



THE GROVE OF DOOM

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CHAPTER I. THE ARRIVAL

LONG ISLAND SOUND lay blanketed with a dense, sullen mist. From the shore, the heavy fog appeared as a grimy mass of solid blackness. The scene was one of swirling, impenetrable night, for not a gleam of light disturbed that omnipresent darkness.

No eye could have discerned the spot where shore ceased and water began. The rocks beside the beach were invisible, and so was the man who stood near them. The only token of his presence was the sound of his slow, steady breathing, broken by the low, impatient growls that came muffled from his throat.

Beneath his feet, this man could feel the crunch of sand. Listening intently, he could catch the faint lapping of the water as it gnawed the fringe of the sloping beach. Every noise that came from the fog-covered reaches of the Sound caused this man to stop his slow pacing.

The faint chugging of a motorboat; the distant deep-blasted whistle of a passing steamship - these evidences of human beings far out upon the water were not what the man awaited. He was watching

uselessly, listening vainly, hoping for a more subtle signal.

A dimly luminous circle showed upon the man's wrist. It was the dial of a watch. It registered three o'clock. The man growled angrily. This vigil had persisted for three hours, but no result had been obtained.

The fog that had imperiled navigation upon Long Island Sound was evidently playing hob with well-calculated plans. No ray of light could reach this shore. Even sounds were muffled by the shroud of never-ceasing mist.

The waiting man did not end his watchfulness. His slow, incessant paces dug deep into the dampness of the sand. He scruffed the granular material with his toes, as though to obliterate the marks that he had made. Suddenly, he came to a standstill, listening once more.

Through the fog came a strange, awesome sound. It was a low, penetrating whistle that carried a peculiar note. In this environment, that floating noise was frightening as it came from the seemingly solid sand bank. But fear was not the emotion that possessed the man who heard the whistle. That was the signal he had expected. With fingers to his mouth, the waiting man emitted a similar sound.

A LONG pause followed. A chance drifting of the fog opened a momentary space out beyond the shore. Glimmering lights, high up, cast a dull glare that showed the forms of bare square-rigged masts.

Lower lights flickered, displaying a glimpse of a phantom ship. Then the fog rolled downward like a final curtain, and blotted out the grotesque vision.

The man on the shore entertained no doubts as to the reality of the ghostly ship. A superstitious sailor might have classed it as an appearance of the Flying Dutchman, reputed haunter of the high seas. But to the landsman, this passing glimpse was the very sight that he had hoped to see.

His guarded whistle was repeated. An electric torch clicked in his hand. He turned the brilliant spot of light toward the unseen boat, and swung his arm in a repeated signal.

Creaking sounds came across the water. A boat was being lowered from the sailing ship. The diminishing of the noise indicated that the square-rigger was drifting away from the danger of shoal water.

The waiting man turned out his light and made another short whistle. He repeated this at intervals, to guide those who might be approaching.

The clicking of oarlocks was his reward. With oars muffled, the small boat was heading toward the beach. The light was on again now, whirling in wide sweeps, as the anxious man sought to give his exact position. The sullen fog threw back the shaft of light, but rays were filtering through the gloom sufficiently to guide those who were arriving.

A small boat landed with surprising suddenness, its prow grinding in the sand. Less than twenty feet away from the man on the shore, the occupants of the little boat were clearly outlined by the light.

Four men leaped over the side. Knee-deep in the water, they lifted a heavy, cubical object from the center of the boat, and came staggering to the shore. Dark-skinned, bare-legged Malays, these men were silent as they placed the box directly in front of the glaring light.

With apparent unconcern, they waded back to the boat, and brought out a second box - the replica of the first. A few minutes later, the two boxes were side by side upon the beach.

During all this operation, the Malays had not glimpsed the man who stood behind the light. They were

working in accord with some prescribed arrangement. Their task now finished, they splashed back to the little boat and climbed aboard. The oarlocks creaked as the boat disappeared into the misty fog.

The man on shore listened, apparently anxious to be sure that the mysterious visitors were gone. A faint whistle signal served to guide the Malays back to their ship. Then came almost inaudible creaking as the little boat was raised to the deck of the invisible square-rigger. After that, long silence.

HIS torch no longer lighted, the man on the shore stood motionless. The whole strange affair might have been nothing more than a fantasy - a strange dream possessing no more solid substance than the hovering fog.

But now the torch came on again, its glare turned downward. Beneath its light was the concrete evidence of what had occurred upon this lonely beach. There rested the two square boxes - bulky containers composed of foam-sprayed wood.

The man examined each of the boxes in turn. The heavy objects were constructed to withstand rough shipment. The tops were indicated by lids that were firmly nailed in place. The sides were studded with small holes that formed black spots when the lights fell upon them.

Cryptic markings had been painted on the covers of the boxes. The inspecting man studied these with care. He laughed gruffly as he laid the torch upon one box so that it threw its light upon the other, over which he now leaned.

Focused within the rays of the light, his head and shoulders alone were visible; but the man's face was turned downward toward the box. From beneath the visor of a rough cloth cap, the man examined the marking on the box lid to make sure he had chosen the one he desired.

Satisfied, he walked away; when he returned, he was carrying a hammer and a short crowbar. Leaning over the lighted box, he tapped twice upon the lid. He placed his ear against the wood and listened for an echoed response.

There was no deliberation in the man's next action. He set to work with the tools, prying the lid from the box. His shoulders heaved like pistons in the light, but despite the effectiveness of the effort, the job was virtually soundless.

The dampened wood responded silently. A portion of the cover broke loose at one end; then another chunk; finally, the whole lid was loose. Swinging between the light and the box, the man reached the other side of the container, and raised the whole lid en masse. He stepped back, and his clenched hands showed the hammer in one, the crowbar in the other. The man was watching the opened box intently.

Two hands appeared. They gripped the sides at the top. The hands were gnarled and yellowish in the gleam of the electric torch.

Then a form arose from within the box. Head, shoulders, then a body appeared. A short, wiry Chinaman stood within the range of light.

THE man's face was as yellow as his hands. It was a placid, solemn face, but it wore a malignant expression that would have befitted an evil idol. That pockmarked countenance, with its slowly blinking eyelids, seemed scarcely human. With the swirling fog as a background, the yellow visage might have been one of those clouded images that appear in the nightmares of opium smokers.

The man who had opened the box was standing like a statue, surveying the grotesque Oriental that he had released from bondage. The Chinaman's blinking eyes were turned in his direction, and now the

yellow face wrinkled a leering smile. This meeting was one of mutual recognition. The Chinaman inclined his head, in greeting.

A short laugh came from the man who wore the cap. He spoke in a low voice, uttering words in Chinese dialect. Among them was repeated a name to which the Chinaman responded. That one was Lei Chang. The speaker used it again, when, after his short greeting in conventional Chinese, he spoke in pidgin English.

"You have come, Lei Chang," he said.

"I tellee you I come," responded Lei Chang. "I bringee him likee you say. Him velly good, him you tellee me to call The Master. Him we callee Koon Woon."

With a sidewise, crablike motion, the wiry Chinaman emerged from the box, and stood crouched upon the sand. His black, beady eyes were glistening in the light. They stared directly toward the other box. The man who had welcomed Lei Chang, stepped forward with the hammer and the crowbar. Like a flash, the Chinaman sprang forward and gripped him by the arm.

"No, no, no," he exclaimed, with a strange, quick warning. "No, no, no. The Master - he sleep. Wait while Lei Chang see -"

He stopped beside the box, while the other watched him. There, Lei Chang crooned softly in a singsong dialect. His voice took on a tone that was oddly soft and soothing.

"Koon Woon," he crooned, "Koon Woon - Koon Woon -"

The words died away. The wiry Chinaman arose and pointed to the box. He spoke to the man beside him.

"The Master, Koon Woon," he said. "Still he sleep, but he is ready soon to be awake. But not here he is to wake. The place where you have made for him -"

A gruff response came from Lei Chang's companion. The man motioned to the box. He extinguished the torch. His hands scratched upon one side of the box; Lei Chang's on the other. A grunt came through the darkness. The box lifted upward as the two men raised the heavy burden.

Footsteps crunched along the sand as the man directed the way. The crinkling ceased as the bearers reached a strip of grass. Softly, steadily, they carried the heavy box across a level area of smooth, even ground.

The four Malays had found the box no light weight. The present task, performed by two men only, spoke well for their individual strength. The man who had been waiting on the beach was unquestionably very powerful, yet he breathed heavily as he forged forward. No sound came from Lei Chang's side of the box. The wiry Chinese seemed to possess superhuman strength in his thin, stooped form.

NOW occurred a most unusual phenomenon. The men and the box emerged completely from the fog. They seemed to enter a spot of utter darkness, where the chill and dampness no longer remained.

The guiding man sensed the new condition immediately. He stopped his forward progress, and grunted to Lei Chang. Together, they rested the box upon the ground.

The torch showed again. It showed the box standing upon a patch of brownish ground - grassless, yet peculiarly matted. Beyond the box, the downturned light revealed the blackness of a tree trunk; past that, the light seemed to diffuse along a veritable corridor of brown matting.

A weird hush dominated the spot. Lei Chang's beady eyes showed that he sensed the strange surroundings. His teeth gleamed in the light while his head turned from side to side.

"This is the place," said his companion in a low voice. "We go from here. You hold light, so I see. Boxee open now."

Lei Chang accepted the torch. He stood close beside the box, focusing the rays upon the very edge of the top. The crowbar and the hammer were upon the cubical container. The man with the cap began to pry open the lid.

The gleam of the torch was no longer reflected by a fog bank. It seemed as though the box had been brought to another world, into a hushed atmosphere where sound, as well as mist, could not penetrate.

Despite this complete detachment from the environment outside, the capped man exercised still greater care than he had shown in opening the box which had contained Lei Chang. The Chinaman expressed his satisfaction at this procedure by short, lisping words in dialect. He was thinking of Koon Woon, The Master - the one who slept within.

The lid was loose, and the man was about to raise it. A warning hiss came from Lei Chang. The man stopped. The Chinaman flicked out the light and stepped forward.

"Leavee me here," said Lei Chang softly. "The Master, he will wakee when I speak. You go - show Lei Chang the way. I come and The Master, he come with me."

Lei Chang's companion grunted his assent. He took the torch from the Chinaman's hand, and moved slowly through the darkness. The light twinkled, went out, then twinkled again. Moving away like a gigantic firefly, it made a beacon that Lei Chang could follow.

Each glimmer of that momentary light showed an identical scene - a dark, irregular corridor flanked by tree trunks. Lei Chang was watching the course of that light as his hands, now invisible, raised the cover of the box. Then the Chinaman was leaning inward, his voice, low and hollow as it spoke in singsong fashion.

"Koon Woon - Koon Woon" - the voice became a singsong dialect, then returned to that monotonous name - "Koon Woon - Koon Woon - Koon Woon -"

There was a motion in the box. Lei Chang's hands were gripping and guiding. The crooning voice was soft and gentle - strange contrast to the Chinaman's face of evil!

Far away, a tiny spot of light flashed on and off - a twinkling gleam that revealed nothing.

Now the box upon the blackened ground was empty. Its mysterious occupant had left it. Noiselessly, through the dark among the trees, Lei Chang and Koon Woon were following the path that their guide had made before them.

CHAPTER II. THE WANDERER RETURNS

THE morning sun, high in the cloudless sky, showed a different scene upon that section of shore beside Long Island Sound. Where thick fog had added to the gloom of night, this new day revealed as beautiful a sight as the eye could desire.

Upon a rocky height stood a large, picturesque mansion. The hill sloped gradually as it paralleled the Sound, and gave way to sandy shore. In back of the stretch of beach lay a wide expanse of smooth, verdant grass that formed a huge lawn leading to a rolling terrain. Flags marked this as an extension of a

golf course.

Continuing along the shore, the beach now but a thin strip of white sand, with occasional rocks, formed frontage for a grove of trees that stood in regular formation. This mass of woods, covering several acres, made a pretty sight from the Sound.

The trees were all of one species - the copper beech - and their uniformity of height was a tribute to the perfection of nature. Burnished leaves, glistening in the early summer sun, caught the eye and held it there in admiration.

Farther along the shore - just past the attractive grove - stood a picturesque dwelling with a lawn that came to the water's edge. Here, rocks replaced sand, and the shore turned to make a cove. Thus both the front and the side of the house were within a few hundred feet of the Sound.

There were signs of activity at this house. Men were working on a construction job, finishing a garage that stood in the rear of the building. On the porch, a middle-aged man was reclining in an easy chair; contentedly smoking a pipe as he stared out toward the blue waters of the Sound.

So engrossed was he that he did not notice the approach of another man who entered the grounds between the side of the house and the grove. When the visitor's footsteps sounded on the steps of the porch, the man in the chair leaped up to look at the stranger.

There was something quizzical in the glances that they exchanged. The middle-aged man, brawny and of tanned complexion, surveyed the visitor with a keen, friendly gaze that seemed to carry inquiry.

The visitor, an elderly gentleman clad in white knickers, white shirt, and white cap, stared steadily through his gold-rimmed spectacles, then smiled in meditative recognition. He stretched forth his hand in greeting as he came up the steps.

"Harvey Chittenden!" he exclaimed. "I can hardly believe that it is you. I am Walter Pearson - the old family attorney -"

The tanned man laughed as he accepted the lawyer's hand. He shook his head slowly, to indicate that a mistake had been made.

"Sorry," he said, "but I'm not Harvey Chittenden. My name is Craig Ware. I came here to put the place in order, and I'm expecting Harvey at any moment now."

"Well, well," remarked the lawyer in an apologetic tone. "The error is mine, Mr. Ware. Of course - of course" - he was nodding thoughtfully - "Harvey is a younger man than you. Strange, what imagination will do. Of course, I have not seen Harvey since he was a boy - but I know the Chittendens, and I fancied that you were he."

"That's all right, Mr. Pearson," said Ware cordially. "I'd never object to being mistaken for Harvey Chittenden. A wonderful young man, Harvey. I've known him for years, while he was knocking around. It's good to see him settle down, now that he's married. Let me tell you, too, Mr. Pearson, Harvey made no mistake in the girl he married. Wait until you see her -"

Ware broke off his conversation as an automobile rolled in the driveway from along the cove. The car came to a stop in front of the house. A young man and a young woman alighted. Walter Pearson recognized at once that these must be Harvey Chittenden and his wife.

THE two came up the steps and shook hands with Ware, who introduced them to Walter Pearson. Harvey Chittenden eyed the lawyer dubiously, and Pearson noted the expression. Harvey was a tall

young man, whose expression was one of maturity. Like Ware, he was swarthy in complexion.

The girl beside him gained Pearson's instant admiration. Tall, slender, and graceful, Mildred Chittenden - for Harvey had mentioned her name in introducing her - was a young woman of the modern type. Her brown eyes formed a pleasing contrast to her raven-hued hair, and Pearson was glad to note that Mildred accepted him as a welcome guest despite her husband's rather cold reception of the lawyer.

Harvey Chittenden had a rather abrupt manner. He displayed it now, as he turned to Pearson. It was obvious that he desired to know the purpose of the lawyer's visit.

"What brings you here, Mr. Pearson?" he asked. "Some idea of a family reconciliation?"

"I must confess that I have such in mind," laughed Pearson, "but actually this first visit is scarcely more than a friendly call. In a sense, I have represented you legally - and I was, therefore, anxious to meet you."

"I have no desire for a reconciliation," stated Harvey coldly. "Outside of that, Mr. Pearson, I am glad to see you."

"Harvey" - Mildred's voice made the interruption - "I think you should be fair to Mr. Pearson. Whatever he may have to say, it is only right to listen to -"

"All right," said Harvey abruptly, "let's get it over with. I handle matters directly. Tell me what's on your mind, Mr. Pearson."

"If we were alone -" began Pearson.

"We do not need to be alone," objected Harvey. "Mildred is my wife. Ware has my full confidence. I rely upon their judgment; they already know my story as I have told it. Let us have your version, then hear what they have to say."

The four were seated about the porch. Ware looked at Pearson and smiled. This was encouraging to the lawyer. He cleared his throat in dignified fashion, and began to speak. He addressed his remarks directly to Harvey, while the others listened.

"HARVEY," said Pearson, "the Chittenden family has been subject to many unfortunate misunderstandings. I have witnessed them, and they have grieved me. I fail to see why they should continue, even though they may be considered justifiable to members of the Chittenden family.

"Your grandfather had two sons: Sidney, the elder; Galbraith, the younger. Your grandfather possessed two houses - Upper Beechview, yonder on the large hill; and Lower Beechview - this residence. By the terms of his will, he intended to leave Upper Beechview to Sidney, and Lower Beechview to Galbraith.

"Then came misunderstanding. Sidney, against your grandfather's wishes, married an actress. Sidney was disinherited. He went away, experienced a stormy career, and died abroad a year after his marriage."

"What has this to do with me?" now questioned Harvey Chittenden. "I know the story you have told; it belongs to the past."

"To the past, yes," declared Pearson, in a kindly tone. "Nevertheless, it has a bearing on the present. Your grandfather made Galbraith his sole heir, for he considered Galbraith to be his only son. Galbraith married, and you were born. Your grandfather was delighted. He said that he had two sons again: Galbraith and Harvey. So to Galbraith he willed Upper Beechview; to you he willed Lower Beechview.

"Now comes the present misunderstanding. Your grandfather died, and the terms of his will were carried out. You did not occupy Lower Beechview, because you were still a minor. But you were now the eldest of three brothers. The other two, Wilbur and Zachary, were naturally piqued because they were not considered in the will. They made it unpleasant for you; and when you came of age, you went away. Thus the misunderstanding has continued. Now that you have returned, I should like to see a reconciliation."

There was a momentary pause. Harvey Chittenden, resting back in his chair, was staring off into the distance. Far beyond the grove of copper beeches he could see the turrets of Upper Beechview. An expression of grim antagonism crept over his features. Still staring in the distance, Harvey spoke in a firm, steady voice.

"Your story, Mr. Pearson," he said, "does not include the most important facts. You did not put up with the misery that I experienced. For years, my younger brothers tormented me with their insane jealousy. They tried to poison my father's mind against me. While still in their teens, they plotted to find some way in which I could be deprived of the estate given me by my grandfather. Now that they have come of age, I do not believe any scheme could be too vicious for them to attempt - if they felt that they could gain the possessions which are rightfully mine.

"I left home when I was twenty-one. For twelve years I have been a wanderer. Why? Because I knew the evil natures of Wilbur and Zachary, knew that they hated me. I went away, because I had become my own master, and realized that if those cowards did not know where I was, they could not harm me. I made every provision to protect my property, but I left it abandoned because I did not want to live here. That is my story, Mr. Pearson - one of perpetual persecution."

"I understand," said Pearson. "Nevertheless, you have returned, after all. That is why I felt that perhaps old feuds could be forgotten -"

"The feud," interrupted Harvey, "was instituted by my jealous brothers. You mistake my purpose in reopening this estate. I did not come here to please Wilbur and Zachary; I came here to spite them. I am married; I own this property; I am independent. I shall live my own life, and if they attempt to interfere - if anyone attempts to interfere -"

HARVEY CHITTENDEN'S voice broke off. Mildred looked toward her husband with alarm. Craig Ware seemed troubled. An expression of intense hatred now clouded Harvey's face.

"Your father," said Pearson softly. "He is an old man, Harvey. Surely you can bear no animosity toward him for -"

"I do not care to make the acquaintance of my father," said Harvey, in an angry tone. "He still tolerates those leeches. He knows Wilbur and Zachary for what they are. Let him drive them out - send them into the misery that I accepted voluntarily - then I shall be ready to consider his welcome."

"Your father," declared Pearson, "longs to meet you, Harvey. You are his eldest son. He knows that you were justified in what you did. In the Chittenden family, the eldest son is the chief heir. You still hold that position; Wilbur and Zachary have failed to weaken it."

"Although they have tried to do so," announced Harvey. "Answer that, Pearson! Answer it truthfully!"

"You are right," admitted the lawyer. "I cannot deny it, Harvey. I have been given the draft of a will that leaves you totally cut off - but I can assure you that your father has never signed such a document. As matters now stand, you will some day own Upper Beechview."

"Unless Wilbur and Zachary get their dirty work across," growled Harvey. "Well, let them do it - I was

right when I termed them leeches."

"A friendship between you and your father," purred Pearson, "would effectively frustrate any actions on the part of your brothers."

"Yes," countered Harvey, "and if those two were put where they belong, there could never be a chance of dispute. If my father has sent you here, Mr. Pearson, you can take back my ultimatum. Tell him to get rid of Wilbur and Zachary - any way he chooses - before someone else gives them what they deserve. Then my father and I will be reunited; but not so long as those two remain."

There was a threatening tone to Harvey Chittenden's voice that made a marked impression upon Walter Pearson. The old lawyer arose and bowed stiffly. His patience was at an end. He made that fact plain.

"You have spoken very vindictively, Harvey Chittenden," remarked the attorney. "One might infer that it was you who threatened Wilbur and Zachary - not they who threatened you. I shall remember that fact, if I am ever called upon to disclose the affairs of the Chittenden family."

Harvey Chittenden sprang to his feet. His fists were clenched as he stared at the gray-haired lawyer. Then the animosity died away on his face, and a look of cold calculation replaced it. Without another word, Harvey Chittenden turned and entered the house. Mildred, with a word of regret to Walter Pearson, arose and followed her husband.

THE lawyer got up and started toward the steps. Craig Ware, still retaining his composure, walked with him, speaking in a quiet tone.

"You touched his sore spot, Mr. Pearson," explained Ware. "You can't blame him - he's put up with a lot. At the same time, it would be better for him to curb his feelings -"

A voice interrupted from an upstairs window. Harvey Chittenden was delivering a parting thrust to Walter Pearson, while Mildred, in view beside her husband, was trying to quiet him.

"Remember this" - Harvey's voice was harsh - "I shall have no more to do with anyone who is connected with my father and my brothers. That includes you, Pearson. Bad luck to the lot of you!"

Harvey said no more. Ware continued to the gate with Pearson. There, the lawyer turned to shake hands with the man who had accompanied him.

"Most unfortunate," declared Pearson. "You have heard but little, Mr. Ware. There are secrets of the Chittenden family which I alone know. Back before Harvey was born; back when Sidney was disinherited, and Galbraith came into the large estate. Well" - he paused and smiled wanly - "today means nothing. The facts that I could reveal might prove amazing."

"The Chittendens are a vindictive race, Mr. Ware. They have always been outspoken - all except Sidney, who gave up his birthright. Well, it's in the blood. It can't be helped. Perhaps, some time, Harvey may feel more lenient toward me. I come out frequently to the golf course. I shall look him up again, perhaps."

With this final statement, Walter Pearson shrugged his shoulders, and walked through the gate. His departing form dwindled to a pygmy shape in the distance, as he wended his way across the links toward the clubhouse that rested upon the rolling inland hill.

CHAPTER III. INTO THE GROVE

TWO days had past since Walter Pearson had visited Lower Beechview. The first day had been a

troubled one for Mildred Chittenden. Never before had she seen Harvey indulge in such an outburst of temper as he had displayed toward the kindly old lawyer. The effects of that fit of anger had remained. For one day, Harvey had grumbled imprecations toward his family and their legal representative.

Now, Harvey had taken on a state of sulkiness. He wanted to be alone, so Mildred had sought the company of Craig Ware. Seated on the lawn, they were looking toward the Sound, and enjoying a pleasant conversation.

Craig Ware was a likable character. His presence pleased Mildred because she felt that Ware fully understood Harvey. To Ware, who had always proven a true friend, Mildred had no hesitancy in expressing her troubles. Thus the chat turned in that direction now.

"You have known Harvey a long while, Craig," remarked Mildred. "Tell me, does he often act as he has acted during the last few days? We have only been married a few months - scarcely back from our honeymoon - and this is a new and trying experience for me."

"Well, Mildred," said Ware, "I've been many places, and I've met a great many men, but I've never known any that could come up to Harvey Chittenden. That's how much I think of him. Of course, so far as his family is concerned - well - they're out to get Harvey. This trouble with Pearson was just too bad, that's all.

"Now, I've known Harvey ever since he broke away from home. I'm sort of like a cousin to him. I've knocked around ever since I was a kid. Been a showman all my life. Carnivals - circuses - handled all sorts of jobs, and I've been pretty near everywhere.

"At the time I met Harvey, he wanted to get plenty far away from home, so I lined him up a job with a steamship company sailing over through the Orient. Used to see him often out in Frisco. Kept track of him all the time.

"He told me when he met you - told me he was going to marry you - and we talked it over. I knew all about his family troubles, but he and I both figured it was wise to open up this place that belonged to him. I was sort of retired for the summer, so I came on to see that everything was made shipshape."

"And it is shipshape!" declared Mildred admiringly.

"Don't blame me for that," laughed Ware. "Lay it on Jessup over there." He pointed back toward the garage where a tall, rangy man was directing workmen who were mixing cement for the garage entrance, at present nothing but a grassy path.

"JESSUP?" questioned Mildred. "I thought he was just a handy man, whom Harvey hired."

"That's what he is," said Ware, "but he's a mighty handy man. Used to do contracting work for the steamship company out in San Francisco. When Harvey and I talked over fixing up this place, Harvey said he'd like to get Jessup, who had gone East. So he wrote to Jessup, and signed him up. I just came on to watch Jessup work - that's about the size of it. He takes orders from me because Harvey told him to, but his real boss is Harvey."

"Harvey is very pleased with the work," remarked Mildred. "I remember now that Jessup came into New York several times while we were staying there. He had long conferences with Harvey. Then Harvey came out here to look things over; he said I could see the place when it was ready. You were here at that time, weren't you, Craig?"

"When Harvey came out from New York? Once. The other times I was up in Boston, gunning for a job

this coming season. That's what I mean when I say Jessup is the fellow who has done the real work. He needs someone to tell him he's doing a good job - that's all. You can leave it to him to do the rest."

Mildred Chittenden was thoughtful. She had come here to Lower Beechview to find a wonderful place that had exceeded all her expectations. She remembered how Harvey had enthused over his short visits to Long Island, but had kept her waiting until all would be ready. Her first sight of Lower Beechview had given her a thrill; then had come unhappiness, because of Harvey's quarrel with Walter Pearson.

Mildred's intuition told her that troublesome times lay ahead. She realized now, as never before, the loathing which Harvey held for his brothers, and the animosity which he nourished toward his father. If Wilbur and Zachary felt the hatred toward Harvey that he claimed they did, a clash would prove inevitable.

The grounds hereabout, the shining Sound, the beautiful sky - all were ideal to Mildred. Yet she wished that she and Harvey could be anywhere else but here. The girl repressed an unhappy sigh. She looked at Craig Ware. The showman was reclining comfortably, puffing his pipe, without a care in the world.

"Craig," pleaded Mildred earnestly, "promise me you will stay here a while - until these matters are settled between Harvey and his family. I" - her voice hesitated - "I am afraid of what may happen. Harvey has displayed a terrible temper. Someone must be here to restrain him. You are his best friend, Craig -"

"It's all right, Mildred," replied Ware quietly. "Harvey is over his outburst now. I don't think the trouble will start again -"

"I'm afraid more now than before," interrupted the girl hastily. "He is so much by himself, as though one subject is constantly upon his mind. I would rather see him angry than silently plotting. It worries me, Craig."

THE showman puffed thoughtfully at his pipe, then turned to discern the anxious expression upon Mildred's face. With keen understanding, Ware spoke the words that he knew would allay the girl's fears.

"I'll stay on a while, Mildred," he agreed. "We'll look out for Harvey, you and I. Just make up your mind that you are going to enjoy life here. Everything will smooth out."

Jessup was approaching across the lawn. He stopped and stood silent, waiting to speak to Ware. The showman noted Jessup's presence, and questioned the man.

