shadow could have reached out and stopped her. It was a difficult urge to resist, even for the Shadow, for he knew that he might be able to break the spell which had caused Beatrice Chadbury to accept this false identity.

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But there were other persons to consider; many who had accepted the dictates of Shivan Khan. Buried in hiding places that they had voluntarily sought, they were no longer their own masters. To reclaim Beatrice at this moment would mean that dozens of dupes would be transported from America against their actual will.

At present, Beatrice Chadbury was the instrument of Shivan Khan. The Shadow hoped to turn that human weapon against the fiend who controlled it, just as the Golden Master's naljorpas made knives recoil upon the persons who held them.

Silently, a blotted shape in the gloom, The Shadow followed the route of Lana Luan.

The girl reached the house next to Selsby's. Using a key, she unlocked a small rear door, which she closed behind her. Opening that door, The Shadow was just in time to see a panel closing in a side wall. He spent several seconds in finding its catch; then moved along the trail again.

From light that filtered through the battered shutter of a stairway window, he saw Lana Luan, wearing a long cape to hide her Chinese costume. Then The Shadow was taking that same upward course.

The house was silent, ghostly. Rooms contained bulky furniture covered with dusty covers that gave them the appearance of shrouded specters. But even an onlooking ghost would have been a tame creature, compared to the stalking figure that kept to the trail of Lana Luan.

From the second floor, The Shadow saw Lana Luan pause at a landing halfway to the third. She was plainly visible, for the shutter, through solidly constructed, had its slats raised. Streaks of light gave a view of the girl's fixed face, and showed something bundled beneath the front of her cape.

Then Lana Luan was gone, on the last stage of her journey. It was The Shadow who approached the landing.

FOR the first time, the cloaked trailer slackened pace. He could see the little landing, the darkened steps above it.

The route beyond the streaked light looked as safe as the portion that The Shadow had already passed. Complete silence clung to the scene; even the slight sound of breathing could have been heard.

Nevertheless, The Shadow paused, his own breath bated. He peeled a glove from one hand, then shoved a bare fist into the ribs of light. Opening his fingers, The Shadow revealed a silver disk upon his upturned palm. The design of a pentagram was plain in the glow. It was the kavacha talisman.

The fist closed, opened again, with the coin reversed. The Shadow was displaying the side that bore the cobra. He let his hand move toward the darkened steps; this time, he was rewarded by a stir. Eyes were looking at the talisman; a hiss told that all was well.

All well for The Shadow, but not for the lurker who hissed the signal to advance.

The Shadow's hand went back into darkness; then his entire figure came forward in a driving lunge, his direction guided by the hiss. Long hands that shot from arms as powerful as plungers, were perfect in their grab as they caught a scrawny neck.

A hand whisked toward The Shadow stabbing a long blade of bronze. The knife point missed, for the creature that drove it was flying through the air, whipped like a thing of rope under The Shadow's lashing strength.

The knife buried itself in the wall as a spidery naljorpa struck the floor shoulder first, with The Shadow wheeling in upon him. The snarling lump of undersized humanity took a rubbery bounce, wriggled full about, and made another grab for the lost knife.

Smothering that attempt, The Shadow caught the eelish fighter in a bundling grip, hooking his twisty arms and legs in pretzel fashion. Out of that writhing muddle, two viselike hands gripped the thin neck in another, and more powerful, clutch.

Tricked by the display of the token that identified the friends of Shivan Khan, the naljorpa who guarded the route to Selsby's hideout was learning what others of his kind had previously found out, that writhing methods and hypnotic forces were useless against the power of The Shadow.

CHAPTER XI. THE DOUBLE THRUST

IT took The Shadow no longer than two minutes to subdue the struggling naljorpa. Mere choking tactics were not sufficient, for these curious creatures from Tibet could hold their breath for much longer periods than most humans.

What The Shadow did was apply pressures upon the bulging vertebrae that formed a line of knobs behind his foeman's thin neck. Under that treatment, the naljorpa caved. The Shadow picked up the loose knife, gave a soft laugh as he placed it beneath his cloak.

This was one phurba that lacked the enchanted powers that it was supposed to possess. As for the dagger's owner, The Shadow had expected to find watchers of his type along the way. Producing strips of rawhide, he bound the unconscious mystic in a tight bundle and tied a cloth gag between the bulging teeth.

Ascending the steps, The Shadow found a door that was stout but unbarred. Locking it after Lana Luan's entry had seemed unnecessary to those within, for they had relied upon the guarding naljorpa to handle all comers.

The Shadow looked into a large room that was crudely fitted out as a laboratory. Among the collection of beakers and big tubes, he saw a man who answered the description of Hiram Selsby. The chemist was elderly, white-haired, and stoop-shouldered. He was bent almost double above a workbench, for he was looking into an ivory casket that Lana Luan had brought him.

With excited fingers, Selsby plucked out rods of coppery metal that looked like short lead pencils.

"Bronzium!" he exclaimed, in a tone of high-pitched glee. "The lost metal of the ancients! Shivan Khan was right; it was an element, not an alloy. These are mine –"

An interrupting figure moved between Selsby and the light. It was Marabar Guru, wearing purple tunic, and turban adorned with a star of diamonds.

"They are yours," he told Selsby in a low, calm tone, "If you acknowledge Shivan Khan as master."

Selsby's eyes took on a misty, distant gaze. The sickening odor of his laboratory was perfume to his nostrils. It was the contact that placed him in communication with the Golden Master.

"He promises me even more," cackled the chemist. "In Xanadu, I can work this priceless metal. It will be mine, great stores of it! You ask me if I acknowledge Shivan Khan" – with a shake of his head, Selsby

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turned reproving eyes upon Marabar Guru – "when I have already told him that I recognize him as supreme!"

"It is well," decided Marabar Guru. He looked toward Lana Luan, who stood a few paces away, and gave a gesture of dismissal. "We shall leave this place, to go to our next destination."

Lana Luan turned toward the door. The Shadow drew back to let her pass. Knowing her route, it would be possible to overtake her; there was still time before the Feds began to move.

Time, too, to settle Marabar Guru, as The Shadow had handled the guarding naljorpa. As for Selsby, The Shadow expected no trouble with the aged inventor.

Reaching the stairs, Lana Luan passed The Shadow without observing him. Her thoughts were fixed upon one purpose: her return to the domain of Shiwon Khan. She reached the landing, where the naljorpa lay bundled in the corner below the lines of light.

Preferring a .45 to the captured dagger, The Shadow drew an automatic and wheeled suddenly through the door that Lana Luan had drawn shut behind her. His entry into the laboratory produced a singular result; one which, at first sight, seemed to better The Shadow's cause.

As the door smashed inward, Marabar Guru went flinging ahead of it. The turbaned mystic had been about to bolt the door when The Shadow struck it. Though the guru was something more than a living skeleton of the strict naljorpa type, his weight was light.

He also had wits enough to add to his dive after it commenced. With his turban scaling ahead of him, Marabar Guru became a whirling mass of purple that somersaulted past a workbench, not stopping until he reached the wall.

Selsby was at that wall. With a shriek of alarm, the white-haired man gripped his precious casket under one arm and tugged a hanging cord with his other hand. The cord ripped loose from the wall, as was intended. With the jerk came a rumble, as a sheet of steel slid wide.

The opening showed an elevator, arranged as part of the hideaway, in preparation for this final departure.

BEFORE The Shadow could take aim at the rolling shape of Marabar Guru, the scene was changed. Selsby, bounding to the foreground, blocked all chance of shooting the guru.

With remarkable agility, the chemist snatched a square box from a workbench. Both hands occupied, he used his knee to overturn the bench squarely in The Shadow's path.

The Shadow ripped shots at the elevator, hoping to nick Marabar Guru. The Hindu was inside, hopping about the car like a huge lump of popcorn, literally dodging The Shadow's aim. He had a moving shield in front of him, in the person of Selsby, who was sidling frantically toward the elevator trying to pull something from the box he carried.

Then Selsby's hand came free, holding an oval object shaped like a small pineapple. His arm was going back to make a fling – and over his shoulder came the head and hand of Marabar Guru!

Instantly, The Shadow dove back across the laboratory. He was more concerned with Marabar Guru than with Selsby, for the brownish man's hand was already beginning a swing when The Shadow spied it. Trickiest of all the assassins employed by Shiwon Khan, the guru should be most capable at flinging a deadly phurba.

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But it wasn't a matter of one thrust. Two came together. Selsby's hand, joggled by the whip of the forearm just behind him, let the bomb go just as the knife whizzed across the room!

The guru saw the course of his blade as it whirred straight for the somersaulting shape in black. He spied the bomb going in the same direction, arching in a high parabola, a curve that threatened to graze the ceiling.

With a triumphant hiss that would have made a cobra sound tame, Marabar Guru grabbed the elevator door with his other hand and slashed it shut, a metal curtain that saved him and Selsby from the blast to come.

They were safe, that pair, with escape through the cellar assured; while their last sight of The Shadow showed him motionless, the knife handle projecting from his back, the bomb descending upon his prone body!

The quick slide of the door prevented the pair from witnessing the amazing thing that followed. Despite the bronze dagger of Marabar Guru, The Shadow came up from the floor, to his knees. His gun was gone from his grasp, but he didn't snap back empty-handed. He was clutching a light workbench, that he flung straight over his head, in the direction of the elevator door behind his back.

The wooden missile never could have reached the elevator door. The Shadow didn't intend it to travel that far. He was as trusting that it would find a nearer target, which it did. The target was the flying bomb.

Metal met wood, a dozen feet from The Shadow. The bomb exploded with a force that shattered the workbench. The concussion flattened The Shadow to the floor, away from the bronze knife that had implanted itself, not squarely in his back but between his body and his arm.

Walls shuddered from the blast. Sheets of flame scorched the ruined laboratory; chunks of ceiling were striking down upon the floor. Amid that deluge of masonry and plaster, The Shadow came to his feet, staggered toward the open door to the stairs.

Ignited by the flames, other chemicals exploded with furious bursts, throwing fiery jets in every direction. Mere seconds would have meant a hellish death for anyone trapped in the laboratory, but The Shadow was no longer there.

His lurch had been in the right direction; straight for the open door. The new concussions didn't stop him; instead, they helped his dive.

WITH roaring blasts hurling him forward, The Shadow made the stairs and pitched headlong to the landing. Out from the doorway came a mighty wall of fire, an inferno in itself. Sufficient to wither any victim in their path, those flames found no human fuel.

Tumbling down the steps, The Shadow was below the level of the consuming fire when it made that terrific lash.

A figure rose to meet him. It was the naljorpa; this twisty killer had wriggled half free of the thongs. Dazedly, The Shadow grappled with his slippery foe. Rolling sideways, they moved through empty space, struck the steps to the lower floor.

Bounding downward, both were preserved for further struggle; had they remained on the landing, they would have met sure doom. While they were still somersaulting on their trip, the roof of the building caved in.

What had been a third floor was now a mighty beacon, lifting its lofty, increasing fire to the sky. Rolling flames had taken over the landing that The Shadow and his opponent had left.

Crackle of flames dim in his ears, The Shadow sensed that fall as a strange, slow-motion journey. All the way, one thought was drumming through his mind: He must be on top when the crash came. Painfully, he was striving for that advantage upon which life depended and he won it.

They both struck. The naljorpa buckled beneath The Shadow's weight. Rolling farther, the cloaked fighter found his feet. He didn't notice the bronze dagger that dropped from his cloak; nor did he pay attention to the naljorpa, who was moving feebly on the floor.

He had intended to carry that pet of Shiwan Khan's along with him, a living trophy to be delivered to the law. But such was impossible under the circumstances. Reeling as he sought to find the lower stairs, The Shadow recognized that he had no strength for extra tasks.

Besides, he had to find Lana Luan.

Yes, that was it. The throbbing thought guided him in his staggering trip to safety. Marabar Guru was gone, so was Hiram Selsby. One was a self-witting villain; the other a dupe, forced to deal in evil against his true judgment.

But they didn't matter, any more than the groggy naljorpa, who never should have slipped his bonds. They could be traced later, Selsby and the guru. In these pressing moments, one trail alone remained important: that of Lana Luan.

Tremendous thuds were resounding through the doomed house; they sounded like the smashes of a mighty mallet, those breaking beams, when The Shadow reached the basement. He didn't look for the connecting panel; instead, he made for the door of the house that he was in. The barrier was locked, triple bolted, but The Shadow found the hinges.

He treated them with bullets. One gun exhausted, he employed another. The door gave; splintering the woodwork that still clung in place, The Shadow shouldered through and sprawled sidewise in the little courtyard behind the house.

Only a few yards distant was Lana Luan, her cape drawn up around her shoulders. She was hurrying back toward the passage to the side street. Even in her half trance, the girl was alarmed by the roar of billowing flames from Selsby's house and the vivid light that the holocaust produced.

The Shadow was again on the trail. His plans for Lana Luan were still a thing that could be realized.

CHAPTER XII. TWISTED BATTLE

As The Shadow found his feet and started in pursuit of Lana Luan, a piercing shriek came from a spot above. Long, shrill, like a voice from some wild, forgotten region, it drowned out the roar of the fire. Instinctively, The Shadow turned, looked upward.

At a window of Selsby's house he saw the freed naljorpa. His leering countenance reddened by the flames, the devil man looked like a creature that had found some chosen hell. Red, too, was the dagger that the assassin wielded.

The Shadow fired with his only gun. His footing shaky, he reeled from the recoil of the gun, his bullet missing, just as the naljorpa launched the knife. But the hand from the window had lost its usual skill, as a result of the recent fray; it was less capable than The Shadow's.

