



THE GOLDEN MASTER

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. DEATH'S WHIRL

THE lights on the electric sign had begun their strange whirl again. Paul Brent stood watching them from the window of his hotel room. Over him came the same fascinating spell that he remembered from previous evenings.

Tonight, the lights did not cease their spin. Gripped by their curious magic, Paul felt a surge of recollections as rapid as the lights themselves.

Odd, about that sign.

It stood atop a low building on the other side of Broadway. It had a flapping, birdlike figure in the center, with three circles around it. Red, green, finally an outer circle of yellow lights, which matched the color of the central bird.

Viewed from Broadway, the sign caught the eye, but did not captivate it. The only times that it produced a mental daze were when Paul stared at the sign from his window. Probably that was because he was looking straight at it.

If the matter of angles explained it, Paul was the one person in New York who could feel the bewildering effect of those lights. His window was directly opposite the sign, and on an exact level with its center.

Why did he happen to be in this hotel room?

Even that simple question could not be precisely answered. Paul Brent had never heard of the Hotel Grayland, until receiving the circular with the offer of special rates. The letter had been waiting for him in Miami, when he stopped there on his way back from South America.

Deciding to try the Grayland, he had found a room already reserved for him. This room. So Paul had taken it. Simple enough, but the rates, he had learned today, were higher than the circular said.

Who had sent that fake advertisement? Who had reserved the room in Paul's name? Who - the final question jarred Paul, despite his increasing daze - was responsible for those devilish lights, with their crazy flip-flops and maddening whirls?

The questions seemed to jumble, like the circles. Of a sudden, the lights went blank. So did Paul's thoughts. He saw the blackened square of the extinguished sign, but the roar of Broadway traffic was gone. Paul was in the midst of a vast calm, from which he actually expected the token that came.

He seemed to hear a voice, like a distant call, yet cold and level in its pitch:

"Paul Brent... Paul Brent -"

Paul's squarish face was frozen. Its tan gave it the effect of a cast molded from bronze. His eyes were fixed in an unseeing stare. His lips did not move, yet he felt himself speak a word in answer:

"Yes?"

"You have heard me," said that far-off voice. "You know my name."

This time, Paul's lips opened. Without knowing where the thought came from, he replied spontaneously:

"You are Shiwan Khan."

"I am Shiwan Khan" - the icy tone seemed closer, yet its pitch had not changed - "and you are ready to obey. Follow every thought that comes to you!"

SLOWLY, Paul turned from the window. He sat at a writing desk that was strewn with papers. From them, he brought a cardboard folder, opened it and mechanically thumbed the papers that he found inside.

They were orders for commercial airplanes, to be delivered to South America. They were made out to Globe Aircraft; the firm which Paul represented as a technical expert. Paul had gone to South America to arrange the final specifications.

He had the needed details on another sheet of paper. He could have copied them directly to the orders. But the paper that Paul picked up from the desk was blank. His eyes, though, saw writing on it, in a hand other than his own.

The hand of Shiwan Khan!

First, Paul added amendments to the orders. He increased the number of certain planes, eliminating others of a definitely commercial type. To the specifications for those that he increased, Paul called for a special wing design, used in military aircraft. With that, he wrote the comment: "Required for flights across the Andes Mountains."

Next, he changed the motor type from KJ4 to WI7, code numbers used by Globe Aircraft. The orders for WI7 would please them at the factory, for they already had a few hundred of those new-type motors in stock. It would also puzzle them, for Globe had built those new motors for delivery to the United States government.

On the South American orders, Paul wrote: "For immediate delivery." Finally, he produced a government order that he had picked up while in Washington. It called for delivery of three hundred WI7 motors within two months, specifying that following such delivery, future motors of that type must be built for the government only.

A conniving chuckle came from Paul's lips. It was a forced tone, a gloat that seemed rather to belong to the unknown Shiwan Khan.

The government contract showed a figure "2" to specify the number of months. Paul inserted a figure "1" in front of it, producing "12" as the total of months. With a year to go, the Globe factory could easily ship the South American orders, and then begin producing motors for the government.

No longer puzzled, they would be doubly pleased at this chance to make a big commercial sale ahead of the government's deadline. This would win Paul real approval from the factory. Until Washington heard about it.

Thought of an unpleasant future did not deter Paul from his next action. Still following the controlling thoughts of Shiwan Khan, Paul folded the order sheets into a large envelope that was already stamped and addressed to Globe Aircraft. Putting on his hat and coat, he walked stolidly from the hotel room.

The elevator operator noted Paul's trancelike expression, while he was riding down to the lobby. So did the bell captain, when Paul dropped the envelope in the mailbox. But neither observer made comment, for the tan-faced man seemed to know what he was about. They saw Paul Brent walk out through the side door.

On the sidewalk, Paul waited for a taxicab. That was the first real evidence that his brain probably wasn't right. No cabs ever stopped on the obscure side street; they always pulled up to the front door.

Tonight was the exception.

Paul had not waited a dozen seconds, before a cab wheeled from a parking place and stopped for him. The young man stepped into the cab as if it belonged to him; which, in a sense, it did.

That cab, like Paul Brent, was under the control of Shiwan Khan, the unseen master of many destinies.

The proof was the muffled driver. Despite his upturned coat collar, the man's features were momentarily visible. They were yellow, with sharp black eyes that kept watching Paul in the rearview mirror. Gleaming teeth showed the driver's grin; straight black hair matched the fellow's scrutinizing eyes.

The man at the wheel was a Mongol. He belonged among the guerrilla bands of western China. Any passenger other than Paul Brent would have wondered what strange quirk had made the man a cab driver. But Paul was scarcely conscious of time, space, or surroundings. The will of Shiwan Khan controlled his thoughts as it did his deeds.

WHEN the cab stopped in back of a small apartment house, Paul stepped to the curb mechanically. Across the sidewalk he saw a door, and he entered it.

Following a hallway, he turned when he came to a stairway and ascended to the third floor. Passing one door, he stopped, laid his hand upon the knob of the next. It was the last door in the hall.

Entering the room by a little passage, Paul was immediately attracted by the glow of a single lamp that stood, unshaded, on a table. It had a greenish tinge, that light, and though it possessed brightness, it didn't hurt Paul's eyes. Instead, it held them.

There was a radio cabinet in the corner and Paul heard the music that was coming from it, for the tune seemed to catch the same vibration as his thoughts. Standing motionless, Paul observed something that glittered on the table. His eyes were blurred by the greenish light, so he groped for the object and gripped it.

The music ended. There was the voice of an announcer, but it wasn't what Paul expected to hear. There was something else - what it was to be, he had no idea; but another voice - the singular tone of Shiwan Khan - told him to wait and listen. It came suddenly, from the radio: the stroke of a Chinese gong.

The very air seemed to catch that vibration. It quivered about Paul's ears, made him shudder with a hard shake of his head. The spell of Shiwan Khan seemed to crash apart, like the breaking of a wave. The circling lights, the ethereal voice, Paul's own recent deeds, were the slipping recollections of a hideous, tangled dream.

His hand clenching tight, Paul felt weight, and coldness. He looked at the object that he held. It was a .32 revolver. His eyes, no longer blurred, gazed beyond the gun, to a thing that lay on the floor beside the table with the greenish lamp.

It was the body of a man, clad in pajamas, lying face down. Blotched in the very center of the man's back was a mass of crimson that dyed the striped pajama jacket. He was dead, that victim, a bullet in his spine.

A bullet from the very gun that was gripped in the tight-clenched hand of Paul Brent!

CHAPTER II. FIGURES FROM GLOOM

"I KILLED him."

Paul Brent spoke the words calmly, with a trace of satisfaction. Then, the memory of his own voice alarmed him.

"I... killed... him -"

It was almost a query, that higher pitch. Paul uttered it desperately, as if to fight off a conviction that must have been inspired from someone else. Panic caught him; he wanted to dash from the place, raving the news of murder.

Then came a flood of reason.

Paul couldn't remember coming here; he'd never seen the place before. The gun wasn't his; he had no idea who the dead man might be. It didn't make sense, this murder.

Or did it?

Doubt was back again; not the sort, however, that made Paul Brent want to scream a guilt that might not be his. This was a doubt induced by cold consideration, grim enough to prove disconcerting.

Actually, Paul could not account for the past half hour, except as a period of mental haze. He remembered starting to his hotel room, but wasn't sure that he had really been there. The spinning lights visible from his window were an occurrence that he associated with previous nights.

It could be that he had come directly here; that he had murdered the man who lay on the floor!

Such a deed, committed in a frenzy, could numb the senses and produce a haze. Confessed killers often stated, honestly enough, that they had no recollection of anything that happened. Paul's own words: "I killed him," spoken aloud to himself, loomed anew as damning evidence.

If only he could snatch some tangible detail from that recent whirl of thoughts!

There was a name somewhere in the medley. A name about which everything revolved. A name that Paul would know instantly, if he heard it; but every effort to recall it made it more elusive. The name that Paul sought and could not find was Shiwan Khan.

With an effort, Paul jolted himself back to the present. He faced the fact that he had a revolver in his hand; that a dead man lay on the floor. The gun could tell him nothing, but the victim could, despite death's intervention. One way for Paul to test his own sanity was to learn if he knew the dead man by sight.

Probably he didn't. That settled, he would feel better. People didn't go about killing strangers merely for the fun of it. Stepping boldly forward, Paul knelt beside the body. Still gripping the gun, he used his free hand to turn the dead face up into the light.

The sight jarred him. Even in death, he recognized those drawn, dissipated features, tight-lipped and bulge-eyed. The dead man was Bob Ryndon, stunt flier and adventurer, whose path had crossed Paul's a few times too often.

They had argued it out heavily, nearly a year ago, when Ryndon had wanted Paul to O.K. some old crates that were being shipped to China. It wasn't a Globe job; the planes were some that Ryndon had bought on his own. But the purchaser would not accept them unless the specifications were approved by a person of recognized ability.

Paul had refused to lend his name to it, on the ground that Globe wouldn't like it. Ryndon hadn't believed him. He had called Paul a fool who put integrity ahead of easy money. Nobody would ever know the difference, Ryndon had said, since a lot of incompetent Chinese aviators were going to crack up whatever ships they received. Paul had coolly told Ryndon to ask someone else to do his dirty work.

Who else knew about that argument?

No one, unless Ryndon had talked about it, which he would not have found good policy. Unless he had found some way to twist the facts against Paul. Nevertheless, it wasn't pleasant for Paul to find that this dead man was an acquaintance, even though he hadn't seen Ryndon for nearly a year.

SUDDENLY sure that he had not killed Bob Ryndon, Paul decided upon immediate departure. He was somewhere in New York; that was certain. If he could find his way to the street, he could go back to his hotel and forget Bob Ryndon. The stunt flier knew plenty of other people; the police would probably find the real murderer long before they reached Paul.

Almost to the door, Paul realized that he still held the gun. He was wondering what he ought to do about

it. An incriminating thing to have, yet something he would need if he met the real killer just outside of here. Paul was speculating upon that unpleasant prospect, when he stiffened.

A click of the doorknob told that someone was entering the room!

Too late to get out of sight from the passage, Paul dropped back, aiming the revolver. He was ready to give challenge, when he found that words were unneeded. The person who entered wasn't formidable. Quite the contrary.

The arrival was a girl. Stepping in from the passage, she faced Paul, a faraway stare in her eyes. That distant expression suited her costume. The girl was clad in Chinese dress that made her a symphony in silk.

Her colorful costume had the appearance of pajamas, topped by a loose, wide-sleeved robe of an exquisite pattern, combining poppy leaves and peacocks. She was one of those rare creatures who might have delighted an opium smoker's dreams.

Her oval face was beautiful: dark eyes with languorous lashes, ruddy lips that were not too bright. Her nose was short, but without the wideness that sometimes marred the symmetry of Chinese features.

Despite her costume, Paul would have classed the girl as an American, rather than Chinese, if it had not been for the olive tinge of her complexion. Since she showed neither fear nor antagonism, Paul lowered the gun and waited.

The girl spoke in English, not with singsong pitch but in a slow monotone:

"My name is Lana Luan."

There was a rippling sound to the name, even with that slow pronunciation. Paul bowed, but did not introduce himself. He watched the girl gaze about the room.

She looked toward a large box-seat couch at the front wall, then toward the radio across the room. Her eyes passed the rear window and settled on the corner where Ryndon's body lay beneath the greenish light.

Sight of the dead man produced no surprise. Lana Luan acted as though she expected to see Ryndon lying there.

Turning to Paul, she eyed the gun and stated, very simply:

"You killed him."

Almost on the point of nodding, Paul restrained himself. Lifting one hand slightly, Lana Luan carried a broad fold of silk cloth with it.

"Let me have the gun," she suggested. "I shall dispose of it. I think it would be wise for you to leave."

There was no malice in the eyes that met Paul's. Their depths revealed a simple sincerity. Perhaps Lana Luan had wanted Ryndon's death, though Paul was convinced that she had not murdered the man. It might be that she was protecting someone else. Whatever the case, it offered an end to Paul's own predicament.

He placed the revolver in the folds of silk, gingerly keeping his hand in readiness, should Lana Luan make a grab for it. His trust was complete when he saw the girl stand motionless, merely waiting for him to

leave.

With a quick stride, Paul stepped toward the passage. He was through it, closing the door, before the girl could possibly have disentangled the gun, to aim it. His parting glimpse restored Paul's momentary loss of confidence. A statue in silk, Lana Luan had made no move whatever.

Not until Paul had time to reach the street did the girl stir from her position. Then turning her head mechanically toward the door, she watched it, while her hand folded in the corners of a silken square. The gun was not lying in a portion of her sleeve. It was in the center of a handkerchief that matched her costume in all its gorgeous pattern.

In the same tone that she had used before, Lana Luan announced:

"He has gone."

THE lid of the box-couch lifted. From the interior came an ugly Mongol face, quite like that of the taxi driver who had brought Paul to this apartment house. The leering Mongol was the actual murderer of Bob Ryndon, and Lana Luan accepted him as another portion of the scene.

Lifting the handkerchief by its corners, she gave it to the Mongol, who carefully wrapped the folds more tightly. He paid no further attention to the girl, as she stepped toward the doorway to make her own departure. Even before the door had closed, the Mongol was engaged in other business.

The silk-wrapped gun pocketed in his American garb, the killer stepped to the radio and lifted the lid of the cabinet.

It was a combination phonograph and radio. From the turntable, which had stopped automatically, the Mongol lifted a ten-inch phonograph record and slid it beneath his dark vest. Moving past the corpse; he was careful not to crack the phonograph record, as he made a rapid search of Ryndon's clothes.

With a dozen pockets to turn inside out, the job took several minutes, despite the Mongol's expert touch. Finished with the clothes, he tapped the pocket of Ryndon's pajama jacket, then had a look through a suitcase that stood in the corner. Satisfied with his task, the Mongol fixed his gaze upon the greenish lamp.

Though his leer did not alter, the Mongol's eyes took on the same distant stare that Paul Brent had noted in the case of Lana Luan. At that time, it had not occurred to Paul that he, too, had held a similar fixed expression, back in his hotel room. He might have realized it, had he remained to witness the actions of this Mongol.

"Yes!" hissed the leering man, suddenly. "It is I, Hoang Khu. I hear you, master. All is done, Kha Khan!"

There was a pause, as if the evil brain behind the yellow face had received an important reminder. A clawlike hand moved toward the greenish light. About to touch the glowing bulb, Hoang Khu quivered, as under a vibrating impulse.

Slanted eyes lost their stare as the Mongol's fingers gripped the light bulb, prepared to loose it from the socket. An instant later, Hoang Khu gave up that purpose. Leaving the light aglow, he whisked from the table and bounded, with a rubbery silence, to the open box-couch at the front of the room.

Clutching one hand to protect the precious record, Hoang Khu vaulted the couch edge with the other. Landing noiselessly, he sped a claw upward, drew the hinged top into place with an action as silent as it was speedy.

A streak of blackness stretched inward from the passage. It formed a hawkish silhouette upon the floor, then dwindled, as the figure that cast it moved into the green light's glow. Of all intruders upon the scene of death, this arrival was the most remarkable.

He was a being cloaked in black, whose slouch hat obscured the profile that had momentarily registered itself upon the floor. Unlike Shiwan Khan, who ruled evil from afar, this being, foe to crime, preferred to visit danger zones in person.

The green glow had welcomed a final figure from the gloom: The Shadow!

CHAPTER III. CRIME'S EVIDENCE

FROM the moment of his entry, The Shadow began an intensified survey of the murder scene, accomplishing his work with most efficient tactics. Starting with Ryndon's body, he noted its position, the condition of the wound, as well as the dead man's face.

With one black-gloved hand, The Shadow tilted Ryndon's chin into the light. All the while, another gloved hand was waiting, half-concealed within The Shadow's cloak folds. The slightest move on the part of any foe, hidden or otherwise, would have brought that ready hand into sight, armed with a .45 automatic.

In inspecting the body, The Shadow used a process that had occurred to neither Paul Brent nor Hoang Khu. He stooped in the corner beyond the flattened form, so that he retained a view of the entire room. It was impossible to tell whether he was actually looking at the body, or keeping camouflaged watch on other portions of the room.

True, there were moments when The Shadow's eyes displayed a reflected glow when they caught the rays of the lamplight; but those moments were seldom, and afforded no opportunity to Hoang Khu, who was watching from the crack of the couch top.

The Mongol considered his own concealment safe. The interior of the couch was dark; no one, not even The Shadow, could have discerned the peering eyes of Hoang Khu.

At intervals, the Mongol eased the couch top a trifle upward, while his other hand sought the handle of a long-bladed knife beneath his coat. But always, Hoang Khu was forced to let the top inch down again, when The Shadow made a timely turn in his direction.

Ryndon's clothes showed plainly that they had been searched. Therefore, The Shadow gave them a very brief examination, which did not allow Hoang Khu time to get busy with the knife. Gliding about the room, The Shadow passed close to the couch, but he was gone before Hoang Khu could take advantage of his nearness.

Reaching the radio, The Shadow used his system of standing against the wall beyond it, thus watching the door, as well as the rest of the room - the couch included - while he made an inspection of the cabinet. He learned, by lifting the lid, that the radio was also equipped as a phonograph.

He also discovered something more.

Though the combination cabinet contained no records, there was dust on the phonograph needle. Peeling away a glove by pressing his left hand beneath his right elbow, The Shadow stroked the needle point with his finger tip and assured himself of the telltale clue.

One of Shiwan Khan's devices, that of influencing persons by sound, was definitely indicated to The

Shadow.

During his roam about the room, the cloaked investigator had given passing glances to the green light. His interest in the olive-tinted bulb had been quite as frequent as Hoang Khu's efforts to bring a knife into play.

Back at the table, The Shadow was comparing the position of the light with that of Ryndon's body. A whispered laugh stirred the room.

Like the stroke of Shiwan Khan's gong, the tone was shuddery. But the air seemed to absorb it, repeating an echoed sibilance, rather than be jarred. The Shadow's laugh remained a recollection, whereas the gong clang had broken off the chain of previous memories.

The green light, as The Shadow saw it, had the sort of glow that would produce a hypnotic effect, the longer that one watched it.

Just how the bulb had been placed here, did not demand immediate consideration. Certain it was that Bob Ryndon had stared at the curious glow, until too puzzled to do anything about it. His mind focused upon the eye-gripping brilliance, the victim had gone into a trancelike condition that had made his murder a simple matter.

Ryndon had never sensed an intruder's entry. He hadn't felt the gun muzzle that had been planted squarely against his spine. It was doubtful that the death shot had jarred him from his coma. Crime had been merciful, in this case, but that did not indicate charity on the part of the insidious master who had ordained Ryndon's death.

Contrarily, a supercriminal who dealt in such calculating methods could resort to wanton cruelty, if it would better serve a purpose. The Shadow had learned that often, in his campaign against living fiends.

GLOATING within the box-couch, Hoang Khu was hopeful that the light would rivet The Shadow's attention, as it had done with others. The Mongol was promptly disappointed.

The Shadow, it seemed, had timed the brief limit in which it was safe to watch the light. Stepping from the table, he began to inspect other portions of the room.

The slight crack on the edge of the box-couch was gone. Settled inside, Hoang Khu was making rapid changes in his plans. The knife was beneath his coat, with the phonograph record. Frantically, he was tugging at the silk cloth in his pocket, to get at the death gun.

Shiwan Khan wanted that revolver as it was, with Paul Brent's fingerprints implanted upon it. Hoang Khu, the tool, was spoiling one design of the hidden master, in an effort to save his own yellow-hued hide. He had no other choice.

If The Shadow lifted the couch top, a knife would not suffice the Mongol. It would be a question of gun against gun, and Hoang Khu's leer, though lost in darkness, was proof that the Mongol considered that he, rather than The Shadow, would be the survivor, should such a duel arrive.

With passing minutes, Hoang Khu realized that The Shadow had apparently ignored the big couch as the possible hiding place of an assassin. That was not entirely unreasonable; outwardly, the couch had an appearance of solidness. Working the top upward with his free claw, the Mongol shoved the gun muzzle to the crevice, along with his eye.

What Hoang Khu saw, pleased him.

The Shadow, apparently satisfied that the room was empty, had returned to the light. This time, to test the glow fully, he had seated himself before the table. The green glow had done the rest. The Shadow was slouched forward toward the light, exactly as Ryndon had been when Hoang Khu murdered him.

Lifting the couch top higher, Hoang Khu aimed straight for The Shadow's back. Then, as a chance breeze from the partly opened window stirred the cloak sleeve, the Mongol changed aim with a snakish action of his claw. Tugging the trigger, Hoang Khu dispatched a bullet to the green light, instead of the black cloak.

Amid blackness wherein glass tinkled to the echoes of the gun blast, Hoang Khu sprang from the couch and dived for the window. A figure shot from the doorway passage, caught the Mongol in a low, fast drive.

Hoang Khu's gun blasted again - above The Shadow's shoulder. The shot told where the weapon was. A gloved hand clamped the Mongol's gun wrist.

Wrenching wildly, Hoang Khu managed to dodge the stroke of The Shadow's gun. Letting his own revolver scale from his hand, he clawed at the long-limbed adversary who had sped in, cloakless, to intercept him. Hoang Khu was fighting with the fierce writhe of a giant python, which told that his present desire was escape.

Hoang Khu's hearing was no keener than The Shadow's. The Mongol had caught the creak of a door hinge before The Shadow entered. Similarly, The Shadow had heard vague indications of the Mongol's rapid sneak to the box-couch. After lulling the hidden killer, The Shadow had tricked him into showing his hand.

Noting the betraying crack along the couch edge, The Shadow had seen it disappear. Whisking off cloak and hat, he had draped them on the chair near the table. Choosing the passage, The Shadow had watched for Hoang Khu's thrust. Only the chance breeze from the window had prevented Hoang Khu from completely gobbling the bait. By shooting out the light, the Mongol had somewhat equalized matters.

His gun gone, Hoang Khu was after his knife. If gripped by the twisty yellow hand, the blade could prove a powerful weapon in this grapple. The Shadow was not deceived by a crackle that came from beneath Hoang Khu's coat. It was the phonograph record, not the Mongol's ribs, that had cracked.

To get the range he wanted, The Shadow whirled Hoang Khu toward the window, then loosed him with a half fling. Dropping back, The Shadow aimed his gun. But the quick-witted Mongol didn't wait.

Head foremost, he crashed through the window, ruining the half-lifted sash with his huge shoulder. Landing on a low roof, a story below, Hoang Khu made a lunge for the roof edge.

By then, The Shadow was at the window, aiming his automatic. Had his finger tightened in its squeeze, there would have been one less Mongol in the service of Shiwan Khan. But The Shadow was forced to hurry the shot, with a jerky motion. A man lunged in from the doorway; behind him came the glare of a flashlight.

