

THE FATE JOSS

Maxwell Grant

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THE FATE JOSS

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CHAPTER I. THE SHADOW'S QUEST

CHINATOWN'S lights were aglow. Beneath the sultry night they formed an exotic glare throughout this bizarre section of Manhattan. A city within a city, Chinatown was a splash of Oriental splendor centered within drab surroundings.

Blobbed blackness fringed the Chinese quarter. To those who approached Chinatown's center, there were darkened stretches to be passed through, secluded thoroughfares that gave no indication of the brilliance that lay ahead.

To ordinary visitors, those outlying regions offered no significance; but to those who knew the ways of Chinatown, the fringing borders were important. They were like the suburbs of a miniature metropolis. Though they seemed no part of Chinatown, they were actually inhabited by quiet, retiring Celestials, the overflow of those who dwelt in the quarter itself.

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Blackened windows above obscure thoroughfares. Any one of those casements might be a lookout spot for spying eyes. On many nights; passers might traverse these streets unnoticed; but on this sultry evening, slanty eyes were sure to be on observation duty.

For Chinatown had begun to seethe beneath its surface of placidity. It had become an area of rumor, wherein cautious voices babbled their high-pitched dialects. Mystery was afoot; and those who talked of it were wise to confide only in their closest associates.

Blackness enshrouded in blackness. Such was the weird figure that moved along the gloomy sidewalk of a side street. Bound toward Chinatown, this weird figure clung close to the darkened fronts of houses that were seemingly deserted. If there were eyes above, they did not see this being of blackness.

That stalking form was the cloaked figure of The Shadow.

Chinatown was one of The Shadow's habitats. He knew its ways; its people; he had friends amid the dwellers in that district. The rumors that irked Mongol minds had reached The Shadow's ears. Because of those reports, he had chosen to keep his visit secret.

The Shadow's course was swift despite his caution. His gliding pace slackened, however, as he reached a turn in the narrow street. As he passed that point, The Shadow could see the glow of the central district. He was almost within sight of the corner of Mott and Pell—the Times Square of Chinatown.

Pausing, The Shadow gazed keenly along the street ahead. He watched strolling figures pass from view. He eyed windows above; satisfied that they were unoccupied, he glided into momentary view, moving straight toward a row of lighted shops that lined the intervening stretch between this point and the lighted district. Almost at the first shop, The Shadow turned suddenly. His cloaked form blended with the blackness of an alleyway.

There was a single shop just off the street; an obscure store that seemed to have been crowded into the alleyway through lack of a better location. It was a place that could hardly hope for business; for its display windows were but dimly lighted and the shop's lone door looked uninviting.

The Shadow could easily have passed that one store unobserved. Instead, he turned and entered the shop itself.

A LONE Celestial was seated at a table in the corner. He was occupied with an account book and his form was almost out of sight behind a counter laden with Oriental curies. The Chinaman did not hear The Shadow's entry; nor did the visitor seek to make him aware of it. Instead, The Shadow glided past the counter and stopped before a paneled wall near the rear of the shop.

He pressed a hidden spring. The panel opened. The cloaked figure joined the blackness beyond the opening and the wall slid shut. The watchdog at the desk had failed to detect The Shadow's arrival.

Mazelike passages formed a labyrinth ahead. The Shadow followed corridors down steps and up; he was guided by dim ceiling lights that shone at intervals. At times, he paused to listen to the rhythmic tramp of guards; when those had faded he went onward.

There were various passages to be chosen; there were metal barriers that blocked the way. The Shadow knew which paths to choose; he also understood the secrets of the doorways. Panels opened at his pressure; when he had passed the final one, The Shadow stood in a square room, where paneled walls were visible amid soft light.

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Instantly, a panel arose at the rear of the room. A voice spoke melodiously. The Shadow heard the welcome and entered an inner chamber. There, amid Oriental surroundings, sat a placid-faced Chinaman, clad in maroon robes so dark in hue that they were almost as The Shadow's black.

The panel dropped immediately after The Shadow's entrance. The visitor from the night was in the presence of Yat Soon, the arbiter of Chinatown.

Old friends: The Shadow and Yat Soon. Both believed in justice; each had his way of gaining it. The Shadow, by open battle against men of crime; Yat Soon, through judicial decisions that he rendered to disputing factions within the borders of Chinese influence.

Evidently Yat Soon had expected this black-cloaked visitor; for the arbiter's greeting, delivered in perfect English, was one of quiet dignity. Viewing The Shadow, Yat Soon could see no features other than a pair of gleaming eyes, for The Shadow's hat brim obscured the upper portion of his visage, while the folds of his cloak collar covered his chin.

Yat Soon, however, was accustomed to see this visitor garbed in such fashion. He expressed no curiosity.

Instead, he bowed profoundly as The Shadow spoke in reply. Uttering words in the Chinese tongue, The Shadow was returning salutations. His voice continued in singsong fashion, as he explained the purpose of his visit. From beneath his cloak, he drew forth a folded sheet of rice paper; with gloved hand, he extended it to Yat Soon.

Soberly, the arbiter read a message that consisted entirely of Chinese characters. His perusal ended, Yat Soon spoke.

"HONORED friend," he said, in English, "you tell me that this letter has reached you through the Chinese general, Cho Tsing. We were friends in China, Cho Tsing and I, in the days when he was governor of the ancient province of Jehol.

"It is apparent that you are his friend as well. You, whom he addresses as Ying Ko, which means The Shadow. For he requests that you regain the Fate Joss that was stolen from the temple of Je Ho. As Cho Tsing had said, that ancient temple has long been closed. It would be well, could he reopen it for those who have made such request. But without the Fate Joss, he cannot do so. There are those who would believe that Cho Tsing himself had stolen the Fate Joss."

A pause. The Shadow put a question in Chinese. Yat Soon nodded and spoke blandly.

"Many Chinese," he stated, "have heard it said that the Fate Joss is here in America. That is why they speak among themselves, those whom you may pass upon the street. They say: 'The Fate Joss is powerful; the Fate Joss can be carried nowhere against his own will'; that, indeed, is their belief."

Once more, The Shadow spoke. Yat Soon listened to a statement; then repeated it in English as he gave his explanation:

"You say that the Fate Joss has been stolen from China," remarked the arbiter. "It is true that the Fate Joss has been removed from the temple of Je Ho and brought to America. But the man who took it— whether bad or good—was but an instrument of the Joss itself.

"That, honored friend, is the belief. It may seem strange, perhaps, to believe that a huge statue of bronze and gold can will its own destiny, yet those who honor the Fate Joss do so believe. I, as an arbiter, can do no more

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than concede to their wishes in this case."

The Shadow spoke. Yat Soon showed the slightest flicker of a smile. The Chinaman bowed his head in agreement.

"What you have said is true," declared Yat Soon. "Should you gain possession of the Fate Joss and return it to General Cho Tsing, you would have my full approval. I, Yat Soon the arbiter, would then declare that you, The Shadow, had been an instrument in its return.

"There are others, however, who may seek to gain the Fate Joss. Should they do so, I can not dispute their possession. As with you, honored friend, I would be forced to say that they were instruments of the Joss.

"No one can steal the Fate Joss. It may be carried from one place to another. Money may be paid for its possession; but the belief will still remain that the Joss has power to go where it may choose.

"Should strife begin because of the Fate Joss; should men do actual evil, murdering those who stand in their path, then I, as arbiter, can denounce them for their crimes. Until such time, however, I can decide only that he who holds the Fate Joss is entitled to its possession.

"Yat Soon has spoken."

THE Chinaman's final sentence was like a formal signature. The Shadow's eyes were keen as they surveyed the arbiter's bland face. Yat Soon's words were fully understandable to the spectral visitor.

Should The Shadow choose to take up the quest of the Fate Joss, he would have Yat Soon's full approval. That was the first point that he had come here to gain. The Shadow knew that all Chinatown was agog; that talk of the Fate Joss had swept to outlying districts of New York, wherever isolated Chinese dwelt.

His purpose, therefore, was twofold. Not only did he wish to return the Fate Joss to China, as a favor to General Cho Tsing. The Shadow desired also to remove from New York an object that might cause the very crimes of which Yat Soon had spoken.

Well did The Shadow know that affairs in Chinatown might often produce reactions elsewhere. He was willing to accept the task of anticipating chaos that might soon be due. The Shadow knew that Yat Soon, with all his blandness, would welcome such measures.

In fact, Yat Soon began to speak again, now that his decision had been rendered. His duty as arbiter finished, he was anxious to provide The Shadow with whatever information he could. Carefully, Yat Soon studied the letter that The Shadow had shown him; then made his new comment.

"It has been told to me," he said, "that the Fate Joss was brought to America by a man named Chichester Laudring. This man was seen in San Francisco; then in Chicago. Since that time, none have brought word concerning where he may be.

"Not long ago, another American came here to Chinatown. His name, so I have learned, is Raymond Roucard. Thrice did he make inquiry of different merchants, asking them to name those of their people who might wish to possess the Fate Joss.

"I do not know what replies Roucard received. It was told to me that the man has lived at a place called the Phoenix Hotel; but as he has not been seen since then, I have made no further inquiry. It was not my task to search for the fate Joss. Should it be, I would look for Chichester Laudring or Raymond Roucard. Perhaps for

both."

Yat Soon became silent. He folded the letter and solemnly returned it to The Shadow. The visitor arose and spoke parting words in Chinese; to which Yat Soon, in courtesy, made response in English. A panel opened; The Shadow made his departure from the arbiter's hidden abode.

TWELVE minutes later, the chauffeur of a big limousine heard a voice speak from the interior of the car. Acknowledging the order, the chauffeur started the motor and drove away from the parking spot that he had chosen near the outskirts of Chinatown.

The chauffeur's name was Stanley; the car was owned by a wealthy globetrotter named Lamont Cranston. The quiet tones that Stanley had heard were those of his master, ordering him to drive to the Phoenix Hotel. Stanley was puzzled, wondering why Lamont Cranston had chosen to visit such an old and out-of-the-way hostelry.

Perhaps Stanley's perplexity would have been lessened had he known the true identity of his passenger. It was not Lamont Cranston who was in the car; but another, who frequently donned the globe-trotter's identity when the real Cranston was absent from New York.

The passenger was The Shadow. Returned from his visit to Yat Soon, he was following the arbiter's suggestion. Choosing between Chichester Laudring and Raymond Roucard, The Shadow had decided to seek the latter, whose address was known.

The Shadow's quest was on. Stimulated by the stir in Chinatown; crystallized by the letter from China; approved by Yat Soon, the enterprise would not cease until the goal had been reached. The Shadow was determined to regain the missing Fate Joss for the temple of Je Ho.

CHAPTER II. SEEKERS OF THE JOSS

YAT SOON had spoken wisely when he had told The Shadow that there were others who sought the Fate Joss. As arbiter of Chinatown, Yat Soon was well acquainted with the devious motives that actuated those within the boundaries of the Oriental district. In fact, Yat Soon's status was unique; his own appointed duties brought him into frequent contact with representatives of many minor Chinese factions.

His position, however, was that of judge rather than investigator. Those with grievances came to Yat Soon, bringing facts and statements concerning their wrongs. The arbiter's decisions were invariably wise ones—often dependent upon his own knowledge of Chinatown affairs. As a one-man supreme court, Yat Soon found it good policy to acquaint himself with conditions that might later develop into arguments that would be brought before him.

Yat Soon had heard the rumors concerning the Fate Joss. He knew that if trouble followed, he would be forced to render a verdict that would satisfy those who believed in the idol's mystic power. With the wisdom of a Solomon, Yat Soon had already planned to meet such contingency. He had decided that the Fate Joss could never be classed as stolen property, because of its own reputed ability to control its destiny.

Yat Soon, himself, did not believe in the power of the Fate Joss. Tradition stated that it had previously vanished from the temple of Je Ho, in China, always to return. Yat Soon doubted such legends; nevertheless, he never disputed the beliefs of others. His fame as arbiter was grounded upon his policy of recognizing the viewpoints and privileges of all classes.

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Moreover, Yat Soon never interfered in Chinese affairs. He waited until cases were brought to him; then issued mandates that were recognized as law.

"When Yat Soon speaks, all must do his bidding —"

That statement had become proverbial in Chinatown; but the strength of it lay in the fact that Yat Soon never spoke without just cause.

Hence Yat Soon himself could not have named "those others" who might be seeking the Fate Joss. He had indicated only that some might be good; and that some might be bad. Should the two conflict, Yat Soon could deliver final judgment. Meanwhile, he had done no more than learn the names of Americans who might be concerned in the matter of the Fate Joss.

For Yat Soon's policy of non-interference with those who lived in Chinatown did not apply to persons foreign to the district. He frequently kept watch on Americans who mingled in Chinese affairs, knowing that they might later be beyond his jurisdiction.

Chichester Laudring and Raymond Roucard. To Yat Soon, Laudring was no more than a name. Roucard, however, had been seen in Chinatown. Should he appear here again, making inquiries regarding the Fate Joss, Yat Soon would surely delve deeper into the man's affairs.

Raymond Roucard, however, had ceased to make such inquiries; Yat Soon had accepted that as proof that the American had paid no recent visit to Chinatown. In that assumption, Yat Soon was wrong.

AT the very time of The Shadow's departure, Raymond Roucard was in Chinatown—but not where he could be openly seen. He was present in a lavish room, a place that formed a scene of Oriental splendor—where gorgeous dragon tapestries vied with thick Chinese rugs in the luxury of the surroundings.

A sallow, dapper man, slight of build but shrewd of eye, Roucard was seated in a massive teakwood chair. He was puffing at a cigarette, compressing it between lips that were topped by a pointed mustache.

Opposite him sat an elderly Chinaman, garbed in robes of vivid crimson. This Celestial was one whom Yat Soon would have immediately recognized. The red-clad Oriental was Shan Kwan the Mandarin.

Known and esteemed in Chinatown, Shan Kwan was one who had preserved the ancient customs of his native land. A survivor of the old caste system, he maintained an abode that would have rivaled a palace in old Peking. Shan Kwan had servitors who shared his traditions; he ruled them as loyal subjects of a tiny principality. For years his influence had prevailed; but never beyond his own portals. King in his little domain, Shan Kwan had stayed apart from the hubbub and confusion of modern Chinatown.

The presence of Raymond Roucard was proof that the American had gained answer to his inquiry. He had learned of Shan Kwan and has come to see the mandarin. The conversation that passed between the two was proof that this visit was not Roucard's first.

"You have told me," Shan Kwan was saying, in perfect English, "that you can obtain the Fate Joss of Je Ho; that you can obtain it for a price."