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Scaling wide, the knife missed its cloaked prey by half a dozen feet. Stretched from the window, the naljorpa uttered another shriek, this time from sheer terror. Trained though he was to forget all fear, instinct overcame him, for he realized what was coming.

Before the foiled assassin could pitch himself to the paved court below, a cascading wall descended on him, bringing a great cataract of hot flame. Carried with that deluge, the servant of Shiwan Khan buried in a fiery grave, more terrible than any pit in the imaginary bardo he had visited in his trances.

The first cry had been heard. As The Shadow swung from scorching heat to follow Lana Luan, the shriek was answered by others. Posted naljorpas were springing out from cover, hoping for revenge upon The Shadow.

Weaving a quick course, The Shadow demonstrated a timely return of his skill. His shots were quicker than the knives that scaled in his direction; flingers were lurching, clipped by bullets, as they flung their weapons. There were others who might have found their chance to knife The Shadow, but they were suddenly pressed by a new attack.

Submachine guns were talking, with naljorpas as their targets. The explosion of Selsby's house had brought in the Feds ahead of schedule. Spotting the scrawny men who hung from roofs and windows of houses all about, the Feds knew them for enemies.

The Shadow had settled three of the assassins. The Feds accounted for half a dozen more. The rest of the tribe – they were thick upon the scene tonight – were quick enough to bound for cover and get away through passages too narrow to be illuminated by the vivid reflection of the fire.

The Shadow had opportunity to reach the passage that Lana Luan had taken. Speeding through to the street, he reached there just in time to see the girl reach the opposite curb, where a taxicab was waiting.

Lana Luan did not get into the cab. She was too late; she had been spotted by stationed Feds. Sighting this mystery woman from the Selsby premises, the Feds called upon her to stop.

Wavering at the cab step, Lana Luan suddenly rallied to the situation. Darting in back of the cab, she crossed a lighted stretch of sidewalk and made for another passage.

The Feds didn't open up with machine guns. Instead, they came on foot, hoping to overtake the fleeing girl. Reaching the cab, The Shadow saw why Lana Luan had not entered it. The cab had no driver; he had scurried for cover when the shooting began.

It was just a chance cab, ordered here to await a passenger. It offered no clue to Shiwan Khan, but it served another purpose.

Springing to the wheel, The Shadow kicked the starter; the cab shot forward on a rocketing trip for the nearest corner. Seeing the fleeing vehicle, Feds trained their machine guns on it; but the cab cut close to the curb and swung the corner just before the volley began.

Ditching the cab half way along the next block, The Shadow leaped out and cut in between two buildings; to head off Lana Luan. He knew that the girl's mad flight would take her squarely into the outer cordon, managed by Joe Cardona.

Dashing straight for a street where she would have been promptly trapped, Lana Luan met the lunging figure of The Shadow. Grabbing the girl, he swung her full about, pushed her to a short-cut leading through to another street.

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Wresting away, Lana Luan was visible when flashlights licked in from two directions; then The Shadow had yanked her from sight. Shouts told that two groups were on the trail: Feds from one direction, police from the other.

THROUGHOUT a twisty route, The Shadow kept Lana Luan with him. Pausing at intervals, he stabbed shots, wide and high, to discourage the misguided pursuers.

Those shots were very necessary, when he shoved Lana Luan across an intervening street. She was spotted as she went; but before men could open fire, The Shadow fired from the darkness that the girl had left.

His lagging tactics worked. Lana Luan reached cover. Springing from his own shelter, The Shadow followed recklessly, for he knew that gliding tactics would delay him too long to regain the girl's mad trail.

A hail of bullets accompanied The Shadow's crossing, but his trip was so rapid that he reached cover unscathed. He was outside the area that the Feds had occupied; his present opponents were detectives. They came after him in a cluster.

Of the ardent detectives who spied The Shadow dashing into darkness, none had previously met him. To them, he was simply a fugitive in black. He could have been Marabar Guru, decked out in special garments suited for a flight by night.

Overtaking Lana Luan, The Shadow whirled her on a side trip that formed the final stages of his route. Lighted windows showed above an obscure door. Like a ghostly challenge from the night, The Shadow's laugh produced strident mockery.

That shivering taunt made pursuers stop. They didn't recognize it as a signal, meant for men beyond the lighted windows. The door yanked open as The Shadow neared it, bringing Lana Luan along. With a long, hard swing, The Shadow rocketed the girl into the arms of agents who were waiting within a rear room of the Shantung Garden.

It wouldn't do for the trail to end here. Making for the front street, The Shadow sent back his quivering gibe as a come-on for pursuers. As he crossed the street, uniformed police appeared from the corner, but failed to sight him.

Unfortunately, The Shadow's beckoning laugh brought others. Like the law, Shiwan Khan had posted a reserve crew in this terrain. A lumbering truck was swinging in from the opposite direction; its occupants spied The Shadow, thanks to the chance veer of the headlights. They also recognized his laugh.

Four huge Mongols, of the sort that Shiwan Khan had brought on earlier expeditions, were the men who formed the truck crew. But their advantage over The Shadow was discounted by a handicap of their own. Arriving police had failed to spy The Shadow, but they couldn't help spotting the Mongols.

Guns delivered an earnest volley. Two of the Mongols hit the sidewalk. A third, ducking, behind the truck, would have gotten clear and gone after The Shadow if it hadn't been for the new doorman from the Shantung Garden.

His uniform flashing as gaudily as his grin, Jericho overtook the servant of Shiwan Khan, who turned to meet him. African and Mongol locked behind the truck. Giants both, their struggle threatened to be titanic. It could have lasted long had they been content to grapple.

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But both wanted quick results and the Mongol thought himself equipped to get them. With one huge hand, he yanked a knife that had the look of a short, curved sword. He was handy with that weapon, as he slashed its edge toward Jericho, but he lacked the quick skill of the naljorpas.

The Mongol wasn't fast enough for Jericho. With one big fist, the African clamped his foe's descending arm. He let the Mongol's other hand reach his throat, for it wasn't going to stay there. Jericho had a free hand of his own and a chance to shove it across the fist that tried to throttle him.

Coming like a sledge hammer, Jericho's big fist met the Mongol's ugly face. The blow struck with a sickening crunch as it hooked up beneath the Mongol's huge jaw. It took the killer's feet from under him, carried him across the back of the truck, where he balanced limply, then pitched headfirst to the curb. There was another crack as the Mongol's skull met the cement.

JERICHO was past the truck, while the police were pouncing on the wounded pair that they had downed with bullets.

In darkness just beyond the sidewalk, the arriving African saw the weaving, lunging shoulders of another Mongol. The last of the four was struggling with an opponent who could only be The Shadow.

A gun spoke, muffled, before Jericho could reach the fray. The big doorman saw the Mongol sprawl; knew that The Shadow had downed him with a last bullet. The Shadow was gone when Jericho reached the slumped figure of the final Mongol.

Ahead, Jericho saw a glowing flashlight; he made out two figures, saw the glitter of guns that the men held. They were detectives, in from another street. They had heard The Shadow's final gunshot. They were probing a basement entrance, where someone had taken refuge.

"We got you covered," one gruffed. "Come out with your hands up! Five seconds, and we fire!"

There wasn't a stir from the darkness. Guns aimed toward the space. Intent upon taking their prisoner, the dicks didn't hear the surprisingly soft-footed approach of a very bulky figure. They knew of Jericho's arrival when a pair of hamlike hands clamped on their necks.

Yanked upward, the detectives fired in air. His big hands gripping tight, Jericho sideswiped two heads in a very gentle fashion – for Jericho. He let the detectives drop, with their clattering guns and flashlight. Stooping into the darkness, Jericho lifted the groggy figure of The Shadow, weak from the choking tactics of the Mongol whom he had finally overcome.

A cab had wheeled up opposite the Shantung Garden. Its driver was leaning out, on the street side, talking to the police. Coming from the other side, Jericho opened the door and slid The Shadow into the rear seat. The cabby was Moe Shrevnitz. He heard the door go shut; promptly, he pulled away.

Then Jericho was in sight, beckoning to the police. He pointed to the alley where the groggy detectives lay, past the body of the Mongol.

"Some of them big fellows went right through there," informed Jericho. "One's lyin' in the way, like he was dead, so I didn't want to look no farther. But from some bangin' I heard goin' on, it's likely they run into somebody comin' from the other way."

Investigating, the officers found the two detectives, who swore that each had been grabbed by a separate foe. Their plight was laid to imaginary Mongols. No one thought of blaming Jericho. In fact, he actually received

thanks from the two detectives when they learned that the doorman had reported the scuffle in the alley.

Two blocks away, Moe's cab was stopped by Vic Marquette and Joe Cardona, who had joined forces. They were the very men that Moe was looking for.

"I've got a fare in back," Moe told them. "A gang of big guys tried to mob him when he was getting out of the cab. I started up and took him away."

Cardona yanked the door open. Marquette caught the tuxedoed figure that rolled from the cab. Both saw the battle-wearied face of Lamont Cranston when it turned up into the light. But the cab showed no signs of a hat or cloak. The Shadow had tucked those garments out of sight.

Cranston's story was a simple one. He had received a message at the club asking him to join the raiders. Supposedly from Commissioner Weston, the word must have come from Shivan Khan. Fortunately, Cranston had shaken loose of the crew that grabbed him when he reached the appointed destination.

Wearily, The Shadow let them help him back into the cab. As Moe drove away, he caught the echoes of a whispered laugh, and understood. Again, The Shadow had preserved his dual identity; but that was not all.

Far from being duped by Shivan Khan, The Shadow had completed his own scheme to trick the Golden Master!

CHAPTER XIII. WITHIN THE LAIR

"My name is Lana Luan –"

Beatrice Chadbury was repeating the singsong formula to a sympathetic listener. Whisked to safety by The Shadow's agents, she had eventually found herself in a secluded room of the Shantung Garden, alone with a girl who looked more Chinese than she did.

"I am Ming Dwan." With that reply, Myra Reldon went into a volley of rapid Chinese that Lana Luan did not understand. Finally reverting to English, she added quaintly: "You do not understand our native tongue?"

Lana Luan seemed to understand nothing.

She was groping, seeking thoughts. Her eyes held their faraway look. Ming Dwan produced a small bottle of perfume, spilled a few drops upon a table cloth. The scent of lilacs became apparent in the room.

There was a brightening of Lana Luan's eyes. The pleasing aroma brought the thoughts she wanted.

"Yes!" Her tone was breathless; her gaze indicated the presence of an invisible listener. "I am safe... Yes... The message was delivered... I can return –"

Catching some mental answer to her statements, Lana Luan walked stolidly toward the door. She was wrapping her bedraggled cape tightly, indicating that she was going outside. She found her path blocked by Ming Dwan.

"It will not be safe," the other girl told her. "You must trust me, Lana Luan."

The suggestion was a timely one. Having caught the instructions of Shivan Khan, Lana Luan was working

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toward one purpose – her return to the Golden Master's lair. Anyone who offered to help her gain that goal would be welcome.

Pausing, Lana Luan let Ming Dwan lead the way.

Men waited below. At a nod from Ming Dwan, they opened the door and let her guide Lana Luan farther. As soon as the two had turned the nearest corner, the men were in action.

There were three of them, who had dined at the Shantung Garden: Harry Vincent, a youthful chap, but a veteran in The Shadow's service, Clyde Burke, a newspaper reporter, who also worked for The Shadow; Cliff Marsland, who covered the badlands for his chief.

Of the three, Cliff was the least presentable, for he had a toughened look that he had acquired by habit. But when he left the confines of the underworld, Cliff shaved his face and smoothed his manner. By rights a gentleman, he could pass muster in respectable company.

Leaving the restaurant, The Shadow's aids took separate routes, all checking to make sure that no police were close. Smoke had replaced flames above Selsby's house; the neighborhood was filled with the shrieks of fire sirens. Busy with gathering crowds, the police were helping the firemen and had little chance for anything else.

Satisfied that the trail would be theirs alone, the agents converged at a spot where a wizened man beckoned. He was Hawkeye, a clever trailer who helped Cliff patrol the badlands. He couldn't have passed as a patron of the Shantung Garden.

Trusting to Ming Dwan's guidance, Lana Luan was moving much slower than usual, largely because Ming Dwan was lagging, to let the agents come along the trail. At the same time, Ming Dwan was in a quandary, for she hadn't an idea as to where her companion intended to go.

It was a case of letting Lana Luan lead the way, restraining her as if on leash. At times, she had to be held back; there were other occasions when it was necessary to turn her along another course in order to avoid patrol cars.

Always, however, Lana Luan bore back to her original direction as though tugged by some magnetic force.

THEY reached a corner some six blocks from the Shantung Garden. A cab was waiting there; its driver sat low, a muffling-collar around his chin.

Ming Dwan noted that his shoulders were high, despite his posture. She caught a chance glimpse of his face, saw that it was yellowish.

The cab driver was another of Shiwan Khan's Mongol servants. The Golden Master wasn't trusting Lana Luan to an ordinary cab, after tonight's adventure.

The Mongol noted Ming Dwan. Classing her as Chinese, he made no objection when she entered the cab with Lana Luan. Soon the cab was bound on a roundabout journey in the general direction of Chinatown.

Other cars trailed it, but not too closely. Ming Dwan had signaled back to be careful the moment that she saw the Mongol driver, for she knew that he would be alert. Hawkeye spied the signal, passed it along to the others. They acted accordingly.