Jabbing his shot at Hoang Khu, The Shadow let the recoil carry him about. A tall figure in evening clothes, one arm raised to hide his face, he drove squarely upon the pair who had arrived to start a combat of their own.

THEY were headquarters police. The Shadow learned that as he tussled with them. The flashlight had clattered to the floor, and in the darkness the two men handled their guns earnestly, but with bluntness

rather than speed. The Shadow treated them to jujitsu tactics, which they recognized but could not duplicate. The police guns, when they talked, merely shot into darkness.

One detective was flung in a backward somersault that brought him, gunless, against the box-couch. The other was launched into a spinning dive that ended when he crashed into the radio cabinet. Whipping his cloak and hat from the chair, The Shadow sped out through the doorway.

The half-groggy dicks were groping for their guns. Finding them, they performed individual crawls toward the glowing flashlight on the floor. Their paths crossing before they reached it, they locked in a well-matched grapple. By the time they had taken a few wild slugs at each other, they discovered their mistake.

By then, it was too late for them to even trace the combatant who had so suddenly left them. The Shadow had reached the rear street, where he, in his turn, was learning the futility of gaining an immediate trail.

Again wearing hat and cloak, The Shadow used a tiny torch to discover small blobs of blood, that ended after a few yards.

His shot had clipped Hoang Khu, but probably not seriously. The Mongol had reached friends and was safely away. Those blood splotches, however, were not the only clues that he had dropped. Along, the sidewalk, The Shadow found a few fragments of a broken phonograph record, which he promptly gathered.

Then, with a swift glide across the street, the cloaked being merged with the opposite darkness. Like others whose paths had crossed the trail of Shiwan Khan, The Shadow was gone into the night.

CHAPTER IV. THE CEYLON RUBY

IT was dusk again and Paul Brent, staring from the hotel window, was hoping that the lights of the Broadway sign would begin their vivid whirl. The circles were moving, as they always did when the sign was illuminated, but they had not swung into that peculiar effect of opposite revolutions, timed to the rhythm of the lifting bird wings.

There was reason enough for Paul to seek the hypnotic opiate of those lights. He felt that they, alone, could cure him of a different sort of bewilderment, which the day's events had induced.

On the writing desk lay a newspaper, with an account of Bob Ryndon's death. It told that the murdered aviator's body had been found, following a phone call to the police. Who had given the tip-off, the newspaper didn't say, but it had been a timely one. Headquarters men had almost managed to capture a well-dressed intruder on the premises. Unfortunately, the man had slipped them.

Paul agreed that it was unfortunate. He was convinced that he wasn't the man in question. Whatever else he might have done, Paul hadn't wrestled with a brace of detectives. He at least remembered leaving Ryndon's apartment and coming back to the hotel.

In his opinion, the murderer had returned to the scene of crime, and the police had nearly trapped him. A near-capture, however, did not lessen Paul's own dilemma. The newspapers said that the police had recovered the death gun and were checking it for fingerprints.

Only too well did Paul realize that he had left his own imprints upon the revolver handle. Between him and arrest stood a barrier: his fingerprints were not on file.

But that would not help, if the police learned that he was a friend of Ryndon's and decided to question him. Once his fingerprints were taken, and compared with those on the gun, Paul Brent would be charged with murder.

He remembered how Lana Luan had let the gun nestle in the folds of silk. Was the lovely Chinese girl a party to the plot that might brand Paul as the killer? He did not know, but he hated to believe that she was. The arrival of the returning murderer could have forced Lana Luan to drop the revolver and flee. In fairness to her, Paul was ready to accept that explanation.

What bothered him most, was a telegram from Globe Aircraft. It acknowledged receipt of the orders, and stated that they were being put through with the recommended changes.

Paul had received that wire this afternoon, and the fact that the order sheets were missing proved that he must have mailed them. Unquestionably, he had done so during the same dazed period in which he had gone to Ryndon's place.

Paul could remember the lights. He was sure that they were responsible for all that had happened. That was why he wanted to see them spin again, in hope that while under their influence, he could recapture some important details of yesterday.

WHILE Paul watched, the circles began their concentric revolutions. By the time they had returned to normal, he was receiving the projected thoughts of Shiwan Khan.

Under the control of the being whose name he again could have spoken, Paul went to the writing desk. Picking up a pencil, he wrote mechanically upon a sheet of paper, following the mental dictation that came through his own brain.

The quiver of a gong rang through Paul's head. With a shudder, he found himself at the writing desk. The name of Shiwan Khan was erased from his memory, but upon the paper, in handwriting that was Paul's own, the young man saw:

It would be unwise to deny that the orders are as stated. Mistrust by Globe would result, demanding full explanation. Such details would produce a link to Ryndon's death and bring suspicion from the police.

Though the statements were not Paul's own, they might just as well have been by the time that he had read them. Until then, he had not connected the altered orders with the scene at Ryndon's. Knowing at last that they were joined, Paul saw the entire logic.

Some master brain had forced him to an illegal action, then had framed him as a murderer. Should he repudiate the deed that he had actually performed, Paul would be convicted for a crime that he had not committed!

Self-preservation demanded that Paul Brent take no step to free himself from that dilemma. He could only trust that in some way the schemes of a master plotter might be frustrated, thus releasing Paul - and perhaps others - from the insidious, invisible control.

Circumstances enmeshing Paul Brent were not as bad as he imagined. There was bluff behind the message that Shiwan Khan had forced the dupe to write. The Shadow had scored definite points against his invisible superfoe, and at present was reaping the fruits of his partial victory.

During the periods when he discarded cloak and hat, The Shadow frequently posed as Lamont Cranston, a wealthy globe-trotter who spent many of his idle hours at the exclusive Cobalt Club. The membership list included Cranston's friend, Police Commissioner Ralph Weston, who liked the quiet of

the club for after-office conferences.

As was usual, when crime was on the rampage, Weston was at the Cobalt Club chatting with his ace inspector, Joe Cardona, while Cranston sat by, almost a disinterested listener. Actually, The Shadow was learning just how far the law had advanced with the Ryndon case.

"THERE'S not enough prints on that gun to convict a flea!" Cardona was growling to the commissioner. "Whoever handled it last, smudged it so badly that we might as well forget it."

The Shadow's lips framed a slight smile. Though he had not learned of Paul's visit, he knew that the death gun, if kept by Hoang Khu, could have proven a valuable tool in the incrimination of an innocent party. Lack of Hoang Khu's fingerprints did not matter. The Shadow intended to find that murderous Mongol himself.

"I let the reporters think we had the prints, though," added Cardona. "I told them, too, what we'd found out about Ryndon. How he had gone to a place called Sinkiang, to sell a lot of old crates to the government there, after he couldn't unload them in China."

"Sinkiang is part of China," corrected the commissioner. "They call it the New Dominion. Am I correct, Cranston?"

The smile was traceable upon the hawkish, masklike features of Cranston. His tone was leisurely when he spoke.

"Sinkiang is not precisely what they call it," said The Shadow. "A new dominion, yes, but in a sense its own dominion. It lies between Tibet on the south, and Mongolia on the north. It is a restive land in some ways - the strangest that I have ever visited."

"Why so?"

"It is close enough to feel the influence of Tibet, the one country where mind rules supreme, yet it feels the force of Mongolia, where brute strength has long been a standard. Sinkiang may some day become the very heart of Asia."

Weston decided to test Cranston's knowledge of geography further. The commissioner nodded to Cardona, who produced a small, ruddy object that glimmered in the light. Holding it upon the palm of his hand, Weston displayed it to Cranston. The object was an exquisite ruby of ancient cut.

"Could this have come from western China?"

"Not originally," was Cranston's reply. "Stones of pomegranate-red, like that one, are mined only in Ceylon."

"I told you!" Weston gave a nod to Cardona. "This must be one of the rubies from the Twindell collection. Ryndon probably bought it from one of those dealers in Maiden Lane."

The Shadow was instantly intrigued. He knew of the famous gem collection owned by Benjamin Twindell, a wealthy and eccentric New Yorker. Twindell had been disposing of his gems in batches, during the past six months. He wanted cash, so he said, to buy up more famous precious stones.

A connection between Ryndon and the Twindell gems offered new angles. In Cranston's casual tone, The Shadow asked:

"You say this ruby belonged to Ryndon?"

"We found it in his vest pocket," informed Cardona, "tucked down in the corner. Whoever turned those pockets inside out missed finding it. All right, the ruby didn't come from China."

"It could have," remarked The Shadow. "Ryndon was in Sinkiang. He might have obtained the ruby there."

Cardona didn't agree.

"Maybe they kick people's heads around for footballs in Sinkiang," he said, "but they don't shoot marbles with rubies. I talked with a lot of gem dealers. They say the only valuable stuff that comes from the territory is jade. Besides, Thorner says it looks like one of old Twindell's rubies."

"Who is Thorner?"

"Twindell's representative. He buys up whatever Twindell tells him. Right now, Thorner says the old man's gone nuts over the Chinese curios. Thinks they're bargains, because a lot of them have been shipped over here for sale. But Thorner argues the opposite. He says the market is glutted. But when Twindell says buy, Thorner buys."

"How often does that happen?"

"Whenever there's an auction down in Chinatown, to hear Thorner talk. But to get back to the ruby, Thorner is sure it was one of Twindell's lot, so there's no use wasting time by going to see a few small-fry dealers."

WHEN Cranston strolled from the club, he left Weston and Cardona checking lists of Ryndon's friends. From the names and addresses already compiled, it appeared that they would have to get out an international search warrant, if such a thing existed, to even find the people that the dead stunt flier knew.

They had picked a tougher task than rounding up all the gem dealers in New York; but The Shadow, meanwhile, had set himself a simple and direct task. He intended to visit the next important auction that was held in Chinatown.

From a blue-lit room that served him as a sanctum, The Shadow called his contact man, Burbank. Soon, he was connected through to Dr. Roy Tam, an influential Chinese business man, who had co-operated often with The Shadow.

From Dr. Tam, The Shadow learned that the next auction was scheduled for tonight, in the curio shop managed by Loo Look, a Chinese merchant.

Dr. Tam knew little about Loo Look, but he had much to say regarding other matters that The Shadow mentioned. The call finished, The Shadow glanced at the clock upon his table, noted that he had ample time to reach the auction before its scheduled hour of nine.

From beneath the table, The Shadow brought a portable phonograph. Upon its turntable, he placed a patched record.

There were cracky sounds as the disk revolved beneath the needle. Snatches of music, then intervals of silence. The record was composed of the fragments that Hoang Khu had dropped. They had been fitted into a blank disk, cut specially to receive them!

Listening to the reconstructed record, The Shadow heard a few words from the voice of a pretended radio announcer; then came the finish that he wanted. With clearness, the phonograph gave forth the sounds of a gong, that had a sharp, vibratory effect.

Shrouding curtains quivered upon the sanctum walls, as the black drapes took the vibrance of Shiwan Khan's weird token. When their waver ended, another shudder seemed to stir them. Through the sanctum throbbed the whisper of The Shadow's laugh.

The bluish light clicked off. A deep hush gathered in the solid gloom. The sanctum was empty. The Shadow had departed, bent upon another opportunity that might prove a setback to the schemes of Shiwan Khan!

CHAPTER V. THE CHINESE AUCTION

LOO LOOK'S store resembled many others in Chinatown. It was on the ground floor of a building near the corner of Mott and Pell Streets, and it was the sort of place that usually attracted out-of-town visitors when they came to Chinatown.

A bland, rather squatty Chinaman, Loo Look had rolled in from somewhere and had bought out the merchant who occupied the premises. He had promptly closed the shop for alterations, then had begun a series of auctions to clear out the old merchandise.

This was the third sale of the sort, and the placards in the windows advertised it as the last. There were not very many patrons, because the junk on display in the window would hardly attract a connoisseur, and the Chinatown bus drivers were herding their patrons past Loo Look's toward other shops, where the managers appreciated tourist trade.

Certain it was that Loo Look had an independent way about him, even to the point of discouraging customers, which caused The Shadow to hope for real developments the moment that he entered the almost-deserted auction room.

Coming to the auction as Lamont Cranston, The Shadow naturally arrived in a limousine. The chauffeur had to drive away to find a parking space, but his departure did not deprive The Shadow of American acquaintances.

There were three on the street: Cliff Marsland, who looked like a tough guy visiting Chinatown for a laugh; Hawkeye, a stoop-shouldered fellow who had the shifty shamble of a panhandler; and Clyde Burke, a newspaper reporter on the Classic, who frequently visited Chinatown for human interest stories.

All were agents of The Shadow. Of the three, Clyde was the one most likely to happen into the auction shop. He wasn't needed for the present; two other agents were already there.

One was Harry Vincent, a clean-cut young chap who seemed to have a genuine interest in Chinese curios. The other was Rutledge Mann, a portly, round-faced individual who ran an investment and insurance broker's office, which also served as The Shadow's clipping bureau.

Tonight, Mann was needed for a duty other than cutting out news reports and filing them. His mission was fulfilled when a sallow, quick-eyed man entered the auction room and immediately began an expert survey of art objects on display. Mann gave a thoughtful nod that was meant for Lamont Cranston.

It signified that the arrival was Herbert Thorner, the purchasing representative of Benjamin Twindell.

Perched on a small platform flanked by two wide Chinese screens, Loo Look began the sale. His audience was enlarging, but most of it was Chinese. Loo Look grinned broadly as he hammered the table with a gavel.

If the Chinese buyers thought that they were going to get merchandise at prices less than wholesale, to sell to other shops, they were mistaken. Loo Look's glance toward the side room told that much. He was gazing at Herbert Thorner.

Each time the auctioneer offered an item, Thorner announced a bid higher than anyone would normally give. Meeting with no competition, he won the chance to purchase. Thorner's whole attitude justified the statements that he had made to Cardona; namely, that old Twindell wanted to buy curios, hence it was Thorner's business to get them.

There was one feature of the auction, however, that held The Shadow's interest. The wares that Loo Look offered were objects of worth, better than the odds and ends displayed in the window. Thorner was getting his money's worth, even though he was the lone bidder.

Evidently, Loo Look had discouraged other buyers, in order to give Thorner full call. The Shadow saw some hidden motive behind that practice.

LIFTING a little curtain at the back of the platform, Loo Look brought out new items. A pair of exquisite vases produced a babble from the Chinese present. They entered the bidding, but stopped when Thorner offered five hundred dollars. Loo Look was ready to knock down the sale, when The Shadow spoke in Cranston's tone:

"Six hundred."

In quick, sharp tone, Thorner raised the price to seven hundred. The Shadow offered seven hundred and fifty. Thorner shrugged, and let him have the vases at that price.

Later, an ivory pagoda was auctioned off. Again the bidding waxed between The Shadow and Thorner. When Cranston's calm tone announced twelve hundred dollars as the bid, a wince appeared upon Thorner's sallow features. With another shrug, Twindell's representative let the sale go through.

A change was noticeable on Loo Look's fattish face. The auctioneer was troubled because Thorner had a rival. He glanced over toward the sallow man, who coolly ignored him. Whatever else was due, Thorner was shifting the burden to Loo Look. The auctioneer became more crafty.

Instead of bearing down on Thorner, Loo Look tried to impress Cranston, and found it did not work. Actually, Loo Look was pleased. He thought that he had found the system by which he could eliminate the unwanted buyer.

Turning to the curtain, Loo Look fumbled a few moments, then brought out a porcelain dragon, excellent from the artistic standpoint, despite its hideous appearance.

Setting the dragon upon the table, where it stood a foot high, Loo Look tapped it affectionately and let his roaming gaze center finally upon Cranston.

"Velly fine item," said Loo Look, as though he did not mean it. "Who buy?"

Like Cranston, Thorner was indifferent. A Chinaman offered five hundred dollars. Loo Look lifted the gavel, was about to swing it, when Thorner stepped in with a six-hundred-dollar bid. Before Loo Look could pound the bid through, The Shadow had casually raised the offer by a hundred dollars.

From then on, it was a duel of price, and with good reason. Anyone could have risked a large offer for that dragon. Like Thorner, The Shadow knew it to be a work of the Ch'ien Lung period, which any collector of Chinese porcelain would prize beyond mere money.

Hundred by hundred, the bids were jumping into the thousands. With every increase, Loo Look became more nervous - very odd behavior for an auctioneer. Thorner, backed by the Twindell wealth, seemed quite unconcerned. At last, there was another shrug, this time from Cranston. It came when Thorner offered ten thousand dollars.

Loo Look's gavel hit the block from its own sheer weight. Glad that the ordeal was over, he wiped his forehead with the curtain when he turned in that direction. He offered a few more items, but none was important. After disposing of a small bronze incense burner that Thorner bought for a mere ten dollars, Loo Look closed the sale.

Some of the Chinese onlookers were leaving the auction room. Vincent and Mann went out with them. The Shadow, of course, remained, because he had made purchases. Thorner was getting first service.

Helpers were carrying his trophies out to a car, the porcelain dragon along with them, but Thorner was not paying for his purchases. He simply signed a receipt, which Loo Look accepted, then turned and followed the men who lugged his weighty packages.

From the platform, Loo Look met Cranston's gaze. Shifting his eyes, the auctioneer saw the bank notes that long-fingered hands were peeling from a large roll. Looking farther, Loo Look observed that only Chinese were still in the auction room. Leaning forward, he inquired in confidential tone:

"You like Ch'ien Lung dragon?"

The Shadow acknowledged that he did. Loo Look gripped him by the arm, drew him to the platform.

"I show you velly good one."

STEPPING to the curtained shelf at the rear of the platform, Loo Look probed beyond it. From the motion of his hands, he was trying to indicate that he was drawing another dragon from the shelf, but there was something wrong with the action.

Loo Look's hands were too far apart. Before he could finish whatever he was about, The Shadow was making a long leap in the auctioneer's direction. He caught Loo Look's left wrist, clamping it tight. The Chinaman's right hand gave a jerk.

Instantly, the platform slid apart beneath The Shadow's springing feet. The quick slither of those separating halves was not swift enough to trap him. Like a skater leaving a layer of crackling ice, The Shadow reached the safety of the ledge where Loo Look stood.

With the failure of that thrust, another came. The ornate screens beside the platform were overturned. From each side sprang a pair of murderous Mongols, four assassins of the Hoang Khu type, whipping long knives into play. They did not have to cross the opened floor. They could throw those blades.

Their hands went back for the hurls that The Shadow, in his present position, could not hope to stop. The knives flashed wildly. A splitting surge of human forms had bowled in on the Mongols.

Those alert allies, springing to The Shadow's aid, were not his own agents. They were men from whom neither Loo Look nor the Mongols had expected an attack: the crowd of Chinese who had remained clustered in the auction room!

His head bobbing frantically from side to side, Loo Look saw the Mongols fighting off a human flood. With a high-pitched cry, the treacherous auctioneer managed to complete the pull of his left fingers, despite The Shadow's grip. He tugged the switch that he had tried to yank before he slid the floor apart.

Every light was extinguished. Amid the blackness, the excited babble of many voices, Loo Look gave a frenzied writhe. It did not take him from The Shadow's clutch, but it produced another result. Twisting, Loo Look was overbalanced from the ledge. He had launched himself into the blackened pit that he had opened.

Perhaps Loo Look preferred the fate that lay below, if it would only free him from The Shadow. But even his suicidal effort did not bring release. The Shadow retained his tenacious grip, though it cost him his foothold on the ledge.

Into those yawning depths went two locked figures. They were bound for the same destination, Loo Look and The Shadow!

CHAPTER VI. LOO LOOK SPEAKS

THE plunge was short, but with a solid finish - for Loo Look. Even in the swift dive from the ledge, which he had accepted at a moment's notice, The Shadow had calculated the result and found time to gain a suitable advantage.

Bland Chinamen like Loo Look didn't throw themselves away while they still had hope of life. The auctioneer's dive was one of hope, not suicide.

It jarred Loo Look, however, much more than he had expected. Dropping from the ground floor to a stony basement was not healthy, with another man's weight plunging with him, to land on top of him. That was exactly what happened to Loo Look. In his twist, he had gone first, with The Shadow following.

Rising from the floor, The Shadow flicked a tiny flashlight upon the prostrate auctioneer. Loo Look was stunned, and would remain so for a while. From the open trap above him, The Shadow could hear excited yells, too babbled to interpret. It might be that his loyal Chinese needed help.

Looking for a way out, The Shadow saw a single door to the stone-walled cellar room. It had a knob, but before The Shadow could grip it, the door did the unexpected. It opened, not on a hinge, but in a sliding fashion. Guided by a gleaming light behind them, a pair of Mongols hurled themselves upon The Shadow.

He met them in between their knife-lunging hands. A fist to a jaw floored the first. The Shadow took a throat grip on the second killer, twisted him about and flung him toward the man who held the light.

There was a sweep of a bobbing flashlight, that glared upon the face of Hoang Khu. Then The Shadow was locked with the chief assassin of the lot.

Shiwan Khan had taken no chances in disposing of The Shadow. He had ordered Hoang Khu and two others to be ready to deliver the coup de grace after Loo Look dropped The Shadow in the pit. But none of the trio was able to supply the finishing touch. Even certainties were apt to fail, against The Shadow's strategy.

Upstairs, four of the Mongol fighters were having a tough time with a horde of Chinese. Meanwhile The Shadow, lone-handed, was giving three others an unexpected battle. He had flung Hoang Khu aside and was somewhere in the passage when the three performed another fling in his direction.

Knives, whirling through the air in the blanketing darkness, were met by stabbing tongues of flame that brought howls from the Mongols. One sprawled on the passage floor; another staggered, locking with The Shadow. Twisting that wounded fighter aside, The Shadow let the third go by.

Their knives had missed in the darkness, for they thought The Shadow had dived toward the end of the long passage. The one man who had heard the others stumble was making for a stairway that offered a chance of escape. The fleeing Mongol was Hoang Khu.

In the struggle, there had been no chance for any Mongol, Hoang Khu least of all, to identify The Shadow as anything more than a whirlwind fighter. By producing immediate darkness, The Shadow had been quite as formidable in Cranston's guise, as if attired in his habitual garb of black.

Hoang Khu had recognized The Shadow by deed. With his mates fallen, Hoang Khu had known enough not to stay around.

SHAKING off the wobbly grappler, The Shadow started after Hoang Khu. As he reached the stone steps, a light gleamed above. Someone had pressed the switch that Loo Look had cut off. With The Shadow at the bottom of the stairs, Hoang Khu's flight seemed due for a sharp finish.

Again, The Shadow's finger was on a gun trigger, ready to drop Ryndon's murderer, when intervention saved Hoang Khu. This time, it was not The Shadow who received the attack. Instead, flinging men hurled themselves upon Hoang Khu. They were the victorious Chinese coming from the auction room, to learn what lay below.

Hoang Khu became the center of a human tangle, with The Shadow unable to risk a shot. At no moment was the Mongol entirely visible; sometimes his head bobbed into sight; at others, The Shadow glimpsed one of his swinging arms.

A white bandage showed on Hoang Khu's left wrist, a souvenir of the flesh wound that The Shadow had given him the night before. Knifeless, and partly crippled, Hoang Khu's chances looked slim against the half dozen Chinese who grappled with him.

Numbers, however, seemed to matter little to the wiry, heavy-muscled Mongol, provided The Shadow was not among his antagonists. He was shedding his Chinese opponents with heaves of his broad shoulders. Landing on hands and knees, they were crawling back toward Hoang Khu, when he finally disposed of the last pair who clutched him.

Turning his twist into a drive, Hoang Khu sent the pair down the stairway, straight into the path of The Shadow's gun. Springing upward, The Shadow met the light forms of the pitching Chinese and halted their fall, but the delay cost him his chance to settle matters with Hoang Khu. The Mongol was gone, pursued by the scrambling Chinese who had been crawling back to battle him.

