

THE NORTH WOODS MYSTERY

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. DEATH'S TRAIL

LATE summer heat gripped New York's Chinatown. It was evening; but nightfall had brought no coolness. The brick walls that fringed the narrow streets had clamped the stifling atmosphere within their confines.

Chinatown was quiet. Few tourists had come to this district. This was a season when Coney Island busses outnumbered those bound to Chinatown. With business lacking, the proprietors of Chinese shops were seated in their doorways, puffing pipes and blandly eyeing passing strollers.

A well-dressed man was walking briskly along Mott Street. He looked like an American; but when he turned the corner of Pell Street, the lights of Chinatown's center revealed his face more plainly. The man was a Chinese; and seated shopkeepers nodded solemn greetings as he passed.

They knew Doctor Roy Tam. A Chinaman with an American education, Roy Tam had established himself among members of his race. Tam's early career had been a struggle; for he had adhered to one definite mission: the Americanization of Chinese in New York.

Enemies had blocked Tam's work. There were those in Chinatown who preferred to keep the traditions of the Orient; their purpose was the gain of power through superstitious followers. Such enemies had failed. The

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few who remained were ones who strived in secret. No longer did Doctor Roy Tam encounter the open opposition of dangerous antagonists.

Tam's route turned again at Doyer Street. He followed the curving thoroughfare and slackened his pace as he passed closed shops. There were darkened patches along these building walls. Some shops were deserted; others had shut down for the night. Few eyes saw Doctor Tam as he stopped at stone steps leading down into a basement store.

A sign bore the name Loon Kow, flanked by Chinese characters. The place was a small curio shop; from its shaded windows filtered rays of greenish light. That was why Doctor Tam stood perplexed. He had expected either to find Loon Kow in his doorway, or to see the shop entirely dark.

Tam threw a darted gaze across his shoulder. He noted no one near him on the street. Descending the steps, he produced a key from his pocket. He unlocked the door of the curio shop. Entering, he softly closed the door and locked it; then looked about.

The curio shop was deserted. Greenish lights revealed nothing but a display of Chinese merchandise. Smiling Buddhas grinned from tables flanked by silken banners. Brass bowls caught the reflection of the dull emerald light.

Where was Loon Kow?

Doctor Tam had received a message from the proprietor, only an hour before. It had been urgent. Loon Kow had left word of danger. Tam, when he had heard of it, had been troubled. Crime was prevalent in Chinatown. Hence Tam had come to see Loon Kow.

HEAVY curtains masked a door at the rear of the curio shop. There was no light beyond them. Tam approached. He found a closed door. He unlocked it with the pass-key, a useful implement which Loon Kow had given him for visits such as this. Tam stepped into an office that was lighted by a single desk lamp. He locked the door behind him.

Again the question: where was Loon Kow?

This was the curio dealer's office. It had no door other than the one that Tam had entered. A bulky, wide-topped desk occupied the center of the room. In the far corner was a three-fold screen that had a filing cabinet behind it. Loon Kow certainly would not be hiding behind the screen. Tam's assumption was that his friend had gone out.

Since Loon Kow seemed absent, Tam chose the big swivel-chair on the far side of the desk. He came into the glare of the lamplight; then stopped short. A desk drawer was opened, beyond the chair. Within the drawer, Tam saw the glitter of a revolver.

The weapon was tilted upward, as though some one yanked the drawer open; then made a grab for the gun. Tam leaned forward. His eyes saw the floor beyond the desk. Staring straight upward was a face; a yellowish visage with glassy, lifeless eyes.

Tam bounded over, shoving the chair aside. He dropped near the figure beside the desk. He studied a face that he knew well. The dead man was Loon Kow.

The body was in shirt-sleeves. Blood stained the white front of Loon Kow's shirt. The Chinese proprietor had been stabbed to the heart, struck down by an assassin before he could produce the revolver from the desk

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drawer.

Sorrow showed upon Doctor Tam's square face. Tam's eyes were fixed. He could think of nothing but Loon Kow. This was the danger that his friend had foretold. A threat of murder; one that had been carried through. Tam's sorrowed gaze became stern; his firm fists clenched.

There was a motion of the screen. Tam did not discern it. He was too preoccupied in his study of Loon Kow. One panel of the screen swung wide. From its edge came a vicious, glaring face. Then huge shoulders; below the right, a hand that gripped a bloody knife.

The man from the screen was a gigantic Mongol, a type of Chinese seldom seen in Manhattan. He was the slayer of Loon Kow. The Mongol's glare foretold another murder. That knife he gripped was intended for the heart of Doctor Roy Tam.

Slowly, gloatingly, the slayer moved forward. Step by step, he closed the distance between himself and Roy Tam. Three feet more would have brought him within range to wield his knife. Then suddenly, the Mongol stopped. Doctor Tam was rising from beside the body of Loon Kow.

Oblivious to the menace that threatened him, Doctor Tam looked into the desk drawer. He moved his right hand slowly downward and stopped his fingers just above the revolver, wondering whether or not to touch it. The Mongol edged closer. His long right arm went back past his hip, ready to deliver an underhand thrust.

Thought of murder must have seized Doctor Tam. Inspired by some knowledge of danger, the Chinese physician swung about. He saw the huge killer; Tam's eyes met those of the glaring Mongol. Instinctively, Tam gripped the revolver and tried to bring it from the drawer.

He was too late. A fierce snarl tore from vicious lips. The Mongol's big right hand sped forward, driving the long-bladed dirk straight for the heart of the hapless Doctor Tam!

Then came the incredible.

A PISTOL shot ripped from the doorway of the room. A tongue of flame stabbed straight toward its desired mark. The bullet from a .45 automatic cracked the Mongol's speeding wrist. The assassin's hand flung wide, as if suddenly it had been struck by a diving fist.

Loosed fingers lost the knife. The blade sizzled wide of Tam and clattered to the floor. The Mongol's snarl changed to a hideous howl. Half rolling, half sprawling, the would-be murderer staggered away from Tam and struck the floor beside Loon Kow's body. Gripping his broken wrist, he glared toward the spot from which the shot had come.

Tam turned also. His eyes showed a gleam of joy.

Framed in the doorway was a figure cloaked in black. It was the shape of a being who had silently unlocked the barrier by a method of his own. Above the folds of the arrival's cloak were burning eyes that gazed from beneath the brim of a slouch hat.

Gloved hands projected from the cloak. The right gripped a smoking automatic the weapon that had dispatched the needed bullet. The left hand rested upon the knob of the fully opened door. Tam knew his rescuer. The arrival was The Shadow!

Grim avenger who battled crime, The Shadow had arrived to save a friend. For of those in Chinatown who

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owned allegiance to The Shadow, none was more loyal than Doctor Roy Tam.

Leaning against the desk, clutching Loon Kow's revolver, Tam was about to pour forth words of gratitude. His lips had parted; but his speech halted. Tam had heard another snarl from the floor. Turning about, he saw the murderous Mongol halfway to his feet.

The big killer was not through. He had snatched up his knife in his left hand. The Mongol was ambidextrous. Tam, horrified, saw the killer's good arm swing. The gleaming knife blade whistled from the Mongol's fist; its point, like an arrow tip, was whizzing straight for The Shadow!

The Mongol's fling was as accurate as his thrust had been for Tam. The knife was already on its way. No bullet could have stopped it. Yet the dirk never reached the mark for which it was intended. The Shadow's left hand had acted as quickly as the Mongol's.

HOLDING the doorknob, The Shadow yanked the barrier half closed; his stratagem was simultaneous with the Mongol's dispatch of the knife. The door was still swinging when the flashing dirk arrived; like a shield, it had come in to cover The Shadow.

The knife blade found the woodwork. Its point stabbed through; the handle of the knife stopped farther progress. The Shadow shifted beyond the door, edging his left shoulder away from the projecting knife point. His right hand aimed its automatic to cover the crippled Mongol.

As he swung to aim, The Shadow hissed a quick word to Doctor Tam. It was a command to withhold fire. Tam was too late to obey.

Desperately, the rescued man had aimed toward the Mongol. Tugging the trigger of Loon Kow's revolver, Tam sped three straight bullets toward the murderer. The Mongol spun about, then withered. He flattened to the floor. This time, he remained.

Tam bounded past Loon Kow's body. He stopped beside the slayer. A gloved hand thrust Tam aside. The Shadow had arrived. Tam moved away. He saw The Shadow stoop; he heard a hissed tone quiz the dying Mongol in the murderer's own tongue.

The Shadow was commanding speech. He was ordering the killer to name the person who had sent him here to slay Loon Kow. The Mongol grimaced. His dying gaze met burning eyes. Fear showed in the murderer's glare. Lips gasped a last utterance, as the killer's head sagged back.

Two words. A name. The Shadow heard; and so did Doctor Tam. The murderer had spoken the title of an evil master whose dictates he obeyed:

"Kai Luan!"

CHAPTER II. A STRANGE CLUE

"KAI LUAN."

The name was spoken by hidden lips. The Shadow's.

The cloaked avenger was standing above the body of the Mongol whom Doctor Tam had slain. The Shadow's utterance was a summary of the one fact that he had learned. The murderer had come from Kai Luan.

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Doctor Tam was solemn. He knew that he had made a great mistake. The Shadow could have slain this murderer with ease. He had spared the killer so that he might make the fellow talk. Tam had spoiled that opportunity.

There was, however, no criticism in The Shadow's tone. He knew that Tam had acted in an effort to stay the murderer's hand. Loyalty, to The Shadow, was a greater virtue than wisdom.

"Kai Luan."

The Shadow looked toward Tam as he spoke. The name came almost as a question. The Shadow wanted Tam's information regarding Kai Luan. Solemnly, Tam shook his head; then spoke.

"Kai Luan is a mystery," declared the Chinaman. "Who he is where he may be no one knows. I believe that there is no one named Kai Luan."

The Shadow's eyes were steady. He wanted to hear more. Tam was close to Chinatown. Chances were that he had learned facts which had as yet escaped The Shadow.

"Among those who are foolish," explained Tam, looking straight toward The Shadow's eyes, "there has been talk of one called Kai Luan. He is a friend of those who are evil. He has sent them money. They have harbored men from Kai Luan."

The Shadow looked toward the dead Mongol. Tam nodded.

"Others such as that one," explained the Chinaman. "Mongols, who may have come into Manchuria, since the boy emperor has ruled Manchukuo. Fanatics, ready to do murder.

"I have heard of the others. This is the first that I have seen. He served Kai Luan. His own voice told that fact. Still, there may be no Kai Luan. It is a name, perhaps, that these have uttered and that others have heard.

"Robbery and murder have struck here in New York. Loon Kow must have been threatened. He sent for me. That is all that I can tell. How or when the Mongols came to New York is as baffling as the name of Kai Luan."

THE SHADOW stepped over to the Mongol's body. The killer was clad in rough American attire. The Shadow found objects in the dead man's pockets. He laid the assortment upon the desk.

A few Chinese coins were mixed with American silver. A crude pipe, probably fashioned by the Mongol, contained a bowl that was thickly encrusted. With the pipe was a small bag of goatskin that served as a tobacco pouch. In addition, The Shadow found a roll of crisp bills that totaled fifty dollars.

The Shadow examined the currency in the light; then passed the bills to Doctor Tam, who had taken the swivel-chair behind the desk. Tam arched his eyebrows and questioned:

"Counterfeit?"

"Yes," responded The Shadow. "I have seen others like them. All recently."

"I have seen them," nodded Tam. He was studying the bills. "I thought that they were genuine. Yes, I have seen serial numbers close to these. Kai Luan whoever he may be is playing a profitable game."

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"We must learn from where the Mongol came."

Doctor Tam nodded soberly in response to The Shadow's statement. He watched the cloaked visitor study the smoking pipe. Slowly, Tam shook his head.

"I have inquired," he stated. "No one can reply. When first I heard of the Mongols who served Kai Luan, I made question of my friends. None of these Mongols have been seen in San Francisco.

"There are Chinese who enter Canada. There they pay a head tax of five hundred dollars before they are landed at Vancouver. There were times when many came from the ships. But that has ended. Too many unfortunate Chinese were tossed overboard by the men who brought them."

Tam paused. He considered another angle.

"Some enter from Mexico," he declared. "But they find it a long trip to New York. Particularly such as these Mongols. None have been seen in Texas. There is only one answer."

The Shadow spoke.

"This man came into Canada," he declared. "He traveled East. From somewhere near the Border, he was brought across by airplane. He landed near New York."

"True," agreed Tam, with a nod. Then wisely: "But the Canadian Border is long. The land beyond it is wide. How could one hope to find the spot from which these Mongols have begun their journeys?"

The Shadow had opened the tobacco pouch. His right glove was off. His fingers were examining the flakes. Tam noted the rich aroma of the tobacco.

"The starting point," remarked the Chinaman, "must certainly be within a few hundred miles of the Border. But there are many regions north; and there are many places in Canada where Chinese have gone. Once entered, their head tax paid, they are lost again from sight "

The Shadow's whisper made Tam pause. The Chinaman caught the tones of a suppressed laugh. The Shadow spoke.

"Eighty miles north of Georgian Bay," he declared. "Close to Lake Nimiskiming; where the nearest town is Wapiti Junction, on the Canadian Pacific Railway."

TAM stared, amazed. He knew that The Shadow was locating the region from which the Mongol had come. The news was astounding.

"You have heard of the Hudson Bay Posts?"

The Shadow's question brought a nod from Tam. The Chinaman listened expectantly.

"There are many such posts in Canada," added The Shadow. "They precede each new frontier. Old ones are abandoned when no longer needed. The Hudson Bay Posts are remote, with one exception. The post on Lake Nimiskiming."

"It is near enough to the Border "

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"Yes. A plane could easily make a non-stop flight from Lake Nimiskiming to somewhere near New York."

"But how did you learn "

Tam stopped. The Shadow was dropping flakes of tobacco back into the goatskin pouch. Calmly, he spoke.

"This tobacco," he declared, "is the famous blend sold only by the Hudson Bay Posts. It must have been purchased with other supplies. It was carried to the place where the Mongol was."

"And the only post," expressed Tam, "is the one near Lake Nimiskiming. The only one near enough to the United States Border "

"Yes. Moreover, the one way to reach that region from the west is by Wapiti Junction. Investigation will begin from there."

Tam watched The Shadow finish with the tobacco. The aroma was distinctive. Tam realized that any one who had once smoked that brand could easily identify it.

Whatever else the Mongol carried could have been brought from China or procured in New York; but not the tobacco. Tam realized the strength of The Shadow's clue. He knew that this supersleuth had gained a start.

Tam knew The Shadow to be a traveler; one who had certainly included the North Woods in his many expeditions. Doubtless, The Shadow had visited the very Hudson Bay Post of which he had spoken.

One by one, The Shadow replaced the articles in the dead Mongol's pocket. He took Loon Kow's revolver that Tam had laid upon the desk. The Shadow wiped the handle of the gun; then, wearing his gloves, he clamped the weapon in the dead hand of Loon Kow.

"Go."

THE SHADOW'S lone word was a command. Doctor Tam nodded and arose. He went out by the door to the curio shop. He found the front door locked. The Shadow had picked it and had fastened the lock afterward. Tam used his pass-key. He edged up the stone steps to Doyer Street.

Tam knew what The Shadow was about. He was fixing a scene to indicate that Loon Kow had fought with the Mongol murderer and had finished the man who had stabbed him. The police might form other conclusions; but it would be impossible for them to gain a trail to actual participants, other than the two whom they would find dead.

The Shadow wanted to keep Roy Tam's name from the case. Tam would be needed here in New York, to check on other developments; for The Shadow might soon have urgent business elsewhere.

Tam had these thoughts as he moved along the sidewalk, noting with satisfaction that no wayfarers were about. Past the elbow curve of the street Tam paused, prepared to make his exodus from the confines of Chinatown. Persons who had seen him to-night would think that he had walked through the quarter without making a stop.

Instinctively, Tam looked back toward the silent shop of Loon Kow. As he stared, Tam caught a motion on the outskirts of blackness. For a fleeting moment, he saw the illusion of a shape that faded into another area of gloom. Tam knew that The Shadow had departed. The Chinaman hurried toward the nearest street and took a northward course beneath an elevated structure.

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Eyes saw Doctor Tam as the Chinaman passed an obscure corner. They were the eyes of The Shadow. They saw the expression upon Tam's face: one of sorrow for the death of Loon Kow; yet an expression mingled with gratitude.

For Tam knew that the murder of Loon Kow would not pass unavenged. One murderer had died; others would meet their doom. Nor would the quest cease until the highest had paid his price the leader whom minions called Kai Luan.

The trail would carry far from Manhattan, off to a pristine wilderness in rough, unsettled country. But every move would be governed by the same master hand. It would be The Shadow's quest. A strange clue had begun the new cause.

A whispered laugh sounded in the darkness. Its echoes faded weirdly. The headlights of a swerving automobile showed vacancy at the spot from which the laugh had come. The Shadow, like Doctor Tam, had departed into the night.

But even The Shadow did not realize, as yet, to how great a scope this single clue would expand. While an agent of The Shadow would be sent to Canada to learn more about the trail which followed the tobacco clue, other individuals, entirely apart from the present scene, were unconsciously preparing another factor in the plot, and The Shadow, himself, was due to learn other things which would keep him here for some time.

CHAPTER III. IN THE NORTH WOODS

"WHAT marvelous tobacco!"

The exclamation came from a young woman who was seated in the bow of a canoe. She was speaking to a man of forty, who was in a boat close by. Both canoes were drawn up to the bank of a little river. Each boat had an Indian guide in the stern.

"It is Hudson Bay tobacco, Edna."

The man looked up from a map, smiled and puffed his pipe. The aroma of smoke became more pungent. It seemed to blend with the fragrance of the pine woods above the river bank.

"I remember," nodded the girl. "You bought a pound tin of it back at the Hudson Bay Post. Just before we left Lake Nimiskiming. But this is the first time you smoked it, Harley. I believe I could recognize that tobacco anywhere."

The man folded the map. He picked up a paddle. The girl did the same. The canoes drifted from the bank and headed upstream. While the silent guides plodded with their paddles, the man and the girl kept stroke at the canoe bows. They talked as the boats moved northward.

"East from Lake Nimiskiming," remarked Harley. "That brought us to the Manitibi River. We have done several miles since noon. We will soon reach Red Cedar Rapids."

"I'm anxious to see the place," said Edna. "It must be interesting."

"It is," stated the man. He smiled. "I think you are liking this trip, Edna."

"Marvelously," agreed the girl. "When you first suggested that we spend our honeymoon in the North Woods, I thought you were joking, Harley. But you weren't."

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"I seldom joke, Edna. You knew how much I liked this country. Even though it has been years since I was here."

"That is what Jim Lagry said after he had talked with you about the trip."

"Yes. Jim was up here once himself. That was a good many years ago. Before "

The man broke off suddenly and began to ply his paddle. The girl smiled, slightly; then remarked in a low tone:

"Before you thought that I would ever be Mrs. Creeland?"

The man nodded. He paused in paddling, to knock the ashes from his pipe.

"That was long ago, Harley," said Edna, in a soft voice. "Really, we should not let the past trouble us. I have told you, often, that I have forgotten Dale Mundon."

Creeland pocketed his pipe and resumed paddling. He looked back toward the guides; then spoke to Edna.

"I can't forget Mundon," Creeland told his wife. "The fellow always was a mischief-maker. I was glad when he left Boyersford. I "

"We are a thousand miles from Boyersford, Harley. Why not think about the North Woods?"

Creeland smiled.

"A good idea," he decided. "Let's speed up the stroke. I want you to see Red Cedar Rapids."

EDNA CREELAND was silent as they paddled steadily onward. But she was thinking of the brief conversation. Somehow, the subject of Dale Mundon was one that had constantly marred this trip. Edna felt that she could understand the reason.

She had been engaged to Dale Mundon until one year ago. Dale was a younger man than Harley Creeland; and he had taken life less seriously. Then Dale had left Boyersford, without an explanation. Edna had considered their engagement broken.

Harley Creeland had made a proposal of marriage. Urged by family and friends, Edna had accepted. Creeland was the wealthiest man in Boyersford. A banker, manufacturer and real-estate owner, he was reputed to be a millionaire. That had influenced the others; but not Edna, until the girl came to the sudden realization that she cared for Creeland.

Had Dale Mundon remained in Boyersford, however, Edna's love for Creeland would not have developed. Both she and her husband recognized that fact; and every time either one thought of Mundon, doubts occurred. In Edna's mind, particularly; for she had never learned the answer to one perplexing question.

Why Dale Mundon had left Boyersford?

Dale had held a good position. In fact, he had worked for Creeland, as an assistant cashier in the Boyersford Bank. Yet no one not even Creeland had ever given an explanation for Dale's sudden departure.

Creeland had merely classed Dale as a "mischief-maker"; beyond that, he had said nothing. Nor had Jim

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Lagry, Creeland's closest friend and the man who had first introduced Dale to the banker. Edna had suspected that there was something beneath the surface; but the subject of Dale Mundon was one that she did not care to press with Creeland.

The girl's thoughts changed. The crisp air of the pine woods; the soft splash of the canoe paddles brought her back to her surroundings. She looked toward her husband and smiled as she saw him staring straight ahead, on the lookout for Red Cedar Rapids.

This trip was what Harley needed. His life in Boyersford was hectic. Business took him out of town nearly every week. Whenever he came back from New York or Chicago, he was on the go constantly. Edna felt glad that they had chosen this trip for their honeymoon. Here, north of Lake Nimiskiming, was one place where Harley could be free from worry.

The canoes rounded a bend. The rush of rippling water sounded from ahead. Creeland raised his paddle and pointed with enthusiasm.

"Red Cedar Rapids!"

EDNA stared in astonishment as the canoes approached the bank. The river curved here; apparently, it encircled a quarter-mile stretch of ground. Along that curve were the rapids; but it was the shore itself that caught the girl's attention.

All about were pine-wood houses, silent and deserted. Upon the bank, beside a landing wharf, was a small steamboat, drawn well up on shore. Anchored in the pool below the rapids were two house boats, one boasting two stories, the other three. The taller house boat bore a weather-beaten sign that carried the legend: "King Edward Hotel."

Narrow rails ran from the small wharf; upon them was a little flat car that mules had once drawn. Edna looked about in bewilderment as they reached the dock. Creeland chuckled.

"It's a ghost town," he explained. "Once it had a few hundred inhabitants. Now every one is gone. I told you that Red Cedar Rapids would surprise you."

"But why did the people leave?" queried the girl, open-eyed. "Where did they all go?"

"Look at the steamboat," said Creeland. "There's another like it up at the other end of the rapids. Miners used to come up the Manitiabi River on this boat. They stayed here overnight, while their luggage was hauled by mules. The next day they went farther up the river in the other boat."

"Where to, Harley?"

"To a town called Galena. Lots of mining up there. Red Cedar Rapids caught the travelers coming and going. It was a boom town. Those house boats were built farther down the river and brought up here to compete with the cabins on shore. They served as hotels."

"But what happened up at Galena? Did the mines fail?"

"Not a bit of it. What killed Red Cedar Rapids was the completion of the railroad. It runs parallel with the river about thirty miles west of here. When the railway was completed, river travel ended. This town died."

They were on the wharf. Creeland and a tired-faced guide were loading a canoe upon the little flat car.

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"I'm going to shoot the rapids, Edna," announced Creeland. "Dominie is going with me. You stay here and make camp with Pierre. I want to try the ride once before I take you through the rapids. You'll see us come around the bend in about half an hour."

Rusted wheels screeched as Creeland and Dominie pushed the little car along the rails. Edna began to look about at the old shacks on the shore. She saw Pierre unloading packs. He was a squatty fellow, with a broad, solemn face, and he was lazy as he worked. Edna decided to help with the packs.

"No," grunted Pierre, when the girl approached. "Me make camp. No need pitch tents here. We sleep in cabins."

"Can any one use them?"

Pierre nodded.

"Pots and pans all in cabins."

"The people left them there?"

Another nod. Edna questioned:

"But why aren't they stolen?"

"Nobody steal up here," grunted Pierre. He pointed abruptly to the canoe. "You go see post office?"

"The post office?" inquired Edna. "Where is it?"

"In house. On boat."

PIERRE pointed to the smaller of the house boats. Edna stepped aboard the canoe. Pierre paddled alone and brought them alongside the two-story structure.

"Anybody leave letters," stated Pierre, as they stepped to the deck. "Only one man take. Him from Wapiti Junction. He put in mail."

They entered a doorway and came to a room that looked like an office. Letters were spread upon a table; some were covered with cobwebs. Only a few bore stamps.

"How often does the postman come?" queried Edna.

"One month," returned Pierre. "Maybe two."

"But what about the letters that have no stamps? How can he mail them?"

Pierre opened a drawer in the table. Edna saw copper and nickel coins, with a few silver pieces among them.

"People leave money," explained the guide. "Man from Wapiti Junction takes letters and money. He buys them stamps."

"And no one steals the money?"

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Edna shook her head as he smiled. She watched Pierre pick up envelopes, stare at them and replace them. This was certainly an honest country, wherein money as well as other property could be left unguarded.

"Me no read," grunted Pierre, tossing envelopes back in pile. "No like school. Books no good. You look at letters. I go back to dock. You call."

Pierre clumped from the office. Again, Edna smiled. Evidently the illiterate guide thought that the art of reading enabled a person to find interest in studying names and addresses. The idea aroused Edna's curiosity. She began to look at the top letters on the table, wondering if much mail was sent to distant points.