"What is it, Jessup?"

"I'm going uptown, Mr. Ware. Need some new tools, and I want to price them. Figured I could call back to find out if it would be all right to buy them."

"See Mr. Chittenden, Jessup. He is the boss. I'm just a supernumerary."

Ware laughed as Jessup's overalled form entered the house. He nudged his thumb back over his shoulder as he spoke to Mildred.

"That's Jessup for you," he declared. "The man won't make a move until he gets orders from higher up. Well, it will do Harvey good to have Jessup constantly bothering him about trifles. It will help him keep his mind off that other matter."

Mildred nodded. Ware's formula seemed a good one. It was apparently proved a few minutes later,

when Harvey Chittenden came from the house with Jessup. Harvey was talking to the workman, and Jessup was nodding to show that he understood instructions. Jessup drove away in an old touring car, and Harvey went back into the house.

Time drifted slowly by; at length Ware suggested that Mildred walk about the grounds of Lower Beechview. Together, they went toward the little gate where Ware had said good-bye to Walter Pearson two days before. The showman pointed across the broad, rolling green, toward the distant clubhouse on the golf links.

"The Beechview Country Club," he stated. "All part of old Galbraith's estate. Big rental every year, I understand. I'll bet those two boys do their share in spending it."

They walked in back of the house, and reached the little cove on the other side. There a long pier, ending in a float, attracted Mildred's attention. One of Jessup's workmen approached, tipped his hat, and questioned Ware about some details on the garage job. The showman shrugged his shoulders, then went to attend to the matter. Mildred went back to the front of the house.

GLANCING in the direction of the grove, Mildred was impressed by the somber depths that seemed to exist beneath the copper-leafed trees. She had strolled nearly to the rocky shore; now the thick clump of woods attracted her. It looked cool beneath those trees. Mildred went to the edge of the grove.

A magical spell seized the girl almost as soon as she entered beneath the shade of the nearest tree. She recalled childhood stories of enchanted forests; this woods answered their description. Twenty yards in from the fringe of lawn, Mildred was in a region of absolute stillness. She glanced incredulously toward the uniform tree trunks; then looked up toward the leaves.

Above was an impenetrable growth of overlapping branches. The whole formed a coppery-hued canopy that completely shut out the light of the sun. The gloom within this grove came from the lower elevation, about the tree trunks.

The whole scene was amazing. No branches began until eight feet from the ground. The tree trunks were not close together, nor was there any underbrush. Passage was easy, yet the corridors that stretched beyond seemed to cry out an insidious warning to all who might enter their alluring reaches.

Mildred laughed aloud at her own impressions, then the hollow sound of her own mirth frightened her. The silence of her footfalls on the brownish sward was awesome. An impulse of flight gripped the girl's imaginative mind. She hurried back toward the lawn.

When she emerged upon the green grass, Mildred felt that she was back in the world where she belonged. Sounds were audible now - the hammering of workmen, the ringing of the telephone in the house. The latter sound ended, so Mildred assumed that Harvey had answered the call.

Unconsciously, the girl found herself again studying that grove of trees. She wanted to know more about it, and it occurred to her that by following the narrow strip of sandy shore, she could skirt the awe-inspiring woods. So she set out upon that quest, strolling just beyond the edge of the copper beeches.

After a considerable distance, Mildred reached the spot where the grove ended at the extension of the golf course. Here, in the sand, Mildred noticed that people had been present, for the tiny white grains were scruffed in great confusion.

She was standing, unknowing, upon the very spot where the Malay sailors had landed a few nights before.

THE sound of voices startled the girl. She turned to see a group of four golfers and their caddies, who were arriving at a green not far from the shore. Across the bunkers, Mildred recognized the face of Walter Pearson. The lawyer did not see the girl. He and his companions were too intent upon their game.

To Mildred, this was an opportunity to speak to Pearson. She felt that a cordial greeting was due him, after Harvey's unjustified anger at Lower Beechview. So she walked over to the bunker and stood quietly watching until Pearson might happen to glance in her direction.

Before Pearson chanced to turn toward the shore, a boy came running up along the fairway, and handed an envelope to the old lawyer. Pearson opened the envelope, read the message, and thrust it in his pocket.

"Bah!" he exclaimed. "A call from the office. I'll have to get right up to the clubhouse. Here, caddy - carry my clubs along for a few holes; then if I do not return, take them to the locker room. The chances are that I may have to run into New York at once, but if I can settle it by phone, I shall rejoin you gentlemen."

Pearson looked along the fairway. Because of the contour of the grove, the fairway made a long, roundabout way to the clubhouse. Pearson's decision was immediate. Waving good-bye to his companions, he walked straight into the mass of beeches, choosing the direct short-cut that would take him to his destination.

Mildred Chittenden stood wondering. The other men were gone toward the fourteenth tee, out of sight beyond the bunkers. She could see Walter Pearson, striding steadily into the grove.

A terrible fear seized the girl. She tried to cry out a warning, not knowing why. Then the call died on her lips, as she realized how ridiculous it would be.

It was too late, now. Pearson's white-clad form was swallowed amid the trees. Mildred Chittenden stood alone by the shore, wondering what impulse had caused her to fear for the elderly attorney.

Slowly, the girl made her way back along the shore. The proximity of the grove, with its mass of motionless foliage, was more impressive now than before. Mildred was deep in fearsome thought when she reached the lawn by Lower Beechview. Harvey Chittenden and Craig Ware were seated on the porch. They did not notice Mildred's arrival until the girl had joined them.

As the afternoon waned, Mildred Chittenden retained a troubled silence. Her mind could not forget that simple incident at the thirteenth hole. Some psychic influence seemed to tell her that Walter Pearson had walked into a danger zone, when he had entered the grove of silent motionless beeches!

Approaching darkness increased the tragic thought. The girl's alarm could not be stifled. She faced the future with an unaccountable worry.

That night, Mildred Chittenden dreamed that she could see the face of Walter Pearson. It stared at her through a coppery haze, and its eyes seemed fixed in death. Then the dream changed and over the sleeping girl came the terrible fear that had clutched her within the fringe of the grove.

CHAPTER IV. AT THE CLUBHOUSE

"HERE'S news for you!"

Craig Ware passed the newspaper across the table to Harvey Chittenden. The two, with Mildred, were

seated at late breakfast, on the second morning after the girl had seen Walter Pearson enter the grove.

Harvey Chittenden, no longer in ill humor, took the paper from Ware's hand. He scanned the headlines. Mildred, peering over her husband's shoulder, gave a short, startled gasp.

Beside the largest headline appeared a two-column picture of Walter Pearson. It bore a significant caption of two words:

Lawyer Missing

Harvey Chittenden read the newspaper story slowly. He placed the journal on the table, and quietly began to stir his coffee with a spoon. Mildred picked up the paper and studied the account. A troubled expression came over her face.

"This is terrible, Harvey!" cried the girl. "They don't know what happened to Mr. Pearson! They haven't been able to trace him for two days. Where can he be?"

"I don't care where he is," responded Harvey testily. "If you want my opinion, I think that Pearson is a crook at heart. He wouldn't be representing my former family if he was on the level. He's probably mixed himself up with some phony deal, and has taken to the woods. That's the type of a scoundrel he is."

Harvey gulped his coffee and arose from the table. He strode out on the porch, letting the door slam behind him. His ill humor had returned at the mention of Pearson's name. Mildred was wondering. Harvey's last remark had carried a double meaning.

"Taken to the woods -"

That was a slang expression, indicating that Pearson had purposely sought obscurity. But to Mildred, it carried a pointed recollection. The last time she had seen Walter Pearson, he was entering the grove beside the golf course. Did Harvey know that fact; and had he purposely used the phrase?

Mildred began to read the story more carefully, and Craig Ware sat down beside her. Pearson's disappearance was unquestionably a mystery. The old lawyer seldom kept account of his actions, and the last time he had been seen was two days previously - first, when he had departed from the office; later, at the Beechview Country Club.

The office had received a call later in the afternoon, at which time Pearson had left the brief message that he could be reached at his uptown apartment. There, a servant reported that Pearson had called to state that he would not be in that night.

"ODD, isn't it?" remarked Craig Ware. "Still, it is scarcely likely that anything could have happened to Pearson. Perhaps he decided to take a business trip. They will probably hear of him soon."

"Craig," said Mildred solemnly, "I saw Mr. Pearson two days ago."

"You saw him? Where?"

"Over on the golf course. I had walked along the shore. Someone came with a message for him. He started off through the grove. That was the last I saw of him."

"He was probably going to the clubhouse!"

"I suppose so, Craig, but the sight of him going among those trees frightened me. I had a terrible presentiment that something was going to happen to the man! I wonder - I wonder if he ever reached the

clubhouse!"

Craig Ware laughed. He seemed to think lightly of Mildred's fears. He stuffed his pipe with tobacco, lighted it, and gazed speculatively through the window.

"That is a silly theory, Mildred," he objected. "Read the newspaper story again. You will see that Pearson was heard from as late as the evening. So he must have reached the clubhouse. I think it would be wise to forget the matter."

"Why?" questioned Mildred, as Ware paused.

"Because," said Ware, in a low voice, "Harvey feels very vindictive toward Pearson. You heard how he spoke just now. People sometimes attach significance to idle threats. You and I know that Harvey can mean no harm toward Walter Pearson; but others might not think the same."

The door opened, and Jessup entered. The man was well dressed today. He looked more like a gentleman of leisure than an overseer of workmen.

"I'm going uptown, Mr. Ware," declared Jessup. "I'll have to see Mr. Chittenden, I suppose, before I leave the -"

"That's right, Jessup," responded Ware, with a smile. "Mr. Chittenden is head man around here. He went outside a few minutes ago. You will probably find him on the lawn."

Jessup departed. Mildred, watching through the window, saw him meet Harvey down by the water front. The two talked for a few minutes; then Jessup left. The roar of a motor announced his departure from the premises.

"I've been worried, Craig," declared Mildred. "Worried about Harvey. I haven't been able to sleep for two nights. The night after I saw Mr. Pearson go into the grove, I was sure that I heard someone moving about the house. I went to Harvey's room; the door was locked. When I entered, I found Harvey smoking a cigarette, while he rocked in a chair. He seemed very angry because I had disturbed him."

"He is nervous - that's all," said Ware.

"I heard a noise outside, too," added Mildred. "I think that Harvey must have been walking about the grounds. It worried me, Craig. I never knew him to act this way before."

"Don't worry, Mildred," said the showman soothingly. "He will get over that restlessness before long."

Mildred tried to calm her fears. She went out on the lawn. Harvey had disappeared.

The girl wondered why he had talked so long to Jessup. Where was Jessup now? Mildred recalled that he had gone on business up in the little town beyond the country club.

HAD Mildred been an observer of Jessup's present business, she would have had new cause for worry. The solemn-faced supervisor was at that moment riding along the road that led to Upper Beechview, where the other Chittendens lived.

He reached a gateway that led into Galbraith Chittenden's home, and drove beyond it. Leaving the car, Jessup moved through a clump of shrubbery. It was fully a quarter of an hour before he returned. He stepped in the car, drove back along the inland road, and parked beside the Beechview Country Club.

Here, Jessup became a man of singular demeanor. He entered the clubhouse with all the assurance of a

member. No one challenged his presence, for no check was made on members except when one played golf. Walking through a spacious lounge, Jessup, remarkably inconspicuous, made a survey of all persons who were present. He was about to leave, when he spied a man standing by a door that led to the spacious veranda.

Something about the stranger's appearance attracted Jessup's close attention. He saw the man step out on the veranda, and turn to the right. With swift, soft stride, Jessup crossed the room and dropped out of sight beside a window. Peering at an angle, he saw that the man he was watching had encountered another individual, and that the two were shaking hands. Jessup dropped within the window, and kept his body out of sight behind a chair. On hands and knees, he listened to the conversation.

The man whom Jessup had first spied was speaking. This man, in the short glimpse that Jessup had gained, had appeared as a short, stocky fellow, clad in a checkered golfing outfit.

The other - whom Jessup had barely seen - was a tall man, of confident bearing. His face had been turned away so Jessup had not viewed it.

"Well, well, Mr. Cranston," the stocky man was saying. "I didn't expect to meet you here. I'm not surprised, though, to find that Lamont Cranston is a member of the Beechview Country Club."

"I belong to a great many clubs, Merrick," replied the tall man, in a quiet, impressive tone. "And, to be frank with you, I am rather surprised to find Calvin Merrick here. Business, I suppose?"

"You guessed it," laughed Merrick. His voice became low. "There's no use trying to keep it dark from you, Mr. Cranston. I'm out here on an important job."

"Pertaining to Walter Pearson," returned Cranston, in his quiet tone.

"You guessed it again!" Merrick's words were confidential. "You'd make a real detective yourself, Mr. Cranston. I'm telling you why I'm here, because I know you won't mention it to anyone. Our office has been asked to trace Pearson. It's a big job for a private detective agency. They assigned me to work on my own - find out something, then report back. So I figured I'd come out here for a starter."

"Have you learned any facts?"

"Not many, but I'm working on a clue. I suppose you've read about the Pearson case. Well, here's the way I've doped it. Pearson was playing golf the afternoon before he disappeared. We got reports on his actions here. It seems he was out with some other players, and he quit the game on the thirteenth hole. Took a short-cut to the clubhouse, and was gone when his friends came in.

"Well, it may sound like blind-man's buff, but I'm going to try to put myself in Pearson's place. I'm going to look around there by the thirteenth hole. Maybe I'll get a start; if I do, I'll vanish like Pearson did - and when I come back to town, I may be able to report where he is."

Cranston chuckled slightly. Jessup, by the window, heard him speak to Merrick before departing.

"Good luck to you, Merrick," were Cranston's words. "I'll have to leave you; I'm going out with a foursome."

As the two men left the veranda, Jessup's long, thin face peeked into view. He saw Merrick, the detective, strolling down a flight of steps. Cranston was going in the opposite direction.

Jessup waited.

FOR some unknown reason, this lanky, furtive man was keenly interested in the conversation that he had overheard. There was no doubt about his purpose here; he had come to learn if anyone at the club was perturbed about the disappearance of Walter Pearson. Through coincidence and quick action, Jessup had gained certain knowledge.

Now, as he stalked toward the veranda, Jessup was particularly concerned with the actions of one man - Calvin Merrick, the detective. Coming through the door, Jessup watched the sleuth idling across the space between the clubhouse and the links. It was obvious that Merrick intended to go down to the thirteenth green in the near future.

Reentering the clubhouse, Jessup found an obscure telephone in the corner. He dropped a nickel in the slot, and called a number. When a voice responded, he spoke a few cryptic words into the mouthpiece. Evidently the person at the other end understood his brief jargon. Jessup hung up the phone.

Going back to the veranda, Jessup again sighted Calvin Merrick. The detective was smoking a cigarette, staring across the links toward the shore of the Sound. Jessup strolled away, heading for his parked car.

In his study of Merrick, Jessup had completely eliminated all thought of the other man - Lamont Cranston. Only the detective concerned Jessup; for Jessup had classed Cranston as one of the wealthy idlers who formed the principal members of the wealthy Beechview Club.

Cranston had expressed but a passing interest in Merrick's statements. Evidently Cranston had met the detective some time in the past, and the two were no more than mere acquaintances. They had separated now; Merrick to investigate, Cranston to play golf. They had nothing in common. Jessup smiled dryly as he glanced over his shoulder for a final glimpse of Calvin Merrick's stocky form.

FOUR men were standing on the first tee as Jessup's car drove by. One of them, peering sharply from the corner of his eyes, watched the departing automobile. That man was Lamont Cranston.

As the member of a foursome, he had silently observed Jessup when the man had appeared upon the veranda. He had seen Jessup watching Calvin Merrick.

Three of the golfers had driven from the tee. Lamont Cranston set up his ball, and sent a long shot straight down the fairway. As the players and caddies started off toward the hole, Cranston remained alone.

Watching, he saw the automobile speeding along the curving road, far away, following the winding course that led down to the cove by Lower Beechview. Lamont Cranston's eyes were keen, his firm, stern-chiseled face was emotionless.

From thin, straight lips came a low, sinister laugh. It was a tone of knowing mirth - a foreboding mockery that carried an uncanny spell. None heard it, for Lamont Cranston was alone. That laugh, far from all listeners, announced an identity that none would have expected to find in this particular place.

It was a laugh that had brought terror to the underworld; a laugh that had taunted fiends of crime; a laugh that had marked the ending of insidious schemes, and had sounded as the death knell to doomed evil-doers.

The author of that laugh was a mysterious being who remained invisible at night, and who disguised himself by day. He was a personage who could seemingly be everywhere, the possessor of a master mind that could frustrate the deepest schemes of crime.

Only one pair of lips could utter that weird mockery that left no doubt of identity. The laugh of Lamont

Cranston was the laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER V. THE CLUTCH OF DEATH

A GOLF ball dropped from space, and thudded on the close-clipped green of the thirteenth hole. A few moments later, two other spheroids made a similar arrival. Then players and caddies approached and walked upon the green toward the balls.

One of the men was Lamont Cranston.

While the others were studying the positions of the golf balls, Cranston strolled toward the bunkers beyond the green. From this position, he could watch the actions of a man who stood upon the sandy shore.

None of Cranston's companions were similarly observant. They were looking back toward the fourth member of the foursome who had just found his ball, and was playing it from the rough.

The man whose activities commanded Lamont Cranston's attention was Calvin Merrick. Until a few minutes before, Merrick had been walking about the green. Now he was examining a scruffed section of the sand beside the water.

Cranston watched while the detective walked along the shore, noting a succession of marks that led past the bunkers to skirt the woods. These were Mildred Chittenden's footprints. Cranston turned back to the game long enough to sink a perfect putt. Then, as he followed his companions to the fourteenth tee, he watched Merrick returning to the green which the players had just left.

So engrossed was the detective that he did not notice the men upon the tee. Only Cranston was watching him.

Merrick was trying to visualize the situation that had existed here the day when Walter Pearson had last been seen. Finally, with an unconscious shrug of his shoulders, the baffled sleuth walked slowly toward the fairway along which he had come.

The fourteenth tee was more distant from the grove of beeches than was the thirteenth hole. Lamont Cranston and his companions played off, then started up the fourteenth fairway, away from the Sound. Simultaneously, Calvin Merrick, still in deep thought, stopped his advance and moved over to the edge of the trees.

Cranston, well up the fourteenth fairway, turned and saw the detective. Merrick had stopped just on the fringe of the woods. Cranston watched him intently, expecting that Merrick would come back to the thirteenth fairway.

It was then that the detective performed the unexpected. Acting upon a sudden impulse, he walked directly into the grove.

Merrick was gone in an instant, his dark-checked suit merging with the gloom beneath the beeches. Cranston, still intent, divined the detective's purpose. It must have occurred to Merrick that the route straight through the woods would be the course that Walter Pearson must have followed. The detective was going over the exact ground, taking advantage of the one clue that he possessed.

Unlike Mildred Chittenden, Lamont Cranston had not sensed the peculiar lure of those copper beeches. Even to his eagle eye, they were nothing more than a thick woods of uniform appearance. Yet an unusual expression appeared upon Cranston's inflexible face. It was seldom that Cranston's countenance

displayed any noticeable sign. The passing expression faded. Cranston went on with his game.

Cranston's surmise was a correct one. Calvin Merrick, after his examination of both beach and green, had decided that no marks were of importance. He had started back toward the clubhouse, when the thought of the shortcut had attracted him.

His first motion toward the beeches had been one of momentary curiosity. Once beneath the fringe of the first trees, he had suddenly decided to take this way back to the clubhouse.

TWENTY yards within the grove, Calvin Merrick sensed the peculiar weirdness of these silent corridors. He was totally inside a gloomy area that seemed detached from the outside world. The detective paused a moment to take his bearings; then, catching a tiny glimpse of green as he gazed backward, he again turned ahead and walked stolidly onward, his eyes roaming over the matted brown of the ground about him. Had Merrick entered here without purpose, he might have hesitated in his progress. However, the detective was still engrossed with one commanding idea. He was anxious - as Walter Pearson had been - to pass directly through this grove, and his occupied thoughts offset the feeling of unreality that so impressed him.

Maintaining a straight course through the widespread cluster of trees required a definite action in order to retain the proper sense of direction. This kept Merrick steadily on his way, and, furthermore, the detective was peering everywhere in hopes of sighting some trace of Walter Pearson.

It would be impossible, Merrick knew, for a man to become totally lost in such a limited acreage of forest. Even a circuitous course would eventually lead the man to the outside.

Nevertheless, this gloomy atmosphere was depressing. It might be possible for an elderly man like Pearson to have experienced a heart attack within these depths. This search was advisable, in Merrick's opinion. The sleuth had struck a very tangible idea, when he had decided that the phone calls attributed to Pearson might have been mistakes or false impressions.

Before Merrick reached the center of the grove, he was turning from a straight course into a zigzag path, in hopes of covering any variation in the way that Pearson might have taken. The detective's eyes were straining in their search, for the density of the leaves above caused a perpetual twilight among the scattered tree trunks.

Stopping for a moment, Merrick looked upward. He was surprised to see that one tree was not distinguishable from another. The whole grove might well have been one mammoth plant with a myriad of stems rising from the ground, so closely did the thick-leafed branches interlace.

Now, in all its fullness, Calvin Merrick felt the spell of the grove. Far in from the sunlight of the broad, green fairways, the detective was lost in a haunted labyrinth that seemed to hold him in a weird prison. Practical minded though he was, Merrick felt his imagination at work.

At distances about him on the ground, were tiny spots of light - the only places where sunlight trickled through the all-pervading leaves. These spots were small comfort; for when Merrick paused at one, he could not even see the sky through the filtering foliage above his head.

With a dull laugh - a fearsome sound that only added to his qualms - Merrick fought off an impelling desire for flight. He realized that he had come too far to turn back; that it would be as safe to go straight ahead as it would be to return. All the while, cold reason fought with fevered instinct.

What danger could possibly lie here? None, Merrick reasoned. Nevertheless, when the detective mopped his forehead, he felt cold perspiration upon it. His nerve was failing him, Merrick knew, and he

could not understand it.

He tried to continue his slow, searching pace; then he compromised with himself. Through the grove he would go, but rapidly. Later, he could return for another search.

DESPITE the smooth regularity of the ground, Merrick felt himself stumbling as he strode forward. His head was swimming; he was staggering almost like a drunken man. Bumping into a tree trunk, Merrick grasped it and gasped in relief as he felt the solidity of the bark-surfaced wood. The token of reality brought back reason. Merrick's fears took on a childish aspect. The man laughed, convincingly this time, and went onward at a steady gait.

Now at almost the exact center of the grove, the detective was mentally at ease. He felt that he had conquered the primitive terror that had seized him. This flash-back to a natural dread of a strange unexplainable environment was gradually dwindling.

Accustomed to the unearthly silence, Merrick occupied himself with his former purpose of making a search as he went steadily ahead. It would not be long before he reached the other side of the grove.

Then came a startling change. Something occurred to alter the lulled situation. Into this realm of total silence came a peculiar sound that Merrick could not understand. He stopped stock-still trying to locate the odd noise that resembled the rustling of leaves.

Staring upward, the detective could see no change in the foliage above him. He glanced in different directions. His ears still detected the elusive noise; yet there was no indication of what had caused it.

With one hand against a tree trunk, Merrick waited nearly half a minute. The noise had ended. He started forward; he paused, fancying a repetition of the sound; he again proceeded.

An unconquerable fear swept over him. Totally disregarding reason, Merrick sprang forward in a mad effort to escape this terrifying place.

The detective's plunge ended abruptly. In a trice, Merrick's body was seized in an irresistible grasp. Raising one hand, Merrick tried to ward off the terror that had come into being. His arm, like his body, was drawn into the same clutch. Now, struggling helplessly, Merrick felt his head drawn back. He tried to scream, his voice faded as the death grip tightened on his throat.

He was being drawn upward, despite his most valiant efforts - upward into the mass of coppery leaves. Branches crackled as the detective's helpless form pressed among them. Merrick's head swung sideways, downward - his bulging eyes caught one last glimpse of the brownish sward below. Then that last view ended. Calvin Merrick's eyes were fixed with death.

SILENCE and gloom reigned over the spot where the detective had last stood. Searching through this grove, Calvin Merrick had learned the cause of Walter Pearson's disappearance - had but learned it through his own experience. The end of the detective's quest marked the end of his own life.

A second victim had fallen prey to the insidious influence that existed in this weird environment. Not one trace remained as evidence. Some superhuman force had acted to deal swift doom with its fast-approaching clutch of death. Unseen, unknown, striking from an invisible hiding place, a fierce, relentless agency had done its terrible work. A warning sound - scarcely audible; a grip - so mighty that no man could withstand it; the crackling of branches and the breaking of the victim's bones - then the silence of doom prevailed.

Within the huge umbra of the interlaced beeches, the unnatural twilight continued, despite the brilliancy of

the summer afternoon. Out on the Sound, boats were moving gaily. Inland, on the links, men were playing golf. Surrounded by carefree fellow men, Calvin Merrick had encountered relentless fate.

The disappearance of the detective, like that of Walter Pearson, was still a mystery; yet its occurrence did not pass unnoticed. One man, whose eagle gaze was fixed upon the grove, inferred that some disaster had taken place within the widespread beeches.

Lamont Cranston, on an upper fairway, commanded an angled view that enabled him to see all the land sides of the grove. His eyes watched the thirteenth fairway, they gazed toward Harvey Chittenden's estate of Lower Beechview and at regular intervals they were focused upon the spot where Merrick should have come forth on his journey to the clubhouse.

Ending his round of golf, Lamont Cranston rested on the clubhouse veranda. For a full hour he had maintained close vigil upon that distant acreage of woods. He had seen Calvin Merrick enter; he had not seen the man emerge.

Afternoon was waning; soon twilight crept over the placid scene. Two hours and a half had passed since Calvin Merrick had gone into the grove of doom. Then did Lamont Cranston cease his watch. He entered the dining room and ordered dinner. He spoke to the attendant.

"I am arranging to stay here at the club," said Cranston. "Tell the clerk to have a room assigned to me.

IN the evening, when soft moonlight spread its glow above the burnished beeches, Lamont Cranston again stood upon the veranda. The glow of his cigar tip seemed to mark his thoughts. At last the finished stump fizzed through the air. Cranston went indoors and upstairs to his room.

There, from a suitcase which he had brought with him, the calm-faced man took forth two garments. One was a long black cloak, the other a slouch hat.

Donning these clothes, Cranston took on a strange, sinister appearance. His figure no longer possessed a human bearing. It was a form that might well have been conjured from another world.

White hands emerged from the folds of the cloak. Upon one finger of the left hand glistened a shining, mysterious gem of ever-changing hues. It was a rare fire opal, or girasol - the single jewel that symbolized The Shadow.

Black gloves slipped over the long, slender hands. Two automatics came into view, to be buried beneath the folds of the cloak. A hand invisibly extinguished the single light in the room. Completely obscured by darkness, the tall figure in black glided to the hallway and down the stairs.

A few minutes later, an almost imperceptible swish sounded as the cloaked being crossed the veranda. People were there; but none saw the mystic personage in their midst. A patch of black flitted across the moon-bathed grass. It was like the shadow of a passing cloud unnoticed, despite the fact that the sky was cloudless.

That phantom shape glided on, down toward the mysterious grove.

A strange personage was at work tonight. A being of invisibility was setting forth to follow the course that had taken two men to their doom.

Beside the thirteenth green, the flitting shape merged with the blackness beneath the fringe of overhanging beeches. No eye could have noted that absorption, no ear could have heard the slightest sound.

Lamont Cranston, guest at the Beechview Club, was temporarily absent. He had vanished, but a new

presence had arrived. The Shadow, figure of darkness, had ventured forth into impenetrable gloom to seek the answer to the mystery that lay within the grove of beeches!