Knowing that trouble still lurked below, The Shadow swung about and reached the bottom of the stairs. He dropped back on the lowest step, as a Mongol made a lunge toward him. The Shadow's adversary was the wounded man whose tussle had led to Hoang Khu's escape. With a knife plucked from the floor, the fellow was seeking another chance of murder.

His lunge was staggy, too high. As the knife descended past The Shadow's shoulder, the Mongol received a gun muzzle against his chest. He heard The Shadow's sharp words in a tongue he understood, ordering him to surrender. Before the Mongol could halt his stagger and snarl a reply, a revolver spoke instead, from the top of the stone steps.

Thrusting aside the crumpling body of the Mongol, The Shadow arose to receive a bespectacled Chinaman, who was hurrying down the stairway. The arrival was Dr. Tam, and he became ardent in his apologies.

He had seen the Mongol's lunge, but had not realized that The Shadow had the assassin under complete

control. It would have been well, Tam recognized, to have kept this Mongol alive.

"The others have all escaped," said Tam, his tone quite sorrowful. "They broke through panels that we did not know about. It is unfortunate, very, that the men I sent here to help you were unable to do better."

The Shadow insisted that they had done well enough. He conducted Tam along the passage, beyond the prone Mongol who had been the first to fall. By the light that came through the open trap to Loo Look's auction platform, they found the auctioneer himself, blinking as he rubbed his head.

Yanking Loo Look to his feet, The Shadow spoke to him in Chinese. He was demanding the name of Loo Look's master, but the fellow did not want to give it. Finding his voice, he uttered a high-pitched jargon that both Tam and The Shadow understood.

Loo Look was saying that he had been paid to run the auction house, but he did not specify why, nor did he state the name of the man who had hired him. Loo Look's evasive speech ended abruptly when The Shadow pressed a gun muzzle against his forehead.

"Speak the name!"

Loo Look spoke it, with a gulp. Fearful of the foe who now gripped him, he discarded his allegiance to his former master. His expression, though, was one of terror as he uttered:

"Shiwan Khan!"

AS if the loosing of that name had wrenched his lips, Loo Look's mouth stiffened into a frozen writhe. The scream that he gargled came deep from his throat, issuing wildly through his half-opened mouth. With a sudden convulsion, he twisted his body free from the hands that gripped him.

Before The Shadow could halt Loo Look's torturous forward lurch; before Dr. Tam could thrust himself in front, to break the fall, Loo Look, his hands clasped tight to his stomach, struck the floor, shoulder first, jolted with a twisty shudder and flipped face upward, dead.

Seemingly, he had been struck down by the invisible hand of Shiwan Khan, in new evidence of the controlling master's unfathomable powers. Nor was that all. Like a token of delivered death, there came a muffled clang from somewhere beyond the confines of that stone-walled pit.

Alarm flashed from the eyes of Dr. Tam as the bespectacled Chinaman stared toward his friend, The Shadow. But there was no expression of awe upon the masklike countenance of Cranston.

Imperturbably, The Shadow pointed to the face of Loo Look. Dropping his gaze, Tam saw the stream of blood that was oozing from the dead auctioneer's lips.

Internally injured by his fall from the floor above, Loo Look had succumbed from the straining effort when he forced himself to utter the name of Shiwan Khan.

As for the clang that followed, it was likewise a coincidence. It came again, louder, ending with a smash. There was an echo of tinkling glass.

The police were breaking through the front of Loo Look's auction house. Shaking Dr. Tam into motion, The Shadow started him out through the passage and up the stone stairs. They were crossing the landing, when the invading police saw them and raised a shout. But there was no chance for the Chinatown Squad to overtake those departers.

Just as Hoang Khu had woven a path through broken panels and short zigzag passages, to escape Tam's loyal crew, so did The Shadow and the estimable Chinese doctor elude the blundering police. Through outside alleys, The Shadow let Tam lead the way.

They were bound for Tam's own headquarters, where The Shadow could contact his agents. After that, The Shadow and Dr. Tam would mark out the next step in their common cause; the trailing of Shiwan Khan!

CHAPTER VII. QUEST OF THE DRAGON

WHILE rapid battle raged in Loo Look's place, some of The Shadow's agents had scattered a flock of tough-looking Chinese out front. Dr. Tam had expected such trouble, when he concentrated some of his men at the auction house. Though tong wars were a thing of the past, lesser feuds still existed in Chinatown.

The dispersed Chinese rioters knew nothing about Shiwan Khan, nor did they unwittingly serve him by making trouble. Others of The Shadow's agents had sped away on another appointed quest. They were trailing Herbert Thorner and his load of curios, which included the rare Ch'ien Lung dragon.

Paced by Moe Shrevnitz, a speedy cab driver in The Shadow's service, the agents had caught up with Thorner's car when it reached its final destination, an old brownstone mansion on an isolated stretch of avenue. They recognized the house the moment that they saw it; the home of Benjamin Twindell.

The car was expected. Two stocky servants came from the Twindell mansion and helped the chauffeur unload. Thorner was no longer in the car; he had dropped off somewhere along the route. From the wheel of the cab, Moe made terse comment to Harry Vincent, who sat in back:

"Pennsy Station."

Harry remembered that the pursuit had led near Pennsylvania Station; that Thorner could have dropped off there. The purchasing agent had left for parts unknown; perhaps he had taken the porcelain dragon with him. Among the wrapped packages being carried into the mansion, it was impossible to tell if the Ch'ien Lung masterpiece was included.

Twindell's mansion was built like a citadel. The only policy was to watch it and check on anyone who entered or left. When Moe wanted to follow Twindell's chauffeur, Harry said no. The fellow could supply no information. Moe might be needed later.

Soon, Harry's foresight was proven. A cab stopped near Twindell's house. When it drew away, Harry was sure he saw a yellow face behind the wheel. He ordered Moe to trail the other cab, and signaled the deployed agents to be alert.

The order was too late. Instinctively, every agent had glanced toward the moving cab, then back toward Twindell's house. During the interim, a figure in darkish gray had crossed the sidewalk and taken a short passage that led to a side door.

There was no haste to the newcomer's motion. When he reached the side door he stood there, apparently confident that the drab hue of his attire would render him unnoticed.

He was by no means invisible, but his outline was vague, much like a camouflaged pattern. Even his saffron face was no more than a blur that could have been a portion of the dingy yellow brick that formed the house wall.

The human chameleon lifted one hand slowly, let it glide to a bell button beside the door. Oddly, his finger did not actually press the button; it merely remained against it, then folded into the hand as it descended. Nevertheless, the summons was answered by one of Twindell's husky servants.

He was close enough to see the face outside the doorway, that servant, but, curiously, he didn't. The gleam of eyes faded as the man in gray let his eyelids droop. The servant's puzzled gaze went past him, almost through him. Then, as though impelled by an idea, the servant nodded.

Stepping from the doorway, he looked along the house wall. Seeing nothing, he went back inside and closed the door.

The thing in gray was no longer outside the doorway. With its same slow motion, the figure had moved into the house. Watching the servant, The Shadow's agents did not see it go. Again, a conspicuous sight had drawn their attention the wrong way.

GLOOMY as a morgue, Twindell's mansion had a grand stairway leading to the second floor. Like an ancestral ghost come back to haunt the place, the gray shape moved up the steps, undiscerned by servants who were in the lower hall.

At the top, the unheralded visitant turned to the right. At the end of a short passage, he stepped into a lighted room and waited.

The room was Twindell's study. It had desks, filing cabinets, and other office furniture; but it also served as a curio room. Except for a few old weapons, which included Turkish scimitars and African spears, the place was filled with the Chinese items that Twindell had begun to collect.

Large screens and garish tapestries dominated the scene; but on a mantelpiece above a fireplace opposite Twindell's big desk sat a row of porcelain dragons, four in all. They were placed where Twindell could stare directly at them, whenever he sat at his desk.

Old Benjamin Twindell was at his desk at present, but he was not looking at the mantel. Instead, he was cackling gleefully over a new prize, a fifth dragon that stood on the desk.

Against the black background of a large safe set in the wall behind his desk, Twindell's face looked very white and withery. But his eyes were sharp, and his hands, despite their tight-skinned thickness, were very quick.

Those hands were fondling the new dragon as they would stroke a pet. At moments, Twindell's fingers went tight and clutched the smooth porcelain. Those moments marked his greatest glee, and Twindell had a habit of tilting his head back when he cackled. In the midst of one tilt, his chortle ended in a sharp croak.

Twindell's eyes had sighted the figure in the doorway. His lips gave a fishlike gasp; then from his thin throat came the name:

"Shiwan Khan!"

Small wonder that Shiwan Khan excited such complete awe from the man who viewed him. His very arrival was uncanny, in a house so thoroughly guarded. His appearance went with that weird ability. When Shiwan Khan wanted eyes to look elsewhere, they did not see him. When he wished them to fix upon his face, they remained riveted.

Shiwan Khan's loose-fitting clothes were American. Considerably oversize, they had a baggy appearance. His features made that drab garb fade from mind. After meeting Shiwan Khan face to face,

one retained a mental picture of him as a being clothed in a robe of dull gold. Benjamin Twindell could recall that phenomenon from other times when he had met Shiwan Khan.

The saffron color of Shiwan Khan's face was the exact hue of the room lights, which produced the curious impression that the features were actually colorless, but gifted with the ability of absorbing the light about them.

Wide at the forehead, the face tapered to a pointed chin. Set in the center of that triangle was a thin, straight nose that stood as sharply as a ruled line. Beneath thin eyebrows that curved almost to the temples were green eyes that had a catlike glow.

Thin mustaches hung down from his upper lip, and on his chin was a slight dab of whiskers.

Shiwan Khan's mouth seemed lipless, until he opened it. Then, from lips that were thin streaks of brown, his voice dropped slow, well-accented words that broke the hush like tinkles of a bell.

"I HAVE come," said Shiwan Khan, "to speak with you about our future plans."

Twindell's scrawny hands clutched the dragon tighter.

"Have no fear concerning your dragon," added Shiwan Khan. "Five are already yours. The remaining two shall be delivered."

A pleased grin spread across Twindell's withered face.

"It will not be wise for Thorner to buy them as he did before," spoke Shiwan Khan, in his singular tone. "I shall have a messenger meet him with the next one. As for the final dragon, I shall choose a special method of delivery."

"Then our plans are unchanged?"

"My plans are never changed!" Shiwan Khan's slitted mouth widened into a contemptuous smile, that could have been meant for The Shadow. "You know my plans, Twindell."

"To rule the world -"

"From my hidden domain in Xanadu, beneath the barren reaches on the borders of Mongolia. You remember, Twindell, who I am."

Twindell nodded.

"I am the descendant of Genghis Khan!" For the first time, the visitor's voice showed change in tone. "Of the conqueror who could have ruled all the world, had he so chosen. I hold the treasures of his descendant, Kubla Khan!

"Treasure is not power. Like my ancestors, I am destined to become the Great Ruler. All the world shall call me Kha Khan! I shall have power, Twindell, supreme power! And you, because you have served me, shall have -"

Shiwan Khan paused. His strange green eyes roved from the desk to the mantel, then back again, to the object that Twindell so eagerly clutched. His voice restored to its accustomed level, Shiwan Khan concluded:

"You shall have your dragons."

Happy, Twindell was nodding. Then Shiwan Khan was close beside the desk. Close to Twindell's ear, he was reminding:

"In Tibet, I learned the power of the distant mind; with that mastery, I control the ways of men. To gain the instruments that I need for conquest is simple, where ordinary persons are concerned. But there are others - especially one other - who may interfere.

"There was trouble tonight, in Chinatown. I know its maker, a creature who calls himself The Shadow. All that he can have learned from Loo Look is my name. But he, or someone sent by him, may seek more from you.

"Should you be questioned by The Shadow, give him this casket" - Shiwan Khan produced a small, square silver box from beneath his baggy coat - "and say that it contains the answer that will satisfy him. From its contents, he will learn more than you could tell him.

"Yet what he learns will not destroy my plans, nor yours. But remember, Twindell - with all others, you know nothing. You are competent enough to deceive them. With The Shadow, I can trust no strength but my own."

Nodding, Twindell received the silver casket and placed it carefully in a desk drawer. There was a bell button on the desk; Twindell saw Shiwan Khan place his finger upon it. The greenish eyes were fixed in a glowing stare, but Shiwan Khan did not press the button. Then, turning to Twindell:

"I have projected the impression," said Shiwan Khan, "that will bring your servant. When he arrives, ask him who rang at the side door. When he says no one, tell him to make sure that he bolted the door."

"But he will see you -"

"He will not see me. The human form that remains motionless is seldom seen. When the brain behind that form can suspend its action of thought, it gives off no impressions. That accomplished, the bodily form is never seen."

STEPPING halfway toward the door, Shiwan Khan became rigid. His eyes stared into space, then closed. Twindell watched him, half expecting him to fade away. Then Twindell's attention was attracted by the entering servant, who came into the room wearing a puzzled expression.

Walking straight past Shiwan Khan, the man stopped before the desk and queried:

"Did you ring, sir?"

Twindell ignored the question, to put one of his own.

"Tell me, Harper, who was at the side door?"

"I'm glad you asked that, sir." The servant was relieved. "I am sure that someone rang. But there was no one there, sir."

"Very well. When you go downstairs, see that the door is bolted. You may have forgotten it."

As Harper went out, Twindell looked for Shiwan Khan. The green-eyed visitor was no longer in the room. Like Harper, Twindell had become unconscious of his presence. Shiwan Khan had left, unnoticed!

The side door was unbolted when Harper found it. Shiwan Khan had drawn the bolt, to move outdoors.

He was a gray shape, timing his slow-motion advance to the approach of a cab. It was the one that The Shadow's agents had seen before. It had simply kept circling, with Moe on the trail, until the appointed time for its return.

After a halt, the cab pulled away. None of the watchers had seen a passenger enter it. Moe still followed, but Shiwan Khan took care of that by giving an order to the Mongol driver.

Swinging a corner, the cab halted at the curb. Its occupants remained motionless, as Moe wheeled past on an imaginary trail. Again, Shiwan Khan had demonstrated the power of mind. His cab turned about, sped away in the opposite direction.

A black-cloaked figure was arriving, meanwhile, among the agents stationed outside of Twindell's. Receiving reports in person, The Shadow was told that no one had entered or left the mansion.

Only The Shadow could have detected the weird coming and going of Shiwan Khan. And The Shadow had reached the scene too late!

CHAPTER VIII. MESSAGES AT MIDNIGHT

LIKE The Shadow, Shiwan Khan had devious routes in darkness; ways that led him to a hidden headquarters. The base that Shiwan Khan used was quite as remarkable as The Shadow's sanctum, and it possessed some features decidedly its own.

The walls of the lair were hung with dull gold cloth, the same color of the robe that Shiwan Khan was now wearing. It was odd that Twindell, who had never seen that robe, should picture it as part of the master Mongol's make-up. Perhaps it was the powerful force of Shiwan Khan's thoughts that had given Twindell the correct impression.

Alone in his lair, Shiwan Khan could wear the habits of a mighty ruler. It was not mere whim that made him don that robe. From here, Shiwan Khan showed the power of his rule - over the minds of men!

Opposite the door of the gold-walled room was a small alcove. There, Shiwan Khan seated himself in a chair that had the ornate appearance of a small throne. Coupled with that ancient touch, the chair had a modern feature. It swiveled when Shiwan Khan turned about.

Facing a glass board that covered the rear wall of the alcove, Shiwan Khan gave further evidence of his ability at thought projection. He was using telepathy, the art that he had learned in Tibet, in combination with a scientific apparatus that he had designed.

In the East, the reception of projected thoughts was common. To apply it in America, something was needed to obtain the attention of untrained receivers, and Shiwan Khan had the required method.

He placed his long forefinger upon a button and actually pressed it. Immediately, lights showed upon the glass in front of him. Shiwan Khan gazed at a bird with moving wings; at circles, of different colors, that ran riot around the central figure.

In miniature, those lights formed an exact replica of the Broadway sign visible from Paul Brent's hotel window. Connected by a distant control, the sign was speeding up just like the lights on the glass board. To that extent, the whole device was mechanical; but it induced the mental result.

His eyes fixed, Shiwan Khan went into a self-induced trance. Finally, in bell-like tone, he spoke:

"Paul Brent... Paul Brent -"

He must have sensed an answer, for his next words were:

"I am Shiwan Khan. The thought that next comes to your mind is one that you shall remember."

From the small table beneath the board, Shiwan Khan drew a photograph of Lana Luan. He brought the picture between his own eyes and the revolving light. Slowly, he announced:

"Lana Luan. You have met her in reality. You meet her in your dream. Lana Luan."

Lowering the picture, Shiwan Khan lifted a small hammer, struck it lightly against a large gong that hung beside the flashing board. Golden curtains gave a quiver, that persisted even when the tone had ended. Shiwan Khan turned off the whirling lights.

He had given Paul Brent an added impression, another link that would keep him committed on the matter of the airplane contracts. Lana Luan was the link. Paul would remember that name from his brief haze. But again, as before, he would not recall the name of Shiwan Khan.

Pressing a second switch, Shiwan Khan produced a new array of lights upon the board. They showed a many-colored sign advertising a brand of cigarettes. The lights came on with a long glow, then unexpectedly went off.

The blank seemed timed, for when the glare appeared again, it came at an instant that produced a pulsating throb from Shiwan Khan's gold-clad form.

THE same effect jarred a gray-haired man who was pacing the veranda of a penthouse near Times Square. He saw the lights of the real sign, a huge affair, a dozen blocks away and stopped his incessant walk.

Many persons would have recognized that gray-haired man. He was Guy Chadbury, who held controlling interests in several companies that manufactured explosives. Chadbury had recently been in the news because of his testimony to congressional committees in Washington.

Chadbury had been authorized to manufacture munitions, chiefly bombs for airplanes, to determine the potential output of his factories in the event of war. At present, quantities of such munitions were ready for delivery to the government, along with Chadbury's reports.

In New York for conference with the managers of his factories, Chadbury had obtained this penthouse at a bargain rate, to complete an unfinished lease.

Every night, he had been attracted by the lights of the cigarette sign. They had a timing that caught the eye and held it; but only at certain hours. Chadbury had watched them often, wondering if the effect would occur again. Again, the lights had found the rhythm which fascinated him.

His arms propped on the railing, Chadbury became motionless. The world was a void, except for those repeating lights. Even they seemed to blur as Chadbury heard a slow, faraway voice, which struck him as familiar.

"Guy Chadbury -"

"Yes."

"I am Shiwan Khan. When I speak, all obey."

From then on, the voice was closer, wording thoughts that seemed to grow in Chadbury's own mind. It

was calling him a fool to sell the full supply of munitions at cost, when he could rate his factories on one month's output, instead of two.

Those voiced thoughts were reminding him of recent orders for blasting materials, to be shipped to South American copper mines. If the munitions were sent instead, they would be welcome when received. Chadbury would profit through his own mistake, and no one would be the wiser.

Striving to fight off the urge for double-dealing, Chadbury was swept with a thought that had troubled him the night before. It concerned his niece, Beatrice. She was his brother's daughter, but close enough to Chadbury to be his own.

Through his mind throbbed the uncontrollable conviction that Beatrice was linked with the plan in question, that her safety depended upon his going through with it.

Turning in trancelike fashion, Chadbury walked into the penthouse. Seating himself at a table in the corner of the living room, he began to pencil notes upon a sheet of paper. He was thus engaged when his secretary entered and stood waiting with a handful of papers.

After a few minutes, the secretary ventured to interrupt Chadbury's thoughts. With a slight cough, he remarked:

"Mr. Chadbury?"

Chadbury did not hear the interruption. At that moment, his brain was ringing from the jarring note of a discordant gong. Jolting up in his chair, he gripped the table, as if waking from a nightmare. Blinking, he saw the secretary.

"Oh, hello, Briggs!" Chadbury's long face showed a tired smile. "I must have been asleep. What is it?"

"About those reports. You said that you would have the figures ready, sir."

"Of course!" Chadbury glanced at the desk. "Yes. Here they are. Take them down, Briggs, as I give them."

In the midst of his dictation, Chadbury paused.

"That's odd," he said. "I've put these on a basis of one month's output. If we double them -"

He stopped himself. Written below the hurried figures was the one word, a name: "Beatrice." Chadbury looked at the papers in his secretary's hand.

"Anything from the Queen Anne?" he demanded abruptly. "Did Beatrice answer that radiogram I told you to send last night?"

"Why... why, no, sir -"

"There is an answering radiogram in those papers, Briggs. Let me have it at once!"

"Yes, sir. I intended to give it to you."

TAKING the radiogram from the troubled secretary, Chadbury read it. The message fitted his worryment. It stated that his niece was not on board the steamship Queen Anne, the ship on which she had booked passage for a Mediterranean cruise. The liner was four days out. Beatrice had been missing all that while.

Chadbury was drumming his desk.

"She's still in New York, Briggs!" he exclaimed. "At least, let us hope she is. I should have gone with her to the pier. I would have, if it had not been for that appointment with a man who did not arrive here!"

"Shall I call the police, Mr. Chadbury?"

"No." Chadbury's eyes were back upon the desk. "After all, there is no need to worry." Chadbury was speaking grimly, his gaze upon his own notations. "We shall hear from Beatrice. She probably missed the boat, and did not want me to be alarmed. By taking a regular liner, she could meet the cruise ship at Marseilles, or some other port. Let us finish these reports, Briggs."

"Very well, sir."

"Write the figures that I give you. The government only wants delivery on one month's output."

"Are you sure, Mr. Chadbury?"

"Yes. I talked with Washington today, while you were out. The rest of the supply" - Chadbury was tracing his own scrawled notations - "is to go to our New Jersey storage plant, along with the blasting materials."

With that, Chadbury crumpled the paper that lay on the desk and flung it into the wastebasket. He had lied to Briggs about that talk with Washington. But Chadbury knew that he was no longer his own master, not if he wished to see his niece alive.

He was fighting to recall a name - the name of Shiwan Khan - but it escaped his recollections. Like Paul Brent, he was fighting for some chance to shake off a baleful influence. At heart, however, Guy Chadbury felt that he was helpless.

IN Shiwan Khan's golden lair, three lights were glowing on the glass-fronted board. In the living room of a Long Island residence, a heavy-jawed man was leaning back in a chair staring at the room lights, which made the same triangular arrangement.

The man with the bulldog countenance was Mitchell Dorron, manager of the Tropical Export Line, which owned a fleet of freighters. His eyes were fixed on the room lights; his lips were moving slowly, as Dorron talked to the shining lights.

"On the Aritoba, bound for Chili," muttered Dorron, in a rumbling tone. "Shipments from Globe Aircraft and Chadbury Enterprises. Arrangements to be made tomorrow."

There was a pause, then Dorron repeated back his next impressions:

"Through the Canal, the Aritoba will change course for the Orient, with her cargo, duplicating the trip of the Southern Star. Yes, I shall remember."

The lights in Dorron's living room lost their glow at the distant touch provided by Shiwan Khan. Dorron heard the stroke of a gong; it seemed to echo from the dome of a reading lamp beside his shoulder. His eyes lost their stare, and Dorron smiled in the slight glow from the lamp.

He could remember the name of Shiwan Khan, though he knew that it soon would fade. But he would not forget instructions. Dorron was writing them down.

This was not the first time that he had served his invisible master. The trip that he was arranging for the

Aritoba was identical with a voyage that the freighter's sister ship, the Southern Star, had made one month ago.

Reading the names of Paul Brent and Guy Chadbury, men with whom he would soon have dealings, Dorron gave a chuckle. They were new to the ways of Shiwan Khan. Dorron fancied that they were not enjoying themselves tonight. In fact, they were not.

Paul Brent was seated in his hotel room, staring at the ceiling, trying to recapture portions of odd experiences that had ensnared him. All that he could see was the ever-appearing face of Lana Luan, the Chinese girl that he had met in actuality, as well as in the strange dream-world ruled by Shiwan Khan.