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Near Chinatown, the Mongol-driven cab disappeared. It was lost somewhere among the narrow streets outside the area where Dr. Tam's watchers would have surely spotted it. The best The Shadow's agents could do was identify an area of about eight square blocks, wherein the Mongol must have delivered Lana Luan and Ming Dwan.

They reported it directly to The Shadow, for Moe's cab had been reached through Burbank and had come in to follow the trail. But ill luck had it that The Shadow should arrive just after the Mongol had given his agents the slip.

Meanwhile, the Mongol dropped his passengers at a building entry, and Lana Luan advanced so eagerly that Ming Dwan was forced to follow along to avoid suspicion.

The entry had a grilled gate, and there was a clever trick to it. Normally, it opened by a heavy latch, allowing entrance to the squarish vestibule of an old brick residence. But Lana Luan did not touch the latch; she pressed a hinge instead.

With the latch serving as a hinge, the door swung in the wrong direction, pushing the vestibule wall when it arrived there. Through that opening, the girls descended hidden steps; both the wall and the big gate swung back to their original positions as soon as the pair had passed.

After a rapid trip through maze-like passages, they reached Lana Luan's boudoir. By then, Ming Dwan had lost all sense of direction, but she was sure that they were near the heart of Chinatown; moreover, she noted many other burrows that might reach various exits from this hidden realm.

Fresh lilacs were in a vase on Lana Luan's table. Closing her eyes, Lana Luan must have heard a voice that said "Come!" for Ming Dwan sensed the same impression. She followed Lana Luan alone the passage to the golden room.

Entering, Ming Dwan felt a peculiar dizziness, which lessened as she sank beside Lana Luan in front of the golden throne.

There, she saw Shiwan Khan. Through slitted eyelids, the Golden One surveyed this stranger that Lana Luan had brought back. After a few words with Lana Luan, he dismissed her, then concentrated upon Ming Dwan. He wanted to hear her story. In bell-like tone he commanded, in English:

"Relate how you came here."

Ming Dwan poured out the tale in voluble Chinese. She said that she worked at the Shantung Garden; how, tonight, there had been shooting and Lana Luan had stumbled into the rear of the restaurant. Taking Lana Luan to be Chinese, like herself, Ming Dwan had befriended her.

The subsequent adventure actually intrigued Ming Dwan; she seemed to trust Shiwan Khan rather than fear him. In fact, there was a point on which she felt that he should be informed. It concerned Lana Luan.

"She is not of China," said Ming Dwan, very simply. "I learned that soon after I met her. It is strange that you should have chosen her for some important purpose."

"Why strange?" came the discordant query.

"Because she could be traced here," replied Ming Dwan. "There are many meddlers in Chinatown, who would suspect her as soon as they saw her."

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By "meddlers," Ming Dwan could only refer to Dr. Tam's men, which indicated that she disliked that faction. Shiwan Khan scrutinized the dark-haired girl, noted the smooth shade of her complexion.

"Perhaps you have heard of me," he said, dryly. "I am called Shiwan Khan."

MING DWAN'S eyes opened as wide as the hidden strips of tape could allow them, which was not very wide. Her expression registered true Chinese admiration.

"I might need another messenger," continued Shiwan Khan, his tone as tinkly as music. "Should you choose such service, Ming Dwan, I shall reward you. I shall take you to China, and beyond – to the famed city– of Xanadu, where my power is absolute!"

The eagerness of Ming Dwan's expression, her ardent sigh, were evidence that she had accepted the choice. Shiwan Khan smiled blandly. Though Ming Dwan apparently did not know it, she had made the only choice. Strangers never came to this domain and went away again. Once here, they had to recognize Shiwan Khan as master.

Stepping down from his golden throne, Shiwan Khan extended a long hand and helped the kneeling girl to her feet. Then, in the subtle fashion that had caused many followers to term him the "Unfathomable," Shiwan Khan put Ming Dwan to the test.

In rising, the girl felt dizziness return. She swayed; to catch her, Shiwan Khan plucked the low collar of her silken jacket. As if by accident, his long nails tore the cloth, ripped it deftly from shoulder to hip.

Caught by the Golden Master's other hand, Ming Dwan couldn't seem to gather the torn portions of the jacket. Shiwan Khan's sharp eye scrutinized the girl's bared side, saw that its yellowish hue did not blend into white.

Then, spinning Ming Dwan about, Shiwan Khan held her balanced by both elbows, while his slitted eyes met hers. Under the spell of those greenish orbs, Ming Dwan felt that the golden room had melted. She was in vast space, it seemed, oblivious of all except that hypnotic gaze.

Shiwan Khan was asking questions in Chinese, using, his icy tone. Ming Dwan was answering them in the same language; but soon their voices spoke no more. This wasn't ordinary hypnotism that Shiwan Khan was using. He was exerting a mesmeric influence through the sheer force of his giant will.

Their thoughts were tuned. In this state, telepathic messages could flash between them. Shiwan Khan still held the mastery, for he was acting in accordance with design. He was asking questions mentally, not verbally, but Ming Dwan still fancied that she heard icy, spoken words.

Literally, Shiwan Khan was probing the brain of Ming Dwan. He was putting questions about China, all in a fashion peculiar to the Chinese, and he was analyzing Ming Dwan's mental responses. The Shadow had foreseen this grueling test, had known that Ming Dwan would meet it.

For Myra Reldon, when she played the part of Ming Dwan, could carry it to absolute perfection. Her thoughts, like her speech, were in Chinese, the language which she had learned in childhood!

His probe ended, Shiwan Khan spoke aloud, giving commands in the Chinese tongue. He told Ming Dwan that she would obey his dictates; in a far-away tone, the girl agreed. Guiding her to the golden door, Shiwan Khan slid the barrier aside and pointed Ming Dwan along the passage.

Rigid, fixed of gaze, arms straight downward, Ming Dwan walked away in the mechanical fashion of Lana Luan. The ruined jacket, draped from one shoulder, revealed the girl's entire back. Again, Shiwan Khan was deceived by the perfect yellow dye that showed no splotches, no trace of white beneath.

Shiwan Khan had obtained another messenger, one who could carry his gift caskets more safely than Lana Luan. His jangling laugh, the smiling twist of his brownish, slitted lips, told that he was thanking the demons of the bardo for bringing Ming Dwan to him.

This was one instance wherein Shiwan Khan was mistaken. Real, or imaginary, the bardo dwellers deserved no credit for the arrival of Ming Dwan.

Shiwan Khan owed thanks to his archfoe, The Shadow!

CHAPTER XIV. THE DOUBLE TRAIL

DURING the next few days the public, like the law, was stirred to a feverish pitch. The truth was out – somewhere in New York there dwelt a superfiend named Shiwan Khan, who, by strokes of Oriental wizardry, could pluck helpless people out of safe places and put them nowhere.

He had done just that with Hiram Selsby, the famous chemist. The case was far more dramatic than the disappearance of the inventor, Ralph Fayden, and the evanishment of several dozen others. A search of the ruined house where Selsby had dwelt incognito revealed no traces of the missing chemist, or Marabar Guru, who had vanished quite as completely.

The authorities did not find the tiny elevator, flattened beneath a mass of wreckage, its cables melted from the heat.

Gone, too, was a narrow tunnel that led from Selsby's house to an outlet across the street. Marabar Guru had led Selsby beyond the closing circle of Feds and through the ranks of the police before the latter could tighten their net.

One body was found in the ruins – that of the naljorpa, who had failed to knife The Shadow. Others of the skeleton men had been picked up nearby; and the fact that such strange creatures were roving New York was startling in itself. Quite a few of them were still at large, the Feds and police admitted.

Besides, there were the Mongols. Identified with Shiwan Khan on his previous excursions to America, those giant fighters were another proof that the insidious master was at work.

Nobody guessed that The Shadow had been the main factor in the whole case – not even Marquette, or Cardona. In fact, they rather doubted that The Shadow had been around at all. Reports had it that a man in black had tiffed with Feds and police; but that didn't suit The Shadow's style.

The authorities considered The Shadow's part as no more spectacular than that of Lamont Cranston, who had also come and gone from the scene. As for Lana Luan, she was scarcely remembered, in view of all the other things that happened, while Ming Dwan hadn't appeared in the picture at all.

Such a set-up suited The Shadow.

The black-cloaked investigator and his agents were busy patrolling the sector outside of Chinatown, where the Mongol had delivered Lana Luan and Ming Dwan. The cab had been traced, but it offered no clue. It was

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found in – of all places – the garage where Dr. Tam stored his relics of fading Chinese superstitions.

A subtle touch of Shiwan Khan's genius, to have the cab left there. The garage was deserted; it had been easy for the Mongol to wheel the cab into the place, and make a later departure. But Tam wasn't going to be fooled again. He had put men in the old garage, hoping that some of Shiwan Khan's Mongols would return.

So far, none had appeared.

However, The Shadow was counting upon Ming Dwan appearing very soon, because he knew that Shiwan Khan must have other missions requiring a messenger.

AGAIN, The Shadow had guessed it right. On this night, Shiwan Khan was ready for another move. He was lounging on his golden throne, watching curls of blackish smoke that rose from a dragon-headed incense burner.

The smoke produced a dull, heavy aroma. Shiwan Khan took on a state of deep contemplation. His greenish eyes gained a fixed sparkle; the odd twist of his lips told that he was holding mental conversation with some distant person.

At last, the Golden Master spoke aloud:

"Be ready!" The words were sharp and clear. "My messenger will arrive tonight... Within the hour... You will receive the reward that you, alone, have visioned –"

His trance ended, Shiwan Khan poured sand over the burning powder. The door slid open, at his pressure of some hidden switch.

Two naljorpas entered; their leers showed that they deemed it a privilege to be picked for a dangerous task. Shiwan Khan addressed them in a curious jargon.

"I am sending the new messenger," he declared. "Her name is Ming Dwan. She will be constantly under my influence, but I want you to follow her and see that no one interrupts her journey."

The naljorpas babbled their readiness.

"You are delogs," reminded Shiwan Khan. "What is death" – his tone was contemptuous – "to those who have already visited the bardo? Remember Kushod, Ramjan, and the others. They have gone beyond sorrows. Be prepared to join them."

Happy at the thought of possible death, the spidery naljorpas retired, approaching the door in the peculiar sidelong fashion they always used when they left the Golden Master's presence.

Bringing a bunch of poppies from the taboret, Shiwan Khan drew a deep breath of their aroma and spoke a musical word:

"Come!"

Soon, Ming Dwan entered, staring straight ahead. She seemed to lean toward the golden throne as she steadily approached it. There had been poppies in her room, too, but she had not brought them along. Plucking a few of the flowers from his own bouquet, Shiwan Khan worked them into strands of the girl's thick, jet-black hair.

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They went with the new costume that Ming Dwan was wearing, its dark jacket a mass of poppies, all deep in hue.

From the taboret Shiwan Khan brought a sealed casket, of the same ivory pattern that he had used before. Giving it to Ming Dwan, he pointed to the doorway. The girl turned and departed, her shoulders bent forward, her eyes fixed on the casket.

On the way, Ming Dwan stopped to put on a cape like the one that Lana Luan had used. Continuing, she was trailed by the slinky naljorpas. Out through the labyrinth of passages, Ming Dwan took the route to the remote exit, which would keep her clear of Chinatown.

It was Cliff Marsland who heard the soft clang of a metal gate across the street from where he was posted. To his astonishment, Cliff sighted the grille swinging in the wrong direction. Drawing closer, he noted the girl who appeared, but could not tell whether she was Lana Luan or Ming Dwan.

She came in Cliff's direction; he drew back. About to follow her, Cliff felt a slight creep of numbness in one arm. He was quick-witted enough to realize that he was within the paralyzing range of a naljorpa. Wisely, he dropped back.

Slinky figures passed, evasive in the gloom. Cliff felt the numbness go. Easing from cover, he shambled in the opposite direction making no effort to avoid the light. Cliff hadn't shaved since the night at the Shantung Garden. Street lamps showed him as a shabby bum, evidently making the rounds of the grogshops, judging from his tipsy condition.

He was the very sort of character to be found along these streets. He hoped that the naljorpas wouldn't waste knife thrusts on such a type, particularly so close to their secret entryway. Cliff's hope was realized; the killers, when they spied him, decided to let him stagger along his way.

AROUND the corner, Cliff's reeling pace ended. Straightening, he reached a doorway, blinked a flashlight signal. It was passed along by Hawkeye, who was on the rove. From then on, everything clicked.

A cab appeared suddenly in the next block, just before Ming Dwan arrived there. She had instructions to take a cab, but the naljorpas wanted to look it over first. Sidling ahead, they reared up like venomous cobras, to peer into the windows.

The sleepy-looking driver could sense that they were present, for he could feel an encroaching numbness in his arms and legs. Then the sensation dwindled; the naljorpas were gone, and Ming Dwan was in the cab. The girl spoke a mechanical order, the cab started eastward.

Two blocks away, it reversed its course, pulled along a street where the driver caught the glow of a flashlight that glimmered red, then green. The cabby was Moe Shrevnitz; merely slackening, not stopping, he picked up a passenger: The Shadow.

Ming Dwan heard whispered words, but gave them no attention. She gripped the ivory casket firmly, angrily, as a gloved hand touched it. Then, seeing the poppies that adorned the girl's hair, The Shadow drew them away instead. Ming Dwan relaxed.

She answered questions that The Shadow put in Chinese, preferring to use that language. But her words were slow, hesitant, as though she could remember very little. Shiwan Khan's influence had obliterated her memory, as with Lana Luan.

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The fact pleased The Shadow. Since Ming Dwan had forgotten that she ever had been Myra Reldon, her security would be complete. He could rely upon Cliff to point out the return path to Shiwan Khan's domain.