Reading names half aloud, Edna repeated one almost mechanically. Then the name stopped on her lips. The envelope froze to her hands.

"Miss Edna Dawson "

Edna was reading her own maiden name. In the week that she had been Edna Creeland, she had seen her new name so often that for an instant the old one had seemed absurd.

This letter was addressed to her; below the name was the address where she had lived in the town of Boyersford!

A letter placed here, perhaps two months ago. By some one who had probably not known that she intended to marry Harley Creeland. As Edna stared, almost unbelieving, the neat penmanship of the name and address awoke another memory of the past.

Without opening the envelope, Edna Creeland knew who had written the letter within. This envelope had been placed here by the man whom she had tried to forget all through the year gone by.

The handwriting on the envelope was that of Dale Mundon!

CHAPTER IV. WORD FROM THE PAST

UNREALITY gripped Edna Creeland as she studied the envelope containing Dale Mundon's letter. Then came wonderment. The girl was confronted by a dilemma. She could not decide what might be right.

The letter was addressed to Edna herself. Therefore, she would be justified in opening it. Contrarily, the letter had been committed to the mail, intended for a usual method of delivery. It might be best to leave it here.

The buried past disturbed Edna. This letter belonged to forgotten days. She was no longer Edna Dawson. Could she, as Edna Creeland, safely face the recollection that this letter might provoke? Troubled, Edna realized that she had still cherished thoughts of Dale Mundon.

When Edna finally acted, she did so under sudden impulse. Gripping the envelope, the girl tore it open and drew out the letter within. Half trembling, she unfolded the paper and began to read. The note was brief; but its statements were startling.

DEAR EDNA:

By this time, you have probably been told why I left Boyersford. I suppose that you have believed the charges. There was no way in which I could refute Harley Creeland's claim that I embezzled funds from his bank.

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Since I could have had access to the money, and the funds were found at my lodging, circumstantial evidence stood against me. It meant jail, unless I accepted Creeland's ultimatum. I had to leave Boyersford and cease all communication with you.

I came to the North Woods. Here, of all places, I learned facts that may some day enable me to clear myself. Therefore, I am writing this letter, with the caution that you show it to no one and destroy it immediately.

The letter may be delayed in reaching you as I am mailing it at a deserted town called Red Cedar Rapids. I am going north to Galena, but will return within six weeks. If you write me at Cedar Rapids, your letter will reach me.

Please make no future plans until you have heard from me again. Trust me as you did in the past.

Your own,

DALE.

The date on the letter was more than a month old. Edna remembered Pierre's statement concerning infrequent mail collections. Looking across the room, she saw a box upon the wall. Close examination showed that it contained letters with canceled postage stamps.

These were addressed to persons at Red Cedar Rapids. They had been brought from Wapiti Junction and left here. Edna realized that a reply to Dale's letter was a definite possibility. There were dusty sheets of paper on a window ledge. With them, envelopes, ink and pen. Hurriedly, Edna scrawled her answer:

DEAR DALE:

I am married to Harley Creeland. We stopped here at Red Cedar Rapids. I found your letter. I read it and destroyed it. From here, we go to Lake Lakimika and will camp there a few days. After that, south to the Hudson Bay Post at Lake Nimiskiming, where our trip will end. EDNA.

Sealing her own letter, Edna deposited it in the delivery box.

She tore Dale's letter into tiny fragments and pushed the bits of paper through a frayed opening in the mosquito netting that adorned the houseboat window. The papers fluttered to the river. Edna watched them drift away.

GOING out to the deck of the house boat. Edna called to Pierre, who was building a fire on shore. The guide boarded his canoe and paddled over to the house boat. Edna stepped into the canoe and they went back to shore.

The girl was seated with her back against the bow. Her face was meditative; and she noted suddenly that Pierre was watching her expression. There was sympathy in the guide's eyes. His intuitive mind had evidently jumped to the conclusion that the girl was troubled. Edna felt a sudden trust in Pierre. She spoke as the canoe grounded the gravelly shore.

"How long will we be at Lake Lakimika?" queried Edna. "Mr. Creeland did not tell me all his plans. He said a few days "

"Him say two," interposed Pierre, holding up his fingers. "Maybe good fish in Lakimika. I tell him yes."

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"Harley likes fishing," nodded Edna. "I wonder if he could be persuaded to stay longer?"

"You want him stay long at Lakimika?"

Pierre's question was direct. The guide had evidently guessed what was in Edna's mind. The girl smiled.

"I would like to stay for a while at Lakimika "

"Leave to Pierre. Me fix it."

Before the girl could question further, a hail came from the bend of the river. Creeland and the other guide had arrived at the outlet of the rapids. They paddled to shore. Creeland looked puzzled when he saw Edna in the canoe with Pierre.

"Where have you been?" he questioned.

"Over to the bottom of the rapids," smiled Edna. "Watching to see you and Dominie come down the rips. We became tired, waiting. As soon as we returned, you arrived. It would be that way."

Edna glanced toward Pierre as she spoke. She saw a slight sparkle in the squatty guide's half-closed eyes. She was sure that Pierre would not mention her trip to the house boat. The guide knew that she did not want Creeland to go there.

"The rapids are tough," decided Creeland. "You had better not try to shoot them, Edna. We nearly pitched the canoe, halfway down. I warded off a big rock with the bow paddle."

"Safe for lady," objected Dominie. "Pierre take bow paddle. Me take stern."

"All right," laughed Creeland. "Go on up and bring back the flat car. Tote the canoe across and take Edna with you. I'll wait here."

It was dusk when Edna completed the trip with the guides. They had dinner by the camp fire and arranged their quarters in cabins along shore. When morning came, Edna awoke to find Creeland absent. She came from the cabin and saw her husband fishing in the big pool near the house boats.

Pierre was cooking breakfast at the camp fire. He raised his head and gave a slight shake. Edna knew its meaning. Creeland had not visited the house boats.

After breakfast, Creeland suggested a prompt start to Lake Lakimika. They carried the canoes and the packs upon the flat car and reached the head of the rapids. There were shacks here, with another house boat; also a small steamer pulled on shore.

Edna had seen the upper portion of the ghost town the day before; but its silence still impressed her. She felt relieved when they paddled northward and lost sight of the deserted settlement, past the next river bend.

Five miles above Red Cedar Rapids, they reached a portage on the west bank. The canoes landed; the guides lashed paddles to the cross-braces and arranged leather tump lines between. Edna watched them roll the canoes up on their shoulders.

With the tump lines pressing hard against their heads; with their arms balancing the inverted canoes, Pierre and Dominie waddled along the path like mammoth turtles, off on a half-mile trip across the portage.

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Creeland had girded two pack bags with a tump line. He hoisted the burden, clamped the broad center of the tump line upon his forehead, and leaned forward, supporting the sides of the line with his hands. He spoke to Edna:

"Put one of the tents on the packs."

Edna added the tent. Creeland motioned for her to come along beside him. Edna remarked that the burden looked too heavy. Creeland laughed.

"You can carry a lot with these tump lines," he explained. "Bend forward and it balances the weight. Much better than a knapsack."

"What about the other packs?" queried Edna.

"The guides will come back for them," stated Creeland. "They can bring the packs and the wannigan boxes in one load."

They moved along through the silent forest. At one spot, the evergreens ended. Dull gloom was replaced by clear light that filtered through the boughs of maple trees. Creeland dropped the packs to the ground.

"It is beautiful here," he remarked, with enthusiasm. "These patches of maple forest change the whole setting. I remember them from other trips up in this country."

"Were you ever on this portage before?" inquired Edna.

"No," replied Creeland. "They call this the Lakimika Circuit. Pierre recommended it. I'm glad we chose it."

"Pierre says there is good fishing in Lake Lakimika."

"And Dominie disagrees. Well, we shall find out to-morrow. I'm going on an expedition at dawn. Odd chaps, those Indians. They never seem to hold the same opinion."

"Isn't Pierre half French?"

"Yes. That may account for their different viewpoint. Pierre seems the wiser of the two, even though he can't read or write."

CREELAND was hoisting the packs. Edna exited the tent and followed. Her thoughts had reverted to the post office at Red Cedar Rapids. She could not forget the statements that she had read in Dale Mundon's letter.

Edna had begun to realize why her husband had termed Dale a mischief-maker. The mystery of the past was explained. It was Harley Creeland who had caused Dale's departure from Boyersford. Yet Harley had never spoken of Dale as an embezzler.

That very fact placed Edna in a quandary. On the surface, it seemed that Harley should be commended for keeping the matter quiet. But Dale's own mention of the subject changed the situation. It indicated Dale's innocence. Though Dale had not so expressed it, the finding of the funds had the earmarks of a frame-up.

That placed a new angle on Creeland's silence. Edna realized that her husband might have good reason to avoid the subject of Dale's departure. Perhaps the facts were too thin to stand close inspection. Considering her own outlook, Edna knew that she would have demanded a complete inquiry had she been told that Dale

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was an embezzler.

Perhaps Creeland had guessed what her reaction would have been. That would account for his policy. One point was certain: by saying little against Dale, Creeland had gained Edna's confidence much more effectively. He had been canny enough to make no accusations against the girl's former suitor.

What did Dale Mundon mean by facts gained in this vicinity?

Edna's only conjecture was that Harley Creeland must have connections in the neighborhood of Lake Lakimika. Harley had taken many trips during the past year. He could have come to the North Woods on secret excursions. That, too, would explain his choice of a camping trip honeymoon.

Creeland had mentioned his old friend Jim Lagry as partly responsible for the decision. That could easily have been a bluff. Edna saw good reason to doubt her husband's statements.

They reached the end of the portage. Creeland dropped the packs and lighted a pipeload of Hudson Bay tobacco, while Pierre and Dominie placed the canoes by the water's edge and started back for the last burdens.

They were on the shore of a long, narrow pond. The banks were mucky, thickly filled with reeds. Creeland pointed to muddy water.

"Muskeg," he explained. "Six feet of silt, with three inches of water above it. Wait until you see our paddles stir up the mud. There are other muskeg ponds beyond Lake Lakimika."

EDNA stopped an exclamation. Creeland had denied a previous visit to Lake Lakimika. Yet his own words showed a knowledge of this terrain. Creeland must have realized that he had contradicted himself. He removed his pipe from his mouth and added:

"Other muskeg ponds. The map shows them."

Edna gave no voice to her suspicions. But she stood convinced that Creeland had covered this route before. Changing the subject, the girl remarked that they had left the patch of maple woods. Here, all were evergreens. Edna showed interest in the trees. Creeland began to point out the different species.

The guides returned with the final packs and tents also a pair of small green chests, the wannigan boxes that held provisions. They loaded the canoes and began a two-mile paddle to the other end of the muskeg pond. There they encountered a second portage.

This carry was longer than the first. When they reached its end, they stood upon the shore of a large, sparkling lake. This was Lakimika. Six miles distant was a wooded point, extending from the far shore; to its right, was an arm of the lake. The main sheet of water stretched miles southward from the opposite point.

Edna was fascinated by the dancing wavelets. She watched the water while her husband puffed his pipe. Time passed dreamily while they waited for the guides to arrive with the second load. At last the pair appeared; Pierre gave a grunt and jounced a wannigan box to the ground. Its hinged lid opened, to show an empty interior.

"Upset in muskeg," announced the half-breed. "No bread left. Cans gone, too. Mud too deep."

"Half our provisions!" exclaimed Creeland. "What are we going to do about it, Pierre?"

"Dominie go down to Nimiskiming." replied Pierre. "Take one canoe. Bring back grub."

"How long will it take him?"

Pierre held up four fingers.

"Two day go," he declared. "Two day back."

"Have we enough provisions for the three of us? Counting out what Dominie takes with him?"

Pierre nodded; then added:

"You catch fish, to-morrow."

Dominie looked doubtful; but made no comment. The guides loaded the canoes. Pierre pointed toward the distant point; they started their voyage across the lake. From the point, Dominie would continue southward, completing the circuit to the Hudson Bay Post on Lake Nimiskiming.

"Four days," remarked Creland, as the canoes paddled onward, side by side. "I had only intended to stay two."

HIS tone was doubtful; he seemed engaged in calculation. For a few moments, Edna feared that he would decide to push on to Lake Nimiskiming and abandon the Lakimika fishing.

Then came the final verdict.

"I'll write some letters," declared Creland. "Dominie can mail them from the Hudson Bay Post. Some business men expect to hear from me. The letters will take care of matters."

Edna smiled. As the other canoe pushed ahead, she looked back over her shoulder and threw a grateful glance toward Pierre. For once, the squatty guide responded with a grin.

Pierre had made good his promise to delay the trip when they reached Lake Lakimika. Edna knew well that he had purposely dumped the wannigan box into the muskeg pond.

Four days at Lake Lakimika instead of two! A chance that Dale Mundon might arrive at Red Cedar Rapids and come along the circuit. Edna was elated, for she had gained the firm decision that the past must be explained. Only through Dale's arrival could that be achieved.

Had Edna Creland known the dangers that the coming days would bring, she would not have thanked Pierre for the ruse that was to prolong the stay on Lake Lakimika. Had she known how close she had come to the spread of The Shadow's net, she would have felt more misgivings than she did.

CHAPTER V. VANISHED MONGOLS

IN choosing the terrain north of Nimiskiming as a place for investigation, The Shadow, had acted with good logic. Had he known of the Creland party and its journeying via the Manitiba River, the master sleuth could have laid a final finger upon Lake Lakimika.

Such facts, however, had not reached The Shadow. He had narrowed matters down to a zone, with the Nimiskiming Hudson Bay Post as its center. He had decided to begin investigations with Wapiti Junction

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rather than the post at Nimiskiming.

On the same afternoon that the Creeland party reached Lake Lakimika, a young man alighted from the C.P.R. local at Wapiti Junction. This arrival was Harry Vincent, a trusted agent of The Shadow. Clean-cut and businesslike, Harry was the ideal man for this preliminary work.

Wapiti Junction proved to be a scraggly town near the shore of a lengthy strip of water that was called Long Lake. The railroad station was the town's principal structure. Here, tracks met; for this terminus of the C.P.R. branch line was the beginning of another railroad called the Galena Northern.

Besides the railroad station, Harry observed half a dozen stores, some cabins and two buildings that served as hotels. One of these, the Wapiti House, was a well-kept structure. The other, the Depot Hotel, had a saggy look. One side of its three-story wall appeared to be a yard lower than the other.

Harry's train had brought a dozen grizzled prospectors up to the junction. These men had headed for the Wapiti House. Lugging his suitcases, Harry followed. He obtained a room at the hotel; the price was twice the amount that he had expected to pay.

COMING down to the plainly furnished lobby, Harry nodded to a bearded man whom he had seen on the train. The fellow returned the friendly greeting and Harry sat down in a chair not far away. The bearded miner was chatting with a long-faced man who appeared to be a resident of Wapiti Junction. Harry wanted to enter the conversation; and it was not long before he did. The bearded miner paved the way.

"Going up to Galena, partner?" he questioned.

"No." Harry shook his head. "I figured on starting out by canoe. Off on a camping trip."

"You came to the wrong place," put in the long-faced resident. "You ought to have gone to Lake Nimiskiming. How about it, Steve?"

The question was to the bearded man, who nodded.

"You're right, Hank. Lake Nimiskiming is where the canoe trips begin. Plenty of guides there at the Hudson Bay Post."

Harry knew very well why he had not gone to Lake Nimiskiming. Though the Hudson Bay Post was the spot from which hidden Mongols had obtained supplies, The Shadow had doubted that much could be learned there. So Harry was here at Wapiti Junction instead, and his present cue was to push the conversation.

"I thought of Lake Nimiskiming," he affirmed. "I had heard of the Hudson Bay Post there. But the railroad does not go to it. That is why I picked Wapiti Junction."

"You get to the Hudson Bay Post by steamer," explained Hank. "There's a station on the main line called Nimiskiming, down at the south end of the lake. Well maybe you'll have some luck here. Once in a while guides put into Wapiti Junction."

"Not often, though," grunted Steve. "I hadn't seen many. Of course, I don't go back and forth from Galena much. You'd know better than I would, Hank!"

Long face nodded. Harry saw a chance for another question.

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"What brings people to Wapiti Junction?" he questioned. "Are there mines hereabouts?"

"None nearer than Galena," returned bearded Steve. "Leastwise, none that amount to much. This place is just a stopping point. The C.P.R. train comes in late in the afternoon. The Galena Northern don't pull out until the next morning."

"So the passengers stay overnight," put in Hank. "Coming down from Galena, though, they get here in the morning and take the C.P.R. the same evening."

"And the guests here at the hotel," remarked Harry, "are all northbound?"

"That's it," returned Hank, "and the place fills up quick. You were kinda lucky to land a room here, young fellow."

"What about the other hotel?"

"The Depot Hotel?" questioned Steve, with a grin of his bearded lips. "The old leaning tower? Yep, you could get a room there, partner. But I wouldn't recommend it."

"Specially to-night," guffawed Hank. "There's a new bunch coming on the work train, Steve."

"More Chinese? Say when's there going to be an end to them?"

"Don't know. There'll be a couple more loads of them, I reckon."

THE mention of Chinese had captured Harry's interest. He had heard no previous talk of Chinamen, nor had he seen any in Wapiti Junction. Steve saw that Harry was intent. The miner explained.

"Up above Galena," said Steve, "they're running a new railway to Hudson Bay. Contract calls for it to be completed by next summer. It's hard getting the right kind of labor for the cold weather."

"Can Chinese stand the cold?" queried Harry.

"These fellows can," returned Steve. "They're Mongols. Most of them worked for the Japanese on those Northern Manchurian Railways. Somebody got the notion of importing them to help out on this job."

"What about the immigration laws?"

"Nothing to stop the Chinese, providing they pay their head tax. The contractors are doing that for them. They bring them into Vancouver and carry them east on the C.P.R.; and they keep a good check on them."

"Until they get here," put in Hank, with a chuckle. "Then they herd them into the old Depot Hotel. It was closed until this new business started. In the morning, the Chinks report at the station and go north in a car hitched on the regular train."

"Hadn't many people know about it," added Steve. "Leastwise, not outside of here and Galena. There was some kick about allowing it; but the Chinese was needed on the job, so they've been coming in. The people in back of it are keeping sort of quiet. Don't want to stir up no argument."

"Don't see why there should be any," was Hank's opinion. "The contract's got to be done on time. Bringing in these Mongols was the only way."

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A clanging bell announced that dinner was ready in the hotel dining room. Harry accompanied Steve and Hank; they conversed on other subjects during the meal, particularly the matter of Harry's camping trip.

"If you get a guide," Hank told Harry, "there's just one way you'll start out, sure as shooting. That's up to the head of Long Lake; then through the chain of muskeg ponds to Lake Lakimika. There's no other canoe route leaving Wapiti Junction.

"Not many people go it, neither. Swampy land all around them muskeg ponds. No place to camp until you get to the Lakimika portage. And that's close onto twenty mile."

IT was after dinner that Hank made a suggestion to Harry. It was inspired by the distant blast of a locomotive whistle they heard amid the darkness of the hotel porch.

"Work train coming in," remarked Hank. "Let's go over to the station and see the chinks unload."

Harry agreed with eagerness. They strolled across to the station. The work train arrived five minutes later. Harry and the miner watched a passenger car that was attached to the rear.

A procession of solemn-faced Mongols alighted. All were roughly dressed in American clothes. They were carrying clumsy luggage bags, and gabbled among themselves while a Canadian supervisor lined them up and started a march to the old Depot Hotel.

Harry counted eighteen Chinese in the group. He saw them huddle through the gloomy doorway of the tilted hotel. Then he noticed that the supervisor was returning. The regular southbound train had been held up until the arrival of the work train. Harry saw the supervisor board the local.

"Who watches the Chinese?" he questioned, while he and Hank were walking back to the Wapiti House.

"Nobody," replied Hank. "They let them go up and sleep where they want. Of course, there's a couple of watchmen downstairs; just to see there's no trouble. But they don't pay no attention to the chinks.

"There'll be another supervisor down from Galena to-morrow. He'll round them up and put them aboard the train. He counts them when he gets here and keeps tabs after that.

"Kinda useless, though. There wouldn't be none of them try to go their own way, up here in the woods. They've got to watch them coming across the continent. After they get this far, they're safe."

GUESTS retired early at the Wapiti House. Harry, spending the evening on the porch, found himself alone amid a silence. Lights were out everywhere. Harry could judge locations only by his recollections of the town by day.

Stepping from the porch, Harry began a cautious journey toward the Depot Hotel. He circled the tilted building and groped his way among scrubby trees that stood in back. Here, on the fringe of woods, he could hear the faint croaking of distant frogs; for he was closer to the lake.

A long while passed, yet Harry persisted in his vigil. His reward came when he heard sounds from fifty feet away. Men were approaching from the shore. A flashlight blinked, as a signal.

Scraping sounds came through this darkness. The noise came from the rear wall of the hotel. Harry listened. He felt sure that he heard padded footsteps. New silence followed; but Harry caught new glimmers of flashlights moving way through the trees. Cautiously, he took up the course.

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His trail was a slow one, for Harry could not risk a light of his own. He stumbled often, and stopped finally when he heard the lap of water. He had reached the shore of Long Lake, a furlong from the outskirts of the little town.

Others had preceded him, and their trail was ended for to-night. From out across the water, Harry heard the scrape of paddles against canoe gunwales. With each creak came the little splash of a completed stroke. The sounds diminished. The canoes were traveling toward the head of Long Lake.

WHEN morning came, Harry Vincent was dressed and on the porch of the Wapiti House. Watching the depot, he saw an antiquated locomotive haul in from the north. It was the train from Galena, due to return north before noon.

A broad-shouldered man with a wide-brimmed hat stepped from the train. He went across to the Depot Hotel. Soon a string of big Mongols appeared from the doorway. The broad-shouldered man lined them up, asked names and made notes on a pad. That done, he sent the Chinamen back into their quarters and returned to the station.

The broad-shouldered man was the supervisor who took charge from Wapiti Junction northward. He had gained no opportunity to talk with the man from the C.P.R., for that supervisor had gone out last night. The new supervisor had relied upon the Mongols themselves to give their names and tell their total number.

Last night, Harry Vincent had gained suspicion. To-day, he had garnered facts. Watching from his seat on the porch, he had taken count of the Mongols in the morning assembly. Their number had diminished from the day before. The total had lessened from eighteen to fourteen.

Last night, Harry had heard four Chinamen slip down from upper windows to join men in the darkness. The missing Mongols had been transported away in canoes toward the head of Long Lake. From there, the route would follow to Lake Lakimika.

Harry Vincent had confirmed the belief that The Shadow had maintained. Somewhere in these woods lay a hideaway for Chinese. Wapiti Junction was the point through which the Mongols entered. Their headquarters must lie eastward; the Nimiskiming Hudson Bay Post was the place from which they received supplies.

At noon, Harry saw Steve off on the train to Galena and watched fourteen Mongols go aboard the rear car. Though the miner had seen the Chinese arrive, he was oblivious to the fact that there were four less than before.

Harry, alone, had guessed the truth. Soon after the northbound train had left, he sent a lengthy telegram to New York. It was addressed to an investment broker named Rutledge Mann and it concerned the sale and purchase of securities.

That wire was a coded message to The Shadow. The strange beginnings were now weaving themselves into a complicated plot. While The Shadow waited in New York, Harry Vincent faced action in Canada. What The Shadow would decide as a result of this message would mean much to every one.

CHAPTER VI. THE SHADOW DELAYS

BLUISH light was gleaming in the corner of a windowless room. White hands were beneath the glow; from one finger glimmered a translucent fire opal. That gem was a mark of identity; it was The Shadow's girasol the only jewel that he wore.

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The Shadow was in his sanctum; a hidden spot in Manhattan where outside light never penetrated. A clock with curious circles showed the hour of eight; that alone was evidence that evening had come. For in The Shadow's sanctum, all hours were alike. Blackness reigned perpetually, save when the blue light glowed within its corner.

A large map lay beneath the lamp. It was a large-scale topographical chart that showed every detail of the region between Wapiti Junction and Red Cedar Rapids. The Shadow was studying the terrain.

At the bottom of the map was Lake Nimiskiming, with the Hudson Bay Post marked upon an island. The Shadow's finger started at this point and moved eastward by lakes and portages to the Manitibi River. His finger followed the stream directly north; up the right edge of the map until it reached Red Cedar Rapids.

Starting at the lower left corner, The Shadow moved his left forefinger as he had his right. His left hand, however, was following the branch line of the C.P.R. It stopped when it arrived at Wapiti Junction.

Two facts were obvious to The Shadow. One, that a definite circuit could be made by canoe from Lake Nimiskiming. He traced the very course that the Creelands had chosen. Up the Manitibi to Red Cedar Rapids; across the westward portage into Lake Lakimika, where the route went southward, avoiding the arm that jutted west above the point.

Secondly, The Shadow saw that there was only one canoe route from Wapiti Junction. It went to the head of Long Lake; then eastward by a series of portages and small ponds until it reached Lakimika, at the very tip of the obscure arm above the point.

This route interested The Shadow. It was one that would be seldom used; for it ended at Wapiti Junction. Moreover, it offered no attraction for canoeists. Marshes were marked between Lakimika and Long Lake. The intervening ponds were muskeg.

The Chinese had followed this course from Wapiti Junction. It was obvious that they would have gone farther than the head of Long Lake, where they might be detected. Therefore, they had continued on toward Lakimika. The shores of the muskeg ponds would offer misery for campers. The Chinese would certainly have been carried through to Lakimika itself.