In his penthouse, Guy Chadbury was gazing solemnly at an actual photograph of a very beautiful girl with dark eyes and raven hair. She was his niece Beatrice, and in the photograph she was wearing an evening gown.

Chadbury could picture Beatrice in various other costumes. But it never occurred to him that a high-collared jacket adorned with peacocks and poppy leaves would cause anyone to imagine Beatrice to be a Chinese girl.

Paul Brent could have informed him on that subject. He would have identified that lovely face immediately, could he have viewed the photograph. But he did not know the girl as Beatrice Chadbury. Paul Brent had met her as Lana Luan!

CHAPTER IX. THE HIDDEN HAND

AFTERNOON sunlight, glinting through the windows of Twindell's study, brought a sparkle from many gems upon the broad-topped desk. Benjamin Twindell, a smile upon his dryish face, was alternately nodding and shaking his head at prices offered for his wares. He was selling another portion of his jewel collection to an eager group of dealers.

Prices settled, the purchasers gathered in the gems that they had bought. There were sapphires, emeralds, and many other precious stones among the lot. Three witnesses, however, were interested in gems of a different species: rubies.

For the benefit of Commissioner Weston and Inspector Cardona, Lamont Cranston was pointing out the different types of ruddy gems. He indicated the pigeon's-blood stones from Burma, the garnet-hued type of Siam, finally the pomegranate-red of Ceylon.

By the time the sale was over and Twindell had gathered in the checks, both Weston and Cardona were convinced of the fact that they had come here to prove: that Ryndon's ruby had once belonged to the Twindell collection.

When the dealers had gone, Twindell had time to talk to his distinguished visitors. Weston showed him Ryndon's ruby, and Twindell gave a slow nod.

"It was probably mine once," he affirmed, "but I have sold so many, how should I remember them? To me, each new gem was something to admire, then store away."

He gestured toward the closed safe behind his desk. Then, thoughtfully:

"Gems still intrigue me. But I shall purchase only those of historical importance, after I have disposed of those which remain in my present collection. Meanwhile, I have found another interest."

He pointed to the mantel, where five Chinese dragons sat in a stately row. Though similar in size and

shape, each had distinctive features. Noting them, The Shadow picked out the one that Thorner had bought the night before.

"Those porcelain dragons," said Twindell, "belong to the period of Ch'ien Lung. They were designed by the celebrated T'ang Ying, who had charge of the imperial porcelain factory at that time. T'ang Ying left several treatises on the manufacture of porcelain, and in one of them he mentioned the seven dragons.

"Gentlemen" - Twindell's eyes fairly gleamed with enthusiasm - "I believe that I have acquired five of those seven dragons! Should I find the other two, I shall be the only man in the world owning a complete series of Ch'ien Lung masterpieces!"

TWINDELL'S manner impressed two listeners, Weston and Cardona. To The Shadow, though he carried the calm pose of Cranston, the collector's talk was froth. The Shadow was familiar with the treatises that Twindell mentioned and knew of no reference to a series of seven dragons. Unquestionably, the objects on the mantel came from the Ch'ien Lung period, but The Shadow doubted the rest.

With one proviso. Twindell's mention of the number, seven, indicated that he was cagily expressing a half truth. Evidently, Twindell expected to have two more dragons later, and therefore had emphasized the coming total.

The Shadow hefted the dragons, at Twindell's suggestion. They were hollow, open at the bottom, and therefore quite light. Remembering how Loo Look had thumped one dragon on the auction table, The Shadow planted his in the same manner on Twindell's mantel.

The old man gave a sharp cackle, fearing that the dragon had been injured. Seeing that it wasn't, he beamed again.

Casually, Weston asked Twindell if the fifth dragon had come from last night's auction. Twindell acknowledged that it had. He said that his purchasing representative, Thorner, had bought it for him, and had fortunately left the place before the trouble started. Today, Thorner was out of town seeking more curios, but Twindell hardly dared hope that he would be lucky enough to uncover the sixth dragon.

"I believe that all are in this country," asserted Twindell, "but there will be no way of telling, until we have found them."

That ended the questioning, though The Shadow would have liked to ask Twindell more. It was evident, though the law did not suspect it, that Twindell was in some way connected with the mysterious master mind, Shiwan Khan. Neither Weston nor Cardona had heard of Shiwan Khan, nor of Hoang Khu, for that matter, though the police had found a few dead Mongols along with the deceased Loo Look.

Somewhere, somehow, Shiwan Khan, the unfathomable, might even now be plotting new crime. But The Shadow, recognizing the mighty power of a foe who could keep his very existence veiled, considered the task of finding Shiwan Khan as something that could be best accomplished alone.

The Shadow's guess that Shiwan Khan's new machinations were under way was definitely correct. At the very time when Commissioner Weston and his party were leaving Twindell's, Mitchell Dorron, a prominent shipping man, was talking with two visitors in his office: Paul Brent and Guy Chadbury.

Mitchell was arranging for the freighter Aritoba to take on a cargo of Globe airplanes and motors, also a shipment of blasting materials from Chadbury Enterprises. Both Brent and Chadbury were promising an answer by the next day.

The reason was that each intended to await a message from the brain controlling the mysterious lights.

Without such approval, they could not finally commit themselves. Neither, of course, gave any inkling of the reason for postponing a decision.

THE conference in Dorron's office was the very type of event that The Shadow would have expected Shiwan Khan to produce. The case of Twindell proved that Shiwan Khan dealt with persons of wealth and influence. There was every indication that he either held a complete mistrust of crooks of the American variety, or had no cause to use them.

In that surmise, The Shadow was placing too sharp a limit upon the activities of Shiwan Khan. Like The Shadow, Shiwan Khan preferred to supply the unexpected. He was branching out along the line that The Shadow had eliminated, and Shiwan Khan was making his preparations this very afternoon.

Among the so-called big shots in Manhattan, a crook named Flash Gidley could well have regarded himself unique. Flash, dapper, suave of manner, was one crook who was willing to wait for certainties, rather than risk chances.

Weeks at a time, Flash would sit about his sumptuous apartment, attended only by his lieutenant, Herk Duvan, indifferent to many opportunities for crime that were phoned in by members of the mob. This afternoon, Herk, a big and bulky rowdy who preferred strong-arm work to strategy, was complaining about Flash's methods.

"That theater job would be a pipe!" insisted Herb. "They bank a pile of dough every week. All we got to do is barge in before the armored car shows up, and grab off the cash."

"With a couple of cops outside the place?" purred Flash. "And about a thousand people inside, to get a look at us? Forget it, Herk!"

"The boys think it's good -"

"And the dough I'm paying them is good! As long as I keep them on the pay roll, they've got no squawk. Sit down, Herk, and help me listen to the radio."

Thumbing the dials of a brand-new radio set, Flash listened intently to the news reports. He was interested in the fact that a gentleman named Benjamin Twindell was disposing of rare jewels, in order to collect Chinese dragons. Twindell, it happened, had willingly talked about his new hobby to reporters, who had called up after Commissioner Weston left.

Herk Duvan had a comment.

"Say, Flash!" he gruffed. "Maybe there's something in them dragons. If a guy collects them, they're worth dough, ain't they?"

"Who ever heard of trying to fence a dragon?" snapped Flash. "Listen, Herk, if you want to put that clockwork brain of yours to work, I'll give it something to tick about."

"What's that?"

"Tell me who shipped us this nifty radio set. Some guy that's trying to suck in with us, I'll bet. Give it a gander, Herk. It's class!"

The radio set was an unusual one. It was large, and among its ornate features was one that Flash had never seen before. Three lights were set above the dial. When a station was tuned in just right, a yellow light glowed. A variation in one direction brought a green light; in the other, a red.

The set was faulty, though. If the yellow light glowed alone for more than half a minute, both the green and the red would light up. After that, all three lights would flicker continually, in a manner that Flash said made him woozy when he watched them.

As the news bulletin ended, the three lights were busy with their flickering. Looking at Flash, Herk noted that he was bowed close to the radio set. Flash was intent, though he could not possibly be hearing anything. Then Herk heard him mumble.

Mechanically reaching for a pencil, Flash began to scrawl something on a piece of paper. Herk stared in awe.

Suddenly, Flash jolted upward. He looked at the radio, then at Herk. As he shoved the switch, he saw the paper in his hand. He read it, whirled to Herk.

"Did I write this?"

Herk nodded.

"Am I nuts?" queried Flash, softly. "Or did I hear it? A voice - a gong - and this!" He tapped the paper. "If this stuff is the real McCoy, it's worth fifty grand to us!"

Amazed, Herk reached for the paper. Flash shoved him aside, nudged toward the telephone.

"Get hold of the boys. Tell them to be ready."

"I must have heard a voice," murmured Flash to himself. "Anyway, this job is worth going after. The guy means it" - Flash crumpled the paper and dropped it in an ash tray, to burn it - "because he even had me write down his moniker - Shiwan Khan!"

It was an hour later when Benjamin Twindell received a telephone call from Herbert Thorner. The purchasing agent was back in town in response to a telegram that he thought Twindell had sent him. He gave an address over the wire, and Twindell repeated it aloud.

"You're to go there at nine o'clock?" asked Twindell. "Very well, Thorner." The old man gave one of his cackles. "Perhaps you will find a dragon waiting for you. I expect another, very shortly."

There was not a shade of doubt in Twindell's mind. Thorner had received the telegram from Shiwan Khan. But when Twindell stared at the study floor, his nerve almost left him. He thought he saw a long, streaky shadow there.

The stretch of blackness faded while Twindell was reaching in the desk drawer for the silver casket that Shiwan Khan had said would satisfy The Shadow. Twindell chuckled his relief. He thought his imagination had bothered him.

The blackness was real enough. It became a solid shape, descending Twindell's grand stairway. On the ground floor The Shadow, a living figure, glided past Twindell's servants and made his exit by the side door. For a moment, he was visible in the dusk outside the house; then he was gone.

Eyes from across the street had glimpsed The Shadow's fleeting shape. A gray-clad form no longer remained immobile. Entering a Mongol-driven cab, Shiwan Khan delivered a monotoned laugh as he rode away.

Tonight, the master who knew the mysteries of the East was confident that he would dispose of the only enemy who could ever hope to balk his plans of world-wide conquest.

Shiwan Khan was sure that he had prepared The Shadow's finish!

CHAPTER X. WEST MEETS EAST

IT was eight o'clock, and Beatrice Chadbury was looking at the lights. Only she wasn't Beatrice Chadbury; she was Alice Haywood. The very thought made her laugh, because she knew that her name was not Alice Haywood, after all.

She was Lana Luan.

She was registered at this little hotel under the name of Alice Haywood, but that was because she was wearing American clothes. Actually, she believed herself to be Lana Luan, and in her case, the lights that she watched did not produce a merely temporary daze.

Beatrice Chadbury was completely under the control of Shiwan Khan. When the lights began their vivid changes, they took her into a world that she had come to consider as her own. The lights belonged to a sign above an uptown Chinese restaurant called the Green Pagoda.

When they changed, the lights made Chinese characters, and Beatrice could read them, which was one reason why she felt sure she was Lana Luan. A message spelled itself as she watched. Calmly, Beatrice left the hotel room and went down to the street.

At the door of the Green Pagoda, the girl was greeted by the bowing Chinese proprietor, who conducted her to a corner booth, set in an alcove near a large Buddha that rested on a high pedestal.

Beatrice did not remain in the corner booth very long. Reaching to a partition on the side toward the Buddha, she slid back a panel. A dim stairway showed below, leading beneath the Buddha. Beatrice took that route, closing the panel after her.

After following a few twisty passages, the girl reached a stairway that had evidently belonged to an old house. Walled in on both sides, it made a route to the second floor, above the Chinese restaurant. On that floor, Beatrice unlocked the door to a small room.

This was her room, where she became Lana Luan. The place had a table, two chairs, a wall mirror, and a curtained closet. Drawing back the curtain, Beatrice gave a happy sigh as she saw her costume of thick silk pajamas, short kimono of peacock and poppy pattern, along with a pair of soft, dark Chinese slippers.

Rapidly disrobing, she flung her American clothes disdainfully upon the nearer chair. Sliding into the Chinese costume, she smiled at herself in the mirror. These clothes were comfortable; they seemed a part of her. She was Lana Luan.

The change was really remarkable. When she entered the room, Beatrice had looked decidedly American. When undressed, her figure had shown entirely white. But the moment that her new attire covered her sleek body, she seemed definitely Chinese.

It was the effect of the costume's pattern. Even in dress design, Shiwan Khan could work deception upon observers. One glance at Beatrice's exotic costume marked her as Chinese; from then on, anyone who saw her looked for Oriental traces in her features. With dark hair and eyes, long lashes, and pursed, ruddy lips, Beatrice was the proper type to produce the illusion.

The pajamas had long sleeves and legs. Her hands were only half visible, her ankles not at all. Thus, chance traces of whiteness were eliminated, and in Paul's case, an added element had strengthened the

Chinese appearance of Lana Luan. He had met the girl in a room illuminated only by a greenish light, which had given an olive tint to her complexion.

LEAVING her Chinese boudoir, Beatrice stole along a short passage, passed a spiral stairway and came to a golden door. It opened as she stretched her hand. Shiwan Khan was waiting on the threshold of the golden throne room.

Smileless, Shiwan Khan presented the girl with a porcelain dragon. As she clutched the object weightily in her arms, the master plotter repeated slowly in English:

"Enter the house where the driver takes you. Give the dragon to a man named Herbert Thorner. When he has gone, leave by the same way you entered."

Beatrice nodded. Shiwan Khan pointed her back along the passage. She descended the usual stairway to the level of the restaurant; but, instead of returning to the booth, she opened a panel that led to a service exit. She always took that path, leading to the rear street, when she was Lana Luan.

Stepping into a cab driven by one of Shiwan Khan's Mongols, Beatrice paid no further attention to her journey. The cab eventually reached a dark street and rolled slowly along it.

The Mongol strained his eyes toward the rear alleyway leading to a darkened house; then, catching a signal, he wheeled around the block to reach the front of the building.

In the gloom at the rear crouched Mongols who were listening to the whispers of Hoang Khu and another, called Shan Juchi. Between them, they were dividing their forces. Hoang Khu was posting men outside the house; Shan Juchi had charge of a group that entered the rear of the basement.

Motionless as they guarded the empty building, the Mongols showed training ordered by Shiwan Khan. Like human statues, they had rendered themselves unnoticeable in the darkness. The path that they left open was the sort that could be turned instantly into a trap.

From his post in the rear passage, Hoang Khu saw another cab stop, watched a man alight and come slowly through. The arrival was Thorner. As the man passed, Hoang Khu looked toward the house, then let his gaze go higher, to the roof.

As Shiwan Khan had planned it, Thorner was going to enter that house and leave it, unmolested. But for anyone who followed, there would be disaster.

Anyone, in this case, was The Shadow.

On the front street, Beatrice Chadbury was stealing up the gloomy front steps, visible to another band of watchers. As the girl opened the front door, Flash Gidley spoke to mobbies about him:

"Two of you lugs come along with me and Herk. The rest of you spread out and be ready with the wheelers, when we lam. No gats, unless the going gets tough. You'll know when to pull the rods, if you need them."

Posting the two men just inside the front door, Flash led Herk through a moldy parlor filled with old furniture. They came to a curtain, a dim light glowing beyond it. Herk wanted to hold back, but Flash pulled him along, nudging Herk's pocket with the comment:

"Just in case."

They looked into a barren room, illuminated by a single light. The only article of furnishing was a battered

brass gong that hung inside another doorway, leading to a downward stairs. On the other side of the room was a passage to steps that went up.

Beatrice was standing in the center of the little room, the dragon nestling deep in her arms. Her eyes had a faraway stare, in the general direction of the brass gong.

"Say!" gulped Herk. "The dame's a Chinee! I didn't know that when she ankled in here."

"She's no Chinee," undertoned Flash. "She only thinks she is. Her uncle is worth plenty! He's worried about where she is, but he's scared to squawk to the Feds. He figures something may really happen to her if he does."

"You doped all that today, Flash, while you was sitting at the radio?"

"Yeah, and more. See that dragon the dame's got? It's one of the bunch you were talking about. We don't want it. The dame is going to give it to a guy, and he can have it. We're going to grab the doll, after she's knocked out of that trance she's in. Then we let her uncle know."

"For how much?"

"Fifty grand! On the line! He'll pay - and why not? He don't even know what's become of her. The trouble with the snatch racket is staging the snatch itself. This case is different. It's been done for us."

JUST as Herk was about to voice agreement, the two heard creeping footsteps from the lower stairs. Shouldering into the light came Herbert Thorner, his shoulder grazing the brass gong. Herk inquired who he was; Flash said he didn't know.

"He's here for the dragon," whispered the big shot, "and he thinks the doll's a Chinee. Which suits me. Nobody knows different, except us."

In the slow tone of Lana Luan, they heard Beatrice inquire the arrival's name. Thorner answered, not loud enough for them to hear, and the girl gave him the dragon. Another figure had appeared from the lower stairway; Herk eyed the newcomer askance. He whispered to Flash:

"Look at the big guy!"

The "big guy" was Shan Juchi. Watching the interview between Beatrice and Thorner, the Mongol was weighing a hammer, ready to strike the gong.

"He's a stooge," Flash told Herk. "He's here to wake up Sleeping Beauty. Give him time."

Thorner had stowed the dragon half beneath his coat. He was not returning by the lower stairs; instead, he crossed the room and took the steps to the upper floor. Beatrice was watching his departure; half turned, she was ready to step toward the curtain where Flash and Herk waited.

The stage was set exactly as Shiwan Khan had planned it. Shan Juchi had actually raised the hammer for the gong stroke, when a wild shout came from the upper stairs. Following his own shriek, Thorner dived into sight, tripped, and rolled toward the lower stairway, clinging tenaciously to the dragon.

Flipping the gong hammer to his other hand, Shan Juchi whipped out a knife. Slashing aside the curtain, Flash Gidley yanked a revolver from his pocket, a move that Herk Duvan instantly copied.

Yet, with all their speed, none of the trio was fast enough to stave off the threat that sprang from the same stairway that Thorner had so frantically rejected as an outlet. It was a living threat, in black.

Instead of the gong stroke, a mocking laugh quivered through the room. Uttered by hidden lips beneath a down-turned hat brim, that mirth was accompanied by the forward shove of a gun muzzle, thrust by a gloved fist.

Wheeling to the very center of the room, the living blackness became a cloaked shape, ready to combat a horde of foemen. Small wonder, for this conqueror of crime had outguessed the measures planned by Shiwan Khan.

Suspecting the Mongol trap in back, noting the crew of thugs in front. The Shadow had chosen the house roof for his entry. By that stratagem, he had blocked Thorner's escape with the dragon, and had arrived in time to rescue Beatrice Chadbury from whatever fate awaited her.

Finally, he had reached a focal spot from which he could hold off two dangerous bands of foemen. In the very heart of the enemy's present domain, The Shadow had raised his challenge to battle!

CHAPTER XI. THE SHADOW'S CHOICE

THOUGH Thorner, in his inarticulate way, had shouted an alarm, The Shadow was so close behind the frantic man that no one expected the cloaked fighter until they saw him. Which amounted to the fact that The Shadow's enemies were not ready for all that came their way, whereas the black-clad invader was prepared for anything.

Whirling into view, The Shadow sized matters in a glance. Thorner was out of it, for the fellow's only thought was to save the precious dragon and leave the battle to others. Beatrice's half-dazed stare told that she was no menace, yet she figured as a factor.

The girl who called herself Lana Luan was standing in harm's way. Getting her out of it was one of The Shadow's instantaneous problems, as important as that of battle.

The Shadow saw Shan Juchi starting a swing with the knife. He saw the whipping curtain; beyond it, the glitter of guns. But he picked Shan Juchi as his first antagonist, rather than the gunners in the other room. The Shadow's gun spoke flame.

A stabbing bullet caught Shan Juchi as the Mongol hurled the knife. The blade skimmed the ceiling above The Shadow's head. Shan Juchi was lunging for that whirl in the center of the room. The Shadow spun in reverse so suddenly, that he was away from the path of fire when Flash and Herk let their guns blast.

Shan Juchi was staggering through the space where the bullets had whined. Bewildered, Flash and Herk could not understand how The Shadow had reversed his course so suddenly, considering the speed of his drive. They had the answer, when they saw that Beatrice was spinning with him.

The Shadow's free arm had encircled the girl, as he stabbed that shot at Shan Juchi. Her weight had halted his charge sufficiently for him to wheel instantly in the opposite direction and carry her along.

Though they wanted to capture Beatrice, the crooks preferred to get The Shadow, no matter what the cost. Again, they fired together, but before they tugged their triggers, the whirling blackness split. Herk saw a figure pitch headlong into a front corner of the room. Swinging through the doorway, he took aim - at Beatrice Chadbury!

FLASH gave a yell. He had recognized the flying form. He was looking for The Shadow, instead of the girl, and for a half second Flash was utterly baffled. Literally, The Shadow had vanished from the center of the room, as completely as if the floor had swallowed him.

Then Flash's quick eye had seen Shan Juchi reeling backward. In the dimness of the room, Flash could not see The Shadow just beyond. But he realized that the cloaked fighter had grabbed the giant Mongol as a shield, for the muzzle of a .45 was poking out from under Shan Juchi's arm!

That gun had swung straight for Herk. It wasn't Flash's yell that saved the lieutenant. The curtain performed the rescue, as Herk tripped over it while taking aim at Beatrice. A gun boomed: The Shadow's. A bullet pinged the wall mere inches above Herk's stumbling form.

The timely shot was proof that The Shadow would have dropped Herk before the latter could have fired at Beatrice. The Shadow intended to dispatch another bullet in Herk's direction, to prevent the fellow from using his gun at all. But there was time in between to halt Flash at the doorway. The Shadow jabbed a quick shot there.

Flash was gone. With his yell, he had dived for safety. He was at an angle where The Shadow could not reach him; in turn, Flash had no chance to shoot at anyone. But his gun was ready, and he used it, on the only target that he could see - the single ceiling light at the center of the barren room.

The bulb shattered. From the instant darkness came a weird laugh smothering the echoes of Flash's well-aimed shot. The crook had simply saved The Shadow trouble. The cloaked fighter had intended to douse that light, after settling Herk.

Flash saw the reflection of a gunburst from deep in the other room. He thought that Herk was through. A moment later, the lucky lieutenant flopped beside him, uninjured. Half wrapped in the curtain, Herk had made a rolling scramble through the doorway, just as the light vanished.

The thugs from the front door were on hand with revolvers and flashlights. Their arrival told that more were coming. Flash pointed toward the other room and hoarsed the order:

"The Shadow! Get him!"

Not having witnessed The Shadow's deadly fire, the two thugs took the chance that Flash was anxious to avoid. At the doorway, they halted, staring at the scene their flashlights showed. Wild yells from the other room brought Flash to the scene.

A squad of Mongols had bobbed up from the lower stairway. The crooks had seen The Shadow launch himself into that throng with one tremendous dive. There wasn't a chance for thugs to aim. The Shadow was gone, down the stairway, in the midst of a tangled, milling mass.

There were sounds of a clash between sledging automatics and swinging knives, but The Shadow was carrying the fight below.

Viewing the whole room, Flash saw Thorner crawling for the passage to the upper stairway. Trampled by the arriving Mongols, Thorner had managed to protect the Ch'ien Lung dragon, and was taking the trophy with him.

Beatrice was lying motionless in her corner. She had struck the wall heavily, and the blow had stunned her. The fault was not The Shadow's. He had expected the girl to thrust her hands before her as she hit the wall. She should have done so, even though she had been standing dazed.

But dazed conditions, when induced by Shiwan Khan's hypnotic lights, were by no means ordinary. The self-styled Lana Luan had been living in a dream world. Her whirling trip toward the wall had seemed pleasant, with no need for worry. She had scarcely felt the blow that crumpled her.