Knowing that the naljorpas were off the trail by this time, The Shadow ordered Moe to make another detour. During it, The Shadow blinked a green light.

When the cab reached the destination ordered by Ming Dwan, a coupe rolled up behind it, with Harry Vincent at the wheel. Ming Dwan alighted; Harry joined The Shadow in the cab.

They watched Ming Dwan's course; it was easy to trace. The cab was at the water front; the girl was descending steps to a low dock.

Below bobbed the lights of a little launch, and Ming Dwan wasn't the only person who was going on the motorboat. A few others were coming up, persons who moved with slow, mechanical stride. The Shadow whispered who they were.

"Dupes, like Fayden and Selsby," he told Harry. "Probably the last of the lot. The trail is yours; take it, and have this ready."

Into Harry's hand The Shadow pressed the kavacha talisman, that silver token that had served so well at Selsby's. Stepping from the cab, Harry heard it pull away, knew that The Shadow was returning to seek Shiwan Khan.

Ming Dwan had produced exactly what The Shadow wanted – a double trail that led to dupes as well as to master; a trail that gave a twofold chance of ending Shiwan Khan's evil rule!

CHAPTER XV. ONE MAN'S PRICE

ON the trim gray launch, Harry Vincent found half a dozen passengers whose eyes had fixed looks of rapture. They were not like Ming Dwan, whose gaze indicated the complete control by another brain.

These were persons who were looking forward to some beautiful dream of the future, living their own thoughts, but under the baleful inspiration created in the past.

Harry recognized one as a midwest manufacturer who had turned out not to be in Europe. He saw a dazzling, well-gowned blonde across the way and promptly identified her as one of the missing movie stars. The others, of course, were various dupes, all of whom had listened to the mystic voice of Shiwan Khan.

The launch crew consisted of two sturdy men who had dream looks of their own. Lurking in the background was a Mongol, apparently ready to take over if either man came out of his happy trance. Certainly no boatload of passengers had ever rivaled this group. To Harry, it was a nightmarish scene, of which he could scarcely believe himself to be a part.

A motor was throbbing, but the launch didn't start. Harry supposed that new passengers would arrive; and they did, ten minutes later. But they weren't dupes, they were naljorpas, two of them. Harry knew that they must be the pair who had followed Ming Dwan to the cab.

At ease among this boatload, the naljorpas exerted none of their attacking power. They simply crouched among the passengers and grinned, as the launch shoved off. They didn't have to behave like electric eels in such a company, and they were pleased – if a naljorpa could experience pleasure – because Ming Dwan was

on board.

The boat was proceeding northward with rhythmic smoothness. Following, the channel of the East River, it passed police boats on the way. None made an effort to stop the launch. It struck Harry instantly that the craft must be too well known to be under suspicion.

Who was its real owner?

That question was answered after the launch had passed beneath great bridges and was nearing Long Island Sound. A well-lighted yacht hove into sight; it was a sleek, streamlined vessel of modern build. Harry remembered it from a photograph that he had seen a few months before.

It was the Nautilus, the million-dollar craft owned by a wealthy man named Felix Bryson, who wasn't listed among the missing persons sought. Bryson lived on the yacht, but frequently came ashore, and recently he had announced that he was going on a cruise, taking a party of his friends.

Those "friends" were the dupes of Shiwon Khan!

Again, master strategy was evident. Shiwon Khan had picked Felix Bryson as a special brand of dupe; one who could stay in circulation and would also offer the most select of hideaways for the rest. This trail was everything that The Shadow had desired, and Harry felt exuberant.

He wasn't going to find a few isolated victims gathered in by Shiwon Khan. Harry would soon be viewing the entire lot, all in one place where they could be rescued at a single stroke. But such a deed would require The Shadow.

Realizing his own position, Harry knew that his one task was to keep himself unsuspected.

THE test came when the launch reached the yacht. The passengers began to ascend the steps that were lowered from the yacht's side. Harry let others go first, and watched what happened. They were showing talismans to some one on the deck.

Clutching the kavacha token, Harry followed, remembering to keep his eyes set straight ahead and a raptured grin upon his lips. From the corner of his eye, he saw a brownish man who wore a purple tunic and a diamond starred turban; knew that it must be Marabar Guru.

Opening his hand, Harry showed the kavacha. He was allowed to pass when Marabar Guru saw the insignia on the silver disk. Fortunately, the guru did not know everything. He was acquainted with some of Shiwon Khan's dupes, but not with all. Tokens were sufficient with those that he did not recognize.

Newly arrived passengers were spreading along the decks like normal individuals bound on a cruise. Harry strolled a short way, then turned about and saw Ming Dwan come aboard.

With a bow, the guru conducted Ming Dwan toward a flight of steps.

Harry played a hunch, and followed.

He saw them reach an open door. Marabar Guru bowed Ming Dwan across the threshold, then entered himself. Harry found a vantage spot from which he could see what happened within. Marabar Guru had not closed the door, for he suspected no spies on board the yacht.

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At a desk, Felix Bryson was rising to greet Ming Dwan. A portly, smiling man, Bryson looked quite unlike the other dupes; it was plain that he had not yet accepted the full sway of Shivan Khan.

The attitude of Marabar Guru added proof to Harry's conclusion. The guru actually showed anxiety as he watched Ming Dwan give the casket to Bryson. Since Marabar Guru was fully concentrated on the scene at the desk, Harry felt it safe to draw closer.

Examining the casket's seal, Bryson laid the ivory box aside. Folding his arms, he looked at Marabar Guru and chuckled. Serious, the Hindu lighted a small incense burner that stood upon the desk; Bryson gave an approving nod.

"I am willing to communicate with Shivan Khan," he said "His previous messages have interested me immensely. I believe his story of a fabulous city called Xanadu, founded by his illustrious ancestor, Kubla Khan."

"There is such a city," assured Marabar Guru, in an impressive tone. "I have seen it!"

"We agree then," continued Bryson. "But I still have certain doubts. Once, Shivan Khan considered schemes of world conquest –"

"Those contemplations have ended," put in the guru. "He is no longer Shivan Khan. He is Shivan Tulku."

"So he says," conceded Bryson, "and knowing the subtle ways of the Orient, I am willing to grant that such could be. Shivan Khan has given me visions of a happy land, where many of us can dwell in peace and contemplation – a perfect race.

"But there is a chance" – Bryson wagged a chunky finger – "that the tulku may again become a khan. He says that such will not happen, and bases it on the claim that his mind is all-knowing. When I proposed a test, he agreed. The answer lies within this casket."

Harry began to understand the reason why Marabar Guru was uneasy. Leaning toward the casket, Bryson pressed his fingers upon the seal and turned his eyes upon the guru.

"I warn you, guru!" affirmed Bryson. "I am still master here. If the test fails, I shall inform the authorities that all missing persons are on this yacht! Only if the test succeeds, will I acknowledge Shivan Khan to be the unfathomable being that he claims."

Bryson drew a revolver from the desk drawer, laid it in readiness, in case the guru made trouble. Harry slid an automatic from his pocket. He, too, would be ready.

"An interesting test," declared Bryson, his fingers loosening the seal. "Shivan Khan gave jade to Fayden, Bronzium to Selsby. Others, I understand, wanted jewels; one man even asked for rare butterflies."

"All received what they requested," reminded Marabar Guru. "Shivan Khan can supply what every man desires."

"But in my case," chuckled Bryson, "Shivan Khan has not been told what the desire is. I have wealth; I am interested in many things. The master brain of Shivan Khan must first have met the test; he must be able to divine what I want beyond all else. Unless this casket contains it –"

Bryson did not repeat his former threat to the guru. Instead, he broke the seal and raised the casket lid. He turned the ivory box into the light, so that Marabar Guru could see its interior.

Harry saw the guru flinch; a moment later, the casket was turned in his own direction and Harry understood.

The ivory box was empty!

THE guru looked stunned. He stared helplessly as Bryson lifted the revolver. Then, at the very moment when Harry expected real results, Bryson let the weapon drop back into its drawer.

"Shiwan Khan knows all!" affirmed Bryson, in an awed tone. "He knows that I no longer care for wealth, or material things; that my one desire is the higher understanding that only the mind can give. He, Shiwan Khan, has recognized my unspoken request, by sending me an empty casket!"

Marabar Guru leaned forward, eagerly. His move was unnecessary, for Bryson's eyes had already taken on a fixed, distant gaze. The room was filled with the heavy aroma of the incense; Bryson's thoughts had tuned in with those of Shiwan Khan.

"I hear you, Shiwan Khan," spoke Bryson. "I acknowledge you as tulku. Those material belongings for which I have no love are yours. But they are too puny for one of your great mind. I am thankful only that I can be of service to your vast plan for the future.

"This yacht, worthless though it is, has value because it can convey us over the first stage of our journey to Xanadu. Those who have joined me are willing to accompany you. I, too, am willing. We await your arrival, Shiwan Khan!"

Harry's gun slid back into his pocket. Of all the amazing things that he had witnessed, this scene astonished him most. It meant that Bryson, the one man who could have stopped disaster, had become Shiwan Khan's most ardent ally!

Numbly, Harry drew from the door. Somehow, he found cover before Ming Dwan appeared, followed by Marabar Guru. The girl was going back to Shiwan Khan, probably to take some special message that the elated guru thought should be delivered in person.

They went up the steps. Harry heard Marabar Guru summon the waiting naljorpas. There was a thrum from the departing launch, as it left with Ming Dwan and her bodyguards.

The schemes of Shiwan Khan had reached their zenith. Before this night was over, the Golden Master would be on board the yacht, with all his dupes as passengers, bound upon the promised voyage.

His own position helpless, Harry Vincent knew that only one hope remained:

The Shadow.

CHAPTER XVI. WORD FROM BELOW

DEEP in Shiwan Khan's domain, The Shadow was completing a survey of the labyrinthic passages that gave access to the Golden Master's own headquarters. A gliding shape of blackness, The Shadow had so far escaped the notice of the many eyes that served Shiwan Khan.

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Except for the cluster of rooms near Shiwan Khan's own golden apartment, the extensive premises consisted entirely of narrow passages, many of them so deeply buried that it did not seem surprising that Dr. Tam's searchers had failed to trace them.

Many of the passages were tricky; they could be cut off, like water-tight compartments on a ship. The automatic barriers that The Shadow discovered were all at turns of corridors, or where steps produced new levels. The Shadow could tell that they were camouflaged, those barriers, to give the appearance of closed walls.

Thus, should invaders try to blast their way to the heart of the Golden Master's realm, they would spend most of their time hacking away at the wrong walls.

The only remedy was to chart the passages for future reference, which The Shadow was equipped to do. He knew his starting point: the house with the reversible gate. He had a tiny compass in the bottom of his special flashlight.

Pacing distances as he went along, The Shadow mapped out an accurate diagram, indicating the turns and changes of level.

Always, he was cautious, studying the route ahead before measuring it. Cautious, too, because of the eyes that he knew were present. Sometimes The Shadow spied the owners of such eyes: slinky naljorpas, who were moving from place to place.

At other intervals, patrolling Mongols passed.

During the course of his accurate, but rapid, investigation The Shadow discovered outlets other than the one Ming Dwan had used. He didn't test those outlets; he simply identified them by the fact that certain passages ended at blank walls, which had the look of camouflaged barriers.

All these exits were within the bounds of Chinatown, which meant that they were being reserved for emergency use. Shiwan Khan was wise enough to know that Dr. Tam had men on duty throughout the Chinese quarter. In fact, from the look of certain exits, The Shadow decided that they might be permanently closed.

One isolated passage was of peculiar interest. From its direction, The Shadow knew that it must be the way by which Beatrice Chadbury had originally entered, for it led toward Loo Dow's abandoned opium den and ended in a brick wall.

Removing a black glove, The Shadow let his fingers run along the brick edges; from this inside vantage point, he was able to trace what Tam's men had not observed from outside; namely, that the bricks themselves were a portion of a dog-toothed sliding wall. Beatrice's amazing disappearance was explained.

HIS map complete, The Shadow moved toward the heart of the premises. From convenient lurking spots, which Shiwan Khan had designed for his naljorpas, The Shadow studied the route ahead and advanced by degrees.

Passing an open door, he saw a small boudoir, knew that it must be Ming Dwan's. Opposite was another room, its door closed; The Shadow felt sure that it was the apartment of Lana Luan.

Then The Shadow's keen gaze was attracted by the golden door that meant the throne room of Shiwan Khan.

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Knowing the tricky ways of the Golden Master, The Shadow did not attempt to pass that barrier. He could picture the interior – a room with golden walls, like one that Shiwan Khan had used on a previous sojourn in New York.

The former room had been designed to crash apart at the stroke of a great brazen gong – a trick of Shiwan Khan's to ensnare others, while he made his own escape. It was wise, therefore, to study the passages around this new throne room before attempting to beard the Golden Master in his lair.

There were passages that ran outside the throne room, and some of them had steps. Making a separate diagram, The Shadow was able to draw an outline of the cubicle itself. He found steps that crossed above it; they were built on solid brick.

Descending, The Shadow came to a damp, low-built tunnel that seemed like an oversized drain pipe. It ran directly beneath the golden room, showing no outlet below. His diagram complete, The Shadow was quite sure that the throne room had no outlet except its golden door.

In fact, the cubicle was situated completely within thick walls of solid brick, its floor reinforced by concrete at ground level. Confident that his domain could never be invaded, Shiwan Khan had made no arrangement for secret exits from the throne room itself. Boxed inside that chamber, he could certainly be trapped.