"I can," acknowledged Roucard, with a smile of self-assurance. "I can get it for fifty grand. In cash."

"Fifty thousand dollars," declared Shan Kwan, "is not an exorbitant price. You have not, however, given me assurance that you can find the person who now holds the Fate Joss."

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"I admit that, Shan Kwan. I wasn't sure of it before; but I am right now. I can pull the deal tonight, if I have the money."

Roucard eyed Shan Kwan; he noted the old Chinaman's wrinkled face and thought that he detected an expression of gladness upon the impassive countenance. There was a kindness in Shan Kwan's air, a gentle attitude that showed the mandarin to be a man of great patience.

"When you pay money for the Fate Joss," questioned Shan Kwan, "how will you bring it from the place where it is at present?"

"Easy enough," laughed Roucard. "I'll have it crated and shipped out by truck. Along with the two War Dogs; they're a couple of funny cannons that were swiped along with it, from the temple."

"And where will the Fate Joss and the War Dogs be delivered?"

"In back of the old Calumet Theater. The truckmen won't think anything of dropping three crates there. The theater's due to be opened in a couple of weeks; they'll think that the stuff is equipment.

"Leave that part of it to me, Shan Kwan. I'll get the Fate Joss there along around midnight. The crates can lay for a couple of hours; then your own men can pick them up and bring them here."

Shan Kwan studied the speaker. He noted that Roucard was sincere, despite his crafty look. Roucard, however, felt uneasy as he met the mandarin's quiet gaze.

"I'm on the level, Shan Kwan," insisted Roucard. "I know I haven't told you the name of the man I intend to deal with. But I'm not going to tell him your name, either. That makes it fair both ways.

"Don't worry about trusting me with the fifty grand. All I want is a ten percent commission for the sale. I'll get that from the fellow who has the Fate Joss. I'm not going to take it on the lam with the dough. I don't want to be in wrong with you, and the law besides.

"Hand me the fifty grand and I'll give you a receipt for it. If you don't get the Fate Joss, you can have me pinched. But you'll get the idol all right; and I'll trust you to tear up the receipt –"

SHAN KWAN interrupted by rising. He clapped his hands twice; golden curtains spread, to admit a bowing servant who was clad in Chinese costume. Shan Kwan spoke, the servant retired.

A minute later, a Chinese girl entered the apartment. Roucard blinked as he observed the new arrival.

Possessed of rare and exotic beauty, the girl was the most charming person that Roucard had ever seen. Her features were exquisite; her complexion had a semblance to the color of old ivory. Dark, limpid eyes met Roucard's gaze; the American noted long black eyelashes that matched the raven color of the girl's smooth, perfect hair.

Marvelous in a golden Oriental robe, the girl advanced and stretched forth a shapely hand that held a ring of glistening keys. Shan Kwan spoke; the girl smiled and turned toward Roucard. Shan Kwan bowed an introduction.

"This is my niece," stated the mandarin. "Her name is Loy Ming. She will take us to the temple that I have provided for the Fate Joss."

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Loy Ming led the way through the curtains. She unlocked a huge brass door; the barrier opened under the girl's slight pressure. Shan Kwan and Roucard followed Loy Ming down a flight of stairs. The girl unlocked another barrier; they reached a long, wide corridor.

On the left were two mammoth doors of brass, swung wide. Through these open portals the trio descended a short flight of wide steps. They stood in a large square room, surrounded entirely by panels that were formed of decorated brass.

Except for screens of the same metal, the room was entirely unfurnished. A square pedestal of teakwood marked the exact center of the apartment; but it could hardly have been classed as furniture. The pedestal, however, was the object to which Shan Kwan pointed.

"It is for the Fate Joss," stated the mandarin. "I shall have it stand here until I have arranged for it to return where it belongs: In the temple of Je Ho."

"You're going to send the Joss back to China?" queried Roucard, incredulously. "I thought you wanted to keep it for yourself, Shan Kwan."

"Where the Fate Joss is," returned the mandarin, solemnly, "that is where the Fate Joss chooses to be. To human beings belong the privilege of serving the Fate Joss. What we may decide to do is controlled by the power of the Joss."

"Sounds screwy to me," grinned Roucard. "But I don't object. If the Fate Joss wants you to make the deal that brings it here, so much the better. Same with keeping it here or sending it to that temple in China."

"The temple of Je Ho belongs to the faithful," pronounced Shan Kwan. "That is where the Fate Joss has chosen to be, for centuries."

"Well, you're one of the faithful, aren't you?" objected Roucard. "This joint of yours ought to be good enough for the Joss. Did you ever figure it that way?"

"When the Fate Joss decides," returned Shan Kwan with a note of solemnity, "men are but instruments who serve him."

TURNING, the mandarin spoke to his niece. Roucard watched the girl unlock a panel at the back of the brass-walled room. She entered a passage, closing the barrier behind her.

Roucard strolled about, studying the deep-set bas-relief of the panels. Looking upward, he noticed that the ceiling was also a mass of ornamental brass.

The floor, however, was entirely covered by a thick, tufted carpeting of Chinese design.

While Roucard was mentally trying to guess the sum that had been spent in equipping this Joss room, the back panel opened and Loy Ming returned. The girl gave a large envelope to Shan Kwan. The mandarin opened it and extracted a bundle of crisp bank notes. There were fifty in all, each of one thousand dollar denomination. Shan Kwan tendered the sum to Roucard.

Loy Ming led the way back to the lavish room above. There a servant appeared at Shan Kwan's order. The mandarin shook hands with Roucard; the servitor conducted the visitor down another flight of stairs and opened a door to a quiet street. He made a signal that must have been caught by a man further down the street. Soon a cab rolled into view and Roucard entered it.

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The taxi man was an American; the cab was a chance one that Roucard had hired to bring him to Chinatown. He had told the driver to wait around the corner until called. Roucard had entered Shan Kwan's inconspicuous doorway unseen. With fifty thousand dollars in his pocket, he was leaving this border district of Chinatown. Roucard's sallow lips wore a shrewd, pleased grin as they spoke a destination to the driver.

AS the cab rolled along a street that fringed the lighted center of Chinatown, a sharp-eyed man noticed it. This observer was a Chinaman, clad in American attire. Turning about, he hurried to the entrance of a small Chinese restaurant. He slackened pace as he entered and strolled past a group of Chinamen who were busy with chopsticks and bowls of rice.

Entering a rear room, the American-clad Chinaman found another who looked very much like himself. This was the proprietor of the restaurant, who was seated at a desk. The two spoke in English, their tones no more than whispers.

"What is it, Leng?" inquired the proprietor. "Have you seen the man, Roucard?"

"I have seen him, Tuan," replied Leng. "He was in a taxicab, driving away from Shan Kwan's. Doctor Tam must know of it."

"Doctor Tam shall know" returned Tuan, solemnly. He arose from his desk. "Remain here, Leng, until I return."

Bitter grins appeared upon the faces of the Chinamen. Tuan arose and Leng took his place at the desk. Tuan departed by a door at the back of the little office.

Yat Soon had spoken true when he had told The Shadow that there were others who might seek the Fate Joss; and that their purposes might differ. Evil and good were due for conflict, following this detection of Raymond Roucard's new visit to Chinatown.

Opposed to the hopes of Shan Kwan the Mandarin were the purposes of another Chinaman, whose followers called Doctor Tam. Already Tuan, informed by Leng, was on his way with word to the chief whose power they obeyed.

CHAPTER III. DOCTOR ROY TAM

JUST outside of Chinatown was a corner that held a touch of the Oriental district. The corner itself was occupied by a pawnshop, but the first door below, on one of the streets making up the corner, bore the lighted sign of a Chinese restaurant called the Hunan Cafe. The restaurant was located on the second floor; its sign was on the level of the elevated railway that loomed above the avenue.

Similarly, the other street making up the corner had a Chinese sign one door away from the pawnshop. This sign was above the front of a small, sleepy looking tea shop, where a lone Chinaman sat pondering over the fact that business was poor. Like Leng and Tuan, the owner of the tea shop was garbed in American attire.

Five minutes after he had left his Chinatown cafe, Tuan entered this tea shop and spoke to the proprietor. The man unlocked a door at the rear of the shop. Tuan entered a storage room and the proprietor closed the door. Locking it, he went to the front window and stared out at the side street.

Tuan, meanwhile, was threading his way through stacks of tea chests. Passing these obstructions, he reached a stairway and ascended. On the second floor, he found a door that he unlocked for himself. It revealed a

staircase that Tuan took to the third floor.

At the top, this stairway was joined by another that came upward at a right angle. That fact, in itself, was proof of something unusual. The second stairway came from the Hunan Cafe. Both the restaurant and the tea-shop afforded access to this third floor; but both from a different street.

Tuan knocked at a closed door. It opened; another Americanized Chinaman was standing there. Tuan inquired for Doctor Tam. The guardian shook his head; then told the visitor to wait. Tuan sat down in a little reception room that was furnished entirely in American fashion.

ONE block back from the avenue was a dark, curving street that marked the very fringe of Chinatown. It belonged to that idle, blackened terrain that seemed almost uninhabited. The street possessed a single shop; but it was closed, its door and windows boarded. One Chinaman had made a poor guess in trying to do business there.

A man was walking along the secluded street. Short, but quick of gait, he paused suddenly at a spot just opposite the darkened shop. Unlocking a door, he entered a house that belonged in the same square at the Hunan Cafe.

Passing through a darkened hallway, this man ascended a flight of stairs. He walked to the rear of the house; there he knocked at a door and gave a guttural utterance. The door opened; the short man passed a guard who was standing in another darkened passage.

This corridor formed a secret connection to a building at the rear. The short man followed it; he came to another door and gave a new signal. The second barrier opened; passing another hidden guard, the short man ascended a stairway and came to a blocking door. He unlocked it in the darkness and stepped into a blackened room. There he closed the door and turned on a light.

The glare showed that the short man was a Chinaman. Firm-faced, square-jawed, he had features that fitted his garb, which was completely American. This man was another whom Yat Soon would have recognized. He was known as Doctor Roy Tam.

The room in which Doctor Tam stood was an office, furnished simply with oak table, straight-backed chairs and metal filing cabinet. Doctor Tam seated himself behind the desk and pressed a buzzer.

The front door of the office opened; a man entered to announce that Mr. Tuan was waiting in the reception room. Doctor Tam nodded, as sign that the visitor was to be admitted.

Tuan arrived to find Doctor Tam busy reading letters. At last the square-jawed Chinaman looked up; he motioned for Tuan to sit down. He then made query in a sharp, choppy tone:

"Well, Tuan! What brings you here?"

"Leng has seen Roucard," replied Tuan, soberly. "He believes that the fellow was visiting Shan Kwan."

A harsh exclamation came from Tam's lips. His fists clenched upon the desk top. Then he demanded:

"Where did Roucard go?"

"We do not know," replied Tuan. "Leng did not follow him."

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Doctor Tam pressed the buzzer twice. A Chinaman came into the office. He was not the one who had admitted Tuan; this newcomer was wearing glasses and looked like a student.

"Sit down, Noy Dow," ordered Doctor Tam. "No, never mind the notebook. I have no letters to dictate. I want you to hear what Tuan has said. Raymond Roucard visited Shan Kwan tonight."

"Regarding the Fate Joss?" questioned Noy Dow.

"Probably," replied Tam. "There have been no telephone calls during my absence?"

"There were none, Doctor Tam."

The square-jawed Chinaman was drumming his desk. In action, he seemed more American than Chinese; but as he sat pondering, his almond eyes narrowed until they were no more than thin slits. Oriental craftiness became dominant in the attitude of Doctor Tam.

Suddenly, the transformation ended. Raising his head, Tam addressed Tuan.

"You have done well, Tuan," he commended, "you and your friend Leng. Return to your place of business and await new word. Perhaps I shall send others to join you. Be ready to receive them."

Tuan bowed himself out. Doctor Roy Tam remained behind his desk; his only companion was the bespectacled Noy Dow. After the door had closed behind Tuan, Doctor Tam spoke.

"Bring me the list," he ordered. "I shall choose the men whom we may need. Work lies ahead, Noy Dow."

NOY DOW produced a list from the filing cabinet. It was typed in English; but Chinese names appeared upon it. Some of these had been crossed out in pencil. Doctor Tam checked the ones that he wanted; then passed the list back to Noy Dow.

"Summon them," he instructed. "Tell them to be ready to join Tuan as soon as they are needed."

Noy Dow nodded; then pointed to a name at the bottom of the list.

"What of Hoang Fu?" he inquired. "Should he not be named among them?"

Doctor Tam shook his head. He noted a puzzled blink behind Noy Dow's spectacles. Motioning to the secretary to sit down, Doctor Tam spoke. His voice became a smooth, persuasive purr.

"There are very few," he stated, "whom I can fully trust. You, Noy Dow, are one. Like myself, you have become American. Yet you are young, Noy Dow. You still must learn very much."

"That will be possible," returned Noy Dow, "since you are my teacher, Doctor Tam."

"That is true. You have an advantage that I did not possess. When I was a student, Noy Dow, I still considered myself Chinese. Even though I was studying medicine at an American university, my one purpose was to some day return to China, where I could be a man of great strength among my countrymen.

"Then came the light. I saw greater opportunity here in America. Instead of carrying new messages to those who were steeped in old traditions, I remained here, organizing those who had already emerged from their superstitions and could therefore be banded for greater progress under one strong leader.

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"Being wise, I have chosen this secret abode, that only those who are worthy may be joined with my cause. I have appointed you as my secretary, because you have had an American college education. Later, I may gain others like yourself.

"They will do as I am doing. They will go among those of our countrymen who will listen. They will show the way to new opportunity and will receive new contributions toward the wealth that I have raised."

Doctor Tam paused. A smile showed upon his firm-set lips as he drew a sheaf of papers from the desk drawer. He pointed to a row of figures.

"Already my fund has passed two hundred thousand dollars," he declared. "It will become greater, Noy Dow. It will reach one million. Then we shall have the power that we need."

Noy Dow started to speak; his bespectacled face was troubled. Doctor Tam noted his expression and held up a restraining hand.

"When I say that we shall have power," affirmed Tam, "I mean power that is necessary for good. Personal wealth is not our desire, Noy Dow. Our mission is to aid others, to help those who are hindered by their own ignorance. Those Chinese who are living in this country can advance themselves only by conforming to American customs."

"That is true, Doctor Tam," corroborated Noy Dow, moved by the physician's persuasion. "To seek wealth for the advancement of our noble cause is indeed an estimable measure."

"You, too, have seen the light," purred Doctor Tam. "Continue to trust in me, Noy Dow. I need intelligent men like you to persuade those who are still ignorant. Such men as Tuan and Leng are weak. They are faithful only because I understand them and their superstitions.