Another figure was in the room that The Shadow had deserted: Shan Juchi.

Mortally wounded, the big Mongol was concerned only with a final effort that would complete a duty ordered by Shiwan Khan. Close to the doorway, where The Shadow had dropped his human shield, Shan Juchi had found the gong hammer. He was raising it slowly, painfully, as he tried to rise against the wall.

His hand, wavering backward, reached the gong level. Shan Juchi gave a slash that carried his tottering body forward. The hammer met the gong, clanged it with a force that startled all who heard it. The room seemed to shudder with the brazen reverberations that carried through the house.

Huddling to the floor, Shan Juchi raised his head. With the last echo from the clashing gong, he babbled:

"It has been done, Kha Khan!"

ODDLY, the hammer stroke seemed to have banished tumult below. Perhaps the other Mongols, hearing the brassy sound, had felt their work accomplished and were choosing flight, instead of further battle with The Shadow.

They had certainly heard the cry of Shan Juchi, and would carry word to Shiwan Khan that he had fulfilled his mission with the gong. In dying, Shan Juchi failed to realize that the stroke of the gong had been unheard by the one person for whom it was intended: Lana Luan.

He lay silent, stiff, Shan Juchi; and it suddenly occurred to Flash Gidley that other Mongols might have fared the same way.

From below, Flash caught new sounds: the faint, muffled shots of a revolver; vague howls, with the clatter of running feet; finally, the weird shiver of an echoing laugh, too much like the mockery of The Shadow!

Two more thugs had arrived. Flash pointed all four toward the lower stairway. Springing to the corner of the room, he lifted Beatrice, shoved her limp form into Herk's arms. The big lieutenant was looking at Thorner, who had come to his feet near the passage to the upper stairway.

"Forget that guy!" snapped Flash. "I told you we didn't want the dragon. We've got the dame -"

A roar came from the lower stairs. Guns blasted with the force of a cannonade. The Shadow's automatics were recognizable when they began the fire; they kept up their staccato punches amid the wild, disjointed bark of revolvers.

Flash's trouble shooters had found trouble that had shot them up instead. Trouble in the person of The Shadow. Thuds and howls told that crippled mobbies were tumbling down the stairs, while a strident laugh, peeling from a corner of the room, announced the safe return of The Shadow.

"Come on!" Flash tugged at Herk. "Get going - and hang onto the dame!"

Flash headed out to the front. He was away from the sweep of the flashlight that The Shadow flicked from the lower stairs. The Shadow spied two men starting a mad race for safety. Each was carrying a valued prize.

One was Thorner. Stirred with wild desire for flight, he was taking to the upper stairway, clinging to the Ch'ien Lung dragon. The other was Herk; he was following Flash. Across Herk's shoulder, The Shadow caught a glimpse of a girl's face, far paler than the usual countenance that represented Lana Luan.

Choice of pursuit lay with The Shadow. Overtaking Thorner would be a certainty, the capture of the dragon included. From such a chase, The Shadow would obtain the very reward that he had come to claim.

Following Herk meant new battle against risky odds, with only a slight chance of rescuing an unknown girl who, from The Shadow's last view of her face, might be already dead.

The flashlight blackened. Through the solid gloom of that barren room where Shan Juchi lay dead beneath the brazen gong, there came the tone of a sibilant, whispered laugh. A few moments later the sound, like its author, was gone.

His trail chosen. The Shadow was on his way. Whether he was seeking the sixth dragon or the captive girl, his laugh did not proclaim. Even Shiwan Khan could not have guessed The Shadow's choice, had the master plotter been present in that very darkness!

The path that the cloaked fighter had taken in the gloom was known to one person alone:

The Shadow!

CHAPTER XII. THE CHOSEN TRAIL

OUTSIDE the deserted house, Flash Gidley made quick plans for a getaway. He shoved Herk Duvan toward the nearest car, an old sedan, that had another mobbie occupying it. The man hopped out to help Herk put the limp girl into the back seat.

Reaching a car across the street, Flash quickly pointed a pair of thugs to the steps of the old house. Crouching on each side of the front doorway, they waited for The Shadow to appear, provided he was coming this direction.

By the time that motors were throbbing, there had been no sign of The Shadow. Flash, swinging his own car about, provided the glare of headlights on the house steps; for an instant, he sighted what looked like a flinging streak of blackness, passing from the steps to the curb.

Then, Flash was seeing other shifting shadows, produced by the swing of the car. Those distorted patches were proof enough that Flash hadn't seen The Shadow, particularly when the men from the doorway, clambering into the car, reported that they had heard no one pass them on the steps.

Herk's sedan was already started - further evidence that The Shadow was taking the trail of the dragon instead of trying to trace the girl. Passing the sedan, Flash saw Herk at the wheel and signaled him to fall behind. A third car was joining the procession, manned by a reserve squad. The safe bet was to keep Herk in between.

Glancing over his shoulder, Flash noted the roof of the old house. No gunshots were sounding there, but Flash hardly expected any. Though he didn't know who Thorner was, Flash had seen enough of the fellow to know that he wasn't the sort who would put up battle.

Thorner was the type who might lie in wait and bag his man; but once in flight, he certainly would not stop. When The Shadow overtook him, Thorner would simply hand over the dragon and beg for life.

Meanwhile, Flash and his caravan were having what they considered an easy getaway, until they reached the corner. There, a coupe suddenly cut in front of Flash's car and forced it to the curb. Flash snapped an order to the men in back; grabbing up sawed-off shotguns, they blasted at the coupe.

But there was no one in it when the barrage hit. The occupants, springing from the far door, had joined companions who were under cover along the street.

Flash and his mob were meeting The Shadow's agents, and finding them a tough squad to battle. In the midst of gunfire, Flash yelled at Herk, who sped away in his sedan. The third car wheeled up, its gunners

raking the street with their fire.

The Shadow's agents were gone. They had done what their chief had ordered. He had told them to slow the escape of the mob, and leave the rest to the police. Sounds of shooting in the old house had been reported; sirens were already shrieking in the neighborhood.

Managing to get their cars started, Flash and his mobbies were driving right into trouble, enough to keep them busy. The Shadow's agents, abandoning the old coupe that they had sacrificed, were heading toward another duty.

REACHING the rear street, they saw a frantic man come tearing from the back of another house. It was Thorner; he had fled across the rooftops and taken a route to the street. He had the porcelain dragon with him, but had been making speed despite his burden.

His goal was a taxicab parked under a street lamp, where he could see it. At the wheel sat a Mongol driver.

Before The Shadow's agents could intercept the cab, shots greeted them from the passage behind the deserted house. Hoang Khu and his Mongols were still on the loose, amplified by a few of Shan Juchi's crew, who had survived their fray with The Shadow by taking flight.

Fortunately, the Mongols did not handle guns as well as knives. Dropping away from the poorly aimed barrage, The Shadow's agents suffered no casualties. In their turn, they began to pepper Hoang Khu and his party, with very good effect.

The cab got away, while The Shadow's men were taking shelter. But they routed the Mongols so rapidly that another cab was able to wheel in pursuit. Moe Shrevnitz was driving the second cab, and he was tailing the other taxi closely.

Though he heard no words from the rear seat, Moe had an idea that he was carrying a black-cloaked passenger. Generally, when Moe took up an important chase, The Shadow entered the cab when it started. Thanks to the delaying gunfire, The Shadow could easily have reached the street before Moe started.

The trail led exactly where Moe expected: to Twindell's mansion. There, Thorner hopped from the other cab, which promptly shot away. Moe saw Thorner run for the side door, which evidently opened to receive him. Parked close to the mansion, Moe looked into the rear of his own cab. It was empty.

Grinning, Moe decided that The Shadow had dropped off and followed Thorner to the gloomy side of the large house. Thorner had carried the dragon during that final dash; perhaps, by this time, gloved hands had plucked it from him.

However, Moe was not supposed to wait here. His job was to get back to where the chase had started and help The Shadow's agents to clear the neighborhood. After that, he could report to Burbank.

Meanwhile, Herk Duvan had completed a roundabout trip to a disreputable neighborhood far from the scene of battle. Parking the old sedan in the depths of a blind alley, Herk turned to the mobbie who rode with him.

"We made it, Brodie," said Herk. "Like I told you we was going to."

"Yeah," returned Brodie, "because Flash covered for us."

"So what?" demanded Herk. "That was the way Flash wanted it. He gave me the high sign, so we could

get away with the moll."

"Yeah, but suppose the bulls got Flash -"

"He'll shake 'em," interposed Herk, in confident tone. "Leave that to Flash. C'mon! Let's lug the dame up to the hide-away. She won't give no trouble. She ain't let a peep out yet."

They could see Beatrice's pale face in the darkened rear of the sedan. Opening the door on the right of the car, they drew the girl out and carried her between them, through a ground-level door, down a short flight of steps.

"She slid out easy," commented Herk, "but she seems heavier, now that we're lugging her. Cripes! I hope she ain't croaked! She's worth fifty grand."

"Yeah?" demanded Brodie. "Her old man must be King of China!"

"She ain't no Chineese," returned Herk. "She's an American, and it's her uncle has got the dough. Flash didn't say who he was, but he's got fifty grand that he can cough over."

They were in a squarish stone-walled room, where Herk turned on a hanging light. They placed Beatrice on a rickety cot; and Brodie, noting the whiteness of her face, gave a nod that disposed of the Chinese theory. Herk was holding the girl's limp wrist, trying to detect a pulse beat.

"Get out and bolt the door," he told Brodie, "while I find out if there's any life in her. Maybe we'll need a sawbones -"

A SHARP snarl from Brodie ended Herk's remark. Swinging about, Herk saw his companion thrusting a quick-drawn gun straight toward the door. He was fast with a rod, Brodie was, as fast as any member of the mob. That was why Flash had given him to Herk tonight.

Brodie's hand was snakelike. It seemed to uncoil and whip in with the gun all in one action, that usually ended with a trigger tug. There was a muffled report close to Brodie's body, but the revolver did not blast the shot. As Herk sprang from beside the couch, pulling his own revolver, Brodie's figure sagged.

Through a drift of grayish smoke, that floated from an automatic muzzle, Herk saw a cloaked figure in the doorway. Burning eyes were fixed upon the gang lieutenant. So was the muzzle of the automatic; the same .45 that had just disposed of Brodie!

Herk heard a whispered laugh: The Shadow's. A revolver clanked the floor, as Herk's hands lifted.

The last thing that Herk Duvan expected was mercy from The Shadow. But Herk received it, for a price. A passenger during the trip, The Shadow had overheard all that Herk said to Brodie.

"You will return to Flash," The Shadow told Herk, "and tell him that the girl is here, being watched by Brodie."

Herk gulped agreement.

"Once you have told that story" - The Shadow's tone was sibilant - "you will be safe! It is your only story! Flash would not be pleased if he learned that you turned yellow" - a whispered laugh taunted Herk's ears - "when you met The Shadow!"

With a quick sweep, The Shadow gathered Herk's revolver from the floor. Cracking it open, he shook out the cartridges. He handed it to Herk, made him turn around. Finding the crook's reserve ammunition,

The Shadow took it from Herk's pocket.

Marching Herk out to the car, The Shadow forced him to get behind the wheel. Waiting at the mouth of the alley, he beckoned for Herk to start. The sedan rolled past and kept going. Herk Duvan did not intend to stop until he was far from The Shadow's range of gunfire.

Rapidly returning to the hide-away, The Shadow gathered up the feebly stirring form of Beatrice Chadbury. Stepping across the dead form of Brodie, the cloaked avenger again reached the darkness of the alley and disappeared with his living burden.

The Shadow had gained the prize he wanted. He had followed the path of the girl, not the trail of the dragon!

CHAPTER XIII. THE POWER OF MIND

BEATRICE CHADBURY awakened. It was daylight and she was in a little bedroom, quite different from the hotel room where she had recently stopped. This room looked as if it belonged in a hospital. In fact, it could have been termed a hospital room, for it was connected with the offices of Dr. Rupert Sayre, a young Park Avenue physician.

The surroundings did not trouble Beatrice. She was still indifferent to such matters. Her life was still the half-trance that Shiwan Khan had produced. Failure to hear Shan Juchi's gong stroke had kept Beatrice in that condition, even after her unconscious spell.

She was tired, though, and her head ached. So she decided to remain in bed, as she had frequently done, during recent days, until lights began to blink outside the window. Beatrice did not stop to reason that the window might not offer the accustomed view of the Chinese restaurant called the Green Pagoda.

As she leaned her head back against the pillows, Beatrice saw her clothes fixed neatly upon a chair. Sight of the colorful Chinese costume brought eagerness to her eyes. Getting out of bed, the girl slid from the nightie she was wearing and put on the Chinese clothes.

Dressed in the silken garments, Beatrice gave the rippling laugh of Lana Luan. Opening the door, she walked into a passage, followed it until she came to an office. A white-jacketed man looked up from his desk; his face showed a serious expression. Dr. Sayre pressed a desk button, to bring the nurse.

Beatrice watched him with a vague smile.

"My name is Lana Luan," she announced slowly. "I have come here because -"

She couldn't finish the sentence. Nothing prompted her. Without the inspiring action of another brain, Beatrice had no thoughts of her own, except the memory of lights that shone at dusk. The nurse arrived, and Sayre told her to take the patient back to the hospital room.

Nothing impelled Beatrice to object. When she reached the hospital room, she let the nurse undress her. But when she realized that she was in bed again, wearing the night dress, she reached for the Chinese clothes that were over the nurse's arm. The nurse left immediately, taking the garments with her.

"These were the trouble," she told Sayre, as she hung the clothes in the office closet. "She saw them, and wanted them. As soon as I took them along, she started to go to sleep."

"Lana Luan?" repeated Sayre, thoughtfully. "I must make a note of that name, to tell Cranston when he arrives."

WHEN Lamont Cranston reached Sayre's office, a half-hour later, he was quite interested in the physician's report. Sayre repeated the girl's unfinished sentence. When Sayre expressed the opinion that Beatrice's condition was hypnotic, and not due to a brain concussion, Cranston nodded.

"Quite right," he said. "She is controlled by a powerful brain, upon which she depends for all complex thoughts."

"You mean the influence is telepathic?"

"Exactly!" Cranston smiled. "Does that surprise you?"

It didn't surprise Sayre. He had delved into the subject of telepathy himself. But he doubted that the influence could be as effective as Cranston seemed to think it was.

"I have studied the tests conducted at various colleges," said Sayre, "and while they prove telepathy to be a fact, they show that it works only at irregular intervals, even when the subjects are hypnotized."

"Let us review the facts of hypnotism," suggested The Shadow. "The first man to demonstrate it properly was Mesmer. His basic method was to gaze into the subject's eyes and thus command a fixed attention. But Mesmer, despite his results, was denounced as a quack and his findings rejected."

"For many years," agreed Sayre, "until Braid again discovered hypnotism. When Braid proved that trance could be induced by gazing at a fixed object, such as a bright light, no one could doubt that hypnotism was a fact."

"And Mesmer's findings were accepted, at last?"

"Why, yes. It stood to reason that he had been able to make people obey his spoken commands, as any hypnotist can do."

"But Mesmer claimed more than that. At times, he controlled his subjects mentally, without speaking to them. We cannot fairly reject that claim, if we accept the rest. Instead, we must look for the reason behind Mesmer's peculiar power.

"The answer may be termed mutual hypnotism. Mesmer's eyes were the bright objects that hypnotized the subject. In his turn, Mesmer was staring into the subject's eyes. Fully concentrated, he became partly hypnotized himself. When that occurred, his mental commands were obeyed."

The facts startled Sayre. He had always considered mesmerism and hypnotism as identical in result, differing merely in method of procedure. The logic of The Shadow's statements gave the case a new status.

"A man who calls himself Shiwan Khan is putting that system into practice," declared The Shadow. "He is using lights to fix their attention, a gong stroke to break the trance. The mental commands of Shiwan Khan are being obeyed.

"It seems obvious, therefore, that Shiwan Khan must gaze into an identical light, whenever he hypnotizes a subject. In that way, he could induce a mutual state of hypnotism, perhaps to a degree exceeding ordinary mesmerism."

Sayre asked about the lights. The Shadow described the green bulb that he had seen at Ryndon's. He mentioned the gong note on the phonograph record. He then produced a small metal gong and hammer, and pointed to the closet.

"Have the nurse take those Chinese clothes into the other room," he suggested. "We shall let the girl resume the part of Lana Luan, the false personality that Shiwan Khan has built for her."

SEVERAL minutes later, Beatrice Chadbury entered wearing the colorful clothes and blank expression of Lana Luan. She repeated her statement of identity; when she halted, The Shadow announced in a slow, impressive tone:

"I am Shiwan Khan!"

A change flickered over the girl's features, but she seemed to note an oddity in the voice. Then The Shadow was approaching her; she was gazing into burning eyes that held her full attention. Beatrice was gripped by the same fascination that the glittering lights commanded.

"I am Shiwan Khan," repeated The Shadow. "When I speak, you hear. Wherever you may be!"

"Yes!" Beatrice was breathless.

"Yes -"

"And the place where you listen -"

"- is the hotel room, where I can see the lights."

"And the lights are -"

"- above the restaurant. The Green Pagoda. That is where I go. And then -"

Beatrice halted. Long in that automatic trance, she could carry her memory no further. The matter of the lights was implanted upon her brain; the rest had been erased. Both results were the design of Shiwan Khan.

He had forced the girl's mind to retain the first details of her journey. The rest came back when she had actually passed the portals of the Green Pagoda.

Even the effort that she had displayed was a strain for the girl's dazed mind. She wavered; The Shadow caught her instantly and let her settle in the waiting arms of Sayre. Seizing the hammer and gong, he gave the needed stroke. Sayre could feel the sudden convulsion that quivered Beatrice from head to foot.

Then, the blank expression fading from her face, the girl stared about in genuine bewilderment. She looked at Cranston's face as though she had never before seen it. The Shadow's eyes had lost their burn. They had a mild, friendly expression that won Beatrice's confidence.

"Where in the world am I?" she gasped. "What can have happened to me?"

With Cranston's calmness, The Shadow explained that she was in New York; that she had met with an accident while attending a masquerade. All that amazed Beatrice as she listened, weakly, from a chair where Sayre had placed her. She began to explain that she was supposed to be on a cruise ship. The effort taxed her. Sighing, the girl said:

"Anyway, my name is Beatrice Chadbury. My uncle is here in New York. His name is, Guy Chadbury. I suppose he thinks that I am on the ship."

Her eyes went shut. Those days of living in a trance had produced a complete nervous exhaustion. Sayre summoned the nurse.

No longer walking with the slow stride of Lana Luan, Beatrice shuffled her slippered feet wearily toward the bedroom. She sighed gratefully when the nurse undressed her. Beatrice was glad to be free of those thick silk garments.

During the last few minutes that she wore them, the clothes of Lana Luan seemed to be dragging Beatrice back into some horrible, nameless past, that could never have been part of her real existence. Unclothed, she felt the terror leave her. In bed, she sighed again, and fell asleep while the nurse was lowering the window shade to cut off the bright sunlight.

In the office, Dr. Sayre was congratulating his friend Cranston upon the remarkable results that he had produced. In response, The Shadow said:

"You may depend upon me to notify Guy Chadbury that his niece is here. I shall, of course, use my own discretion in the matter. It may be preferable to wait until we can give a satisfactory report upon her condition."

Dr. Sayre agreed. He knew the meaning of what Cranston termed discretion. Sayre had long recognized a connection between Lamont Cranston and The Shadow. If news of Beatrice's rescue should be withheld from her uncle, it would be for their mutual benefit.

Nothing should be done to obstruct a coming event that Dr. Sayre could foresee: a duel wherein a plotter named Shiwan Khan would meet The Shadow!

CHAPTER XIV. DOUBLED TRAILS

TWO days had passed - strange days for The Shadow! In all his dealings with master criminals, he had never encountered one whose ways were as baffling as those of Shiwan Khan.

The Shadow knew of Shiwan Khan's existence; that was all. The rest depended upon sheer reason, but not of a deductive sort. It was necessary for The Shadow to build a theory, test it with every fact, yet even then accept it without positive proof.

A slender link began the chain. It started with the fact that a murdered stunt flier named Bob Ryndon had come from a vast province of western China - Sinkiang.

The Shadow knew that territory, its present state of unrest. He could see deep causes behind the trouble in Sinkiang, at a time when all China was supposed to be united. Between Tibet, the land of brain, and Mongolia, place of brawn, Sinkiang was a terrain where both could unite.

There was proof that they had been united through the effort of Shiwan Khan. His power was that of mind, as he had demonstrated; his followers, fierce Mongols, were men of muscle. Behind that combination lay Shiwan Khan's ambition: to rule all the world!

Even The Shadow, a few weeks ago, would have considered such a scheme fantastic. But in this strange campaign, the seemingly unreal was plausible. Things that others would regard as unimportant were solid links, welded in The Shadow's chain of evidence. One was the cry of the dying Mongol, Shan Juchi, which The Shadow had heard follow the clash of a gong:

"Kha Khan!"

The name "Shiwan Khan" alone meant little. Coupled with the term "Kha Khan," it meant much. The title by which Shiwan Khan's Mongols knew their master was the same used by Genghis Khan, greater conqueror of history. It meant "Great Ruler," in the parlance of the Orient.

In days of old, Genghis Khan had conquered empires by superior military measures. In this modern age, such a result could be accomplished only by present-day preparations. To bring an invisible kingdom into reality, Shiwan Khan would need munitions. Another link that fitted into The Shadow's chain!

Shiwan Khan's control of Beatrice Chadbury, the temporary Lana Luan, was proof that his machinations concerned her uncle, Guy Chadbury, the one man - The Shadow had been studying Chadbury's case - who could secretly supply a shipload of bombs for delivery to Sinkiang.

Through Harry Vincent, The Shadow had been carefully seeking facts regarding Chadbury; so far, without result. The trouble was that Chadbury was king man with his own enterprises; it was difficult to check his actions.

Obviously, there would be other implements required by Shiwan Khan: airplanes, for one. Unfortunately, Beatrice had not met Paul Brent during her waking life, hence she had not supplied a clue to Globe Aircraft. So far, The Shadow had obtained no lead along that line.

As for the matter of shipments, The Shadow had considered that phase of the question. Through the investment office managed by Rutledge Mann, he had acquired reams of data pertaining to international shipping companies. None had shown a flaw in the affairs of the Tropical Export Lines, managed by Mitchell Dorron.

WHILE keeping tabs on Chadbury, The Shadow had not forgotten other persons who were definitely hand in glove with Shiwan Khan. There were three: Flash Gidley, Benjamin Twindell and Herbert Thorner. It was possible to check on all of them.

Flash was serving Shiwan Khan on the promise of collecting fifty thousand dollars from Guy Chadbury for the safe return of the latter's niece, Beatrice. That indicated Chadbury to be as honest as Flash was crooked. In this case, The Shadow had scored one on Shiwan Khan.

Beatrice was already safe, in The Shadow's custody. Flash Gidley hadn't guessed it, because his lieutenant, Herk Duvan, was afraid to tell him. With Hawkeye watching the hide-away where Beatrice was supposed to be a prisoner, The Shadow would learn immediately if Herk spilled facts. But Herk probably wouldn't.

Having double-crossed Flash, Herk's only game was to play ball with The Shadow. It was an axiom in the underworld that when a crook went straight, The Shadow became his friend.

Herk had gone straight - under pressure, of course, but that did not change his new status. He would remember and know that The Shadow would not let him down, provided he adhered to his present policy.

Benjamin Twindell was a different proposition. It was easy to understand how Shiwan Khan was using him. Twindell was serving as a "front" for the purchase of munitions and airplanes, probably supplying cash through various well-covered channels. In return, Twindell was receiving porcelain dragons, which, for some curious reason, he valued more than his famed jewel collection.