A whispered laugh shuddered through the damp tunnel, confined to that space alone. All was in accord with the Shadow's plans. He was considering a surprise stroke that had not occurred to Harry Vincent, the agent who had gone on board the Nautilus.

Thinking in terms of the double trail, Harry supposed that The Shadow would let Shiwan Khan reach the yacht and attack the Golden Master there. But The Shadow had a better plan; it was to trap Shiwan Khan in his own headquarters, to prevent him from ever reaching the ship that had a passenger list of dupes.

To complete his map of the underground realm, The Shadow made a quick trip through the tunnel. He found a long passage that ended in a fair-sized stone-walled storeroom. In one corner were stacks of teakwood boxes, beside a mammoth iron chest.

Some boxes contained costumes, beautiful robes of rare silk, many woven of a golden cloth. In others, The Shadow found odd curios: heavy statuettes, bronze vases, objects of hand-carved ivory, including boxes of the sort that Shiwan Khan's messengers delivered.

There wasn't time to open the great iron chest, which stood five feet high in its corner, for it was solidly locked. Besides, The Shadow knew what its contents probably were: spare munitions and weapons that Shiwan Khan kept for his fighting men.

Leaving the cul-de-sac, The Shadow returned to a higher level. Following his own chart, he picked a zigzag course that led him back to the lone passage which ran beyond the limits of Chinatown.

Pressing the tricky wall, The Shadow brought it inward, the closed gate with it. After peering from the house entry, he gave a signal with his flashlight.

Hawkeye arrived. To the little spotter The Shadow gave the diagram of the underground realm, and added complete instructions. Hawkeye sidled away; The Shadow stepped back into the entry. Descending the steps to the underground passage, he pressed the lever that swung the gate and wall back into place.

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AGAIN The Shadow was making a rapid journey to the heart of Shiwan Khan's great burrow. Reaching the door of Lana Luan's room, he opened it softly and entered.

Lana Luan was reclining on cushions in the corner. Hearing the door close, she came to her feet, gave The Shadow a fixed stare.

Approaching, The Shadow drew a small vial from his cloak, uncorked it and extended it toward the girl's face. The strong smell of collodion penetrated the room. The banana odor of the liquid smothered the lighter perfume of lilacs.

The girl's eyes remained fixed, but her lips were hesitant as they spoke the mechanical words:

"I am Lana Luan –"

Light caught the sparkle of The Shadow's eyes. Under that burning gaze, the spell of Shiwan Khan faded. The girl heard a whispered tone that echoed completely through her thoughts:

"You are Beatrice Chadbury!"

"Yes!" – Beatrice's tone had changed; it came breathlessly – "Yes! I remember!"

"Be ready," The Shadow told her. "You will be needed. Should you meet a girl named Ming Dwan, take good care of her. She aided you once; it may soon be your turn to repay her."

Burning eyes were gone; blackness faded past the closing door of the boudoir. But the words that The Shadow had uttered remained paramount in Beatrice's mind. Slowly, she was grasping her actual status, in that room where a sharper odor than lilacs still pervaded.

Elsewhere, Dr. Roy Tam was studying a penciled chart that had been delivered to him, comparing it with a large map of Chinatown. The Chinese physician was in his office, a telephone at hand. He read a message that Hawkeye had also brought him; it was in writing that faded, leaving only The Shadow's silhouette, which also vanished later.

Tam reached for the telephone.

In conference with Commissioner Weston and Inspector Cardona, Vic Marquette was informed that he was wanted on the telephone. He answered the call, heard a voice that spoke in English but with traces of a Chinese accent.

Returning to the grillroom of the Cobalt Club, where the conference was being held, Marquette said:

"Listen to this."

Word for word, he repeated what Tam had told him over the wire. Commissioner Weston sat amazed, scarcely ready to believe. It was Joe Cardona who arose and snapped to Marquette:

"What's holding us? Let's go!"

Through Tam, The Shadow had gained the allies that he wanted. The law was moving in to aid in the trapping of Shiwan Khan!

CHAPTER XVII. THE GREAT DRAGON

CHINATOWN was in the middle of an extended celebration, one that had lasted for several days. That afternoon, an Honorable Lion had danced through the streets, across a hotbed of exploding firecrackers.

Of course, the Honorable Lion was simply a Chinese in an outlandish lion's skin. He was part of a very modern parade that included Chinese boy and girl scouts, along with representatives of other organizations.

In the past, such celebrations were the cause of much apprehension. Usually there were rival lions, favored by different groups, and if the Honorables happened to meet together in one of the narrow streets, plenty of trouble could result.

So, this year, a lone lion had danced amid the beat of drums and the crash of cymbals, to the accompaniment of exploding firecrackers. Tomorrow, another lion was to strut his stuff, while pleased spectators tossed money into outstretched banners that were carried along the street – funds for the relief of homeless folk in China.

Time was when there had been great displays of fireworks, and huge parades of many Chinese masked in fantastic costumes representing devils. Sometimes those costumes had contained paraders who were not thinking in terms of the celebration, but whose desire was to bury the hatchet – in someone else's back.

A newer and more sober spirit had replaced the old and dangerous festivities. Feuds in Chinatown were a thing of the forgotten past. Dr. Tam and his associates had done much to bring about the present sentiment; but there were persons – even among that group – who felt regret at the passing of old traditions.

Every year, Tam was pressed with petitions to restore some of the older customs, the argument being that since feuds were gone, no harm could result. It was well known that Tam had stored away an extensive collection of old costumes; that if he wished, he could put on the greatest show that Chinatown had ever seen.

This evening, the same talk was in the air. It suddenly began to swell, along with the increasing burst of firecrackers. No idle chatter, this time! Dr. Tam had called his friends, to tell them the parade would be in order. Chinatown was united, Dr. Tam believed, and a well-managed celebration would prove it.

Some of Tam's men had gone to the garage, to dig up the old costumes and put them on. Others were along the narrow streets mingling with the expectant throngs, to make sure that all was well. Squads of uniformed police had arrived to rope off the sidewalks. A big event was due; hence such precautions were needed.

Among those who watched these happenings were certain slant-eyed men whose expressions showed a sinister satisfaction. Some were roaming the streets; others gazed from isolated stores. They were residents of Chinatown who had come under the baleful influence of Shiwon Khan.

The Golden Master had his spy service throughout the district. Silent men, very careful of their actions, they had reported everything to Shiwon Khan. They knew all about the futile search that Tam's workers had made near Loo Dow's. In tonight's celebration the spies saw a desperate effort on the part of Dr. Tam, as ridiculous as it was futile.

Apparently, Tam was trying to win the good will of certain Chinese who did not approve his newfangled notions. With such men as his friends, Tam probably supposed that he would eventually gain some lead to Shiwon Khan. But such was entirely impossible.

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Shiwan Khan's spies formed a select and secret society of their own, who never talked to anyone outside the ring. In addition, they believed that Tam's heroic efforts were hopelessly belated. By tomorrow, so these spies understood, Shiwan Khan and his cortege would be gone from America.

CHINATOWN, as a whole, was ignorant of Shiwan Khan's presence. All other matters, small and large, were forgotten when a distant shout told that the parade was coming in from the outskirts.

The wave of acclaim swept along the narrow, crooked streets; then, to the smash of drums and cymbals, the paraders came in sight.

They were led by a group of grotesque demons and hobgoblins: Chinese dressed in trailing, fanciful robes, wearing big masks that covered their entire heads. The masks, themselves, were remarkable contrivances; they had bulging eyes that rolled when actuated by hidden strings.

As they advanced, the mummers sped pace as though pressed by others in the rear. They were dancing, circling along the street, making grimaces with the mechanical faces. From their robes they were chucking firecrackers to encourage similar action from the sidewalk throngs.

The whole street was crackling with such salutes, while the gleeful crowds shrieked applause. It was a merry occasion, one that modern Chinatown did not take too seriously, yet enjoyed to the full. These rampant hobgoblins, so long in storage, were much more entertaining than the Honorable Lions who had paraded earlier.

Then arose a shout that made the windows clatter all along the streets. It was a tidal wave of human voices, shrilled to the highest possible pitch.

The Great Dragon had appeared!

It was weaving along the street, the greatest dragon of them all. It had a great head that snorted fire through its huge nostrils; a head so great that it took five men to carry it. Behind the head came the undulating body, twisting like a mighty sea serpent, a hundred men within its silken coils.

Despite its ancient origin, the dragon gave a streamlined effect that was distinctly modern. It was a monster in reality, for the cloth that covered its articulated framework was too thick for anyone to see the men within it; and its flanks had trailing drapes that swept the street, hiding the many feet beneath.

Observers would have been surprised had they known that Dr. Tan was the front man in the dragon's head. While others were shooting smoke and flame through the great nostrils, Tam was looking through peepholes beneath the dragon's lower jaw, picking the exact route that he wanted.

The dragon began to zigzag. Its serpentine course carried it toward one sidewalk, where laughing, screaming spectators spread apart to let it pass.

Darting across the street, it made for an opposite wall, while its long flank actually grazed the building wall on the side that it had left. Scattering persons vacated doorways, giving the dragon more room as it came along.

Never had the Great Dragon performed more capably than tonight. Its head rounded a corner, counting upon the body and tail to follow, which they did. But the observers, interested chiefly in the fire-breathing head, failed to see what took place amid the dragon's coils.

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As the flank swept a doorway where a droopy-faced Chinaman was standing in his shop, it disgorged four men, who came rapidly from beneath its folds. Stooped low, they drove into the doorway, bowling the astonished Chinese merchant ahead of them.

THEY were Americans, those invaders, and they flashed badges in the face of the amazed merchant. Recognizing them as detectives, the Chinaman made a grab beneath a counter and brought out a hatchet.

They took it away from him; while two were suppressing the fellow, the other pair tore down a curtain and found a thick wooden panel. They chopped through it with the hatchet, splintering a route to a passage beyond.

Undulating past a basement restaurant that was empty except for two drab-looking waiters, the Great Dragon disgorged another group of crouched invaders. They were Feds, who flashed badges with one hand, while they brandished automatics with the other.

Overpowering the waiters, they found the side wall that they wanted. Bashing away the plaster with gun butts, they came to a steel wall beneath. They didn't let the barrier stop them.

Two of them had magnum guns, new-style weapons powerful enough to penetrate steel. They drove bullets through the wall as if the guns were riveters. The perforations cut the opening they needed.

With firecrackers bursting along the street outside, the rapid blasts of the magnum guns passed unnoticed by the crowds.

Farther along, detectives were invading another shop marked on the list that Tam had prepared from The Shadow's chart. That crew had a fire ax; they made rapid work of another hidden doorway, and started through.

In fours and fives, detectives and Feds were alternating in their rapid duty, as the Great Dragon coursed through Chinatown. Never once were they spotted by Shiwon Khan's spies, except those who were in the buildings. Such men had no chance to escape, or spread the alarm.

The Great Dragon still curved along its route. It had started with full capacity; it could unload fifty men without yielding to the strain. It was sagging a trifle as it swung past the alley leading to Loo Dow's, but spectators thought that its droop was part of the act.

Police had kept all alleys open. The dragon brushed the side walls of this alley very closely, to release its last and largest quota. Like human torpedoes, a dozen men shot from beneath the folds at intervals. They were Feds and detectives, combined.

They reached the brick wall, probed it for cracks. Finding some, they quickly drilled holes and inserted charges, working in darkness after the dragon had passed. They dropped away to the inner end of the alley, waited while the explosion ripped.

The blast from the alley was loud enough to be heard throughout that section; the flames that it coughed were gigantic. Invaders poured through the smoke that issued from the shattered wall; but people who packed the outer street knew that something more than firecrackers had caused the detonation.

Spies of Shiwon Khan declared themselves; shouting for others to join them, they grouped together and headed into the alley. They didn't notice that the great dragon had rounded the block and was bearing down upon them. Out from the head came Dr. Tam, followed by trusty Chinese who issued from the coils.

With drawn guns, Tam and his men withered the flock of spies by a rapid rear attack. The few who escaped that gunfire surrendered. Not one could get through to warn the Golden Master.

The Shadow's call was heeded; the plan that he ordered had worked. The domain of Shivan Khan had received a mass invasion from nearly a dozen different channels.

Thanks to the co-operation of Dr. Tam, the law was pouring in its forces to aid the black-cloaked fighter who had penetrated, alone, to the heart of crime's domain!

CHAPTER XVIII. WITHIN THE THRONE ROOM

So rapid, so well-timed, was the massed invasion that it caught Shivan Khan's servitors unawares. They heard battering sounds from many passages, ran to see what all the tumult was about. They learned, to their own confusion.

Submachine guns spoke from shattered outlets, revolvers joined in the fire. Big Mongols were felled by bullets; witnessing their fate, others fled, along with scrawny naljorpas, who had been clever enough to wriggle away from harm.

The roar of battle brought Shivan Khan from his throne room. Leaving the golden door wide, the Unfathomable moved calmly along the passage. He paused at the empty room belonging to Ming Dwan; then glanced at the closed door opposite.

Coldly, firmly, he spoke: "Lana Luan."

The door did not open. Shivan Khan wrenched it wide. On the floor he saw the Chinese costume belonging to Lana Luan. It was ripped and trampled. Beatrice Chadbury, restored to her own self, had torn off that garb of servitude and shown her hatred for it.

Shivan Khan allowed himself the privilege of a scowl. Then, opening a closet in the corner of the room, he looked for Beatrice's own clothes and found them gone.