The Shadow's left forefinger was moving eastward. It stopped, just past the string of muskeg ponds. The Shadow was studying the northwest arm of Lake Lakimika. It was the one place that offered haven for the fugitives.

Farther progress would cause a hazard when the Chinese reached the circuit that curved through Lake Lakimika. Their conductors would not risk passage across toward Red Cedar Rapids; nor would they chance a southward journey down Lake Lakimika.

SOMEWHERE along that arm of the lake, safely above the point, there would the hide-out be found. Marked upon the map, on the northwest shore of Lakimika, was a place that offered an abode. Tiny black squares indicated cabins. A small, outlined square signified an abandoned mine shaft on the shore of the lake.

The Shadow's hands lifted. They reached across and drew earphones from the wall. A tiny light glimmered. A voice came across the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

"Instructions." The Shadow's response was a whisper. "Coded telegram to Vincent. Obtain guide. Occupy

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H-3 on map 4. Await contact."

"Instructions received."

A low-toned laugh in the darkness as The Shadow replaced the earphones. Through Burbank, who like Mann, was an intermediary, The Shadow had sent terse orders to Harry Vincent. Soon, his agent would be camping on the site of the old cabins.

A dangerous spot, yet one that Harry would approach with caution. For Harry knew the menace of the Chinese. His own reference to a map would tell Harry of The Shadow's theory. Moreover, the last words of The Shadow's order were significant. "Await contact" meant that The Shadow, himself, would arrive within the danger zone.

The North Woods would not be far by plane. However, The Shadow, like Harry, would show wisdom in approaching his destination by canoe. Again, The Shadow laughed as he marked the course that Harry was to follow. Then, as an aftermath, he noted the other route to Lake Lakimika.

This was the one that Creeland and his wife had taken, up the Maniti River. The Shadow was considering its possibilities. His study ended, he folded the map. The bluish light clicked off.

Usually, that action indicated The Shadow's departure. To-night, however, he lingered. Delay seemed illogical under the circumstances; for The Shadow had reason to be starting northward. There was greater reason why he waited. The explanation came after a pause of twenty minutes. The tiny wall light glimmered.

The Shadow found the earphones in the darkness. Burbank's voice gave quiet statement:

"Doctor Tam has called the number that was given him."

"Connect."

The Shadow's single word was an order. Clicks sounded from the earphones; then Tam's hello. The Shadow responded. Tam delivered news.

"False money has reached me," was the Chinaman's bland statement. "It has come twice from Toy Ling, who owns the Hankow Cafe. He has paid it to persons from whom he has bought supplies."

"Proceed."

"Toy Ling leaves his restaurant at nine every night. After that hour he meets his friends. I have trusted men who can watch Toy Ling and follow him."

"They will not be needed."

The Shadow's cryptic utterance ended the telephone call. Earphones clattered back upon the wall. A swish sounded in the darkness. The Shadow had departed from his sanctum.

SOON afterward, a vague figure glided up to a taxicab that was parked in the gloom of an obscure Manhattan street. A gloved hand gripped the door and opened it. The outlined shape joined the blackened interior of the cab.

A voice spoke in a whisper. The driver heard it; his shrewd face became alert. This cabby was Moe

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Shrevnitz, an agent of The Shadow. He had been parked at this spot, awaiting his chief's arrival. Yet Moe, keen though his hearing was, had not caught the sounds of The Shadow's entry.

The whisper was an order. Moe started the motor; the cab rolled forward. It reached an avenue and took a southward course beneath the structure of an elevated. The cab stopped at the address that The Shadow had given. Moe grinned as he noted the front of a darkened, deserted building.

The Shadow had a photographic memory of such spots in Manhattan. Almost invariably, he chose addresses that offered gloomy patches of sidewalk. The door of the cab was opening; yet Moe did not hear it. Nor did he see The Shadow's cloaked form glide forth beyond the curb.

Moe sat waiting, his eyes faced forward. He saw the street ahead, where brilliant lights proclaimed the Hankow Cafe. The lights from the Chinese restaurant threw patches of glare along this avenue. Moe was positive that The Shadow must have gone in the opposite direction.

The cab driver was wrong. Even as he stared, a phantom shape moved across his line of vision, a dozen yards on the near side of the lights. That figure reached the curb and merged with the blackness of an elevated pillar. It shifted to the far side as the lights of a passing truck came down the avenue.

Once the truck had passed, the shape moved again, this time at an angle that brought it back to the curb at the right. The Shadow had passed the brilliant front of the Hankow Cafe. The keen eyes of Moe Shrevnitz had failed to glimpse even an instant view of The Shadow's passage.

Beyond the Chinese restaurant was the doorway that served as the entrance, for the cafe was located on the second floor. There, The Shadow entered. His figure was outlined for the first time; but only when it had reached a spot inside the lighted hallway.

There were stairs that led straight upward; beside them, a gloomy hall that led to a storeroom at the rear of the ground floor. The Shadow's form became obscured past the bottom of the stairway. He had found the lurking place he wanted.

Through Doctor Tam, who had contacts everywhere, The Shadow had learned that Toy Ling had passed counterfeit money. Like many other Chinese in New York, Toy Ling was one who thrived by conducting a restaurant outside of Chinatown. Even to The Shadow, a search through scores of places like the Hankow Cafe would have been a tedious, hopeless task.

Doctor Tam, however, had provided the proper process, at The Shadow's bidding. Among Tam's associates were Chinese who sold wholesale provisions. Their routes included nearly every Chinese restaurant in New York.

THE SHADOW knew that Chinatown itself was flooded with false currency that had been placed there through the unknown Kai Luan. He had divined also that the shrewd Celestials who handled the counterfeit bills would be wise enough to seek outlets beyond their own bailiwick.

Police had found the dead Mongol beside the body of Loon Kow. Those who served Kai Luan would be wary since one of the Mongol killers had been slain. The Shadow had picked the very type of outlet that crooked Chinese would choose. Doctor Tam's friends, the wholesalers, had cooperated.

Queer money had come from Toy Ling, for payment on his accounts. Working with some one in Chinatown, the restaurant owner had unloaded a good supply of bad currency. Toy Ling had made a test; apparently, it had worked. One consignment exhausted, Toy Ling would desire more. The Shadow knew the ways of the

Chinese.

Not only would Toy Ling be avaricious. He would prove crafty as well. He would be smart enough to conduct his own negotiations personally. Hence The Shadow had chosen to await Toy Ling's departure from the Hankow Cafe.

The Shadow was needed in the north. But a task remained in Manhattan. The Shadow had delayed long enough to handle it. To-night, he would trail Toy Ling; after that, if necessary, the work could be left to others unless consequences should bring complete results.

Curiously, The Shadow's delay was to produce an outcome that even the master sleuth had not anticipated. The Shadow had left his sanctum with his future plans already formed, save for this interlude that concerned Toy Ling.

But before this evening's task was ended, The Shadow was to gain another contact. One that would bring an added feature to the program he had scheduled Vic Marquette, G Man who had met with The Shadow before. From delay, The Shadow was to experience again.

CHAPTER VII. THE SHADOW'S ALLY

"TEN minutes of nine."

"Time for Marquette to meet us."

"Here he is "

The rest of the remark was drowned by the rumble of an elevated train. The speaker pointed toward the steps from a station platform. Another man was coming to join the pair that had spoken. He had arrived by the elevated train.

The third man was of stalwart build; his face was darkish and adorned with a mustache. As he approached the others, he kept his head turned slightly, in order to avoid the observation of chance passers. He had good reason for this policy. There were always persons who might recognize Vic Marquette.

"Hello, Redshaw." Vic gave greeting to the taller of the pair who awaited him. Then to the shorter: "Hello, Byrnes. Anything new?"

"This." Redshaw thrust a crumpled bank note into Vic's fist. "Another queer one. From the same place."

"The brass shop?"

"Yeah. The old owl is still behind his counter."

Vic gave a nudge. The three men started along a side street. They stopped when they reached a dimly lighted shop. Another man stepped up to join them. Marquette addressed him as Logan. He had been covering the brass shop.

These four were G Men. Their leader, Vic Marquette, was a veteran long in the Federal service. As a Department of Justice operative, Marquette had proven himself a hawk when on the trail of counterfeiters. He had become an important factor in the Division of Investigation.

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PLACING Redshaw and Byrnes on either side of the brass shop, Vic strolled forward and casually noted the name above the door. The sign stated:

J. LOSKOB

BRASSWARE

Thrusting his hands into his pocket, Vic entered. He saw a white-haired old man behind the counter; the fellow was wearing large-rimmed glasses that gave him an owlish expression. Noting a half-opened door behind the man, Vic gave a slight shoulder motion. It was a signal to Logan, outside.

"Mr. Loskob?"

The old man nodded as Vic gave the query. The G Man drew his hand from his pocket and fluttered a ten-dollar bill upon the counter.

"Where did you get this?"

Loskob blinked as he heard the sharp question. He looked up to see the G Man leaning forward. Marquette's right hand was on his pocket's edge. His left had turned back his lapel to give a glimmer of a badge.

"You you're a detective?"

Loskob's gasp showed that Marquette was using good tactics. Vic followed it with a sharper jab.

"I'm a government man," he informed, harshly. "You're coming clean, Loskob. How long have you been shoving the queer?"

Logan had edged in from the door. Loskob quaked at the sight of a new inquisitor. He blinked hopelessly and stammered words.

"Honest honest, I'm not in the racket "

Vic motioned toward a cash register on the counter. Loskob approached it and brought out other money. He spread a pitiful display of one-dollar bills, with a single ten among them. Vic pulled away the ten.

"Another of them!"

"I'll tell you where it came from!" The shopkeeper gave the words eagerly. "It was Lee Look! Yes, Lee Look!"

"A Chinaman?"

Loskob nodded willingly. He pointed through the inner doorway.

"Often, Lee Look comes here," he explained. "Not around by the Bowery, but through my back door. His own shop is down the next street."

"In Chinatown?"

Another nod from Loskob.

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"Lee Look sells brass. I let him choose pieces that he likes. He pays me a better price than wholesale. All this week he has come here. He has paid me sometimes twenty sometimes thirty dollars "

Marquette had nodded Logan toward the door. Logan had signaled; Redshaw and Byrnes entered. While Loskob stared, Marquette led the way around the counter. He looked through the rear door and saw a passage.

"We'll take this route," he told his men. "You stay here, Logan, and watch Loskob. Redshaw and Byrnes will go with me. We're paying a visit to Lee Look."

WITH the two men close behind him, Marquette led the way through to the rear street. They stepped cautiously out into darkness. Marquette motioned; they started along in a group. The street was dingy and poorly lighted; but as the trio passed an angle, a brilliance greeted them. They were approaching the outskirts of Chinatown.

"Lee Look's," chuckled Marquette, in an undertone. "There's the place, right ahead. Second shop on the right."

"Going in ahead, Vic?" inquired Redshaw.

Marquette nodded.

"Ready for quick action," he added. "One word for both of you. Lee Look may be slippery."

They reached the shop. Vic entered. Loskob was right; the Chinaman dealt in brass. That type of merchandise was all about, with very little of any other ware.

A sleepy-faced Chinaman was standing in the shop. He looked like a clerk. Marquette inquired:

"Where will I find Lee Look?"

"Downee there." The Chinaman pointed to a stairway. "Office, under here. Shoppee velly small. No roomee upstairs."

"All right." Vic raised his voice a trifle. "I'll be back."

Descending the stairs, Marquette found a light at the bottom. He saw a single door and knocked. There was no response. Hand resting on a gun, Marquette opened the door. He saw a lighted office, crudely furnished with a large desk in the center; huge, old-fashioned cupboards were on either side. The office was empty.

While Marquette looked about, new footsteps came from the stairs. Vic turned to see Redshaw and Byrnes, accompanied by the sleepy-faced clerk.

"Friends come to see you."

The Chinaman put the statement blandly. Redshaw gave the explanation as he and Byrnes stepped in with Marquette.

"We popped in too quick," said Redshaw. "Guess this fellow must have figured we were with you. He pointed downstairs. Said you were with Lee Look."

"Yeah?" growled Vic. He turned toward the door. "Say "

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Marquette cut short. He was looking into a revolver muzzle, held in the fist of the copy clerk. The Chinaman had a second weapon. He was covering Redshaw and Byrnes. Both men were close together. Like Vic, they were trapped.

The Chinaman kicked the door shut. His eyes were gleaming; his sleepy manner had ended. Above his dark, plain attire was a face that held a gloat. He spoke; his pidgin English ended.

"I am Lee Look," snarled the Chinaman. "I know your purpose here. There are words, however, that I intend to say. Stand as you are!"

THE Chinaman babbled a high-voiced command. The doors of the cupboards swung open. Into the room bounded two huge Mongols, one from either side. Following each was a squattier Chinaman. The Mongols were armed with knives. Their companions carried revolvers.

Lee Look piped a sharp order. It stopped the Mongols; but for the cry, they would have pounced upon the G Men. Lee Look motioned his prisoners toward the rear wall. As they backed, Marquette and the others saw that the cupboards were openings into underground passages.

The Mongols loomed like sentinel watchdogs while the squattier Chinese frisked the G Men. That done, the Mongols lowered their blades. Lee Look pocketed his revolvers and approached the G Men.

"You have defied Kai Luan," he declared, in a vicious tone. "He is the one whom I obey. These Mongols are his own servants. They are the ones who brought the money that you seek.

"Where you found it out does not matter. That, I shall learn without troubling you for statements. I was chosen by Kai Luan because I am conversant with the ways of America.

"I have expected government agents. I prepared this trap for you. My policy as ordered by Kai Luan is to spare no one who meddles. From Kai Luan comes one command that I, Lee Look, obey. That word is death!"

Grim silence followed Lee Look's pronouncement. Marquette saw evil on the Chinaman's countenance. He knew the ilk of Lee Look. The Celestial was a murderous criminal who had managed well to hide his true character under a shopkeeper's placid guise.

A sudden interruption of the silence gave momentary hope. A rap had sounded at the door of the room. Two taps a pause then two more. Lee Leek saw the G Men crane forward. The Chinaman sneered a laugh. He nodded to one of his squatty servants. The man opened the door.

A bespectacled Chinaman entered and the servant closed the door behind him. The arrival was dressed in American clothes; his face showed a troubled expression when he saw the guns and knives.

"Have no alarm, Toy Ling," jeered Lee Look. "This is for your protection. You have come for new money? Very well, you shall receive it. I am glad that you were not the one through whom these men traced their way to my shop."

"G Men?" babbled Toy Ling, wildly. "They come here to arrest you, Lee Look?"

"They come here to die," snarled Lee Look, with fuming, twisted lips. "Stand back, Toy Ling, and watch. You have heard the name of Kai Luan. See how his servants act!"

For an instant, Lee Look was rigid; then, stepping back, he drew Toy Ling with him, out of the path of the

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guns that were held by the squatly Chinese. That pair served as reserves. Kai Luan's Mongols were to have the first chance to kill. Lee Look began a high-pitched command.

With the first utterance, the door of the room ripped inward. With it came the figure who had thrust the barrier before him a being whom Vic Marquette had seen in the past; one whose garb brought amazed gulps from Redshaw and Byrnes.

The Shadow had trailed Toy Ling from the Hankow Cafe. He had let his quarry enter Lee Look's. The Shadow had followed, unseen. He was here to effect a rescue.

BIG Mongols spun about at the noise of the door. They heard the gibe of challenging laugh. Like the killer at Loon Kow's, they whipped their knife blades forward with long, sweeping throws. They undergessed the prowess of their challenger.

Precision, not speed, was what the Mongols sought. The Shadow's fists held guns; but those weapons were unaimed. The muzzles snapped toward targets as the Mongols moved. The quick turns of The Shadow's wrists were shorter, more effective than the long, arm whips of the killers.

Automatics blasted. Knife hurlers jolted as their arms came upward. Blades twisted from quivering fingers. Launched too late, the knives traveled wide. Each underhand sling had missed. One blade buried itself in the framework of the doorway. The other sizzled past The Shadow's shoulder.

What happened then was chaotic to Vic Marquette. He saw Lee Look's own servants swing from their stations and aim toward The Shadow. With a cry to Redshaw and Byrnes, Vic leaped forward. Lee Look had turned toward the door. He was whirling back again, yanking his revolvers to stop the G Men. Marquette fell upon Lee Look.

It was a terrific grapple with the Chinaman. Amid it, Vic heard the bursts of guns. A sharp cry from Redshaw; another from Byrnes. A descending gun muzzle grazed Marquette's head. Vic rolled away, half groggy. He stopped, staring upward from beside a motionless Mongol.

The Shadow had handled Lee Look's servants. He had fired at one while he hurtled toward the other. The first had fallen. The Shadow had managed a grapple with the second. He had dropped that fellow also, with the downward thud of an automatic.

Redshaw had encountered Toy Ling. He had wrested a revolver from the restaurant keeper and had dispatched the man with a pair of shots. Byrnes had piled in to aid Vic with Lee Look. He had taken up the struggle when Vic slumped.

The pair Byrnes and Lee Look had gone milling toward the doorway. There, Lee Look's right arm swung. Byrnes took a glancing blow and sank. Lee Look was in the doorway. He had a chance for safety; more than that, a desire for vengeance.

Marquette saw Lee Look aim for The Shadow. The cloaked fighter was rising from beside the second man whom he had downed. Lee Look tugged viciously at the trigger of a .38. He failed to beat the action of The Shadow's .45.

The automatic boomed straight shots while Lee Look fired wide. With a wailing cry, the Chinaman staggered through the doorway. His clambering footsteps sounded on the stairs as The Shadow followed through the doorway. Then all was still.

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Redshaw was helping Byrnes to his feet. Rising, Marquette looked about him. The two Mongols were finished. The Shadow had done more than clip those murderers. One of Lee Look's men was badly wounded. The other lay unconscious. Toy Ling, too, was stunned.

To Vic Marquette came realization. He recalled the mention of a name Kai Luan. He knew that it must mean some one higher up. The Mongols were dead; they could supply no evidence. The only other man qualified to speak was Lee Look.

STRIDING unsteadily, Vic passed Redshaw and Byrnes. He reached the stairway. There lay the body of Lee Look. The Chinaman's scramble had carried him no farther than the stairs. The Shadow was gone. Vic felt no surprise. Minutes had passed since the battle's ending.

Vic leaned above Lee Look, in futile hope that the criminal might still have breath to speak. One of Lee Look's hands was clenched below his chin. In the clawlike clutch, Vic saw a folded sheet of paper. Lee Look was dead. But he held some message!

Marquette snatched the paper. He opened it. His eyes scanned inked lines. Terse statements, penned in a steady hand. As Vic read, he wondered. These were instructions; but of a sort that were puzzling. While Marquette was pondering, Redshaw came up beside him.

"What is it, Vic?"

Marquette passed him the paper. Redshaw grunted.

"Nothing, eh? Just a blank."

The writing had vanished. It had been written with a special ink. The message was one intended for Marquette alone.

"Nothing," nodded Vic. "Throw it away, Redshaw. Come on. We have work ahead. We'll call in the police to search for the phony mazuma."

As he spoke, Vic Marquette was thinking of the future. His mental impressions were based upon that note. It was a summons for Vic to seek a one-man assignment that would carry him far from New York. One that would mean cooperation with Canadian authorities.

Paths had crossed to-night. G Men and The Shadow had gained the same quest. The Shadow had known Vic Marquette in the past. This chance meeting had given him opportunity to call in a new and useful ally. Vic Marquette was one of few who could handle his part the way The Shadow needed.

The Shadow had penned words that Vic Marquette would accept, knowing their authorship. Quizzes would be useless, now that Lee Look and the two Mongols were dead. But clues were no longer necessary. The Shadow had learned more, perhaps, than the dead men could have told.

To cap it, The Shadow had passed enough to Vic Marquette. The G Man, too, would start at once upon the trail to Kai Luan.

But the trail in New York had ended. From the sinister dens of Chinatown, the plot pointed directly now to Lake Lakimika; to the point where Harry Vincent had gone forth to prepare the way; where Edna Creeland had found strange things where Kai Luan must have his stronghold!

CHAPTER VIII. THE NEXT NIGHT

STRANGE events were in the making at Lake Lakimika. Trails had led to that secluded sheet of water, in the depths of the Canadian forest. To Edna Creeland, however, there had come no forebodings. One day had passed since their arrival at Lakimika. Edna was finding great contentment.

Dominie had gone southward toward Nimiskiming on the day of their arrival. Pierre had made camp on the jutting point. They had spent one night. At dawn, Harley Creeland had set out to fish in the arm of water above the point. He had returned without a catch and had spent the whole day at the point.

Dinner was ended. The sun was close to the tops of westward trees. Creeland, standing beside the camp fire, looked northward toward the darkening waters of the lake. He spoke to Pierre.

"Pretty quiet out there," was Creeland's comment. "How about it, Pierre? Would the fish be biting?"

"Good time to fish," returned the taciturn guide. "You go. Bring back bass."

"More likely pike," grumbled Creeland. "Those fish chase away all the bass. We could use some pike, though, with our provisions getting low."

He went to the canoe, boarded it and paddled away without an invitation to Edna. The girl was not surprised, however. She knew that Creeland preferred to fish alone.

The point was rocky, almost one long ledge of stone that slanted into the lake. Edna walked out to the end of the promontory and watched Creeland's progress. She noted that he was keeping close to the shore; soon his canoe was lost beneath the long-shaded gloom of the forest.

PIERRE came out to join Edna. As they looked across the water, they saw the splash of a jumping fish; then another. Pierre grunted in pleased manner.

"Fish bite out in middle," observed the guide. "Good bass to-night."

"But Harley is staying close to shore!" exclaimed Edna. "You should have told him to go farther out, Pierre!"

"You watch. You see. Him go across."

Edna looked toward the obscure arm of the lake. She could barely see the canoe, half a mile away, turning over toward the northern shore. It seemed to be moving slowly, but steadily. That fact caused Edna to look toward the far shore itself.

The girl noticed a clearing, almost on a line with Creeland's course. She could detect a blocky object at the very shore; beyond, she spied what appeared to be a cabin, nestled near some trees. Edna pointed.

"Some one lives there?" she inquired. "I hadn't noticed the place before."

"Old mine," explained Pierre. "People gone up to Galena."

"Is that the mine shaft by the lake?"

Pierre nodded.

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"How long ago did they abandon it?"

"Long time," returned Pierre. "Mine no good. Fill up with water. Nobody want it now."

Creeland's canoe could no longer be seen, although its course had not changed. Edna kept staring through the gloom, then gave up the task. A night chill was setting in; she went back to the camp fire, leaving Pierre on the point.

Roughly, Lake Lakimika was heart-shaped, fully eight miles wide along its northern shore; and fifteen from north to south. Its symmetry was spoiled by the point on which the party had pitched its camp; for that promontory entered the heart like a jagged spearhead.

It was responsible for the northwestern arm of the lake, which Creeland had chosen for his fishing expedition. Edna knew that the arm formed a route to Wapiti Junction.

Her interest, at present, concerned the main portion of the lake. It was from across that water that she expected Dale Mundon. If he found the letter at Red Cedar Rapids, he would certainly come to Lake Lakimika. Edna had dated the letter. Her one hope had been that Dale would gain the message soon.

Seated by the warmth of the camp fire, the girl kept staring toward the point where Pierre had squatted and was smoking his pipe. Edna could scarcely see the guide as she watched; suddenly, however, she became distinctly aware of Pierre's presence.

The guide had risen. He had begun to blink a flashlight.

Excitement gripped Edna. Had Pierre seen some one on the lake? As she listened, the girl heard the scrape of a canoe paddle. Water splashed off shore. Pierre's torch blinked like a signal.

Then the flashes ended. Pierre was coming in along the point, apparently motioning to some one alongside. Edna saw the canoe. She hurried to the gravelly landing spot that was used by those who came ashore on the point. Along came Pierre, still guiding the canoe.

"Dale!"

Edna exclaimed the name spontaneously. A cheery voice responded, in a modulated tone:

"Hello, Edna!"

A FEW moments later, Dale Mundon stepped ashore. Edna recognized him instantly, for the afterglow still prevailed at this open portion of the point. The man was almost as the girl remembered him. Tall, powerful of build; with a rugged, square-jawed countenance.

Dale Mundon could never have been classed as handsome. The straightness of his profile had discounted his looks. Edna recalled that fact as she saw a side view of Dale's face. This came when they had approached the firelight.

Dale's appearance had improved, however, through his sojourn in the north. A bronzed complexion had replaced a pallor which Edna had remembered. It fitted well with Dale's rugged visage.

"I found your letter, Edna." Dale's deep tone was brisk. "I was glad to receive it; but I was sorry to learn of your marriage. I hardly thought, though, that you would want to see me."

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"Why not?" queried Edna. "We were friends, Dale."

"Of course." Dale sat by the camp fire and lighted a cigarette. He added: "But I suppose that the friendship would cease when you had heard statements that concerned me."

"But I heard nothing," returned Edna. "Really, Dale, your letter was the first explanation that I ever gained regarding your departure from Boyersford."

"You mean that Creeland never accused me of embezzlement?"

"Never."

"Then why did you marry him?"

Edna thought for a few moments; then explained.

"I was loyal to you, Dale," she said, firmly. "If I had known that you were in trouble, I would never have deserted you. But you went away with no explanation. I supposed that your regard for me was ended."

"It was all that I could do, Edna," asserted Dale, seriously. "It wasn't jail that I feared. I simply wanted to preserve your happiness. I was framed. The law would have termed me an embezzler. You would have suffered."