Where two men had dared by day and died, a single being was advancing through the thickness of night. The Shadow knew no fear!

Could he elude the clutch of death?

CHAPTER VI. SPECTERS OF THE NIGHT

IT was some time after midnight when Mildred Chittenden awoke from a troubled sleep. The house was strangely calm and still. Its silence was disturbing. The girl found herself wondering what had caused this sudden awakening.

During the past few nights, Mildred had been afflicted with terrifying dreams; vague nightmares that left only worried memory after the awakening. Tonight, in this quiet room, she sought to recall those dreams, but her mind was chaotic.

Listening, Mildred conjured up fanciful thoughts of unexplainable noises. These thoughts became dominating. The room was an oppressive place that seemed to hold her prisoner. The moonlight, floating in through the open window, offered solace. In a frantic effort to escape the overpowering fantasies that swept her brain, Mildred decided to go outdoors, where realities would surely overcome imagination.

Donning a dressing gown and slippers, the girl softly stole from her room and crept through the darkness of the upstairs hall. She detected a sound not far away. It seemed to come from Harvey's room. Going close to the door, Mildred could hear the slight noise of slow, padded footfalls.

Harvey was evidently awake; if so, he would be in a disagreeable humor. To disturb him would be a mistake. Thus reasoning, Mildred turned to the stairs and descended to the first floor. Holding her fright in abeyance, she opened the front door and reached the porch.

Here, the moonlit lawn was alluring. Softly, so that she could not possibly be heard by anyone in the house, Mildred went down the steps and straight toward the placid Sound, which formed a huge pool of unrippled water. There was an obscure bench among the rocks - a spot from which Mildred had frequently looked out upon the Sound - and it was there that the girl went now.

Here, with her dark gown wrapped closely about her, Mildred reclined so motionless that no one would have detected her presence even at close range. The sight of the water made the girl restful. She fell into a drowse; then suddenly, awakened to view her surroundings in surprise.

Mildred's head was resting upon the arm of the bench. She peered through the slats at the back, looking toward the lawn and the house beyond. All was as quiet as before. The girl's eyes wandered; they turned directly toward the grove of beeches, a blackish mass that seemed to infringe upon the edge of lawn like some grim monster of darkness.

Spectral fantasies returned. The girl's thoughts turned to a vivid scene in a tragedy that she had witnessed long before - in which the witches of Macbeth had raised an apparition to speak to the Scottish chief:

"- Until Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill shall come -"

That grove might well be Birnam wood. Mildred half expected to see the silent mass of trees creep forward in the moonlight.

With hypnotic stare she watched the blackened edge that marked the spot where the boughs cut off the

moonlight. There was a clear-cut division between the ground beneath the trees and the end of the moonlit lawn. That stretch of blackness would be the first to move!

For a few minutes the girl's fancies continued; then they waned. Mildred seemed to see clearly again; the blackness at the side of the grove appeared quite normal, and Mildred watched in idle curiosity. A moment later, the girl experienced a startling chill. The shadow of the trees was moving at one spot - a projecting patch of blackness was creeping out upon the lawn!

GRIPPING the back of the bench, Mildred watched in stark terror. Like a living thing, the extending mass moved onward; it detached itself from the blackness of the woods, and became the shadow of a human form!

It was then that Mildred saw the being in black. So suddenly did she realize his presence that she fancied that he had grown instantaneously from the ground. Within the range of the moonlight stood a tall, unearthly figure - a weird personage garbed in jet-black cloak and topped with broad-brimmed hat.

Mildred Chittenden did not recognize The Shadow; unacquainted with the ways of the underworld, she had never learned of the terror which that solitary being could provoke. But in Mildred's mind lay a real horror of that grove beyond the lawn; a creepy fear that recognized a menace in its midst. Here, before her staring eyes, the girl had seen a living form develop from the spell of darkness!

To Mildred, The Shadow was a specter of the night - a wanderer from unearthly domains. That form in black, more sinister than any creature of her fevered dreams, stood as proof of danger that lay within the depths of the grove.

What was its purpose here?

Mildred watched the phantom shape as it moved slowly across the lawn. It was going toward the house. It was lost beside the blackish walls of the building. Was it a menace to those who slept within the mansion?

Mildred trembled. A warning cry might suffice to save the others, but should it pass unheard, she would be at the mercy of that frightful phantom.

Half in relief, half in fright, the girl suppressed a sigh as she saw the tall black shape once more. The Shadow had made a circuit of the building. Silently, he was emerging from the darkness on the side toward the cove.

Now his form was closer; it passed across the lawn and neared the edge of the grove. Mildred fancied that she heard a low, shuddering sound - an uncanny laugh that made her tremble again.

Peering through the moonlight, the girl watched the figure as it moved away from the shore, almost a portion of the blackness by the edge of the grove. Had she not seen the form before, she could not have seen it now. As it was, her eyes barely discerned The Shadow's progress as the black-clad visitant neared the fence that marked the limit of Lower Beechview.

Once again, the form of The Shadow was clear in the moonlight as it passed through the little gate. Then it was lost to the girl's vision. The Shadow had gone as mysteriously as he had arrived.

Mildred Chittenden sighed at the conclusion of the ordeal. She was too weak to leave this spot of security; at the same time, she was surprised at her own bravery. After the first fright, that black-clad shape had not seemed so ominous. Its departure left the girl wondering. To her amazement, she was doubting that The Shadow was a menace.

Fantastic, yet so real that its presence could not be forgotten, the being in black had come and gone with no threatening gesture. To a certain extent, that somber form was more a guardian than foe. Mildred wondered if she had seen a ghost; if so, what its purpose could have been. Was some wandering spirit haunting this old estate?

LONG minutes went by, while Mildred's thoughts remained at a standstill. The girl sensed the passing of time; she knew, instinctively, that the spectral shape would not return tonight. Nevertheless, she waited here, calmly resting, her mind perturbed at times, at other intervals less fearful.

At last, Mildred regained power of action. She started to rise from the bench; then stood transfixed at the sight of another living form. Where The Shadow's shape had been mysterious and supernatural, this new specter was hideous and earthly. With tightened lips, Mildred shrank back upon the bench, knowing that she now faced danger.

A creeping man was coming from the grove. His body bent almost double, he appeared more as a crawling creature than a man. He was moving stealthily, yet lacked the gliding motion that had characterized the approach of The Shadow.

As the creeping man came into the moonlight, his face was visible above his close-fitting dusky garments. He had come from the grove at a spot quite close to the shore. Now, his head turned in each direction, and Mildred, slipping down upon the bench, could see his visage plainly.

The girl was terror-stricken at the sight of yellow, pockmarked features, and evil, glinting eyes that stared almost directly toward her. She recognized that this creature was a Chinaman, his fiendish bearing and huddled arms indicated that he carried a weapon. Here was a human enemy, Mildred sensed.

Had the yellow man spied her, she would have counted herself lost. But the Chinaman's gaze did not light upon the girl.

This creature that had materialized from the trees seemed intent upon reaching the shelter of the house. Satisfied that no one was watching, he scurried across the lawn, and huddled beside the porch. From that spot, Mildred fancied that she heard a thin, faint whistle - like a shrill, though guarded, hiss.

The girl listened. A second sound came from somewhere. The Chinaman appeared upon the steps. He was entering the house!

Now, despite her qualms, Mildred felt the necessity of action. The first spectral visitor had inspired her with awe; the present one filled her with alarm.

Was the man bent on murder? Mildred could well believe it. She had feared for Walter Pearson when she had seen him go into the grove. Something must have happened to the lawyer. Now a physical menace had come from the grove; it threatened all who slept in Lower Beechview.

Rising swiftly, Mildred hurried directly toward the house. She was ready to encounter the yellow-faced creature, confident that she would be able to give an alarm. Nevertheless, she restrained her steps as she neared the porch. From then on, the girl advanced cautiously.

A living-room window was open. Mildred stole toward it, noiselessly. She could hear sounds from within. She listened.

Someone was speaking a low, singsong voice - scarcely more than a piping whisper. There were breaks in the talk, as though the speaker were receiving replies from someone who spoke more guardedly.

"Lei Chang do" - Mildred could hear only that statement; then mumbled words, and finally a strangely

accented name - "Koon Woon - Koon Woon - Koon Woon -"

At last the lispng talk concluded. Mildred heard someone moving in the darkened living room. She waited beside the window; then shrank behind a protecting chair as she saw, but did not hear, the front door open.

THE Chinaman was leaving the house. As silently as he had come, the yellow-faced creature, more insidious at this close view, was hurrying back to the grove of trees. Watching through the rails of the porch, Mildred saw him scurry to the beeches; then his stooped form was swallowed by the darkness.

Mildred was sure that more than conjecture made her realize that this wicked-looking monstrosity made his home among the beeches. But she could not divine why he had come into the house. Harvey, like herself, had been awake. Could he have been watching from the window to see this fearful creature?

If so, how had he avoided an encounter? Horrified, Mildred realized the answer. She understood now why Harvey could have been staying awake so many nights. A rendezvous with this creature from the beeches! That could well be the answer!

Mildred was more frightened now than she had been before. She would prefer to see her husband in grave danger than to imagine him in touch with such an outlandish monster. But the thought awoke terrifying memories within the recesses of her mind.

Harvey had often spoken briefly of his trips to China and the Orient - of his acquaintances there - of the strange customs in the East. In some ways, Harvey had imbibed an Oriental philosophy for he had often spoken with unfeigned admiration of the Chinese and their methods.

Lei Chang!

Somehow Mildred sensed that such was the creature's name. Who then was Koon Woon? Another man from China?

Mildred could not answer these perplexing questions. She realized dully that now she was more anxious to be within the house than without. Her entire view had changed.

Carefully, the girl entered the front door and ascended the stairs without making a sound. She stopped outside of Harvey's room. She heard a few slight noises, but they were no proof that Harvey was still awake. He might have been tossing in his sleep.

Craig Ware's room was nearby. Before the door, Mildred could hear the stentorian breathing of the middle aged showman. Then she thought of Jessup. His room was in a wing at the back of the house. Mildred decided that she would not investigate there.

Instead, she went into her own room and lay quietly in bed, seeking sleep. Each doze was interrupted. Once Mildred fancied that she heard someone moving in the hall; again, she imagined that whistled hissing; finally she was sure that she heard sounds on the other side of the house.

Bravely the girl calmed these recurring fears and finally dropped off to sleep. Vague dreams perturbed her mind and frequently brought her to a waking point. In those dreams, she heard unexplainable noises, and caught the fancied gleam of a wicked, yellow face. But one impression triumphed over all these nightmares; that was the form of a tall being clad in black.

Through her troubled sleep, Mildred could see this one apparition battling off the weird figures that surrounded her. The recollection of The Shadow predominated over all others. When morning dawned, the memory of that first phantom greeted Mildred Chittenden. From the confused recollections of the

hectic night, she recalled the black-clad shape that had come from the mysterious grove.

The thought of the tall, gliding form remained a warning in her mind. The recollection of The Shadow made Mildred feel that only beings of a superhuman mold could safely trespass upon the ground beneath the beeches where the yellow-faced menace dwelt.

CHAPTER VII. AT UPPER BEECHVIEW

LATE the following afternoon, two young men appeared upon a terrace of the huge house on the crag above Long Island Sound. From this vantage point of Upper Beechview, they commanded a wide sweep of the terrain below. The clubhouse of the golf course was obscured by a corner of the mansion; aside from that, every detail of the surrounding territory was visible in panorama.

One of these observers held a pair of field glasses. In the dimming light, he made a careful inspection of the ground that lay between Upper Beechview and the grove; then his hands raised so that he could plainly see what was going on at Lower Beechview.

The young man with the field glasses was Wilbur Chittenden; his companion was his brother Zachary. Their secretive actions indicated that this spying procedure was not a new custom. Evidently they had been practicing it for days.

Wilbur Chittenden lowered the field glasses and uttered a growl of displeasure. Wilbur bore a marked resemblance to his elder brother Harvey, the present occupant of Lower Beechview. Only the pallor of his face - a sharp contrast to Harvey's coat of tan - would have enabled an acquaintance to have told them apart.

Zachary, while he possessed the Chittenden facial characteristics, was quite different in appearance. Harvey and Wilbur were tall; Zachary was short. Wilbur, like Harvey, was mature and self-possessed; Zachary had the face of a weakling. Nevertheless the youngest of the Chittendens was impressive in his shrewdness. His physiognomy denoted the schemer; a malicious smile was constantly upon his lips; and he bore himself in domineering fashion.

Of the two, Wilbur would have been the more formidable in physical combat, but Zachary appeared to be the cleverer.

"Nothing important down there, Zach," growled Wilbur. "It riles me to think that the beastly cad is living so close to us. I had hoped that he was gone to stay."

"Yes?" questioned Zachary with an ugly laugh. "You're counting too much on hope, Wilbur. Now that Harvey is back, you can be sure that he is here to stay - and we might as well make the best of it."

"Make the best of it?"

There was a significance in Wilbur's echo that showed he had caught the import of his younger brother's words. Zachary laughed again and sprawled himself in a reclining chair below the high parapet of the terrace. Wilbur seated himself and looked dubiously toward his brother. It was plain that he expected Zachary to offer some sound advice.

"LISTEN, Wilbur," declared Zachary. "While you've been spending your time looking through those glasses and cursing to yourself, I've been doing some constructive thinking. More than that, I've been acting."

"How?"

"In a very efficient manner. Following hunches - using my head as well as my eyes. Figuring how the present situation can be turned to our advantage."

"I don't see anything to our advantage," protested Wilbur. "Harvey is back. Pearson has walked out of the picture. There's no way for us to work things the way we want them. Harvey will patch matters up with the old man and that will be the end of it."

"Yes?" Zachary's tone was sarcastic. "Well, Wilbur, I was younger than you when Harvey went away. You were the chief cause of his going. I helped to make matters unpleasant for him, but at that time, I followed your lead. Now that he is back, it is my turn to do the heavy work."

Wilbur Chittenden nodded. He was a stubborn fellow, who held an intense hatred toward his favored brother Harvey, but Wilbur was unquestionably blunt in method, and he recognized Zachary's subtle superiority.

"Wilbur," said Zachary, in a low tone. "I've been preparing for trouble ever since I knew that Harvey was coming back. I didn't tell everything to you, because I wanted to watch developments. But you can believe me when I tell you that affairs are turning favorably to us. There's just one factor that you have failed to consider."

"Which is -"

"That Harvey is a Chittenden - just as set in purpose as the rest of us. He has come back here looking for trouble. He is going to find it, and that will prove his undoing."

Wilbur Chittenden was listening intently; but his impatience showed itself in his next words.

"Trouble for Harvey?" he demanded. "I can't see how that is developing. We have tried to convince the old man that he ought to cut off Harvey, but he always insisted that there would be a reconciliation. He sent Pearson to arrange it and Pearson didn't get far, I'll admit. But now" - Wilbur paused speculatively - "just where is Pearson? How can we work on the old man while his lawyer is missing?"

"Pearson," responded Zachary calmly, "was our greatest obstacle. He represented the family for years. He was a stickler for precedent. He had no luck when he tried to make friends with Harvey. That proved my point - that Harvey is short-tempered. But Pearson would be keeping on with his friendly efforts still - except for the fact that Pearson is no longer here."

"I'm puzzled about that," persisted Wilbur.

"Why be puzzled?" questioned Zachary softly. "Why should you care? It has left us the opening that we need. You knew how fussy our esteemed father has become. He's worrying night and day about Pearson. He has lost confidence in a lawyer who departs for places unknown."

"That, in my mind, is very much to our advantage. Before Pearson returns" - Zachary smiled shrewdly - "if Pearson ever does return, Galbraith Chittenden will have a new attorney. I have arranged for that."

WILBUR clapped his fist upon his open hand. He was unrestrained in his admiration of his brother's craftiness.

"A great idea, Zach!" he exclaimed. "We get the new lawyer in; then we start again about the will. Our man sides with us. The old man capitulates. Harvey will be cut off - with only Lower Beechview in his grasp."

"Exactly," returned Zachary. "Galbraith Chittenden will have two sons - Wilbur, the elder; Zachary, the

younger - just as we have so often planned it. Provided that Harvey helps."

"That Harvey helps?" asked Wilbur incredulously.

"Certainly," said Zachary. "He began to help when he antagonized Pearson. That was not sufficient. But with our lawyer on the job, all that remains is for Harvey to clash with us as he did with Pearson. That will turn our father's mind completely against him."

"Very good," said Wilbur. "Very, very good. You are getting there, Zach. But what is going to start all this strife? As far as I can see it, Harvey never leaves Lower Beechview. There has to be a cause of war, you know."

"There already is a cause," said Zachary, in a confidential tone. "If you spent less time admiring Harvey's bride through those glasses, and looked over some of the other people on the place, you might know more than you do now."

"The others?" asked Wilbur, in surprise. "You mean that middle-aged bird who came on ahead to watch the workmen - Craig Ware, I heard his name is - the one who sits around all day -"

"Not Ware," said Zachary, with an evil smile. "I'm thinking of the gawky gentleman in overalls - the chief workman. He lives at Lower Beechview, too. His name is Jessup. "

"Jessup?" quizzed Wilbur. "How did you find that out?"

"I've looked him over uptown," said Zachary. "I've seen him other places, too. Particularly, around here."

"Around here? You mean that Jessup is spying on us?"

"Exactly. But I haven't stopped him. He's a good snooper, that fellow. I've seen him watching you; I've seen him watching me; but I haven't let on."

"How did you learn about him? What is he?"

"A pretty tough customer," said Zachary. "He used to do contracting work, out West. That's probably where Harvey met him. He came East, went broke, and tied up with a racket. New York City isn't such a healthy place for Mr. Jessup, right now."

All this appeared to be surprising news to Wilbur Chittenden. He stared open-mouthed at his brother and waited for further information. Zachary took his time in divulging. He liked the effect that he was creating.

"I'm no simple-minded soul," declared Zachary. "Long Island Sound is a mighty profitable place for racketeers, especially when the rum-running is in season. Those boys like to know the home folks. I've made a few useful acquaintances."

Wilbur nodded. Zachary had said something of this before, but Wilbur had paid but little attention to it. Now, however, with a Harvey Chittenden connection, Wilbur could see where Zachary's questionable friends might play a part.

"Gangsters," resumed Zachary, "are easily spotted by those who know them. I figured this fellow Jessup was more than a mere workman. So I pointed him out to some of the - some of my friends. They recognized him. It looks very much as though those workmen who are with him are others of his same kind."

"Now what is Jessup's purpose? He's working for Harvey. Retired from the phony racket business? Perhaps" - again Zachary's tone became ironical - "and perhaps not. If Harvey anticipates trouble" - again the sarcasm - "or if Harvey is making trouble, Jessup would be mighty useful to him."

"What are we going to do about it?" asked Wilbur anxiously.

"You mean," returned Zachary, "what have I done about it? Well, brother Wilbur, while you have been mooning through your glasses and father has been doing nothing, I have been attending a bit to affairs on Upper Beechview. For one thing, I have hired some extra help."

"Three men, yes," agreed Wilbur. "I didn't see why we needed them around the place, with two hired men already on the -"

"That," interposed Zachary, "was because you did not know the vocation of our new employees. Like Jessup, they are tough gangsters - temporarily retired. There are others available if necessary, should emergency arise."

WILBUR CHITTENDEN whistled softly. He realized now the purpose of these extra hired men, whom his brother had employed ostensibly to look after the widespread estate. They had impressed him as rowdies when they had first arrived. Zachary had arranged quarters for them in the garage, where they slept at night.

"Someone is always on duty here," remarked Zachary. "That is why Jessup has been seen on his brief excursions. But Jessup has not in any way been molested nor will he be."

"Why is Jessup coming here?" demanded Wilbur suddenly.

"Wilbur," answered Zachary seriously, "you must always try to put yourself in the other man's place - even when the other man is such a low form of humanity as our eldest brother Harvey."

"What is our main purpose in life? To see that Harvey is disowned. Did you ever reason that Harvey might be gratified if we were disowned? Let us consider Lower Beechview as the enemy's camp - with Harvey in charge and Jessup as his spy. In some way Harvey must manage to injure us. To do that, he must learn all that is possible. Wise enough to lie back, he lets Jessup do the preliminary work."

"And when that is finished?"

"Harvey will open some negotiations. He will try some way to frame us. When he does, it will be our part to appear completely duped. Let him play his hand; then return with our trumps."

Zachary was on his feet now, leaning against the parapet of the terrace. He lighted a cigarette, and its glow showed bright in the deepening dusk. Wilbur could not see his brother's face.

"I wonder" - Wilbur spoke in a tone of partial bewilderment - "just what happened between Harvey and Pearson. More than that I wonder -"

Zachary held up his hand for silence. He flicked his cigarette from the parapet. He stared toward the ground then gave a low whistle. A response came from short distance away and Zachary saw a man approaching through the gloom.

"That you Hunky?" he asked.

An affirmative growl sounded from below.

"Seen anyone?" questioned Zachary of the man.

"Nope," said a gruff voice.

"Look around a bit," said Zachary in a low voice. "I thought I saw something like a shadow going over by those bushes. Use your flashlight and if you scare up that bird Jessup, let him get away without noticing him."

"O.K.," came the growl.

Zachary waited while the inspection was under way. He could see the gleam of "Hunky's" flashlight moving in and out among the bushes. At length the man returned to report from the ground that no one was in sight. Zachary dismissed him with a laugh. He turned to Wilbur.

"You were saying?" asked Zachary.

"I was wondering," observed Wilbur from the darkness, "what happened to Walter Pearson. Someone must know about it. The way you figure it, his being gone is to our advantage. Harvey might figure it was to his advantage too, for that matter, because we've had a long time to work on that old lawyer."

"Good reasoning," laughed Zachary.

"Yes," responded Wilbur, "but get back to my question. Who is it that knows what happened to Walter Pearson?"

"You would like to know?"

"Yes - if you can tell me."

Zachary Chittenden approached his brother. He laughed as he stood beside Wilbur. Then he spoke in a suave cryptic tone.

"Mark these words," said Zachary. "Mark them well; then ask me no more. There is a person who knows what happened to Walter Pearson; and the name of the person who knows is - Chittenden."

With that, Zachary clapped his brother on the shoulder and suggested that they go in the house. Wilbur followed, in perplexity. A light was turned on from within; its dim glow showed through the curtains of a closed window.

A FEW moments later a vague splotch of black appeared upon the stone of the terrace. In the faint light from the window, the head and shoulders of a man appeared above the edge of the parapet. A figure dropped silently upon the terrace. It stood there, tall and spectral, like a being conjured from thin atmosphere.

The Shadow, phantom of the night, was here. Unseen; undiscovered during the inspection made by Zachary Chittenden's minion, he had risen like a ghost from outer darkness. He was no clumsy prowler like Jessup; he had come here while daylight still prevailed to listen to Zachary Chittenden's revelations.

A relentless foe of crime, The Shadow was ferreting every angle of the mystery which surrounded this portion of Long Island. He had passed through the grove last night; he had studied the features of Lower Beechview. Now he was present at the house upon the hill.

Moving from the terrace, The Shadow's silhouetted form merged with the side of the house. It reached the front and stopped, invisible, as a man came strolling along a path. This was Hunky, the gangster who

patrolled the grounds. He went in through a side door and soon returned accompanied by Zachary Chittenden. The two men stopped only a few yards from where The Shadow's shape had become a mass of blotted blackness.

"Down by the side of the entrance," growled Hunky. "That's where I've spotted this guy Jessup. Thinks he's sitting pretty I guess. I didn't do nothing to make him scram -"

"That's the ticket Hunky," said Zachary. "You go through the house. Keep away from that entrance until I tell you it's O.K."

Zachary returned to the house accompanied by Hunky. A few minutes later, Zachary reappeared with Wilbur. The youngest Chittenden was subtly suggesting a short stroll to his elder brother.

Wilbur did not demur. The two walked toward the entrance. Zachary was making no observations. He did not see the silent gliding shape of blackness that kept pace beside the driveway. No eye could have noticed The Shadow in the dark.

By the entrance, Zachary gripped Wilbur's arm, and spoke suddenly in a tone that was low, but clear.

"By Jove, Wilbur," exclaimed Zachary, "it would be great if one of us could walk in on Harvey - just to say hello and appear friendly."

"What!" responded Wilbur in astonishment. "Why, Harvey would go mad if -"

"I hardly think so" objected Zachary. "Still" - he paused thoughtfully - "at least an invitation should come from him. Suppose you heard from him, Wilbur. You'd go over to see him alone, wouldn't you?"

"I guess so," grumbled Wilbur. "Sure - I can't see any reason why not."

The two resumed their progress. They passed the entrance, no longer talking.

When they had gone fifty yards, there was a motion in the bushes beside the gate. Jessup's gawky form slid momentarily into view and went out of sight behind some trees.

Zachary and Wilbur returned, no longer talking. They went up the drive and into the house. It was then that a silent motion occurred opposite the spot where Jessup had been. The figure of The Shadow assumed its vague shape beneath the dim light of the moon, which was now filtering feebly through scudding clouds.

Silent, ominous, The Shadow stood. From unseen lips came a low sound of shuddering, whispered mirth. It was the laugh of The Shadow - that weird, knowing mockery that characterized this strange unknown master of the night.

The moonlight flickered, then brightened as the clouds spread apart. It shone upon the bare surface of the driveway.

The Shadow was gone.

CHAPTER VIII. THE MIDNIGHT JOURNEY

MORE than twenty-four hours had passed since Zachary and Wilbur Chittenden had held their talk upon the terrace of Upper Beechview. The day had been uneventful. The garage work at Lower Beechview had moved on toward completion. Lamont Cranston had spent a quiet day at the country club. Neither Wilbur nor Zachary Chittenden had moved from their house.

Wilbur, as was his custom, had spent a few hours with the field glasses. He had seen Harvey and his wife upon the lawn of Lower Beechview, and had noted Craig Ware with them. He had seen Jessup superintending the job on the garage. Zachary had been in telephone communication with an attorney in New York. He had arranged an appointment at an early date.

Now late in the evening, the two sons who lived at Upper Beechview were lounging about the big living room. Galbraith Chittenden was there also, dozing in an easy chair. The old man's clean-shaven face was like yellow parchment, a noticeable contrast to his white hair. Neither of his sons seemed to pay the slightest attention to him.

A telephone bell rang. Wilbur went to answer it. Zachary threw a glance toward Galbraith Chittenden and saw that his father had not heard the ring.

It was several minutes before Wilbur returned. The elder brother made a sign to Zachary. The two withdrew to an adjoining room.

"It was Harvey," said Wilbur in a tense low voice.

"Oh yes?" questioned Zachary in feigned surprise. "What did he want?"

"He talked rather abruptly," declared Wilbur. "He said that he was very anxious to see me. He was rather cordial, and seemed to be worried about something. Of course, he naturally supposed that I might be surprised to hear from him so unexpectedly; but I listened well, and when he took on a pleading tone, I played up to it."

"Trying the big-brother stuff, eh?"

"Not exactly, but to some degree. Maybe he thought I was going to hang up on him, but after our discussion of last night, I worked in with his line of talk."

"When does he want to see you?"

"Immediately. He said that too many barren years have gone by; that he has something on his mind and would like to unburden it. I promised him that I would say nothing to you or the old man. Just a quiet visit - that's all."

"Come out on the terrace," suggested Zachary. "Let's talk this over a bit more."

THE two men went through the living room. A huge police dog rose and followed them. The brute nudged its nose against Wilbur's hand as the brothers stopped at the doorway to the terrace.

"Go on back, Beowulf," commanded Wilbur, and the dog obeyed with a short whine.