"LOOK at this list—these crossed-off names. They are the ones whose faith in me has weakened. I have dropped them because they have proven themselves unworthy and, therefore, useless. You spoke of Hoang Fu. Bah! He is like the others who have failed me. I need him no longer."

Taking a pencil, Doctor Tam crossed off the name of Hoang Fu. Noy Dow made protest.

"Hoang Fu is strong," he reminded. "When I talked with him not long ago, he swore that he would serve you forever, Doctor Tam. I can not believe that he —"

"You have much to learn, Noy Dow," interrupted Tam, in a testy tone. "I spoke with Hoang Fu only an hour ago. His attitude has changed. He pretended that he still believed in me; but he does not. Hoang Fu is no longer in my service; remember that, Noy Dow."

"I shall remember, Doctor Tam."

Looking up from his desk, Tam could still see doubt upon his secretary's face. Briskly, the Chinese physician changed the subject. Driving a dynamic fist against the desk, he loosed a fierce tirade.

"This man Roucard is dangerous," he stormed. "He has visited Shan Kwan the Mandarin. Perhaps they have conferred concerning the Fate Joss."

"Roucard does not hold the Fate Joss, Doctor Tam."

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"He knows where it is. He may have made plans to acquire it. Should he gain the Fate Joss, he could sell it to Shan Kwan."

"Perhaps Satsu can give us information."

"Satsu is still with Laudring. Since we know that Laudring no longer has the Fate Joss, what can Satsu tell us?"

Noy Dow could think of no answer to the question.

"Rumors are about," remarked Tam, slowly. His square-jawed face showed a scowl. "Rumors that the Fate Joss is here, in New York. Those rumors have weakened my followers."

"Not Tuan and Leng," reminded Noy Dow, "nor many others upon whom you can call."

"Perhaps not; but I am sure that the reports have influenced some. Hoang Fu, for instance."

Doctor Tam spoke the last sentence with slow, important emphasis. He eyed Noy Dow and noted that the secretary was impressed by the statement. Instinctively, Noy Dow was nodding. Doctor Tam lost no opportunity to drive home another statement.

"I shall prove that I am stronger than the Fate Joss," he declared. "Once given opportunity, I shall show my faithful followers that I can control its so-called destiny. Serving me, they will gain proof that a half-ton idol is nothing more than a mass of useless metal that can be shipped about as one desires."

"That point proven, our cause will be gained. The power of Doctor Roy Tam will be known. None will block my path to the accumulation of wealth. Our wealth, Noy Dow, not mine." Again Tam eyed his secretary. "Wealth that will be used to help those who are in need."

Noy Dow was nodding soberly, his face no longer doubtful. Doctor Tam picked up the telephone that lay beside the desk; then replaced it and pointed toward the door.

"You may go, Noy Dow," he said, quietly. "Should calls come, I shall answer them. Be ready, in case I decide to summon you."

NOY DOW retired. Doctor Tam remained alone; seated at his desk, he began a new study of the account sheets. Laying the papers aside, he eyed the door through which Noy Dow had gone. A wise smile appeared upon the lips of Doctor Roy Tam. The meaning of that smile was plain.

Doctor Tam was pleased with the success of his recent discourse. He had convinced Noy Dow on every point. The secretary believed that wealth for the cause was justified; that Hoang Fu was no longer in the service of Doctor Tam; that the power of the Fate Joss was a myth.

Doctor Tam, in turn, was convinced upon one point that Noy Dow had not argued. Though other followers might weaken, there was one upon whom the enterprising physician could rely. That was Noy Dow; and Doctor Tam intended to depend upon his secretary in every move that was to come.

CHAPTER IV. THE MIGHTY JOSS

WHILE Doctor Roy Tam was seated alone in the seclusion of his office, strange events were shaping

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elsewhere. A taxicab had pulled up in front of an old house on the upper East Side; two men were alighting, suitcases in their hands.

One was an American, tall, pale-faced, with light-colored mustache. The other looked like a Japanese; but his build was unusually bulky for a member of that race. The American paid the driver and picked up a suitcase; his companion lifted two larger, heavier bags. Together, they ascended the steps of the house.

"Here we are, Satsu," chuckled the American. "The place doesn't look so inviting, though, does it! Maybe it will be better after we open those boarded windows."

"I shall open them tomorrow, Mr. Laudring," replied the other man in choppy, oddly pronounced English. "You have the key to the door, sir?"

"Here it is." Laudring unlocked the door. "Come on, Satsu, bring in the bags and we'll take a look about."

The two entered a musty hallway. Laudring found a light switch and pressed it. Glowing bulbs showed plain furnishings, with curtains by a doorway on the right. Laudring glanced toward a carpeted stairway; then decided to enter the room beyond the curtains.

He found another light switch; the subsequent illumination showed the room to be a furnished parlor. Laudring picked out an antique chair and sat down. He found it comfortable.

"Park the bags, Satsu," he said with a laugh. "Let's talk this over while I smoke a cigar. Then we can go upstairs and see what the rest of the place is like."

"Very well, sir."

Laudring lighted a panatela and leaned back in his chair. Satsu sat down on the edge of a piano bench and solemnly eyed his master. Laudring began to talk, his tone reminiscent, and tinged with an occasional chuckle.

"THE adventures of Chichester Laudring," he resumed. "They have been odd ones, Satsu, as you can testify; even though you were not in at the beginning. It started in China, when I visited that old temple of Je Ho, on the border of Manchukuo.

"There I found the Fate Joss, solitary and neglected, except for the two ancient cannons that guarded him. There was trouble brewing thereabouts, Satsu. Those irregular troops—little better than bandits—were broken up, fearing the approach of General Cho Tsing. They wanted to leave that terrain.

"So I bribed a dozen of them to carry away the Fate Joss. We packed it in an old wagon and there was room for the cannons, so I brought them along, too. Roads were still passable; and when we met the scouts of Cho Tsing's army, I bluffed them into thinking that my companions were coolies who had accompanied me on a trip from Canton."

Laudring paused to puff his cigar. He eyed Satsu; then spoke again.

"We crossed Manchukuo," he recalled. "That was when I met you, Satsu. Remember, how I took you for a Japanese; how, indignantly, you told me you were a Korean?"

Satsu nodded; his eyes showed a glower at the recollection. Laudring laughed.

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"You came with me to the United States," he declared. "by way of Mexico, where I smuggled you across the border along with the Fate Joss and those War Dog cannons. I thought my troubles were over. They had only begun."

Again Laudring paused for reflection.

"That Fate Joss proved a white elephant," he maintained. "I figured it would be worth plenty, like some of the other oddities that I have brought back from foreign soil. But getting rid of a half-ton statue was no soft job.

"Museums had no money. They wanted it for a gift. So I went to their sponsors and couldn't find any who had the cash I wanted. I even sent you to Chinatown in Frisco. Remember, Satsu I thought for a while that you could make a deal there. You became quite friendly with some of the Chinese."

Satsu nodded, but made no comment.

"My last bet was Chicago," recalled Laudring. "Old Dustin Clabb, the eccentric millionaire. He'd buy anything, Satsu, provided it interested him. It took all the cash I had left to get us there with the Fate Joss. Remember how Clabb's eyes popped when he saw it?"

Satsu grinned at the recollection.

"Fifty thousand dollars, spot cash," resumed Laudring. "We helped Clabb and his servants shove the Fate Joss in that huge vault of his. It was almost a last-minute sale, for Clabb went abroad about ten days later.

"We didn't wait in Chicago, though, did we, Satsu? Not a chance, once we had unloaded the Fate Joss. You know I was getting worried about that Fate Joss. The Chinese are pretty touchy about their idols. I was afraid of trouble; and I was mighty glad to pass the burden on to Dustin Clabb.

"He had the place to keep the Fate Joss. Nobody could ever crack that vault of his. He's gone to Europe; the Fate Joss will be forgotten by the time he comes back. It will be there, with the War Dogs, when he comes home. Clabb is welcome to it."

Satsu decided to speak. The Korean's broad, yellow face was spread in a solemn grin.

"Perhaps, sir," said Satsu, "the Fate Joss will not stay with Mr. Clabb. It may think that it is time for it to return to China. To the temple of Je Ho."

"The old superstition," chuckled Laudring. "I told you about it, didn't I, Satsu! Those Chinese soldiers half believed in it. All the way from Jehol to Manchukuo they were wondering if the Joss would disappear, War Dogs and all.

"Well, if the Fate Joss wants to go back to China, that will be Clabb's hard luck. Only"—Laudring paused with a chortle—"I hope it doesn't decide to wish itself back with me. I have the money I wanted. I never want to see the Fate Joss again."

LAUDRING finished his smoke; he dropped the cigar in an ash tray and motioned to Satsu to follow him. They walked about the ground floor, finding a dining room and kitchen, tidily furnished. A door led to the cellar, but it was locked, with no key.

Laudring saw a telephone on a table; he lifted the receiver and heard the buzz that indicated that the wire was connected.

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The two ascended the stairs and found two furnished bedrooms on the second floor. Laudring chose the front one and ordered Satsu to bring up the bags.

While the Korean was gone, Laudring saw two keys on the bureau. He decided that one was for the back door; the other to the cellar. Lighting a fresh cigar, Laudring sat down as Satsu entered.

"This house is an adventure in itself," remarked the American. "An anticlimax, I admit, but intriguing nevertheless. Something of a mystery that I do not quite understand. When we left Chicago, Satsu, we went directly to that lodge in the Adirondacks, where we were away from everything, telephones included.

"No one knew we were there—no one except Clabb; and he went to Europe—yet that letter reached me. The letter from the lawyer. What was his name? I remember now: Charles Boford. That letter told me of this house, a legacy to me from my Uncle Felix."

"The key to the house came with it," reminded Satsu.

"That's right," agreed Laudring. "But I never knew I had an Uncle Felix; I'd never even heard mention of such a person. But since the house was to be mine if I occupied it promptly, it seemed best to come here. I suppose we shall hear from Boford shortly; he said in the letter that he would visit me shortly after my arrival.

"But speaking of keys, Satsu, here are two that I found. They probably belong to the downstairs doors. Come; let us continue our exploration of the premises."

ARRIVING downstairs, Laudring went past the parlor, then through the dining room into the kitchen. He tried a key in the outer door; it fitted. Laudring unlocked the door; then locked it again and left the key inside the door. Satsu had followed him; beckoning to the Korean, Laudring led the way to the cellar door that stood beneath the stairway.

The second key fitted that lock.

Opening the door, Laudring found a switch and pressed it. Lights gleamed below. Descending with Satsu, Laudring reached the cellar and took an opening that led between two coal bins. Passing those boarded barriers, he turned into the center of the cellar itself.

Satsu, half a dozen paces behind, stopped short as he heard a startled hiss from Laudring's lips. Looking from the passage, the Korean saw his master standing with fixed stare, looking into the main room of the cellar. Laudring's hands were shaking; his eyes were riveted by what they saw.

Satsu bounded forward. Like master, the servant stopped short. His yellow face paled; he, too, was transfixed. Even though he had observed Laudring's startlement, Satsu had not guessed—or even dreamed—the cause.

Facing the astonished men was a hideous, grotesque statue that occupied the center of the cellar. Taller, bulkier than human size, its height seemed greater because of the one foot pedestal that formed a part of it.

Like a dream from a Shanghai nightmare, the figure formed a glittering mass of bronze. Its brawny arms and legs were streaked with snakelike veins. Its body was swathed with sculptured garb of metal; beside it, a portion of the statue, hung a long, sheathed sword with massive handle.

The hands of the statue were upraised, supporting the sculptured likeness of a decorative sash that hung behind the idol's neck. The glaring features were distorted with a horrible leer, which showed fang-like teeth of bronze between thick, outspread lips.

Claw-like nails of fingers and toes were of glittering gold that formed a contrast to the duller bronze. Gold was the handle of the sword; so were portions of the garments. Most startling of all were the eyeballs; for they, too, were of shining gold with blood-red garnets as their pupils. Bulging, those eyes seemed to glare at the intruders.

Other jewels glimmered; they, however, were but ornamental portions of the sculptured figure's garb. To Laudring and Satsu, those gems were incidental. So were the two other sculptured objects that stood with the huge idol, one on either side.

These were squat, dog-shaped figures that came only to the idol's knees. Their mouths were as wide as their bodies, for these seated statues were actually ancient cannons. Their muzzles were fitted with plugs, which detracted from their warlike appearance; but that did not calm Laudring and Satsu. Their eyes scarcely noted the guardian dogs of war.

The huge statue was what held them, as powerfully as if it had been a creature of life. For its very presence in this unexpected place imbued it with a power that seemed superhuman. Chichester Laudring and his servant were staring at the bronze idol that they had stowed in Dustin Clabb's vault.

This towering, glaring thing of bronze that had arisen to confront them was the mighty Fate Joss from the temple of Je Ho!

CHAPTER V. MOVES IN THE NIGHT

CHICHESTER LAUDRING now stepped slowly forward. His move was mechanical; his outstretched hand was trembling. Satsu, awed, made an effort to stop his master. Laudring kept straight ahead; quivering, Satsu followed.

Reaching the Fate Joss, Laudring lifted his hand and placed it upon the statue's arm. He quaked momentarily; then the touch of the cold bronze restored his nerve. Turning, he beckoned to Satsu. The Korean arrived and also touched the idol. "What—how"—Laudring was faltering, hoarsely—"what could have brought the Fate Joss here? It— it was in Clabb's vault, Satsu! You—you saw it there!"

"I did," nodded Satsu, solemnly. "It was in the vault, Mr. Laudring. Yet it is there no longer; it is here—with us."

"With us," agreed Laudring. His tone became almost furious. "Come back again to trouble me; to bring new danger! Why did it come here? Why did it not return to the temple of Je Ho?"

Half fearful, half furious, Laudring was attributing full power to the Fate Joss. He had derided its legend, less than a half hour ago; but this startling discovery of the idol itself had weakened him to the point where he was ready to accept the belief of the superstitious coolies who had aided him in the theft of the Joss.

Beads of sweat adorned Laudring's brow. The laugh that he forced was hollow. The sound of his own attempted mirth made Laudring tremble once again. Then, steadying, he stepped back and studied the leering idol.

"Yes," declared Laudring, slowly, "it is the Fate Joss. It has returned to me, Satsu, yet I am not ready to yield to superstition. At first, my fear overpowered my reason; but I have no cause to dread a sculptured mass of bronze.

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"After all, Satsu"—Laudring's chuckle was more genuine than his laugh—"after all, we carried the Fate Joss thousands of miles. We brought it to America; it did not harm us on the way. Why should we fear it now?"