"Why didn't you speak to me at the time?"

"Creeland would not allow it. He gave me twenty-four hours to leave town. It was my only choice. I thought I knew his game; that he intended to tell you that I was crooked."

"Harley never made an accusation, Dale. He said that you were a mischief-maker. That was all."

"What would you have replied if he had accused me?"

"I would have demanded proof. I would have stood by you, Dale, until I heard the full evidence of your guilt."

Dale nodded, knowingly.

"That's just it," he affirmed. "That's what I counted upon, Edna. I thought that Creeland would denounce me to you perhaps to a few others. But he was too wise to do it."

"Because he lacked sufficient proof?"

"Exactly! The whole thing came from a clear sky, Edna. You know how well I liked my job in Boyersford; how much I was counting upon our marriage. I was the happiest man in the world until that night when the accusation came."

"Tell me about it, Dale."

MUNDON flicked his cigarette stump into the fire. His face clouded as he visualized the experience of a year before.

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"It was brief, Edna," he declared. "One night I came back to my room. I found three men waiting for me, Creeland, Lagry, and a fellow named Crawford. He was some sort of an investigator.

"They said that funds were missing from the bank. They wanted to search my room. I was willing. I let them go through the place and they found the money. Twenty-five thousand dollars in cash, planted in a trunk that any one could have opened with a set of ordinary keys."

"Money from the bank?" inquired Edna.

"Yes," replied Dale. "I could have taken it; but so could other people. I was stumped, Edna. Then Creeland began to act big-hearted. He gave me twenty-four hours to clear out of town. I came to Canada."

"Why didn't you write me?"

"Creeland threatened trouble if I wrote to any one in Boyersford. He didn't specify you; but I understood what he meant. I was positive that you would still believe in me, even after you heard his story. I thought that you would be waiting for me when I finally came back. But he outsmarted me. He told you nothing."

"What did Jim Lagry think about it?"

"He sided with Creeland, of course. The two were old cronies. Jim showed some sympathy; but not much. I couldn't count on him to help me."

Edna was silent. Dale arose from beside the fire and lighted another cigarette.

"I don't ask you to believe me, Edna," he declared, slowly. "I was a fool to fall for Creeland's game. I've paid for it, by losing you. It's twice as tough, knowing that you married him.

"But if I'd known it, I never would have written that letter that I left at Red Cedar Rapids. I want you to be happy; and perhaps you can be, with Creeland. I don't like the man, or his tactics; but I hope he proves to be a good husband.

"All I ask is that you forget you ever heard from me. I came over here from the rapids to tell you that. Remember me as a friend, Edna. Good-by and good luck."

EDNA had risen. Dale was extending his hand. The girl shook her head.

"It can't end this way, Dale," she insisted. "You haven't told me everything. In your letter you said "

"Forget my letter."

"But you intimated facts "

"That might concern Creeland? Never mind them. You are his wife."

Edna's eyes widened.

"You didn't mention Harley in the letter, Dale!" she exclaimed. "You said that you had learned facts that would clear yourself! But "

Dale Mundon laughed an interruption.

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"Of course," he remarked. "I said that because I did learn facts. But did you stop to figure out what sort of facts that they would have to be?"

The answer dawned upon Edna.

"Facts about some one else," cried the girl, "that would prove another guilty of the crime charged against you!"

"Not quite." Dale shook his head. "Better forget it, Edna. I had ideas of revenge. They are ended. Please "

"Ended!" ejaculated Edna. "Why? Because I am married to Harley?"

"Of course," returned Dale. "So please forget it."

Edna shook her head emphatically.

"Not unless I know the whole truth, Dale."

Mundon considered. Edna watched his face. His expression was troubled. At last the man spoke.

"Very well, Edna," he declared. "I'll give you the answer. There was only one man who could have had a reason to charge me with the theft of those bank funds."

"Harley?"

"Yes. He wanted me away from Boyersford. He could make trouble for me if I returned, unless I could deliver some accusation in return one that would place him in a pickle "

"And you learned "

"I learned of certain business in this region. I looked into it. I didn't get far; but I found out enough to know that the game is crooked. More than that, I heard mention of a name."

"Harley's?"

"Yes. People spoke about him at Red Cedar Rapids."

"Who were they?"

"Strangers whom I overheard. They were coming from Nimiskiming to Lake Lakimika. Bringing supplies from the Hudson Bay Post."

"When was this, Dale?"

"More than a month ago. Before I wrote that letter. I know more, Edna; but I don't care to talk about it. Because of you, I intend to drop my investigation entirely, even though "

Dale paused abruptly. Edna caught up his final words.

"Even though?" she queried. "What else, Dale?"

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"Only this!" Dale spoke hotly. "I'm dropping it, even though I have the final set-up that I wanted. I'd been hoping that Creeland would come up here himself, to contact those who are in the game with him.

"He's come at last. Right straight to Lake Lakimika. Where is he now? I'll tell you! He's gone to hobnob with the other crooks "

Again Dale stopped. His manner calmed. He clasped a hand upon Edna's shoulder.

"I'M sorry," apologized Dale. "It's rotten of me, Edna, to hold this grievance. Maybe it's not as bad as I think. I may be prejudiced because Creeland framed me. Anyhow, I'm the only person who can make trouble. That's why I'm going on my way, up to Galena. You'll be away from here in a few days. Creeland will be smart enough to finish up his business. The future will be safe."

Edna shook her head.

"Dale," she said, "if you had stolen that money from the bank, Harley would have been justified in treating you as he did."

"Of course, he would," agreed Dale. "But I didn't steal the money –"

"I know it. But if Harley would have been justified then, you are certainly justified at present. I want you to tell me all that you have learned."

"So much of it is suspicion, Edna. But "

"Can you produce the facts?"

"With Creeland here?" Dale laughed. "Edna, he will give the game away himself. The guide told me that Creeland had gone fishing, in the arm of the lake. I can tell you where he has gone. He has "

A grunt interrupted. It came from Pierre, who had approached. The guide had heard a paddle splash from the lake. Dale Mundon was beside his canoe; he stepped aboard and spoke a parting to Edna.

"Creeland is returning," he said. "I'll camp below the point. We can talk again to-morrow."

Darkness had settled. Dale pushed his canoe away from the shore and drifted into the night. Edna, waiting, was prepared for Creeland's arrival. She spoke a caution to Pierre, warning the guide to say nothing of Dale Mundon's visit.

Edna knew at last that some mystery hung over Lake Lakimika. Later, she would learn more concerning it from Dale Mundon. Meanwhile, she had gained conviction upon one definite angle.

She was positive that Harley Creeland had come to Lake Lakimika because of a secret mission. One that might concern crime much greater than the embezzlement with which he had charged Dale Mundon in the past.

CHAPTER IX. THE DESERTED CABIN

THE next day dawned cloudy; not only at Lake Lakimika but at Wapiti Junction. To Harry Vincent, the weather was not the only cause for gloom. From the porch of the Wapiti House, Harry surveyed the world with sourness.

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Harry had spent three nights at the junction. On the first, he had spotted the departure of the Chinese. The second night had brought a late wire from The Shadow. There had been no need for departure until the morning.

The next day, however, had brought enforced delay. Harry had intended to start for Lake Lakimika. To his annoyance, he had been unable to locate a single guide in Wapiti Junction. Harry had been forced to stay over the third night.

Would to-day bring another disappointment?

Harry was in a quandary. If no guide appeared at the settlement, he would be forced to embark alone. That, in itself, would be poor policy. People at Wapiti Junction would get suspicious of a camper who started out to navigate long canoe routes alone.

Even worse, such action might cause trouble at Lake Lakimika. Harry knew that he might encounter danger when he reached his goal. He needed a guide not only to aid him in a pinch, but to serve as a blind if he should come under hostile observation.

Harry had been taciturn since his arrival. He had mentioned that he wanted a guide and a canoe; but he had spoken no further about his plans. One of the men with whom Harry had talked briefly was Hank, whom he had met with Steve, the miner. It was Hank who approached while Harry was frowning glumly from the hotel porch.

"Hello, Vincent," greeted Hank. "Say, partner I've got news for you. There's a guide pulled into town since last night."

"With a canoe?" queried Harry, eagerly.

Hank shook his head.

"Reckon he came down from Galena," he said, "because he's down at the landing, trying to buy a canoe. He's French, this fellow is. Calls himself Alphonse. Says he's a guide from Nimiskiming."

"I'll go over and see him."

WHEN Harry arrived at the landing, he found a long-limbed man dressed in corduroy trousers and flannel shirt. The stranger's face was darkish; his high-arched nose and sharp eyes denoted him as a shrewd dealer. Harry inquired if his name was Alphonse. The man nodded.

"Good," decided Harry. "I've been looking for a guide and they tell me that you're in the business. My name is Vincent."

"Ah. M'sieu' Vincent." Alphonse seemed pleased at Harry's arrival. "Where is it that you wish to camp?"

"I'm going to Lake Lakimika. You know the route, of course?"

"Oui. I have been to Lakimika often. And from there, m'sieu'?"

"I don't know. Maybe the Maniti River. Perhaps down to Nimiskiming. But I'll need a canoe, to begin with. I understand you are buying one?"

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"I have bought the canoe. See? It is here, beside le bateau."

Harry noted an old canoe, drawn up on shore beside a clumsy, four-oared rowboat. He walked over to look at it; and Alphonse came along beside him. An inspection showed Harry that the canoe was in good condition.

"There will be packs, m'sieu'?" inquired the shrewd-faced guide. "And food? Perhaps new paddles, eh? You wish Alphonse to buy?"

"Yes. Come along up to the store at the junction. We'll see what we can get."

ONE hour later, Harry and Alphonse were paddling the old canoe along Long Lake, bound for the lone portage at the farther end. Their boat was stacked with supplies for a ten-day trip. The wind was with them; they were making excellent progress.

It was a long trip up the lake; but they reached the portage soon after noon. They carried the canoe and luggage across to the first muskeg pond. There, Alphonse cooked lunch; and after the meal they resumed their journey.

The silence of the woods held a new spell for Harry. Long Lake, stirred by the wind that swept its length, had carried no touch of loneliness. But the muskeg pond, set deep within the trees, was a place of solitude.

Muckiness alone spoiled the scene. Each stroke of the paddles stirred up silt within the brackish water. When they reached the next portage, thick mud greeted them. Harry and Alphonse had difficulty keeping their footing when they made the carry through swampy woods.

It was at the end of the second muskeg pond that Harry gained a sudden suspicion regarding Alphonse. Harry had wondered how the guide had happened to appear at Wapiti Junction.

There had been no proof that Alphonse had come from Galena; even if such were a fact, it was odd that a Nimiskiming guide should have gone north to the mining town, then stopped off at Wapiti Junction. Harry had gained a slight distrust because of those considerations.

He had given Alphonse the benefit, however; and this concession was not shattered until the episode occurred at the middle pond. It began when the canoe coasted up to an opening among the reeds.

Harry, paddling in the bow, was about to step ashore when he noticed that there was no path ahead. He looked toward Alphonse. The guide evidently thought that they had reached the portage, for he was rising in the stern of the canoe, prepared to toss the packs ashore.

"Where's the portage?" queried Harry. "This isn't the beginning of it, Alphonse."

For a moment, the guide's eyes stared toward the marshy ground. Then Alphonse tilted his head and delivered an apologetic laugh.

"Ah, m'sieu'!" he exclaimed. "I am mistaken, of course. I have forgotten. The portage is farther to the right."

They backed the canoe from the shore. They plowed along by reeds; Alphonse saw an opening. He guided the canoe toward the shore; then fumed and used his paddle to back water. They had again approached a false landing spot. It was a dozen minutes before Alphonse's shrewd eyes picked out an opening that looked like the right one.

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WHILE he lugged a pair of heavy packs across the portage, Harry was thinking of the incident. He was sure that Alphonse was unfamiliar with this terrain. The guide knew where Lake Lakimika was located; but he had picked his bearings from a map, not from an actual knowledge of the terrain. If he had ever been through these muskeg ponds before, he would not have forgotten the location of a portage.

They had no trouble finding the last portage from the chain of muskeg ponds, for it was easily observed when they approached it. It proved to be a stiffer carry than the others; for it took the travelers up high ground, out of the swampy district.

When Harry reached a spot where the path descended, he felt a breeze among the trees and observed the blue sheen of water through the branches.

Lake Lakimika. They had reached their goal long before dark. So far, they had encountered no one on the route. But Harry suddenly noticed the smoke of a camp fire some yards from the path. As he reached the end of the portage, he saw two men approaching.

Clad in knickers and khaki shirts, the pair looked like forest rangers. Harry dumped the packs and nodded affably. The men returned the greeting just as Alphonse appeared along the path, balancing the canoe upon his head.

"Camping on Lakimika?"

One of the rangers put the question gruffly. Harry paused a moment before giving answer.

"I guess so," he replied. "It would be too long a trip to the lower end of the lake."

"You're going to Nimiskiming?"

The query came from the second ranger. The first man turned about and spoke to his companion with a growl.

"I'm doing the talking, Walt."

"All right, Jake. Go ahead."

Alphonse had dropped the canoe beside the water. Hearing the clatter, Harry happened to look in his direction. Alphonse had overheard the discussion. He was staring at the man called Jake.

The ranger returned Alphonse's gaze with a scowl. The French guide laughed pleasantly and gave a friendly nod. Jake's scowl ended; but it caused Harry to study the man more closely, and to continue with a scrutiny of Jake's companion as well.

JAKE was a lanky, rawboned man who had the look of a slugger. His jaw was outthrust; his nose had evidently received punishment in combat. His eyes were beady; and they peered from beneath a bulging forehead. Jake was a man who would prove dangerous in a fight.

Walt was something of a bruiser, also. He lacked the physical size of Jake; but he had a solid look. His face was hard; his eyes were ugly. Harry decided that forest rangers must be tough in this country.

"Be careful where you camp," growled Jake. "Lots of fires have started hereabouts. Better get down below the point. The farther the better. You'll find some islands there."

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Walt was nodding as Jake spoke. Both were looking toward Harry, who ceased his scrutiny and turned away. Harry caught another glimpse of Alphonse. The guide was eyeing the two rangers more closely than before. Jake started to turn toward the guide. To prevent an argument, Harry put a question.

"Many people have been through here?" he questioned. "Seems like we ought to be meeting some other parties."

"Why are you asking that?" demanded Jake, sourly.

"On account of camping spots," returned Harry, promptly. "We don't want to bother anybody who is already located."

"There's been nobody through," declared Jake. "We've been here four days. Four or five. Which is it, Walt?"

"Five," added the other ranger. "And these fellows are the first we've seen going either way."

Alphonse was looking past the two rangers. Harry followed the guide's gaze. He saw another pair of men halfway to the camp fire. They looked like rangers, also. Apparently they had stepped up to listen to the conversation.

"Load the canoe, Alphonse," ordered Harry. Then, to Jake: "Maybe you need some supplies. We can spare anything you want."

"We've got plenty, thanks," returned Jake, in a more friendly tone. "Wait a minute, though got any cigarettes?"

"Three cartons."

"Do you smoke a pipe?"

"A good bit of the time."

"I'll make a swap. A pound of Hudson Bay tobacco for a carton of cigarettes. Would it suit you?"

Harry nodded. Jake sent Walt over to the camp fire for the tobacco. The other two rangers dropped from sight while Harry was on his way to the canoe to get the cigarettes.

Walt returned with the tobacco. The exchange was completed and Jake waved a friendly departure as Harry and Alphonse paddled from the portage, along the long arm of Lakimika.

The course was winding from the portage; the arm did not begin to widen until they had traveled half a mile. When they were out of sight of the rangers Harry turned toward Alphonse and made a gesture with his paddle.

"We'll hug the left bank," he ordered.

"The point is to the right, m'sieu'," objected the guide. "The rangers have say that we should go below it."

"We're camping above the point," returned Harry. "Across from it, on the north shore. The map shows an old cabin there. That's the place that we'll stay to-night."

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A gleam showed in Alphonse's eyes. The French guide's lips formed a slight smile the moment that Harry had swung toward the bow to resume paddling. It would have been difficult to analyze Alphonse's opinion of Harry's decision.

THE arm of Lakimika widened as they proceeded. The water roughened, for the lake was swept by wind. Harry kept eyeing the northern shore. At last he spied the goal he wanted. He pointed; Alphonse gave strong strokes to his paddle and they swung leftward.

They could see the point that jutted into the lake. It was more than a mile away when they made their landing beside a square, well-shaped frame that indicated the abandoned mine shaft. While Alphonse was unloading the canoe, Harry strolled up to the shaft.

He could not guess its depth, for the shaft contained water. Harry saw eight feet of crude, wooden interior, with a clumsy ladder that had once given access into the shaft. After that came water, which had apparently seeped in from the lake.

There were many mines of this sort through the country south of Galena. Probably all would require pumping to keep them dry, for such shafts were usually close to lakes.

Harry was not entirely sure, however, that the shaft had filled from seepage. Driven into rock, it might prove almost water-tight. Heavy rains might have filled the pit instead of water trickling in from the lake.

Harry turned away from the mine shaft. He saw Alphonse carrying a pair of packs toward the cabin, fifty yards in from the lake. Harry picked up a wannigan box and followed. He caught up with Alphonse when the fellow reached the door.

The cabin was unlocked. Looking in, Harry saw a main room, furnished in crude style. Two doors were in the far wall; both were open. Harry saw that the house contained two small bedrooms, each with an old cot. Alphonse turned and faced him with a grin.

"We stay here?" queried the guide. "A comfortable place, m'sieu'. The people who own it would not mind."

"That's the right idea," replied Harry. "I'll take the first room, Alphonse. You take the other."

Five minutes later, Harry was alone, behind the closed door of the room that he had chosen. He was smiling as he stuffed his pipe with Hudson Bay tobacco. He had followed The Shadow's orders. This cabin had proved to be the very place he needed.

With a door that he could close; a window through which he could drop, Harry could enter and leave without even Alphonse's knowledge. That was much to Harry's liking.

For Harry had a hunch that there would be cause for deep investigation before he departed from the shores of Lake Lakimika.

CHAPTER X. MEETINGS ON THE LAKE

IT was half an hour later when Harry Vincent strolled from the deserted cabin and walked over to the abandoned mine shaft. Seating himself upon the crude wooden framework, he puffed steadily at his brier pipe. The fragrant smoking mixture inspired a review of the trip from Wapiti Junction.

Harry's first thoughts concerned Alphonse. Harry's suspicions of the guide were twofold. The incident at the

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muskeg portage was proof that Alphonse had made false pretense of his familiarity with this district. The episode at the portage into Lake Lakimika added a secondary doubt.

Why had Alphonse eyed the forest rangers so closely?

Harry had seen significance in the action. But he could not guess the answer. It was possible that Alphonse knew the rangers, and had kept that fact from Harry. It was possible also that the guide had some reason for avoiding the rangers.

Such speculation caused Harry to consider the forest rangers themselves. In previous acquaintance with the North Woods, Harry had never before come across a ranger camp on a secluded portage. Usually, rangers were on the rove; or located at some place where there was reason for them.

Moreover, there had been four rangers altogether. Two would have been a more likely number. Added to that was a fact that struck home to Harry. The ranger called Jake had stated that no one had come across the portage into Lakimika; and his pal Walt had supported the testimony. That meant that the fugitive Mongols could not have come in this direction.

Yet where else could the Chinese have gone?

Harry had definitely accepted The Shadow's theory: namely, that the Mongols would not have tarried on Long Lake, nor camped amid the morasses of the muskeg ponds. Nor could they have proceeded beyond Lake Lakimika. Even with expert canoeists conducting them, they could not have passed this spot before dawn.

Harry was sure that the Mongols must have somehow slipped past the rangers. He was positive that the Chinese and their companions must be somewhere near this deserted mine site. Harry was convinced that The Shadow was right. Yet the situation was a baffler.

Had Harry Vincent followed through with his contemplation of the riddle, he might have come to a startling conclusion. The very facts that he considered were capable of producing a logical answer that concerned the missing Mongols. But before Harry could continue with his speculation, he became interested in another matter.

ALPHONSE had strolled from the old cabin. The guide was at the shore, stepping aboard the canoe. Harry wondered what he was about. Rising, The Shadow's agent approached the fellow.

"Where are you going, Alphonse?" quizzed Harry, abruptly. "What's the idea of starting out in the canoe?"

Alphonse grinned. He gave prompt answer.

"Ah, m'sieu'. Remember the rangers? What they say? Camp below the point on some island, perhaps."

"We're camping here," retorted Harry. "I'll handle the matter with the rangers if they come this way."

"Oui, m'sieu'." Alphonse nodded. "Very good. But maybe the rangers will be mad. If you have excuse, they can say nothing."

"What sort of an excuse?"

"Look." Alphonse pointed across the water. "See rocks, like point into the water? Smoke coming up? We go

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there we find people. Then we go to island, down below. Maybe we find old camp fire; we think somebody camp there. We come back here "

"I get it," interposed Harry. "Then we can hand a yarn to the rangers. Tell them that this was the only place to camp. A good idea, Alphonse. Hold the canoe. I'll go along with you."

Alphonse showed no reluctance because Harry had decided to accompany him. They paddled at a cross angle toward the point. The sun was setting; the lake wind had quieted. As they neared the point, they saw three people standing on the rocks.

One looked like a guide; the second was a woman clad in knickers and white shirt. The third was a man of medium height, apparently the leader of the party; for he spoke to the others, then came over to hail the arrivals. Alphonse coasted the canoe to the end of the point.

"Hello," greeted the man on the shore. "My name is Harley Creeland. Up from the States."

"So am I," returned Harry. "My name is Vincent. I came up here from New York."

"You're camping over by the mine shaft?"

"Yes. Until we find a better place, we're taking a look at the island below here."

"Have you plenty of grub with you?"

"More than enough. How about you?"

"We may be short in a couple of days. We sent a guide down to Nimiskiming for more supplies. I counted on good fishing; but I've only landed a couple of pickerel."

"We'll be around. Call on us in a pinch."

Harry had formed an impression of Creeland during the conversation. The man looked rather pompous; he seemed stiff, despite his effort at informality. Creeland's face was sharp, but not unfriendly. All that Harry did not like was the quick blink of the man's eyes. There was a trace of suspicion perhaps hostility in Creeland's gaze.

HARRY and Alphonse paddled southward from the point. They skirted the island; as they reached the lower side, they came directly upon another canoe manned by a single paddler. Harry saw a husky, square-jawed chap whose profile formed a vertical line from forehead to chin.

"Hello," greeted Harry. "You're camping here?"

"Yep," returned the other man, briskly. "Down from Galena. Mundon's my name. Dale Mundon. Just another unlucky prospector."

"My name is Harry Vincent. Glad to meet you, Mundon. We've picked an old mining cabin for our site."

"You've come from Wapiti Junction?"

"Yes. Left there this morning."

"Not many people come through that route."

"So the rangers told us."

"Rangers? Where were they?"

"On the last portage. Four of them are camped at the edge of Lakimika."

"That's news. Think I'll paddle over and see them. Maybe I've met some of them before."

"One fellow's name is Jake. Another is called Walt."

"Don't think I know them. Anyway, I'll paddle along with you. That is, if you're going back to the old mine site."

"That's where we're going, now that there's no other place to camp."

"You can come down here if you want. I don't own this island."

Harry realized that he had made a mistake. The canoes were swinging; and he was still seeking a reply that would enable him to decline the invitation. Alphonse supplied the gap.

"M'sieu, try catch fish at dawn," remarked the guide, to Mundon. Alphonse was referring to Harry. "Perhaps maybe after that we decide to come here."

"I want to fish in the arm of the lake," added Harry, promptly. "I understand there are pickerel there. I was talking to a chap up on the point."

"The sharp-faced fellow?" queried Mundon.

"Yes," replied Harry. "His name is Creeland."

"And he caught some pickerel?"

"Yes. A few. He didn't say how often he had been fishing; but I thought I'd take a try to-morrow morning."

Mundon started to say something; then changed his mind. For a moment, he eyed Harry suspiciously. The Shadow's agent noted it. He wondered what was in Mundon's mind. Was there a connection between this fellow and Creeland?

Another question puzzled Harry. Why had Alphonse responded so promptly in the emergency. Did the long-limbed guide suspect that Harry had some special reason for remaining at the abandoned cabin?

It certainly seemed that Alphonse had gained such an inkling. With that conceded, Harry pondered upon another question: namely, Alphonse's motive for rallying to his aid. Was Alphonse governed by simple loyalty to the man who had hired him; or was he secretly anxious to learn why Harry had chosen the site by the abandoned mine shaft?

Harry leaned toward the latter choice. He could not forget Alphonse's difficulty in finding the muskeg portage. The fellow knew more than he pretended. He was out for further information. Very well: Alphonse could continue with his game. Harry felt that he could counter it.

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Lost in these musings, Harry had scarcely noticed the route that the canoes were following. Mundon was leading the way; but instead of taking the short course, back between the island and the point, he was heading out toward the middle of the lake.

As they skirted the island and turned directly north, the procedure impressed itself upon Harry. He realized that Mundon was deliberately seeking to avoid close passage by the point. This increased Harry's belief that there was a connection between Mundon and Creeland.

RIDING two miles out from the point, the occupants of the canoes could not possibly have been identified by persons on the rocky point. The sun was low; waves had reduced to ripples as the two canoes plowed forward. Mundon was an expert paddler. Single-handed, he was keeping pace with Harry and Alphonse.