On the terrace, Wilbur leaned over the parapet and stared toward twinkling lights across the blackened grove. Someone was still up at Lower Beechview, that was evident.

"I hadn't expected this," observed Wilbur thoughtfully. "I guess if I had received the call a few nights ago, I might have refused. Then again, I might have decided to go down and see Harvey. He suggested that I come quietly - he is alone tonight - as every one else has gone to bed. He said that I could make it very quickly if I cut down the hill and across the golf course through the grove."

"Why not drive down?" asked Zachary.

"I suggested that," responded Wilbur, "and he explained the reason. The driveway to Lower Beechview

has been cut off temporarily. It would be a long walk anyway. He talked as though he would like to come up here, but felt he couldn't. With you and father here - leaving his wife alone - all that, you know _."

"How did his voice sound?"

"As much like Harvey's as I could expect. I haven't talked to him for ten years, Zachary. It just hit me, though, from his tone, that things might be settled better by seeing him than by not."

"Why?"

"Well, the big-brother stuff was rather illuminating. He mentioned how much he liked Lower Beechview, how satisfied he was with life, how youthful ideas changed when men grew older. It gave me a distinct impression that he might be willing to pass up his share of the old man's estate. That would be great - if it's what he means. By the time I was through listening to him, I was all set to go, except for one reason."

"What was that?"

"Your talk last night, about Jessup being a mobster - the way you thought it best to protect this place. The idea of a coming battle impressed me, Zach."

"That means nothing right now," declared Zachary. "Maybe I'm wrong - although I don't think so. Perhaps Harvey has turned soft-hearted. On the other hand, this may just be a preliminary negotiation before real trouble starts. Under the circumstances, I'd go down there, if I were you."

"You would?"

"Certainly. What can you lose? It will give you an opportunity to size up Harvey. It will be a friendly gesture on your part. If a show-down comes later on, we can convince the old man that you went personally to patch things up with Harvey. You know how much father wants a reconciliation brought about."

Wilbur nodded. This turn of affairs was promising. He agreed with Zachary. Still, he showed a certain reluctance about starting out alone.

"I'm still worried about Jessup," Wilbur began.

"Forget it," laughed Zachary. "I'll fix that."

"How?"

"Well, I'll send two of these men of mine down there. I'll let them skirt the woods and spot Harvey's house from front and back. Nothing's going to bite you at Harvey's - not right away anyhow. If you want help, you know the signal."

Zachary emitted a low whistle. A minute later a man appeared beneath the parapet.

"Hello Banks," greeted Zachary. "Where's Hunky?"

"Over in the garage," came the reply.

"Go over there and wait until I call you," said Zachary. Then after the man had gone, he said to Wilbur: "See how they work? Always on the job. If you need them at Lower Beechview, give a whistle."

"All right," agreed Wilbur.

AS though by agreement, the two men went down the steps from the terrace and walked across rough ground to the path that led down the hill. They knew the way perfectly, despite the darkness of the night. Zachary went part way down the hill; then paused to say good-bye to Wilbur.

"Play the game, old top," he said. "Don't let Harvey kid you and don't tell him you said anything to me. Remember, the eldest son in the Chittenden family gets the gravy. Keep that in mind."

"I'll remember it," laughed Wilbur gruffly. "If Harvey wants to give away his birthright, he'll find a welcome recipient."

Moving down the hill, Wilbur Chittenden found himself thinking over what Zachary had said. He felt that he might strike luck when he talked to Harvey. Perhaps Harvey had made money; at least he was in sole possession of Lower Beechview. A deal tonight, whereby a real reconciliation would take place - that would fit in well with Wilbur's selfish schemes.

Strangely, Wilbur felt a strong inclination to meet Harvey. They had not seen each other for ten years. The one point that had ended their brotherhood was the matter of Harvey's claim upon Galbraith Chittenden's large estate. If that could be completely eliminated, why should Harvey and Wilbur be enemies?

His own interests were Wilbur's greatest demand in life; now that there was a chance to further them, he began to hasten on his way. He recalled Harvey as a boy - a patient long-suffering fellow who was not to blame because he was the pampered son.

As he reached the border of the golf course, Wilbur was feeling in a friendly mood; then suddenly all his suspicions arose again as he tramped across the smooth lawnlike grass.

In the midst of a surge of antagonism toward Harvey, Wilbur recalled Zachary's last encouraging words: "Remember - the eldest son in the Chittenden family gets the gravy."

Harvey was still the eldest son; Wilbur could not forget it. If Harvey were eliminated, all would be well. Harvey, in turn, would inherit all if the younger boys were disowned. A curious complication.

Wilbur paused at the edge of the grove. Just outside the pale of those fateful trees, he turned, intending to go back. He wanted to talk with Zachary some more.

Zachary! A younger brother. Wilbur wondered, there in the clouded moonlight, why he had come to rely so much upon Zachary. He and Zachary were companions in a warfare for possession. Then, for the first time, Wilbur began to realize Zachary's viewpoint.

What would Zachary profit by Harvey's elimination? Very little, for he would be the younger of two recognized sons. Until now, Wilbur had admired Zachary's cunning; now he saw a craft in the man that he had not understood before.

What if Zachary were the only son? What if Wilbur were eliminated as well as Harvey?

The thought was a terrific shock to Wilbur Chittenden. It acted as a mighty spur to his doubtful mind. Why side with Zachary, from whom he could gain nothing of consequence? Why not team with Harvey, who might be induced to give up his rights?

Talk with Zachary now? No thought could have been more repugnant to Wilbur Chittenden's mind. His hesitation ended. He strode directly toward the grove with long, eager steps.

UP on the hill, Zachary Chittenden was watching his brother's progress. He was standing still as he noted

Wilbur's hesitation. Then, when he saw Wilbur march into the black mass of trees, Zachary laughed. Perhaps some psychic wave had told him what was in Wilbur's mind. Whatever the case might have been, Zachary appeared pleased when he saw Wilbur swallowed in that mysterious spread of darkness.

Zachary Chittenden turned and went back to Upper Beechview. He found his father sound asleep in the chair. The big dog, Beowulf, looked up. Seeing Zachary, not Wilbur, the beast placed its nose between its paws.

Entirely forgetful of his promise to send men who would be within range of Wilbur's call, Zachary went upstairs to bed. Watching from his window, he could see the twinkling lights of Lower Beechview, toward which Wilbur Chittenden had gone.

He could not see the sloping hillside, the spot where he had stood. Perhaps it was well that the area was out of view; perhaps, had Zachary been able to see it, he would have detected nothing. Nevertheless, someone was present near the place from which Zachary Chittenden had watched his brother enter the grove.

A tall, eerie phantom had emerged from the darkness that enshrouded Upper Beechview to view the scene below. The Shadow had arrived from a tour about the grounds just after Wilbur Chittenden had reached the edge of the grove. He had stood beside Zachary. He had heard the youngest Chittenden's dry laugh. He had seen Zachary return to the house.

Now, with swift strides, The Shadow was descending the hill. Scurrying clouds erased the moon as the tall form stalked across the links. Then The Shadow, like Wilbur Chittenden, was buried in the weird grove among the trees that seemed haunted by day as well as night.

Half an hour later, the shape of The Shadow reappeared, this time beneath a dull moonlight. The being in black stood upon the lawn of Lower Beechview. The lights of the lower house were extinguished. All was silence here.

The phantom form moved silently about the grounds. Then, after a long and careful inspection, it approached the grove and became a still patch of black beside the darkness cast by the trees.

The Shadow, who could move with perfect silence; the personage whose stealth could not be heard nor seen when danger lurked; again had he passed through the grove of doom unmolested. But the man who had gone before him was nowhere to be seen.

Wilbur Chittenden had passed into complete oblivion when he had entered the shroud of those mysterious trees! Another victim had fallen prey to the menace that inhabited the grove of doom!

Some shrewd schemer was at work; some terrible power was in action. It required more than mere coincidence to account for the disappearance of this man before The Shadow could arrive to warn him.

Yet The Shadow, although he could trespass where it meant death to others, was still in search of the answer to this latest mystery. The world knew nothing of the menace within the grove of doom. Only The Shadow could hope to solve the riddle.

CHAPTER IX. CHITTENDENS MEET

IT was the next afternoon when old Galbraith Chittenden stepped out on the terrace of his home, to find his son Zachary staring speculatively from the high parapet.

The night before, Galbraith had appeared extremely aged, dozing in his easy chair. Today, the old man

was alert and keen. He bore himself with a stern, pompous dignity that had been his characteristic posture for many years.

Turning to see his father, Zachary Chittenden noted at once that Galbraith was incensed about something. The old gentleman had a habit of arousing himself from a lethargy whenever anything disturbed his comparatively peaceful existence.

His eyes were sharp as they looked at Zachary.

"Where is Wilbur?" demanded Galbraith querulously. "Where has he been all day?"

"I haven't seen him, father," answered Zachary, in a subdued tone. "That is, I haven't seen him since last night."

"The young ingrate!" growled Galbraith. "Well does he know that I wanted him here at home today. Yet I have not seen one sign of him. A favor-currying son who is never on hand when needed."

"I haven't seen Wilbur all day," said Zachary thoughtfully. "It has troubled me, father. I have been wondering about it."

"That dog of his!" snarled Galbraith. "Whining, whining, whining. It annoys me! It must stop!"

Zachary Chittenden approached his father. Despite his malicious nature, the youngest of the Chittenden boys possessed a remarkable faculty for soothing his aged parent. In fact, it was this one element that had so long kept peace upon the hill.

Galbraith Chittenden's mind had rankled for years over Harvey's absence. At times, the sight of Wilbur and Zachary incensed the old man, but always, Zachary could ease the situation by subtle comment.

"Father" - Zachary's tone was serious - "I am really anxious about Wilbur. I must talk to you - about something that is worrying me - something that you ought to know -"

Galbraith Chittenden's rage subsided. Father stared at son, and saw that the young man was troubled. Nodding his head in parental fashion, Galbraith requested Zachary to step into the living room. As the two entered, Beowulf the big dog, came bounding over to Zachary, then turned away and whined as it lay down in a corner.

"You see?" questioned Zachary. "Beowulf knows that something is wrong. Father, I must speak to you in closest confidence - about Wilbur - and about Harvey."

"Wilbur and Harvey?" The old man's temper flamed. "Always that trouble between the two. And you, Zachary - you are like Wilbur -"

"I bear no animosity toward Harvey," protested Zachary. "I scarcely remember him - I was so young when he went away -"

"Ah, yes," declared Galbraith. "Wilbur and Harvey were at odds. Yet you sided with Wilbur. Still, Zachary, that was not your fault. Wilbur was the closer to your age. He had a constant influence over you."

"I always remembered Harvey," said Zachary, in a reflective tone. "I always regretted the quarrel between him and Wilbur. But I fear that Wilbur must be in the right."

"Why?"

"Because he stayed here, with you. That, at least, was the duty of a good son."

ZACHARY had picked a certain thrust. Galbraith Chittenden - as self-centered as any member of the family - was greatly impressed by Zachary's subtle statement.

"You are right, Zachary," he said. "You are right. Wilbur was faithful - although I still feel that Harvey wants his father's friendship. That is why I have always recognized him as my eldest son. My own father disinherited his elder son. I could never make that mistake with my elder boy, unless - unless I had full proof of his enmity."

"There is one way of settling that matter, father."

"How?"

"By visiting Harvey."

"Never!" Galbraith Chittenden drew himself up proudly. "Harvey must come to me - then I shall welcome him! But I shall not go to his home."

"Not even if it would give you certain proof?" questioned Zachary. "Not even under circumstances that might definitely declare Harvey's position toward you?"

"How do you mean?" asked Galbraith sharply.

"I am thinking of two people," said Zachary thoughtfully. "First, Walter Pearson. He went to see Harvey. He made no gain toward a reconciliation. Then, suddenly, Pearson disappeared. I am wondering why."

"You mean" - Galbraith frowned - "that Pearson's visit to Harvey may have had something to do with his disappearance?"

"Exactly."

"Outrageous!" exclaimed Galbraith. "You are as unfair as Wilbur! I shall disown you!"

The old man was seething with indignation. Rising, he shook his fist threateningly at Zachary. The young man was unperturbed. He met his father's gaze firmly, and responded in a quiet tone that caused Galbraith's rage to subside.

"One moment, father," said Zachary. "Hear me out. I did not make this statement immediately after Pearson's disappearance. I am speaking now because of something that has occurred since Pearson vanished. That is why I wanted to speak to you today. This concerns both Wilbur and Harvey."

The old man stood stock-still, his anger gone because of the surprise which now gripped him. Zachary followed with his calm, easy tone.

"Last night," said the young man, "Wilbur went to see Harvey, in hopes of effecting a reconciliation. He did that without telling you, because he wanted to please you."

"Wilbur!" cried Galbraith, with a sudden change of heart. "Bless the boy! Why did you not tell me this before, Zachary?"

"Because Wilbur spoke to me in confidence, father. I was as pleased as you are now. I was happy about it, until today. Now, I am troubled - miserably."

Zachary's concern seemed real. The young man was seated with his head in his hands, staring across the

floor. Galbraith Chittenden sat down beside him, and spoke in a worried tone.

"Tell me, Zachary," requested the old man. "What is the matter?"

"Wilbur went to see Harvey," asserted Zachary. "because Harvey called him. That is a most important point. It shows how willing Wilbur was to effect a reconciliation. Harvey specified that Wilbur should come alone, without telling anyone. But Wilbur was so enthused over it, that he could not resist telling me."

"So Wilbur went to Harvey! When did he go?"

"About midnight. He promised to return with a few hours, knowing how anxious I was to hear what might have happened. Wilbur has not returned, father. I have had no word from him."

Galbraith Chittenden took in his breath sharply. He felt a feeling of remorse for having criticized Wilbur without knowing the facts.

"Terrible thoughts have troubled me, father," confessed Zachary. "I realized last night how big-hearted Wilbur was. It suddenly dawned upon me that Harvey - despite the fact that he is my brother - might be a man of evil. Pearson went to see him. Pearson is gone. Wilbur went to see him. Wilbur is gone. We must not dally, father -"

GALBRAITH CHITTENDEN arose and strode across the room. Pacing back and forth, his ire increased. Zachary watched shrewdly as he calculated the tempo of the old man's anger.

The police dog arose from its corner and whined. With surprising alacrity, Galbraith Chittenden seized the leash that lay on the table and fastened it to Beowulf's collar.

"Come!" he cried to Zachary. "Come! We must not lose a minute. We are going to see my son Harvey. I must know the truth. If he welcomes me, we may be reconciled. If he does not, I shall disown him. I can play to his whims no longer. I shall question him about Pearson and about Wilbur!"

The big dog was straining at the leash as the two Chittendens came out upon the terrace. Zachary pointed to the grove that shone, far below, under the lowering afternoon sun.

"It was there that I last saw Wilbur," said the young man sadly. "He was going through the grove, eager to reach Harvey's home as soon as possible."

"That is the way we shall go," announced Galbraith.

By the time the men had reached the bottom of the hill, the police dog was nearly choking on its leash. Only Galbraith's firm, restraining hand prevented the beast from breaking loose across the golf links, which were now deserted.

"He is following Wilbur's trail," stated Zachary, and Galbraith nodded.

UP on the slope beside the clubhouse, a tall man garbed in golf clothes was watching the progress of the Chittendens. This was Lamont Cranston. Keen eyes flashed as the club member saw the police dog heading for the woods. Cranston began to stroll down the slope, then paused and waited.

The police dog had stopped at the edge of the woods. The sound of its whines could be faintly heard. Galbraith Chittenden was encouraging the dog to enter the grove, but the beast would not respond. Zachary was watching from a short distance away.

When Cranston saw the two figures turn and lead the dog toward the shore, he sauntered back to the clubhouse, where he took a seat on the veranda, at a spot which commanded a view of the lawn of Lower Beechview.

At the edge of the grove, Galbraith Chittenden was still trying to encourage the police dog, even though he and Zachary were moving toward the shore.

"Come, Beowulf!" cried the old man. "What ails this dog, Zachary?"

"It is Wilbur's dog," responded the son.

"Certainly," declared Galbraith. "It wants to find Wilbur. Then why does it stop before it reaches these trees?"

The old man made another effort to force the big dog into the beeches. The animal responded until it was well under the edge of the overhanging boughs. There, it whined and refused to budge. Furiously, Galbraith dragged the dog forward.

With a loud, piteous whine, Beowulf broke away and struggled back to the golf links, Galbraith Chittenden following despite his strongest efforts. As the old man tried to pull the beast from the dipped green grass, Beowulf snarled viciously.

"We should not have brought the dog," observed Zachary. "Come, father; let us go around by the shore. Those thick woods frighten the beast. It is longer, but our objective is to see Harvey."

Agreeing to it now, Galbraith accompanied his son, and Beowulf went in docile fashion as the two men skirted the grove, taking the narrow strip between the trees and the water. After a long course, they suddenly reached the rocky water front of Lower Beechview, and came on to Harvey Chittenden's lawn.

Three people were seated in comfortable chairs. Harvey Chittenden, his wife and his friend, Craig Ware, looked up to see the sudden approach of the men from the hill.

HARVEY CHITTENDEN recognized his father and brother immediately. He sprang to his feet and clenched his fist. This unannounced invasion of his property was something that he had not anticipated. Galbraith Chittenden stopped short, when he caught his eldest son's hostile gaze.

"What does this mean?" demanded Harvey.

Galbraith Chittenden, aroused by his son's ire, met the challenge promptly.

"Where is Wilbur?" came the old man's question.

"Wilbur?" quizzed Harvey. "Oh, so that's Zachary with you! Why should I know where Wilbur is? Why come here with such an absurd question?"

"He came to see you last night!" retorted Zachary.

"He did?" Harvey's question was sardonic. "Well, if he came here, it was of his own volition. Whatever has happened to him is his own making. I am not responsible for the affairs of Upper Beechview."

"Where is Walter Pearson?" demanded Galbraith furiously. "He came to see you. Wilbur came to see you. Both are gone!"

"Good riddance!" shouted Harvey, now fully incensed. "And you two will be gone - off these premises."

Get out, and look for your own. Get out!"

As Harvey made a threatening gesture toward his father, the huge dog Beowulf rose and strained fiercely at its leash. Its great jaws opened in a terrific snarl. Mildred screamed as she saw the beast about to leap upon her husband. Only Galbraith Chittenden's firm restraint withheld the dog.

Quickly, Mildred grasped Harvey by the arm. With all her strength, she dragged him toward the house. Harvey, too angered in mind to control his actions, allowed himself to be guided by his wife. He paused upon the steps of the porch to voice wild, inarticulate imprecations. Beowulf barked fiercely.

"I'll give you fifteen minutes!" shouted Harvey. "Off of these grounds, both of you - off to stay!"

"I'll disown you!" cried Galbraith.

"Do it!" cried Harvey. "I've disowned you long ago - thanks to those skulking boys whose talk has influenced you!"

With that, Harvey moved into the house, under Mildred's charge. Beowulf still snarled as Galbraith Chittenden, his face livid with mighty wrath, clung to the big dog's leash. Zachary was standing silent at his father's side. Craig Ware, calm and controlled, was facing the two visitors.

Chittendens had met - and in that meeting, the breach of long-nourished enmity had been widened beyond recall!

CHAPTER X. THE SEARCH BEGINS

THE encounter upon the lawn of Lower Beechview had been witnessed by one man from afar. In a secluded corner of the clubhouse veranda, Lamont Cranston had been watching with the same device that Wilbur Chittenden had employed to spy on Lower Beechview - a pair of field glasses.

But Lamont Cranston, although a long way off, had virtually heard every word of the tempestuous conversation. His keen eyes had followed the motions of angry lips. The words that had been veiled from him when heads had turned were easily inferred by his shrewd brain as he watched the replies of lips that were visible.

Now that the brief altercation was ended, Galbraith Chittenden stood firm and dignified upon the lawn. A domineering man, he was not ready to obey Harvey's short order to vacate. Zachary, too, held his ground. It was inevitable that Harvey would return at the end of fifteen minutes. Then another clash would occur.

There was one, however, who sensed this fact, and took measures to avert that trouble. Craig Ware, calm and unperturbed, walked directly toward Galbraith Chittenden and spoke to the old man. Galbraith glared and Beowulf snarled. Ware quietly stretched out one hand and gripped the police dog's nose. To the amazement of Galbraith and Zachary, the fierce beast subsided. Ware smiled wanly as the two other men stared in surprised admiration.

"Let's talk things over, Mr. Chittenden," suggested Ware. "My name is Craig Ware - a friend of your son Harvey. When Mr. Pearson was here, I smoothed a few troubles. Perhaps, now, I can do the same. Had Harvey known that you were coming here, I think that he would have acted with less temper."

Galbraith Chittenden's anger was lessening as he listened to Craig Ware. Zachary, too, was quiet. Ware followed his first remarks with words of explanation.

"I've knocked around a bit, Mr. Chittenden," said Ware. "I'm an old showman, and I'm used to troubles.

I've known Harvey for years, now, and I know all his problems. I'd like to help him out of them.

"There's been a bad misunderstanding right now; you're not to blame, nor is Harvey. I don't think you made it plain why you came here - it's not clear to me, at present. I suppose there's a good reason - but Harvey didn't take time to think the same."

"You are a fair-spoken man, Mr. Ware," said Galbraith Chittenden with dignity. "I still have a portion of fifteen minutes to remain here. So, in justice to all concerned, I shall discuss my visit with you. Zachary and I came here, not to annoy Harvey, but to inquire regarding Wilbur."

"Your other son?"

"Yes. I am sorry that we brought the dog - although you and he seem to be on friendly terms" - Ware was stroking Beowulf while Galbraith Chittenden spoke - "but that was purely an accident. The point is, Mr. Ware, that Wilbur has disappeared. Beowulf is Wilbur's dog. The beast seemed to know that we were going out to look for Wilbur, so we let him come along."

"Wilbur has disappeared?" asked Ware. "When and where?"

"Last night," inserted Zachary. "He went to visit Harvey, here. He was to be back within a few hours. That is the last we have seen of him."

"Hence you see why we are worried," added Galbraith.

"I CAN understand," nodded Ware thoughtfully. "But isn't it odd that Wilbur should have come here? I was up and around until nearly eleven. So was Harvey. I can assure you that we saw no sign of Wilbur - or any other visitor."

"He left around midnight," explained Zachary. "He received a call from Harvey, inviting him to come here alone. He came."

"A call from Harvey?" echoed Ware. "At midnight? Harvey went to bed about the same time I did - but it is possible that he arose to make the call. He has been restless and moody lately. I think that this family worry is troubling him deeply."

"That was the impression Wilbur received when he spoke to me about the phone call," said Zachary. "Harvey seemed pleasant over the phone, according to Wilbur. That is why today's outburst has surprised me."

"It has done more than surprise me," added Galbraith. "It has made me see that any friendly overtures from Harvey toward Wilbur could be nothing more than pretense."

"Let us be impartial," suggested Ware. "You say that Wilbur received a phone call from Harvey. That can be corroborated - later - by asking Harvey. It would be unwise for me to chat with him now. If Wilbur arrived here, Harvey could also state the fact. But to my knowledge, Wilbur did not arrive. Is it not quite possible that Wilbur changed his plan?"

"Possible, but not probable," replied Zachary. "I saw Wilbur come down the hill. I saw him reach the grove. He was bound in this direction."

"But you did not see him actually arrive at Lower Beechview?"

"No."

"That may be significant," declared Ware thoughtfully.

"I wanted to come here through the grove," asserted Galbraith suddenly. "But Beowulf - the dog here - refused to budge. That is why we came around the shore. I am beginning to think it possible that something might have happened to Wilbur among those trees."

"A foolish notion, father," interposed Zachary.

"Look" - Galbraith Chittenden pulled the dog over to the woods. Beowulf began to whine and draw back - "you see how the dog is acting, Mr. Ware?"

Ware nodded.

"I would like to go back through the woods now," said Galbraith. "It is the shortest way home. I intend to leave immediately, and it would satisfy my worries to go that way."

"There's no good in our searching the grove, father," declared Zachary. "Harvey called Wilbur; if Harvey is on the level, let him make some efforts to find Wilbur. Leave that with Mr. Ware. It's a fair test. He can tell Harvey that by looking for Wilbur and coming up to see us afterward, you will forget this quarrel. Otherwise, you will talk with the lawyer who is calling you tomorrow, and Harvey will be cut off, as you threatened."

"I don't think Harvey would look for Wilbur or come up to see you folks," observed Ware doubtfully.

That remark pleased Zachary. It was what he had hoped. The clash on the lawn meant Harvey's quick elimination from the Chittenden family. Zachary had tried to propose terms that would prevent a reconciliation. He had apparently succeeded.

"Very well," said Galbraith testily, "you may propose those terms to Harvey, Mr. Ware. Until tomorrow night. That is the limit for him to make amends."

Ware shrugged his shoulders.

"You can count the break as permanent, then," he said. "It will be up to you to trace your son Wilbur; I can say positively that you will hear no more from Harvey. I know him well enough for that."

Quite viciously, Galbraith Chittenden dragged Beowulf toward the grove, which was only a few feet from where the men were standing. The dog protested with angry snarls.

"I'm going through this woods," said Galbraith, in a determined tone. "I'm going to assure myself that Wilbur is not there. Come, Zachary, help me."

"We can't manage it," protested the son. "Beowulf won't go with us. How will we get him back? Of course, I can take him around, if you will go through alone."

"I'm not going through alone," growled Galbraith obstinately. "Come, Zachary - you wanted me to visit here. You were worried about Wilbur. We're going through with the dog."

Reluctantly, Zachary assisted with the leash. Beowulf broke away and dashed madly about the lawn.

Up on the veranda of the clubhouse, Lamont Cranston, who had arisen, now resumed his seat.

Craig Ware captured the wild dog's leash. Beowulf snuggled his nose in the showman's hands. Ware stroked the animal soothingly.

"Poor fellow," spoke Ware. "He wants his master. I know animals, Mr. Chittenden - right from hedgehogs up to elephants. This is a fine dog. Come - Beowulf."

Holding the leash, Ware brought the dog to Galbraith Chittenden at the edge of the trees. Beowulf was no longer snarling nor afraid. He seemed ready to do whatever Ware might command. The showman stroked the dog's head.

"Try him now," he suggested.

GALBRAITH seized the leash and started into the grove, beckoning Zachary to follow. Beowulf moved onward; then stopped, trembling, to turn back toward Ware.

"Go on, old fellow," said the showman softly, moving his hands forward. "Go on, Beowulf. It's all right. What's to hurt you?"

The gentle, kindly manner of the middle-aged man reassured the police dog amazingly. Turning into the trees, Beowulf walked in a subdued manner beside Galbraith Chittenden. The old man smiled and called a word of thanks to Ware. As Galbraith started through the grove, Zachary silently followed his father.

Up on the clubhouse veranda, Lamont Cranston witnessed this unexpected change of affairs. He could see Ware encouraging the dog; he observed the showman finally walk away from the fringe of the beeches.

Until that moment, Cranston had fully expected to see the big police dog come bounding from the woods. Now that it was too late, a tense expression came over Cranston's visage - one of those rare traces of emotion that the man so seldom exhibited.

Laying his glasses aside, Lamont Cranston arose and walked across the golf links, taking a rapid course toward the grove of beeches.

He stopped before he had gone a hundred yards. It was too late now. The sudden change in the dog's demeanor had frustrated Cranston's plans. Already, Galbraith and Zachary Chittenden must be in the depths of the grove far beyond recall.

Chance had sent them there. What would be the outcome? Death lurked amidst those beautiful copper-boughed trees.

Moving back to the clubhouse, Lamont Cranston could do nothing more than wait to see the outcome of this new venture into the grove of doom!