Satsu managed a grin.

"Come," decided Laudring. "Let us go upstairs. It is more pleasant there, Satsu."

They left the cellar to the glistening idol and the burnished cannons. Laudring turned out the light when they reached the top of the stairs. He locked the door and pocketed the key. Satsu followed his master into the parlor.

"Whew!" exclaimed Laudring, mopping his brow with a silk handkerchief. "That was rather startling, Satsu—walking right in on the old Fate Joss itself, with his faithful War Dogs! It jolted me worse than the first time I saw them in the temple of Je Ho!"

"We'll have to talk this over, Satsu. We both know that those stories about the idol are the bunk. It can't jump from Chicago to New York any more than it can fly back to Jehol. A smoke will help me out, Satsu."

Laudring fumbled in his pocket for a cigar. Finding none, he arose from his chair and started for the stairs.

"I'll get some panatelas from my bag," he told Satsu. "Wait here until I return."

As Laudring's footsteps faded on the stairway, Satsu stole swiftly from the parlor out into the back hall. He picked up the telephone and dialed a number. He gained a prompt response. Satsu spoke quickly, his voice low and tense.

"Doctor Tam? Good... This is Satsu... In New York. I had no time to write you, doctor. No, I had no chance to call... One moment, doctor. Let me tell you where I am..."

Satsu paused to listen. Hearing no sounds from upstairs, he placed his lips to the mouthpiece and carefully repeated the address of the house. That done, Satsu explained further.

"The house was given to Mr. Laudring," he declared. "By his uncle... So he has told me; but maybe there is no such uncle... This is more important, doctor. The Fate Joss—it is here. In the cellar..."

"Yes... Yes... I think he may listen, if I talk to him... Yes, Mr. Laudring did seem very surprised... Yes... I understand. I shall do as you have told... But if —"

Satsu paused abruptly. He could hear Laudring on the second floor. Hanging up the receiver, the Korean started for the library. He had delayed too long; however, for he encountered Laudring at the bottom of the stairs.

"Where were you, Satsu?" demanded Laudring, suspiciousness in his gaze. "I told you to remain in the parlor."

"I was in the kitchen, sir," returned the servant. "Looking to find if food was there."

"I thought I heard your voice."

"I was humming, sir, as I often do."

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Laudring paused, puffing a freshly lighted cigar. He decided to take the servant's explanation. He waved Satsu into the parlor; following the fellow, Laudring resumed his easy chair.

"I don't want the Fate Joss," he asserted, in a troubled tone. "What am I going to do about it, Satsu?"

"You could leave this place, sir," replied the Korean. "The Fate Joss could remain."

"But the house is mine."

"Are you sure, sir?"

"That's a point, Satsu. Maybe it isn't my house at all. I never knew I had an Uncle Felix. I never heard of this lawyer chap, Boford. I've a mind to dig out of the place."

"That would be wise, Mr. Laudring."

Laudring considered plans; then nodded slowly.

"We'll stay here tonight," he decided. "Tomorrow we can leave. We'll never open the boarded windows. That's settled, Satsu. But if Boford should come here —"

Laudring broke off, startled by an unexpected sound. A bell had begun to clang. Someone was at the front door. Laudring stared at Satsu; the servant shook his head.

"We won't answer it," decided Laudring. "Whoever it is will go away." The bell clanged anew.

"Persistent beggar," remarked Laudring, nervously. "Maybe he saw a glimmer of the lights. Perhaps—ah! I have it! Our visitor must be Boford. Answer the door, Satsu."

THE Korean hesitated. Laudring gestured impatiently, as the bell jangled a third summons. Satsu went to the front door and unlocked it; Laudring, coming from the parlor, was just in time to see the servant admit a sallow-faced man, whose pointed mustache and dapper manner gave him a harmless air.

"Mr. Laudring?" inquired the visitor, in a smooth tone.

"Yes," replied Laudring. "Are you Mr. Boford?"

"Boford? No. My name is Roucard. Raymond Roucard. I came to see you on business."

Laudring looked puzzled; but he conducted the arrival into the parlor and offered a cigar, which Roucard accepted.

"You have come regarding this house?" queried Laudring.

"This house?" echoed Roucard. Then, with a laugh: "Certainly not! It was only by accident that I learned you were here. I came to talk about the Fate Joss."

Laudring stared. Roucard laughed.

"Come, Mr. Laudring!" insisted the dapper visitor. "I am not the only one who has heard of the Fate Joss that you have tried to sell everywhere. I learned of your white elephant. I came here to take the idol off your

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hands."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I am willing to accept the risk of owning the Fate Joss. A grave risk, too, Mr. Laudring. If you were acquainted with conditions in Chinatown, you would understand."

"Conditions in Chinatown?"

Roucard nodded as he settled back to puff his cigar. He flashed a glance at Satsu who was standing in the doorway, then concentrated on Laudring.

"It may mean death to own the Fate Joss," pronounced Roucard, solemnly. "Terrible death at the hands of aroused Chinese. They know that the temple of Je Ho has been desecrated. They are aroused to fever pitch."

"My name?" questioned Laudring, nervously. "Do they know it?"

"Yes. If they knew you owned the Fate Joss, they would murder you. You will be doing yourself a favor if you turn the idol over to me. It must be removed from here at once."

There was a cold decisiveness in Roucard's tone. Laudring trembled. This information, coming so close upon the mysterious return of the Fate Joss, was something that created real cause for fear.

"Where is the Fate Joss?" inquired Roucard. "In the cellar of this house?"

Laudring nodded in spite of himself. Roucard shook his head seriously.

"Most dangerous," he declared. "My word, man! Your life is in immediate jeopardy! You must get that idol out of here! There is no time to lose. Suppose spies should come here to search –"

"But how can I remove it?" broke in Laudring, his voice a quaver. "The Joss weighs half a ton!"

"I can help you," assured Roucard. "Come. Let me see the Fate Joss."

Laudring arose and led the way to the cellar door. His hand trembled as he unlocked the barrier. He went downstairs with Roucard and Satsu behind him. They found the Fate Joss glaring from its central position in the cellar.

ROUCARD surveyed the idol curiously. Looking beyond it, he spied something that attracted his attention—a large door at the extreme rear of the cellar. Moving there, Roucard tried to open the door; then gave it a sidewise push. The door slid back. Beyond it lay an underground passage.

"Most amazing!" exclaimed Roucard, turning to Laudring and Satsu, who had joined him. "This must lead to the house on the rear street."

"I wonder who lives there?" questioned Laudring.

"No one," responded Roucard, with a knowing smile. "That whole block is untenanted. The buildings are due to be torn down within a month. I recognized the block when I was driving past."

"Then this passage will serve us as an outlet?"

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"An excellent one! I can bring the truckmen through from the rear street. In fact, they are parked there already, because I did not want them to be seen outside your house."

Laudring gaped in astonishment. He could not understand how this stranger had found him so quickly; furthermore, he was amazed to learn that Roucard had already provided for the removal of the Fate Joss.

Laudring had experienced a double shock tonight. First, the discovery of the Fate Joss, the jinx from which he had freed himself; second, Roucard's warning that the threat of vengeful Chinese might strike at any time. Doubly troubled, Laudring was ready to accept any suggestion.

Satsu understood his master's temperament. The Korean decided to intervene. In so doing, he chose the worst course that he could possibly have taken.

"Remember, sir," said Satsu, "we are leaving here. It is best to keep the Fate Joss until tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" echoed Laudring. "Have you gone crazy, Satsu? Who asked for your opinion? Leave us! Go upstairs until I call you."

Satsu did not immediately obey. Laudring clenched his fists and glared in fury. Knowing that further argument would be useless, Satsu departed from the cellar.

Roucard shrugged his shoulders and strolled toward one of the coal bins; peering into it, he called to Laudring.

"We're in luck, old man!" exclaimed Roucard. "Look at this pile of canvas and these old boxes. We can cover up the Fate Joss and have the truckmen crate it. They'll never know what it is!"

"The War Dogs, too," added Laudring. "Take them with the Joss."

"They're cannons, aren't they?" queried Roucard, in feigned surprise. "Regular mortars that have been plugged. Yes, they must go, too."

FEVERISHLY, Laudring brought out stacks of grimy canvas. Roucard found some pieces of rope. Together they began to cover the Fate Joss and the War Dogs.

While Laudring was completing the lashing, Roucard hurried out through the rear passage. When he returned, he was accompanied by half a dozen husky truckmen. Roucard pointed out the boxes. With hammers, the truckmen knocked out ends and sides, to make them into improvised crates.

With Roucard in charge, the crew tilted the heavy Fate Joss, which made an odd sight, covered from top to bottom with its canvas swaths. As the bottom of the pedestal was hoisted, Laudring covered it with another sheet of cloth. The truckmen made a quick job of the crating; then raised the covered Joss aboard a pair of rollers that they had brought with them.

"They'll come back for the cannons," remarked Roucard, as he and Laudring watched the six men roll the Fate Joss out through the passage to the house on the other street. "We may as well go upstairs."

"That passage puzzles me," said Laudring. "Why should this house be connected with the one in back?"

"Some one probably started to make apartments of them," decided Roucard. "Planning a central-heating system. I suppose we would find several connected cellars hereabouts."

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Satsu was in the hallway when the two arrived. The Korean had been making another telephone call; but he had long since finished. He made no comment when Laudring and Roucard arrived. He watched the two shake hands, then opened the front door to allow Roucard's departure.

Chichester Laudring showed relief. He found a bolt on the front door and pressed it shut, not trusting to the lock alone. He told Satsu to accompany him to the cellar. They arrived there to find vacancy. The canvassed War Dogs had followed The Fate Joss.

Laudring closed the sliding door. He smiled to see that it was equipped with heavy inner bolts. He closed them, thus cutting off this avenue of entrance. Followed by Satsu, the ex-owner of the Fate Joss went upstairs.

"I need sleep, Satsu," announced Laudring. "Here are the keys. You may keep them. We shall leave this house tomorrow. What a weird adventure this has been! I'm thankful that fellow Roucard showed up. He's welcome to the Fate Joss—and the War Dogs, as well. My conscience is clear. He knows the risk himself."

Satsu waited until his weary master had gone upstairs. Again the Korean went to the telephone and put in a final call to Doctor Roy Tam. Instructions must have followed Satsu's statement of details, for the Korean concluded by acknowledging words that came across the wire.

The call ended, Satsu hung up the receiver and turned out the lights. He went into the parlor and paused there; his broad, yellow face showing an odd, wise grin. Satsu turned out the last light. Complete darkness reigned within the boarded-up house—a darkness that was silent save for the sound of Satsu's creeping footsteps.

Raymond Roucard had made good his boast to Shan Kwan. Smoothly, cagily, Roucard had gained the Fate Joss and shipped it to the appointed spot. But even before Roucard had visited the old house, Doctor Roy Tam had learned that the Fate Joss was there.

ELSEWHERE in Manhattan, a truck was rumbling southward beneath the structure of an elevated. Aboard it lay the Fate Joss and the guardian cannons, so swathed that Roucard's truckmen could not guess what the bulky objects were. Behind that truck was a following coupe, from which two yellow faces peered.

Spies sent by Doctor Tam had reached the mystery house before the truck's departure. Calling back to their chief, they had received new orders, based on later word from Satsu. These Chinamen were trailing the truck to its appointed destination, the courtyard in back of the old Calumet Theater.

Delayed delivery had been a part of Roucard's scheme. An interval between the dropping of the crates and their collection. That time space was designed to prevent a meeting between Roucard's hired truckmen and the Chinese carriers whom Shan Kwan would later order to pick up the Fate Joss and the cannons.

Unknown to either Roucard or the mandarin, that time period was to offer an opportunity to Doctor Roy Tam. He, like Roucard and Shan Kwan, had willing workers who would do his bidding. Strange might be the travels of the Fate Joss before it reached the brass-walled room that Shan Kwan had provided for its reception.

CHAPTER VI. MURDER AT MIDNIGHT

THE old Phoenix Hotel was obscure and poorly located; it fronted on an avenue that was topped by an elevated railway. Because of the noise, the choice rooms were at the rear of the hotel; and from those windows the prospect was one of dingy alleyways and backs of dilapidated buildings.

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Raymond Roucard had chosen the Phoenix Hotel partly because of its seclusion, partly because it was not too far from Chinatown. His trips to Shan Kwan's residence had proven inexpensive at a time when Roucard was counting upon coming funds.

Roucard's room was on the second floor—number 228—and he had not returned to it after his departure from Shan Kwan's. Instead, he had gone directly to Chichester Laudring's new house; and he had waited outside that building until Laudring had arrived with Satsu.

Hence there had been no opportunity for The Shadow to pick up Roucard's trail; but present circumstances indicated that the master sleuth would soon have a tracer on the dapper chap who had arranged the transfer of the Fate Joss. The proof of that lay within the walls of Roucard's room at the Phoenix.

A single lamp was burning on a corner table. Its shaded rays produced but little illumination in the other portions of the room. Hence the figure that moved within Room 228 was nothing but a phantom shape that glided within edging gloom. No eye could have discerned The Shadow in that light.

Arrived at the Phoenix Hotel, The Shadow had gained entry to Roucard's room. He had found that single lamp aglow; it had served his purpose well. For The Shadow was profiting by Roucard's absence to make a systematic search. Table, bureau, suitcases, closet—all had come under his inspection.

The search had been a slow one, for Roucard's room was in great disarray. His suitcases contained stacks of papers; the table drawer was filled with time-tables, clippings and other items. So, for that matter, were the pockets of an old suit and a light overcoat that hung in the closet.

Roucard, apparently, was a man of shady enterprise. The Shadow had brought many items into the light, to study them and then return them. He had found letters, with carbon paper replies that had evidently been typed by Roucard, for a portable machine stood in one corner.

Roucard's correspondence covered many subjects. It was plain that the man made a business of acting as intermediary in various undertakings. In one letter, he offered to visit a factory in Ohio, to pose as a prospective purchaser, thereby gaining information for a rival manufacturer. In another he expressed a willingness to dispose of some doubtful gold mine stock on a commission basis.

The clippings concerned affairs in which Roucard saw opportunity. His method, apparently, was to follow up any leads that came to his notice.

Sifting all these items, The Shadow had discovered a few of uncommon interest: he had gained inside details on matters that he would take up later, much to the confusion of certain persons who were planning doubtful enterprises.

But the subject that gave The Shadow present concern was entirely untouched in Roucard's documents. Not one clipping; not one letter contained any mention of the Fate Joss. Either Roucard had destroyed all existing data, or he had been wise enough to carry such evidence upon his person.