Despite the approach of battle, Shivan Khan buried his bearded chin in one long-fingered hand. He was trying to calculate how his methods had failed. He knew that only one being could have produced Beatrice's transformation: The Shadow.

The din of strife brought him to a further conclusion. Shivan Khan was sure that The Shadow had departed, taking Beatrice with him. Battle had been left to others; therefore, The Shadow's one route must have been the passage that led beyond the outskirts of Chinatown.

It was a route that Shivan Khan could follow. Stepping from the empty room, he raised a long, penetrating cry for his warriors to hear. Then, with a stately but rapid stride, the gold-clad fiend headed for the passage that offered escape.

His followers came clustering about during his progress. Knowing the many turns of the underground burrow, they were well ahead of pursuers. Shivan Khan sent snakish naljorpas ahead, while he turned to speak with some of the Mongols. Before the Golden Master could give his intended order, he heard snarls that told of a new obstacle.

The naljorpas had paused at the beginning of the lone passage. They were shooting out their knives with the

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quick motion that characterized their way of battle. Bronze daggers, launched in that fashion, usually found a target. This time, they failed.

From deep in the corridor the naljorpas were answered by a formidable laugh; that came with sinister, eerie echoes. Interspersed with the reverberating mockery were the blasts of an automatic. Staggering naljorpas reached Shiwan Khan.

The Shadow had taken over the needed outlet. Having clipped the naljorpas, he was sure to get the Mongols if they tried to battle him. Strident mockery was coming closer, indicating that The Shadow wanted to meet Shiwan Khan in person.

The way things were going, he might have his chance. For the shouts from many passages told that Feds and police were closing in; that they would take care of the Mongols while The Shadow handled the Golden Master.

WITH a fierce snarl to his Mongols, Shiwan Khan forgot his calm. Wheeling about, he dashed back toward the golden room, issuing orders as he went. But his Mongols didn't have a chance to obey. Invaders had sighted them, were shooting at them.

Taking cover in rooms along the way, the Mongols drew guns and answered the barrage, while Shiwan Khan reached the throne room alone.

This was The Shadow's opportunity. Coming from his passage, he was ready to be the first attacker when the fire of the Mongols lessened. He wanted the privilege of meeting Shiwan Khan alone, but it was to be denied.

From a safe niche in the side of the long passage came a girl's frantic cry. Wheeling about, The Shadow left the scene to the law, in order to learn why Beatrice had called. He soon saw the reason.

Another girl was coming in by the passage. It was Ming Dwan, returned from the yacht. Her arrival at this moment was most untimely, but it had to be taken into account.

Speeding past Beatrice's niche, The Shadow gave a quick order as he went by. Then, halfway along the gloomy corridor, he flattened against the wall and let Ming Dwan pass.

Beatrice grabbed the girl, to drag her into cover. It was The Shadow's cue to swing into sight. He made the move, a rapid, elusive whirl, and as he came he opened fire in the direction of the outlet.

Knives whirred amid The Shadow's shots. They were launched by the two naljorpas, who had returned on Ming Dwan's trail. The Shadow's shots were blind; whereas the Tibetans had a target, for they saw their whirling foe. It was a long chance, a double risk that The Shadow had taken in this crisis. Nevertheless it succeeded.

One blade, a trifle high, cleaved the brim of The Shadow's hat, carving it cleanly away. The other, a bit wide, grazed his body as he twisted. It skimmed his ribs, deflected by his spin, ripping a long slice in his cloak.

Striking the opposite wall from the speed of his rapid whirl, The Shadow was off balance long enough for the scrawny men to start their flight. He fired shots that ricocheted from the walls; thinking his aim was bad, the killers sped more rapidly.

They found out the reason for those wide shots as they neared the outlet. In came a surge of men who threatened to drive the naljorpas back into The Shadow's range. Hawkeye had seen the scrawny men trail

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Ming Dwan down into the passage, and had brought on The Shadow's agents.

It took the entire squad to subdue the snakish fighters, for the naljorpas used their long-nailed hands like weapons. It was impossible to slug their bobbing heads, so the agents settled it with bullets – the only way to dispose of the strangling hands that dug into their throats.

Hearing the shots, followed by a piping call from Hawkeye, The Shadow knew that his agents had won. Reaching Beatrice, he found her struggling with Ming Dwan. Quickly, The Shadow pinned Ming Dwan's arms behind her and propelled her along the passage, while she shrieked defiantly.

Cliff Marsland took prompt custody of the deluded girl. The agents retired to guard the outer exit, and Beatrice went with them. She knew The Shadow's method of breaking Shiwan Khan's spell. When Beatrice found time to apply it, Ming Dwan would be transformed into Myra Reldon, just as Lana Luan had become Beatrice Chadbury.

Meanwhile, The Shadow had his own task to perform. He wanted to meet Shiwan Khan before it was too late. Gunfire had ended from the distant depths of the Golden Master's burrow. Turning about, The Shadow hurried toward that focal spot to see how matters stood.

Already, Vic Marquette and Joe Cardona had ascended the twisty steps that led to the golden door. With half a dozen stolid supporters behind them, they were hammering at Shiwan Khan's own portal. If they couldn't smash it with such methods, they intended to drill it with magnum guns, or blast it open.

As they hammered, the golden door slid wide.

Crossing the threshold, with drawn guns, Cardona and Marquette were followed by their men, who clustered behind them. They had been assured by Tam that the room itself was solid, with no secret outlets. But Tam had warned them to lookout for trickery if they found Shiwan Khan inside.

The Golden Master was there.

Reclining on his golden throne, his chin propped sidewise on his hands, Shiwan Khan surveyed the foemen that he had voluntarily admitted. The mighty master of insidious crime was calm; he seemed in a mood of deep contemplation.

Yet his fixed eyes must have observed the invaders, for he spoke. His words were in English, precisely put, with the clear ring of a bell.

"You have come to take me," said Shiwan Khan, as he raised his gold-sleeved arms, to show his long hands empty. "Very well, you may enter. I am ready."

CHAPTER XIX. THE WAY OF SHIWAN KHAN

STRANGELY subtle was the tone of Shiwan Khan. It was emotionless, yet it carried a singular touch that set the nerves of listeners taut. The law held the Golden Master powerless, for he was covered by many bristling guns. Nevertheless, the calmness of the reception was something that promised trouble.

Marquette was studying the sleeves of the golden robe, Cardona was wondering if the garment was bulletproof. One expected hidden weapons to come suddenly into play, the other felt that Shiwan Khan might be immune from harm.

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"Close in on him," growled Vic, to the men behind him, "but watch those sleeves of his. If we can, we want to take this guy alive."

"That's just what we're going to do," gruffed Joe, by way of further advisement. "Jump on him if he gets tough, but don't shoot unless he tries to make a getaway."

They pushed forward, all of them. It was then that Shiwan Khan made his move. Hands still raised, and empty, the Golden Master uncoiled and whipped up from his throne, voicing a triumphant snarl as he launched, barehanded, toward the throng.

With a surge, the eight invaders drove for him with pointing guns. Shiwan Khan made a crazy twist, half way toward the floor, but did not lose his balance. Men grabbed for him, but missed. They were lurching dizzily as they came.

Twisting among them, Shiwan Khan met the slashes of guns in unaccountable fashion. He not only dodged those strokes; he actually seemed to control them, for hands that swung, in his direction were curving away.

Together, Marquette and Cardona were reeling across the room, past the golden throne. Striking the wall, they swung about, first one, then the other.

Vic aimed first, and fired. He missed the weaving figure of the Golden Master by three feet. Cardona took a steadier shot, but failed by the same margin.

Some invisible, unaccountable force was pulling their guns wide. They saw the leering face of Shiwan Khan, heard his musical laugh strike a harsh discord as he pushed men away and made for the open door.

Every one of the invaders had felt the same influence. All were staggering drunkenly across the room. They were actually pushovers for Shiwan Khan.

Then, as the Golden Master wrenched free from a tiny, groggy cluster of men, a black-clad figure launched in through the door. A fierce tone of sardonic mockery drowned Shiwan Khan's jarring chuckle.

Turned for his exit, the Golden Master saw the muzzle of a .45 automatic looming down upon him; the gun was gripped by the gloved fist of The Shadow!

Bent queerly, Shiwan Khan made a sideward shift. The Shadow stopped abruptly; his gun tongued flame. It was a close-range shot, the sort that never should have missed; but the bullet was wide by the fraction of an inch. Its heat fanned the side of Shiwan Khan's wide forehead.

The Shadow had made just one misstep, but it was enough to preserve the life of Shiwan Khan.

In that one step, The Shadow had guessed the riddle of the golden throne room. Solid within the cubical walls of inclosing brick, it had no trapdoors or secret outlets. As The Shadow had surmised, the golden room was a box.

But this was the first time that The Shadow had actually entered the room.

In its entire construction, the chamber was a clever snare. Its floor seemed level, the walls were perpendicular, but the whole thing was tilted at an angle. There was a slant to the curved steps outside that made the illusion perfect.

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Anyone entering the room for the first time took it for granted that the place was normal. Actually, it had a slant of its own that threw people off balance unless they knew the secret of its tilt. That was why Shiwan Khan always sat in leaning attitude on the golden throne, why persons like Beatrice and Myra had felt dizzy when they entered.

They had tried to stand upright, but it wasn't possible. Later, influenced by Shiwan Khan, they had entered and left in the fashion of the naljorpas, changing their balance to conform to the room's crazy construction.

Trapped by Feds and police, Shiwan Khan had coaxed them into an attack, knowing that the faster they came the harder they would fall. Aiming guns had gone wide, because the hands that held them shifted. Even The Shadow, by his one misstep, had missed fire.

FROM the doorway, Shiwan Khan hurled a knife that seemed to travel on a curve, bending in to reach the cloaked fighter's heart. It missed, for a very simple reason.

Shiwan Khan, knowing the room's tilt, had made allowance for it but he had also figured that The Shadow would still be off balance, as the others were.

The latter part of the calculation was wrong. Without moving his feet, The Shadow had shifted position. He was standing at an odd angle, tilting, farther toward the true perpendicular. Eyes half shut, he was gauging how things were by his sense of balance alone.

As the blade missed The Shadow's upswaying form, Shiwan Khan vaulted the rail of the steps outside. It was well for the Golden Master that he chose such quick departure. The Shadow opened fire straight through the center of the doorway an instant after Shiwan Khan had gone.

Starting pursuit, The Shadow was followed by the others. By the time they reached the doorway, Shiwan Khan had disappeared, and The Shadow was almost to the corner that the fleeing fiend had turned. But there was a new sound now within this strange domain. It was a rising roar, accompanied by a vivid, ruddy flicker.

The whole place was ablaze!

Flames were sweeping in from the passage that Shiwan Khan had taken. By the time that Vic Marquette reached the corner, a wall of fire blocked him. He swung toward another passage, to be met by an onrush of leaping, fiery tongues.

Scattered Mongols had introduced a new element to drive away the foes of Shiwan Khan. Knowing that such was due, the Golden Master had waited coolly in his throne room, hoping that his enemies would be trapped. It was The Shadow's arrival that had brought them to their senses in time to escape.

Joe Cardona had spied an open passage and was shouting to the others. He was heard above the roar of the rising holocaust; when Cardona started along the only route to safety, the others followed, with Marquette bringing up the rear. In his flight, Vic hesitated and looked back, but only for an instant.

He was thinking of The Shadow, but he saw that there was no chance to follow along the cloaked fighter's trail. It occurred to Vic, however, that The Shadow would be safe. Close behind Shiwan Khan, the crime avenger could use the Golden Master's own route, wherever it might lead.

With that surmise, Marquette took after the others. As they fled, they heard the fire roaring in behind them like a great flood of doom. But they were through a shattered exit before it reached them. Though foiled in their attempted capture of Shiwan Khan, these representatives of the law had at least escaped unscathed.

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Meanwhile, The Shadow was finding things less easy than Marquette had supposed.

Through cataracts of flame, he was keeping to the trail of Shiwan Khan, but at no point did he get a chance to drill the Golden Master with a bullet. With fire as the background, Shiwan Khan was wearing the perfect attire. His golden robe blended with the flames as The Shadow's black cloak merged with darkness.

Only by fleeting glimpses did The Shadow manage to keep along the trail. Shiwan Khan turned corner after corner, picking his path uncannily despite the heat and scorch of the ever-increasing fire. At times he reversed his course, actually leading The Shadow back through the flames.

Somewhere, the route would have to end, either in safety or in doom! Shiwan Khan must have recognized the fact, for he suddenly took a straightaway course, leaping across a gap in the floor where flames formed a blinding screen.

The master crook was through the fire, and The Shadow was close behind him. Still imbued with the desire to end the flight of Shiwan Khan, The Shadow took aim while he leaped through the screen of flame, tugged the trigger of his automatic the instant that his feet struck the passage floor.

That shot failed. The Shadow didn't find the solid footing that he needed. Charred timbers had crunched beneath Shiwan Khan's weight, they gave when The Shadow struck them. The whole floor caved in, jarring the aiming gun upward.

Amid a mighty puff of flame, The Shadow was carried downward along with burning beams. He struck heavily on the stone floor of a lower passage; a chunk of flaming woodwork glanced from his head.

Flattened, The Shadow lay motionless, until the crackle of the fire aroused him. It was as loud as the shout of the applauding crowd that had welcomed the Great Dragon's return to Chinatown.

Slowly, painfully, as if hunting a place to die, The Shadow crawled forward, seeking safety somewhere in this fearful pit where the rain of flaming firebrands cast a hideous, torchlike glow upon the scene.