Of all persons, Twindell was the one that Shiwan Khan would watch most closely. Close to Twindell, however, was another person, who might be overlooked. That man was Herbert Thorner. Whatever profit he might gain would come from Twindell, not from Shiwan Khan. Like Herk, Thorner offered real possibilities.

That fact explained why The Shadow's complete review of the Shiwan Khan intrigue took place in a limousine bound for Twindell's mansion. Trusting to his guise of Cranston, The Shadow was visiting

another of Twindell's jewel sales, on the chance that he would find Thorner present.

The Shadow was not disappointed. Thorner was on hand. The police had not connected him with a crazy fight in an empty house, where they had discovered dead and crippled mobbies and Mongols, along with a battered Chinese gong.

While he watched the jewel sale, Thorner occasionally glanced toward Twindell's mantel, where six squatty porcelain dragons formed a grinning row. Just after one of those off-guard glances, Thorner happened to meet the steady gaze of Lamont Cranston. From then on, Thorner looked worried.

When the sale had ended and the visitors were gone, Benjamin Twindell cackled pleasantly as he thumbed a pile of checks. His total sale from the jewels amounted to many thousands of dollars. Since Thorner was available, Twindell gave him the checks and told him to take them to various banks.

Twindell added other instructions that Thorner accepted as quite ordinary, until he was on his way to make the rounds. Riding in a cab, he happened to notice that Cranston's limousine was following him. It kept on the trail from bank to bank.

At one bank, where Thorner paid a visit to the cashier's office, the sallow man was sure that he saw Cranston watching from near a teller's window. From then on, Thorner plotted a cute move of his own. He tried it when he left the last bank.

Thrusting a bill into the cab driver's hand, Thorner told him to speed away. Ducking into another cab, Thorner trailed the limousine. The big car lost the trail of the speedy cab, and finally took a different course. It stopped on Twenty-third Street, where Cranston alighted near an ancient office building.

The limousine did not wait. Leaving his cab, Thorner stole into the building. He trailed Cranston up a stairway; at the top, Thorner saw no further sign of his quarry.

He noted a short passage, with an office at the end of it, the only place where Cranston could have gone. That was all Thorner wanted to know. Smiling shrewdly, the sallow man stole down the stairway and out to the street.

IN a more modern office building, two visitors were seated in a private office connected with the Tropical Export Lines. Both looked glum, although Mitchell Dorron was smiling from the other side of his big desk. Handing a sheaf of papers to Paul Brent, the shipping man said:

"The Globe shipment has gone aboard the Aritoba. Mr. Chadbury's shipment is waiting to be loaded, so that the ship may leave the Hoboken pier tonight."

Looking toward Guy Chadbury, Paul Brent saw a hopeful expression come over the munitions magnate's face.

"I am still waiting a payment for my materials," said Chadbury. "I am afraid, Dorron, that you will have to delay the departure of the Aritoba for a few days, at least -"

There was an interruption, as Dorron's secretary entered bringing an envelope that had been forwarded from Chadbury's office. Opening it, Chadbury drew out a check. It was from a company that he had never heard of, but that did not matter. The check was certified by the cashier of a large New York bank.

Chadbury grimaced, as he thrust the check into his pocket, he told Dorron that the loading of the Aritoba could be resumed. With bowed head, Chadbury left the office. At the elevators, Paul Brent overtook him.

"I've got to talk to you, Mr. Chadbury!" exclaimed Paul, eagerly. "We're in the same mess! I just realized it, when I saw you put away that check. We've got to talk this over!"

Chadbury caught the earnestness in Paul's tone. Tightening his lips, the gray-haired man nodded, then said:

"Come to my penthouse, Brent."

Back in his private office, Mitchell Dorron was pacing the floor, worried. He had noticed Paul's look at Chadbury. Staring toward the ceiling, Dorron watched three lights, fixed exactly like the ones in the living room of his Long Island home.

Suddenly, those three lights gleamed, pressed by a distant switch. To Dorron's blanking brain came the far-away tone of Shiwan Khan. Dorron began to speak in answer, steadily but anxiously.

In the outside dusk, Harry Vincent had seen Paul Brent enter a large limousine with Guy Chadbury. Trailing in Moe's cab, Harry followed the big car to an apartment house, saw the two get out together. Paul was evidently going up to Chadbury's penthouse.

Who Chadbury's friend was, Harry did not know, but he had come from a shipping office that Chadbury had visited. Over a telephone in the corner drugstore, Harry contacted Burbank.

Word was going to The Shadow. Word that might mean the turning point in the long struggle to frustrate Shiwan Khan!

CHAPTER XV. PAYMENT DEFERRED

THE radio program had ended, but Flash Gidley was still staring at the dial. He liked those little lights - green, yellow, red - that blinked with a pulsating throb. Herk Duvan, watching nervously, could hear Flash's low-purred answers to questions that seemed unspoken.

Herk always kept far enough away so the lights would not get him. While he watched, he worried about questions that Flash might ask later. One came soon after Flash finally swung about, no longer fascinated by the lights.

"What did Brodie say when he called up last?"

"Nothin' much," returned Herk. "Everythin's jake, Flash, just like it always was."

"You're sure he's sticking close to the joint?"

"He ought to be, Flash. He looked all set to stay there, when I seen him last."

Flash leaned back in his chair, quite satisfied. He nudged his thumb toward the telephone.

"Call the boys."

"What for, Flash -" Herk tried to curb the anxiety in his tone. Then, hopefully: "Another job?"

"No. The same one. Tonight we collect. Have a couple go over and case the apartment house where Guy Chadbury lives. Tell them we'll be along later, with the rest."

"Who's Guy Chadbury?"

"The dame's uncle," replied Flash, with a grin. "Her name is Beatrice Chadbury. The reason why I told

you not to worry about asking her to spill her name, was because I knew it all along."

Two facts were proven by Flash's statement. One: that he had not understood Shan Juchi's real purpose in striking the big gong in the deserted house. The other: that Herk had successfully managed to keep Flash thinking that Beatrice was still a prisoner in the hide-away.

QUITE unaware that he might soon be receiving visitors, Guy Chadbury was finishing a long discussion with Paul Brent. They had dined together at the penthouse, following dinner, they had finally come out with their full stories.

Each found it impossible to recall the name of Shiwan Khan, but when Paul described the lights outside his hotel room window, Chadbury promptly pointed out the large cigarette sign that had started him on the road to ruin.

"It looks like we'll sink together," declared Paul glumly. "I can't trust my story to anyone else, Chadbury. You're the only man who has been through the same sort of experience. The moment I open my mouth, I'll be arrested for murder."

Chadbury gave a sympathetic nod.

"I'm ready to talk, though," declared Paul, grimly. "At least, it would stop those shipments. It seems more sensible, however, to wait a few days more. Something might turn up to help us. In that case, we could have the Aritoba flagged before she gets through the Panama Canal."

"Wait, by all means!" insisted Chadbury. "A move on your part would be as serious as one on mine! We can't take any risk, until we know that Beatrice is safe!"

Stepping to the corner, Chadbury brought out Beatrice's photograph, showed it to Paul with the simple comment:

"My niece."

To Paul, the gown that the pictured girl was wearing seemed to transform itself into a Chinese jacket.

"It's Lana Luan!" he exclaimed. "The girl I met at Ryndon's! She must have looked at lights the way we did! If -"

Paul did not finish. Chadbury was staring off through the window. His eyes were fixed on the changed glimmers of the cigarette sign. Quickly, Paul flung his arm across his own face.

He did not intend to feel that same influence that had again gripped Chadbury. He was listening, though, hoping to hear Chadbury utter words. They came:

"Yes. I hear you, Shiwan Khan!"

The forced voice of Chadbury gave Paul a missing recollection as vivid as a lightning flash.

Shiwan Khan!

That was the name of the hidden master who made all obey his dictates. Hearing it while in a waking condition, Paul intended to remember the name. While he repeated it in undertone, he heard more words from Chadbury. The entranced man was speaking of his niece, and Paul caught his final response:

"Yes. Fifty thousand dollars."

Chadbury's shoulders jarred. He had heard the stroke of the distant gong. He blinked at Paul, then asked:

"What... what did I hear?"

Paul repeated it. Chadbury had the same electric effect at mention of the name Shiwan Khan. Then, when Paul had barely finished with the remaining details, they heard the telephone bell.

Chadbury's secretary was out, so the munitions man answered the call himself. When finished, he let the telephone clatter heavily on its stand.

"They're here!" Chadbury bit the words. "To get the fifty thousand! Some racketeer, and probably a crowd with him. I could hear them talking, when he called from downstairs."

"You're sure?"

"He mentioned Shiwan Khan. They're coming up, and if I don't have the door open when they get here, they'll take it that I called the police. In that case -"

"You'd better get to the door, Chadbury. Keep a stiff lip. I'll stand by you!"

HURRYING through a darkened outer room, Chadbury had the door open when his visitors arrived. Leaving two thugs near the elevator, Flash Gidley stalked through to the living room, with Herk Duvan at his heels. Chadbury introduced Paul Brent, whereupon Flash grinned.

"My name is Flash Gidley," he announced. "This is my side-kick, Herk Duvan. It don't hurt if you know it. The lid's off on the whole works. Shiwan Khan says so. You aren't the only guys that have been looking at funny lights. I've been seeing the glims, too."

"Only I'm on one side of the fence, you're on the other. Shiwan Khan says you've got fifty grand here, so fork it over, Chadbury! That's to pay your niece's room and board."

Chadbury opened a little safe to get the money. He was remembering, rather vaguely, that he had brought the cash here a few days ago. He had made a notation that he might need it. Probably he had been watching Shiwan Khan's lights and thereby had been influenced to draw the money from the bank.

As the front of the safe swung open, Chadbury turned suddenly about.

"What guarantee do I have?" he questioned. "How do I know that my niece will be safely returned?"

"Herk here will take care of that," replied Flash. "He's going to stick with you until tomorrow. This guy Brent" - he gestured toward Paul - "is getting a good break, too. Shiwan Khan says he won't have to worry about a murder rap, after the dame gets back."

There was no question as to the prime purpose governing Flash Gidley. He wanted to get the fifty thousand dollars with as little delay as possible. He was purring other arguments - that he hadn't abducted Beatrice, but had actually saved her from danger. He hadn't known who she was, he added, until afterward.

That smooth talk was glossing over the matter of the money, making it look more like a reward than a demand for ransom. Flash wanted everybody to be happy, himself included. He talked about concluding the deal, and calling it quits. To that, Chadbury agreed; he had caught a glance from Paul.

Both had the same idea. With Beatrice returned, bringing the gun with which Hoang Kim had murdered

Ryndon, Shiwan Khan would have no hold over either Paul or Chadbury. They would then be able to have the Aritoba brought back to port, through an arrangement with Dorron.

They had correctly figured the shipping man to be a dupe like themselves, though they did not know the extent to which he had come under Shiwan Khan's baleful influence. What they did not realize was the fact that Shiwan Khan did not intend to deliver either the girl or the death gun.

As matters actually stood, Shiwan Khan was unable to keep either term of the agreement that Flash proposed. But Flash had no idea of the real situation. He was bluffing because Shiwan Khan had ordered him to do so, but he thought his bluff was backed.

Chadbury reached for the box that held the money. There was a loaded revolver beside it; he felt an urge to produce the weapon instead, but he resisted that desire, until he heard a voice he recognized speaking firmly from the doorway.

Beatrice's voice!

FLASH and Herk wheeled, reaching for guns. They were too late. Side by side, they were under a muzzle that moved slowly, left and right, keeping them both covered. It was Beatrice Chadbury who stood in the doorway, and she had both crooks covered.

The girl was dressed in dark-blue American clothes. No longer Lana Luan in mind or attire, she had come here somehow ahead of the crooks. Flash, his hands raised and clenched, realized that he had given his game away by sending men ahead to look the place over.

While they were reporting back to Flash, Beatrice had slipped into the apartment house. Coming up to the penthouse, she had waited in the darkened outer room.

But who had released her from the hide-away, and told her to come here? Both questions had a single answer:

The Shadow!

Flash glared at Herk. Thinking that Flash's guesses were going deep, Herk gulped the whole story.

"The Shadow took her, Flash! The night we went to the hide-away, Brodie and me. Brodie tried to croak The Shadow, but got his instead. After that he -"

"He made you pull a double cross, huh?"

"What difference did it make, Flash? You tried to pull a double cross yourself, on these guys" - Herk nudged a raised thumb toward Chadbury and Paul - "telling 'em the dame was coming back; and to forget the murder rap. You was going to lam with the fifty grand, and leave me and the boys here to croak these lugs so they couldn't squawk."

While he talked, Herk didn't heed Flash's interrupting snarls. Meanwhile, Chadbury had the revolver from the safe and was prodding Flash in the ribs. To Paul, Chadbury said:

"There's another gun in the table drawer. Get it and cover this chap Herk. Beatrice can probably tell us what we are supposed to do next."

"I can," announced Beatrice, very calmly. "We are to hold these crooks as prisoners, until -"

Chadbury interrupted with a warning cry. Swinging away from Flash, he aimed his revolver wildly toward

the window. Paul made a grab for the gun in the table drawer, hoping he would be in time to aid. Beatrice, startled, let her gaze go toward the window.

Over the still had come a leering Mongol face. The yellow hand above it was starting the hurl of a long-bladed knife, with Beatrice as the target. Crime's counterthrust was on its way.

Out from the blackness of the night, Shiwan Khan had provided another of his lawless killers, to furnish new murder that would defeat The Shadow's plans!

CHAPTER XVI. WITHOUT THE SHADOW

A GUN spoke from the darkened doorway of the penthouse living room. It was scarcely noticed, the blast of that automatic, for immediately afterward came the rattle of revolvers. But the spurt of that big .45 was the one thrust that found its mark.

Again, The Shadow's skill was demonstrated; the superiority of a bullet was proven, when compared to a knife fling. The impact of the leaden slug jolted the Mongol at the window, just before his slinging hand completed its arc.

The knife scaled forward as the killer flew back. The blade whirled as it flashed a foot above Beatrice's head, to bury itself, hilt-deep, in the living room's oak-paneled wall. A wailing, long-pitched cry came like an answer to the knife's useless zip, as the Mongol began a whirling journey of his own.

He was bound for the ground, twenty-four stories below, striking projecting cornices on the way. Somewhat amazed, Paul and Chadbury were jabbing revolver shots through the window's empty space.

Beatrice knew where the rescuing shot had come from, for The Shadow had brought her here. She turned about to greet her black-cloaked friend; a moment later, she was spinning toward the side wall of the room, sent there by The Shadow.

No longer in the daze of Lana Luan, the girl was able to halt herself as she reached the paneling. She saw why The Shadow had again supplied a rapid rescue. Flash and Herk had spotted the black figure at the doorway. No longer covered, they were yanking their revolvers, to fire at The Shadow.

As he flung Beatrice in one direction, The Shadow faded in the other. Their first shots traveling through space, the two crooks shifted aim immediately. This time, they guessed the direction correctly, but their tactics differed.

Flash was stepping back to fire, Herk was lunging forward. Beating both to the shot, The Shadow took the closer man. Herk received a fitting reward for his latest double cross - a bullet that turned his lunge into a dive. His gun sputtered, but its aim was high. Flash supplied a direct shot at the same moment. but it did not reach The Shadow.

Herk's twisty pitch had thrown his shoulder in the bullet's path. The Shadow's cloaked head ducked away before Flash could fire again. Catching Herk's sprawling body as he had grabbed Shan Juchi. The Shadow blasted a quick reply at Flash.

Though luck had partly served The Shadow, it did the same for Flash. A chance writhe of Herk's body destroyed the black-cloaked fighter's aim. Flash sped for the door with two men after him, before The Shadow could chuck Herk aside.

Paul and Chadbury were out to capture Flash alive. They didn't realize that they blocked The Shadow's fire.

As Flash flung himself into the lighted corridor by the elevators, his pursuers at last decided that shots were necessary. They were aiming, about to tug their triggers, when two men sprang in to block them. They were the thugs that Flash had stationed outside, and they realized their folly too late.

Before the pair could even pick out targets, Paul and Chadbury cut loose. The bullets meant for Flash took the mobbies instead. From the living room doorway, The Shadow saw the pursuers clear the sagging bodies of the thugs. Then came the clash of an elevator door; it was echoed by clang of bullets against metal.

Flash had made a getaway under gunfire. The only way to halt him would be to get quick word downstairs, by telephone. Any excitement in the lobby would be spotted by Hawkeye, who would relay word to Cliff Marsland, outside. With Moe's cab available, Flash might be overtaken.

Before The Shadow could reach the telephone, he heard Beatrice's scream. It came from the corner of the living room, a heartfelt shriek, its horror proclaiming some new menace.

THE SHADOW knew the only place from which danger could come; he did not stop to take a look. With a low dive, he made straight for the window, bringing his eyes upward with his gun.

He heard the whirl of knives that almost skimmed his back. He saw the extended hands that had flung them. Two Mongols were half across the broad sill. They were reserve assassins who had climbed up together, undeterred by the fate of the slant-eye killer who had tried the previous thrust.

They had been swinging their knives when Beatrice saw them. Behind a chair in the far corner, the girl was safe. Both killers were loosing their knife throws at The Shadow, when he had made that instinctive dive. Fast and long, his low, headfirst surge had carried him just below the launched blades. But The Shadow had not ended his plunge until he reached the window.

Grabbing the cloaked arms, the Mongols tried to haul The Shadow across the window ledge. Beatrice had a gun but could not fire, for The Shadow was tangled with his foeman by the time she aimed. The girl dashed to the living-room door, shouting for Paul and Chadbury. They came on the double-quick.

There was a muffled shot from the window. One Mongol sagged from the ledge, losing an elbow hold. As that killer went outward, The Shadow's free hand gripped for the ledge, almost had it, when the remaining Mongol clawed the gloved hand away.

There was a babbled shout of triumph as The Shadow slid outward; but as he went, the cloaked fighter delivered an upward shot. Beatrice saw the Mongol jolt, claw his chest with his hands. Shrieking, the assassin took a forward pitch out into the dark.

Blackness ruled the window space. Wildly, Beatrice hoped that it would materialize into a cloaked shape. She was telling her uncle what had happened; he and Paul hurried to the window. They were dejected when they turned about. There was no sign of The Shadow, as Beatrice realized when she also looked below.

The girl saw the ornamented edge of a cornice, a floor below the penthouse. It was the ledge upon which the Mongols had perched themselves, prior to the arrival of Flash Gidley. Farther down, Beatrice could see other ledges, like vast steps, all showing blank against the glare of the city's lights.

Somewhere below the lowest ledge that she could see, was a sheer stretch to the ground. At the bottom of it lay the bodies of those victims who had taken the long fall. Mournfully, Beatrice pictured a cloaked form lying among a trio of crushed Mongols.

The Shadow had settled three desperate assassins, but there was no possible chance that he could have survived a plunge as long as theirs. Sobs racked Beatrice, as she thought of her rescuer's fate. Gently, her uncle drew her from the window.

"Tell us," he said, solemnly, "what do you know about Shiwan Khan? It is up to us to avenge the death of our lost friend, by tracking down the enemy that caused his death."

Beatrice nodded. Grimly brave, she was ready to do her part. The Shadow was gone, and the one way to serve his memory was to settle scores with Shiwan Khan. Beatrice knew that she could provide the beginning of a trail to the headquarters of the heinous master villain.

Dr. Sayre had told her what she had said while she was Lana Luan. The girl told of the lights that had blinked nightly above the Green Pagoda; how she had been lured by them into the restaurant, there to visit a hidden domain that she knew existed but which she could no longer remember in detail.

NEITHER Paul nor Chadbury could doubt what Beatrice told them, for they knew the hypnotic power of Shiwan Khan's lights. They were pleased, too, when Beatrice remembered a message that The Shadow had ordered her to give them. She questioned her uncle:

"Do you know anything about a gun that was used to murder Bob Ryndon?"

"I do!" exclaimed Paul. "I gave it to you, when you were Lana Luan. What did you do with it?"

"I don't know," replied Beatrice. "The Shadow simply said that the gun no longer mattered. The police found it, but could distinguish no fingerprints upon it."

Chadbury thwacked Paul on the shoulder.

"That clears you, Brent!" he exclaimed. "With Beatrice safe, we can both tell all we know. We can call in the police, to help us find Shiwan Khan."

"We ought to see Dorron first," insisted Paul, "so he can hold the Aritoba. Maybe he was duped like we were. If so, he will support our story."

Chadbury nodded while closing the safe, to lock up the fifty thousand dollars. He remarked that Dorron might still be at his office; the shipping man usually remained there evenings when freighters were being loaded.

Taking Beatrice with them, Chadbury and Paul left the penthouse. They were solemn as they rode down in the elevator. Despite their elation over the chance of balking Shiwan Khan, they had not forgotten The Shadow. Their tones were hushed when they spoke of him.

Silent, too, was the cloaked form that soon rose from the blackness outside the penthouse window. Wavering inward from the darkness, The Shadow settled upon the living-room floor.

Crawling farther, he was blocked by Herk's body; managing to circle it, he reached the telephone. His gloved hand failed, however, when it tried to lift the instrument.

Unlike the Mongols, The Shadow had not taken a long pitch from the window. Their plunges had been inspired by bullets. The Shadow had dropped straight; his plummet fall had stopped on the cornice from which the diving Mongols had bounced.

Managing to cling there, The Shadow had rolled inward from the edge. Strength returning, he had climbed up to the deserted penthouse.

Exhausted, The Shadow lay motionless. It would be minutes, perhaps many of them, before his senses came back. Precious minutes for Shiwan Khan, whose evil cause had received a bad setback tonight. For Shiwan Khan, perhaps, would have a chance to rally his depleted forces while The Shadow's recovery was under way.

True, measures were being taken to defeat Shiwan Khan. But such measures could bring only failure, when employed without The Shadow.

CHAPTER XVII. THE PERFECT THRUST

Shiwan Khan was seated in his golden throne room, a silent, immobile figure. He was engaged in a period of contemplation, in accordance with the teachings he had learned while in Tibet. The golden room seemed to flow with the supreme villain's vital thoughts.

Last of the long line of descendants who had come from Genghis Khan, this new seeker of conquest had not always dreamed of power. As a youth, he had been meditative, while he dwelt in the wilds of Sinkiang. He had considered which way his future lay: whether in Tibet to the south, or Mongolia to the north.

He had chosen Tibet. Reaching the forbidden city of Lhasa, he had studied under the lamas, learned their mystic ways. He had gained a mental power which his teachers had informed him he should use to accomplish good. Thus gifted, Shiwan Khan had set out for Mongolia.

In that land where brawn and cruelty reigned, Shiwan Khan had experienced his ancestral urge for power. His mental mastery over the Mongolians had caused him to foresee the rise of another Kha Khan, or Great Ruler - himself. He had gone back to his birthplace, Sinkiang, the dividing land that suited his complex nature.

And there -

A sharp interruption ended the contemplation of Shiwan Khan. An intruder had dashed into the golden room, to fall kneeling at the throne. Shiwan Khan, fixing his eyes upon the arrival, saw the upturned face of Hoang Khu, the lieutenant who governed his Mongol horde.

"We have failed, Kha Khan!" babbled the Mongol. "I saw, with these eyes, from the ground below. There was trouble in the little house on the great building where the man Chadbury lives. Unless there had been trouble, my faithful men would not have entered there."

"They came from the window, all three" - Hoang Khu lifted his hand, keeping his forefinger bent with his thumb, so that only his last three fingers were raised - "like tiny dolls! They were thrown to the ground!"

"Only one enemy could have accomplished that, Kha Khan. He alone could have saved the girl, her uncle, and the man Brent, for they came, all three" - the Mongol lifted his other hand - "from the house above. The one who did those deeds was Ying Ko!"