HIS long search ended, The Shadow was standing motionless beside the wall when a key grated in the lock of the outer door. Instantly, The Shadow's cloaked shape performed a fading glide toward a darkened front corner of the room, away from the single window. His gloved fist found the knob of the door that led to an adjoining room. The Shadow opened the barrier and eased into darkness just as a man came into the room and pressed the light switch.

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Peering through a tiny crack, The Shadow saw a dapper man with pointed mustache. He knew that this must be Roucard; he could tell by the fellow's sallow grin that he was pleased with some accomplishment. The Shadow watched Roucard stroll about the room, digging out the very papers that The Shadow himself had so recently examined.

Bundling all his documents, Roucard stacked them on the table where the lamp was still glowing. From his pocket, he produced a thin sheaf of folded papers and laid them on the top of the pile. The Shadow divined immediately that those must be the documents that concerned the Fate Joss. Among them, doubtless, would be names and addresses; in all probability a direct clue to the whereabouts of Chichester Laudring. For The Shadow was sure that Roucard, true to form, had become an intermediary in some transfer of the idol that Chichester had brought from Jehol.

Roucard was packing up; he had tossed his suitcases in the center of the room and was chucking clothing into the bags. He was between The Shadow and that corner table; that prevented any opportunity of gaining the important papers that Roucard had added to his stack.

The Shadow's chance, however, might soon be due. Roucard had a suit and an overcoat in the closet which was located near the outer door of the room. When he went there to get the garments, The Shadow would have time to glide into the room and remove the papers that Roucard had laid aside.

The Shadow waited, ready. Roucard completed packing and turned about. He stopped short, after a single pace. A telephone bell had begun to ring.

The telephone was on the table where Roucard had laid the papers. The dapper man picked up the instrument and spoke, his tone a trifle nervous. The Shadow saw Roucard's lips form a smile as the man recognized the voice on the wire.

"Yes, indeed," remarked Roucard, suavely. "This is Mr. Roucard... Yes, I obtained it... I intended to call you shortly... The price? Just what we expected... Yes, I paid the party the full fifty thousand..."

"The commission? Certainly, I insisted on it... Yes, ten percent. That was in the deal. I collected a small shipment charge, too... Certainly, he saw the truckmen; but he didn't know where they were going..."

Not a mention of any name or destination.

"What time? They've been there and gone by this time... I paid the truckmen in advance; I have the receipted bill right here." Roucard tapped the stack of papers. "What's that...? Yes, any time from now on. Send your own men up there to get it; but there's no need to hurry... Nobody's going to bother those crates..."

"Yes, three crates. The Joss is in the big one; the others contain the dog cannons... The truckmen? Not a chance... Everything's covered with canvas. They didn't catch a glimmer... Fine. I'm glad you're satisfied."

ROUCARD thumped the receiver on the hook. He sat down at the table and leaned his head back to deliver a pleased chuckle. The Shadow watched him dig into his pocket; from it, Roucard produced an envelope, opened the container and counted out fifty crisp bills, each of a thousand dollar denomination.

The Shadow understood all. Roucard had arranged the sale of the Fate Joss to the unnamed person who had just called him on the telephone. The price had been fifty thousand dollars. Roucard had promised to buy the Joss and collect a commission from its owner, who— The Shadow knew—might have been Chichester Laudring.

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Somehow, Roucard had gained the Joss without payment. He had bluffed both purchaser and seller, keeping the money for himself, Roucard was planning a prompt departure from New York. The Shadow watched him pocket the bank notes. Then he saw Roucard pick up the papers that he had added to the stack. He put them in the same pocket that contained the money.

That done, Roucard went to the closet and brought out suit and overcoat. He packed them in a bag. Going back to the table, he made a hurried inspection of the odd papers, tearing up some and pocketing the others. Roucard's chance action had caused The Shadow to miss his opportunity of gaining the papers that concerned the Fate Joss.

Roucard lifted the telephone receiver and called downstairs. He asked for a porter, to carry down his bags. Quietly, The Shadow closed the connecting door. He moved through the darkness of the adjoining room; reached a hallway and descended by a gloomy stairs. Reaching a passage behind the Phoenix lobby, he saw a porter entering the elevator.

From his vantage point, The Shadow would be prepared to trail Roucard. The passage led to a side street; once Roucard arrived to check out, The Shadow would make his exit in that direction. From the corner of the avenue, he could take up Roucard's trail.

The porter arrived with Roucard's bag and typewriter. From his spot of gloom, The Shadow watched the man stack the burdens; then nod to the elevator operator.

"Better go up again," said the porter. "That fellow from 228 will be along in a minute. He sent me ahead with the bags while he was looking 'round to be sure he hadn't forgot nothing."

"He'll ring when he wants me," retorted the operator. "I'll wait here."

Three minutes ticked past. No sign of Roucard; no buzz from the elevator. Turning, The Shadow took to the darkened stairs. He reached the second floor; the corridor was empty.

In the gloomy light, The Shadow made an instant discovery, There was a side passage that terminated in a window with a red light, signifying a fire tower. That window was open; it had not been when The Shadow had left the second floor.

Quickly, the Shadow entered the unlocked door of Room 226, the room that he had used before. On his way, he noted that Room 228 was closed. Gaining the connecting door, The Shadow opened it. From the threshold, he saw a horrible sight.

Raymond Roucard was lying face upward on the floor. His sallow face was frozen; his eyes were bulged toward the ceiling. Driven deep in his breast was a long knife, clear to the hilt, its heavy handle glimmering in the light. Roucard's shirt front was dyed with a huge crimson stain – his heart's blood.

ABOVE the dead man crouched the murderer, an insidious, leering fiend. The killer was a Chinaman, clad in American garb. His breath was coming in gloating snarls; the venomous sound was proof that he had enjoyed his kill.

His big, bony hands showed yellow against the whiteness of objects that he had tugged from Roucard's inside pocket. The Chinaman had found the envelope with the bank notes; also the sheaf of papers that The Shadow knew concerned the Fate Joss.

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As the killer thrust these trophies into his pocket, The Shadow swung forward into the room. With gloved hand, he whipped forth an automatic, to cover that evil-faced croucher.

Though The Shadow's approach was silent, the murderer somehow guessed of the advance. With a quick upward tilt of his head, the Chinaman glared straight into The Shadow's burning eyes.

Instantly, the Chinaman's form shot upward and forward. From a crouching figure that seemed of normal height, he became a giant of startling proportions. Six feet six in stature, massive of build, the Mongol rocketed forward like a mammoth battering ram. Head downward in an incredible lunge, he sped long arms ahead of him, while his lips voiced a hideous cry of rage.

Only six feet separated The Shadow from his adversary. Springing up from beside Roucard's body, the giant Chinaman covered the distance in one unbelievable lunge. His left hand, jabbing its writhing claw, caught The Shadow's right wrist in a ferocious twist. His right hand, swinging overarm, went straight to The Shadow's throat.

The Shadow had met with a foe whose speed and power were as amazing as his deceptive crouch. Like a living Jack-in-the-box, this fierce murderer had aimed for his mark and found it. Hurling back by the terrific attack, The Shadow, with all his surpassing skill, did not have time to even press the trigger of his automatic.

Shots were useless once his hand had received that upward jolt. Twisted in the grip of his giant enemy, The Shadow found the gun a handicap. He let it fall as the Chinaman's gripping arms encircled him. With fiendish vigor, the Mongol had gained the hold he wanted. He was trying to snap The Shadow's body as one would break a tree bough.

The Shadow writhed. His free left hand drove back the Mongol's chin; the punch brought a contemptuous snarl from the murderer. Lifted clear from the floor, The Shadow was helpless in the giant's grip, unable to gain a counterhold against the killer. Only his contortions saved him from the Chinaman's back-breaking tactics.

Back and forth across the room, stumbling past Roucard's body, the hissing Chinaman carried his black-cloaked burden. With each pause, he tried to snap The Shadow's body; every time, The Shadow twisted in the giant's grip, sufficiently to defeat the would-be killer's game.

THE SHADOW had realized instantly who this terrible foe must be. He had heard of Hoang Fu, mightiest of mongol wrestlers, who had long dwelt in Manhattan's Chinatown. But Hoang Fu had been classed as a genial giant, his nature free from malice.

Driven berserk, he had become a raving demon with a lust for death. With all his mighty skill concentrated upon murder, Hoang Fu was seeking to destroy The Shadow, whom he—like others—knew to be the arch-foe of crime. Yet though the Mongol held The Shadow in a terrific grip, he could not perform the last snap that his huge arms sought to give.

Fiercely, Hoang Fu whirled, driving toward the outer door. Past Roucard's body, he turned; as The Shadow performed another safety twist, the killer changed his tactics. Stooping almost to the floor, he shot upward to his full height, swinging The Shadow's form aloft. Then, with a fierce heave of his tremendous shoulders, Hoang Fu sent the cloaked form whirling sidewise through the air.

The Shadow struck the floor beyond Roucard's body. Jouncing, rolling, he was bound for the wall; had his head struck that spot, he would have been knocked senseless, an easy prey for the gigantic killer. But The Shadow's left arm was swinging as he sprawled. With it, he clipped a chair that stood near the corner, seeking

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to break the violence of the coming blow.

The chair served as buffer. The swinging arm sped it to the wall. The Shadow's shoulders struck the chair legs and cracked them into pieces. The thud that his head received was eased by the slouch hat that was clamped down upon his eyes. Jolted, but still conscious, The Shadow was ready for Hoang Fu's next move.

That stroke had already begun. Diving forward, the Mongol was twisting the long-bladed knife from Roucard's heart. The dirk came free, accompanied by a torrential gush of blood.

Hoang Fu saw The Shadow trying to rise, by clutching the broken chair. Backing almost to the outer door, the murderer swung his hand straight backward; then, with a whipping underhand swing, he sent the dripping blade straight for The Shadow's heart.

The Shadow's arms moved as Hoang Fu aimed. Gloved hands had gripped the seat of the broken chair; they swung that improvised shield forward and outward. Hoang Fu had hurled his dagger with precise marksmanship; but The Shadow's protective move proved quite as accurate.

The whirring blade drove straight into the wooden chair. So terrific was its speed that the obstacle did not stop its point. The blade sped completely through the wood; it was the hilt that stopped its progress. Wisely had The Shadow thrust his arms to their full length. They jolted back as the blow came; but tightening muscles absorbed the shock.

Gleaming before The Shadow's eyes, inches only from his heart, was the point of that Chinese dagger with which Hoang Fu had sought to deliver another death.

THE SHADOW cast the chair seat aside; his lips delivered a fierce laugh in challenge to Hoang Fu's evil hiss. Rolling over, The Shadow managed a dive in the direction of the automatic that lay by the wall. Twangs of pain slowed his progress; but with a final crawl, he gained the gun.

Hoang Fu was no longer at the door. The killer had loosed his only weapon; seeing The Shadow's move, he had opened the door and fled along the corridor.

Coming to his hands and knees, The Shadow could hear the slam of the fire escape window. The Shadow rested, panting; a new sound reached him. Voices were coming from the direction of the elevator. The commotion must have been heard downstairs; hotel employees were coming up.

Gaining his feet, The Shadow limped into the adjoining room. As he closed the door, he heard startled cries from the door of Room 228. Moving out through Room 226, The Shadow found the hall vacant. The arriving employees had gone into Roucard's room.

Half limping, The Shadow reached the stairway and descended. He took the obscure passage to the side street. Strength returning, he glided off into the darkness of the night. Too late to pursue Hoang Fu, he had been forced to let the killer escape with those all-important papers that had belonged to Raymond Roucard.

Yat Soon's belief had been realized. Crime had developed; murder had crossed the path of the Fate Joss. One course alone belonged to The Shadow. He must move to deal with coming crime and, in that task, remove the Fate Joss from all fields of strife.

CHAPTER VII. THE JOSS RETURNS

IT was late the next afternoon. A dusky sky clouded Manhattan; beneath it, the present residence of Chichester Laudring appeared as a forgotten abode. The windows were still barricaded, the house looked quite as untenanted as it had the day before.

Inside, however, lights were aglow. Confident that the shutters had no telltale cracks, Laudring had ordered Satsu to turn on the lights downstairs. Seated in the dining room, Laudring was enjoying an early dinner of canned salmon and baked beans. His repast ended, he settled back in his chair to light a panatela, just as Satsu, solemn of face, came in from the kitchen.

"Still sulking, eh, Satsu?" chuckled Laudring. "What's come over you, man?"

"I have advised you, sir," replied Satsu, "that we should leave this house."

"And I told you why we are staying," declared Laudring, his tone angry. "We'll leave here tonight; after it becomes dark. I do not intend to be seen leaving this place. It is too dangerous!"

"Wise is he who risks new danger," quoted Satsu, "when he leaves old danger far behind."

"A good proverb, Satsu. But it doesn't apply in this case. No one knows we're here—except Roucard, who is friendly—so why am I in danger?"

Satsu made no reply. Laudring's attitude became less critical.

"Since we found those canned goods in the kitchen," he remarked, "there's no reason why we shouldn't stay here as long as we want. But tonight is long enough. This place doesn't worry me, Satsu. It bores me."

Strolling into the parlor, Laudring chose a chair in the corner. He noted a small radio; turning it on, he was rewarded by the sound of music. Satsu came in from the hall, raising a warning hand. Laudring smiled and turned down the set.

"Nobody will hear it," he decided. "Not when I have it low, like this. Humph! The music has stopped. I wonder what's coming next. Ah, here it is. A news report from WNX."

Satsu went out into the dining room to clear up the dishes. He could not hear the radio in that room. Busily, the Korean carried the dishes into the kitchen. As he began to wash them, he heard footsteps. Turning about, he saw Laudring. The tall man's face was pale.

"There's been murder, Satsu!" exclaimed Laudring. "Murder—last night, after midnight. Raymond Roucard—the fellow who took away the Fate Joss—knifed by some Chinese." Satsu stared, apparently speechless.

"We're getting but of here, Satsu," informed Laudring. "Forget the dishes. Come along with me. Where are the keys I gave you?"

"Here, sir."

"All right." Laudring took the keys. "The bags are all packed. We won't wait for dark."

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Laudring started for the hall. He stopped at the door that led to the cellar. Satsu saw him insert the key in the lock. The Korean protested.

"Don't go down to the cellar Mr. Laudring," said Satsu. "Time is short, sir. You said yourself that we are leaving —"

"I want to take a look down there," interrupted Laudring, angrily. He had opened the door and was turning on the light. "Maybe I dropped something; or maybe Roucard did."

"But the cellar is empty, sir; and it may be a place of danger."

"Empty and dangerous? Ridiculous, Satsu. Come."