CHAPTER XI. IN THE GROVE

GALBRAITH CHITTENDEN had entered the gloom beneath the beeches with surprising energy for a man of his age. With rapid strides, he took a straight course toward the heart of the woods - directly along the way that he knew Wilbur must have come from the opposite direction.

The police dog, no longer protesting, began to strain forward, whining at times, growling at intervals. It had seemingly caught the spirit of the search. Galbraith, intent of purpose, did not sense the hideous atmosphere of these brown-matted, irregular corridors. Beowulf, eager for his master, looked up as though asking to be loosed. The old man responded by leaning down and unclasping the hook that held the dog's collar. Beowulf bounded forward; then stood waiting.

Galbraith Chittenden looked around for Zachary. The old man saw his son lagging far behind. Zachary's evil face looked grotesque in this strange light. It wore a sickening, pallid expression.

"Come on!" ordered Galbraith.

"Go ahead," said Zachary. "I'll follow. I'm looking around a bit. You're moving too fast, father."

Galbraith Chittenden snorted contemptuously. He marched straight forward. The police dog, scenting the ground curiously, circled about the old man, covering a much wider area. Zachary Chittenden, a worried look upon his face, crept onward, slowly veering toward the right.

One could see a considerable distance beneath the trees, due to the uniform height of the trunks to the lower branches. Off to the left and farther ahead, Zachary could spy his father; and every now and then, the grayish form of Beowulf bounded in the air into distant view.

They were deep in the grove now, Zachary still keeping the right, increasing his pace so that he would not lose ground. Fully did the malicious-faced young man realize the impending danger that hovered above this low-roofed acreage. By swift, circuitous travel, Zachary gained more ground until he was more than fifty yards ahead of Galbraith and the dog; and still a considerable space to the right.

Suddenly, Zachary stopped his progress and gripped the trunk of a tree. He was experiencing the same sensations that Calvin Merrick had gained herein, save that Zachary's mind was ravening as well as intuitive. Zachary recognized the presence of a hidden threat; he knew, however, that the danger lay over his father, who was now pacing slowly at the very center of the grove.

Wilbur's dog was traveling in a wide, continuous circle, its muzzle against the ground. Whines became snarls; then came excited barks. Steadying himself, Zachary was tense. He knew that something was about to happen, not here, but over there, fifty yards away.

THE dog sprang suddenly forward. Galbraith Chittenden followed it. Beowulf stopped and growled; then bounced forward, barking in wild excitement. Again the dog stopped; its bark became a currish howl - as its pointed nose stared up toward a tree branch.

A streak of gray whisked rapidly along the ground as the howling beast began to run from something that it had seen.

Zachary saw the bounding dog tearing off through the trees. He saw a wild, frantic leap that seemed to carry Beowulf five feet in air. The howl became terrific; a frightened yelp followed; then all was silent. Try as he could, Zachary could not trace the dog. It had vanished - upward - and had not returned.

Galbraith Chittenden was shouting, calling the dog by name. Zachary could see his father striding forward among the trees, then turning in an effort to learn what had become of Beowulf. It was then that Zachary sensed a greater danger than before.

Galbraith's cries were frantic. His form disappeared beyond two trees that formed a blocking path to Zachary's vision, due to the angle from which the young man was watching. Zachary mopped cold perspiration from his forehead.

"Zachary - Zachary!" The call came wildly through the grove. Its sound seemed suppressed within the blanket of gloom that lay everywhere.

"Zachary!" It was Galbraith Chittenden's shout - a cry of hopeless, helpless terror.

Then came a gurgling, muffled call that formed a gigantic gasp within these cloisters where fierce evil dwelt. Zachary knew the meaning of that cry. It was his father's last, pitiful summons for aid, in the face of complete annihilation.

Zachary Chittenden did not respond. Instead, he turned and fled post-haste, off through the grove to the right. His flight was unrestrained. With a long yardage of safety from the spot where doom had fallen, Zachary was heading for the fringe of the grove beside the beach.

It was a mad dash for safety that ended only when the blueness of the Sound trickled through among the tree trunks. With a last spurt, Zachary plunged over the final stretch of matted brown and hurled himself headlong toward the white sand. He sprawled beneath the shade of the last fringe of trees, then rolled until his fingers clutched the hot granulation of the beach.

For long, wearied minutes, Zachary Chittenden lay panting, staring up at the blueness of the sky. A wisping breeze cooled his face; it seemed to end as it neared the edge of the grove that he had left, for not a leaf was stirring on those copper-tinged boughs.

Rising, Zachary went along the shore beside the trees. The close proximity of the overhanging branches brought a shudder to his shoulders. Here, in the open sunlight, back in a world where all was bright, the man was in a daze as he hurried to shake off the hideous impressions of that fatal cavern-like grove.

NOT until he reached the golf course did Zachary Chittenden recover from his groggy trance. He moved stolidly across the carpet-like grass, and arrived at the foot of the hill, where he made his way to Upper Beechview. He paused to rest upon the terrace, and, as he leaned his elbows on the parapet, Zachary Chittenden allowed an evil smile to play across his bloated lips.

He, alone, had witnessed the striking power that lay within the fearful grove. Before his eyes, his father and Wilbur's dog, Beowulf, had been carried into oblivion. Walter Pearson; then Wilbur Chittenden; now Galbraith Chittenden. Father, lawyer, and second son - all were gone.

They were dead!

The passing of these three was shrouded in mystery. Who could tell of it? It would be long before the search for the missing lawyer would end; as for Galbraith and Wilbur Chittenden, no one would suspect their absence for days to come.

That would be the beginning of a long procedure, in which the estate of Galbraith Chittenden would eventually go to the surviving members of the family. Well did Zachary know the terms of the will - so worded that the eldest living son would be the chief recipient.

There were two sons living, now - two sons of Galbraith Chittenden. Harvey was one; Zachary was the other. Should Harvey die - Zachary's smile widened as he stared across the grove to the lawn of Lower Beechview - then there would be but one.

Until but one Chittenden remained to claim undisputed title to the family wealth, there could be no peace. Those who had died to date - outsiders as well as those of the family - had perished because they were obstacles to ambition. The next encounter lay between Harvey and Zachary; that was the cause of Zachary's smile. For this evil schemer was mentally alert, planning the death of his sole remaining brother.

ONCE again, dusk was creeping over Upper Beechview, while Zachary Chittenden watched. The grove of doom was blackening in the glow of early evening. It lay like a huge, unmoving monster, in the midst of the land below.

A sound from beside the house attracted Zachary's attention. He recognized his man, Banks, coming past the terrace. Leaning over the edge, Zachary called in a low tone.

"Keep close watch tonight, Banks."

The man nodded.

"Expecting trouble?" he asked.

"Maybe," said Zachary. "We'll see. But I have a hunch we'll be starting some before any comes our way. I want to see you and the rest of the crew some time tonight. So be around, about midnight."

When Banks had gone, Zachary Chittenden went back into the house. The scene upon the terrace gave no sign of human presence. Off beyond the parapet, however, a silent shape was gliding along the ground. That shape signified The Shadow.

The master of darkness was here at Upper Beechview. Once more had Lamont Cranston assumed his mysterious identity. The Shadow, weird phantom of the night, had come to watch Zachary Chittenden, the only living person who - beside The Shadow, himself - had emerged unharmed from out the grove of doom!

CHAPTER XII. THROUGH THE NIGHT

THAT same evening, at Lower Beechview, a small, tense group sat discussing the affairs of the late afternoon, up until the departure of Galbraith and Zachary Chittenden. The members of this conversing group were Harvey Chittenden, Mildred Chittenden, and Craig Ware.

Harvey was bitter in his remarks. Seated in the living room of his home, he voiced his animosity toward his father and his brothers, while Mildred sat hushed, and Ware solemnly smoked his pipe.

"Coming here to look for Wilbur!" sneered Harvey. "A fine excuse, I call that! I'll tell you why they came here; they wanted to see what I was doing; they wanted to spy on me. First they sent Pearson; then maybe Wilbur sneaked around; at any rate, they became bold enough to walk right in on me during the day. If they come again - well, I'll be ready for them."

"I think you're wrong to feel that way, Harvey," observed Ware, in a frank tone. "Your father seemed very much perturbed, this afternoon. He seemed sure that some harm had befallen Wilbur. Remember, too, that Walter Pearson has disappeared. I do not wonder that your father is alarmed."

"What do I care?" questioned Harvey. "If my father should disappear - and Zachary, too - it would not matter to me. I have suffered too long from my family's persecution."

"Harvey," said Mildred mildly, "I cannot understand the malice that you display toward your only relations."

Harvey Chittenden looked toward his wife. Mildred was very beautiful tonight. In the lamplight, her eyes shone clearly, and her raven hair glistened with an entrancing hue. An angry sentence died on Harvey's lips. His manner softened, and he spoke quietly.

"It is not malice, Mildred," he explained. "It is worry. All my life I have been beset by constant fear. I have always felt that Wilbur and Zachary would spare no effort to harm me."

"As for my father - if he could only see what I have suffered, I could feel deep affection for him. But circumstances have made him one with Wilbur and Zachary. The animosity that I have displayed is really a desire for self-protection. That is all."

Craig Ware puffed at his pipe while Mildred nodded to indicate that she understood Harvey's feelings.

"Self-protection," repeated Harvey. "That is why, Craig, I talked with Jessup this afternoon, and arranged for him to keep the workmen on the premises. They appear to be good, capable fellows, and they are armed. I actually fear that someone may attack this place at night."

"That is ridiculous," responded Ware. "Nevertheless, Harvey, it is wise for you to keep your men, if it gives you any peace of mind. But I do not see any need of fearing prowlers."

Instantly, Mildred's mind reverted to the night when she had watched from the bench beside the shore. She had seen two prowlers then. Had they come from Upper Beechview, through the grove?

The girl could picture the fiendish Chinaman, who called himself Lei Chang, and who had spoken of a mysterious Koon Woon. Was Koon Woon the phantom form in black? What terrible secret lay buried in that grove so close to Lower Beechview?

ODDLY enough, Harvey, replying to Craig Ware, was voicing thoughts that had entered Mildred's mind, although his ideas were general, where hers had been specific.

"That woods beside the house," Harvey was saying, "is a good place to keep away from. I don't like it, and I would suggest that you and Mildred stay out of it. If any of those people on the hill" - his eyes glistened in unrestrained animosity - "should choose those trees as a place to hide, they could watch us here at mighty close range. I can't help it, Craig, if I regard my brothers as snakes. They have shown themselves as nothing better than reptiles. Evil natures, such as theirs, seldom undergo a change."

"Your father and your brother went into the grove," remarked Ware quietly. "Your father seemed to have an idea that Wilbur might have lost his way there. They took Wilbur's dog with them. A ferocious-looking beast, that dog, until I quieted it."

New, fanciful thoughts were passing through Mildred's mind. She remembered how Walter Pearson had gone into the grove - later to be declared missing. The girl shuddered as she thought of the proximity of those trees, ready to ensnare all venturers. She wondered if anything could have happened to either Galbraith Chittenden or his son Zachary.

All seemed so confusing; yet Mildred was afraid to voice her fears, and to tell what she had seen for fear of disturbing Harvey, who was already in a troubled state. He was on his feet now, pacing up and down the floor. At last he left the room without a word and went upstairs.

Craig Ware, puffing steadily at his pipe, would have been a good confidant for her fears; yet Mildred hesitated to speak to the kindly-faced showman. She realized that Ware felt great concern over Harvey, that his visit here was being extended purely through friendship. Why trouble him more? After all, her worries were vague ones. She had marked no recurrence of those disturbing events. Mildred felt a secret relief to know that the house was carefully guarded now.

"I hope matters will adjust themselves," declared Mildred bravely. "If Harvey's worries would only cease, we could really enjoy it here. It has been a shame, Craig, to spoil your vacation with all these troubles."

The showman laughed and tapped the burned tobacco from the bowl of his pipe.

"No trouble to me," he said. "I'm glad to be around, Mildred. I'm running up to Connecticut tomorrow to talk with the owners of an animal show. I'll be away one night, but after that, I can stay as long as I'm needed. In a way, I don't like to leave Harvey for a single day - because something might happen that would need my immediate assistance."

"Jessup is here," Mildred reminded him. "Also his workmen."

"Yes," agreed Ware, "and Jessup is a reliable man. I don't know about the others, though they are capable workers."

"Jessup is raising rabbits," laughed Mildred. "Big ones, too - off in the rough ground behind the new garage. He was boxing some of them this afternoon. He said that he was shipping them away, and that better ones were coming to replace them."

"Jessup is a man of many parts," smiled Ware.

A CLOCK chimed eleven. The showman decided to retire. He went upstairs, and Mildred followed a few minutes later. She could hear Harvey, still awake in his room.

The girl went to her own room, and donned a dressing gown. She turned out the light and rested in bed, sleeplessly staring through the window at the moonlight, her mind revolving in endless thought.

The clock downstairs chimed twelve. More minutes passed; still, Mildred could not sleep. Something impelled her to go downstairs again. She crept softly from her room and descended; then went out on the porch. The sight of the bench over by the shore made her realize why she had come here.

Tonight was very much like the other night when she had watched the lawn and the grove from that secluded bench. Why not watch again tonight? If she could see nothing, her vague fears would be allayed; if new specters should appear, she would be able to study them more carefully and to report at length to Harvey in the morning.

Mildred went across the moon-bathed lawn, and reached the little bench. She rested there, watching, while long, placid minutes slipped by. The moon overhead was very nearly full. Its influence seemed powerful to Mildred. Could this moon be responsible for the strange phantom that she had seen?

Looking off toward the grove, Mildred saw lights far above the blackened beeches. Someone was awake in the house upon the hill.

Had Wilbur Chittenden returned?

Mildred shuddered. She thought of the grove. Walter Pearson had entered it; so, according to report, had Wilbur Chittenden. Last of all, Galbraith and Zachary had gone into that weird place. She looked toward the edge of the trees and - as on that other night - her whole being seemed to freeze.

From the grove a figure was emerging - the form of the crouching Chinaman, Lei Chang. The whole scene seemed like a grotesque flash-back to the former episode. The stooped man was moving toward the house. His pockmarked face shone yellow in the moonlight. The evil-visaged Oriental seemed more hideous than before!

The Chinaman stopped beside the house. He emitted his low, weird whistle. It was answered. Up the steps went Lei Chang. He silently entered the front door. Once again, Mildred followed and found her listening post beside the open window.

"Koon Woon - Koon Woon" - Mildred shuddered at the lilting tone she heard. "The Master - soon he will sleep. He will do more work - but he must sleep."

An unheard response; then came an affirmative approval from the Chinaman.

"One week - yes - velly good. One week for The Master to wait. Velly good. Velly hungry tonight, though. Lei Chang must be good to The Master."

Another pause; then Lei Chang added:

"Lei Chang bringee out. Leave where he find samee Koon Woon need. The Master he do work; Lei Chang see he getee what he need. Velly good."

Through the door came the sinister yellow man. Mildred, hiding, watched him go back across the lawn. Then, after a long pause, she crept into the house and listened at the stairs. She was positive that she could hear Harvey moving about.

WITH trembling nerves, Mildred forced herself to go back to the lawn. Again she sought the bench from which she could so safely watch. She looked toward the house, and out in back, she spied a moving figure. At first, she thought it might be the black-clad, shadowy phantom. Then she recognized the fact that it was a tall man.

Harvey?

Mildred could not tell.

Jessup?

The girl was not sure. The man was stooping, and now he seemed to be lifting a burden which was hidden by the blackness. The man was going to the grove!

Scarcely had the man entered the shadow of the trees before Mildred glanced above the woods and noted that the lights had been extinguished at Upper Beechview. Did this fact hold significance? Could someone - Lei Chang perhaps - have come from there?

No - somehow, Mildred was sure that the pock-faced man dwelt within the grove itself.

Now the tall man was coming from the trees. His form was very vague as he hurried back to the house. He went out of sight in back. Then Mildred was surprised to see him come up out of the ground beside the building. For a moment the girl gasped; then she realized that the man had been in the cellar, and was coming through a door that led to the lawn. Again he moved swiftly toward the trees and Mildred was still confused as to his identity.

She expected the man to reappear; and he did, struggling with a new burden, a large, compact sack that he carried on his shoulders. He went into the cellar with this load and Mildred suddenly realized that this must be the exchange of which Lei Chang had spoken. Something had been taken to the grove; something had been brought back from it.

Mildred became suddenly conscious that she was not the only one who had watched this strange procedure. Her eyes were drawn automatically to a spot close to the grove. There, she saw the sight that made her tremble - not so much with fear, as with tense anticipation.

Close to the shadow of the beeches stood the tall being in black. Once again Mildred was observing that mysterious personage known as The Shadow. Waiting motionless, the sinister shape appeared like a chiseled statue. Long minutes passed before The Shadow moved; then, with gliding sweep, he went across the lawn, and his body merged with the side of the house directly by the cellar door.

MILDRED'S nerves could no longer stand the strain. She knew that the stranger of the night had entered the cellar, where the man from the house had gone. What if the man from the house were Harvey! Had he had time to leave the cellar before he had been followed?

Mildred tried to scream as she dashed across the lawn and up the steps; but her voice failed her. She

rushed into the house and up the stairs. A figure blocked her path. She cried aloud now, as she seized the man who was moving out of her way.

"Harvey! Harvey!" she cried.

Harvey's voice answered her within her very arms. It was her husband whom she had seen here in the darkness; it was he whom she had seized!

A light came on in the hall. Craig Ware, awakened by the noise, was standing in pajamas, blinking in bewildered fashion. Harvey, fully dressed, was glowering at Mildred angrily.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "Where were you?"

"Nothing" - Mildred was gasping - "I was just out on the lawn - walking about. I - I thought you were out there, Harvey."

"Outside the house?" blurted Harvey. "I? You have been dreaming, Mildred."

"But you are dressed -"

"Of course. I didn't go to bed. I was in my room. I heard you rushing up the steps. I came out to see what was the matter."

More men were arriving now - Jessup and his two companions, from the back of the house. Jessup was clad in trousers and pajama jacket; the others were in pajamas. Craig Ware met them and sent them back.

"It's all right, boys," he said quietly. "Mrs. Chittenden had a bad nightmare - that's all."

Harvey was darting back to his room. Mildred followed him. He turned on the light. Craig Ware joined them, and Mildred looked from one man to the other.

"You had better go back to bed," said Harvey. "You have been dreaming Mildred."

"I can't, Harvey," responded Mildred. "I must tell you what I really saw. Men walking on the lawn -"

"Don't annoy me!" cried Harvey angrily. "You'll drive me mad, with these wild imaginings!"

Mildred would not stop. Her whole being was terrorized with unexplained impressions.

"I've got to talk to you, Harvey!" the girl blurted. "You must answer me. You were up tonight. You must have seen - or heard. Tell me - Craig can listen, too. Who is Lei Chang? Lei Chang - the Chinaman who lives in the grove? Who is Koon Woon? Koon Woon - The Master? Is he the - the" - Mildred groped for a descriptive term, and found one - "is he the dark phantom?"

Harvey Chittenden leaped forward as though to clutch his wife's throat. Craig Ware intervened. Harvey stepped back and clenched his fists, pounding them against his body.

"You're driving me mad!" he exclaimed. "Can't you understand? Isn't there enough on my mind? Go back to bed! You have been dreaming!"

CRAIG WARE gently urged Mildred to the door. He spoke reassuringly to Harvey, and the young man quieted down. Craig closed the door, and accompanied Mildred to her room. The girl dropped her head upon the showman's shoulder and began to weep.

"I shouldn't have spoken, Craig," she sobbed. "But I was not dreaming. Something terrible is threatening this place. I saw - I saw another man come from the house. A tall man - it must have been Harvey - he was the only one who was up -"

"Be calm," soothed Ware. "Harvey may have gone outside to settle his nerves. He has been very troubled lately."

"But you believe me, Craig -"

The showman nodded seriously in response to the girl's pleading words. Mildred looked up and saw a worried expression on Ware's face. She felt sure that he, too, was experiencing her fears that all was ill.

"Don't worry," declared Ware. "I'll stay here tomorrow night, Mildred, and make my trip to Connecticut the next day. I'll keep watch for the rest of this night. Tomorrow night, too. Jessup and his men can be on guard after that."

"I really saw those persons," Mildred said in a low, positive voice. "The Chinaman who talked to somebody, and called himself Lei Chang; the other creature who glided across the lawn, all in black -"

The girl stepped away and went into her room. She dropped upon the bed and lay there, weakly. Craig Ware went downstairs and lighted the lamp in the living room. Its glow was visible to Mildred, and it was comforting. But as she lay there, thinking, Mildred recalled Harvey's anger.

She had thought that he was the man from the house who had gone to the woods. Perhaps that was wrong; but of one fact, Mildred was now convinced. The person to whom Lei Chang had talked must have been none other than her husband!

Her thoughts changed. She recalled the mysterious being clad in black. Where was he now? Was he in the cellar of this house? What had he done during the interval since she had seen him last?

Mildred would have been amazed had she known the proximity of The Shadow. Harvey and Craig Ware were not the only ones who had heard her outburst in Harvey's room. Beyond the window had been a form in black - the figure of an unseen listener who had scaled the wall to hear.

Now, with every fact that Mildred had uttered firmly fixed in his mind, The Shadow was watching Lower Beechview from a spot that Mildred would never have suspected. The tall, spectral figure had become a blotted shape of black, resting upon the bench beside the shore.

From that spot, keen eyes were visualizing the scene as Mildred had described it. A soft, whispered laugh shuddered through the night air. The Shadow's master mind was finding answers to the riddles that surrounded this place.

The keen eyes turned to the grove. There, they were focused steadily as they tried to penetrate the solid gloom. Within that grove lay mystery and doom, which even yet were taxing the mighty genius of The Shadow.

Things here had reached a stage of impasse. The answer to the mystery must come from another source. The Shadow would have to draw upon his vast knowledge now.

CHAPTER XIII. THE SHADOW PLANS!

LAMONT CRANSTON glanced at this watch. It was nearly six o'clock. He stood up and looked across the golf links. It was late afternoon, on a quiet day. The grove of beeches was placid beneath the setting sun. The roof of Upper Beechview glistened from the rays of sinking light. The house at Lower

Beechview was partially obscured by dusk.

Upper Beechview - Lower Beechview - the grove between. Those were focal points in a baffling set of problems. Of the three, the grove was most mysterious and sinister. Yet the houses, too, were of great importance in the matter.

Last night, a mysterious figure in black had hovered about Upper Beechview, to learn the plans of Zachary Chittenden. The same phantom shape had appeared in timely fashion at Lower Beechview to see what was happening there.

Now, Lamont Cranston, a very quiet, easy-going individual, had finished an afternoon of leisurely observation from the country club. His strolling gait, as he entered the clubhouse, indicated the greatest unconcern.

At a writing desk, Cranston scorned the pen and ink. Instead, he used a fountain pen of his own. He wrote a line on a sheet of paper and let the ink dry. As he watched, the writing disappeared. This was The Shadow's test of the ink he used in all his messages to his agents.

Satisfied by the test, Cranston wrote a note in code and folded the paper promptly, to seal it in an envelope. He repeated the operation with a second sheet and envelope. These messages could be read only by the men for whom they were intended. After that, the writing would vanish too quickly for a wrong recipient to have time to work out the code.

Using the club pen, Cranston addressed the first note to Harry Vincent; the second to Clyde Burke. These were two of his trusted agents. He left the envelopes at the clerk's desk, and stated that he was going into town; but that friends might call, in which case they should receive the messages.

In a telephone booth, Cranston called a number, and a quiet voice responded.

"Burbank," it announced.

"Instructions," answered Cranston. "Vincent to club at half past seven. Burke to club at eight. Messages waiting."

"Instructions received."

"Report on Mann."

"Data delivered."

The conversation ended. Through Burbank, his secret contact-agent, The Shadow - at present Lamont Cranston - had completed arrangements for tonight.

A limousine came up to the portico of the clubhouse. Lamont Cranston descended the steps, an attendant carrying his bag. Within the elegant car, Cranston gave a brief order to the chauffeur.

"City, Stanley."

AN hour afterward, the limousine stopped at a secluded spot on Twenty-third Street. It remained there for half a minute; then drove on. On the back seat reposed a closed bag.

Lamont Cranston was no longer to be seen. Instead, a black-clad figure had taken his place - not in the limousine, but on the street. The Shadow had again set forth upon some mysterious mission.

The door of a dilapidated Twenty-third Street building opened silently, and a tall, obscure figure slipped

through. It made its way to an upper floor, and stopped near a smudgy-paneled door that bore the name:

B. JONAS

This was the mysterious office that was never opened. Through the mail chute in the door, Rutledge Mann, investigator for The Shadow, dropped envelopes containing data which he had been ordered to acquire. Rutledge Mann was presumably an investment broker, with a suite of offices in the towering Badger Building. His recognized position as a business man enabled him to obtain information regarding persons of social standing whose doings were of interest to The Shadow.

The figure in black disappeared somewhere near the glass-paneled office. It appeared later in the hallway, then silently descended the steps and reached the street. From then on, The Shadow's course was totally untraceable.

A LIGHT clicked in a room; a blue incandescent threw its ghoulish glow upon a polished table. White hands - blue-hued in the weird glare - appeared. Upon one finger gleamed The Shadow's token, the iridescent girasol, the gem of ever-changing colors.

The hands opened an envelope. An inner envelope followed. It was marked:

Chittenden Records - Complete

Folded papers were drawn from the envelope. The Shadow's supple fingers spread the documents upon the table. Keen eyes from the dark scanned the closely-typed lines, noting every detail in the wealth of information.

As the hands refolded the papers, a soft, whispered laugh broke through the room. Black walls threw back the shuddering sound. The laugh died away, as impish echoes took up the weird mockery.

Now The Shadow's right hand was inscribing visible thoughts upon a sheet of paper. The brain that was mapping out a direct campaign was putting its ideas into carefully formed writing. The brief phrases formed a column.

UPPER BEECHVIEW

Zachary Chittenden plans overheard.

Waiting tonight. Action tomorrow night.

Vincent watching to inform in case of emergency.

The writing began to fade. Letter by letter, it passed from view. Affairs at Upper Beechview were in temporary abeyance.

The hand inscribed a new column on the same sheet of paper:

LOWER BEECHVIEW

Quiet essential tonight. No action.

Watchers arranged by Harvey Chittenden.

Tomorrow night important.

After the writing faded, The Shadow's hand wrote two lists of comparative forces:

Upper Beechview: Zachary; three regular retainers; three - or
more - reserves.

Lower Beechview: Harvey; Jessup; two men. Ware absent.

After this consideration of opposing forces, one group numbering at least seven men, the other four, The Shadow wrote:

THE GROVE

Lei Chang - Koon Woon

Those two names faded after the capitalized words had gone. The hand, with a quick motion, inscribed a huge question mark upon the paper. Then, after the interrogative had obliterated itself, the hand of The Shadow slowly wrote this statement.

Choy Lown can tell.

The short sentence seemed to linger longer than the previous writings. It carried a marked significance. Eyes studied the paper after the words had vanished. The light clicked out. A laugh came through the pitch-black darkness.

There was no mockery in that sound. The laugh, was one of strange determination; a hoarsely echoed cry that signified the unknown. Only when grave danger lay ahead did The Shadow laugh like that.

The eerie echoes clung to the unseen drapings of this mysterious room - The Shadow's sanctum. When the last hushing sound had whispered in uncanny reply, complete silence pervaded all. The Shadow was gone.

What strange adventure was on foot tonight? Why had The Shadow laughed so weirdly?

Because within the next few hours, The Shadow was to undertake the impossible; to pit his wits against the strangest lair that human cunning had ever conceived.