By Ying Ko, the Mongol meant The Shadow. He was using the name that the Chinese employed when they spoke of the intrepid, black-clad fighter. Yet Hoang Khu's excitement did not perturb the placid Shiwan Khan. Lifting a gold-sleeved arm, he pointed to the door.

"Go!" The word was like the tone of a bell. "Await my orders, Hoang Khu. I shall learn more facts than you can tell me. We shall yet destroy The Shadow."

AS Hoang Khu left, Shiwan Khan turned to his glass board. Again coupling the mechanical methods of

the West with this wisdom of the East, he began to flicker various lights. He pressed one switch, then another, staring at each glow that appeared upon the board.

"I am Shiwan Khan -"

The words brought no mental answers. They proved what Hoang Khu had said. Neither Paul Brent nor Guy Chadbury were where they could feel the hidden master's influence. There was a response, however, when Shiwan Khan pressed Dorron's light.

"I am Shiwan Khan. Speak!"

A mental answer came back. Probing Dorron's brain, Shiwan Khan received the impression that Paul and Chadbury had called his office and were on their way there. Calmly, Shiwan Khan gave instructions. His mental advice was exact.

Dorron was to pose as a complete dupe, like the others, although, actually, he had accepted the rule of Shiwan Khan. Through cunning argument, which Shiwan Khan detailed, Dorron was to dissuade Paul and Chadbury from mentioning the Aritoba shipments to the police.

He could attend to the Aritoba quietly, while they took up a more important cause: the trapping of Shiwan Khan. After turning off Dorron's lights, Shiwan Khan monotoned a chuckle. He liked trappers. He had a way of enmeshing them in their own snares.

Three little lights glittered as Shiwan Khan pressed a switch. They corresponded with the bulbs on Flash Gidley's new radio set: green, yellow, and red.

Flash answered. Probing the crook's thoughts required patience on the part of Shiwan Khan, for Flash was a less adaptable person than Dorron. Soon, though, Shiwan Khan had learned enough.

He sped new thoughts to Flash - orders for him to leave his headquarters before the police called on him. He instructed Flash to gather a mob and have them ready.

As soon as that was done, Flash was to be at a specified place, to meet a person sent by Shiwan Khan. Flash would then be started on another mission. At the end of it - this was Shiwan Khan's final mental statement - Flash would be paid fifty thousand dollars, in lieu of the money that he had failed to get from Chadbury.

Extinguishing the three little lights, Shiwan Khan gazed at the blank glass board. His lips phrased a melodious laugh, a change from his usual monotone, as he pressed a different switch. Chinese letters began to flicker from the board. Shiwan Khan had started the flashing sign that hung above the Green Pagoda Cafe.

Though he knew that Beatrice Chadbury was no longer living the life of Lana Luan, Shiwan Khan still believed that the sign would bring results; and it did. Across the street from the Green Pagoda, a man was watching that sign. Harry Vincent was on new duty, for The Shadow.

Harry had definite instructions from his chief. He was to watch the sign, in case it showed odd flickers. Thereupon, it would be Harry's duty to report to Burbank. Harry had been warned, too, that he was not to watch the sign more than a few seconds.

Without realizing it, Harry stared at the glow too long. He was counting the changes of the Chinese letters, thinking that they were shifting at the rate of one a second. Instead, the letters had a slower progression.

To his amazement, Harry was reading those curious characters. With one of them, he seemed to hear the spoken words: "Come!"

MECHANICALLY, Harry crossed the street. A man in a trance, he entered the Chinese restaurant and was shown to the little booth beside the idol. Thoughts were coming to his mind without the aid of the lights. Sliding back the panel, Harry took the route that Beatrice had so often followed.

Passing the closed door of the room where the girl had discarded her own clothes for the garb of Lana Luan, Harry followed the passage that went by the spiral stairway and came into the throne room of Shiwan Khan. He halted like a stalled mechanical figure, to meet the green-eyed gaze of the gold-garbed master mind.

"Your name" - Shiwan Khan seemed to probe Harry's brain to find it - "is Harry Vincent. Once, you served The Shadow."

Unwittingly, Harry gave a nod.

"From now on," said Shiwan Khan, "you shall serve me! I promise you a vast reward. You shall come with me to the heart of Asia, to the underground city of Xanadu, where the sacred River Alph runs through measureless caverns, into a sea where the sun never shines!"

Harry's eyes seemed to light, as if they caught a vision of the splendid capital which dominated Shiwan Khan's underground kingdom.

"Genghis Khan, my ancestor, conquered half the world," announced Shiwan Khan, proudly. "He used gun powder, other implements of warfare that were modern in his day. His descendant, Kubla Khan, feared no one, and was able to use the wealth that Genghis Khan had left him. With it, Kubla Khan built Xanadu.

"Thoughts are things. Sometimes they are sent 'on the wind,' as we say in Tibet. Once, a fragmentary vision of the famed city, Xanadu, reached an English poet, Coleridge, who wrote his impressions. The words of a dream? No! The description of a vision!"

"I, Shiwan Khan, have again discovered the lost city of Xanadu. Far beneath the earth, on the banks of the sacred River Alph, it forms a vast bombproof shelter. No puny bombs could blast the mountains that cover the forgotten sea of Manja."

Inspired by his own description, Shiwan Khan was sweeping Harry into a state of ecstasy. Leaning forward, the golden-robed master drove home the utterance:

"I shall be Kha Khan, the ruler of Xanadu! Through the wealth of the ancients, I am acquiring aircraft and munitions. My air fleets shall travel everywhere, conquering unprotected lands. Should enemies attack my country, seeking reprisal, all they will find will be dry deserts and barren mountains.

"I have stirred the people of Sinkiang, so that they are dissatisfied. When I return to Xanadu, I shall assemble them. They will populate my hidden kingdom, and later, as conquest proceeds, the craftsmen of all nations will be drawn to Xanadu. There, our factories will supply the planes and bombs for still greater conquest!"

Harry was approaching the throne, drawn by the powerful green eyes of Shiwan Khan. They were face to face, and Shiwan Khan's lips were moving, but the words that he merely whispered seemed to thunder through Harry's brain:

"To you, I promise high honor in Xanadu, if you obey my present mandate. You will accept -"

Harry punctuated the comment with a nod.

"- the duty," continued Shiwan Khan, "of destroying the one enemy who alone can hope to block my ambitions - The Shadow!"

Entranced by the glare of the green eyes, Harry continued his slow nod. The lips of Shiwan Khan formed a livid smile. The master plotter was ready to give the perfect thrust.

Harry Vincent had become the tool of Shiwan Khan. Doom was scheduled for The Shadow, to be dealt by the agent that he trusted most.

Doom that The Shadow could not possibly foresee!

CHAPTER XVIII. BLACK DEATH

WHILE Harry Vincent stood rigid before the throne, Shiwan Khan probed his pockets and found an automatic, fully loaded. He placed the gun in Harry's own fist, with the ominous comment:

"For The Shadow!"

Harry nodded. His brain, fully controlled by Shiwan Khan, gave him no inkling of his present opportunity to deal finally with The Shadow's greatest foe. A gun in hand, Harry was facing Shiwan Khan; like the other agents, he was sworn to end that monstrous murderer's evil career, should he find the chance to do it.

The chance was here, and so was Harry. But the urge for the promised stroke was totally absent.

Contemptuously, Shiwan Khan brought a telephone from behind a golden curtain. Lifting the instrument from the stand, he placed it in Harry's free hand. He wanted Harry to communicate with his chief, The Shadow, and a mechanical means was necessary.

The Shadow, however great his prowess, had not yet acquired the skill to project thoughts, with his agents as receivers.

Mental jolts were reaching Harry's brain. They were the commands of Shiwan Khan, standing close beside him. They told Harry what to do, then gave him leeway. His mind, so to speak, was on leash. Freely, it started along its accustomed channels, then pulled up short at the beck of Shiwan Khan.

Harry called a number that came from his own memory. He heard a quiet voice across the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

"Vincent reporting," announced Harry. "Important information regarding Shiwan Khan."

"Report in detail."

Eyes were close to Harry's. Across the telephone, he met the green glare of Shiwan Khan, looming like the vast sea of Manja, ready to swallow him in its forgotten depths. An uncanny shrewdness governed Harry's next words.

"I can't report from here," undertoned The Shadow's agent. "There is danger. I must see the chief alone."

Burbank inquired if Harry could safely hold the wire open. Inspired by Shiwan Khan, Harry gave an affirmative whisper. Burbank then informed that The Shadow had not been heard from since he went to the penthouse.

Cliff Marsland had gone up there to look for him. Burbank was expecting Cliff's report over another wire.

Soon it came. Burbank made a connection, so that Harry could listen in. Shiwan Khan did not have to hold the receiver. He was getting everything that Harry heard, through the agent's own brain.

Cliff's voice first, then The Shadow's.

Shiwan Khan was ready to pluck the telephone from Harry's hand, in case the power of The Shadow's voice should influence him. There was nothing forceful, however, in The Shadow's tone. On the contrary, it sounded weary.

Besides, The Shadow was not talking directly to Harry. He was hearing the agent's request through Burbank. The Shadow gave instructions, which Burbank relayed:

"At the Jonas office," said the contact man. "As soon as you can get there within the next half hour."

"Instructions received."

With that, Harry let the telephone drop into the waiting hand of Shiwan Khan. Lifting the curtain, the master criminal placed the instrument behind it.

Then, reaching to a shelf beneath a large brass gong, Shiwan Khan brought out a porcelain dragon. He let the curtain fall again, covering the gong.

Fixing the dragon under Harry's arm, where it settled heavily, Shiwan Khan ordained:

"You will follow my directions, until you meet a man named Flash Gidley. Give him the dragon. Then continue to the place where you are to meet The Shadow."

Harry nodded.

"Have the gun in your pocket" - Shiwan Khan pushed Harry's hand into his coat - "and shoot through the cloth. Remember" - the words had the clarity of a tinkling bell - "that to you, sight of The Shadow means to pull the trigger!"

TURNING Harry about, Shiwan Khan started him through the broad door leading from the throne room. He did not strike the small gong standing beside the glass board, as he had done when cutting off his projected thoughts to Dorron and Flash.

Shiwan Khan had supplied an influence under which he intended to remain until an event, quite as jolting as a gong stroke, would suffice to waken him.

In leaving Shiwan Khan's, Harry went down the spiral stairway just outside the throne room. It took him to a basement level, where he followed a long, interminable passage. The low-roofed corridor dipped at one point, then rose again. Reaching what seemed a solid wall, Harry pressed it with his fingers.

To the left, straight up, then to the right - the moves came naturally. They were inspired by the urging thoughts of Shiwan Khan, who at that moment was standing, eyes half closed in concentration, near the center of the throne room.

Though the motions of the wall were imperceptible, Harry's pressure produced the proper combination. The wall slid aside like a door. As Harry stepped through, it glided back into place. In a small cellar, Harry saw a flight of steps. At the top, he opened an ordinary door, that took him to an outside passage.

The underground corridor had carried him beneath two streets and the short intervening block. Going along the outside passage, Harry reached a street that was three blocks from the one which fronted the Golden Pagoda. No one would have connected this outlet with Shiwan Khan's headquarters above the Chinese restaurant.

Harry had not gone five steps along the sidewalk, when a man stepped from a parked car and halted him. Flash Gidley had seen the dragon that Harry carried. He gave his name when Harry asked it. It served as well as code words. Harry handed over the seventh Ch'ien Lung dragon.

As Flash's car pulled away, a taxicab shoved into the space. Though he still stared straight ahead, Harry was forming thoughts that were in a way his own, though they had come originally from Shiwan Khan. He wanted to get to an address on Twenty-third Street. The cab would take him there. Stepping into the cab, Harry muttered his destination.

It was heard by a Mongol driver.

Shiwan Khan was taking no chances on anyone trailing persons who came from his hidden lair. After a circuitous route, the cab finally stopped in front of the building that Harry wanted. Without thinking to pay the driver, Harry stepped from the cab and walked into the building, his hand deep in his coat pocket.

The Mongol at the wheel was not at all disturbed because he did not receive the fare. He was leering, in a very unlovely fashion, when he drove away. He had delivered another of the walking figures who could hardly call themselves human, while under the sway of Shiwan Khan.

This one was just like the others. He would do whatever Shiwan Khan had ordained.

UP a rickety stairway, Harry turned into a passage where wavering gaslight threw its uncertain rays upon a glass-paneled door that had a letter chute on a level with the knob. On the panel, in faded letters, was the name:

B. JONAS

Who B. Jonas was, Harry had never inquired. This office was simply one where special reports were delivered to The Shadow. Usually, Rutledge Mann dropped them in the mail chute, but Harry had also performed that duty.

The glass panel of the door was very grimy. The lock was the sort that could be opened with almost any skeleton key, but usually, thick cobwebs, showing through the glass, gave indication that no one - neither B. Jonas nor any one else - had been in the place for months.

Tonight, the cobwebs were missing. The fact didn't interest Harry. He had a mission to accomplish. Through his dazed mind ran visions of a dream city with glorious palaces, glowing under some strange light that came from neither sun nor moon.

It was real, that city, and Harry wanted no one to destroy it. Only one person intended to destroy it: The Shadow. Therefore, it was only right that Harry should prevent the terrible deed, by disposing of The Shadow first. The place where The Shadow could be found was beyond the grimy old door, so Harry reached for the knob.

Before Harry's hand could twist, the door whipped inward. The gaslight threw a block of light into the Jonas office. Beyond that glow was darkness that suddenly disgorged a cloaked figure.

Harry saw the brim of a slouch hat, cloaked shoulders beneath. A gloved hand swung a gun straight toward Harry, as its owner suddenly realized that Harry's pocketed hand meant business.

Had Harry's reactions been normal, he would have dropped back at sight of that quick-moving muzzle. Instead, his brain seemed to click a signal that controlled his trigger finger. A burst of muffled flame flashed through the cloth of Harry's coat, spurting a bullet with it.

With the gunburst, Harry's trance snapped. He was in the midst of new amazement. He saw The Shadow jolting upward, backward, to coil upon the bare floor of an unfamiliar room. His hand coming numbed from his pocket, Harry found himself holding a smoking gun.

Harry's vision went black at the sight of death before him. Struck with the terrible thought that he had slain The Shadow, through some hideous mistake, Harry slumped to the floor beside the dead body of his black-clad victim!

CHAPTER XIX. GONG OF DOOM

THROUGH Harry's gritted teeth came groans that drowned a muffled click from a closet in the corner of the squarish office. Recovered from the staggering sensation that his own gunshot had brought, Harry was unable to lift the slouch hat from the face of the cloaked figure beside him.

He felt that another hand would have to perform that sorrowful rite. Another hand did - a gloved one, that came suddenly past Harry's shoulder, to tug the hat away.

Swinging about on hands and knees, Harry stared upward at The Shadow! If ever a daze had swept him, it was then. The torpor produced by Shiwan Khan was nothing, compared to the stupefied bewilderment that Harry felt at seeing The Shadow alive and dead at the same moment!

From The Shadow that stood beside him, Harry heard a solemn whispered laugh. He saw the burn of amazing eyes that could only be those of his chief. Letting his gaze turn to the floor, Harry viewed the face of the dead man, the masquerader whose hat The Shadow had removed.

It was the face of Herbert Thorner.

"He was a party to murder," expressed The Shadow, "as deep in crime as the rest. His death was deserved!"

The Shadow's statement was self-evident to Harry. He realized that he had fired his own shot in self-defense, even though the action had been involuntary. Thorner, lurking in the Jonas office, had swooped out, intending to drop Harry with a gunshot. He had been waiting for a chance to kill The Shadow, or any of the latter's agents.

Calmly, The Shadow explained how he had led Thorner to the Jonas office during the afternoon. Taking the old cloak and hat from Thorner's body, he hung them in the closet where he had kept them, so that anyone penetrating here would think that they had found The Shadow's actual headquarters, instead of a mere way-station.

There was an opening at the rear of the closet, where a specially constructed panel formed The Shadow's usual route to and from the dingy office, instead of the cobwebbed door.

Crossed snares had produced a curious result. The Shadow, talking to Burbank, had correctly supposed that Harry was in the power of Shiwan Khan, because of the unusual request for a special meeting. Thinking that Thorner had contacted Shiwan Khan, The Shadow naturally supposed that he was being duped to enter a trap that he already knew about.

He had said for Harry to meet him at the Jonas office, merely to satisfy Shiwan Khan.

But the master plotter, who usually knew so much, had not been acquainted with Thorner's little game. It happened that Thorner had cooked up the cute idea all on his own, as the results had definitely proven.

In sending Harry to kill The Shadow, Shiwan Khan had doubly injured his own cause. He had lost the services of Thorner and had also released a valuable prisoner, in the person of Harry Vincent.

The Shadow, too, had made a mistake. He had taken his time, coming in to surprise Thorner, not suspecting that the fellow would be due for a clash with Harry. His purpose had been to capture Thorner and make the fellow talk, in hope of learning just where Harry was. Thus Thorner and Harry had fought it out together. Since Harry had won, the episode was closed.

It was Harry - not Thorner - who might now provide a worthwhile trail. Questioning his agent, The Shadow learned the same facts that Beatrice had disclosed; namely, that the Green Pagoda was the route to Shiwan Khan's lair. But Harry's experience had been short and recent. It was possible that he could remember more.

Behind the closed door of the Jonas office, The Shadow faced Harry toward a brilliant gas jet, then turned him so that he could gain the proper glitter from The Shadow's own eyes. Under that burning gaze, Harry felt the creeping return of his recent daze. The Shadow talked of lights outside the Green Pagoda; gradually, Harry carried the story further.

He remembered the panel beneath the idol, the trip to Shiwan Khan's golden throne room. He described all that had occurred there, even mentioning two gongs that he had seen: a little one beside the glass board, and a large one when Shiwan Khan had lifted the golden curtain.

Memory of the porcelain dragon returned; with it, Harry described the long corridor that he had used for exit. He told how he had given the dragon to Flash Gidley, then started for the Jonas office.

There the story ended; Harry was suddenly brought from his trance by a jolt that The Shadow pounded to his chin.

LEAVING by the secret route, The Shadow told Harry to contact Burbank and arrange for the removal of Thorner's body.

Outside the building, The Shadow entered Moe's cab and made a rapid trip to the neighborhood of the Green Pagoda. Skirting the block, The Shadow saw a forming police cordon. He knew that Paul Brent and Guy Chadbury must have summoned the police, to begin a hunt for Shiwan Khan.

The Shadow's surmise was correct. More than that, the hunt was making progress. Inspector Joe Cardona was in charge, and he had taken over the Chinese restaurant. Under rapid persuasion, the proprietor had begun to talk.

He was pointing out the panel that led beneath the idol. He didn't know what lay beyond it. He had been paid to put it there, for the use of persons who seemed to know where it was. He had always been able to identify them, by the way they stared.

One reason the restaurant man talked was because Beatrice Chadbury had come along with her uncle and Paul Brent. Recognizing her, the owner of the Green Pagoda thought that she had already imparted the information and that it might be to his benefit to corroborate the story.

The bluff was Cardona's idea. The ace inspector was quite pleased with himself when they began the trip to Shiwan Khan's lair.

Posting men along the line, he stopped at the top of the stairs to watch Beatrice Chadbury open a door

that she had suddenly recognized. Close behind Cardona, Guy Chadbury and Paul Brent heard the girl give exclamation.

"Those are my clothes!" declared Beatrice, pointing to a chair: "I remember taking them off in this room, so I could put on the Chinese costume. This is where I became Lana Luan."

Joe Cardona was suddenly impressed that he was on the trail of something important. So far, the story had made him rather dubious, because Guy Chadbury had confined it to a kidnap charge. Cardona had believed the part about Flash Gidley demanding fifty thousand dollars ransom. But Beatrice's talk about a master mind named Shiwan Khan had sounded like a pipe dream.

Finding the clothes made it different. If Beatrice had worn them in here, and left them, she must have put on other garments in order to go out. Either she had left as Lana Luan or Lady Godiva, and Cardona decided that a Chinese costume was more plausible than none at all.

He posted his last detective to guard the clothes as evidence. Turning to Beatrice, Cardona said:

"All right, Miss Chadbury. Your story stands to date. What about this Shiwan Khan? Do you think he's around here somewhere?"

Beatrice nodded emphatically. They followed her along the passage to the throne room.

Seeing the light from the golden room, Cardona pressed ahead, drawing his gun. As he stopped at the wide doorway, the other men stepped up beside him, with Beatrice in the background.

Shiwan Khan was seated placidly in his throne, facing the door. He had drawn aside the cloth at the side of the little alcove, revealing the large gong hanging above the vacant shelf where the seventh porcelain dragon had lately rested.

UNPERTURBED by the bristle of three revolvers, Shiwan Khan gave a slitted smile and bowed. His eyes seemed to focus on the four pairs of eyes at the door. Each person felt the power of that stare, and tried to fight it off.

"I have expected you," announced Shiwan Khan, in his singular tone. "Three of you have already been tuned to my mental vibrations. Your thoughts, to some extent, are still mine!"

Shiwan Khan's words were sheer bluff. Without the hypnotic influence of his lights, he could not place other minds under immediate control. Only a person willing to be hypnotized could succumb to his powerful eyes, though their influence did have a marked effect when accompanied by his persuasive speech.

"You have told little," remarked Shiwan Khan, his gaze shifting between Paul and Chadbury, "but not all. Therefore, the law is still uninformed on my most important secrets, and shall remain so."

The verbal bait was too much for Cardona. He started into the room, the other two men with him and Beatrice close behind.

Shiwan Khan's only weapon was a small wooden hammer that he weighed between his long-fingered hands. He looked helpless against the guns; in fact, he raised his arms wide apart as the group approached.

As they crossed the threshold, Shiwan Khan gave a hard backstroke with his upraised hammer, a move designed to bring his enemies forward in a surge. But before they could spring to action, a black-clad avalanche came whirling from the spiral stairs outside the throne room.

Slicing through the edge of the doorway, The Shadow wheeled upon Cardona and the others, flinging himself into a dive that carried all his weight with it. Bodily he carried them back across the threshold, sprawling them in the hall. Their guns were barking wildly in his ears at the moment when Shiwan Khan's hammer clanged the great gong.

Shiwan Khan had spoken of vibrations. The golden room received one, of a devastating sort. Instead of merely quivering, the golden drapes collapsed. With them came thundering walls, a crashing roof. Beams, rafters, bricks and mortar roared destruction that Shiwan Khan had meant to swallow four unsuspecting victims!

Except for the alcove in the far wall, the entire room was gone. Three rescued men and a girl were blinking upward at the open sky, when they heard The Shadow's laugh, dispelling the final echoes of Shiwan Khan's great gong!

CHAPTER XX. THE SEVENTH DRAGON

SO thick was the cloud of piling debris that The Shadow's shots were useless when he opened fire with a brace of automatics. He was trying to get bullets through to Shiwan Khan's alcove, where complete darkness had enveloped the gold-clad master foe.

Everywhere, the bullets met obstruction, a fact announced by the harsh laugh of Shiwan Khan filtering through the wreckage. The laugh continued when The Shadow's shots were spent, and with it came a purring rumble.

Situated in the solid wall of the next building, Shiwan Khan's alcove was an elevator. From the direction of the sound, The Shadow could tell that it was going up, instead of down. Evidently, Shiwan Khan preferred escape across the roofs, the sort that he had once prepared for Thorner.

Perhaps he had guessed that The Shadow had entered by the route that led underground, three blocks away, and was therefore neglecting that advantage. Probably Shiwan Khan did not know that the police had formed a cordon around the single block to which his flight was automatically restricted by his choice.

Gripping Cardona in the darkness, The Shadow informed him of Shiwan Khan's direction and announced that he was leaving the fiend's capture to the law. The Shadow mentioned the underground passage, however, in case Shiwan Khan reversed his course. Then, with a final trailing laugh, The Shadow was on his way.

Leading his rescued companions, Cardona started down through the Green Pagoda, to start the hunt for Shiwan Khan.