Laudring descended and Satsu followed. As on the night before, Laudring led the way. He passed the coal bins. Satsu heard him gasp. Once again, Laudring was struck dumb with terrified amazement; and Satsu saw the reason when he arrived beside his master.

Standing in its old spot was the Fate Joss, glaring with its gold, bejeweled eyes. Beside it, just as they had been before, were the muzzled War Dogs.

BLINKING, Laudring surveyed the hideous tableau. His arms dropped limply as he turned to Satsu.

"The Joss!" gulped Laudring. "It—it has returned. But it was gone last night! I saw this cellar, vacant. So did you, Satsu! We bolted those inner doors ourselves!"

Grasping the Korean's arm, Laudring became wild-eyed as he pointed beyond the glaring image of the Fate Joss.

"The doors!" he cried. "They're still bolted! It's uncanny, Satsu! Unreal! The Fate Joss—it has true power—it is back with us. Following me, with its War Dogs!"

"Out, Satsu! Out! Let us get away from here. I feared those golden eyes when I first saw them in the temple of Je Ho. Then I lost my fear; but it has returned. Upstairs, Satsu! Come!"

Laudring faltered as he started for the passage to the stairway. Satsu supported him; they gained the stairs and reached the top. Laudring leaned gasping against the wall, while Satsu, also excited, locked the door and pocketed the key. The Korean helped his master into the parlor.

"I shall get the bags, sir," he declared.

Laudring slumped as Satsu left. The Korean returned with the bags, expecting to find his master as troubled as before. But Laudring, once away from the Fate Joss, had regained his nerve. He ordered Satsu to place the bags on the floor.

"We must not run from duty, Satsu," declared Laudring, solemnly. "Raymond Roucard has been murdered because he took the Fate Joss. Somehow, the idol has returned here. It is evidence in the case. We must inform the law."

Satsu began a protest; Laudring intervened.

"Go to the telephone, Satsu. Call detective headquarters. Tell them to send men here. At once."

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Satsu hesitated; then went out into the hall. Laudring could hear the clatter of the dial. No call followed; instead, Satsu returned.

"The telephone is broken, Mr. Laudring," he declared. "Maybe it has been cut off. No operator gave me any answer."

"Very well, Satsu. I have a better plan. You go out, by the back door, and hurry to the nearest precinct. Bring officers here with you."

"But to leave you alone, sir –"

"You heard my order. Hurry, Satsu. It should not take you long."

"I may have trouble, sir –"

"I'll allow you one hour to find the precinct and explain matters to the right man."

A faint smile appeared upon Satsu's lips. Laudring did not see it; he was lighting a cigar. The Korean nodded slowly to himself; then spoke.

"I shall do as you have ordered, Mr. Laudring."

SATSU went out through the kitchen. He unlocked the door and opened it, but carefully left the key on the inside. Taking a darkening passageway between the house and those in back of it, Satsu gained the nearest street.

His first stop was at a drug store, two blocks away. There the Korean put in a call, not to the precinct, but to Doctor Roy Tam. Tersely, he told how Laudring had listened to the radio report of Roucard's death; and he told of the discovery of the Fate Joss in the cellar.

Doctor Tam's reply came as assurance to Satsu, for the Korean's smile returned after a short disappearance. When Satsu spoke again, his phrases showed approval.

"One hour has been given me," he declared. "I shall be gone that long... One hour. Yes... But I can arrange for much time more if that is not enough. Yes, I can say that the police are coming.

"That will be very good, Doctor Tam. Yes. I can do as you have said. The police will not know... Yes, all will be well, once the Fate Joss is gone... One hour, I shall remain away..."

His call finished, Satsu left the drug store and began a slow walk about the neighboring blocks, keeping well distant from the house where Chichester Laudring had remained.

Back in the house itself, Laudring finished his cigar and glanced at his watch. A dozen minutes had passed; already, he was anxious for Satsu's return. He went to the kitchen, opened the back door and looked out into the gloom. Seeing no sign of Satsu, he hastily closed the door; but left it unlocked.

Going into the hall, Laudring noticed the telephone. He picked up the receiver and heard the dial tone. Laudring's brow furrowed. Had Satsu lied to him? Angrily, Laudring dialed the operator. The prompt reply proved that the telephone was not out of order. Fuming, Laudring ordered a connection with detective headquarters. The call went through; a gruff voice answered.

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"Hello," said Laudring. "My name is Laudring. Chichester Laudring... I have news for you. Regarding Raymond Roucard... He was here at my house last night..."

An inquiry for the address. Laudring gave it; then resumed.

"He took away the Fate Joss... A statue—a Chinese idol... Yes, Chinese. A big statue called the Fate Joss... You'll see it when you come here... It's back again. I don't know who brought it.

"What's that? No, this is no hoax... I'm not trying to get my name into the newspapers... No, I don't want to talk to a reporter if there's one there... I want detectives... Yes. Detectives... In a hurry..."

LAUDRING banged down the receiver. He stalked into the parlor, muttering to himself about the dumbness of the man with whom he had talked. It must be almost dark by this time and Laudring became more and more impatient for Satsu's return.

Another glance at his watch told him that more than half an hour had passed since the Korean's departure. The musty parlor bothered Laudring; he went upstairs and turned on the light in the front bedroom. He fancied that he heard the closing of a door below. He called to Satsu; but received no answer.

Creeping footsteps on the stairs. Laudring went out into the hall. He spoke another inquiry, nervously, as he fumbled for the light switch. The footsteps were closer; almost at the top of the stairs when the light came on.

A cry from Laudring. Before him loomed a crouching figure of a yellow man with venomous face. Big hands were huddled against the front of the intruder's coat. Laudring backed toward the bedroom. As he did, the Chinaman leaped forward.

It was Hoang Fu. The murderer's right hand flashed a long knife blade into view, while his huge left claw shot forward to Laudring's throat. With the same speed that he had used against The Shadow, the killer overtook his prey.

The scene that followed was a duplicate of the attack that Hoang Fu must first have made against Raymond Roucard.

As big, deft fingers dug into Laudring's neck, the thumb of the same hand pressed hard against the victim's windpipe. Laudring choked as he staggered backward. Hoang Fu hurled him bodily against the inner wall of the bedroom.

Half stunned, Laudring slumped forward. Hoang Fu's upswinging right hand drove the knife blade deep into the doomed man's body.

As a dying gargle came from Laudring's throat, Hoang Fu hurled the collapsing body backward. Laudring's figure landed past the foot of the bed; like Roucard, this new victim lay face upward, with glassy stare. The handle of the knife glittered in the light.

Snarling his triumph, the murderer stalked forward and yanked the knife from Laudring's breast. His prey was dead, with shirt front dyed as red as Roucard's. Hoang Fu, the killer, had regained the new weapon that he had used for this murder. He was delivering gloating hisses as he crouched above Laudring's body.

Suddenly, Hoang Fu became silent. He crept toward the door, then reached the hall. He chose the entrance to Satsu's room and waited there, intent.

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Caution alone had caused Hoang Fu's move; but his action was to prove as timely as a premonition. Obscured in the entrance to Satsu's room, Hoang Fu saw darkness stir upon the stairs.

A cloaked figure emerged from gloom. Burning eyes flashed toward the open door of Laudring's room, where the body lay out of sight beyond the bed. Hoang Fu's leering lips formed a silent gloat of new anticipation, as the crouching Chinaman prepared for a forward leap.

Again, with murder done, Hoang Fu the mighty killer was to have the joy of conflict with a cloaked avenger. The figure that had so weirdly come into the murderer's view was the shrouded shape of The Shadow!

CHAPTER VIII. ONE HALF HOUR

THE halfway point of the stairway was marked by a little landing, where the stairway doubled forward to the second floor. It was from the darkness of the landing that The Shadow had first viewed the lights of the hall and the bedroom.

The Shadow had reached this house too late to prevent the murder of Chichester Laudring; moreover, his arrival was too recent to bring him any sounds that might tell of Hoang Fu's presence. All that The Shadow could discern was the illumination that indicated an occupant of the front room.

To peer into that room, The Shadow needed to traverse the lighted hall. Should an occupant suspect his approach, this cloaked visitant would need immediate cover. The stairway would be too far behind, once the front room was reached. With one hand beneath his cloak, The Shadow looked about for a hiding place that would do in an emergency. His eyes turned straight toward the door of Satsu's darkened room.

Hoang Fu, lurking, had been awaiting The Shadow's cautious advance. Like a jungle beast that stalks an unsuspecting prey, the giant Mongol was ready for a spring. He had counted on the cloaked figure coming closer; but when The Shadow's eyes swung toward the doorway, the murderous Chinaman waited no longer.

Eight feet intervened between Hoang Fu and The Shadow. The mammoth killer covered it with one tremendous leap. His long left arm shot forward, its clawing hand aiming for The Shadow's throat. His right fist sped upward, thrusting the bloody blade straight for The Shadow's black-clad form.

Tonight, the odds were turned. Hoang Fu was delivering the surprise. At Roucard's, he had outmatched The Shadow despite the latter's leveled gun. Here at Laudring's, Hoang Fu was lurching forward with a driving dirk while The Shadow was still drawing an automatic from beneath his cloak.

Yet The Shadow possessed an advantage which Hoang Fu had not considered. He had fought with the fiendish Mongol once before; and The Shadow never forgot the methods of an enemy whom he had previously encountered. His burning eyes had spied Hoang Fu at the very instant when the killer was about to launch his spring. The Shadow acted with instinctive skill.

As Hoang Fu hurtled toward him, The Shadow twisted, fading to the right. In the midst of his dervish spin, he loosed his fist and let his automatic clatter across the hall. Whirling full about, he shot his long arms straight for Hoang Fu's ram-like form.

The Shadow was only half clear of the killer's drive; that space, however, was sufficient. Hoang Fu's left hand caught The Shadow's left arm instead of his neck. The upswinging knife point carved the folds of the black cloak; the blade barely skimmed the lithe body beneath.

THE FATE JOSS

Hoang Fu swung about through the very speed of his attack, carrying The Shadow with him. Viselike fingers gripped the killer's right wrist; their fierce twist caused Hoang Fu to drop his knife.

As the long blade clattered to the floor, Hoang Fu wrenched his wrist from The Shadow's grasp. With both arms, he grappled with The Shadow, in hand-to-hand combat.

THE SHADOW still held his footing; with both hands free, he fought Hoang Fu at the man's own game. Catch as catch can, Hoang Fu still held the odds, for he had titanic strength with which to back his skill. Yet The Shadow had chosen the one course that afforded opportunity.

In brief but furious grapple, he outmatched the skill of the murderous wrestler. Like a tiny mongoose fighting a huge writhing cobra, The Shadow broke Hoang Fu's holds and gained his own. Twisting, using swift jujitsu methods, The Shadow lashed the murderer back and forth across the hall.

Just as The Shadow had stalled Hoang Fu the night before, so did the Chinaman thwart the cloaked fighter's measures in this battle. His own skill was sufficient to free him from some holds. His bulk served him when The Shadow tried to throw him with other moves. Time and again, Hoang Fu lurched forward over The Shadow's shoulder, only to recover and counter while The Shadow sought a new hold.

His first drive finished, the giant could gain no new advantage; but The Shadow, with all his skill, was unable to throw this adversary who knew how to rally against every grip. Fighting a man-mountain of twice his bulk, The Shadow was due to weary long before Hoang Fu. It was foresight of that fact that caused him to deliver an unexpected move.

Gaining a quick hold, The Shadow thrust Hoang Fu backward; then released his grip. Before the killer could recover, the cloaked fighter made a dive toward the head of the stairs. Hoang Fu, dropping to a crouch, delivered a triumphant snarl and launched himself in a terrific plunge to overtake The Shadow.

Six feet six shot forward, clear of the floor. Hoang Fu outdid himself in that mammoth bound. Long arms forward, huge bulk in mid-air, he had his opportunity. Had his leap been unexpected, Hoang Fu would have flattened The Shadow close by the top step. But The Shadow had known what was due to come.

He stopped short as he heard Hoang Fu's snarl. Dropping to one knee, The Shadow thrust both arms upward. Hoang Fu's arms sped above and past The Shadow's head. His flying body skimmed those cloaked shoulders. Like trip-hammers, The Shadow's hands clipped the killer's waist. Shooting forward, they propelled Hoang Fu onward, adding impetus to the murderer's flying drive.

Had his leap ended normally, Hoang Fu's hands, missing The Shadow, would have struck the floor before the top step. But that added force carried the big Mongol further. Hoang Fu's hands found nothingness. His body continued its long arc, clearing the eight steps to the landing.

The Shadow, crouched and panting, saw the flying shape disappear. He heard a half-snarled scream from Hoang Fu's lips; then a terrific crash as the killer smashed the wall of the landing, head foremost.

The wild cry ended; a big body thudded. Sudden silence was broken by the slight clatter of falling plaster.

THE SHADOW arose and went to the darkened stairs. He glimmered a flashlight toward the landing. The glow showed Hoang Fu sprawled in twisted fashion; beyond him, a broken wallboard. The killer's gigantic plunge had ended with a deadening impact.

THE FATE JOSS

Though his body had rolled face downward, Hoang Fu's head was twisted more than half about. Frozen yellow features were leering upward toward The Shadow; blood was streaming sidewise along the killer's forehead, away from his bulging eyes. The crash had not only smashed Hoang Fu's thick skull; it had broken the murderer's neck as well. Hoang Fu, twice a killer, had gained deserved doom.

Hoang Fu was dead; his menace ended. The Shadow crossed the hall and entered the front room. Past the bed he discovered Chichester Laudring's body. After a brief survey of this victim, The Shadow went back to the stairs and descended, stepping across Hoang Fu's blocking body.

On the ground floor, The Shadow paused and looked upward. Hoang Fu's corpse was obscured above the steps to the landing. The Shadow began a swift search of the ground floor. He found the locked door to the cellar. It was not a formidable barrier; the lock was easy for The Shadow's pick. Opening the door, The Shadow descended into the darkened cellar.

With flashlight, The Shadow picked his way between the coal bins. He widened the focus of the beam. It shone upon the bulky statue of the Fate Joss. A whispered laugh came from The Shadow's hidden lips as he surveyed the glittering glaring idol. The rays of light turned toward one of the squatty dog cannons, then to the other. Finally, as The Shadow advanced, the beam showed the deepest recess of the cellar.

Turning about, The Shadow went back to the stairs. Arrived in the ground floor hall, he picked up the telephone and dialed a number. A quiet voice responded. The Shadow began to speak in a low whisper. As he talked, a clangor sounded in the house. Some one was ringing the front doorbell.