"Choy Lown can tell -"

To those who knew, that brief statement would have been awe-inspiring. Choy Lown, aged recluse of Chinatown, the crafty old man whom all tong leaders feared, was one who dwelt away from all the world.

No one had seen Choy Lown for years. He molested no one; but his philosophy of life was to live without friends. His mandates - wise decisions that were supplied when so he chose - came from a mysterious and secretive source.

The very name of Choy Lown meant beware. This odd Oriental possessed tremendous knowledge and unfailing memory; yet he preserved both for his own purposes. It was said that Choy Lown knew every riddle of the Orient. He was regarded as a demigod by superstitious Chinese.

None of Choy Lown's countrymen knew where the ancient savant lived; had they learned, they would have avoided the spot with utmost care. For Choy Lown's philosophy taught him that all intruders were lawful prey. It was known to the craftiest men of Chinatown that Choy Lown's hidden abode was surrounded by traps that no living person could escape.

"In the toils of Choy Lown," was a proverb of New York's Chinatown. It was used to indicate a situation from which there could be no possible escape.

Tonight, The Shadow intended to visit Choy Lown. From that one man, he knew, he could gain the information that he wanted - could learn the secret that involved Lei Chang and Koon Woon.

To visit Choy Lown meant to go uninvited. The way would be barred by relentless pitfalls. Choy Lown was the man whom none had dared defy.

Tonight, The Shadow would defy him! While the mystery of the two Beechview mansions was dormant, The Shadow would prepare for the grand climax that was sure to come.

CHAPTER XIV. THE DEATH WEB

OF all the quiet spots in New York's Chinatown, the Tai Yuan Oriental Shop was most placid and unobtrusive. It was located on a narrow street, away from the din that characterized other thoroughfares of the quaint district. It occupied the ground floor of a building that stood by itself, and it was presided over by a bland-faced Chinaman who was the very picture of integrity.

None would have suspected the Tai Yuan as a blind for a hop joint. In fact, the place had long been open to inspection by the authorities. The quiet proprietor, Wing Goy, was a man of estimable status. Never, in all the years that he had dwelt in Chinatown, had Wing Goy been implicated in anything that savored of crime.

There were other shops in Chinatown that bore a similar reputation, but there was one fact about the Tai Yuan that made it different. That was the location. Away from the spots where sightseers flocked, the Tai Yuan could not expect its share of trade. Nevertheless, Wing Goy seemed satisfied.

Other Orientals had shaken their heads and chattered about Wing Goy's folly. Money could be made by Wing Goy if he used wisdom. But Wing Goy used no wisdom. As one Oriental phrased it, Wing Goy "had cast his fish line in a pail" - but that was Wing Goy's affair. Let him be a fool if he so chose.

The Tai Yuan Shop was divided into several rooms, with passages between. The rooms were stocked with odd furnishings from tiny Oriental trinkets, to huge carved cabinets. It was seldom that any of these articles - even the smallest - were sold, yet Wing Goy never worried. From before noon until late at night, he sat placidly near the door that led to the street, and surveyed the few idlers who passed the place.

When prospective purchasers entered - as they did but seldom - Wing Goy made no effort to induce them to buy. They were welcome, but they were never encouraged to go through the stock rooms of the shop.

Wing Goy and his family lived on the second floor of the building. There was a third floor where servants dwelt; above that, a small fourth story. Widely separated windows designated these living quarters. The fourth floor, low and windowless, was evidently a storeroom.

On this particular night, while Wing Goy sat blinking just inside the door, a strange visitor came to the silent street outside the shop. The person who approached gave no sign of his presence. Only a faint rustling in the darkness announced the fact that a living being was approaching the shop. At length, a vague, long splotch of blackness extended itself across the threshold, where it obscured the dim rays of feeble light that emanated from the shop.

Wing Goy came toward the door. It was closing time. In accordance with his usual procedure, he was

about to shut the shop for the night. His long, bony hand rested upon the edge of the door. Within a few minutes, that door would be closed and triple barred.

It was then that Wing Goy paused to stare at the vague blotch that lay before the doorway. Here was a spot where Wing Goy had always seen light. Tonight, that spot was dark. It was not his own form that caused the shadowy blackness. Wing Goy discerned that fact as he stepped within the doorway.

A trace of curiosity showed upon the Chinaman's bland face. With calm indifference, Wing Goy stepped into the street and peered toward the sidewalk on the other side. He moved a few paces from the doorway; as he did, the blackness on the threshold materialized suddenly, but silently. A tall, inky figure came momentarily into view then swept into the shop. When Wing Goy turned back to the doorway, he was too late to see the fleeting shape, but his almond eyes became suddenly fixed in gaze.

Again, Wing Goy was looking at the bottom of the doorway. The splotch of blackness was no longer there. Unknown to Wing Goy, The Shadow, strange being of the night, had stepped from darkness into the gloom of the Tai Yuan Shop!

With unfeigned alarm, Wing Goy toddled rapidly back into the shop. His mind was ill at ease. He had seen a shadow on the threshold; now it was gone. Wing Goy inferred that a shadow that moved must mean the presence of a human being. Someone had come and gone from outside the doorway. Wing Goy had seen nothing of a person in the street. Therefore, Wing Goy reasoned, someone must have entered the shop.

Wing Goy's first action was to close the door and bar it. Then he looked toward a thick ironwork that blocked all passage to the stairs that led to the floor above. No one could have passed that barrier. Wing Goy began an inspection of the shop.

The Chinaman's search carried him throughout the floor. When it had ended, Wing Goy breathed in relief. He was sure that no one was here; but before he could be positive, there was one spot that he must inspect. Wing Goy pushed his way through scattered articles of furniture, and came to a thick portion of the wall that projected like an interior chimney.

Stooping to the floor, Wing Goy raised a baseboard molding. He made a slight motion, and a portion of the projecting wall moved upward. It showed a cavity, some three feet square, with a five-foot opening. Wing Goy satisfied himself that no one was in the artfully concealed hiding place. He stooped again, and the raised wall descended. Wing Goy moved a taboret in front of the spot.

While the Chinaman was thus engaged, there was motion on the other side of the room. The door of a large cabinet was opening. From it, with utmost stealth, emerged the figure of The Shadow. The being in black had been watching; now that Wing Goy had inadvertently disclosed the secret of this room, The Shadow was approaching.

Had Wing Goy been looking in any direction except toward the floor, he would have had no knowledge of The Shadow's advance. But Wing Goy, still peering downward, saw a long, black silhouette creeping forward at his feet. Leaping up and turning quickly, the Chinaman found himself staring into eyes that peered from beneath the brim of a black slouch hat.

Like a flash, Wing Goy leaped forward, throwing his bony hands toward The Shadow's neck. He was quick to begin the struggle, and he emitted a wild cry as he hurled himself at this mysterious foe. In a trice, Wing Goy's cry turned to a choking gurgle. Black-gloved hands, thrusting from the dark, had caught around the Chinaman's throat.

The Shadow had proven quicker than Wing Goy. The bland proprietor of the Tai Yuan Shop collapsed,

helpless. The Shadow, whisking a mass of thick silk foulards from a taboret, gagged and bound the helpless man.

The job was done none too soon. Peering into the room was the yellow face of a gigantic Chinaman. This servant of Wing Goy, stationed near the back of the shop, had heard his master's call. He had come to investigate its source.

MOVING with Oriental stealth, the huge servant was instinctively approaching the spot where The Shadow was binding his master. The big Chinaman could see no living form, but his sharp eyes detected a wavering blackness by the wall.

Had the would-be rescuer continued his slow approach, he might have taken The Shadow unaware. But the moment that the Chinaman's eyes saw motion, they registered a need for action. A yellow hand swung upward, carrying a flashing knife blade as the huge Chinese leaped forward.

The Shadow sensed the attack. The black-brimmed hat swung suddenly. The burning eyes stared straight up toward the leaping form of the Chinese. The knife blade was flashing downward now; two black hands came up to meet it.

With swift, sure skill, The Shadow caught the Chinaman's wrist. His other hand gripped the big man's body. In a moment, the two were grappling beside the prostrate form of Wing Goy.

The Chinaman was a powerful brute - chosen as a guardian by Wing Goy because of his superhuman strength. He had the advantage in the fight; for The Shadow had been unable to do more than ward off the fatal knife thrust.

But as the fighting forms swung back and forth across the floor, The Shadow gained ground. Against the wall, he rose slowly, the Chinaman with him; then, bracing himself, The Shadow bent his lithe body downward.

Up came his sinister shape with all the snap of a catapult. The huge Chinaman shot head-foremost over The Shadow's shoulders. His knife flew out ahead of him. His wild hands clawed in space. His head and shoulders crashed upon a taboret. The wood splintered as the man fell and rammed his forehead against a stout cabinet. The Chinaman lay unconscious.

The Shadow worked swiftly now. He examined the form of the victim, and his sharp eyes discerned that the big Chinaman was but momentarily stunned. A few minutes later, the huge guardian opened his eyes to find himself bound and gagged beside Wing Goy. The Shadow laughed softly in the gloom as he placed the prisoners apart, each one carefully obscured from view behind tapestries in different corners of the room.

The laugh sounded again - this time with weird reverberations - as The Shadow pressed the molding beside the projecting wall. The laugh became a hollow, whispered sound, as The Shadow entered the cavity which appeared behind the sliding panel. A click occurred; and a tiny light appeared in one black-gloved hand. The Shadow was examining the little compartment that he had entered.

The purpose of the tiny room was evident. It served as an elevator. This was indicated by a small push button on the side. The Shadow let the panel drop behind him; he now stood in a sealed prison from which exit would be easy, for the closed panel showed a small crevice at the bottom.

By keen inference, The Shadow had divined that the placid Tai Yuan Shop might be the entrance to the domain of Choy Lown, the mystic savant of Chinatown. By causing qualms in Wing Goy's mind, The Shadow had tricked the proprietor of the shop into revealing the spot that it was his duty to hide. Wing

Goy was nothing more than the guardian of Choy Lown's sanctum.

The course lay upward now; but The Shadow did not press the button of the elevator. Instead, he examined the sides of the little lift, to find them smooth as glass, with no projection that would afford the slightest hold.

The tiny flashlight pointed upward. The roof of the elevator was a sheet of metal held in place with screws. With a blackened screw driver, The Shadow carefully removed these fastenings. The top came loose in the black-gloved hands. The light revealed a tall, narrow shaft extending upward. The Shadow laid the square metal roof piece against the wall of the elevator, and pressed the button.

THE car moved upward noiselessly, through total blackness. The Shadow's flashlight was out. The elevator was traveling through a tight shaft, carrying The Shadow on his quest. But the black-clad passenger was not idle in the darkness. Long arms were reaching upward. Gloved hands gripped the edges of the open-roofed car.

The elevator stopped at the top of the shaft. Simultaneously the bottom of the car dropped on a hinge. Something went clattering downward into space - the square sheet of metal that The Shadow's hands had taken from the roof. The flashlight clicked. Its glare revealed a tall figure in black, hanging by one hand from the upper edge of the elevator. The light pointed downward. A shaft-like abyss lay below.

The Shadow had foreseen this trap. Mechanically prepared to dispose of an unsuspecting intruder, the bottom of the car had fallen - and no living man could possibly have found a hold upon the smooth-walled sides of either elevator or shaft!

Hanging against the side of the lift, The Shadow retained his position without effort. His free hand turned the rays of the flashlight toward the open side of the elevator. The smooth, slippery surface of the shaft revealed the narrow crevice of a sliding door.

With flashlight extinguished, The Shadow probed the edge of the door. His hand was employing a tool of metal that clicked as it slipped into the crack. A hidden catch yielded; a door slid back of its own momentum and the tall form in black swung clear of the car, coming to rest in the dim light of a small entry.

The Shadow made a quick inspection of the door to the elevator shaft. The operation of the car was obvious; its mechanism was set to foil all those who might come up without first warning of their approach. Had the device been set to receive a visitor, the door would have opened automatically upon the arrival of the lift.

The Shadow closed the door to the shaft, and faced straight ahead. Before him was a curtained archway, the only exit from this place. The Shadow advanced, and his blackened hands spread aside the draperies. The act disclosed a dark, wide passage; beyond that, another pair of curtains.

Sweeping the light of his torch along the darkened corridor, The Shadow measured the distance; then examined all the surroundings. The way seemed open. Here, on the fourth floor of the building, must lie the sanctum of Choy Lown.

What danger could be ahead? The elevator had been designed to drop invaders to their doom. This quiet passage looked like nothing more than a simple entrance to a room beyond. Yet The Shadow sensed a snare. He was resolved to enter the passage; before doing so, he was preparing for any emergency.

Ready, The Shadow stepped through the curtains. They swished together behind his tall, spectral form. With light spotted low upon the floor ahead, The Shadow moved into the strange passage. Something

clicked above; the man in black sprang forward; a solid wall of steel dropped behind him.

The Shadow's laugh echoed along the corridor. He had encountered such tricks before; he was prepared to combat them. Should return prove necessary, there were ways whereby he could, in time, force open the most formidable barrier. But still, The Shadow's course lay ahead. Carefully, step by step; the tall invader moved along the passage; then, suddenly, The Shadow drew back.

HE had reached a crucial spot in the advance - a widening of the passage; and his halt had been made just in time. Less than six inches ahead, the floor, set off by an invisible spring, had dropped in two hinged sections. The flashlight showed a yawning hole some twenty feet in breadth.

A sullen, muffled thump of mechanism had begun. Turning, The Shadow threw the beams of light upon the steel barrier that had dropped behind him. That heavy wall was creeping forward, impelled by some powerful force. It had been set to force the unwary entrant to this passage into the gulf of death which now blocked the path!

Between the barrier and the pit, The Shadow had a hopeless choice. With all his skill, he could not hope to stop that moving mass in the short time allowed. Turning, The Shadow faced the abyss and stood upon its very edge. His light revealed the opposite side of the passage.

The Shadow's path lay ahead, but only a superhuman effort could enable him to take it. A leap across that pit was possible, with a running start; but the approaching wall of steel, pressing through the passage like a huge ram plowing through a snow bank, would soon eliminate the short space in which the leaper could gain sufficient spring.

The Shadow did not hesitate. He threw his tall form flat against the moving wall. With long, swift strides, he sprang to the edge of the pit and shot through the air with hands upraised, bound for the safety on the other side.

It was a bold, powerful leap, planned in the nick of time, and executed to perfection but it came to an unexpected end. Hurling through the air, The Shadow's body encountered an invisible obstacle that gave beneath his form, then swung back and forth with elastic action.

The Shadow was hanging in mid-air, swaying above nothingness, suspended by an unseen clutch. His hands, outstretched before him, were tangled in skeinlike threads. His body was wrapped in the folds of a network; his legs were hampered by a tangling grip.

The Shadow was in the toils of Choy Lown; he had fallen into the master snare of the Oriental schemer. He was twisted in the midst of a gigantic web, which held him helpless. Below that web yawned certain death!

CHAPTER XV. CHOY LOWN SPEAKS

THE snare, designed by Choy Lown, was one of the most subtle traps ever conceived by human cunning. The artful old Chinaman had scorned so easy a device as the simple pushing of a victim into space. The open pit which had appeared so suddenly in The Shadow's path had been planned as a blind that would make the victim take the quickest, shortest course to safety.

The Shadow's flashlight had not shown the web that stretched from wall to wall above the pit. Pliant, wirelike threads, patterned after the complicated design of a spider web, had been joined to form a gigantic meshwork that could capture a human form.

The snare was not a single web; it was composed of many portions, so cleverly arranged that the force of

a flying leap would completely entangle a person and render him helpless. This was the obstacle with which The Shadow now was struggling.

The darkness made The Shadow's task seem impossible. His flashlight was beneath his cloak; his hands were so engaged that they could not reach it. Each effort to fight against the all-resisting meshwork meant further entanglement in the web.

The Shadow's twisted form ceased its struggle. The black-garbed figure lay huddled in mid-air, like a gigantic fly awaiting slow death in the web of a mammoth spider. To fight against these toils was useless.

As long minutes drifted by, The Shadow did not move. He lay like a creature without life. The gently swaying web retained him comfortably, yet formed a prison that offered no escape. Should those slender bonds have broken, the captive would have fallen to his death; but the threads held, for they had been woven by the thousands.

Choy Lown could have intended but one fate for the victim who might fall into this mesh. That fate was death. Long, continued struggles would bring weakness. Death would be slow, but positive. No mercy would come from Choy Lown. He had planned this as a huge trap for the first human who might reach it. Death to intruders was Choy Lown's philosophy.

In contrast to a lingering submission, there was one other course. A furious struggle within these bonds would snag the victim further, but could suffice to break the meshwork from its moorings. Then the web would fall, carrying its helpless prisoner down to the bottom of the pit, where death would be immediate.

That was the extent of Choy Lown's consideration. Here, while strength still belonged to him, The Shadow might choose between quick death or lingering doom. He had been halted on the verge of his objective; this was to be his end.

THE motionless position of the huddled black shape seemed to indicate that The Shadow had chosen to submit to his fate without an effort. But after many minutes had passed, the cloaked man began to move. His arms, his legs - they were cautious in their efforts. The Shadow was testing the strength of this mammoth web.

To a slight degree, this strange prisoner was frustrating Choy Lown's device, for while he could not sufficiently alter his position to free a portion of his body, at least his cautious actions were not entangling him further. So artfully designed was the web that The Shadow's great spring had automatically rendered him helpless; but now he was skillful enough to keep his position from becoming worse.

The web was a network of many portions, all fastened to the corners of the oblong room that formed the widened center of the passage. Thus The Shadow's body was swinging as though in a hammock, moving back and forth over a space of half a dozen feet. The fact that the meshes came from the sides of the room made it impossible for the swing to approach either of the solid portions of the passage.

Back from the spot where The Shadow had come, the steel barrier now was flush against the wall, a sheer cliff rising from the pit. Ahead, the passage still lay open to the curtains at the end. In making his terrific leap, The Shadow had jumped well upward, so that, in the faint light from beyond the curtains, he now viewed that farther passage from an angle.

Safety was close - but how could it be reached? Inch by inch, The Shadow tried to creep upward in the net. His hands, moving toward the vertical, were touching the ceiling; but no grip was afforded there.

Nevertheless, The Shadow's brain was working coolly. His eyes, peering from beneath the brim of the hat enmeshed above them, were staring shrewdly at the end of the passage - ahead and below The

Shadow's form. Now with determined effort The Shadow commenced a strenuous struggle.

He did not seek to free himself; instead he urged his body back and forth, seeking the momentum of a powerful swing. Each forward motion became more violent. The web stretched; then receded. Forward - backward - forward - backward - the grim monotony kept on. The Shadow was not enmeshing himself further; but he was apparently striving uselessly. For the only result could be a breaking of the fastenings that held the web.

What was the answer? That The Shadow had chosen immediate death in preference to a lingering demise in the pit?

No! Despite his helplessness, The Shadow was striving with master precision. His body was moving forcefully now; each swing was a mighty heave forward; each return an automatic recoil. If The Shadow's efforts were to succeed, the fastenings would break; but they would not break haphazardly. They would tear away in accordance with The Shadow's plan.

The climax came. As The Shadow used all his might to give a forward, downward swing, a portion of the web broke away from the wall at a rear corner. That one fastening was followed by all the others that lay most distant from the farther passage. The Shadow's forward urge became a flying plunge that snapped the foremost fastenings. The form in black dropped toward the oblivion of the pit!

NOTHING remained to stay The Shadow's fall. As Choy Lown had designed it, the web had failed under repeated struggling by the victim. But The Shadow, in his keenness, had modified Choy Lown's plan. Fruitless struggle would have caused The Shadow to drop straight down; concentrated effort had altered that plunge.

The Shadow's fall was a forward dive. With greater impetus, it would have shot him squarely into the passage instead of the pit; but the swinging had not yet gained the required momentum. The Shadow was plunging short of his objective; but as his body described a falling curve, his hands and arms caught the edge of the passage, and his head remained above. Poised with the weight of his legs and body swinging downward, The Shadow was hanging on the edge of oblivion.

Under ordinary circumstances, The Shadow could have scrambled to the passage with ease. But a fearful, desperate struggle now confronted the master of mystery. The plunge had not freed him from the web. He was still tangled in the troublesome skeins and the huge net, with its myriad of threads, was hanging from his body like a shroud.

Fortunately, the web, so thin as to be invisible in ordinary light, weighed only a few pounds. If The Shadow could draw the weight of his own body above the brink he would be saved. That was his endeavor now; and his fingers vainly sought sufficient hold upon the floor of the passage.

Somehow that steady clutch managed to impress itself upon a roughened board. With a mighty heave, The Shadow urged his body upward. Inch by inch, he pressed forward until his form lay prostrate on the floor, clear of the terrible pit. It had been an exhausting effort; but The Shadow had won.

Even now, The Shadow lay virtually helpless, for the entanglements of the web had increased rather than diminished. But now he held a distinct advantage over these enfolding bonds. Before, his body was a handicap because of its own weight. Now with the web no more than a loose meshwork, escape, while difficult, was not impossible.

Gradually, The Shadow's right arm was drawn inward while probing fingers found a pathway through the threads. The hand reached the black cloak. A sharp-bladed knife unfolded in the black-gloved hand. The fingers used it to sever the tough threads and cut a wide gap in the net.

When the task was finished, The Shadow gradually emerged from his shroud-like mesh. He raised himself to his feet and swept the last portions of Choy Lown's web from his body, stepping clear upon the floor.

Picking up the defeated web, the black-clad master tossed it into the pit. Standing on the brink, The Shadow emitted a whispered laugh. The shuddering sound was answered in long, sinister waves from below, as though a horde of waiting ghosts had cried back to the man who had eluded their abode of death.

THE SHADOW stole along the passage. His hands parted the silken curtains. A steel barrier prevented further advance. Wise Choy Lown! Despite the cruel web that protected his sanctum, he was clever enough to provide against chance shots that a wild victim might fire in the last moment of despair.

The Shadow's laugh was mocking now. Here, with a barrier before and one behind, his sardonic mirth could not be heard. Sheets of steel? They were no terror to The Shadow. Not when he had time to deal with them!

His fingers found a crevice at the bottom of this barrier; the passage ended and the door extended below its termination. The Shadow stooped beneath the tiny light that hung just past the curtains, the light whose faint rays he had seen before. The Shadow peeled off his gloves, to reveal the gleaming fire opal.

He plucked at the right side of his cloak. The lining opened, and a small mass of blackish powder poured into the waiting left hand, which laid it carefully upon the floor. The hand poised back upward, and the iridescent gem gleamed with changing colors from the third finger. Then the right hand went to the other side of the cloak, and opened it. A grayish powder came forth.

The hands mixed the powders and let them sift down into the crevice at the bottom of the steel barrier. Then they produced a small metal tube, which, when opened, disclosed a glass vial. Uncorking the vial, the hands of The Shadow moved back and forth along the crevice, while a liquid trickled down to join the powder.

Then the black-clad form moved swiftly back toward the pit where it dropped and lay huddled on the floor just short of the edge. A moment later a dull explosion thudded from the barrier. Fumes of nauseating gas swept back through the passage. The Shadow waited for a few seconds; then rising, started forward, his head buried in his arms. The steel barrier wavered as The Shadow threw his form against it. The barrier gave. The sinister figure in black plunged forward into a lighted room.

Rising upright, The Shadow stood erect, while his hands, coming from his cloak, swung two automatics into view.

The gleaming eyes of The Shadow then witnessed a strange scene. The room, through which a few smokish fumes were trickling, might have been a chamber in the Imperial Palace of Old Peking. It was furnished with beautiful oddities of Chinese furniture. The floor was carpeted with garish Chinese rugs. Dragon tapestries hung from the walls, glittering with threads of gold. Beyond, at a carved desk, sat the wise old Celestial, Choy Lown.

The man must have been one hundred years old. His face, dry as parchment, was filled with sharply creased marks. His scrawny hands were resting helplessly on the table. From the odd, drawn face, two keen eyes were peering at the invader in black.

Choy Lown was half-stunned by the terrific cataclysm that had preceded the advent of The Shadow. He had not yet recovered from the fearful shock of seeing his impassable barrier totter from its fastenings. All his snares lay without his sanctum. Here, where he had never believed a visitor could enter, he had no

protection.

The Shadow laughed. The automatics disappeared beneath his cloak. He swept forward to the table, his flowing garments swishing as he approached. Choy Lown stared with transfixed eyes, fascinated by the crimson lining that swung in view as the cloak opened slightly.

"You know me?"

The question came in The Shadow's sinister whisper. It was addressed to Choy Lown.

"Yes I know you" - the old Chinaman replied in perfect English - "although I had never expected to meet you. You are The Shadow."

"I have destroyed your snare," declared The Shadow, his voice a sibilant shudder.

Choy Lown bowed and spread his hands. The gesture was more elucidating than words could possibly have been. It was Choy Lown's symbol of resignation. It indicated that had The Shadow failed, his death would have been justified. Now that the black-clad phantom had triumphed, Choy Lown could see no cause for quarrel.

"I have a question to ask you," came The Shadow's forceful voice.

"I shall answer it," responded Choy Lown quietly. "You have gained entrance to my sanctum where none but myself has ever before entered."

The Shadow's black-garbed form bent across the table as his unseen lips voiced the purpose of his quest.

"Who is Koon Woon?" His question was direct.

CHOY LOWN looked up and blinked. His eyes were staring. The name was significant to him.

"Koon Woon is in Penang" he replied.

"Koon Woon is not in Penang," returned The Shadow. "Koon Woon is here - in America."

A flicker of horror passed momentarily across the old Chinaman's face.

"Koon Woon - here" - his words were short syllables - "Koon Woon - and Lei Chang - where is he?"

"Here also. I have come to learn about them."

Choy Lown paused thoughtfully. At length he spoke in a tone of wisdom.

"You are The Shadow," he said in a voice that showed a tinge of awe. "You have found the way to Choy Lown - a way that would never have been opened had you asked. You have saved your own life. You have spared mine. You are a man of miracles. Choy Lown is your friend henceforth."

Drawing pen and paper toward him Choy Lown began to inscribe Chinese characters. He was thinking in his own language, as he wrote the story of Koon Woon. It was his intention to translate his inscriptions later, but that was not necessary. The Shadow, moving around beside the table, was reading the Chinese writing with his hidden eyes.

The silence was broken only by the scratching of Choy Lown's pen. When the old man had finished the upward inscription in true Chinese fashion, he laid the pen and ink aside.

"That is the story of Koon Woon," he said. "Koon Woon of Penang - Koon Woon, The Master of Lei Chang. Few have heard of Koon Woon. I have seen him. I know the truth."

The old Chinaman was staring fixedly as though his eyes were visualizing a terrible sight from the past. Then his thoughts returned to the present. A scrawny hand reached for a locket that hung from the old man's neck. Opening it, Choy Lown brought forth a tiny disk which bore a silver character upon its jet-black surface. He held it toward The Shadow.

"This is the token of Choy Lown," declared the old Chinaman solemnly. "It is Choy Lown's gift to The Shadow as a sign of friendship. With it, you can always send word to Choy Lown through those who serve him. To you, The Shadow, the way will henceforth be open to Choy Lown's sanctum."

As the hand that wore the flaming fire opal received the black disk, Choy Lown stretched forth his other hand, and with a single pointed finger pressed three buttons that were on the side of the disk. The muffled throb of mechanism came from the passage through which The Shadow had entered.

"The way is open," announced Choy Lown. "It shall ever be open for The Shadow, the man who knows no fear. He may always come and go, to and from the secret abode of Choy Lown."

CHAPTER XVI. THE ATTACK

ANOTHER morning had dawned at Lower Beechview, and Mildred Chittenden had enjoyed a restful night. High noon had arrived when she appeared upon the lawn and began to stroll about the grounds. Jessup and his two men were at work on the side of the house away from the grove. Harvey, Mildred knew, was in the house, keeping to himself. Craig Ware was not in sight.