CHAPTER XX. SHIWAN KHAN ESCAPES

IT was the greatest fire that Chinatown had ever known, that holocaust started by the desperate servitors of Shiwan Khan. They had chosen the proper setting for a terrible conflagration, for many of the buildings that held the concealed passages were antiquated structures of the rabbit-hutch variety.

Among the narrow streets, thousands of Chinese were fleeing the flames, as if seeking refuge from a mighty volcano. All along the curve of Dovers Street flames were spurting from every window and roaring up through roofs. Showers of sparks that fell in huge eruption were carrying to the corner of Mott and Pell, the principal streets of Chinatown.

Police had given way to firemen, who were responding to repeated alarms. The smoke-eaters were pouring tons of water on the sea of flame, from a respectable distance. When they pressed too close, their rubber coats began to melt.

Residents of the section had managed to get clear, but the firemen were bringing up nets, expecting figures to leap from windows. They had been told that persons were trapped somewhere in the tremendous blaze. But even when the walls began to crumble, no survivors appeared.

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They had found a different refuge.

Traveling down a sheltered stairway behind the golden throne room, Shiwan Khan had reached the damp passage that lay below the basement level. He wasn't alone; several of his Mongols and a few surviving naljorpas joined him.

Scattered by the law's invasion, those servants had made for this refuge after they had set the fire.

Through the passage, side-stepping burning embers of wood that had fallen in the corridor beyond, Shiwan Khan led the way to his storeroom. It was badly wrecked, for its roof had caved in and the whole floor was in flames.

Kicking the burning brands aside, Shiwan Khan reached the wall and examined his precious teakwood boxes. Some were scorched, but all were intact, which pleased Shiwan Khan. He valued his many robes, and was glad of this chance to save them.

Pointing, to the huge iron coffer, he told the Mongols to move it, which four of them did, with difficulty. When they shoved it too near the flames, Shiwan Khan snarled and pounded them with clenched fists. He didn't want the inflammable contents to explode too soon. The Mongols pushed the coffer to a safer place.

Behind the five-foot iron box was an opening in the wall, almost as high as the coffer itself. It was large enough to admit the teakwood boxes, which measured four feet in each dimension. Stooping, Shiwan Khan went through the outlet; his Mongols followed, dragging the teak boxes along.

This was one route that The Shadow had not uncovered while roaming Shiwan Khan's premises. It led to an abandoned water main, which the little caravan followed for a few blocks. They finally came to a thin wall, which Shiwan Khan smashed with his shoulder, taking them into a cellar.

The other side of the plywood wall was faked to look like plaster. The Golden Master and his men were in the cellar of a vacant house east of Chinatown, and beyond the fire lines.

THEY reached an alley. The brilliance from the flaming sky produced a revealing glare that did not please Shiwan Khan, although it had been caused by his own design. He managed to crowd his Mongols into a darkened place barely large enough to hide them; then he sent the naljorpas ahead to scout.

A clang came along the street, from just beyond the alley. Peering out, Shiwan Khan saw an odd-looking fire wagon slackening to a halt. It was an insurance patrol ordered to Chinatown, only to find that it couldn't be of any use.

Shiwan Khan gave his Mongols the word. The mighty mob surged out and took the patrol by storm.

They didn't use their knives; they simply tossed the truck crew to the street and piled the boxes into the captured vehicle. The patrol clanged on its way, carrying a motley bunch of occupants. A big Mongol was at the wheel, with the others facing each other on the lengthwise seats in back.

Shiwan Khan and the naljorpas were also passengers, riding safely through groups of police, who allowed the insurance patrol free passage.

As always, Shiwan Khan saw that the course was reversed. He and his companions ditched the vehicle when they reached a dark street near a subway entrance. The direction that they took on foot was eastward, through devious routes that the naljorpas picked for them.

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All was dark in this vicinity, particularly when they reached the water front near the East River. The launch was waiting at its dock; the teak boxes were loaded on board, and Shiwan Khan followed with his crew. The launch glided northward, passing police boats, as it had before.

The trip on the launch was killing the trail completely. As for the destination, the Nautilus, Shiwan Khan was quite sure that The Shadow could not have learned about the yacht.

In fact, things would have been very much to the Golden Master's liking had he known the exact details. One man did know that the Nautilus was being taken over by Shiwan Khan, but the man in question wasn't in a position to make use of his knowledge.

He was Harry Vincent. As a passenger on the yacht, he was as badly off as Shiwan Khan's own dupes.

There were others, agents of The Shadow, who could follow the trail as far as the little dock; for Moe, the taxi driver, knew that it led there. But they didn't have a link beyond. As for Ming Dwan, Shiwan Khan felt no concern over her case.

Even if Ming Dwan came out of her trance, she couldn't offer evidence. Under the influence of Shiwan Khan, her trip to the Nautilus had been a total blank.

As for The Shadow, his case was least troublesome of all. Shiwan Khan had seen him plunge into a pit of flame, taking a fiery journey from which there could be no return. His own adventures in the torrid holocaust convinced Shiwan Khan that The Shadow could not possibly have survived.

When the launch reached the Nautilus, Shiwan Khan was met atop the gangplank steps by Marabar Guru. Passengers had gone below; like a great prince arriving incognito, Shiwan Khan was conducted to the owner's cabin, where Felix Bryson awaited.

From the moment of his entry, Shiwan Khan held absolute command. With profound bows to the Golden Master, Bryson turned over ownership of the Nautilus, and all that went with it.

Outside, the creak of davits told that the launch was being hoisted to the deck of the yacht, so that Shiwan Khan's precious boxes could be removed and stored away by the men he had brought with him.

While that was being done, Shiwan Khan spoke a command that Bryson relayed to the yacht crew.

Smoothly, its motors purring, the yacht got under way and glided in the direction of the East River. It was reversing the course that the launch had recently taken, but it did not intend to stop at any pier.

The Nautilus had her clearance papers. She was going past Manhattan, putting out to sea!

Along a watery boulevard, Shiwan Khan was escaping openly, carrying more than sixty missing persons for whom the law had hunted high and wide!

UNDER the lighted streaks that were big bridges; past teeming shores where the law's search still persisted; past police boats, ferries, tugs and other craft, the streamlined Nautilus slid unsuspected toward the lower Bay.

Ahead was a welcoming blanket of gathering fog. Other ship owners might dread that mist, but Shiwan Khan appreciated it. Filtering whitely through the darkness, it was like the shroud of a beckoning ghost that offered to convoy the Golden Master on his strange voyage.

There were thicker billows of white that Shiwan Khan appreciated even more, as he turned toward the yacht's stern. Still clad in his fire-scorched robe of gold, Shiwan Khan looked back at the clouds of smoke that rolled above fire-gorged Chinatown.

As he watched, the Golden Master saw a vast display of fiery tongues lick upward in those billows, making a last lash toward Manhattan's glowing sky. He heard the roll of a thunderous roar that must have shuddered Chinatown like an earthquake shock.

It was the blast from the munitions in the iron coffer that the Mongols had left in the storeroom, near the pit where The Shadow had fallen. To Shiwan Khan, that last flare was more than a mere beacon waving him on his voyage.

The flames betokened a mighty funeral pyre, completing the doom of the only foe that Shiwan Khan had ever feared:

The Shadow.

CHAPTER XXI. THE HAND FROM THE PAST

MILES out to sea, the Nautilus was a creeping shape of gray studded with lines of lights, that glowed dimly through the thickening fog. Her captain, a man long in the employ of Felix Bryson, was keeping the yacht at half speed, along a course that shipping seldom followed.

Word had spread through the vessel that Shiwan Khan was on board. The passengers, sworn to serve the Golden Master, were eager to meet their mighty chief. To some, he was Shiwan Khan; to others, Shiwan Tulku. The exact title did not matter; the two were interchangeable to anyone who fully acknowledged the Golden Master's sway.

One cabin remained totally dark, for no passenger had been assigned to it. The cabin was the one where lumbering Mongols had stored their master's teakwood boxes.

Some of those squarish chests held costumes; others were filled with weightier objects, of bronze and other metals. The Mongols had carried them with due allowance as to weight – two men to each heavy box, one to each lighter chest.

In the gloom of the cabin, a box lid lifted. It had been up a half inch all the while, wedged in that position by a jamming chunk of cloth. No one had noticed the cloth in question for its hue was not golden. It was dark, like the color of the teakwood.

Pushed wide, the lid allowed a figure to roll from the box – a shape that was barely discernible in the deck-light glow that issued feebly through the cabin's porthole. A low tone, more like a sigh than a laugh, quivered in the darkness. There was a dull thud as the black-clad form sank to the floor. The thud was the thump of a gun wrapped in the folds of a cloak.

The Shadow had come along with Shiwan Khan!

Back in the pit beneath the Golden Master's lair, The Shadow had crawled along the only route that offered: to the storeroom that contained the teakwood boxes.

There, with more flames licking down upon him, he had sought temporary refuge. He had flung off robes

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from one of the teakwood boxes, and crawled inside the improvised shelter.

The blaze that had greeted Shiwan Khan and the Mongols had risen because of new fuel that it had rapidly consumed: the robes that The Shadow had tossed to their fate!

His strength strained far beyond the breaking point, The Shadow had lapsed into unconsciousness while boxed within a room that had reached a furnace heat. Even the trip to the yacht had not revived him. Here, miles at sea, he was finding his senses for the first time since the beginning of his journey.

Reaching a porthole, The Shadow wrenched it open, drank great drafts of cooling, fog-laden air. His whispered laugh came steadier, then faded. Footsteps were lumbering in the passage outside his door. Wheeling across the cabin, The Shadow closed the box that he had occupied, slid a light one on top of it.

He was behind the boxes when two Mongols entered. Ready with a gun, The Shadow heard them fumbling with the boxes. They lifted the lid of the topmost one, found robes inside it. Soon, they clamped the box shut again.

Shiwan Khan had sent them to bring him another robe. Having found one in the first box in which they looked, the Mongols had seen no need to open other chests.

When the Mongols were gone, The Shadow returned to the porthole. His strength recuperating steadily, he listened to sounds along the deck. The whole yacht seemed astir; The Shadow could understand why.

Shiwan Khan's fresh robe was the explanation. The Golden Master intended to hold a conclave with the dupes who were going with him on this journey. He wanted proper attire for the occasion.

And again, The Shadow's laugh throbbled the darkness.

AWAY from the darkened cabin, people were assembling in the dining saloon of the Nautilus. The room was large enough to accommodate all sixty passengers, with space for more. Its portholes were tightly shut, for the saloon was air-conditioned. Its coolness was as comfortable as the subdued lights which illuminated it.

Among the persons at the tables was Felix Bryson. He had given up his position as owner of the yacht, and regarded himself an ordinary passenger. Near him sat Ralph Fayden, the inventor; across the saloon Hiram Selsby, the gray-haired chemist, was chatting with other persons.

Those three were but few of the many distinguished passengers. This throng consisted of individuals who were tops in intelligence and personality. They were the hand-picked leaders in American affairs chosen by Shiwan Khan as fitting candidates for higher posts in his realm of Xanadu.

They had relaxed from their tense condition; still, the influence of Shiwan Khan was traceable in their faces. All were engaged in one subject of conversation: the glorious times that would await them in the mystic realm where Shiwan Khan was supreme.

One man alone avoided that discussion. He was Harry Vincent. The Shadow's agent was uneasy.

Harry knew that something must have happened to his chief. Soon, Harry would be facing Shiwan Khan, and he feared that the Golden Master would be a keener judge of faces than Marabar Guru. Once picked out from the throng, Harry could be forced to show his hand. He knew that his strength would be puny, worthless.

Only one being could make a worth-while thrust into this ironclad situation: The Shadow.

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Yet Harry wondered how his chief would handle the situation, if present. On this yacht, as in his gilded domain, Shiwan Khan was master, surrounded by dozens of followers who saw as he did, eye to eye!

A stir swept the dining saloon. The door had opened: Shiwan Khan was on the threshold. Resplendent in a new robe of gold, with colorful ornamentations, the great ruler stood motionless as his new subjects came to their feet and gave him loud acclaim.

Moving to a separate table, Shiwan Khan sat down and faced the group. Following him came Marabar Guru, who perched himself on cushions beside his master's table.

The guru lighted a curious brazen lamp that raised a wavering flame. It was fed by a sweet-scented oil that threw an exotic fragrance through the room. The thickness of the atmosphere did not increase, however, because of the air-conditioning system, which kept the fragrance at a uniform level.

Stewards were bringing in refreshments – choice foods that would suit the palates of Shiwan Khan's recruits. A cryptic smile showed on the Golden Master's slitted lips. He was making allowance for the tastes that his new followers had cultivated. Gradually he would wean them from such viands and put them on a spare diet, the sort that would be necessary to their future.

There were no drinks among the refreshments. Shiwan Khan had dispensed with liquors, even with coffee, as a starter in the course of training that his chosen followers were to undergo.

"Once I planned great conquest," spoke Shiwan Khan. "I believed – and still believe that the world would improve under the rule of a single mind. My golden city of Xanadu, hidden beneath the mountains of Sinkiang, was to be the capital of one great empire. Unreachable by enemies, I could be secure, while my own forces spread their power everywhere."

Then, with a wave of his long-fingered hand, Shiwan Khan dismissed that dream of conquest.

"The world is not yet ready," he told his listeners. "It is better that I should deal with minds in harmony with my own. In Xanadu, we shall dwell for centuries, creating ourselves into superminds such as the world has never before known! Yes, for centuries! Because I, as tulku, not as khan, have found the secret of prolonging life.