Harry chanced a glance across his shoulder. He noted that Alphonse was exerting considerable effort. This increased Harry's doubts about the fellow. It seemed odd that a guide, with a bow paddler to aid him, should have difficulty in pushing past a canoe that was handled by one man only.

They neared the northern shore, with Mundon still in advance. They were heading toward a spot to the right of the old mining camp. Harry saw Mundon pause and eye the shore line, which had become hazy.

"Look there!" exclaimed Mundon. "Dead ahead, by the mouth of that small creek. A canoe with something swimming alongside."

"Beaver, maybe," observed Alphonse, stretching to peer past Harry's shoulder. "Oui. I see beaver. Two."

"Do you know who's in that canoe?" queried Mundon, suddenly. "It must be Beaver Luke. Let's go over and see."

"Who is Beaver Luke?"

Harry put the query to Alphonse.

"Never hear of Beaver Luke?" The guide spoke in a tone of mild surprise. "I thought every one knew who Beaver Luke is."

"I never heard of him."

"He is one man that is friendly with many beavers. The government pays him to go everywhere. Beaver, they follow him. They build in those place where Beaver Luke tells them. He is one Indian, Beaver Luke."

They were close to the canoe at the entrance of the creek. Harry saw a splash as a fair-sized beaver twisted in the water and flapped its flat tail. Another beaver followed; then a third. All went scudding to the shore.

A fourth beaver plopped from the bow of Beaver Luke's canoe. Then a huge patriarch of beavers poked its whiskered nose above the gunwales and made ready to follow its more timorous companions. The hunched man in the stern of the canoe straightened and delivered a series of loud, peculiar grunts.

The big beaver hesitated; then turned its head shoreward and gave grunts of its own. The swimming beavers paused restlessly on shore; then came swimming back to the canoe. Evidently the Indian and the old beaver held full command over the tribe. Other beavers were appearing from bushes on the bank.

"Beaver Luke is wise," commented Alphonse. "He knows the beaver language. You have heard him speak,

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m'sieu'."

MUNDON had stopped his canoe; Alphonse backed water with his paddle. Mundon waved in a friendly fashion to "Beaver Luke." The Indian had huddled again and was staring with challenging eyes. Harry could distinguish his long features. Beaver Luke was solemn-faced, with high cheek bones and a large-bridged nose.

The Indian was wearing a dark sweater and a battered felt hat. His canoe was packed with luggage; evidently he intended a long stay at Lake Lakimika. Mundon was apologetic as the canoes coasted closer.

"Sorry," said Mundon. "You're Beaver Luke, aren't you?"

The Indian nodded. It was his first acceptance of the strangers.

"Locating here with a tribe of beavers?"

Beaver Luke grunted affirmatively.

"Taking them up the creek?" queried Mundon, "so they can build a dam?"

Another grunt.

"How far up?"

"Half mile," replied Beaver Luke, speaking for the first time. His voice was gruff. "Maybe more."

"Need any grub?" queried Mundon.

"No," returned Beaver Luke. "You tell people stay away. Want nobody to bother beaver."

"We'll pass the word along," agreed Mundon. "Glad to have met you. We've heard a lot about you, Beaver Luke."

Mundon turned his canoe westward; Alphonse followed suit. Harry, idle at the paddle, looked back to watch Beaver Luke. The Indian had remained motionless in his canoe. The big beaver by the middle thwart was grunting noisily to the others of his clan. Harry saw swift-moving heads poke from the water. Beavers were climbing back into the canoe.

As they rounded a slight curve of the shore, Harry caught a last glimpse of Beaver Luke. The canoe was moving at last, heading toward the mouth of the creek where the Indian planned to place a beaver colony.

With that, Harry was ready to forget Beaver Luke; for he had too much else to think about without considering a person who could scarcely figure in events on Lake Lakimika except as a bystander.

Dale Mundon, however, brought Beaver Luke back to mind as they neared the abandoned mine. Musingly, the young man made remark:

"I was going to pass up that trip to the portage. But I think I'd better go along and talk to the rangers. They ought to be informed that Beaver Luke is here. It's their duty to see that no one troubles him."

IT was dark by the landing near the mine shaft. Harry noticed for the first time that the ground sloped

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considerably up from the water's edge. The hill shrouded the clearing, for the slope curved between the cabin and the setting sun. Harry and Alphonse landed; Mundon waved a parting and continued along his way, following the arm of the lake.

Crisp air had given Harry an appetite. Alphonse made busy with a fire and began to cook a meal. Whatever the guide's lack of other qualifications, he certainly knew how to cook.

He and Harry enjoyed an excellent repast; then reclined beside the fire and lighted their pipes. Alphonse grinned pleasantly when Harry offered him a pouch full of the Hudson Bay tobacco. Evidently the guide liked that particular mixture.

All was quiet, save for occasional sounds. Once, from the dusk of the lake, Harry heard the splashes of a paddle. Later had come the lonely, long-drawn call of a loon, far out upon the silent lake. Night had settled; the camp fire was dying. Alphonse stretched lazily; then decided to turn in.

Harry smoked for a quarter hour longer. Then he arose and went to the cabin also. Alphonse had extinguished the light. Harry supposed that he had gone to sleep in his room. Harry entered his own simple apartment and stretched upon the cot, fully clad.

Despite the calm that had settled upon Lake Lakimika, Harry Vincent felt that events might strike to-night. He intended to be ready should they come.

CHAPTER XI. PROWLERS IN THE DARK

WHEN Harry Vincent awoke, he was conscious only of complete darkness. He had slept restlessly; as he groped for a remembrance of his surroundings, he felt a sense of motion. Shakily, he gripped the edge of his cot; then gave a short laugh of relief.

A full day in a canoe had given Harry the same illusion that comes after a voyage at sea. He had accustomed himself to the motion of the water. As a result, he could still feel the movement of a canoe. It was a full three minutes before Harry could overcome the sensation. Even then, it impressed itself at intervals.

Complete silence gripped the old cabin. Amid the darkness, Harry could feel the pounding of his own heart. Recollections were drilling through his brain snatches of the day's events. They were falling into place.

The meeting with Alphonse at Wapiti Junction; the guide's trouble at the muskeg portage; the rangers who encountered them coming into Lakimika. Those thoughts ended.

Then came a mental picture of Harley Creeland, glaring suspiciously from the rocky point. Dale Mundon, with his cheery greeting. Beaver Luke, silent in his canoe, surrounded by bobbing heads of beavers.

Harry remembered the crisp smell of bacon on the camp fire. He recalled the aroma of his last pipeload of tobacco. With that, he began to wonder why he had so suddenly awakened.

Harry glanced at the luminous dial of his wrist watch. It was vivid in this utter blackness. The time was a few minutes past eleven. That was late, here in the loneliness of Lake Lakimika. Harry grasped a flashlight that lay beneath his pillow. Just as he clutched it, he heard a sound from outdoors.

It was like a scraping, that might have come from the main door of the cabin. The only door. One that had no lock.

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Harry pocketed the flashlight and thrust his hand beneath the blankets that served him as a mattress. He found another object near the foot of the cot. It was an automatic, fully loaded. Harry had placed it there in readiness.

Again the scraping. This time, Harry did not linger.

STEPPING from the cot, he found the window. With one wrench, he pulled away the tattered remnants of mosquito netting. Insects were infrequent at this time of the year. There had been no need to repair the cloth screening. That fact pleased Harry at present.

Edging from the window, Harry found the ground a few feet below. He stole toward the corner of the cabin. He looked through darkness toward the door, but saw nothing. The scraping had ended. The only sound that remained was the slight murmur of the lake.

Harry stole closer to the door. He stopped abruptly. A new sound had come. The squeak of an old hinge. Harry remembered that he had wedged the door when he closed it. The scraping had been the releasing of the barrier. That finished, some one had entered the cabin.

The front windows had been boarded for some reason. The only window to the large room was at the side of the house, closer to Harry than the door. Harry edged toward the window, just as a flashlight blinked. Then came a steadier light. Harry looked through the window.

The situation was odd. Harry, outside, was surveying an intruder who had entered. The man within had found an old kerosene lamp and had lighted it. Harry saw a stooped figure clad in rough clothing. The man's back was toward him.

Evidently the fellow had been in the cabin before; for he was studying the room to see if anything had been changed. When Harry and Alphonse had arrived, they had found the place in disarray.

Canned goods; half-opened boxes of rice; two alarm clocks, stopped almost at the same hour; the kerosene lamp which this man had lighted. Those were typical objects in the room. Harry and Alphonse had disturbed nothing.

The prowler completed his survey. He tiptoed toward the smaller rooms. He stopped at Harry's door; then at Alphonse's, as if to make sure that the occupants were asleep. After that, the man turned about. Harry glimpsed his face.

The intruder was Harley Creeland.

CUNNING showed upon the man's face; but with it, nervousness. The blink of his eyes; the twitch of his lips both were signs that Creeland was anxious to avoid detection. Harry wondered that the man had been so bold as to light the kerosene lamp. Then he realized that the action had been crafty. A steady glow was preferable to the blinks of a flashlight.

Creeland had chanced it that both Harry and Alphonse would be asleep. His lighting of the lamp was probably for the benefit of outside observers. Any persons who might be about would suppose that the light had been turned on by occupants of the cabin.

His survey ended, Creeland did what Harry hoped. He glanced toward the door that led outside a sure sign that he meant to choose that route. Then he extinguished the kerosene lamp. Harry smiled in the darkness as he listened for the creak of the door. It came.

THE NORTH WOODS MYSTERY

Creeland was moving out into the night. Perhaps he was going somewhere else before returning to the rocky point. Harry held the definite hunch that the man's inspection of the cabin had been no more than a preliminary step in his prowling.

Harry could hear creeping footsteps. Cautiously, he followed. Creeland was moving away from the cabin; but not directly toward the shore. Instead, he was going at an angle. His objective might be the square-built boarding of the water-filled mine shaft.

Near that spot, Creeland's footsteps ended. The prowler had come to thick-tufted ground. Harry heard a slight, scraping noise. He was sure that Creeland had encountered the low wall of the shaft. Guiding accordingly, Harry crept up toward the nearer side. His hands touched the roughened woodwork.

There Harry waited through minutes that seemed interminable. He sensed that Creeland must be listening also. Had the man heard his approach? The only way was to outwait him.

After a time, Harry began to think that he had been outguessed. It was possible that Creeland could have detected a follower and played possum in the darkness. Possible also that the fellow could have crept away, along the tufted grass; to leave Harry watching no one.

Harry remembered the old game of "snipe hunt" where dupes are left in the woods by those who perpetrate the hoax. The similarity of the situation did not please him.

A soft splash issued from the lake. Another followed; a trifle more distant. Harry listened a long while; then fancied that he heard a third. The sounds might have been jumping fish; but they could also have come from some canoe.

Was it Creeland, departing? Or was some other person about, paddling past this site?

Harry crawled from beside the framework of the mine shaft. He decided to creep toward the lake; perhaps to man his own canoe and start on a search. After a few yards he hesitated, still thinking about Creeland. While he waited, he heard a new and unexpected sound.

It was the gurgle of water; a sucking that could have come from one place only: the mine shaft. The noise ended after a few moments. Listening, he heard a new and muffled scraping.

Grimly, Harry thought of Creeland. Evidently, the prowler had not gone. Instead, he must have decided that no one had followed him. Harry edged to a spot between the mine shaft and the lake. He would be ready for Creeland when the fellow came this way.

Another burble from the mine shaft. All that Harry could picture was Creeland, dipping a bucket down into the depths, from the end of a rope; then spilling the water after he had raised the bucket. Harry could not grasp any sensible reason for such an odd procedure. The best plan would be to wait until a minute after the sound had ended. Then Creeland would be along.

Somehow, Harry miscalculated. He was still listening to the muffled gurgles when footsteps thudded the ground in front of him. Harry came to his feet; before he was fully risen, a man stumbled squarely upon him.

HARRY dived upon the arrival. A sharp snarl came from his opponent; then they grappled furiously in the dark. Harry had been off balance; but he had made up for it by quick action. He knew that he was stronger than Creeland. As he locked with his foe, he planned to overpower the man as rapidly as possible.

THE NORTH WOODS MYSTERY

It was the only course. Once captured, Creeland might talk. Harry felt that he would jeopardize nothing through this conflict.

The wrestle became furious. Harry had gained a hold; but his opponent was writhing furiously. Harry gave a kick that should have spilled the other fighter; but the stroke skidded wide. Harry felt his adversary twist away. A fist jabbed from the darkness.

Dropping his hold, Harry swung a haymaker. It was a long right hook that would have landed if Harry's fist had not encountered a swinging arm that his foe had brought up luckily in the darkness.

Harry lost his balance; as he tried to recover, two flaying fists pounded wildly upon him. Dropping backward, his head ringing from a punch above his eye, Harry rolled over and away from conflict.

Flat on the ground, he sped his right hand to his pocket and brought out his automatic. Harry was ready if the other used a weapon. Punches were too hopeless in the darkness. Harry thought that Creeland must certainly have brought a revolver with him.

Oddly, the temporary victor made no effort to resume the combat. Perhaps he feared too much trouble if he did. Harry gained the impression of a departing scramble; after that, he heard nothing. He had pictured Creeland as a chap who would avoid a fight. This fitted with Harry's conclusions.

At the same time, Harry realized that his adversary might not have been Creeland. There was a chance that a third hand had entered into the game of blind man's buff.

Where was the fellow? The scrambling footsteps had ceased. Was he doing a cautious sneak; or was he lying in wait? Boldly, Harry crept forward on hands and knees, ready for a new encounter. At intervals, he paused to listen. Then he heard footsteps off to his right. Paces that halted as though some one was listening for a move in the dark.

More minutes passed. The footsteps moved. They were cautious; yet Harry could follow them. He was on a trail again; and curiously, it was leading back along the original path straight toward the cabin!

Nearing the shack, Harry heard the creak of the door. He edged toward the window. He saw the flicker of a match. The kerosene lamp was ignited. Harry stared at the man whom he saw within the cabin. It was Alphonse!

Had he struggled with the French guide? Harry doubted it; for Alphonse looked unruffled. Harry saw him go and peer into the bedroom which Harry had left some time before.

Alphonse emerged; he had learned that Harry was absent. His only reaction was a slight shrug of his shoulders. Harry watched the guide extinguish the kerosene lamp. The outer door did not open. Apparently, Alphonse had gone into his own room.

Had the guide, too, used a window as an exit? Was his retirement a bluff? Harry decided to enter the front door, light the lamp himself and see if Alphonse would appear. He waited a couple of minutes; then plunged toward the door itself.

Instantly, Harry encountered some one who had come up through the darkness. This time, Harry swung to immediate action. Creeland, Alphonse, or any other Harry intended to down the opposition and learn the identity and purpose of his foe.

THE NORTH WOODS MYSTERY

Harry sledged a hard punch with his free right arm. A stabbing hand clutched his wrist. An arm sped beneath his chin; a swift foot engaged his heel. Whisked backward, Harry flattened on the ground beside the cabin. An inarticulate gasp came from his lips.

Groggily, Harry heard a whisper. Sibilant words came from the darkness. Harry knew the identity of his present adversary. This new foeman was The Shadow!

Harry guessed that his chief had arrived after the other episodes had ended. The Shadow had recognized Harry in the dark. He had acted swiftly to avoid a grapple. Here, in terse terms, he was giving his agent brief instructions.

HARRY came to his feet, as a slight swish sounded close beside him. He found the door and entered the cabin.

Acting in accord with The Shadow's brief instructions, Harry lighted the kerosene lantern. Using a soap box as a chair, he seated himself beside a ramshackle table.

After a glance toward Alphonse's door, Harry brought a folded paper from his pocket. He drew out a fountain pen and proceeded to write a message by the lamplight. It was a coded report, complete in every statement. As he finished each sheet, Harry folded it and thrust it into an old crumpled envelope.

He paused early in his writing to light a pipeload of tobacco. He had finished his smoke when he completed his detailed account of all events; beginning with the suspicions of the day, concluding with the actions of the night. The report ended, Harry sealed the envelope. He extinguished the lamp and placed the message on the table.

Then Harry went to his room. He left the door ajar. He waited fully one dozen minutes; but heard no sound from the outer room, until a click came from Alphonse's door. A match flared; again, the kerosene lamp was lighted.

Harry saw Alphonse. The guide was staring toward the table a proof that he had watched Harry write the message. But the envelope was gone. The Shadow had entered and taken it some time during the interval.

Alphonse shrugged his shoulders. He extinguished the lamp without bothering to glance at Harry's door. Harry heard the guide move back into his own room. Harry, in turn, quietly clicked his own door and stretched out upon the cot.

There was time for sleep before dawn arrived. Comfortable sleep, free from threat of prowlers or danger. Strain would no longer grip Harry Vincent during his stay on Lake Lakimika.

The Shadow had arrived. Harry had passed full word to his chief. From chaos would come understanding. The Shadow would fathom the riddles of this night.

CHAPTER XII. NIGHT AND THE SHADOW

DAY dawned placidly above Lake Lakimika. The hours passed peacefully and all upon the shores seemed lulled with full contentment. None gave outward sign of hidden interests.

Early in the morning, Harley Creeland went fishing, but stayed close to the rocky point. Edna Creeland remained on shore, while Pierre kept lookout, watching for the return of Dominie.

THE NORTH WOODS MYSTERY

Dale Mundon had come back to his island. He, too, was fishing; but only from the lower shore, where he could not be seen from the point.

Harry Vincent spent the day strolling about the mine site. He found no paths of interest. For a while, he idled by the abandoned shaft, but discovered nothing that explained the sounds of the night before. The water in the shaft was as murky as before; there was no sign of any rope or bucket anywhere about.

Alphonse was busy patching the canoe that he had bought at Wapiti Junction. The guide took time out to cook lunch. Outside of that, he seemed unconcerned regarding Harry.

From a clump of moosewoods east of the mine shaft, Harry Vincent heard occasional distant sounds that betokened falling trees. They told that the beavers were at work; beginning a new dam at some place up the creek, under the guardianship of their human friend, Beaver Luke.

The forest rangers had not appeared on Lake Lakimika. Mundon's report of Beaver Luke's arrival had evidently been received as unimportant.

Nor did it strike Harry as a matter of consequence. Of all persons along the shores of Lake Lakimika, one alone could testify to having legitimate business here. That one was Beaver Luke. He was following the task which had been appointed him by the Canadian government: the establishment of new beaver colonies throughout the North Woods.

DAY passed. The various campers had finished dinner. Harry had retired to the cabin, to avoid an outside chill. Creeland, muffled in a sweater, had embarked on a twilight fishing expedition, farther away from the point. Pierre had given up his watch for Dominie and was seated beside his camp fire, where Edna was reading a book.

The stilled evening air was awakening echoes. The beavers were still at work. Every time a young tree crashed, its fall could be heard miles away. Two loons had arrived to-night. Floating invisibly upon the darkened waters, they were uttering eerie trills. The melancholy bird calls carried a weird foreboding.

A faint paddle splash sounded near the end of the point. Pierre heard it and spoke to Edna:

"Man from island. He come here again."

"Dale?" queried Edna, dropping her book. "Where is he?"

"Out by end of rock."

Wrapping a sweater about her shoulders, Edna hurried toward the end of the point. Dale had arrived on the lower side. He was drawing his canoe up the ledge when Edna approached.

"Harley has gone fishing," said the girl. "We can talk again, Dale. Begin from our interruption. I have been anxious to hear from you."

Dale sat down upon the rocks. He put a question.

"Why, yes!" exclaimed Edna, in surprise. "Harley has a seaplane. I have never seen it and I scarcely believe that he has."

"He bought it recently?"

THE NORTH WOODS MYSTERY

"Not more than six months ago."

ANOTHER canoe was approaching the point. Despite the fact that the conversation had broken for the moment, neither Dale nor Edna heard the arrival of the boat. Nor did Pierre, back at the camp fire. The explanation lay in the method of the paddler.

He was a silent, black-cloaked figure, almost invisible in the deep dusk. His hands did not lift the paddle from beneath the water's surface. With every easy stroke, they turned the blade and brought it edgewise to a forward position.

The Shadow was the arrival in the canoe. With expert twist, he was steering his craft with each stroke. He was paddling in the fashion that Indians use when they approach unsuspecting water birds. No scraping betrayed his presence; for his paddle was clear of the canoe's side.

The Shadow glided alongside the point. The rocky strip was narrow; he could hear the subdued resumption of the conversation. The speakers were scarcely a dozen feet away from this unseen listener.

"What about the seaplane?" questioned Edna. "What does it have to do with matters here?"

"Where does Creeland keep his ship?" quizzed Dale.

"Somewhere near Detroit," replied Edna, "although I believe that it has flown to Long Island a few times."

"Who has charge of it?"

"A pilot called Chris Ringler."

"What do you know about him?"

The Shadow heard Edna speak in an accusing tone. The girl seemed annoyed by Mundon's ceaseless quiz.

"Why these questions, Dale?" she asked. "When we talked last, you promised to tell me facts. Instead "

"I'll come to facts, Edna." Mundon's interruption was apologetic. "Suppose you ask the questions. That will be better."

"Very well. First, just what did you hear about Harley? The time you overheard men at Red Cedar Rapids?"

"That's easily answered, Edna. I heard that he had paid ten thousand dollars for a mining property on this lake."

"Here on Lakimika? There is a mine, up above this point "

"That's the one. It is worthless."

"Then Harley was duped. Who were the men who swindled him?"

"No one swindled him. He wanted that property. The men who talked were coming to Lakimika. They hoped for a bonus."

"Then the mine may pay?"

THE NORTH WOODS MYSTERY

Mundon laughed lightly.

"You don't catch the thought, Edna," he stated. "Creeland wanted that property for some unknown purpose. I learned from other sources that strangers had been seen about the mine. They have used it as a base for some sort of crooked business."

"Where are they at present?"

"Frankly, I don't know. They must have a hide-out somewhere. I tried to question people up in Galena. Failing in that, I decided to come down here and investigate matters for myself."

"That was how you happened to come back to the rapids and find my reply to your unposted letter?"

"Yes. When I learned that Creeland had come through to Lake Lakimika, I knew there could be but one answer. His purpose is to make contact with the men already hereabouts."

"But Harley has merely gone fishing "

"Always at dawn and dusk when he could not be watched."

"Pierre says those hours are best for fishing "

"Yet Creeland has brought back only a few fish."

MUNDON'S rejoinder left Edna silent. The man continued his discourse in a low-toned voice.

"Yesterday," he stated, "two men camped at the mine site. One is a chap named Vincent; the other a French guide. I talked with them. They may be working with Creeland. I'm not quite sure."

Edna started to speak; then stopped. Mundon resumed:

"I also saw Beaver Luke, an Indian who travels hereabouts. I used that as a pretext to visit some forest rangers who are camping at the northwest portage. I learned something from the rangers."

"About Harley?"

"It appears so. A seaplane has landed on Lake Lakimika every Thursday for the past month. To-morrow is Thursday. The ship is due soon after dawn. At least, that is what the rangers think."

"And they are here to meet it?"

"They are going to watch for it. Like myself, they think that there is something wrong. That's why there are four of them. It is also why I asked if Creeland had a seaplane. I wanted to see if the facts fitted."

"But even if it should be Harley's plane; what wrong would that be?"

"It looks like a case of smuggling, Edna. Planes can cross the Border without being stopped. They can also carry large shipments."

"But Harley did not intend to stay here until Thursday "

THE NORTH WOODS MYSTERY

"Of course not. He has probably finished his mission. He wants to be away before the seaplane arrives."

"But he won't be "

"I know it." Mundon added a chuckle. "That means he will have to give an alibi. I think I can guess what it will be."

"What, for instance?"

"That he had the other guide send a wire from Nimiskiming, telling the plane to come here. Unless" Mundon paused; then added, ruefully "unless he was smart enough to send a wire for the plane not to come. I doubt that, though."

"Why?"

"Because he is probably quite careful about his contact with that aviator, Chris Ringler, whom you mentioned. A wire from Nimiskiming might be a give-away."

"Then you hope the seaplane will arrive?"

"I do. Because it will bring a showdown."

Dale Mundon's tone was one of full conviction. Edna Creeland was impressed. So much so that her own tone changed.

"Dale," declared the girl, "I believe that you are right. That is why I am going to add another fact to those that you know. Harley left this camp secretly last night."

"When?" queried Mundon. "Long after dark?"

"Not long before eleven o'clock. He thought that I was asleep."

"Where did he go?"

"He started out in the canoe, toward the abandoned mine."

Mundon's right fist thwacked his left palm.

"That settles it!" he exclaimed. "Vincent is in the game! He and that guide of his. Unless" as before he paused; then speculated "Unless those two have unwittingly walked in on Creeland's preserves. He might have gone there to spy upon them."

"If he owns the property, he could order them off "

"Do you think he would try that?" Mundon chuckled and shook his head. "Not one chance in a million. He's paid for that property; but it's not in his name. I think the man who received the money was the former owner, who has become a proxy paid to keep quiet."

DALE MUNDON had risen from the rock. He was stepping toward his canoe, Edna Creeland beside him. The man made a final statement.

THE NORTH WOODS MYSTERY

"The climax will come to-morrow," he affirmed, "after that seaplane shows up. The rangers will be here; and crooks will get what is coming to them. The game will be finished.

"I don't know how Vincent and the guide stand. If they are crooks, it will go badly with them. Those rangers have full authority. They act straight from the shoulder in this country.

"Creeland, though, and Ringler there's no question about them, Edna. But you'll see the show-down. All I ask is your promise to let justice take its course."