Jessup saw the girl approaching, and tipped his hat. Mildred noted that the two men were busy rolling a large barrel up an incline from the cellar. She spoke to Jessup.

"Where is Mr. Ware?" she questioned.

"He went away this morning," replied Jessup. "Up to Connecticut. He won't be back until sometime tomorrow."

"That's right," said Mildred thoughtfully. "I remember that he was going away. I'm sorry that he will be away. The place looks beautiful this morning, Jessup. Perhaps that is because I enjoyed a good rest for a change."

"Glad to hear that, ma'am," responded Jessup. "I was up most of the night, watching the grounds. One of my men will be on duty tomorrow. I hope that will make you and Mr. Chittenden feel less worried."

"I'm not worrying any more," said Mildred, with a laugh. "It just seemed rather spooky out here, I suppose, after the city."

Jessup turned to order the men who were moving the barrel. Mildred saw now that there were three or four of the large containers, and that they offered considerable trouble in handling. One was going on a wheelbarrow now.

"Those barrels are very heavy," commented Mildred. "What is in them, Jessup?"

"Cement," replied the head worker solemnly. "You see, ma'am, I tried an experiment that didn't work out. We had cement left over from the garage drive, and I thought I could use it to line the cellar wall. It wasn't going right, down in the cellar, and I was stuck with a whole load of mixed cement. Had to get rid of it - no good. So I poured it into those old barrels. Now it's hardened."

"Is the cement of any use now?"

"No, ma'am," said Jessup ruefully. "It's just a loss - for which I'm sorry. Had to figure a way to get rid of it, so we're loading the barrels on our little boat off the float. Drop them overboard in the Sound is what we intend to do."

"How are the rabbits getting on, Jessup?" queried Mildred, anxious to turn to a more interesting subject. "Did the new ones come in?"

"Yes, ma'am," was the reply. "Shipped the old ones out the other day. The new ones aren't just what I want; guess I'll have to get rid of them the same way. You can look at them if you wish, while they're here."

Mildred strolled up to see the rabbits and immediately forgot all about Jessup and his workmen. She resumed to the front lawn, and spent the afternoon reading a book. Despite the beauty of the day, Mildred felt lonely. Harvey's condition was troubling her. He had not recovered from the mood that his father and brother had occasioned.

It was nearly evening when Harvey appeared from the house and querulously called to Jessup. Mildred heard him give instructions to the man.

"I want you to be up tonight, Jessup," ordered Harvey. "You and both your men. Take tomorrow off if you want. I don't like it here at night, especially with Ware gone. Can't sleep unless I know the place is right. So be on the job, all three of you."

"All right, Mr. Chittenden," assented Jessup.

Evening came, and Harvey seemed wrapped in an unapproachable lethargy. His wife attempted to open conversation with him, as they sat in the living room, but Harvey was taciturn and morose. It was obvious that his mind was ill at ease. Finally, in response to Mildred's quiet talk, Harvey became suddenly angry.

"Don't talk to me!" he exclaimed. "After the other night, when you asked all those maddening questions - how can you talk to me? I tell you I don't know what it's all about - all these worries. My family - I detest them. Why should you trouble me, too?"

He stamped upstairs, and Mildred sat alone and unhappy. She and Harvey had seldom quarreled. She made allowance for the nervous strain that he had suffered, for with Harvey a temper lasted long. At the same time, Mildred could not help but wonder about those nights she had spent on the lawn.

Lei Chang and Koon Woon - the two names kept throbbing through her brain. What had happened to Walter Pearson - to Wilbur Chittenden? Had any ill befallen Galbraith or Zachary after they had visited Lower Beechview and returned through the grove?

Mildred pondered long. She walked out upon the porch. She stared off past the grove toward the lights of Upper Beechview. She watched them for a long time; then saw them go out, one by one.

The moonlight was not brilliant tonight, yet it threw a plain glow, and Mildred could see the bench by the water front. It seemed very black and shadowy. Somehow, Mildred connected it with the strange phantom that she had seen on the lawn - the gliding shape that had emerged from the grove.

The grove! Had Mildred known it, that weird figure was moving through the grove at this very moment. There, beneath the beeches, a black-shrouded figure was walking with noiseless tread. Tonight was important to The Shadow!

Mildred went in the house and up to her room. She could not go to sleep. Midnight had long since passed. Jessup and his men were on watch tonight; that, at least, was comforting.

Mildred was suddenly aware of a tense, whispered voice beneath her window. Leaping from bed, she listened. It was one of Jessup's men talking with his chief.

"I just spotted 'em!" the man was declaring breathlessly. "Sneakin' up from the shore, over by them trees. Don't know who they are, but we'd better lay for 'em."

"Go around in back," growled Jessup. "Hurry! I'll get Bud and aim for the front. If they look phony, give it to them."

Trouble on the other side of the house! Men on the lawn! Frightened, Mildred rushed to Harvey's room. She rapped softly on the door. Harvey's growl came in response.

"Harvey! Harvey!" exclaimed Mildred. "There's going to be trouble outside. Hush! Don't let anyone hear you! Men are coming in, and Jessup is trying to stop them!"

The door opened, and Harvey appeared, dressed except for coat and vest. In the gloom of the hallway, Mildred could see the flash of a revolver.

"Stay up here!" ordered Harvey. "I'm going down to see what's the matter. More trouble from the hill, maybe."

MILDRED went to a front window and crouched there. She could see no one, although all seemed vague over by the beeches. Then she fancied she could see men near the shore. Suddenly, Harvey appeared. He had rushed down the steps from the porch.

Instantly, the quietude of Lower Beechview was broken by a strident shout. Someone - down near the shore - had raised the cry.

"That's him!" came the call. "Get him! Get him! He's the guy we want!"

Revolver shots crackled from the shore. Before Harvey, startled, could respond, an answering fire came from the side of the house. Then, up by the gate that led to the golf course, new shots burst forth.

Harvey, out of range of the first wild attack, scrambled to the shelter of the porch. Men were dashing over the lawn now, their shots forming a barrage that covered the door to the house. The rounds were spreading; a terrific fusillade seemed opening from all directions.

Terror gripped Mildred Chittenden. She could see half a dozen men crossing the lawn, and knew that others were elsewhere. Some enemy - she thought of Harvey's fears - had ordered a mass attack. To resist it were but four: Jessup, his two men, and Harvey. How could they resist these superior numbers?

The cause was hopeless. Worst of all, Harvey had gone directly into the trap. Jessup and his men were under cover; they had themselves to look out for. Fiendish gangsters were tearing over the lawn. Harvey could not escape them. He was doomed!

A terrified sob came from the girl's lips. Pathetically, she stared across the lawn. Then to her distorted vision came a sight that both horrified and thrilled her, as she recognized a new entrant into this maddened fray.

Coming from the edge of the grove was the strange phantom in black. Like an avenging specter, he was gliding toward the focal point of the attack.

Was he with the enemy? A terrible fear gripped Mildred. Then her dread changed to inspired hope as she cried in exultation. She could see a black-garbed hand extended in the moonlight. A flash burst from a huge automatic. A gangster, who had suddenly observed the menace, dropped upon the lawn before he could fire a single shot.

The Shadow had entered the conflict. Alone, he had come from darkness to beat back the attacking hordes; wild cries came from everywhere as Mildred Chittenden stared transfixed at the sight of the man in black.

Then came a sound that chilled her, yet which added to her hope. Amid the rattle of the guns, the weird avenger was laughing - his mirth pealing forth in a fearful cry of mockery.

That was the laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XVII. BROTHER AND BROTHER

THE SHADOW'S arrival had indeed been a timely one. This was the night that Zachary Chittenden had planned the sure elimination of his brother Harvey. By gang attack, he had felt sure, he could become the last of the Chittendens.

But Zachary, as cowardly as he was clever, had not trusted to a handful of henchmen. He had sent forth a mob of more than a dozen men; and they were attacking Lower Beechview from front and back.

Sixteen was the total number, and half of these had begun the charge on Harvey. He had eluded them for the moment; crouching on the porch, he was prepared to fight to the end. Jessup and one man, beyond the house, had fired wildly; then they had been forced to turn to meet gangsters coming from the back.

The first man to fall upon the lawn was the one who had seen The Shadow. Now, at the sound of the automatic, and the terrible laugh which followed it, the others turned to meet the menace. Revolvers glimmered in the moonlight. The Shadow's automatics burst forth.

Down toppled gangsters. Some fired wildly, others shot hopelessly as they fell, while some never had the opportunity to press the triggers of their revolvers. The Shadow, against the blackened background of the beeches, was a hazy figure to these fighters, although Mildred, from above, could see him plainly.

The Shadow's aim was certain. The attacking gunmen were clear targets for his unerring marksmanship. For cowardly murderers, The Shadow had no quarter. Snarling, bestial fiends fell with dying curses on their evil lips.

To Harvey Chittenden, The Shadow's surprise attack meant salvation. He could not understand who the rescuer might be; he knew only that rescue had come. Leaping forward to the rail of the porch, the beleaguered man raised his revolver and shot down one gangster whom The Shadow had wounded. A rising fiend tried to clip Harvey at the rail. A bullet from The Shadow silenced the would-be killer.

The lawn was strewn with attackers who would fight no more. The charge was broken. Not a single shot came from the scattered mobsmen as they lay spread about. Harvey, exulting in victory, rushed down the steps and out into the moonlight; then stopped, vainly looking for cover.

The other half of the mob had arrived. Eight men, sweeping from the rear, had circled the house to annihilate Jessup and his two henchmen. They had struck too swiftly for resistance. Only one of the invaders had fallen, while Jessup and his two were dead. Those had been the shots from quarters other than the lawn.

HARVEY CHITTENDEN was cut off from the house. His only fortune lay in the fact that he was not instantly recognized. Seeing the danger, he began to rush across the lawn toward the shore, the seven gangsters suddenly spying him.

All these had circled the building, knowing that those from the shore could cover the side by the grove. Hence they had not seen The Shadow's fight. The first sign of the avenger in black came when the leading mobsman raised his revolver and paused to take certain aim at Harvey Chittenden.

Had that finger pressed the trigger, Harvey would have fallen with a bullet in his back. Mildred, from above, screamed out a futile warning.

It was The Shadow, again, who frustrated the cold-blooded killing. A loud roar came from the automatic in his left hand. As the recoil thumped back against the black-garbed arm, the standing gangster slumped crazily to the ground. Another man fired wildly toward Harvey, then paused for better aim. Like the first, he had no chance to place a well-directed shot. The Shadow finished this murderer with a well-placed bullet from his right-hand gun.

With their quarry out of range, the five remaining slayers sprang in widespread formation toward The Shadow. They had seen him vaguely, they could spot the flashes of his pistols. They knew that they had but one man with whom to deal.

They realized the identity of that one man as they swept forward, coming up with glistening revolvers. A strident laugh rang through the night; upon its echoes came the roar of guns that barked like cannons.

"The Shadow!"

The loud, shrill scream came from the lips of a terrified mobsman. An instant later the gangster's arms swung in the air, and his revolver tumbled from his grasp. He stumbled aimlessly upon the greensward and fell.

Shots whistled through the dark - shots toward the grove - fired by the other gunmen. But these men, rushing up to overpower a single foe, were throwing their lives away. The Shadow, crouching with leveled automatics, replied with perfect, calculated aim. As the foremost gangsters fell to rise no more, the last three of the evil crew broke and fled for the corner of the house.

One staggered, clipped by The Shadow's following shot. Then, with his taunting laugh ringing clear, the black avenger swept forward in pursuit. Mildred, staring in amazement, saw the swift chase made by this relentless foe of evil. She knew that the last members of the gangster horde could not escape the one who followed them.

Harvey Chittenden realized it, too, as he saw the pursuit. He was lying on the ground beside the shore, where he had fallen. Now, with his revolver in hand, he arose, intent upon going back to the house. But as Harvey stood within the range of moonlight, a shot was fired from several yards away. A bullet seared the sleeve of Harvey's shirt. Turning with upraised revolver, he saw the author of the shot.

Zachary Chittenden was skulking by the edge of the grove near the shore. He had stepped into the moonlight, unseen by Harvey, and had aimed with intent of ending his brother's life.

With a frenzied cry, Harvey leaped across the ground, raising his revolver. Zachary was about to fire again; then, in craven fashion, he ducked and started to flee. He slipped on the grass, and before he could escape, Harvey was upon him.

With a frightened squeal, Zachary squirmed away, and ran along the edge of the grove, heading toward

the house. Harvey overtook him, threw him on the ground, and grasped his revolver.

MUFFLED shots were sounding from the direction of the cove. The Shadow was dealing justice to the last of the mobsters. Harvey did not hear those shots, so intent was he upon the coward who cringed before him. Mildred, still at the window, watched, too worn with terrible excitement to make a move.

"So this is your work, you cur!" growled Harvey, to his brother. "I expected something like it. Lying back, you sent a mob of killers to get me!"

Zachary was crouching, his hands upraised in fear.

"A bullet through your black heart!" shouted Harvey. "That is what you need. You came here to kill me!"

A sudden defiance came over Zachary Chittenden. Raising his head, he stared fiercely at his brother.

"Why not?" he snarled. "What of you? Where is Walter Pearson? Where is Wilbur? Where is my father? Answer me!"

"What do I care where they are?" demanded Harvey.

"They are dead!" cried Zachary.

"Dead?" Harvey's question was a jeer. "If they are of your kind - as they have shown themselves to be - that is what they have deserved - death!"

"You know they are dead!" denounced Zachary. "You know they are dead! You know where they died!"

"Where?" questioned Harvey.

"In that grove!" cried Zachary.

"So you know where they died," said Harvey coldly. "You, a man bent on murder tonight, telling me of others who have died, and where. You - the youngest and meanest of the family - the one who wanted all that he could get. Coming here to end my life after" - Harvey's note was fierce - "after you have murdered the others who stood in your way!"

"You lie!" screamed Zachary "You lie! You drew Walter Pearson to his death! You lured Wilbur! You are to blame for my father's death! Now you - you are trying to kill me - the gun is in your hand! Trying to blame me for your crimes; pretending to kill me in self-defense. All was well until you came here - to murder. That is why I came tonight; to put an end to your crimes!"

A look of fierce rage came over Harvey Chittenden's face. Angrily he raised the revolver, then lowered it. His words burst forth in staccato tone as he voiced his wrath upon Zachary.

"Lies! Lies! You speak lies!" At Harvey's glare, Zachary cringed and drew away. "You who have lied all your life! Get out! Get out! I give you ten seconds!"

Zachary backed rapidly away. Finding himself beneath the branches of the beeches, he began to sidle toward the lawn.

"Out of my sight!" roared Harvey. "Into the woods before I kill you!"

"No - no" - Zachary was backing away, unconsciously going deep beneath the trees. "No - no -"

Harvey raised his revolver, furiously. Zachary could see his face in the moonlight. Harvey was charging forward. Death was the threat in his eyes. In stark terror, Zachary turned and dashed into the grove, with Harvey in pursuit.

THE menace of the revolver, wielded by a man who had gone mad with rage, was too great for Zachary Chittenden's terror-stricken mind. No thought of other dangers could overcome that one. He plunged madly through the woods, padding over the brown matting, with Harvey's vengeful footsteps following him. The pursuit ended suddenly, but Harvey's voice threw forth a final threat.

Panting, shouting, pleading, Zachary ran on. Harvey, returning to the edge of the beeches stood upon the lawn and glowered toward the trees where Zachary had fled. He could hear those cries becoming fainter and fainter. Then came a distant scream, a vague, fearful sound that wafted through the lonely, blackened corridors beneath the thick-leafed boughs.

Mildred Chittenden watched from the window. She had observed the whole tragic scene. She had seen Harvey follow Zachary, and had witnessed the prompt return of her husband. Now, her eyes unconsciously wandering across the lawn, Mildred saw a silent figure that had seemingly arrived from nowhere.

The Shadow - he who had foiled the fierce attack - had returned! Like Mildred, he could see Harvey standing beside the beeches!

Harvey Chittenden walked across the lawn with weary, shaking step. Mildred watched him from the window, she knew that The Shadow, statuesque in pose, was also watching. Harvey came through the door and up the steps to the second floor. He walked by Mildred and entered his room, like a man in a fatal trance. He turned on the light, and his gun fell from his hand.

"We must call the police, Harvey," gasped Mildred. "They will surely be here soon -"

"Call them," said Harvey.

Mildred went to the telephone and made the call. Her voice was mechanical. She was thinking of that episode on the lawn. Harvey, her husband, had driven his brother Zachary into that terrible grove. Others had gone there - all had died. Mildred had heard Zachary's accusations before Harvey had made the final threat.

It was a grove of doom! Why had people gone there? Until now, Mildred had seen no definite cause. But tonight, Harvey had sent his own brother in there! Mildred thought of the terrible Chinaman, Lei Chang - of the dread name, Koon Woon - of that tall man so much like Harvey, who had gone to the grove and returned to the house, carrying strange burdens!

Then to her fear-ridden mind came the thought of The Shadow. She had heard that name screamed by a dying gunman. The Shadow! He, too, had come from the grove; but he was different. Tonight, he had fought to save one man outnumbered by a horde.

The Shadow! Was he still here? Perhaps he would speak and explain these terrible tragedies. Mildred ran to the front window and leaned out. She could hear the noise of distant automobiles, approaching from the inland. She knew that the police were coming. All that seemed trivial.

She was scanning the lawn, looking everywhere, in search of that phantom in black - that strange being who seemed so ghostly, yet who had proven so real.

The girl's search was in vain. The Shadow's work had ended for tonight. The Shadow had gone.

CHAPTER XVIII. MILDRED CONFERS

THREE days had passed since that fateful night upon the lawn of Lower Beechview. This afternoon, Mildred Chittenden and Craig Ware were discussing matters on the pleasant green, which so recently had flowed with blood.

The police, upon their arrival that night, had been amazed at the carnage. They had begun an immediate questioning, which Harvey Chittenden had answered. Mildred, in turn, had given her story, carefully adding no details other than those her husband had given, for the girl was not anxious to reveal her troubles.

Harvey had said simply that the men located on his place had been aroused by prowlers. They had investigated, and had met with gunfire. They had been killed; and he, Harvey, had been in danger. He explained how he had come out on the porch, but due to the intervention of one of the fighters, had managed to escape alive.

There was no mention of Zachary in Harvey's story. Mildred, too, in her corroboration, omitted the name of the youngest Chittenden.

During their inspection, the police had made an important discovery, to their way of thinking. Jessup was identified as a missing racketeer from New York, and his companions as lesser mobsters. Harvey was surprised to learn that he had been harboring men wanted by the police.

This section of Long Island had been infested by rum-runners. When the police learned of Jessup's moderate wage, they nodded knowingly. Harvey Chittenden had been made the blind, without his knowledge. Jessup, starting to muscle in on this territory, had been wiped out by those who controlled the district.

It was not known how many gangsters had escaped, therefore it was assumed that Jessup had been provided with additional forces. Perhaps some of the dead men had been in league with him. It was hard to identify lesser mobsters according to their particular gangs.

Harvey, though annoyed, had answered further quizzes on the morning after the fight. So had Mildred. All questions pertained to Jessup. When Mildred spoke of the barrels of cement, the police had a new clue. They could not locate the barrels; but there was nothing to prove that Jessup had dumped them in the Sound.

Smuggled liquor was the answer, so they thought. Craig Ware had arrived home early from Connecticut to take up the burden of further quizzes. He, too, had been surprised to learn of Jessup's sub-rosa activities.

So there the matter rested. Harvey and Mildred remained at Lower Beechview, anxious to aid the police with any possible information. Craig Ware, who had gone through none of the ordeal, was on hand and virtually in charge.

NIGHTS had been quiet since that outburst; still, Mildred Chittenden was miserable. Harvey had been more morose than ever. He was keeping to the house. Mildred, who had said but little so far, was now giving complete details of the battle to Craig Ware. The showman listened with nods while he puffed his pipe.

"We didn't mention Zachary's name," explained Mildred, "because it would have been terrible for Harvey's own brother to be connected with those gangsters. Harvey has been right - Zachary was bad. Still, I can't forget how Harvey sent Zachary to his death - and I think it is preying on Harvey's mind."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Ware. "How do you know that anything has happened to Zachary?"

"I don't think he is at Upper Beechview," observed Mildred. "There have been no lights up there."

"Of course not," laughed Ware. "He would get out of sight quick enough after that."

"But he spoke of Wilbur and his father -"

"It is all quite obvious to me," interposed Ware. "The Chittendens - Zachary, at least - were mixed in the rum-running racket. The gangsters that they knew were working with Jessup. You say you once saw a tall man going to the woods and back. Jessup was tall."

"Don't you realize, Mildred, that the grove yonder would make a wonderful place for storing smuggled liquor? Lower Beechview was the proper outlet - much better than Upper Beechview. Probably they were using this house before we came."

Mildred nodded. Craig Ware's explanation accounted for much. Still, there were problems in the girl's mind.

"What about Walter Pearson?" questioned Mildred. "I saw him go into the grove, Craig. That was not long before he disappeared."

"Pearson was probably in on the game," responded Ware. "He was wise enough to get away when the Chittendens began to talk of getting Harvey - and Jessup, who was working his own racket here. I figure that the old man and Wilbur cleared out, too, leaving Zachary to do the dirty work. A mean bunch - trying to hang trouble on Harvey."

"But, Craig," protested Mildred. "I went to the grove one day. It was terrible in there - so frightening. I never knew anything so dreadful -"

"Imagination," smiled Ware.

"I was sure that someone was in there - not someone, necessarily, just some thing that seemed a menace."

"People were in there, all right - those in the racket. No wonder you were frightened. You may have heard something you could not explain to yourself."

"I saw a Chinaman come out," remarked Mildred, in a far-away tone. "A Chinaman named Lei Chang; who spoke of someone called Koon Woon. Maybe it was my imagination, although I am sure Lei Chang talked to Harvey, a fact that frightens me terribly. But I know that it was not my imagination when I saw The Shadow."

"The Shadow?" queried Ware.

"Yes," said Mildred. "He was the one who saved Harvey. I spoke of him before, but I guess I didn't mention his name. One man fought so bravely that the others all broke away."

"The Shadow? Where did you hear his name?"

"One of the dying men called it out. It sounded terrible to hear that cry."

"The Shadow," repeated Ware. "The Shadow."

"Did you ever hear of The Shadow?" questioned Mildred in surprise.

"The Shadow," returned Craig Ware thoughtfully, "is said to be a strange and dangerous person. No one knows who he is; some say that he is a myth - others that he is real and active. I have heard his voice over the radio -"

MILDRED suddenly understood. That weird laugh that she had heard last night! She had heard the laugh before over the radio, like Ware, but then it had been in connection with a national broadcast, not under such auspices as the gang attack of last night!

"They say," declared Ware, "that The Shadow fights with gangsters. Whether he is a crook himself or an agent of the police, no one seems to know. The most essential fact - so I have heard - is that when The Shadow fights, he wipes out crime and disappears. He apparently has had a hand in last night's fray, which supports my belief that there is nothing more to fear."

"Nothing but that dreadful grove," sighed Mildred, looking toward the beeches.

"It seems very peaceful there," responded Ware, reassuringly. "At night, when all is black, any place looks sinister. But in the daytime, I can see nothing repulsive about those trees."

"They are driving Harvey mad," said Mildred. "I am sure of it, Craig. I saw him looking at the grove yesterday, mumbling Zachary's name. Zachary said some terrible things that night when he was here. He screamed when Harvey drove him into the grove."

"Harvey must calm himself," said Ware decisively. "He must rid himself of any fear; and you must do the same, Mildred. Otherwise, life will prove unbearable here. Yet it is wise for you to stay, for a sudden departure might lead police to believe that Harvey was implicated in crime."

"I do fear the grove," admitted Mildred. "It seems to cast a terrible spell over one!"

Craig Ware arose from his chair. Smiling he strolled toward the grove. Mildred followed him, placing her hand upon his arm.

"Don't go in there, Craig!" she pleaded.

They reached the fringe of the trees. Craig Ware stepped forward several paces, and shrugged his shoulders when he came under the shadow of the first beeches.

"A spooky place," he admitted, "but nothing to be afraid of. If we should beat through here, we would find it to be nothing but a very quiet woods. I think I shall go in a way, Mildred. Will you follow?"

The girl was trembling. She nodded bravely. With a farewell gesture that made the girl cry aloud, Craig Ware entered the area beneath the trees. Mildred, in great trepidation, walked back upon the lawn. Her eyes were fearful as they followed Ware.

The figure of the girl was visible to a man up on the veranda of the Beechview Country Club. Lamont Cranston, who had returned, was watching and now, as Mildred made a move to follow Ware, the tall man arose and started swiftly down the slope.

His progress halted as he saw Mildred turn back toward the house. He guided his steps toward a group of rocks beside a big tree off the fairway. There, unseen from the clubhouse, he drew his binoculars from their case, and watched the girl through the powerful lenses. Cranston was almost within hail of Lower Beechview.

It was sudden fright that had made Mildred turn toward the house. Fancifully, she had imagined that she had heard a strange sound from off within the grove. It reminded her of that hissing whistle which Lei

Chang had emitted, those nights when he had visited Lower Beechview.

MILDRED was calling Harvey. Her husband, haggard and glowering, came from the house. Mildred pointed to the grove. She explained the terrible fear that was upon her.

"Craig went in there, Harvey" - the girl's tone was breathless - "and I am afraid! I am sure I heard something utter a faint sound. Can anything - anything have happened to Craig?"

Harvey Chittenden moved quickly toward the beeches. He stopped and shuddered before he reached the trees. Through his befuddled mind came thoughts of Zachary's flight through that very grove.

"Craig should not have gone in there!" blurted Harvey. "He should not have gone in! Something might happen to him - as it happened to -"

He broke the sentence and stood staring toward the beeches. Suddenly a man emerged. It was Craig Ware. Smiling, the showman walked up to greet Harvey.

"What's the matter?" he questioned. "You look as pale as a ghost!"

"Where were you?" demanded Harvey.

"In the grove," responded Craig Ware, in a matter-of-fact tone. "I didn't go all the way through - I just wandered around a bit. It's rather gloomy in there, but I didn't stay long."

"Keep out of those trees" - Harvey's voice was rising to a sharp scream - "Keep out - keep out! I saw my brother - Zachary - run in there. I heard -"

Wild-eyed, he stopped his discourse. Craig Ware stared at him with puzzled expression. The showman looked at Mildred. Harvey Chittenden turned and went suddenly into the house.

"Mildred," said Craig Ware suddenly, "Harvey must be cured of this terrible worry. You are right; the grove is preying on his mind. It is my task - I must go through there and assure him that there is no danger beneath those trees. He holds a fancied belief that something happened to Zachary, and that he is responsible. It is the last great strain upon his troubled mind."

Again, the showman turned as though to enter the trees. Then he turned to the girl. He shook his head doubtfully.

"No," he declared, "my assurance would be in vain. Here I have just told Harvey that I was in the grove, and it drove him wild. He would not believe me if I said that I had scoured the ground beneath those trees. Tomorrow, we must talk to him, Mildred, you and I. Then I shall arrange to have a force of men go through every inch of the terrain. If we can satisfy Harvey that Zachary is not there, dead, and that the grove is nothing but a peaceful woods, then I feel sure your husband's fears will end."

Mildred nodded in agreement. Craig Ware's words were sound. They showed sensible planning. Tomorrow some definite action might be taken to end this terrible dread. Mildred felt sure it would be a great relief to her, and she hoped the same for Harvey.

The girl was not the only one who had noted Craig Ware's speech. Lamont Cranston, through his glasses, had watched the showman's lips and had virtually heard the definite plan that Ware had made. As Ware and the girl went back into the house, Cranston left his spot of seclusion, and strolled up to the clubhouse.