The Shadow paused; the clang was repeated. Then came an interval, followed by a third ringing of the bell. After that, a pause, with no new sound of visitors who craved admittance.

The Shadow concluded his telephone call. Moving to the front door, he listened; but heard no sounds from without. Whoever had come had gone. With a slight swish of his cloak, The Shadow glided back toward the door that led below.

OUTSIDE, Satsu had approached the vicinity of the old house. His hour was not yet up; but darkness had settled and the Korean could see no risk in this terrain. But Satsu had stopped at the nearest corner. Thanks to a lighted street lamp, he had discerned two men who were leaving the front steps of Laudring's home.

Satsu edged into a doorway near the corner. The two men did not see him as they passed; but the Korean caught snatches of their conversation. One was speaking in a growl:

"I said it was a crank call, Casey. Well, I was right. Some guy got a kick out of us chasing up to an empty house. I'll bet that place has been closed for a year."

"You're right, Parker. Well, we'll ride back to headquarters. Maybe Joe Cardona will be there by now --"

The two men had passed from hearing distance; but their words had told Satsu much. The Korean knew that Laudring must have discovered his bluff about the telephone. Going back to his original idea, Laudring had called headquarters. Two detectives had come in response; but they had been denied admittance.

Satsu decided to put in a telephone call to Doctor Tam. He preferred to make it from the drug store where he had gone before. Making for that destination, Satsu found an empty booth. He dialed his number and gave the news to Doctor Tam.

THE FATE JOSS

Satsu's subsequent conversation now proved that he had gained new instructions. He repeated words that he heard from Doctor Tam, and added his own comments.

"Very well, Doctor Tam," was his reply. "I shall wait until I see them. Then I shall call you from here. As you have said, Doctor Tam: It is very wise that I should not go back into the house until all is ready."

Satsu strolled from the drug store. He walked away toward Laudring's; but reversed his pace and kept strolling back and forth along an avenue. Carefully, he watched all cars that turned along side streets toward Laudring's. Twenty minutes passed; the limit of Satsu's hour had arrived.

A SEDAN swung from the avenue. Satsu caught a view of the man behind the wheel. He saw a yellow face, with lips that were speaking to another man in the front seat. Satsu watched the car roll away in darkness. He hurried back to the drug store.

A coupe swung from a side Street before Satsu reached his destination; the Korean saw it stop near the drug store. A young man alighted and entered before Satsu arrived.

Both telephone booths were occupied when Satsu entered the store. The young man was in one, the druggist in the other, receiving an incoming call. Satsu studied the young man's profile as he waited. He noted a keen expression on that clean-cut face. The druggist came out of the second booth; Satsu entered it. Thanks to the thinness of wall, he caught the young man's final words.

"Thirty blocks straight up the avenue," was the statement. "With only a half block at the start... Yes, that means three minutes more. I'll be ready..."

The young man left the telephone booth. Satsu called Doctor Tam and spoke tersely.

"I have seen them... Yes, I shall return at once... Yes, you will hear from me afterward, Doctor Tam... Some of them; not all... I understand, Doctor Tam. The rest should be here with them..."

This time, Satsu was prompt in his return to Laudring's. He chose the darkness at the rear of the house, gained the back door and entered the unlighted kitchen. Stealing into the hallway, Satsu listened; then tried the door that led to the cellar. It was locked. Satsu inserted the key; then, as an afterthought, went to the foot of the stairway.

Silence, only, from the second floor. Satsu could discern the glow of lights, reflected by the upper wall of the landing; but he was too far below to see the dead form of Hoang Fu.

After a few minutes, Satsu went back to the cellar door; he was about to turn the key that he had left there when he heard a sound from the kitchen.

Satsu had left the rear door unlocked; he knew that persons were entering. Ever cautious, the Korean pulled the key from the door and went rapidly toward the front parlor. He reached that destination just as footsteps were sounding in the dining room. A Chinaman entered the hall; four others followed.

All were dressed in American attire, but they spoke in their own tongue. One pointed toward the front of the hall; another motioned back toward the dining room. As they began to spread out, they did not watch the door that led to the cellar. One man had tried it; but moved away to babble that it was locked.

"Hoang Fu —"

Satsu caught a mention of the name as he reached to push aside a curtain and speak to these arrivals. Then the Korean stopped short as he caught a glimpse of one Chinaman turning toward the rear of the hall. A high-pitched babble had come from the guard stationed at the dining room.

Satsu understood the words. The guard was giving sing-song news about the cellar door. Like a flash, the Chinamen snatched out weapons and herded toward the rear of the hall. As they made in that direction, Satsu heard a strange, uncanny laugh.

From his lookout post, the Korean saw blackness heave forward from that darkened area behind the stairway. He caught the outline of a living figure; again he heard the rising crescendo of a fierce; challenging laugh.

Five Chinamen were diving toward a cloaked shape in black. Three with revolvers, two with knives—their flashing weapons told of their desire for combat. Sole witness to the coming fray, Satsu was to see The Shadow do battle with these new invaders in this house of doom!

CHAPTER IX. THE VANISHED JOSS

THREE sharp clicks were the first sounds of the combat. They came from revolvers in the hands of Chinamen. True to form, these fellows carried guns with empty chambers beneath the hammers, a safety measure preferred by the Chinese.

Each weapon needed one trigger pull to bring a cartridge into duty; and each Celestial was quick with the move. But of the three, only one had opportunity to press the trigger for the second time. Hard on the clicks came thunderous blasts that re-echoed through the hallway.

Two of the Chinese staggered—the pair closest to The Shadow. The third man fired from a greater distance; his bullet sizzled wide of the form in black. Then came another blast from an automatic. The third Chinaman faltered, vainly trying to press the trigger of his gun.

Satsu, from the curtains, saw two knife-wielders diving forward. The Chinese with the ready blades had given their companions the first opportunity; but they were already on the move when the shooting started.

Their part was to carve a crippled foeman; instead, they hurled themselves upon an unwounded battler. The attack, however, was too prompt for The Shadow to drop them as they came. Satsu saw the cloaked fighter fade. He thought that the down-driving knives had found a mark. Little did he know of The Shadow's strategy.

One knife-handler like Hoang Fu was more dangerous than these two apprentices in murder. Sweeping from one swinging blade, The Shadow swung an automatic against the wrist that held the other. A Chinaman went sprawling to the floor, his knife clattering ahead of him. The Shadow grappled with the man who had missed the first stroke.

Satsu, rigid, looked on; though powerful, the Korean was unarmed. He had no desire to join the combat in which five men had been no match for one. The Shadow had wounded his first three adversaries; one, rising with his gun, was aiming again as The Shadow grappled to get the knife from the last remaining killer.

One gloved hand was clutching the knife wrist, the other still retained its automatic. That weapon boomed three riddling blasts that ended the fellow who had tried to fire. Satsu saw the Celestial spill to the floor, his revolver thudding useless beside him.

THE FATE JOSS

The others with regained revolvers were near the entrance of the dining room. At sight of their fellow's fate, they uttered frightened cries and went stumbling toward the kitchen. Only two enemies remained: one, grappling with a knife that he would not drop; the other, on hands and knees, rising with the blade that he had lost.

This fellow paused for a throw; but The Shadow was away from him. The muzzle of an automatic loomed from beneath the arm of the Chinaman with whom The Shadow was wrestling.

The free man gave his knife a wild, frantic fling and dashed off toward the dining room, just as The Shadow's automatic spat a pursuing shot. The blade, winging wide, drove into the door to the cellar; but the cry from the dining room told him that the knife-thrower had been clipped.

AT that instant, a terrific hammering began at the front door. The barrier quaked under vicious pounding, Satsu, still staring from behind the curtain, saw The Shadow finish off the last enemy. He needed the Chinaman as a shield no longer. With a twist, he wrenched the fellow's knife arm downward; then drove his automatic against the Celestial's head. The last of the five would-be killers dropped limp upon the floor.

Satsu heard a taunting laugh: of victory. Dropping back into the parlor, he saw the front door splinter as an ax head cleaved into view. Tugging the upright piano from the wall, Satsu dived into the corner behind it. New smashes broke the front door clear. A stocky, swarthy man lurched into the house, fronting his body with a leveled revolver.

Peering past the edge of the piano, Satsu saw two men in uniform follow. The police had arrived during the fray. This leader of the trio was Detective Joe Cardona, the ace sleuth who held the post of acting inspector.

Gun in hand, Cardona surveyed a hall that was deserted, except for the forms of two prone Chinamen. The Shadow was gone; but sounds of new fray echoed at the rear of the house. Sending one bluecoat upstairs, Cardona left the other guarding the front door, while he dashed off through the rear of the house.

Casey and Parker met him in the kitchen. They had ducked through the rear alleyway; the shots that Cardona had heard had been theirs. Cardona found the kitchen light; Casey pointed out through the open door, to the sprawled figure of a Chinaman who lay dead, with a knife beside him.

"There were three of 'em," he explained. "Me and Parker met 'em. Two of 'em fired and then beat it; but I plugged this one while he was trying to knife Parker. Spotted him with my torch, I did; he was kind of on hands and knees, like he was crippled some —"

"Get going," snapped Cardona. "Chase after those two Chinese and get the patrol cars on the job. I'll stay here. Come back when you're through."

The dicks took to the alley. Cardona started toward the front hall. He heard sounds of a scuffle; as he reached the hall, he saw one Chinaman on his feet. The fellow was the one with the knife; he had recovered from the stunning blow that The Shadow had given him. The officer had spotted him rising; the two were grappling at the stairs.

Seeing Cardona, the Chinaman leaped away from the cop. Driving straight for Joe, he brandished the wicked knife. Coolly, Cardona pumped four shots straight into the Chinaman's body.

Whining a hideous cry of agony, the would-be slayer bounced in air and went rolling on the floor.

CARDONA turned to the officer, who was clutching a slashed sleeve.

"Get you?" inquired Joe.

"Not bad," returned the officer, weakly. "Kind of a long cut; but it's not deep."

"Get out and have it fixed. You never can tell what may be on those knife points. Report to the precinct."

Cardona swung toward the stairs, to growl at the other policeman, who was coming down.

"Well?" he demanded. "Where were you?"

"I heard your shot, inspector," explained the cop. "I was up in the front room. There's a body up there."

"Another Chinaman?"

"No. It's an American—murdered. There was a big Chinese laying on the landing, dead; but I went past him, to look around upstairs. Then I found the dead man —"

"It must be Laudring," interposed Cardona, savagely. "That's the fellow who called up: Chichester Laudring. Wanted men up here, so Casey and Parker came. Found the place closed, so they toddled back to headquarters, the dummies!"

"Lucky I was there when they came in. Too bad, though, that they didn't have that reporter Burke come up here with them. He'd have had sense enough to tell them that they ought to smash into a place when they've been called there.

"They figured it a hoax. Didn't want to look like saps. A fine pair of dunderheads! They ought to be back on beats. Maybe they will be, if they don't show some brains."

Cardona ended his tirade. The wounded officer made his exit. Cardona looked about the hall, as puzzled as the remaining bluecoat. He wondered about this fray that had ended in his arrival. Little did he suspect the details; even though he himself had mentioned a fact that concerned The Shadow's arrival here.

Clyde Burke, a newspaper reporter on the Classic, had been at headquarters when Chichester Laudring had called; Clyde was a secret agent of The Shadow. He had called his chief, through Burbank, the contact man who served The Shadow. Traveling more quickly than Casey and Parker, The Shadow had beaten the detectives to the house. But he had entered the unlocked rear door, whereas the headquarters men had done no more than ring at the front.

"Let's go upstairs," decided Cardona. "I want to see that body."

The officer started up the steps, with Cardona following. As they neared the landing, two thoughts occurred to Joe. One was the open front door; the other was the need for a call to headquarters. Cardona, motioned the officer ahead; then turned about. He stopped to listen.

A SQUEAKY sound was coming from the parlor, indicative of furniture being pushed about in cautious fashion.

Cardona crept down the stairs. He moved toward the parlor. Again he heard the sound. Springing past the curtain, Joe came face to face with Satsu. The Korean had come from his hiding place and was pushing the piano back against the wall. He quailed at sight of Cardona's gun.

THE FATE JOSS

"What are you doing here?" demanded Cardona. "Hiding back of the piano, eh? Who are you?"

"I am the servant of Mr. Laudring," replied Satsu, solemnly. "I had gone out to find the precinct, to talk to the police."

"And got lost?"

"Yes, sir. When I returned, the Chinese entered. They began to fight."

"Who with?"

"Some one that I could not see. One man who was in the hall. I heard the smashing of the door. I was frightened and I hid away."

"You're no Chinaman. What are you? A Japanese?"

"A Korean, sir. From the country of Chosen, which is now ruled by Nippon—by Japan."

Footsteps interrupted from beyond the front door. Still covering Satsu, Cardona gave a quick glance as Parker and Casey entered. Cardona ordered Parker to frisk Satsu. Meanwhile, Casey reported.

"Over by the avenue," he stated. "We was talking with a patrol car. A truck was coming out of a side street, and just as it turned south another one came down the avenue and headed into the street.

"There was a Chinaman at the wheel of it, inspector. We started a chase, and the truck cut through the street, right in back of here. The truck took a skid after a couple of blocks. Cracked up on the sidewalk and about six Chinese jumped out.

"The whole lot took for cover. Beat it into an alley before we could stop 'em. They was running like rats; we wasn't close enough to clip any of 'em. The patrol cars are trying to round them up; but they haven't had any luck yet."

"Two crews, eh?" queried Cardona. "One lot in here—the others coming with a truck. Well,"—he turned savagely to Satsu—"what do you know about it?"

"I know nothing, sir—"

"We'll see. Come along upstairs with me." Then, to Casey and Parker, Joe added: "You men stay here."

ON the stairs, Cardona and Satsu passed the dead form of Hoang Fu. They reached the front room, where the officer was with Laudring's body. Eyeing Satsu closely, Joe saw the Korean's lips twitch.

"Is that Laudring?" demanded Cardona.

Satsu nodded.

"Who murdered him?" inquired Cardona.

"I don't know, sir," replied Satsu. "I was not here in the house. Mr. Laudring sent me to the precinct."

"Before he called headquarters?"

THE FATE JOSS

"He did not use the telephone, sir, before he sent me out."

"Let's see that key in your pocket. The one Parker found when he was frisking you."

Satsu produced the key.

"What does this unlock?" asked Cardona. "The door to the cellar?"

Satsu hesitated; then nodded.

"Is that where the Fate Joss is?" demanded Joe. "The idol that Laudring told us he had here?"

Satsu trembled. He stared, wild-eyed. Cardona knew that his thrust had gone home.