"Perhaps" – his tone carried a chime – "I shall solve the riddle of perpetual life. If so, we shall dwell in Xanadu forever, while nations beat themselves into ruin and starve into oblivion. Then, when misery has taken precedence over ambition, the world will listen. We shall dominate, as the creators of a new civilization!"

THERE were shouts of "Kha Khan!" others of "Tulku!" To his amazement, Harry found that he was joining in. A hope was overwhelming him – the hope that he would be permitted to remain with these chosen followers of Shiwan Khan.

"The path will not be easy," declared Shiwan Khan. "You must rid yourselves of the restraints of ordinary life, in order to understand the higher existence. You must learn the mystery of the samadhi, or trance condition, in order to learn the perils of the bardo, that strange land beyond this life.

"Each of you will become a delog, one who has returned from beyond. With fear of the future banished, you will understand what this life holds and be ready for my teachings. Already, each of you has been given a kavacha, the silver talisman all mystics recognize."

As Shiwan Khan paused, listeners began to raise their hands, showing the silver tokens that he mentioned. Harry was fortunately able to do the same; but as he looked about, he saw Ralph Fayden fumbling, looking for a token that he didn't have.

Even the stewards held kavachas. They were standing within the swinging doors that led to the yacht's pantry. Like the passengers, those crew members were staring fixedly at Shiwan Khan, drinking in his words of honeyed promise.

The closed doors blocked view of a black-clad figure that had arrived in the pantry beyond. Through the crack, The Shadow was watching the scene that Shiwan Khan dominated. He noted the sweet aroma that filled the saloon, knew that it was important to the Golden Master's mental sway. Turning about, The Shadow saw exactly what he wanted: a panel in the pantry wall.

He opened the panel, to reveal heavily frosted pipes, part of the yacht's refrigerating equipment. Drawing an automatic, he muffled it in his cloak, jamming the muzzle squarely against a pipe. His free arm lifted across his face, The Shadow fired.

The shot was heard, but it did not matter. Wheeling away, The Shadow swung wide the swing doors and leveled his .45 across the heads of diners, straight for Shiwan Khan. With The Shadow's smashing, spectacular entry came something else: a deluge of overwhelming fumes that produced utter chaos.

The Shadow had loosed a pipeload of ammonia into the dining saloon. Its powerful, stifling pungency was drowning the mild perfume that had hitherto predominated

Stricken by the fumes, diners were leaping for the portholes, smashing them. Like The Shadow, Shiwan Khan was burying his face in his golden robe, while Marabar Guru was clapping a cushion across his nostrils and eyes.

From the protecting folds of the muffling cloak came The Shadow's challenge: a laugh that told his purpose.

The Shadow had found his chance to ruin the final schemes of Shiwan Khan!

CHAPTER XXII. THE HOST DIVIDED

A HAND from the past had struck, to break the grip of Shiwan Khan. In loosing that deluge of fumes, The Shadow accomplished a master blow. He proved that Shiwan Khan was human.

Temporarily, Shiwan Khan was out of combat; so, for that matter, was The Shadow. Both were blinded by the terrific influx of ammonia fumes, as were the others in the saloon. But the smashed portholes, along with the air-conditioning apparatus, were carrying off the devastating fumes.

The showdown would be next.

Blindly, The Shadow was keeping his .45 in Shiwan Khan's direction. Raising his eyes, he blinked to clear them. He could see Shiwan Khan, but he did not fire. No shot could be sure under these circumstances; and if one missed, The Shadow's own cause would be lost.

It was better to appeal to the host of dupes. They were prepared to listen to The Shadow. They could hear, even though they were yet unable to see.

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The potency of Shivan Khan's hypnotism could not compete with any staggering effect upon the human senses. The cue to that had been the meeting, between George Endle and Marabar Guru.

In the style taught by Shivan Khan, the guru had tried to remain unnoticed, through a trance condition, but Endle had seen him. Again, Marabar Guru had tried to paralyze Endle with one of the forceful shocks that Tibetan mystics could produce. In that, the guru had also failed. The reason was simple. Endle had been drinking too much before he came to Fayden's room.

Realizing that alcohol had rendered Endle immune, The Shadow had used collodion, with its content of ether, to awaken the entranced Lana Luan. The method had restored Beatrice Chadbury to her waking senses, proving The Shadow's theory.

Here, on the Nautilus, he had loosed the ship's ammonia supply, knowing that the powerful vapor would produce a similar result.

The ammonia fumes were clearing. So were the minds of the persons who had inhaled those fumes.

Like The Shadow, they could see Shivan Khan. They saw him as an ordinary mortal, a crouching man garbed in rather tawdry gold, whose face seemed to wear its ugly expression only by an effort of its owner. As for Marabar Guru, he was simply a squatting Hindu, as much a fake as his master.

Listeners heard The Shadow's mocking tone.

"Those talismans that you hold are worthless," he told them. "They are charms against evil only because conniving naljorpas have agreed not to harm the persons who display them. A kavacha means safety for travelers to Tibet, for such travelers have paid the price.

"Shivan Khan has power, of a sort, as do the creatures who serve him. But it is not the power of tulku. It is a mesmeric influence, long practiced in the Orient, that produces telepathic ability. Anyone can match it, through the proper form of practice."

The Shadow spoke with a tone of confidence, indicating that he was practiced in the method that he mentioned. To intelligent listeners, such as these, he had chosen the most forceful form of argument. To clinch his victory, but one step more.

He could show these dupes that Shivan Khan was human, by letting them complete the capture of the Golden Master!

"Shivan Khan awaits!" taunted The Shadow. "Let him show his power when you try to take him!"

A DOZEN men sprang for the Golden Master. Frantically, Shivan Khan thrust out his long hands, hoping to stop them with numbing shocks. Marabar Guru was using the same system, but both were merely going through the motions.

No longer did these dupes believe in Shivan Khan's imaginary powers. They knew that his force was mental, not physical, and their own minds were able to combat it. Shivan Khan was buried beneath a surge of captors.

In that moment, which seemed to carry absolute defeat, Shivan Khan showed his genius. Floored, entirely in the grasp of bold, unflinching captors, Shivan Khan remembered two things.

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First: he was temporarily safe from The Shadow; again, there were others present besides these fighters who had dared to attack him. His mind snapped up the thought that he could put The Shadow in a similar plight by calling, on those who still hesitated!

Uncanny in his guesses as to which dupes might yet be loyal, Shiwan Khan shrieked promises – not of long life in the happy city of Xanadu, but of material rewards that his followers had forgotten.

He was shouting that Fayden could have his room, with its walls of jade. He was calling to Selsby, reminding him of Bronzium. To others he was promising gold, jewels, whatever they might desire.

Hearing those utterances, The Shadow started forward. Before he could wrest his own allies away, to get at Shiwan Khan, others pounced upon him. Amid mad battle cries the dining saloon became the fighting ground of a furious, milling throng – a host divided, half for The Shadow, half for Shiwan Khan!

The leaders in that fray were separated. At moments, The Shadow tried to aim shots toward the golden figure of Shiwan Khan; but, always, figures intervened. Once, Shiwan Khan tried to hurl a knife, when he saw cloaked shoulders and a hat with a sliced brim above them. Then closing fighters spoiled the opportunity.

Ardent in The Shadow's behalf was a burly, shock-haired man, Professor Arthur Graydon. A student of ancient languages, he had been promised access to long-lost Sanskrit manuscripts which Shiwan Khan claimed to own. Graydon had received specimen pages in an ivory casket; but he doubted, how, that Shiwan Khan possessed the rest.

Graydon was rallying other intellectuals, who proved themselves men of brawn as well as brain. But on his side Shiwan Khan had such men as Fayden and Selsby, plus one other, the greatest fanatic of them all. Shiwan Khan's most loyal ally was Felix Bryson, the man to whom he had promised nothing!

Factions were separating as they brawled, trying to leave the dining saloon by opposite doors.

Ahead of them went Marabar Guru, off to rally the naljorpas and the fighting Mongols. From the other door squirmed Harry Vincent, who knew that he could gather allies from the yacht crew.

During his sojourn on the Nautilus, Harry had guessed that certain members of the personnel were merely following regular orders, rather than the commands of Shiwan Khan.

The fight rolled to the deck, where The Shadow, wrenching clear of many hands, at last found his chance to bear down on Shiwan Khan. Before he could take aim at the Golden Master, he saw naljorpas swinging into action, prepared to murder anyone to whom Shiwan Khan might point.

Whipping a second gun from beneath his cloak, The Shadow gave those scrawny killers a double hail of bullets, from two barrels that carried sharper stabs than any knife. Their daggers clattering from their bony fists, the naljorpas sprawled about the deck.

Big Mongols, driving in to aid Shiwan Khan, were intercepted by the crew members that Harry had rallied. Not expecting such interference, the Mongols were outflanked. Some fell; the rest made for the fo'c's'le. Keeping a screen of loyal followers between himself and The Shadow, Shiwan Khan retreated in the same direction.

FROM amidships to the stern, the yacht was under The Shadow's full control. At his command; many hands were lowering the launches, two at the side davits, a third at the stern. Those smaller boats were sufficient to carry the thirty-odd passengers and the crew members who were on The Shadow's side.

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But the black-cloaked fighter still hoped to take over the yacht itself. He was weaving forward, while Harry was getting the others clear.

By advancing alone, The Shadow evidenced his contempt for Shivan Khan. Just as he had won over half the dupes by such tactics, so he could impress some of the rest. Meanwhile, he was making sure that the persons who had been redeemed were safe.

The launches were in the water when The Shadow reached the bridge. By the glare of spotlights slicing through the fog, observers from below could see The Shadow. Harry was at the bow of the foremost launch; he watched his chief approach the bridge with drawn gun that probed for Shivan Khan.

Suddenly, the Golden Master bobbed into sight, his hands raised but his smile serene. Beside him was Hiram Selsby, grinning in apish fashion. The chemist was holding a wooden block which was mounted with an electric switch.

"Be cautious, Ying Ko," Shivan Khan advised The Shadow, dryly. "Selsby is ready to touch off an explosion that will blow this ship to fragments! What will it profit you to end your life along with mine? There are others" – he gestured to the close-packed followers around him – "who would die. It is not your way, Ying Ko, to deprive innocent victims of the right to live."

The Shadow paused, expecting a further proposition. It came. Pointing to the rail, Shivan Khan spoke.

"Keep at a distance, Ying Ko," he suggested. "I shall make no interruption while you speak from there. If others choose to join you, they are welcome. You will do me a favor, Ying Ko, by weeding out the faint in heart. I want only ardent followers in Xanadu."

Behind the tone lay the great ego of Shivan Khan. The Shadow decided to put it to the test. He retired to the rail, but all the while he kept a gun trained on Shivan Khan, expecting some treacherous move.

The stroke came, but Shivan Khan was too crafty to supply it in person. The Shadow looked quickly upward, to see a figure launching, itself from beside the funnel, just behind the bridge.

It was Marabar Guru, coming like a living arrow, his face leering as he dived. Out ahead, a long blade of bronze was shafting for The Shadow's heart, a brown fist gripping the handle, to guide the point in whichever direction The Shadow wheeled!

In the split seconds of that death-dealing dive, The Shadow took the one direction that the guru did not expect. Hand on the rail, he vaulted upward, flinging his body high in air.

The lunge carried him above the knife point by scant inches, but The Shadow did not travel high enough to clear the free hand of Marabar Guru as it clawed for his cloak.

Twisted across the rail, The Shadow plunged along with his foe. Watchers saw the guru make a frantic stab with the bronze dagger; they also spied the accompanying jab of flame that came from The Shadow's gun. Then the locked forms struck the fog-laden water, and went beneath the surface.

THE Nautilus was in motion, bells were clanging, but Shivan Khan and others had hurried to the rail. Like Harry and the others in the foremost launch, they saw the turbaned head of Marabar Guru come up from the ocean's surface.

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A wild cheer echoed along the yacht's rail; it faded as a leering face tilted backward and stared straight up, with sightless eyes. Marabar Guru was dead, a bullet in his heart. Nor had his bronze knife found its intended victim.

Another head appeared, wearing a slouch hat with a slashed brim. Long arms were in motion, coming from cloaked shoulders. Harry and others in the launch were reaching out to drag The Shadow on board. A dripping gun still in his hand, The Shadow turned to look for the Nautilus.

The yacht was gone, save for the last glimmers of its stern lights, which seemed to trickle off through the fog. Speedier than the launches, it was sure to escape in that dense blanket that covered the open sea. The launches had but one course: to return to shore, guiding by their compasses.

The fog still echoed with a maddened glee from many voices. The shout that faded at the death of Marabar Guru had been raised again by those who were happy to be safe with Shiwan Khan. In that last lapse of laughter, The Shadow could hear the chimelike chuckle of the Golden Master, carrying like a final note.

From the launch, The Shadow answered that gleeful outcry with a strange laugh of his own. It carried far, a mocking tone meant for Shiwan Khan. Then it sobered into a mirthless tone that trailed to nothingness, bringing shudders even from those who had accepted The Shadow's rescue and were with him on the launch.

They sensed the pity in that laugh. Pity for those who had gone with the Golden Master to his realm of Xanadu. They had chosen their course; The Shadow could not stay them. But their future, dependent upon the promises of Shiwan Khan, was a thing of grave doubt.

As for Shiwan Khan himself, The Shadow's laugh was full of challenge; not for the present, but for the future. It was a double prophecy that the Golden Master could well heed.

It meant that when Shiwan Khan returned to America he would find The Shadow ready, that their next meeting would not result in divided victory, but in death.

The Shadow was ever willing to stake his life upon any course that could bring doom to Shiwan Khan!

THE END