That night, while the clouded moon sought vainly to test its spectral glow upon the ground below, a

vague, dim figure in black glided down past the grove. It appeared - no more than a flitting shape - upon the lawn of Lower Beechview. Then it slid toward the blackish edge of the grove; toward that monstrous umbra that seemed to be stretching forth, ready to creep forward upon those who came within its reach.

All was quiet along the water front. No lights shone in either Upper or Lower Beechview. Motionless trees stood silent in their huge mass. The Shadow had entered the grove of doom - and therein he had remained!

CHAPTER XIX. HARVEY SHOWS DECISION

MORNING found Harvey Chittenden standing upon the lawn of Lower Beechview, staring across the hazy surface of the Sound. He had risen at dawn, after a sleepless night. Harvey's face was haggard; his features were streaked with worry. An unnatural pallor had replaced his normal tan.

Muttering vaguely to himself, the young man turned to encounter Craig Ware. He was surprised to see the showman about at this hour. Ware had still been asleep when Harvey had descended from his room; now, Harvey realized that at least an hour must have elapsed since he had left the house.

Ware's frank face was serious. Coming close to Harvey, the showman placed his arm upon the young man's shoulders. There, in the midst of this placid scene, Ware spoke in a tone that was encouraging.

"Harvey, boy," said the showman, "it's time you awoke from your troubles. You've been through a long siege. It's ended now. Something is preying on your mind; why not unburden it to me? If there is anyone in whom you can confide, I am the one."

"You are right, Craig," responded Harvey thoughtfully. "Perhaps I have been wrong in keeping my problems to myself. I feel - feel that I - I, Harvey Chittenden - am responsible for great crimes."

"I hardly think so, Harvey," returned Ware.

"Look back and see," said Harvey. "I wished ill to certain men. Ill has befallen them. Walter Pearson - my brother Wilbur - my father - and my brother Zachary. All are dead. I cursed them, and they have perished."

"You have no proof of it," said Ware soothingly.

"It was Zachary who brought me to my senses," declared Harvey, in a far-away tone. "He tried to kill me, Craig. My own brother tried to kill me, Angered, I threatened him with death when he accused me of those crimes."

"His words were serious; they convinced me of his wild sincerity. What was my response?"

"Instead of offering my hand to Zachary, I threatened him. I was ready to kill him. Here, on this very lawn, I was on the point of slaying my brother."

"You would have been justified, Harvey," affirmed Ware. "He sent a band of murderers to get you. When they failed, he tried to do the dirty work himself."

"But he was helpless, Craig," insisted Harvey. "Helpless and at my mercy. Then I drove him to his doom. I heard him plunging through the woods. I heard him scream. I thought then as you think now; that he had gained what he deserved. But now I feel that I was wrong. Zachary - the last of my relations - dead - somewhere among those trees."

"Nonsense, Harvey," objected Ware. "You have no proof of it. I walked into the grove yesterday

afternoon. I could see no sign of anyone. What could have harmed Zachary? You saw nothing, did you?"

"No," demurred Harvey, "but I heard his frightened cries. The memory of them rings constantly in my mind. What could have happened, Craig? I know that Zachary is dead - but -"

HARVEY'S tone had taken on a strange sound. It seemed that his thoughts and words were apart. He might be asking a sincere question; he might be deliberately seeking to conceal his true impressions. Craig Ware studied him narrowly.

"There is only one answer, Harvey," said the showman. "This matter must be settled - today."

"How?"

"By beating through those woods. I shall obtain men. We will make a systematic search - more thorough than a brief saunter, such as I took yesterday. If anything is to be found there, we will find it."

"No!" Harvey's tone expressed alarm. "We must not bring others into this, Craig! Three of my family have gone into that grove. First Wilbur, then father, then Zachary. All may be there. I could not understand the terror until the night that Zachary fled. To bring men here - to search for those whom I know are dead! I could never permit it, Craig!"

"I'll go into the grove myself," announced Ware. "I'll be more thorough this time. I'll assure myself that no one is among those trees. Danger? I do not fear it!"

As the showman swung toward the trees; Harvey leaped forward and restrained him.

"No - no" - Harvey's voice was very hoarse. "Do not go there, Craig! It is not your duty! It is mine, but I fear it!"

"You cannot go on this way," insisted Ware, in a forceful voice, "You are losing all self-control, Harvey. This matter must be settled. The grove, once searched, will cease to worry you. I have suggested the method. I can go alone, or with others."

Harvey Chittenden drew himself up proudly. He faced Craig Ware and something in his bearing indicated his decision. Ware's words had cut him to the quick.

"You are right, Craig," said Harvey slowly. "I must control myself. I must know that all is well. I must end this fearful reign of doubt. There is but one method. I must enter those woods and make a search. If I find no trace of any of my kin, I shall agree with you. But if any - Zachary most of all - lie dead, it is my duty to find them."

With firm, measured step, Harvey Chittenden walked straight to the grove of beeches. Craig Ware, almost stupefied, did not restrain him. Something in Harvey's manner brooked no interference.

Ware saw his companion walk under the boughs of the bordering trees; then advance farther into the mysterious, brownish gloom. A few moments later, Ware was staring only at copper-hued leaves that formed a motionless canopy over a hidden scene.

A STRANGE look came over Ware's face. Moving toward the trees, he called Harvey's name. There was no response. Like a man entranced, Ware waited; then, as the silence continued, he turned and strode toward the house.

"Mildred!" Ware's cry rose to the upper story. Ware listened for the girl's response.

"Yes, Craig?" Mildred answered from within the front door.

"Come here, quickly!" called the showman.

Mildred Chittenden appeared upon the porch. She viewed Ware with alarm. She could tell from his expression that something unexpected had occurred. The girl ran down the steps. Ware turned and pointed toward the grove.

"Harvey went into the trees!" gasped Ware. "He suddenly decided that he must go - to look for his brother Zachary. I am worried, Mildred, worried because I should have stopped him. I must follow him; but I wanted to tell you first."

"Come!" Mildred's decision was a prompt one. "We must both go, Craig. I am afraid for Harvey. We must find him before some harm befalls him."

Ware hurried with Mildred to the edge of the grove. He pleaded with the girl to stay here; to let him go alone. Mildred was obdurate. Her dark eyes flashed in indignation.

"Harvey is my husband, Craig," she stated. "There is no time to lose. Both of us are needed to rescue him from that terrible place. I am sure that danger lies there. Together, we may be able to discover Harvey sooner. Come!"

Craig Ware nodded. He reached in his pocket and produced a revolver. The showman had kept this gun upon his person ever since his return from Connecticut. There was no friendly smile on Craig Ware's face now. His features were grim and tense. Like Mildred, he realized that a menace lay ahead.

Precious moments had been lost. Harvey - ahead - nearing the center of the grove! All of Mildred Chittenden's alarm came both to her mind and to that of Craig Ware. Together, the two advanced swiftly among the trees.

The brownish soil was like a matted pad. The two visitors - man and girl - moved silently forward. They were in the gloom beneath the leaves that never rustled under a huge mantle that subdued all sound, and which, in this early morning light, threw a weird coppery hue upon the faces of the invaders.

Neither Mildred Chittenden nor Craig Ware uttered a sound. They were listening for someone ahead, hoping that they might hear Harvey Chittenden in the distance. Their thoughts were their own. Neither dared offer a cry to disturb this spectral stillness.

Lost from the outside world, pacing through strange corridors of irregular formation, seeing only tree trunks that looked alike, the two pursued their direct way through the grove. They could not tell exactly how far they had gone. The laden boughs above seemed as limitless as the sea.

Not even the twitter of a bird came from the branches above. Not even the buzz of an insect could be heard beneath the trees. They were in a grove of gloom - within the spell of a doomed area that pressed its silent warning like an enfolding pall.

They were nearing the center of the grove, now. Mildred was sure of that, yet despite her fear, the girl kept pace with the man beside her.

Had some strange fate befallen Harvey Chittenden? Mildred could not tell. She only knew that the oppressiveness of this terrible spot signified that some dread disaster was awaiting!

CHAPTER XX. TRUTH IS TOLD

HARVEY CHITTENDEN was well into the grove of doom before his startled mind began to realize the menacing atmosphere of the strange area beneath the beeches. Despite the ardor that had brought him on the search, the young man stopped and stood hesitant.

Some weird fear was clutching his heart. He was afraid to go on, yet his pride would not allow him to return. Slowly, he began a new advance; then stopped short in instinctive dread as something rose to block his path.

Before him, rising almost from nothingness, stood a tall form garbed in black. Like a ghostly inhabitant of this dread domain, The Shadow was here to prevent Harvey Chittenden's progress.

Wild thoughts whirled through Harvey's brain. Was this the menace of the grove, this black-clad being who seemed a portion of the spectral gloom? No - quick recollection transported Harvey's thoughts back to the night when Zachary and the mobsmen had attacked. Then, The Shadow had come to save him. Why should The Shadow threaten him now?

Afraid to budge, Harvey stood motionless, awaiting The Shadow's bidding. It came. A low, barely whispered voice, issued a firm command.

"Lie down. Stay close to the trees. Do not move!"

The tones were sibilant, like the sigh of a light wind. Yet every syllable was clear to Harvey Chittenden. He could not disobey this strange command. Dropping to the ground, he crawled beside the nearest tree trunk, and remained there, while The Shadow's tall shape glided close beside him.

"Not a sound," came The Shadow's whisper. "Say nothing! Wait!"

Harvey waited. Slow minutes went by. He could see the burning eyes beneath the black-rimmed hat. The Shadow was gazing intently over the path on which Harvey Chittenden had come. The young man stared in that direction. Half hidden behind the tree trunk, he sensed the approach of others across that brown-carpeted stretch.

Harvey saw The Shadow no longer, yet he made no effort to go against the orders he had received. Gripping the tree trunk, striving madly to shake off the terrible, unreasoning fear that had settled over him, he saw his wife, Mildred, coming through the trees, accompanied by his friend, Craig Ware.

A slight rustle beside him reminded Harvey of The Shadow's presence. He looked toward the being in black. He saw a gloved hand clutching a small round object; then the hand disappeared beneath the cloak and returned, carrying an automatic. Harvey stared toward the approachers. He was afraid to emit a cry; and, somehow, he trusted in The Shadow.

CRAIG WARE and Mildred Chittenden walked directly past the spot where the young man was watching. They did not see Harvey. Turning to follow them with his eyes, Harvey noticed that The Shadow was no longer beside him. Then with bulging eyes, Harvey realized that The Shadow had gone ahead, farther into the fastness of this strange grove.

Mildred Chittenden stopped suddenly as Craig Ware grasped her arm. The showman spoke in a low, quiet voice. His words were plain to Harvey, farther back. To Mildred, Craig's voice carried a menacing note as the gloom of the grove seemed to muffle its bass tones.

"We are near the center of the grove," declared Ware. "Close to the danger zone. It is here that we shall stop."

"But where is Harvey?" whispered Mildred fearfully.

"He is with the others," came Ware's cryptic reply.

Mildred stared squarely into the showman's eyes. Now, the girl's body shuddered with the greatest fear that she had known since her advent to Lower Beechview. Ware's eyes were glistening with a fiendish glow - a strange, incredible light that Mildred had never before seen in them. Was this a hallucination, caused by the strange surroundings?

Mildred gasped as she realized that Craig Ware had suddenly developed the appearance of a fierce, insidious fiend! The showman's previous words came to her lips in a frightened echo.

"With the others -"

"With the others," hissed Ware, with a wicked grin. "With Walter Pearson, the lawyer. With Calvin Merrick, the wise detective. With Galbraith, Wilbur, and Zachary. Four Chittendens have died beside this spot!"

The man paused with a fiendish leer. Then, as he fairly spat words from his lips, Ware continued:

"You ask me how I know?" His question was a fearful laugh. "I shall tell you - before you, too, are dead. It is I who have caused these deaths, to exterminate all who were connected with the evil line of Chittendens.

"You call me Craig Ware. That is but part of my name. My full name is Craig Ware Chittenden. I am the only son of Sidney Chittenden, the eldest brother, who should have inherited the great estate of Upper Beechview.

"I have the certificates to prove my claim. I was born just after my father died. My mother told me the story of my father's unhappy life. For years, I have nourished one great scheme of vengeance.

"I searched for all who bore the name of Chittenden, hoping that I could harm those of this last line. I met your husband, Harvey. I heard his story. I became his friend - so he supposed. I came here to arrange the deaths of the others; then to send Harvey to his doom.

"I have succeeded. You, as Harvey's widow, must also die. Then I shall depart - and months from now Craig Chittenden, last of all the family, son of Sidney, shall come into his own! There is a menace in this grove - a menace of my making. It killed those who knew too much. It killed those who blocked my ambition. You, too, must die, for you are the last barrier - and now you know my story."

Mildred Chittenden could not move. She realized it all now. Bewilderment was on her face as she tried to piece the portions of this terrible drama.

Craig Chittenden saw her puzzlement. He laughed.

"It was I who talked to Lei Chang," he explained. "I, not Harvey. It was Jessup whom you saw going from the house to the grove. Jessup was my man. I am glad that he is dead. I need him no longer. He carried rabbits to the grove and dead bodies from it. Hardened in barrels of cement, the corpses were cast to the bottom of the Sound!"

It all seemed incredulous to Mildred. Despite her fear, she could not help but question this fiend who threatened her with death. An insane notion seemed to grip her mind.

"Jessup - bringing rabbits - to Lei Chang -"

Craig Ware was sneering as he gazed with pitiless eye. The girl's silly perplexity pleased him. He made

no answer.

"Rabbits - rabbits -" Still Mildred repeated the words. Still Ware leered.

"Rabbits" - the word was uttered in a spectral tone close beside the pair - "of course there were rabbits. They were to feed Koon Woon."

Simultaneously Ware and Mildred swung in the direction of the voice. A look of terror came over Ware's hardened face. A gasp of hope emerged from Mildred's lips. Five feet away, tall and mysterious, stood The Shadow!

Bright eyes flashed from beneath the hat brim of the being in black. A firm gloved hand held its automatic, with the muzzle directed squarely toward Craig Ware. The Shadow was master of the situation.

"You have told your story," came The Shadow's whispered tones, "but you have not told all, Craig Ware. You have said nothing of Koon Woon, who has failed you today. Koon Woon is with Lei Chang; but he has not acted. For I prevented Harvey Chittenden from reaching the fatal spot that lies ahead.

"Lei Chang has heard your voice, and he restrains Koon Woon until you give the call. That was the order he received from you yesterday; that Koon Woon should continue to kill all intruders, but wait when you came here - wait until you could leave this helpless girl to her fate. That plan is ended now, Craig Ware.

"You lured Walter Pearson to his death by a false message, and made calls that seemed to indicate he was alive after the time he died. You had the trap ready, and it caught Calvin Merrick. When Jessup reported a conversation he heard upon the hill, you snared Wilbur Chittenden by a call he thought came from Harvey. Then Galbraith Chittenden died when you calmed the dog, and enabled him to go through the grove to search for Wilbur.

"You thought that Zachary had died also. You were wrong, as you learned later. By good fortune, Zachary escaped the doom of Koon Woon the first time, only to fall into your trap when Harvey sent him off. He thought that Harvey was the plotter. That was the reason for his attack upon his brother. You had prepared to wait to slay Harvey and his wife. Jessup's death was to your liking, for Jessup had worked for you, and knew much.

"Your crimes have found you, Craig Ware Chittenden. Not once again will your vile vengeance fall. You cannot call Koon Woon to do your evil bidding."

A fiendish sneer came over Ware's purpling face. With wild eyes, the arch-plotter stared toward the boughs ahead, picking a spot which seemed familiar to him.

"Koon Woon is there!" His voice rose to a cry. "Lei Chang will loose him! Lei Chang is waiting. Give the call, Lei Chang!"

As Ware was speaking, The Shadow turned. His automatic swung upward. Its aim followed directly on the path of Ware's fixed gaze. Thus, by Ware's own mistake, had The Shadow located the unseen hiding place.

The automatic barked. The bullet sped among the leaves of a bough a dozen feet from earth. It was answered by a terrified scream from within the branches.

Tumbling headlong from the tree came the misshapen form of Lei Chang. Mildred gasped as she saw the sinister Chinaman sprawl upon the ground; then the body rolled over, and the pockmarked face stared upward as the head twisted crazily.

The Shadow's shot had felled the yellow demon. Lei Chang's neck was broken in the fall. The slave of Koon Woon was dead. Never again would Lei Chang call his Master!

The weird laugh of The Shadow rolled its mocking tones beneath the silent beeches!

CHAPTER XXI. KOON WOON

WITH abrupt, startling suddenness, The Shadow had brought an end to Craig Ware's plotting. But in the deed that marked the death of Lei Chang, the avenger in black had been forced to turn away from Craig Ware. A man less bold might not have gained the courage to act with precision; but Ware, seeing one last opportunity, leaped forward, drawing his revolver.

The Shadow had anticipated the attack. He turned with incredible swiftness. Before Ware could press the trigger of his gun, The Shadow's automatic was full upon him. Instinctively, Ware threw himself to the side, but the automatic spoke. Gasping, Ware rolled upon the brown ground, his revolver falling from his grasp. Mortally wounded, the man of evil had been felled.

Dying, Craig Ware knew that his reign of terror had been ended. Yet in his weakened body lay a last ounce of evil strength. As The Shadow's form turned away, Ware, with a desperate effort, raised his hand to his lips and emitted a low, weird whistle.

Mildred recognized that call - the signal between Ware and Lei Chang. The Shadow heard it also, and he knew its hidden meaning. In his last moment of life; Craig Ware had summoned Koon Woon!

Ware's hand had dropped. His eyes were glassy, and his lips were blood-flecked. He would not live to see the result of his last vile deed, but he had summoned forth an instrument of vengeance upon the one who had thwarted him.

The Shadow had turned toward the tree from which Lei Chang had fallen. Mildred Chittenden, recoiling from the writhing body of Craig Ware, had unconsciously moved toward that spot. Now, seeing the dead form of Lei Chang close by, the girl had moved no farther.

Harvey Chittenden, back by the tree from which he watched, did not sense what was about to happen. He had thought Lei Chang to be the menace of the grove, for he had not clearly understood the sinister utterances of Craig Ware.

Only The Shadow knew the dread event that was coming - the arrival of Koon Woon, in answer to Ware's dying call. The Shadow's eyes were flashing as they gazed up toward the copper-leaved branches.

The Shadow knew the identity of Koon Woon!

Then, silently, swiftly, the terror of the grove came into being. From the boughs near where Lei Chang had hidden, a huge head stretched forth, followed by a long, twisting body. Glazed, reptilian eyes stared wickedly as the long, serpentine form of a monstrous snake swept downward.

Koon Woon was a huge python, nearly thirty feet in length! This giant snake, largest of the constrictor species, possessed the grip that could crush a man-eating tiger within its sinuous coils!

Koon Woon!

THE SHADOW knew the monster's story. He had gained it from Choy Lown, in the old Celestial's study. Koon Woon, greatest of all the reptiles in the famed snake temple at Penang! A snake captured by men to be kept as a god!

This was the terrible creature which Lei Chang had called The Master. To Lei Chang, Koon Woon had for years been an object of worship. The python, easily tamed, had learned to obey the summons of its slave. Here, to this strange clime, Craig Ware had brought Lei Chang, and with him one of the most formidable type of death-dealing creatures that existed on the face of the earth!

Koon Woon, the mighty python that for years had strangled victims in the jungle, was trained to conquer human foes! Lei Chang, with crafty wisdom, had tempted the great monster with a rabbit diet, lest Koon Woon sleep too long after devouring a human body.

Now, Koon Woon, to whom this grove was as much a home as the grotesque snake temple where others of his kind were imprisoned, was stretching forth his great head to eye a new victim. When Koon Woon was loosed, nothing could restrain him!

The great snake possessed a skin of mottled yellow-brown, a hue that blended with the leaves of the copper beeches. Up in the trees, a natural habitat for a python, the twisting form had been coiled invisibly. Now, with his great tail anchored to a tree trunk, Koon Woon was shooting his mighty body downward.

This was the monster that had caught five men in its sinuous grasp, and had made short work of a large, fierce dog. Koon Woon always sought the nearest victim, and here, within range of that swiftly moving head, stood Mildred Chittenden, helpless and unaware of the approaching menace.

The Shadow leaped forward, intent on reaching the girl before the python grasped her. Shots from the automatic would have been in vain. The Shadow hurled his gun aside as he sprang to the rescue. The race was an unequal one. The long, uncoiling snake possessed the advantage. It was Koon Woon's change of purpose that saved The Shadow's effort from futility.

The python, when it spied the girl, withdrew its head to start a downward drive. Such snakes are living pile drivers. With its prey so helplessly close, Koon Woon was returning to deliver a mighty blow with his great head. The momentary interval enabled The Shadow to clear the ground. As Koon Woon struck downward with a long, terrific drive, the black-garbed rescuer seized the girl and threw her clear of the python's crushing stroke.

The great snake head, with its forked tongue, turned in its forceful smash. The girl was out of danger; The Shadow's form, moving clear, received a glancing blow. That stroke, delivered squarely, could have felled a huge beast. The Shadow staggered to one side, caught himself upon the smooth, matted turf, and sprang forward to escape the python's looping coils.

The Shadow was Koon Woon's quarry now. The head, with its beady eyes, twisted back toward the man who had eluded it. The long, twisting body, forming a widespread curve, rounded the indomitable fighter in black, and began its fierce embrace.

STRIVING to clear himself of the snake's mammoth body, The Shadow was lifted upward toward the trees. Mildred Chittenden screamed in horror as she saw her rescuer going to what seemed certain doom. Harvey, now witnessing the horror of the grove, knew that he could do naught to help.

The Shadow, who had conquered all human foes, was falling into the grip of a hideous reptile that possessed the strength of a score of men. But as he neared the boughs of the tree, he performed a superhuman feat. Locking one arm about the limb, The Shadow whirled his body free of the rising coils, and clung there.

Koon Woon was not to be so easily deprived of his prey. The huge body was twisting about the bough. One threatening coil, closing with steady squirm, blocked off The Shadow's possible fall. The head of

Koon Woon, twisting from beneath, darted straight toward The Shadow, and the huge mouth of the monster opened.

The python's stroke - the python's grasp - both of these had been partially avoided by The Shadow. Now he was facing the third and most formidable weapon that the great reptile possessed - its teeth.

When a python captures its prey between its jaws, there can be no escape. That is the hold which enables such a snake to hold its victim while the coils entangle themselves about the helpless body. Koon Woon had brought his enemy up to the tree. The quarry was escaping. Koon Woon was yawning to gain that sure grip with his mouth.

The Shadow was stretched along the bough. The instant that he had gained that hold, he had prepared for this attack. As Koon Woon's head was swinging from the opposite side of the limb, The Shadow's hand was coming from beneath the black cloak. Firm fingers gripped the round black object that Harvey Chittenden had seen The Shadow hold some time before.

As though to gorge his victim in one mighty gulp, Koon Woon unlimbered his great jaws. The peculiar hinged formation of the python's mouth now displayed itself. The great cavity widened and spread in different directions - a sight that opened before The Shadow's eyes.

A black-garbed arm swung straight toward the yawning terror. Into that mighty mouth, between those cavernous jaws, The Shadow hurled the object that he held - a hand grenade with gridded surface!

That weapon was no more than a tiny pill to Koon Woon; but no pill could have produced more dire results to the recipient. The fierce jaws came on; they were closing upon The Shadow's form. Then, within the serpent's neck came a terrific explosion!

The head of Koon Woon flopped downward as the neck broke apart, ripped with jagged tears. The helpless jaws were short of their mark. The great coils writhed on. The Shadow, rolling from his perch; was shaken toward the ground by the force of the exploding grenade. The whole tree trembled, and for once the beech leaves rustled.

Head-foremost, The Shadow crashed into the twisted, writhing body of Koon Woon, but that huge coil that acted from reflex action, sagged as the weight came upon it. Swinging free, The Shadow toppled to the ground, and sank into a huddled heap of black.

MILDRED CHITTENDEN, running from beneath the tree, had rushed straight into the arms of Harvey. Her scream turned to a happy sob as she realized she had reached her husband. Together, they turned to see the finale of The Shadow's battle.

The huddled form was moving. It rose and stepped away as the long, headless body of Koon Woon swept across the ground, and dangled with harmless twists.

The Shadow had triumphed over the monster from Penang. He had met the menace in the grove of doom. Craig Ware - son of Sidney Chittenden - was dead, his fiendish schemes brought to an end. No longer would Koon Woon, the temple python, lie waiting with his sinister slave, Lei Chang!

Weird death had been rampant in this grove since that foggy night when Craig Ware had masked himself amid the mist to receive the boxes that the Malays brought ashore. A man who had traveled everywhere, Ware had managed to arrange with Lei Chang to bring the terrible Koon Woon to America.

The showman's cunning had been great. From the start, he had managed his insidious schemes with skill that carried suspicion from him. Even when The Shadow had learned that murder lay within this grove,

Ware's evil fortune had persisted long enough to bring doom to the three Chittendens from the hill.

Stealing through the grove at night, The Shadow had been forced to move so stealthily that not even the listening Lei Chang could hear him. He had evaded the instinctive watchfulness of Koon Woon, also. But in those visits to this weird spot, The Shadow had failed to find the menace that he sought.

His keen, unsurpassed skill in crime detection had told The Shadow who the master schemer was. But to have eliminated Craig Ware without destroying the menace of the grove would have been insufficient. Carefully assembled data sent by Mann, The Shadow's agent, had revealed the connection of Craig Ware to the family of Chittenden.

But only through his visit to Choy Lown had The Shadow gained the vital fact that he required - the identity of Koon Woon. Lei Chang had crooned that name. Brought to The Shadow's ears, it produced the clue that had saved the lives of Harvey and Mildred Chittenden, and had brought death to Craig Ware, Lei Chang, and the mammoth python.

As the rescued man and wife gazed upon the weird ending of this strange drama, they knew that The Shadow had preserved them. Uninjured is his dynamic conflict with Koon Woon, the black-clad avenger now stood in the center of the grove. His long arm, sweeping onward, upraised and pointed beyond those who watched.

Harvey Chittenden understood the sign. He was to leave the grove of doom with Mildred. Together they turned their backs upon the bodies of the dead men and the snake. At the command of the living shadow, they walked slowly back toward Lower Beechview.

THROUGH the gloom echoed the reverberations of a long, weird laugh. That cry had brought terror to men of evil. To Harvey and Mildred, the laugh, chilling though it was, came as a mocking melody of retribution.

The laugh of The Shadow told of triumph. It seemed to dispel the terrible atmosphere of this strange grove as it rippled through the corridors of tree trunks. With the laugh still ringing in their ears, Harvey and Mildred came suddenly from the grove and sank, side by side, upon the green grass of the lawn.

They had come back into the world - the real world of cheer and happiness - into the midst of a clear summer day. All seemed new and wonderful. The sparkling waters of the Sound matched the azure of the sky above.

No longer would Lower Beechview be an abode of strife and misery. The evil fiend who had dwelt there as a friend was dead. The grove, gloomy and somber though it might still remain, would hold no terror now other than those fantastic thoughts that memory might create.

Harvey and Mildred looked toward the motionless, burnished trees. They breathed in relief, as they thought of the hideous, unseen menace that had lived among those thick-leaved branches.

Then to their ears came the faint ripples of a dying, distant laugh. The last echoes of The Shadow's final triumph cry seemed to linger within the leaves of the unmoving boughs.

Koon Woon, the murderous python from the snake temple in Penang, had been destroyed through the mighty efforts of a valiant superman. No terror now remained.

The Shadow, alone, was master of the grove of doom!

THE END