"I promise," declared the girl.

"I appreciate your decision, Edna," concluded Dale. "Say nothing of your suspicions. Let Creeland go fishing as usual, at dawn. As soon as the plane appears, you will hear from me."

"And the rangers?"

"They will have occupied the camp by that time. They warned Vincent and the guide to choose an island for a camping spot. I offered the pair an opportunity to join me. If they meet with trouble, it will be their own fault. But that does not concern us.

"Do as I have asked, Edna. I want no vengeance upon Creeland because he framed me. I never expect to go back to Boyersford. I simply feel that Creeland should pay the price for his crooked methods. That seems fair enough."

"It is fair, Dale," agreed Edna. "I am willing that you should gain the proof. If Harley is a criminal, I, too, should know."

Dale Mundon gave a whispered farewell. His canoe coasted from the ledge. The Shadow heard the splashes of his paddle as the man headed toward the island where he kept a lone camp.

The Shadow's canoe moved slowly while Edna still stood watching from the rocks. With his silent stroke, the black-clad listener glided his bark toward the northern shore. He was going in the direction of the abandoned mine.

Unheard, The Shadow passed Harley Creeland in the darkness. He could hear the scraping when the belated fisherman made a landing. The Shadow continued onward, totally obscured by the settled night.

The cries of the loons had ended. A last sapling crackled from far away, marking the finished day for the busy beavers. No sound disturbed the stillness until a whispered tone of repressed mirth sounded upon the wavelets of Lakimika. That low-toned laugh was heard only by its author.

THE SHADOW had ferreted through Harry Vincent's report. He had made deductions which had escaped Harry. The Shadow had wanted added details to clinch the conclusions that he had formed. He had gained the needed facts by his visit to the point.

There would be a show-down tomorrow. But it would offer many angles more than Dale Mundon had supposed. A supercrook was in this game; one who would have hidden strength should challenge be offered him. The showdown would be a vital factor; but to be effective, outside strategy must enter.

The Shadow had planned such strategy. He had worked to accomplish it before dawn. A hidden, unsuspected factor in the game, he had kept his very presence here unknown, except to his own agent.

The Shadow could foresee a welcome climax soon after dawn. His own plans were made. Chance alone could disturb them. The Shadow was taking precautions against chance.

Therefore, The Shadow laughed.

CHAPTER XIII. CHANCE PLAYS ITS PART

NOT long after The Shadow had sculled away from the rocky point, Harry Vincent came from the cabin on shore. Harry was puzzled about Alphonse. He wondered why the guide was still outside. The camp fire was out; there was no light to show that Alphonse was still repairing his canoe.

Harry remembered that he had not seen Alphonse since dinner. He also had a recollection of the guide's previous behavior. Harry had set himself to watch Alphonse; despite his intentions, he was failing at the task.

Strolling to the shore, Harry flashed a pocket torch. He saw nothing of Alphonse; nor was the canoe about. The answer was plain. The guide had taken an opportunity to slide away from camp.

Angrily, Harry hurried back to the cabin. He looked in Alphonse's room. The guide's luggage was still there, although his pack lay open and some of its contents had certainly been removed. Returning to the outer door, Harry stared into the darkness, wondering what step to take.

Several minutes passed. Harry was conscious of a sound beside him. He spoke instinctively. A reply came in a whispered voice:

"Report."

It was The Shadow, arrived in silence. Harry could not see his chief in the thick darkness. Steadily, he gave a brief account of Alphonse's disappearance. He heard the reply:

"Report received."

A gloved hand pressed Harry's. The Shadow's agent gripped an envelope. He knew what its contents must be. Instructions which he was to follow. Harry spoke his understanding; then stepped toward the cabin. He thought that he heard a swish that moved along the building.

Once in the cabin, Harry opened the envelope and read the message within. The instructions were brief. He was to break camp to-night and paddle eastward to the portage that led toward Red Cedar Rapids. He was to take Alphonse with him. Harry was to contact persons whom he found there.

Handling Alphonse would be an easy job, once the guide returned. Harry grinned when the writing disappeared from the message. He tucked the paper in the envelope and placed the latter in his pocket. Then he sobered; for he remembered that he still had to wait for Alphonse.

THE guide returned within ten minutes. He came in the door of the cabin and bowed in his polite fashion. He seemed to suspect that Harry had known of his absence; for he gave an immediate excuse.

"Ah, m'sieu'!" enthused Alphonse. "The canoe she is grand. The leak is all gone. We shall have no water for the packs to soak up. Too bad, m'sieu', that you were not with me when I try the boat out in the lake "

"I'll have the chance soon enough," returned Harry. "We're packing up, Alphonse. Breaking camp to-night."

"To-night? Ah, no, m'sieu'."

"Why not?"

"It is too late "

"It wouldn't have been if you had stayed around. We're not going far, Alphonse. Only to the portage that leads to Red Cedar Rapids."

"And why, m'sieu'?"

"It's not your business to ask," growled Harry, angrily. "But since you're curious, I'll tell you. The fire rangers told us to camp on an island. We didn't."

"But we could give excuse "

"We could have to-day. But not tomorrow. Rangers can be tough, Alphonse. That's why we're going to move."

"And to-morrow we will go on to the rapids?"

"No. We can come back here and spend another day fishing. Then we'll go back to the portage and keep on through to Red Cedar Rapids. We'll have a start on our journey."

The decision pleased Alphonse. The guide nodded and announced that he would set to work at once. He started to pick up articles that belonged in the wannigan box. Harry threw off his mackinaw and went into his own room to pack.

At first, Harry held the thought that The Shadow had listened in to make sure that Alphonse accepted the new plans. That seemed logical; it would have fitted under usual circumstances.

But while he packed his blanket roll, Harry gained another inkling. Always, The Shadow's ways were mysterious. He frequently kept certain facts to himself and with good reason. When his agents encountered trouble, they were better off if they could tell but little concerning their chief.

Since his arrival at Lake Lakimika, The Shadow had pursued this policy. He had kept his whereabouts unknown to Harry. It was possible that The Shadow was the person whom Harry was to meet at the portage. There was another possibility also; and it intrigued Harry immensely.

Try as he would, Harry had been unable to place Alphonse in the game. The guide's odd arrival at Wapiti Junction; his slip at the muskeg portage; his in-and-out appearance both last night and to-night these gave Harry a sudden inspiration.

Alphonse was The Shadow!

MORE aptly put, The Shadow was roving in the guise of Alphonse. Facts supported the theory. The Shadow could have reached Wapiti Junction before Harry's departure. He would have been forced, perhaps, to guide the passage through the muskeg ponds only by knowledge of the map.

Last night, Alphonse had come from the cabin after Harry. He had returned; Harry had seen him peer into the empty room. Alphonse had retired; soon afterward, Harry had encountered The Shadow.

THE NORTH WOODS MYSTERY

Identifying The Shadow with Alphonse, Harry saw how well it fitted. He could picture Alphonse donning cloak and hat, leaving by the window and rounding the cabin for the encounter. He grinned as he thought of the aftermath: Alphonse sneaking into the main room and looking for the message, only to find it gone. As The Shadow, he could have taken it before; then slipped back into his own room by the window.

To-night, The Shadow had come in from nowhere, with instructions. Alphonse, singularly, had been absent at the time of The Shadow's arrival. The guide had shown up immediately afterward, with his canoe. Harry guessed that The Shadow had been navigating the lake. How better than as Alphonse?

The whole situation was in keeping with The Shadow's method. Emergencies might arise. If The Shadow were keeping vigil, he could do it best as Alphonse. In a final pinch, Harry might be safer if he did not know that his chief and his guide were one.

An idea struck Harry. He wanted a subtle way to convey his finding to his chief. He thought of a method; he decided to employ it. Finished with the blanket roll, he shouldered his pack and walked out into the main room. He placed the pack upon the table; he picked up his mackinaw and donned it.

Alphonse's gleaming eyes happened to turn in his direction. Calmly, Harry drew the envelope from his pocket. He extracted the paper and pretended to be reading a message. He closed the envelope and threw it into his pocket.

"Hurry it, Alphonse," chided Harry. "Hoist that wannigan box and come along. We're moving over to the portage."

As he spoke, Harry again shouldered the pack. He started through the door of the cabin and stepped to the ground outside. Then a hurtling body came from the doorway and struck him squarely between the shoulders. Harry flattened forward; rolling about, he grappled vainly with a powerful foe.

It was Alphonse. The guide had made a swift dive from within the cabin, to down The Shadow's agent with an unexpected attack.

Harry had made a bad guess. Alphonse was not The Shadow. The flashing of the envelope had served only as bait. Alphonse had been ready to go along with Harry. He had changed his mind when he saw the envelope.

The Shadow had already departed, believing that all was well. Chance had stepped into the issue, produced by Harry's own mistake. The struggle, begun with Alphonse holding advantage, could show but one result.

HARRY fought bitterly; but the husky, long-limbed guide was pounding him breathless. The finish came when Harry slumped beneath his opponent's choking clutch.

Alphonse dragged Harry toward the doorway. Reaching through, he whipped out a long tump line that lay beside the wannigan box. Harry began a new and valiant struggle. Alphonse pinned him to the ground and strapped him with the tump line. In expert fashion, the guide tied Harry's legs and wrists together with the single strip of leather.

Harry had made no useless outcry; but Alphonse took no chances on the future. He used a bandanna handkerchief as a gag. He lugged Harry into the cabin and propped him in a corner. With a glower, the guide extinguished the light. Half groggy, Harry heard him lug out the packs and the wannigan boxes.

Harry slumped hopelessly against the wall. He was dazed; his strength was gone. Worst of all, he had ruined The Shadow's plans. That, to Harry, was more serious than his own plight.

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Wisely, Harry made no effort to fight against his bonds. They were too tight, he needed rest before he attempted a struggle. Sinking back into the corner, Harry napped in fitful fashion, hoping only that his brain would clear; that he would find the strength he wanted.

He managed to stretch to a position of reasonable comfort. He worked the gag loose enough to breathe more easily. Rolling on one side, he dozed; and with each awakening, postponed the effort that he intended later. Somehow, he fell into a longer sleep.

WHEN he awoke, Harry guessed that hours must have passed. By this time, perhaps, The Shadow would be wondering why he was not at the portage; for Harry felt sure that The Shadow must be there. He was positive, too, that Alphonse had gone somewhere else.

Harry's limbs ached; but he was ready for his struggle. He began to writhe; and realized that his strength had returned. The tump line, oily and pliable yielded at intervals. Wide in formation, it did not cut like a thong.

One knot tightened a fashion with tump lines that Harry had found troublesome in the past. On this occasion it was helpful. It gave the looped leather an inch more slack.

Harry worked for many minutes. He rested a while; then tried again. Another long period of fruitless labor; another rest. With the third attempt, Harry wriggled one arm free.

From then on, it was a question of minutes only. Wearily, Harry completed his quest for freedom. He flipped the tump line to the floor; rising, he stretched and wobbled toward the door. Chill outer air revived him.

Night still held heavy. Harry's wrist watch had stopped; but Harry guessed that it must be close to dawn. His problem was to reach the distant portage. That would be difficult, since Alphonse had gone with the canoe. A tramp along the undulating shore of Lakimika would be slow and long delayed.

Considering this, Harry remembered the beaver colony. The creek was not more than a quarter mile distant; it was directly along the path that Harry had to follow. Beaver Luke would be about. The Indian owned a canoe. Perhaps Harry could make some deal with him.

This decided, Harry started past the mine shaft. He made no attempt at caution; for he felt sure that no one was about. As he neared the shaft, he paused; for he heard a repetition of a sound that he had noted the night before.

It was the sucking gurgle of water, within the shaft itself. It was followed by a muffled scraping, difficult to locate with exactitude. Harry heard soft thuds. Reaching in his pockets, he found a flashlight and automatic, which Alphonse had not bothered to take from him.

Stealing forward, Harry centered the flashlight upon the mine shaft and pressed the button. The glare formed a circle upon the shaft itself. Within the focused glow was a crouching man, whose face showed a snarl as it stared into the light. Astonishment gripped Harry Vincent.

The Shadow's agent had expected to see either Creeland or Alphonse. He would not have been surprised had he found some other person who belonged in this terrain. But the man before him was foreign to the territory. He was one of the four Mongols whom Harry had seen at Wapiti Junction.

The Shadow had surmised that this would be their base. Harry had come expecting to find traces of the Chinese. But he had given it up as a lost idea; hence he was startled by the sight of the unexpected Mongol.

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THE fellow was digging for a knife. Harry stopped him with a rasped command, which the Mongol evidently understood. Up came yellowish hands. Harry strode forward, thrusting his automatic into the flashlight's glare, that the man might see the gun.

Then, from each side came thudding figures that Harry had not seen. The Mongol was not alone. Two of his countrymen were with him; but they had spread away from the mine shaft. Harry had not guessed their presence until the Mongols sprang, like stalking tigers, to bear him to the ground.

Harry lost his grip on the automatic as a yellow hand seized the gun. The central Mongol piled forward to aid his fellows. Three against one, they rolled Harry in the tufted grass. One pinned his arms; another clutched his throat. A third whipped forth ropes in the darkness and bound The Shadow's agent.

A gag was forced between Harry's jaws. Again exhausted, helpless in his bonds, Harry felt himself hoisted by brawny arms. He jolted against wooden beams. Then came a descent into musty gloom that seemed like a nightmare to Harry's dazed mind.

Amid Stygian depths, Harry became conscious that he was being dragged upward by his three captors. There was a pause; then Harry heard a surge of water from somewhere in the blackness.

Hopeless regret gripped Harry Vincent. He had gained the end of a quest. He had encountered the lurking Mongols for whom The Shadow searched. But he had become their prisoner; and they had carried him to some secret hiding place.

Helpless, Harry Vincent could find no way to inform The Shadow of his plight.

CHAPTER XIV. DAWN BRINGS AID

FAINT dawn streaked the eastern sky soon after Harry's capture. Dim light showed desolation at the clearing by the cabin. Even the wavelets of the lake carried a lulling murmur as they licked the gravelly shore. No trace remained of Harry Vincent nor his Mongol captors.

A slight splash betokened the slow approach of a canoe. It was gliding westward along the shore, close to land. The huddled shape in the stern was that of Beaver Luke. Peering from the bow was the snout of the mammoth beaver who was the Indian's chief pal. The animal looked like a figurehead from the prow.

Beaver Luke had passed the fringe of moosewoods that skirted the eastern edge of the clearing. These trees, though fully grown, were no larger than saplings. Their huge maple leaves, larger than an outspread hand, formed a curtain that hid the clearing from the area to the east.

A fishing pole projected from Beaver Luke's canoe. The Indian evidently coincided with Pierre's opinion that the arm of the lake was the best place to fish. Perhaps Beaver Luke had found better results than Harley Creeland.

Beaver Luke looked stolidly toward the clearing as he came along beside the vertical mine shaft. His eyes studied the shore; they noted the absence of Alphonse's canoe. Beaver Luke ceased paddling; the big beaver turned its head about and solemnly watched the Indian eye the shore.

Last night there had been two men camping at the mine site. This morning, they and their canoe were gone. That fact apparently interested Beaver Luke. It was seldom that men broke camp at night.

Beaver Luke backed water. He piloted the canoe to a landing by the mine site. He grunted to the beaver; then

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stepped ashore. The Indian intended to investigate the subject of the vanished campers.

Circling to the cabin, Beaver Luke entered. Only the faintest light showed the interior; yet the solemn-faced Indian could see that the place was vacated. He came out of the cabin and walked past the camp fire. He neared the square-built mine shaft.

There, Beaver Luke stopped. Huddling to the ground, the rangy prowler noted the bent grass. Footsteps had made but little impression upon the tufted turf. There had been more than footprints here, however. The ground had been marked by Harry Vincent's scuffle with the three Mongols.

Beaver Luke read signs in the grass. He grunted; he arose and studied the edge of the mine shaft. There, caught by a long, splintered beam, he found a wisp of blue wool. It had come from Harry's mackinaw.

LEANING over the edge of the frame, Beaver Luke peered down into the water-filled mine shaft. He could see the muddiness of the water; but the surface of the square-pool was not as it should be. There was no scum upon it.

This was a fact that Harry Vincent had not noted. Yet it was likely that the water in the pit, whether fed by rain or seepage, should have become stagnant. That, to Beaver Luke, was significant.

Returning to his canoe, the Indian grunted to the big beaver who awaited him. The bewhiskered animal flopped from the canoe, gave a grunt and swam out into the lake, heading toward the creek. Beaver Luke had ordered his four-footed lieutenant back to the beaver colony.

Hauling the canoe up from the gravel landing, Beaver Luke pulled it behind the clump of moosewoods. He left it where it could not be seen either from the lake or the clearing.

The Indian kicked off his moccasins; then removed his tattered flannel shirt. He placed these garment's in the canoe, along with a pack, a rifle and the fishing pole which were already there.

Clad only in khaki trousers, Beaver Luke crept through the moosewoods and approached the mine shaft. His hand tightened a large hunting knife within a sheath that was fastened to his belt. When he reached the shaft, Beaver Luke lifted himself over the edge.

He descended mechanically into the shaft; when he reached the water, he still proceeded downward. The surface closed above his head. Beaver Luke held his breath until he found the bottom of the shaft, fully ten feet farther down.

There he groped in darkness with his right hand, while his left clutched slimy beams to keep him from popping to the surface. Where a back wall should have been, Beaver Luke found an opening nearly five feet high and almost as wide as the rear of the shaft.

Without hesitation, the limber Indian shoved himself through the water-filled passage. It was a dangerous undertaking; for he would be trapped if the passage narrowed. But Beaver Luke was an expert underwater swimmer.

Stone blocked progress after a dozen feet. Beaver Luke gripped the edge of a crude stone step. He followed it upward to another; step by step, hand over hand, he continued the ascent through watery blackness. His head emerged suddenly into clear air.

Beaver Luke had arrived within a hidden shaft that followed up beneath the slope. The excavators of this

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mine must have struck a vein after burrowing twenty feet downward beside the lake. The steps ended; but the passage still continued on a slight upward slant that proved there could be much hollowed space ahead.

Groping along the passage, Beaver Luke came to a fork. One corridor cut downward; the other stayed on a level. The Indian chose the latter. He reached a turn in the passage. He saw the glimmer of light ahead. It came from the left of the level corridor.

Stealing forward noiselessly, Beaver Luke found two doors; one on each side of the corridor. The one on the left was half opened. It was from there that the light issued. Peering into a chamber, the silent Indian saw two men seated on boxes beside a table that supported a kerosene lamp.

There was a doorway at the other side of the room. It was bound with iron and heavily padlocked. Evidently it guarded a cavern where valuables were stored.

BEAVER LUKE eyed the two occupants. One was a small, wizened man who wore large spectacles beneath a tuft of grayish hair that projected over his forehead. The other was a stocky, sullen-faced fellow who was puffing moodily at a corn cob pipe. Beside him rested a pound tin of Hudson Bay Post tobacco.

"Half past six," growled the stocky man. "'Twon't be long to wait, Specs."

"It's got me jittery, Bing," complained the wizened man. "I don't like it, mixing these two games."

"No wonder you don't," snorted "Bing." "Plate-making is your racket; you can't think of anything else. You've done a good job, turning out the queer. But that's no reason why the chief shouldn't go in for chink running."

"It may bring us trouble," insisted "Specs." "In fact, we're due for complications this morning. Bad business may begin when Chris Ringler gets here."

"It will all be over before eight o'clock. Quit beefing, Specs. Say how do you think the chief could have unloaded the phony mazuma, if it hadn't been for the chinks? Besides that, he's picked up a grand apiece for each one that he's shoved across the Border."

"From Kai Luan?"

Bing snorted at the wizened man's query.

"That Kai Luan talk is the bunk," he explained. "The chief came out with it when I talked to him last night. There isn't any Kai Luan. It's just a name the chinks have for the chief."

"Then who pays the money?"

"The chinks themselves. They're hopped up with the idea of getting into the United States, so they can bump off foreign devils. You know what these mugs are? They're Boxers or what's left of 'em and they're still sore about the time when the white race busted up to Peking and finished their racket."

"That was thirty years ago "

"Longer than that. But the Boxers have started a come-back ever since the Child of Heaven snagged the job as emperor of Manchukuo. That's the low-down that the chief gave me. He knew some chinks in New York. He framed the racket with them "

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Babbled voices sounded from behind the closed door on the right side of the corridor. The tones reached Specs. The wizened man looked uneasy. Bing snorted.

"Don't worry about them chinks," he remarked. "They think that the chief is a Chinaman himself. That's why they call him Kai Luan. They'll do anything he tells 'em. He knows some of their lingo."

"That's why they grabbed that fellow at the cabin?"

"Yeah. The chief wanted them to bring him here. They should have snagged two; but one had scrambled."

"Who is the man that they got?"

"Some galoot who butted in where he wasn't wanted. The chief will make him talk later. After that "

Bing paused and made a gesture of a knife blade passing across his throat.

THE buzzing had stopped from the room on the right. Specs had been looking toward the corridor; but he had not spied Beaver Luke. The listener had drawn back into the passage.

"The chinks tied that guy up plenty tight," clucked Bing, to Specs. "I took a look at him in the end room. You'd think he was in a strait-jacket. I'll bet Houdini couldn't have got out of a tie-up like this bird is in."

"You locked him in the room?" queried Specs.

"Naw," retorted Bing. "What was the use? He can't crawl out of those knots. He's not going to bother nobody; and nobody is going to bother him. We're holding him for the chief."

"Get over the jitters, Specs. Along about seven o'clock, I'll tell the chinks to get ready. They understand enough English to listen. The boss gave them orders in their own lingo "

Beaver Luke was listening no longer. Silently, he was pacing along the corridor toward the inner end. How much of the conversation had passed his understanding, no one could have estimated. Beaver Luke had remained impassive as well as quiet.

It was plain, however, that he had grasped the final remarks. The reference to the room at the end of the corridor certainly concerned some prisoner. Beaver Luke was making for that room.

The Indian stopped at the end of the passage and lurked beside a closed door. His move was one that seemed inspired by native cunning. His ears had detected a sound from the closed door farther back. The barrier opened; light showed a pair of fierce-looking Mongols, armed with knives. They came along the corridor toward Beaver Luke.

The Indian's long fingered hand drew the hunting knife from its sheath. In darkness, the lithe waiter crouched, ready to meet a surprise attack. There was a chance that the Mongols would flash a light. If so, they would see Beaver Luke.

Luck favored the Indian. The Mongols came through darkness. They found the door while Beaver Luke huddled back in a corner where the corridor widened. It was not until the two Chinese had opened the door that they used a flashlight. The glare was turned into the room itself.

Babbling, the Mongols turned about, extinguishing the torch. They came from the end room and went back

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along the corridor to their own apartment. After they had gone from view, Beaver Luke stepped to the door of the end room. Softly the Indian opened the way.

The dimmest of light, trickling from the corridor, was all that served Beaver Luke. Nevertheless, his piercing eyes could distinguish a figure upon the floor. That form was huddled, girded with many bonds. Luke closed the door behind him. Groping through pitch darkness, he found the prisoner.

LEATHER straps bound Harry Vincent. They were interlaced with twisted pieces of wire. To loosen those knots would have been impossible. Beaver Luke attacked the straps themselves. Probing with his hunting knife, he slid the blade beneath the bonds. With a careful, outward slice, he cut Harry free.

The prisoner was gagged. Beaver Luke released the bandage from beneath his teeth. Harry rested mute and motionless. His muscles were incapable of activity. Beaver Luke grunted. Harry recognized the tone. He guessed who his rescuer was.

Silently, the Indian aided Harry to his feet. He spoke two words in English:

"Come. Careful."

Half supported by his rescuer, Harry made the door. Beaver Luke opened it and edged him out into the corridor. Harry steadied. With Luke aiding him, he managed to tread along with very little noise. Harry was wearing moccasins that he had bought at Wapiti Junction. They were of great help during this progress.

Near the door of the lighted room, Beaver Luke stopped Harry with a warning arm. The Indian peered into the chamber. He saw Bing and Specs beginning a game of pinochle, using a box as a table. Bing's watch lay in view. The stocky man was taking care to observe the time.

Luke motioned to Harry. The Shadow's agent stole past the doorway. They reached the turn in the corridor; at the fork, Luke continued along the main passage that led down toward the stone steps.

Picking his way through the darkness, he stopped at the right moment. A pebble, slipping from beneath Harry's moccasin, splashed slightly in the water that covered the steps.

Harry stood bewildered. For the first time, the full situation dawned upon him. He had been rescued, thanks to the unexpected intervention of Beaver Luke. But the way to freedom was blocked.

Wearied, still unsteady, Harry felt sure that he and his rescuer had reached the abrupt finish of a useless trail.

CHAPTER XV. HARRY PREPARES

"You got light?"

Beaver Luke's question was a guttural monotone in the darkness. Harry Vincent understood the Indian's want. Feeling in his pockets, Harry learned that his flashlight and his automatic had been taken from him.

"No light," replied Harry. "Men take it."

"Got match?"

This time Harry fished into a little pocket of his mackinaw. He found a half-filled packet of paper matches. He passed them to Beaver Luke.

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The Indian struck a match. By the tiny flame, Harry could see the glisten of damp, tanned skin. Luke had arrived in the mine as dripping as one of his friends the beavers; and he was still moist from his underwater excursion.

Harry watched the match flicker along the rough stone wall of the passage. Beaver Luke was looking for something in the hewed rock. Harry saw the sparkle of minerals in the stone. Then the flame died. Luke struck another match.