The Shadow had gone by the underground passage, so as not to be delayed by the cordon. He had another objective, where he intended to operate alone. He had not forgotten the dragon that Harry Vincent had handed to Flash Gidley. The Shadow was headed for the home of Benjamin Twindell.

MATTERS were brewing at Twindell's before The Shadow reached there. Flash and a few of his mobbies were grouped in the passage near the side door; the rest were stationed in front and in back of the house. It was Flash alone who approached the door, to ring the bell.

Harper, the butler, answered. Flash lifted his coat, to let the servant see the dragon. As Harper nodded and stepped back, Flash jabbed him with a gun. The men at the side door entered, and soon had Twindell's servants covered. Opening the other doors, they admitted the rest of the mob.

Benjamin Twindell first learned of the invasion when Flash entered the study and found the old collector at his desk. Twindell showed immediate alarm at sight of the gun Flash pointed at him. He gave a peculiar gulp when the smooth-toned crook placed the dragon heavily on the table.

"We're friends," informed Flash. "Good friends! Why? Because we both know a guy named Shiwan Khan. He's the fellow who sent me here."

Twindell blinked. He didn't fully understand.

"The idea is this," said Flash. "You want this dragon, to match up with six others sitting there on your shelf. I want fifty grand - fifty thousand bucks to you - which Shiwan Khan owes me. He says I can collect from you."

"But I have already paid for the last dragon!"

"You'd better take a gander at your books," returned Flash. "The way I got it, you still owe dough to Shiwan Khan."

Twindell brought a ledger from the desk.

"Ah, yes!" He nodded. "I had forgotten this extra credit. It comes to forty thousand dollars. I suppose I can spare the extra ten."

Flash grinned.

"You can, all right!" he said. "I'll tell you why! Because you're buying a special service; get it? With us barging in here, the cops will think that somebody was trying to rob the joint. They'll never figure we brought the dragon, instead of cleaning out the place.

"That's worth ten grand, ain't it? Ten grand for a real alibi? It's cheap for a guy like you, who's got plenty of dough and a rep he's got to watch out for. Forty grand from his nibs, ten from you - that makes up the kitty."

The arguments produced a pleased cackle from Twindell. Hearing it, Flash was sorry that he hadn't asked for more money. He decided, though, that it was best to follow Shiwan Khan's instructions.

While Twindell was opening his huge safe, Flash went out to the stairs and called down to his men, telling them to march the servants up to the study.

"Tell these guys of yours that we're all right," Flash said to Twindell. "Then we can give them back their gats. When we lam, we'll do a lot of shooting, see? They're to do the same - only, it's all in fun. When the bulls get here, you can tell them that you beat us off."

Twindell explained matters to the servants. Harper and the others grinned, when they understood the game. Rogues in their own right, they knew that Twindell was crooked. Any measure that covered their master's methods was a help to them.

PARTIES to a crooked game designed by Shiwan Khan, both Twindell and Flash sent their followers from the study, to get posted for what was to follow. A few of Flash's mobbies remained, looking around at the curios. Flash wanted them with him, so the fake battle could begin as they started downstairs.

He was expecting Twindell to bring money from the safe. Instead, the withered man produced several check books, which Flash eyed askance. Flash began an objection:

"Say! Checks won't go!"

"Why not?" cackled Twindell. "My name will not be on them. These are accounts belonging to imaginary companies, with false names of officers. I have used them in all the transactions that I have performed for Shiwan Khan."

"But if you stop their payment -"

"Why should I? Forty thousand dollars of the fifty belongs to Shiwan Khan. As I have already told you, I consider the remaining ten thousand a mere trifle for the service rendered."

Flash made no further objection. Twindell was making out many checks, all for small amounts, payable to cash. They would be easy to cash. Gathering the checks as Twindell wrote them, Flash was too interested to note what occurred outside the room.

A black-cloaked figure had arrived in the little passage at the top of the stairs. The Shadow, entering while all hands were getting instructions in the study, had found later opportunity to move upstairs. From the doorway, he could see the porcelain dragon squatting on the desk. He watched Flash reach for the last of Twindell's checks.

It was almost the time for action. Drawing back, The Shadow was ready to let Flash and the mobbies pass. Then he could cower Twindell in the study and cover the departing crooks from the doorway. Flash and his whole tribe could not dislodge The Shadow, if they came from one direction only.

At the moment, however, The Shadow's position was unenviable. If discovered, he would be between two fires. A minute more, the odds would be his. All seemed perfect for The Shadow, when he caught the clatter of footsteps on the stairs.

Something had happened below, bringing a pair of Twindell's servants and one of Flash's thugs up to the study!

Trapped in the very spot he didn't want, The Shadow was faced by a serious emergency. His time limit of a minute was cut down to a few seconds, with disaster, not victory, waiting at the finish.

There was a way, however, to make those brief seconds serve. It depended upon an important fact that The Shadow had long ago learned.

Coolly, The Shadow leveled a .45 at the porcelain dragon that stood on Twindell's desk. He pressed the trigger. With the impact of the bullet, the foot-high dragon shattered.

From its interior gushed a cascade of shimmering gems: rubies, sapphires, emeralds - a galaxy of jewels worth half a million dollars!

FLASH heard the gunshot, so did his slouching thugs. But they saw the flood of gems that the dragon had released.

The sight made Flash forget everything else. He thought that one of his own men had blasted the revealing shot. Flinging the checks aside, he snarled:

"Fifty grand - for all those!"

Flash made for Twindell. The old man screeched. Driving into the room, The Shadow blasted shots at the astonished thugs. They were sprawling, The Shadow was wheeling to a corner, as Twindell's servants entered. Flash was full about, bellowing as he fired, and Twindell's howls were louder.

It was gang against gang, with The Shadow handy to even up the odds. The cloaked fighter let Flash drive past, then followed. Flash wanted his crew to clean up the servants, to make sure the path was clear. He didn't understand why shots from above the stairs were clipping the mobbies, until he wheeled to see The Shadow.

Two guns spoke. The Shadow's was perfect in its aim, but Flash's was not.

While the mob leader was still tumbling down the stairs, to join his crippled pals and the battered servants, The Shadow wheeled back into Twindell's study. The scrawny man was waiting for him, but not with a gun. Between his palsied hands, Twindell was proffering a small silver casket.

"I'm innocent!" he whined. "I swear it! Shiwan Khan is to blame for all! The facts are in this casket. Look!"

Before The Shadow could reach Twindell, the old man in his eagerness had flipped the casket open. It was Twindell, not The Shadow, who received the answer which Shiwan Khan had said would satisfy the man who asked for it.

A coil of silver writhed within the casket. A darting head slid out, jabbed its tiny fangs into Twindell's wrist. The old man staggered as he let the casket fall. The Shadow fired a shot at the silver snake that wriggled across the floor.

The bullet blew away the snake's head, but the creature's body still wriggled as The Shadow watched it. Twindell, though, was motionless when The Shadow turned to look at him.

Slumped across the desk, Twindell's hands were buried in the jewels that lay about the shattered Ch'ien Lung dragon. The man who had aided Shiwan Khan's schemes was dead, served with a poisonous dose that had been intended for The Shadow.

Every dragon on Twindell's shelf had carried its quota of jewels, which had been turned to cash at Twindell's sales, for Shiwan Khan's purchases of supplies, airplanes, and munitions. The contents of the seventh dragon were the reward that Twindell was to keep for his services.

He had his reward: the jewels on the desk. But Benjamin Twindell had not lived long enough to really enjoy the prizes that crime had brought him.

A solemn laugh crept through that room of death. With the fading of that tone, The Shadow was gone.

CHAPTER XXI. THE JEWEL ROOM

POLICE were arriving when The Shadow reached the street. It must have been their approach that had caused members of both bands to hurry to the study. During the quick battle in which one gang had turned against the other, The Shadow had noted some men sprawl as they flung themselves from the front door.

Officers were entering that same door when The Shadow departed from the side, but they didn't account for the fact that a cordon was forming all around the block. As he finally left the neighborhood, The Shadow saw the commissioner's big car arrive. On that account, he soon returned to Twindell's.

The Shadow came as Lamont Cranston, in a big car of his own. Recognized as the commissioner's friend, he was admitted. On the ground floor, he met Beatrice Chadbury, who introduced him to her uncle and Paul Brent. The girl told Cranston that the commissioner was upstairs in the study, with Inspector Cardona.

At the study door, The Shadow met Weston, who looked very sick. Jabbing his forefinger back into the room, the commissioner told Cranston not to look. So The Shadow looked, and saw what he expected, though it wasn't at all pleasant.

The thing was Twindell's body, no longer scrawny. It was swelled from the poison that had brought such rapid death. The face was covered with splotches, mostly green and purple, and the wide-open bulge of Twindell's eyes was something very hideous.

A police surgeon had just decided that Twindell was dead, a statement that pleased Joe Cardona, because he was reaching Weston's state. The body was lying on a stretcher that had come in from an ambulance, so Cardona covered it with a silk Chinese banner that he plucked from the wall.

Coming out with the police surgeon, Cardona detailed two detectives to guard the body. Entering the study, they stared curiously at the gaudy drape of red and gold, as though they wondered what was underneath it. After Cardona gave a terse but graphic description of what the body looked like, the detectives lost their curiosity.

On the way downstairs, The Shadow learned what had brought the turnout. Shiwan Khan had been sighted near the Green Pagoda. Still wearing his golden robe, he had made an excellent target for police bullets; but the trouble was that none had hit him.

"Either he ducked that lead," growled Cardona, "or that smock he was wearing fooled the eye. Anyway, he got into a cab, with a big Mogul driving it -"

"A Mongol," corrected Weston. "Be precise, inspector!"

"With a big mongrel driving it," resumed Cardona, "and we took after him. When he headed up here, I had a hunch where he was going, so we spread out and closed in on him."

"Thereby losing trace of Shiwan Khan," added Weston. "From what I have heard, we practically had the world's greatest criminal in our hands, and let him slip out!"

"He's in this house," insisted Cardona. "We nabbed the mongrel out back, and while he won't talk, we know that his boss isn't very far away."

Guy Chadbury joined the group.

"I have just talked to the Federal agents," he said. "We called them up a while ago, and they went to the Hoboken pier. Evidently Dorron was really working with Shiwan Khan. He let the Aritoba get under way.

"She won't get far, though. They intend to intercept her in the lower harbor, remove most of the crew and tow her back to dock. I told them about the cargo, and said that Brent and I could explain the reasons for our mistakes."

ODDLY, Chadbury felt a confidence as he spoke. Perhaps it was because he found himself addressing Lamont Cranston. He realized that Cranston was the man who had found Beatrice, and he was sure that this friend could supply real evidence to prove that all crime was due to Shiwan Khan.

In fact, Cranston could already do so.

"The proof is quite plain," said The Shadow. "Shiwan Khan must have purchased many supplies and shipped them to Sinkiang, with Dorron's aid. I can produce a man" - The Shadow made reference to Harry Vincent - "who talked with him and learned his plans.

"Shiwan Khan intended to start a kingdom in the wilderness, with himself as ruler. Buying supplies was simple, but airplanes and munitions promised him more difficulty. So he established fake companies, in Twindell's name, very early in the game. With Dorron already controlled, he merely needed to force two others to do his bidding."

The "two others" were Paul Brent and Guy Chadbury. Having already admitted the fact, they were relieved, rather than worried.

"Shiwan Khan's chief Mongol is named Hoang Khu," continued The Shadow calmly, as though he had learned the fact from some informant. "Hoang Khu murdered Bob Ryndon, because Ryndon had learned too much in Sinkiang. The ruby that Ryndon had was probably one of many that Shiwan Khan used to bribe the local trouble makers."

There was another link that The Shadow did not mention - the fact that Bob Ryndon knew Paul Brent, and that the death was intended to incriminate Paul. That detail was a thing forgotten, for which Paul was quite grateful.

Sudden enlightenment had struck Commissioner Weston, in regard to the matter of the jewels. He spread a large cloth upon the table, to display the gems that had been brought from Twindell's study.

"Then these gems," exclaimed Weston, "came from Sinkiang!"

"Certainly," returned The Shadow. "Shiwan Khan has masses of them, the spoils that his illustrious ancestors took from conquered nations. Look at the stones, commissioner. Any expert will tell you that they are ancient."

"But how can we prove they came from Shiwan Khan?"

"Very easily," replied The Shadow. "Find Twindell's own collection, which he did not sell. It is probably somewhere in this house. When you find it, you may also find Shiwan Khan. Though he considers jewels to be baubles, he would certainly appreciate a hiding place."

The search of the house had been completed, but Weston decided to go at it again. He and Cranston were at the top of the stairs, when Weston heard his friend suggest that they look at the room next to Twindell's study and note the thickness of the wall between.

Cardona was shouting up the stairs that the dead wagon had arrived. While Weston and Cranston were busy in the other room, the two detectives came from the study, bearing the stretcher with the silk-draped body. Evidently their vigil had not agreed with them, for Cardona noted their fixed expressions when they were going past.

Hearing the call from above, Cardona hurried to the study. He found the commissioner standing by the desk, pointing to a section that had lifted like a hinge. Lights were shining from the open space.

"Cranston found these," expressed the commissioner. "An odd thing: the panel, like the lights, seems to be controlled by a switch -"

WESTON interrupted himself. Cranston was finding more. He was half inside of Twindell's big safe, working at the back of it. He found a spring along the edge. The rear of the safe slid smoothly into the wall. The Shadow emerged to say something, but Cardona did not wait to hear it.

Sighting a light beyond, the police inspector lunged through the big safe and the opening at the back of it. He came into a tiny room that sparkled with the brilliance of many jewels, arrayed upon a table. The Shadow had found Twindell's missing collection, but that was unimportant at the moment.

The sight that really gripped Cardona was that of a gold-robed figure crouched at the end of the table, bent forward as if gloating over the massed gems. Recognizing Shiwan Khan's attire, Cardona decided not to give the master mind a chance.

Pumping away with his Police Positive, Cardona literally punched the gold-clad figure from its chair; then bounded past the table to add a few more bullets, in case Shiwan Khan still offered fight. He hoped, too, to recognize the face of Shiwan Khan, which he had seen once before.

In that hope, Cardona was disappointed.

He recognized the face he saw, but it did not belong to Shiwan Khan. Joe Cardona was staring squarely into the bloated, bulge-eyed features of dead Benjamin Twindell!

His own eyes shut, Cardona groped back through the safe. He was remembering the lights and the dead wagon.

He was realizing something that The Shadow had understood before Cardona had made that unneeded surge into the secret jewel room.

From that new lair, which he had gained as a hiding place, Shiwan Khan had pressed a switch controlling lights in Twindell's study. The glowing bulbs had attracted the two detectives who were guarding Twindell's body.

Obeysing the bidding of Shiwan Khan, they had carried the corpse into the jewel room, where Shiwan Khan had adorned it with the golden robe.

No wonder the two detectives had passed so stiffly in the lower hall! Still obedient to Shiwan Khan, they were carrying crime's master out to the dead wagon, under the brilliant cloth that had previously covered Twindell's body!

Weston was shouting when Cardona dashed past him. Something about Cranston having disappeared. Cardona didn't wait to talk about it. Tearing downstairs, he passed Chadbury, Beatrice and Paul as they came from a side room.

Reaching the avenue, Cardona saw tiny lights, no larger than distant pin points: the taillights of the hearse that was carrying Shiwan Khan away to safety. Before the ace inspector could yell for men to follow, he heard a roar from the curb, a half-block ahead.

A taxicab shot away, in pursuit of Shiwan Khan. From the speeding cab, Cardona heard a laugh that promised sure results before the chase was ended.

It was the laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XXII. CRIME'S FINAL RIDDLE

THE hearse that carried Shiwan Khan was far speedier than the dead wagons that took murdered victims to the morgue. The detectives who had placed the stretcher aboard it had not noticed that it was a high-powered car, with a hearse body.

Controlled by Shiwan Khan's vibrating thoughts, they had simply delivered their burden and waited outside the house. The Shadow had seen them when he passed, and knew they would remain in their stupor until someone clanged a gong in their ears.

If no one else thought of that, The Shadow would take care of the matter when he returned as Cranston.

For the present, he was no longer Cranston. From a special sliding drawer beneath the rear seat of Moe's cab, The Shadow had extracted his familiar garb of black. Ready with his automatics, he was prepared to blast the hearse as soon as Moe overtook it.

Shiwan Khan provided for everything. He had probably arranged this getaway, if forced to hide at Twindell's.

Perhaps the walls of his special hearse were of steel. The only way to find out was to test them. That opportunity depended upon Moe, the man at the wheel, and also on the cab.

Like Shiwan Khan's special vehicle, The Shadow's cab was geared for speed, and demonstrated it. Away in back, The Shadow could hear the wail of sirens fade. The fact did not surprise him, for the hearse had tried some twisty tactics that only Moe had managed to follow, partly, by The Shadow's guidance.

They were on a cross street and the hearse was only a few blocks ahead, making straight for a downtown pier. Ahead loomed a yawning entrance, beyond that, the dock itself. The Shadow urged Moe to a greater show of speed. It was given just in time.

As the hearse sped through the pier opening, a big steel door began to slide shut. Moe whisked to the other side and whipped through with inches to spare. The hearse did not slacken speed. It reached the outer end of the pier and scaled off into the river!

Only The Shadow saw two figures dive from the front seat as the vehicle disappeared into the water. One was the driver, probably Hoang Khu; the other, Shiwan Khan, who had come through to the front seat. Moe did not see those flying shapes; he was watching the pier itself.

Brakes jammed, the cab did a nerve-racking skid right to the brink. The door on that side flew open and The Shadow launched himself into space. He did not know what lay beneath, but Shiwan Khan and the other man had found it. That was why The Shadow took the same leap.

HAD he delayed, even a few seconds. The Shadow would have missed his chance. He landed on the very stern of a long, rakish speedboat, just as it roared out from beneath the pier.

Clutching the stern rail with one hand, The Shadow aimed an automatic toward two figures that were driving at him.

The stabs of the gun showed the faces of two Mongol fighters. Their knives slashed The Shadow's cloak, skimming his flesh with it. His first shots were wide, but the next ones took effect. Lurching forward, ripping his cloak from the knives that pinned it to the narrow deck, The Shadow made a hard swing with his empty gun.

That stroke clashed the blade that Hoang Khu was thrusting for The Shadow's heart. Two Mongols eliminated, The Shadow had reached the last of the brawny killers in Shiwan Khan's depleted crew.

The Shadow had guessed right; Hoang Khu had been the hearse driver. Judging from his actions, he hoped to make the boat a dead wagon, with a real corpse in it - The Shadow's.

His crippled arm recovered, Hoang Khu held The Shadow in a rib-cracking grip that prevented him from getting at the extra automatic which he had stowed beneath his cloak. All the while, knife jabs were coming, and The Shadow was fencing them off with slashes from his empty gun.

During that flaying struggle, Shiwan Khan was watching calmly from near the bow. Clad in the dark, baggy clothes that he had worn beneath his golden robe, the Oriental crime master was patiently

depending upon his most capable Mongol to succeed where many others, Shan Juchi included, had failed.

There was nothing else that Shiwan Khan could do. The Shadow had not forgotten him. At no time did enough of a cloaked form display itself for Shiwan Khan to fire, if he had held a gun in readiness. But Shiwan Khan did not have a gun. His only weapon was his brain.

Leaving a scudding wake behind it, the rakish speedboat was driving far out into the harbor. Coolly, Shiwan Khan stepped up beside the man who stood at the wheel. The pilot was Mitchell Dorron; he had provided the speedboat at his accepted master's command.

Away ahead, Shiwan Khan saw the glimmer of searchlights upon a squatty vessel that was being towed into port by two tugs.

Words dropped from slitted lips: "The Aritoba."

Dorron nodded. His lips showed a grimace. He was angry because the freighter had been halted and turned back with its cargo. But Shiwan Khan was not angry.

"Bear straight for the Aritoba," he commanded. "Do not change your course."

"But she's loaded with munitions -"

"I have commanded!" Shiwan Khan's green eyes glared coldly into Dorron's, as the man turned his face. "You have heard. You shall obey!"

Dorron obeyed, while Shiwan Khan turned toward the stern. He could hear the muffled shots of an automatic and knew that The Shadow had managed to draw his other gun.

Hoang Khu was evidently fighting to ward away the muzzle, for although the shots continued, Shiwan Khan could still see the sway of the Mongol's looming body.

Counting the shots, Shiwan Khan heard one that brought a chortle from his slitted lips. It was The Shadow's last bullet. Hoang Khu had won.

So the master plotter thought, as he saw his strongest fighter lunge. Then, from the sag of Hoang Khu's body, Shiwan Khan learned for once that he was wrong.

The Shadow had won! Letting Hoang Khu's bullet-laden body fall aside, the cloaked victor was waiting for Shiwan Khan to move. This was the moment that The Shadow had long awaited, when Shiwan Khan would have no other choice than conflict, without the aid of hypnotizing lights, vibrating gongs, or protecting Mongols.

SHIWAN KHAN met the test. During his stay in Tibet, he must have made some side trips to the jungle, to learn the ways of beasts as well as men. For the spring that he gave had all the swiftness and the power of a tiger's lunge.

Shiwan Khan met The Shadow near the stern, flung him back against the rail. Hands that made steel seem pliable went for The Shadow's throat.

Shiwan Khan's fingertips failed to get their wanted grip. Twisting from the vise that would have meant sure death, The Shadow thrust his own hands for Shiwan Khan's neck. The man who sought mastery of all the world was to learn of conquest delivered by a single foe. The Shadow's clutch was velvet, with solid steel beneath!

Half across the stern rail, The Shadow was dragging Shiwan Khan into total submission. He could feel a neck that throbbed under his own choking fingers. His head bobbing, The Shadow was weaving away from Shiwan Khan's weakening grabs, actually elbowing aside the hands that had at first been more powerful than his own.

Shiwan Khan was sinking steadily, when across his foeman's bowing head The Shadow saw two scudding tugs cut clear from a looming hulk that was rising dead ahead. It was the Aritoba, with only a dozen seconds to go before the speedboat reached her!

Giving Shiwan Khan a twisty fling, The Shadow rolled across the stern rail. As he went, two hands shot after him. Fingers, recuperating with a giant's strength, caught The Shadow's torn cloak. Lashing his overbalanced weight, The Shadow ripped free.

As he struck the water, he saw the face of Shiwan Khan, long arms outstretched beside it, making a great lunge across the rail.

Then came the blast that shook the harbor. Hurtled forward by its stiffened pilot, Dorron, the speedboat gored the hulk of the Aritoba, drove itself deep into the munitions-stocked hold and became the spark that set off a vast explosion.

The freighter split apart, gushing a mass of flame that seemed to scorch the sky. Pieces of aircraft skyrocketed with the bombs that they would never carry. Echoes of the blast still roared when flame had vanished, like the freighter and its cargo.

Swimming steadily, The Shadow reached the stern of a crippled tug with a coal tow. Rolling upon the deck, he lay in darkness while the engine resumed its laboring poundings, to take the sinking towboat into dock.

Other craft were visible near where the Aritoba had gone down. They were using searchlights to hunt for survivors.

Seaplanes were zooming out from shore. One settled like a tired bird, its motor still throbbing. As the sweep of a searchlight glistened from its wings, the seaplane plowed the water. The Shadow saw it lift and take off.

With the plane's fading drone, The Shadow recognized that the brief landing could have been more than the pilot's whim. The ways of Shiwan Khan were many, as were those who served him. It was possible that the master plotter was alive; that the plane was beginning a trip to Sinkiang and the ancient city of Xanadu!

Such was crime's final riddle. Had Shiwan Khan, the conquered, survived his conflict with The Shadow? Or had he gone to the watery depths that swallowed the products of his lost ambitions?

The Shadow would know - if Shiwan Khan returned!

THE END