It was on the fifth match that Beaver Luke made a discovery; one that puzzled Harry. A flat plate was embedded in the rock. Fitted to it was a lever. Beaver Luke surveyed the device; then gave a knowing grunt.

Harry caught the idea. Luke's intuition had told him that Harry had been carried here without immersion in the water of the mine shaft. Luke, himself, had been forced to swim for entry. Therefore, the Indian had supposed that there was some way by which the shaft could be temporarily drained.

"Let me swing it, Luke," suggested Harry, as the match flare died. "I can guess what will happen."

Luke stepped aside. Harry found the lever and pulled it to one side. Immediately, a gurgle sounded from the steps beneath. Faintly, Harry could hear an answering trickle from somewhere deeper in the slope:

"Water go through pipe," grunted Beaver Luke. "Big hole inside hill."

"It drains into the lower shaft," agreed Harry. "It's moving rapidly, too. Listen the noise has stopped."

LUKE struck a match. He and Harry looked toward slimy steps from which the water had receded. At the bottom was the passage through to the vertical mine shaft.

"Great work," approved Harry. "Come along, Luke."

"You go," returned the Indian. "Me stay."

"But you will be in danger here "

"Me come after."

Harry saw the reason for the Indian's insistence. Luke had come through by an underwater swim. He could return in the same fashion. Such a method would leave no trace for the men within the mine.

"All right."

With that agreement, Harry descended the stone steps. He was forced to stoop slightly when he came to the low passage. He remembered that the Mongols had done the same when carrying him into the mine.

Harry reached the shaft. He saw dim daylight above. The crude ladder was visible at the front side of the shaft. Harry clambered upward. He managed to hoist himself over the side at the top of the shaft.

A minute passed. Then came a gurgling noise from below. Peering down into the shaft, Harry saw water pour in from slits between boards in the front wall. The whole system was explained.

The shaft was almost water-tight; for it was drilled in solid rock. The water in it came neither from rain nor from seepage. There were pipes that ran in from the lake. These kept the old shaft filled.

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Those inside the mine were cut off from the world by a clever barrier which few persons would have suspected. No one would care to dive to the bottom of an abandoned mine shaft. The water was always muddy; for the walls of the shaft were thick with ooze. Each new supply would become murky.

When persons entered, some one within the mine prepared the way by drawing back the lever at the top of the inside steps. This action closed the pipes from the lake. It opened sluices in the rocky bottom of the shaft. The water flowed out through lower pipes, down into the sump at the end of the downward corridor.

Either that corridor ended in a large chamber, or it ran into soft earth that would absorb the water from the shaft. For Harry could guess that the shaft was drained at frequent intervals. A few nights ago, the Mongols had come here. Last night, some other visitor had emerged. To-night the Mongols had come from the shaft to make their capture.

Gurgling had ceased. The water was up to its normal level. For the first time, Harry realized that he might have suspected something because the surface lacked slime. Then came an upward splash. Out from the water bobbed Beaver Luke. The redskin climbed up the crude ladder. He came over the edge and shook himself like a beaver.

DAYLIGHT showed Harry and his rescuer plainly. Beaver Luke did not like the fact. He grunted and pointed toward the moosewoods. He started in that direction and Harry limped after him. Luke pressed his way through the mass of oversized leaves. They came to the canoe.

This was Harry's opportunity to explain matters. While Luke donned moccasins and shirt, The Shadow's agent made brief statements.

"Bad men here, Luke," affirmed Harry. "Last night, I start for portage. Hope to find friends there. Men grab me."

Luke grunted.

"My guide go bad," added Harry. "He take canoe. I need canoe. I pay if you lend me yours."

Beaver Luke scowled.

"No pay," he grunted. "You take canoe. Go."

"Thanks, Luke," expressed Harry. "I'll bring the canoe back again, to the Beaver dam, or wherever you say. If you "

Harry stopped. A distant sound was thrumming the air. He saw Beaver Luke turn and stare steadily. Harry recognized the increasing zoom.

"A plane!" he exclaimed. "Coming this way "

"Bad man talk," interposed Luke. "Me hear him say plane come."

The ship was roaring low above the lake. Spreading the top of a moosewood tree, Harry could glimpse a seaplane. It was already near the point; it was nosing for a landing on the water.

"I've got to stick here," said Harry, earnestly. "Going to the portage won't help me. I'd be moving away from where I'm needed. I'd be seen. If I only had a gun "

"Me give gun."

Harry turned in surprise at Beaver Luke's statement. He had not fancied that the Indian, friend of most animals, would carry a firearm. Luke was stepping to the canoe. From beneath the thwarts he drew a rifle that had been hidden beneath his packs.

"Men bother beavers sometime," stated Luke. "Me keep gun. Chase men away. Gun got bullet. You take."

"But what about yourself?"

"Nobody bother Beaver Luke."

"Then you can head for the portage "

Beaver Luke shook his head.

"Me stay here," he declared, stoutly. "Keep near beaver. Near men, too. Keep between. You need me; then you call."

THE Indian handed the rifle to Harry; then turned and slid his canoe down the slope toward the lake. There was no stopping him. Harry simply stood and watched his rescuer push the canoe into the water, beneath an overhanging clump of moosewood and pine trees.

Then Beaver Luke was aboard; with a shove of his paddle, he sent the canoe out from the shore. A few strokes and he was gliding beyond the moosewood fringe. Harry noticed, however, that Luke was not conspicuous. The shore at this point formed a slight indentation.

No one would bother Beaver Luke. That seemed obvious, particularly if the Indian did not thrust himself into trouble. At any rate, Luke had made his own choice. Harry's job was to watch what happened at the clearing.

Gripping the Indian's rifle, Harry pressed through the boughs of moosewood and stared toward the clearing in front of the cabin. The plane had reached the water. It was coasting in toward shore.

Harry saw that the ship was an amphibian. He watched its propeller roar; he kept vigil as the plane reached the gravel. Then, like a mammoth, waddling turtle, the plane crawled from the lake under its own power. Wheels had replaced its boatlike bottom, as a means of advance.

The amphibian halted close by Alphonse's dead camp fire. A pilot stepped from the cabin and dropped to the ground. Harry saw him face the lake and signal with his arms. Daylight had brightened. Far beyond, Harry saw a canoe that swung inward from the arm of the lake.

No doubt remained in Harry's mind as to the identity of that paddler. The jerky progress of the canoe was a giveaway. The man who was coming to contact the aviator was Harley Creeland.

CHAPTER XVI. THE SHOW-DOWN

IT was seven minutes before Creeland's canoe grated upon the beach. Meanwhile, the aviator had doffed his pilot's helmet to reveal a shock of tousled black hair. Harry had spotted the man's face in the light. The fellow looked hard-boiled.

Creeland, when he landed, came directly toward the plane. Harry saw him speak to the aviator; the two

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became engaged in a deep discussion. Harry could not overhear their words, for the pilot had walked halfway to meet Creeland.

Looking toward the lake, Harry caught a glimpse of Beaver Luke's canoe. The Indian had circled away from the shore; he was using his fishing pole. Neither Creeland nor the aviator appeared to be noticing him.

The splash of paddles sounded from across the water. Both Creeland and the aviator looked out to see a canoe that had started from the point. Harry could discern two distant figures. The one in the bow was Edna Creeland. Pierre was paddling stern.

Creeland gestured to the aviator. The pair came farther up on shore. Harry could catch snatches of an argument.

"I tell you, Ringler!" It was Creeland, speaking harshly. "You should not have come "

"But the wire, sir," protested the aviator. "I knew that you must have sent it "

Creeland interrupted with fuming words that Harry could not catch. Ringler continued his protest. At last, Creeland calmed.

"It won't matter," he decided. This time, Harry could hear. "I'll tell my wife that I had Dominie wire you. I can say that I brought you here in case she wished to cut the trip short."

"That was my thought," put in Ringler. "After all, sir, there is no harm done."

"She is coming from the point, with Pierre, the guide. Let me do the talking, Ringler."

The aviator nodded.

"You can stay here until evening," added Creeland. "Better, still; until tomorrow dawn."

"Always the best time to take off."

"And in the meantime," put in Creeland, sourly, "you can taxi the ship farther inshore. There are too many meddlers about this lake."

"Like that chap out there?"

Ringler had observed Beaver Luke. Harry heard Creeland give a harsh laugh.

"That's Beaver Luke," stated Creeland. "He minds his own business. One fellow, at least, that does so. Pierre told me about him."

THE canoe had neared a landing. Creeland and Ringler started down to meet it. Harry saw Pierre toss a couple of sweaters into the bottom of the boat. Then Edna was ashore, coming up toward Creeland. Pierre followed; he pulled the canoe up on the beach and joined the group.

The four were walking toward the amphibian plane. Again, Harry could hear their conversation.

"This is Chris Ringler, Edna," explained Creeland. "My pilot, you know; just er sort of a surprise for you. I had Dominie wire him from Nimiskiming."

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Edna shook hands with Ringler. Then she asked:

"But why did you want the plane up here, Harley?"

Creeland shrugged his shoulders.

"I thought perhaps you would be tired of the woods. If you say the word, we can fly back to civilization tonight. Or to-morrow or whenever you choose."

"I like it up here," declared Edna, emphatically. "By the way, Mr. Ringler how in the world did you ever manage to find this lonely lake?"

Creeland looked at Edna; then at Ringler. The pilot stuttered:

"By by compass. Of course well, I've flown this country before, Mrs. Creeland."

"Never in my ship," interposed Creeland.

"Of course not," agreed Ringler. "It was while I held my last job. Maybe the one before. I don't quite remember."

FROM his vantage point amid the moosewoods, Harry could see the canoe that Edna and Pierre had left. While he watched, he suddenly gained the reason why the half-breed guide had tossed the sweaters into the boat. A figure was rising from beneath the thwarts.

Dale Mundon. Harry recognized the man's head as soon as it had poked into view. Promptly, Harry visualized events that must have happened on the point at dawn.

Creeland had promptly started out on one of his fishing excursions. That had placed him in a good position when the plane had arrived. But with Creeland's start, some one must have flashed a signal to the island below the point. Dale Mundon had come over in his canoe. Harry began to sense the true status of things. Mundon and Creeland were enemies; Edna had heard statements made by Mundon.

The man on shore was approaching, circling to come behind the plane. It was fortunate for him that he took that precaution; for while Mundon was advancing, Creeland became suddenly interested in the matter of the canoe. Harry saw him look toward the shore.

"Whose canoe is that?" demanded Creeland. "Has Dominie returned? I had forgotten for the moment that I had taken the only canoe we had."

"I did not forget it," put in Edna, boldly. "It is odd that you forgot, Harley. Your deliberate intention was to keep us away from here!"

"Nonsense!" ejaculated Creeland, angrily. "I was fishing over near here and I "

"You find fish on shore?"

Pierre put the question. Creeland turned savagely.

"What do you mean by that?"

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"Pierre listen, one other night." The guide spoke artfully. "He hear long paddle. Canoe scrape stone. You land here "

Creeland's fists were clenched. For a moment, he seemed about to pounce upon the guide. He could count on Ringler's backing, and he was enraged by Pierre's impertinence. Then came the interruption that stopped Creeland's urge for fight.

Dale Mundon had stepped from beside the amphibian. His steady hand was holding a leveled revolver. His voice snapped an order that made Creeland spin about.

"Raise your hands, Creeland," ordered Mundon. "You, too, Ringler. Your game is up."

CREELAND glared viciously; then complied with the order. But his lips spat an oath. He followed with a bitter accusation.

"Mundon, eh?" Harry could see the man's teeth grit. "More of your crooked work. So you're out to make trouble. If you "

"Pipe down, Creeland," interposed Mundon, firmly. "This gun has a hair-trigger. Don't make me fidgety. It's my turn to do some talking."

Despite his assertion, Mundon remained silent. Creeland himself glared helplessly, while Ringler looked dejected. Edna stood by, her face puzzled until Pierre turned lazily and looked toward the cabin.

"Men here," remarked the guide. "Forest rangers."

"Good," decided Mundon. "They told me they'd show up. They were smart. They must have left their canoe before they reached the landing."

Four men appeared promptly, two from each side of the cabin. Harry recognized Jake and Walt, with their two companions. The rangers were armed with rifles; they came forward and covered the men whom Mundon watched. Dale stepped back and pocketed his revolver with a satisfied smile.

"The law will handle the rest," asserted Mundon. Then, to the four rangers: "Here are the men you wanted. My plan worked. I nabbed them."

Creeland began to splutter. Jake silenced him with a growl. Harry Vincent rested, waiting with his rifle. Off shore, he saw Beaver Luke hauling in his fishing pole. Then he spied something else a motion beyond the cabin. Harry was just quick enough to catch a fleeting glimpse of a figure that had moved from a clump of trees to reach the hiding shelter of the shack.

Had The Shadow returned?

Harry felt confident that he had. Then doubts seized him. He had been mistaken about The Shadow once before. Perhaps he had made a slip again. Friend or foe, that person beyond the cabin must be watched. That, Harry decided, would become his own duty.

The foreground showed no danger. Creeland and Ringler, the accused crooks, were guarded by four men. Mundon and Pierre were standing in reserve. The only menace might come through a surprise attack. None could issue from the mine shaft. If Mongols poked their noses forth, they would be at a disadvantage.

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The one danger was from the cabin. It would be Harry's duty to forestall it. But if the danger threatened at all, it would strike soon. Otherwise, the lurker would not intend to act at all.

TENSE seconds passed; and with them, Harry felt a new flood of confidence. The person past the cabin had become a watcher only. In Harry's estimation, he could be The Shadow; no one else. For Harry knew The Shadow's way. When the law triumphed, the master fighter never entered afterward.

And Harry was sure that the law had gained its mission. Jake, the big ranger, was beginning to quiz Creeland; while Mundon stood ready to add his challenging questions. Soon, Harry supposed, Creeland would weaken. Then would the cause be won.

Harry Vincent was due for an amazing surprise. In wildest fancy, he could never have guessed the sudden changes that were to take place in the scene before him. Hidden facts were to be learned; sudden counterstrokes were to come.

Only one who had delved deeply into ways of crime could have predicted the moves that were to follow. Only one who had pieced the pattern in which many had participated. Harry was right upon one point only; that The Shadow, like himself, was on watch.

For The Shadow had divined the moves that the crooks would make. The Shadow was present to aid the cause of right.

CHAPTER XVII. THE LONE HAND

"COME clean, Creeland."

It was Dale Mundon who sounded the urging words. Jake had battered questions to which Creeland had only scowled.

"That's it," growled Jake. "Come clean."

Creeland eyed the forest ranger.

"All right," he decided. "I'll do some talking, provided I'm not interrupted."

"Go ahead," agreed Jake.

Creeland glared momentarily; then managed to calm himself. Coldly, he looked toward Dale Mundon. He pointed to the man.

"This fellow is a crook," declared Creeland. "He once had a job at my bank in Boyersford. He stole twenty-five thousand dollars.

"We've heard about that frame-up," put in Jake. "He told us the facts last night. What we want to know is what your game is. Maybe we know more about it than you think."

"You said I could speak "

"And you have," put in Mundon. "They know how you framed me, Creeland. So does Edna. I told her about the money in my room."

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Creeland swung to his wife.

"You must believe me, Edna," he pleaded. "It was on your account that I shielded Mundon. I should have sent him to jail "

"You couldn't have," interrupted Mundon. "But I was stupid enough to believe you when you said you could. I know better now."

"Did Mundon tell you everything?" demanded Creeland, still speaking to his wife. "How it was that I first suspected him? How Crawford came to me and "

"Hear him out, Edna," put in Mundon. "He is going to elaborate the story."

"I heard how you hired Crawford," declared Edna, to Creeland.

"I hired Crawford?" queried Creeland. "Ridiculous! Crawford came from the bonding company. He was their private investigator. He demanded that I find out if funds were missing from the bank. On account of Mundon "

"On account of me?" laughed Dale. "This is good. Go ahead, Creeland."

"ON account of you," returned Creeland, savagely. "You had embezzled twice before. Once you had gotten away with it. You had a criminal record for the other time. Crawford and I went to the bank. We found funds missing. We went to your room "

"And planted cash that you took yourself."

"Ridiculous! There were three other witnesses besides myself and Crawford. Jennings, Marsh "

"Both tellers in your bank. Men who would be easily deceived."

"And Jim Lagry "

"A crony of yours. It's the same old story, Creeland, with the Crawford elaboration."

Creeland turned to Edna.

"Do you believe me?" he queried.

"I do not care to answer, Harley," replied the girl. "The dispute lies between you and Dale. The proof lies in the situation here. Dale tells me that there has been smuggling, involving a seaplane. This is your plane."

"It came here without my knowledge "

"Come, Creeland." Jake growled his way into the discussion. "This is your ship. This fellow Ringler is your man. Spill what you know. Where are you hiding the Chinamen?"

"The Chinamen?"

Creeland blinked incredulously. Mundon looked astonished as he turned to Jake.

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"Chinamen?" questioned Dale. "You said there was smuggling "

"That's what it is," returned Jake. "Running chinks is smuggling. There was no reason to tell you too much, young fellow. Come on, Creeland!" He wheeled toward the accused man. "Where is the hide-out?"

Creeland darted a glance toward Ringler. The aviator looked pale. Jake delivered a pleased growl. He approached Ringler.

"So you know the answer, eh? He's trying to keep you quiet? Well, I've got another idea. I think you'll talk. We can make it easy for you, if you do."

Ringler began to shake his head. Jake thrust a heavy jaw forward. He gestured with his rifle. Ringler gasped.

"I'll I'll tell." Words stammered from the aviator's chalkish lips. "I I've come up here before for for Creeland. The hide-out it's it's down there "

Turning, Ringler pointed toward the mine shaft. Jake motioned to Mundon, who went over and peered into the depths. Dale swung about, shaking his head.

"A stall," he decided. "Take a look yourself. The shaft is filled with water. You couldn't keep Chinamen in divers' suits."

"But we know that the Chinamen are here," snapped Jake. "Leastwise, they should be. Ringler's given us a lead; maybe he can tell us more."

"I I can't," gulped the aviator. "I only know that I saw them come from the mine shaft. The last time I was here. I wasn't supposed to see. But it was later after dawn "

"Listen!" Mundon called the interruption. Then, leaning suddenly over the mine shaft: "Look!"

Jake hurried over. Harry could see the pair looking down into the depths. He could hear the gurgle of receding water. Jake growled a command for silence. He beckoned to Walt, who came over beside him. The other two rangers covered Creeland and Ringler.

The gurgling ended. Mundon, Jake and Walt drew back. They waited, on Harry's side of the mine shaft. Soon a yellow head poked itself up from the opening. Mundon bounded forward with his revolver. A Mongol stared with bulging eyes. Mundon gestured.

GRIMACING, the Chinaman climbed from the shaft and raised his hands. Jake motioned Walt to cover him. There was a new scraping from the shaft. Mundon covered a second Mongol. He forced this fellow out, as he had the first. Walt held the pair.

A third Mongol came out to find the trap. Jake backed this one over beside the others when the fourth arrived, Mundon took care of him and placed him also in Jake's custody. Looking down into the shaft, Mundon saw that no more were coming.

Harry Vincent was amazed at the ease of the capture. He had been holding his rifle leveled in case the Mongols made trouble. But none of the procession had put up a fight. They had not emerged close together; those following had evidently not known of the difficulties that had been experienced by their predecessors.

Jake and Walt marched the four Chinese toward the plane. They lined up their prisoners. Jake spoke to

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Mundon.

"We can take care of this lot," decided the chief ranger. "We'll handle Creeland and Ringler as well. The best plan is to carry them over to Wapiti Junction. You'd better stay here with the girl and the guide."

"Can you handle all of them?" quizzed Mundon.

"Let them try something," snorted Jake. "I'll send Walt ahead in the plane, with Ringler managing it. They can carry a couple of Chinese as prisoners. We'll take the others and Creeland, too."

"We're trusting you, Ringler." Jake turned to the aviator. "Play straight and you'll be cleared. You gave us evidence. Creeland was your boss you were forced into this crooked business "

"A lie!" shouted Creeland. "You talk of frame-ups! This is one! Ringler came here without my knowledge! He is trying to place the blame upon me! I'll "

"Easy!" Jake snapped the command as Creeland started to move. "If you make a run for it, you'll wind up loaded with gun metal. That goes from here clear into Wapiti Junction. I've handled your kind before."

"Go easy with him," pleaded Mundon, his tone less vengeful than before. "Maybe you'd better have the rest of us along with you."

"You stay here," decided Jake, "right on this camping site. There may be others in that pit. You'll have to keep a look-out for them. Call that guide of yours. Where is he?"

"There." Mundon looked toward the shore, where Pierre was talking to some one in an arrived canoe. "Who's that with him?" He turned to Edna: "It isn't Dominie, back from Nimiskiming?"

"It's Beaver Luke," replied the girl, as Pierre stepped away from the canoe. "The Indian brought the beavers to the creek."

"That's right," nodded Mundon. He, too, saw Beaver Luke's hunched form. "Say, Pierre what did Beaver Luke want?"

"Luke stop by," returned Pierre, approaching. "Me tell him we come here after crook. He worry about beaver, with so many people here."

"Tell him we won't be here much longer."

"I already tell him."

"Good. All right, Jake. I'll stay with Pierre and Mrs. Creeland."

Mundon was nodding to the forest ranger. Creeland began to sputter a new protest. A ranger jabbed his ribs with a rifle. Jake put a final ultimatum.

"One more kick from you," growled Jake, "and I won't be responsible if any one plugs you. No more talk. We've got too many of you to handle. Come on, Mundon. Help tie up a couple of these Chinese."

HARRY had been watching Beaver Luke. He saw the Indian idling with his canoe, hesitant about leaving. It was apparent that Luke was doubtful of Pierre's assurance. He wanted to see for himself that these people

departed. Harry heard Pierre comment:

"Beaver Luke say big man—bird bother beaver. Ask me to tell ranger to send it away."

"We'll be out of here in no time," returned Jake. "Tell Beaver Luke to keep his shirt on."

Harry heard Jake's statement and looked toward the raw-boned ranger. Jake was on a line with the cabin. Thus Harry happened to see the door of the building give a tremble. An instant later, it was opening. Harry stared dumfounded.

From the cabin strode a lone man, a stalwart interloper, who like Harry had been a listener until this moment. In each fist, the man was gripping a bulky service revolver. He was swinging the big weapons with a businesslike effect.

Lone-handed, he was coming to call a halt to the proceedings. His very stride betokened confidence in his authority. The advent of this lone hand was astonishing in itself; but the identity of the man was the factor that baffled Harry most.

The man from the cabin was Alphonse. The pretended guide had returned. Whatever his part, Alphonse had found reason to delay it. That time was up.

At last, Alphonse's game was to be known.

CHAPTER XVIII. KAI LUAN SPEAKS

A QUICK answer came to Harry Vincent as he puzzled over the reason for Alphonse's appearance. It was Alphonse whom he had seen sliding behind the cabin. The fellow had doubtless entered by a window on the other side. Like Harry, Alphonse had listened to the controversy in the clearing.

Alphonse must be the supercreek; one higher up than Creeland. There was a reason why he would have delayed his advance. There had not been enough men on hand to aid him. Not until the Mongols had arrived. A quick thrust might release them. If so, Alphonse would have four fighters in addition to Creeland and Ringler.

Thinking thus, Harry projected his rifle barrel from the moosewood. He covered Alphonse; but did not press the trigger. There would be time after the man made a move. Harry had made mistakes in the past. He was taking no chances on an added error.

It was less than sixty feet to the spot where clustered persons stood. Harry heard the sudden words that boomed from Alphonse's lips. The guide's tone was a harsh order.

"Stand where you are! You four with the rifles! One move and I'll drop you!"

JAKE wheeled half about when he heard the note of authority. Alphonse's revolvers had come up to level. Jake made a gesture with his rifle, swinging it toward the guide.

"Drop it!"

Jake's gun clattered. Alphonse barked an order at the other rangers. It was one that brooked no argument.

"The same with the rest of you! Hurry it "

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Other rifles fell to the ground. Walt and the other two rangers had been caught as unready as Jake. Despite himself, Harry admired the colossal nerve of Alphonse. Lone-handed, terse in his orders, this challenger had cowed four men through sheer boldness.

"Over here." Alphonse was brisk as he gestured with his left-hand gun. Jake and the rangers huddled. "And you" this was to the Mongols "stay as you are."

Whether or not the Chinese understood the words, they obeyed. Alphonse was covering them with his right-hand gun.

"Be ready, Mundon." Alphonse spoke to one whom he could not see. "Let Pierre look after Creeland and Ringler. I may need you."

His hard gaze settled on the four rangers. Then, in sharp tones, the pretended guide announced:

"You've guessed who I am, Jake Ledroit?"

Jake gulped. Hands raised, he spoke hoarsely:

"Sergeant Dan McClay "

"Right," interposed the false Alphonse. "I'm McClay, of the Northwest Mounted. It took me six months to find you, Ledroit."

"I should have known you," growled Jake, "when I saw you at the portage. You didn't look the same then, like you do now."

"I recognized you," returned McClay. His part of Alphonse was finished. "You're wanted in Manitoba, Ledroit, for murder. Your pals are wanted, too. They look like part of your gang."

Mundon had stepped over beside McClay. The young man queried:

"These men are crooks?"

"Outlaws," replied McClay. "I wondered what their new game was. I listened from the cabin."

"You mean they are in with Creeland?"

"Not a chance. This Chinese business looks like Creeland's own idea. Jake Ledroit saw through it, that's all. He came here to try a shake-down. If you had let Ledroit take Creeland, he would probably have threatened him. Made him pay money for freedom."

"This is an outrage!" Creeland was coming into the discussion and his tone was hot. "This rogue Ledroit might have threatened me; but not with blackmail. I know nothing, I tell you! Nothing except "

"Except what?"

McCLAY put the question to Creeland without looking toward the man. The police sergeant was steady with his guns.

"Except that men came here," announced Creeland. "The first dawn when I went out to fish, I saw them,

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moving across the clearing toward the mine shaft. After that, they disappeared.

"That's why I kept coming here at intervals. I saw you, McClay, with another chap. The two of you were camping here. I thought that you were in the game. I am innocent, I tell you!"

"You'll have a chance to give your story," assured McClay, steadily. "I figured that Jake Ledroit had come to Lake Lakimika. I came here to get him. I'm in charge; and I'm taking all of you with me."

"And it suits me," announced Creeland. "The sooner we get to the bottom of this, the better. I'm with you, sergeant, if you need me."

Harry Vincent had noticed a slight shift by Dale Mundon. The brawny young man was almost behind McClay. Harry saw Mundon stare toward Creeland; then made another shift. Harry glimpsed Mundon's right hand. He saw the fellow jab his gun muzzle squarely between McClay's shoulder!

"Drop those rods, McClay!" snarled Mundon. "You're not in charge! I am! This hair-trigger's ready "

McClay's face soured. Reluctantly, the sergeant dropped his revolvers. Creeland uttered a cry and started forward. He was stopped by Chris Ringler. The aviator had whipped out a gun, to cover him.

Edna gave a slight scream as she saw the stub-nosed revolver with which Ringler was covering her husband. Mundon barked an order to Pierre:

"Hold the girl!"

Pierre gripped Edna's arm. Quivering, the girl stopped short. She stared dumfounded when she saw the evil gleam that had come upon Dale Mundon's face.

Jake Ledroit was picking up his rifle. The other outlaws regained their guns. All were grinning; so were the Mongols. Realization seized Harry Vincent. This was a game that had been faked from the start! The easy capture of the Chinese was explained. Harry could hear the Mongols babbling the name:

"Kai Luan Kai Luan "

"They are speaking of me," sneered Mundon, thrusting McClay to one side. The sergeant's arms were up. His eyes were lowered when Mundon kicked away the revolvers that McClay had let fall. "I am Kai Luan" Mundon laughed harshly "I framed this racket to finish with a phony show-down. You queered it, McClay. So the game is coming out."

"Dale!" exclaimed Edna. "You lied about Harley "

Pierre clamped a big paw over the girl's mouth. Edna subsided. Mundon laughed jeeringly. Jake and the three outlaws had lifted their rifles and were holding them across their forearms.

"YOU were framed, Creeland," snorted Mundon, to his rival, who stood silent under Ringler's aimed gun, "right from the beginning. I came to Boyersford intending to clean out your bank. A friend of yours saw to it that I had a job there."

"Jim Lagry!" gulped Creeland. "You mean that Jim "

"He's no friend of yours," jeered Mundon. "That's been Lagry's bluff for years. I was to grab the dough. Lagry

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was to get his cut. You blocked it. Lagry had to play in with you."

"That's why he talked the way he did," recalled Creeland. "Jim advised me to let you clear the country."

"Sure. What's more, he financed my new racket. He kept me posted about you, Creeland. It was through Lagry, indirectly, that you heard about the seaplane. I had seen Ringler. He was fixed.

"I've been running Chinese and peddling phony money, all from this headquarters, in your plane, Creeland. Lagry talked you into coming up here with Edna. You fell for it.

"You're up here so you can be framed. Jake and this mob of his are going to rub you out. The law will find the hide-out, with the counterfeiting plates. But the last load of mazuma will be gone; and the Chinese, too."

Edna was beginning a violent protest. Again, Pierre stifled her.

"When they find your body, Creeland," predicted Mundon, "they'll figure that pals of yours put you on the spot. They'll locate your plane, abandoned, with evidence in it. Lagry has planted counterfeit bills in your own home during your absence.

"Why did I stage this fake scene? I'll tell you why. It was on account of Edna. I wanted her to think you were a crook. After they bumped you, Creeland, Jake and his pals were coming back to say that they'd shot you trying to escape.

"Edna would have believed it. She would have gone along with me to China, where I have friends. Jake and the others would have gone their own way. Nobody could have guessed the inside of the game. They'd be looking for pals of yours, Creeland."

Mundon turned to glower at McClay.

"When you barged in," he told the sergeant, "I had to spill the story. I couldn't have let you take charge. It was bad enough when you gave out the truth about Jake Ledroit.

"But what does it matter? I was prepared for a slip. It's curtains for you, along with Creeland. Edna will go with me anyway, whether she wants to or not. If she'd rather die, she can."

The harsh words were like a death sentence. Harry saw Mundon turn and babble to the Mongols. The four Orientals thrust their hands toward hidden knives. Harry knew that Mundon was giving those murderous fanatics the opportunity to kill.

"Kai Luan Kai Luan "

The Mongols were crying out the name by which they knew Dale Mundon. Death was imminent. Harry, alone, could intervene to stop it. As The Shadow's agent realized the formidable task that lay ahead, a sound came from the lake. Harry alone heard it; for it came from the east.

Glancing across his shoulder, Harry saw three canoes, plowing along the shore line. They were coming from the northeast portage. New canoes appeared behind them. These were the men whom Harry should have met at dawn.

Aid, brought by The Shadow!

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Harry could picture his chief, in some disguise, aboard the leading canoe. Rescuers were heading for the old mine site; but they would arrive too late to stop the massacre. Action was needed, instantly!

Ready to fight until The Shadow came, Harry sighted his rifle straight toward Dale Mundon. His only hope was that he could find the proper range with this gun that Beaver Luke had loaned him. If he could wing Mundon, doomed men might stand a chance.

Mundon had stepped back from McClay, as if to leave the helpless sergeant at the mercy of the Mongols. Leering yellow men were ready with their knives, anxious to begin a thirty-foot surge that would bring them upon McClay and Creeland. Ringler, too, was stepping back from the man whom he covered.

Harry's finger was on the trigger. His chance was here. He wanted to fell Mundon before the supercrook gave the order for slaughter. He wanted also to be sure of his shot. That was why Harry took slow aim. He was pressing, to produce a perfect trigger squeeze.

Then came the challenge that made all men listen.

FROM the very shore came a fierce, mocking laugh a shivering cry of mirth that chilled every one who heard it. It stopped the Mongols, rigid. It made outlaws stare, as they held their rifles akimbo. As the shuddering taunt reached its full crescendo, Dale Mundon whirled to stare toward its author.

Harry Vincent turned his head instinctively. He, too, was frozen by the mirth, though he knew that it had come from his own chief. It was the laugh of The Shadow a token that, somehow, the master fighter had already closed in upon the scene of coming doom.

Twenty paces up from the beach stood one whom Harry had forgotten. One who had approached with the silence of a woodsman one who had been visible throughout, yet whose inconspicuous presence had been overlooked by men of crime.

There stood Beaver Luke. Erect, he was gripping mammoth automatics that he had brought from the pack in his canoe. Each .45 was leveled. Above them, lips still curdled the weird challenge, while eyes blazed toward the host of would-be murderers.

The Shadow had come to Lake Lakimika in the guise of Beaver Luke. His role; his motive in rescuing Harry both had been totally unsuspected, even by The Shadow's own agent. The Shadow had been here all along.

In the very midst of foemen, the master of might was ready to do battle.

CHAPTER XIX. ODDS OVERWHELMED

CROOKS recognized The Shadow.

The Mongols had heard of this weird fighter; for they babbled the name: "Ying Ko!" Jake Ledroit spoke for the outlaws; resorting to French, he cried: "L'Ombre!" Dale Mundon snapped the name in English:

"The Shadow!"

Jerking about, the supercrook aimed. Harry, his eyes returning to the rifle sights, was quick to tug his trigger before Mundon could fire. The rifle barked the opening message.

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Harry's bullet clipped Mundon's shoulder. It was well for the rogue that it did. As Mundon spun, The Shadow fired. He had deliberately drawn Mundon's aim, with intent of downing the crook squarely. But Mundon's half sprawl carried him wide of The Shadow's bullet.

Wounded, Mundon bellowed an order:

"Get him! Get Beaver Luke! He's The Shadow!"

Jake Ledroit and the outlaws raised their rifles as one. The four Mongols sprang forward with brandished knives, ready to follow up a barrage. Mundon saw this while sprawled upon one elbow. He thought of two other foemen. He shouted word to Ringler.

With that, Mundon aimed for McClay. Ringler jabbed his stubby revolver toward Creeland.

The Shadow's automatics were booming as his figure zigzagged backward. With one automatic, he was bombarding the outlaws. The other .45 was spurting toward the Mongols. The Shadow was drawing the attack of these two bands. He had counted upon safety for McClay and Creeland, once those squads were drawn off. The Shadow had provided for the rescue of the two doomed men.

HARRY VINCENT crackled rapid rifle shots toward Mundon. The master crook dispatched one bullet while McClay was diving, rolling to regain his lost revolvers.

Mundon's shot was wide. He did not gain another. Harry had found the range on a third quick shot. He stretched Mundon on the ground. The crook lay writhing.

Pierre dropped Edna and whisked a hunting knife from its sheath. He sped the blade toward Ringler before the traitorous pilot could stab a shot at Creeland. The knife found Ringler's shoulder. The traitor screamed and dropped his stub-nosed gun.

Pierre had learned much in his conference with Beaver Luke. The half-breed had wisely decided to change sides when the crisis arrived.

The Shadow was leading the others on a wild chase toward the shore. His own shots had clipped two foemen: Walt, and a giant Mongol. But his adversaries had spread; they were on the move. Bullets must not be wasted, even by The Shadow, in a daylight battle such as this.

The weaving retreat had balked the foemen. Outlaw rifles were barking wide. Hurling knives had sizzled an arm's length from their target. These Mongols had extra blades. Counting upon a protecting barrage from the rangers, they hurtled forward with fury.

The Shadow had reached the shore, at a point beyond his canoe. His guns were nearly emptied. He stopped, to pick off an outlaw, with a perfect shot from his left hand .45. Then Harry saw him stumble.

Crashing from the moosewoods, Harry fired a wild shot at the three Mongols. The bullet was wide; then Harry was through. He had used the fifth cartridge; all that the old Springfield held.

McClay had started booming with his regained revolvers; but the sergeant's aim showed poorly at long range. Jake and his lone pal stood unscathed, aiming as The Shadow arose from his half fall. The three Mongol killers were almost on The Shadow.

The lone fighter made a sidewise leap.

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Harry realized that it must have been intended. Almost diving through the air, The Shadow caught a tree trunk on the very shore, nailing it with his left arm. Rifles barked; the bullets kicked up splashes in the water. With his turn of direction, The Shadow had tricked the two outlaws.

One Mongol's knife slithered through the air and buried its point an inch above The Shadow's hand. Gripping fingers disappeared. The Shadow's right fist sped in view from the shore side of the tree. Its automatic spoke. The bladeless Mongol jolted; bent backward and stared upward, his hands clapped to his chest.

Again, The Shadow's laugh. It was triumphant in its brevity. Harry saw The Shadow's hands drop, despite the fact that two Mongols had turned and were about to dive for the tree.

The flotilla of canoes had appeared just off the landing. Five of them, with paddlers in bow and stern; each with a passenger in the center. Those idle hands were ready with rifles.

JAKE LEDROIT saw them and gave a hurried cry. He and his lone pal aimed for the canoes. The Mongols stopped, stupefied; then turned and dashed for the mine shaft.

Rifles flashed fire toward the shore. Jake staggered; his last pal sprawled. Reserves had arrived; men of the law, brought by The Shadow. They were quicker on the trigger than the battle-tired outlaws. Other marksmen were opening fire on the fleeing Mongols.

One of the killers sprawled; but not from a rifle bullet. Sergeant McClay had clipped him with a cross-shot, delivered from the right range. The other Mongol was clear; Harry leaped forward and swung his rifle like a club, aiming for the fellow's head. Slipping, Harry missed his stroke. He sprawled; the Mongol sprang upon him with upraised knife.

McClay fired to save Harry. His first shot was wide, for he was springing forward. But the burst that came from the tree beside the shore was a perfect in its aim. With a last bullet, the Shadow found the Mongol's heart. The balked killer wavered on his knees. McClay pumped bullets into the swaying form. The Mongol toppled while McClay still fired.

Creeland had grabbed Edna early in the fray, to carry his wife to safety beyond the sheltering sides of the amphibian. Pierre was crouching by the plane, watching the battle with quick eyes. His knife regained, the guide was keeping guard over Ringler, who lay moaning as he clutched his wounded shoulder.

The canoes had landed. Heading the inrush from the shore was a mustached man whom Harry Vincent recognized. It was Vic Marquette. The G Man was charging up to the spot where Dale Mundon lay. The supercrook had come to life, despite the rifle bullets that had caved him. With an oath, he aimed for Marquette. Vic fired before Mundon could pull his vaunted hair-trigger.

Mundon sank motionless. The first of the Mongols, wounded, came up and tried to hurl his knife at Marquette. Three rifle shots flattened the yellow-faced killer. The men behind Marquette had been ready with their guns.

DOWN by the shore, The Shadow had stepped from behind the tree. All the arrivals had landed and were coming toward the plane. None saw The Shadow step slowly into his canoe. Calm, the master fighter had resumed the role of Beaver Luke.

Harry Vincent alone witnessed the change. He watched his chief survey the scene with an eagle gaze, making sure that all opposition had been ended. Then the canoe glided out into the water. Manned by silent paddle strokes, it floated eastward and vanished beyond the clustering moosewood screen.

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The men with Vic Marquette were forest rangers and Canadian government men. Sergeant McClay was announcing himself. Harley Creeland and Edna were explaining their part in the fray. Vic Marquette had spied Harry and was beckoning to The Shadow's agent.

A stillness had settled over this clearing where guns had held sway. To Harry, the place was like a mighty tomb, where death had fallen to those who had deserved it. And with that doom, rescue had come to others who had needed aid.

Master strategy had won the battle. The Shadow, counting upon coming numbers, had deliberately prolonged the interval before the moment of combat. Calm in his guise of Beaver Luke, The Shadow like Harry had seen the approach of the canoes.

Then had The Shadow struck. By bold attack, followed by sudden retreat, he had drawn the attention of frenzied fighters and had drawn them upon his trail. Exultant, they had fallen for The Shadow's ruse. Jake, the outlaws and the Mongols. Dale Mundon, crafty though he was, had urged them forward to the chase.

Then had The Shadow stepped to cover. Bullets wasted in his scheme, he had spent all but a few last shots that were to serve in brief emergency. He had timed his last action to the closing of the snare. Rats had found themselves within the trap.

The Shadow had given the final actions to the law. He had arrived as Beaver Luke; he had left in the same guise. The interlude had been the time of triumph.

Victory belonged to The Shadow.

CHAPTER XX. AFTER THE FRAY

"So Dale Mundon was Kai Luan." Vic Marquette made the statement musingly, as he puffed his pipe by the shore of Lake Lakimika. Dusk was gathering; this day's end showed Vic alone with two companions.

They were Harry Vincent and Dan McClay. The Canadian government men had gone; so had the amphibian. Dead and wounded were absent. The place had been cleared.

"Mundon was smart," continued Vic. "He had tough birds working with him. Bing Thurdy, for one. Say wasn't Bing surprised when we piled into that hide-out and cornered him?"

"So was Specs Deemer," remarked Harry.

"Yes," agreed Vic, "but Specs was a scary sort. He blubbered that he had figured something would go wrong. Say it was a hot one finding Specs up here."

"You'd been looking for him?"

"For a year. One of the smoothest engravers that ever turned out a counterfeiting plate. He knew how to handle that press, too the one that we yanked from the room with the sheet-iron door."

"Along with the bad money?"

Vic nodded. He spoke with satisfaction.

"We got their last load," he stated. "It's good they never had a chance to ship it. They were testing with the

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other lots. They'd have flooded New York with the final batch."

Vic turned to McClay:

"Say how about dinner?"

"Just starting it," laughed the sergeant. "You'll like my chow, Marquette. Vincent does."

McCLAY started for the camp fire. Harry looked over toward the point, where a curl of smoke was rising. Dominic had returned from Nimiskiming, with a canoe of supplies. The Creelands, too, would soon begin their dinner.

"Lucky for Pierre that he helped out," remarked Harry. "After all, he wasn't deep in it. He helped bring supplies up here from Nimiskiming, so he admits; but he didn't know who wanted them."

"Outside of Mundon," put in Vic. "Of course, Pierre helped Mundon in the frame-up of that letter. It was Pierre who talked Creeland into coming around the Lakimika circuit, by Red Cedar Rapids."

"And Mundon had the letter planted with Pierre to give the word to Edna Creeland."

"Also to stall the party later, when they reached Lakimika."

A lull. Silence was broken by the distant crash of a falling tree. The beavers were hard at work damming the creek.

"Jim Lagry is deep in it," decided Vic. "But he doesn't know the game is up. That wire of mine will get to Washington soon enough. They'll nab Lagry before he can make a get-away from Boyersford."

Another pause. Again, the sound of a crackling tree. Vic looked toward the camp fire. He saw McClay outlined in the dusk.

"Vincent," said Vic, in a low, serious tone, "I'd like to know how this game was figured out. I know that The Shadow found some lead to this country. I can't guess what it was."

"Neither can I," asserted Harry. "I was sent up here; that was all."

Both men puffed their pipes. The rich aroma of the Hudson Bay Post tobacco was crisp against the piny air. Vic was trying some of Harry's blend. Neither guessed that they were sampling The Shadow's clue.

"But after you arrived here," persisted the G Man, "didn't you begin to dope it out yourself?"

"I reported," replied Harry. "Nevertheless, I was bluffed."

"All I did," declared Vic, "was to follow instructions that I received in New York. I was to come to the portage between Red Cedar Rapids and Lake Lakimika, cooperating with the Canadian authorities. We were to wait for instructions later. I had some trouble selling the idea at first; but they chanced it when I persisted."

HARRY pondered. Then he spoke.

"It's becoming plain, Vic," declared Harry. "Since I've learned the facts, I see how it could have been pieced."

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"Good," chuckled the G Man. "Let's hear the details."

"The Mongols came here," stated Harry. "That much was settled. The job was to learn who was in the game. I started off by suspecting McClay. He passed himself as a guide named Alphonse. He claimed to know the route to Lake Lakimika. But he showed his ignorance of it."

"Which made it look bad for McClay."

"That's where I was wrong. At last I see the answer. McClay as Alphonse was a doubtful factor. But the muskeg portage cleared him."

"How so?"

"Because his ignorance proved that he did not know the territory. Therefore, he was not one of the crooks."

Vic Marquette chuckled in approval.

"That's the way The Shadow reasoned it," declared the G Man. "Keep on with your story, Vincent."

"We reached the portage," stated Harry, "and I saw that McClay eyed the fake rangers closely. That proved that they might mean something to him. Either as friends or enemies."

"As enemies."

"Yes, because McClay was already cleared. But there was something else about it, Vic. Four forest rangers, camping at a useless place. Four of them. I see now that the number was important."

"Why?"

"Because there were four Chinese who beat it from Wapiti Junction. With two passengers to a canoe, they would have needed two paddlers."

"That's right. You missed it, Vincent, but The Shadow didn't. Jake Ledroit and his pals were the outside crew."

"Yes. What's more, they were covering that portage in case any one trailed the Mongols from Wapiti Junction."

The crispy smell of bacon was coming from the camp fire. McClay was cooking at his best.

"Next," resumed Harry, "we met Creeland. Another doubtful quantity. But one now that I think of it who was unlikely to be crooked."

"Because he had brought his wife on the camping trip?"

"Yes, and because he was fishing in the logical spot. Still, the Creeland proposition wasn't straightened out until after I met Mundon."

"You noted something wrong with Mundon?"

"Yes. First that he avoided passing Creeland's camp."

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"Which made it fifty-fifty. Either Mundon or Creeland?"

"Yes. But Mundon went to see the forest rangers. Built up a couple of excuses because he was going there."

HARRY stopped. He was stumped for the moment. It was Vic who took up the thread.

"Mundon talked with Edna Creeland last night," remarked the G Man. "She told us all about the conversation. The Shadow could have listened in on it, Vincent."

"You're right, Vic!" exclaimed Harry. "He must have. Because he knew Mundon had seen the rangers."

"And Mundon told Edna that the rangers were watching for Creeland's plane. Pretty free talkers, those fake rangers."

"Unless they had been talking to a pal of theirs, or unless Mundon simply told his own story and laid it on the rangers."

"In either case the line that he handed Edna Creeland was proof that he was as crooked as Jake Ledroit and that crew of phony rangers."

Vic Marquette had supplied the missing link in Harry's chain of reconstruction. It cleared the way for Harry's next review.

"Creeland came over here," remarked The Shadow's agent. "I saw him snooping in the cabin. I followed him over toward the mine shaft. Then I heard the noise of the water after Creeland had apparently gone. Something scraped by the mine shaft. There was another gurgling sound –"

"Creeland had gone!" inserted Vic. "You heard the water leaving, so some one could come out. You heard the water pour in again, after the fellow had come from the shaft."

"It must have been Mundon. He had been in the hide-out, after he came back from Jake's camp. Yes, Mundon was the fellow I fought in the darkness. Creeland had sneaked away. When I went back to the cabin I saw McClay looking into my room. I could tell that he hadn't been in a scrimmage."

McClay was coming down to announce that dinner was ready. He caught the final words.

"Talking about me?" he queried. "I heard some one prowling that night, Vincent. I went out after you did. Guess you followed me in. Sorry I landed on you last night. But you'd been acting as suspiciously as I had."

McClay nudged toward the camp fire; then added:

"Grub's ready."

Harry and Vic emptied their pipes against some stones. Harry spoke as they arose to join McClay by the camp fire.

"It all fitted, Vic," he stated, "even though I couldn't match the pieces. That's why I was rescued last night, after the Mongols carried me into the mine."

"Your reports were accurate," chuckled Vic. "That much is evident. The Shadow must have decided what the noise from the mine shaft meant."

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"I kept thinking of Creeland with a bucket," said Harry, ruefully. "Foolish, when I think of it. But where I fluked was when I failed to start out with McClay. I pulled a boner. I acted suspiciously. I was on the wrong track."

"I was expecting you," added Vic. "The Shadow had McClay pretty well figured. He knew that your supposed guide wouldn't object to going to the Red Cedar portage. Once he'd met us, McClay would have had to show his hand."

"But I was a lunkhead, too, Vincent. When dawn came, we found a note scrawled on birch bark signed 'Beaver Luke.' It told us to come to the mining site. That was my instruction sheet. But I thought you were going to show up, so I stalled until after we heard the amphibian roaring over the lake."

Harry understood The Shadow had gone to the portage after giving Harry instructions. Returning, he had heard no sounds of Harry and McClay in their canoe. Reaching the mine just at dawn, the master sleuth had investigated. Having already defined the mine shaft as the entry to the hide-out, The Shadow had studied it for clues to his agent's disappearance.

The last mystery was cleared. The Shadow's course had been retraced. Well had the crafty investigator remained under cover. Dale Mundon had spoken of a coming show-down. When it was due, the game of crookery would be ready to be broken. So had The Shadow decided.

Men had failed where The Shadow had counted upon efficient aid. But in each case, The Shadow had amended the error. First, through his rescue of Harry. Second, by prolonging his vigil until Vic Marquette finally arrived with the Canadian officials.

McClay's sudden thrust had forced an issue. Without it, The Shadow could have waited even longer; for crooks, believing themselves secure, would not have been hasty in their removal of Harley Creeland. Dale Mundon, otherwise Kai Luan, had plotted well; but he had failed in his watch on those who had camped on Lake Lakimika.

The supercrook had discounted Beaver Luke.

AS Harry and Vic sat down to dine with McClay, they noticed that the early evening silence was complete. The last trees had fallen at the beaver colony. The busy animals were finished for the night. But there was something in the hush that became impelling. Eyes turned toward the shore where not even the cry of a loon was present to disturb the stilled surface of the lake.

There, reflected by the last vestiges of sunset, was a lone figure etched against the glassy water. Long arms were delivering a slow stroke. An eighteen-foot canoe was moving southward. The steady, effortless sweep was one which observers had identified with Beaver Luke.

The founder of the beaver colony was departing toward Nimiskiming, leaving his furred followers at their new abode. The beavers needed guardianship no longer.

Nor did humans. Crime had been ended upon the shores of Lake Lakimika. Harley Creeland had been cleared; Edna had regained love and confidence in her husband. Sergeant Dan McClay had gained the man he sought. With the finish of Jake Ledroit had come the end of the mastercrook, Dale Mundon.

Kai Luan, the unknown, was no more. The last of his fanatical Mongols had met their doom. The Shadow had terminated evil.

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The hush broke. From across the tinted waters came a long, quivering sound that had awakened these echoes once before. A tone of uncanny mirth; sinister, yet triumphant. A sardonic peal that had meant disaster to men of evil, it signified triumph to those who stood for right.

Fleeting sunset ended. Colors faded from the lake. Low-lying darkness blanketed the occupant of the canoe. Night had laid its shroud of invisibility upon the master fighter whose ways, like the dark, were hidden.

The Shadow was gone. New silence reigned where he had laughed.

THE END