"Spill it!" growled Cardona. "What about Roucard! Who killed him? The same fellow that got Laudring? What about this Fate Joss that Roucard took away? Who brought it back?"

Satsu weakened under the barrage of spasmodic questions. Pitifully, he raised his hands. Confronted with all these facts, he was ready to speak.

"The Fate Joss was here," he admitted. "In the cellar, when Mr. Roucard came here last night. He had men take it away. Through a path at the back of the cellar. Today—today, we found the Fate Joss here again."

"Who do you mean by we?"

"Mr. Laudring and myself, sir."

"And the Fate Joss is there now?"

"Yes, sir. With the cannons called the War Dogs. The Fate Joss is very large. It is nearly the weight of half a ton."

"We'll take a look at it."

Carrying the door key, Cardona marched Satsu downstairs. The policeman followed; Joe stationed him at the front door. Casey and Parker joined the acting inspector. Joe unlocked the cellar door, found the light switch and turned it on. The trio then escorted Satsu to the cellar.

The Korean's face showed relief. There was reason—for Satsu knew that he could build a creditable story. He was almost eager as he marched ahead of Cardona's revolver muzzle. Between the coal bins, Satsu spoke.

"The Fate Joss is here, sir," he said. "In the very center of this cellar. With the War Dogs—"

Satsu gasped. He had reached the space ahead; close in back of him were Cardona and the detectives. But where Satsu had expected to see the towering glitter of the Fate Joss, nothing remained but vacancy. The idol was gone; not even the squatty dog cannons remained as testimony to its former presence.

Beyond was the heavy door that covered the underground passage. Its strong bolts were closed. Weirdly, incredibly, the half-ton Joss and its brazen guardians had vanished from their underground abode.

CHAPTER X. THE GUARDED JOSS

"WELL? Where's the Joss?"

"I—I don't know, sir. We saw it here. That was why Mr. Laudring sent me for the police."

Joe Cardona had made the query; Satsu had delivered the stammered reply. Speaking choppily, the Korean stared about in dazed fashion. His bewilderment was unfeigned.

It was plain that the cellar could not contain the Fate Joss. Blank, whitewashed walls were everywhere, except at the coal bins. They were low; and the light showed almost all of their interiors. Devoid of crates or boxes, the bins offered no possible hiding place for so huge a statue as the one that Satsu had described.

"You didn't lug it out," decided Cardona, eyeing the Korean. "That's one thing certain—providing this idol is as big as you've said it is. Those Chinese upstairs didn't have a chance; and the ones that Casey says had a truck were coming—not going."

"That truck was empty, inspector," put in Casey. "We grabbed it after the Chinese ran away. But say—if anybody did try to get the thing out of here, how would they drag it up the steps we just came down?"

"They would not use the steps," said Satsu, in sudden answer to the question. "Mr. Roucard took the Joss through to the house behind here."

"That's something," inserted Cardona. He eyed Satsu steadily. "Do some more talking, fellow. It will be good for you. You say Roucard took the Joss away last night?"

"Through those doors," stated Satsu, nodding as he pointed. "That was the only way that the Joss could go."

"But they're barred now," began Cardona; looking toward the far end of the cellar. "Barred—from this side of the doors —"

Cardona got no farther. Momentarily, he had eased his revolver away from Satsu's ribs. Casey and Parker had edged in from the passage between the coal bins. Satsu, his eyes showing a quick, cunning blink, had seen an opportunity.

With a quick leap, the Korean darted away from the men who held him. He dived for the passage between the coal bins.

Cardona, wheeling, shouted for him to stop. Satsu kept on. Joe leveled his revolver and fired. His shots were too late. The bullets ripped splinters from the boards of the narrow passage; but Satsu gained the turn and clattered up the stairs.

CARDONA was after him, with the detectives close behind. At the bottom of the steps, Joe caught a glimpse of the fugitive springing through the doorway at the top. Cardona fired another hasty shot that sizzled wide. He and his companions headed up the stairs. A revolver barked while they were coming.

The cop at the front door had heard the first shots below. He had yanked a revolver and aimed for Satsu when the Korean appeared. He had not been quick enough to stop the dodging fugitive. Satsu had dashed through the dining room, making headway for the opening back door. Cardona and the rest continued their pursuit.

THE FATE JOSS

The chase followed to the alleyway. Flashlights blinked long glares; one beam showed Satsu reaching the street. He had gained on his pursuers; hurried shots failed to wing him. The four men kept up their chase. A patrol car whined into view as they arrived on the street.

Angrily, Cardona ordered an intensive hunt. Turning back, he started through the alleyway. More men were needed here; Cardona would summon them from headquarters. Police surgeons as well; for deaths must be investigated. The murder of Chichester Laudring in particular.

While Cardona was returning, fuming at the slip that he had made in letting Satsu escape, a figure was moving from the deserted cellar where the Fate Joss once had been. The Shadow, his cloaked figure plain in the light, was coming from an inner corner of an empty coal bin.

He had headed back into the cellar after his fight with the five Chinese. He had used his pick to lock the door behind him. He had bided here until the advent of Cardona and Satsu. The Korean's dash for liberty had given The Shadow an excellent opportunity for departure.

Hidden in the coal bin, The Shadow had seen nothing of Satsu's escape; but he had quickly guessed what had happened. Taking the stairs, The Shadow reached the ground floor to find it deserted. Deciding that the chase had led through the back door, he calmly stalked through the front way and reached the outside street.

Lamplights here were infrequent. With full darkness settled, The Shadow found no difficulty in making a departure. He heard the whining of police sirens in neighboring blocks; and at times he paused to listen for other sounds. Threading his way through the terrain, The Shadow showed purpose other than his desire to leave here unobserved. He was trying to cross Satsu's trail. As much as the police, he would have liked to question the slippery Korean.

The Shadow had heard enough to know that Cardona had captured some servant of Laudring's. Satsu's peculiar accent was indication that the man was a Korean; for The Shadow had met with others of that race. He could have guessed Satsu's identity had he encountered the man. But The Shadow found no sign of any lurker who had hidden in this neighborhood.

Traveling several blocks away from Laudring's, The Shadow found a small, gloomy cigar store. No one was behind the counter. The Shadow entered and heard the sound of voices from beyond the door of a rear room. Stepping to a darkened corner, he used a telephone to make a call to the exclusive Cobalt Club. In the calm tones of Lament Cranston, he gave an order for his chauffeur to meet him at a certain address.

Gliding out into the night, The Shadow covered a few more blocks. He chose a waiting spot in front of an empty house. Five minutes passed; then a limousine came along the street and stopped.

Stanley alighted and went up the steps of the house. Using a match, the chauffeur looked at the number. Puzzled, he went back to the car wondering if he had come to the correct address.

A voice from the speaking tube startled Stanley. The tones were those of Lament Cranston, ordering the chauffeur to drive to another destination, some distance away.

Puzzled, Stanley took the wheel and started the car. He had not seen The Shadow step aboard the limousine.

MEANWHILE, four men were gathered in a small underground room. The place was windowless; its illumination came from a single incandescent that was hanging by a cord. One man was close by a table that held a telephone. He was the clean-cut individual whom Satsu had heard calling from the drug store. This was Harry Vincent, agent of The Shadow.

THE FATE JOSS

Opposite Harry was a husky, square-jawed fellow of about Harry's age. His countenance was firm, his features chiseled. This was Cliff Marsland.

Beside Cliff was a little, wizened faced man whose sly face wore a grin. He was "Hawkeye," The Shadow's spotter, who usually watched developments in the underworld.

Standing by the door was a huge African, whose bulk would have matched that of the dead Hoang Fu. He, too, served The Shadow, on certain rare occasions. Like Hawkeye, this big fellow was wearing a grin. Harry Vincent noticed it and made comment.

"Good work, Jericho," he commended. "That job should have taken six of us. You filled the bill for three. Well, we made it, and when –"

Harry paused to answer the telephone, which had begun to ring. He held a short conversation with Burbank and hung up.

"We'll take the truck back to the Howland Garage," he told Cliff. "Hawkeye, you and Jericho are to stay on duty here. But don't move around unless you hear some one trying to break in."

Harry and Cliff went out into a larger room, which was obviously the floor of an old abandoned garage. Small and narrow, the place had probably been closed because it had storage space for too few cars. The light from the little room showed a coupe; beyond it, a light truck. At the inner end of the garage were sliding doors that led to another storage space.

Harry closed the door from the little room. Moving through the darkness, he ascended a ramp and unlocked a large sliding door. He opened the barrier and spoke in a whisper to Cliff.

"I'll back the coupe out to the street," informed Harry. "When my lights go out, you'll know it's clear. Head for the Howland Garage. I'll follow."

Harry backed out. Cliff saw his lights turn out. Entering the truck, Cliff backed it to the street. Harry had left the coupe; he slid the door shut and locked it. The truck rolled away; the coupe followed shortly afterward.

A blackened shape glided up to the closed door. Gloved fingers produced a duplicate key and turned the strong lock. The door slid back noiselessly, no more than two feet. A figure entered, closed the door and glided past the room where Hawkeye and Jericho stood vigil. Arrived at the far end of the garage, the same gloved hand opened a padlock, slid open a door and entered the second storage room.

A light switch clicked. It revealed The Shadow, standing within the closed door of a room some twenty feet square. A soft laugh sounded as burning eyes surveyed a glittering bulk that occupied the center of the chamber. Standing within this abandoned storage room was the Fate Joss from Jehol.

GLARING with its lifeless golden eyes, the huge idol seemed to challenge the being who now controlled its destiny. Beside the massive Joss rested the crouching War Dogs. The idol and its guardians had become the property of the master who had sought them. Casey had told Cardona of a truck that had left the rear street. That truck had come promptly at The Shadow's call. He had unbarred the doors at the back of Laudring's cellar; He had prepared an exit for the Fate Joss. Satsu had heard Harry contact with Burbank, to learn that the others were on their way.

When his agents had come through to carry away the Fate Joss, The Shadow had gone upstairs in Laudring's. It was then that he had encountered the five Chinese and had waged the battle that had ended just before

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Cardona's entry. While The Shadow had fought, his agents had worked.

They had removed the Joss and the cannons; all were gone when The Shadow returned below. After that, The Shadow had bolted the rear doors from the inside and had awaited an opportunity for departure,

The agents had brought their trophies to this abandoned hiding place. The Shadow had followed; here was his opportunity to inspect the Fate Joss at leisure. He approached the big statue and studied its gold and jeweled fittings. He knew it to be the idol from the temple of Je Ho.

The Shadow compared the War Dogs. Twin beasts of slaughter, those muzzle-mouthed mortars had evidently served in battle. Exerting pressure, The Shadow untwisted the plug from the mouth of one; then repeated the action with the other. The lamplight showed yawning cavities, with blackened bronze interiors.

Perhaps it was the oddity of those fanciful ancient weapons that brought a whispered laugh from The Shadow's lips. Possibly, the construction of the cannons gave him some chance inspiration. His momentary mirth ended, The Shadow fitted the plugs back upon the muzzles. He did not wedge them tightly; instead, he produced an automatic and placed it across the mouth of one cannon; then did the same with the other. Each muzzle was almost the exact width of the automatic.

Extinguishing the light, The Shadow made a prompt departure. He passed through the outer storage space as silently as he had arrived. Neither Hawkeye nor Jericho had guessed his visit; nor would they—or other guards—learn of any future journeys hither should The Shadow choose to keep them unaware.

LATER, a light gleamed in The Shadow's sanctum, that strange abode which the master sleuth kept as his own. White hands moved beneath a bluish glare. A shipping report lay upon the table; The Shadow inscribed coded messages.

Through Rutledge Mann, another agent, The Shadow would arrange for shipment of the Fate Joss back to Jehol. The idol would go aboard a tramp steamer, off the coast. Word of its arrival would reach General Cho Tsing in advance. Within the coming week, the Fate Joss would be on its way to the place where it belonged: within the temple of Je Ho.

The Shadow would visit the hiding place at intervals, to make sure that the Fate Joss remained safe. The spot was unknown to any one in Chinatown. Hawkeye and Jericho stood on guard; they would later be relieved by Harry and Cliff.

The Shadow had dealt with men of murder tonight. He had ended the insidious career of Hoang Fu, the giant killer. He had eliminated other would-be murderers who had come to give him battle. Later, he could look for Satsu; opportunity would come, moreover, to deal with a master fiend who had ordered death.

Yet the taste of vengeance must wait, for the present. It must bide until the Fate Joss began its trip to China. The cause of crime must be removed before justice could be given its full due. None—not even Yat Soon—should know of The Shadow's deeds until they had reached full accomplishment.

Such was The Shadow's decision. A wise one, for it concerned the mysterious Fate Joss, which had already found four abodes since Chichester Laudring had first disposed of it. From the vault of Dustin Clabb, in Chicago, it had come to Laudring's boarded-up residence. It had returned there, amazingly, after Laudring had sent it away with Roucard.

At present it was gone again from Laudring's; and to some—such as Satsu—its evanishment must seem as miraculous as those other episodes had seemed to Laudring. Had the idol's wanderings ceased? Would it

remain in its present quarters, until The Shadow was ready to remove it?

Held by The Shadow, the Fate Joss and its War Dogs seemed secure. Yet The Shadow, strong though his position was, did not intend to risk any move that might inform an enemy of the part which he had played.

The Shadow knew the ways of the Chinese. That fact—more than the tradition which concerned the Fate Joss—would keep him on complete guard until he himself had seen the idol on its final voyage.

CHAPTER XI. YAT SOON LEARNS

ONE day had passed. New night had brought its blanketing thickness above the splendid glow of Chinatown. Natives of that bizarre district were abroad; their whispered stir persisted. Talk of the Fate Joss still gripped Chinatown.

For the Chinese knew that the strange idol had actually been seen in Manhattan. They had learned that fact from the newspapers; they had read of Chichester Lardring's murder and the death of Hoang Fu. The police had identified the giant Chinese wrestler.

Lesser Chinese had died as well; and all had sought the Fate Joss. That was why Chinatown buzzed. Many natives believed that their compatriots had perished in behalf of a cause. Whom they had served, and why? Such factors did not matter.

Mixed with the medley of strollers who traversed Chinatown were blue-uniformed patrolmen. Four times the usual number of police could be observed from the corner of Mott and Pell. The law had recognized the seething undercurrent that might betoken trouble. Officers were on hand in case tumult should begin.

Chinese leaders felt no qualms. Men of intelligence, they could see no cause for factional strife. Good will existed among the Chinese themselves; trouble could start only by the boiling over of individual agitators. Talk of the Fate Joss might arouse fanaticism; if it did, the job of quelling the disturbance would belong to the police. In fact, the leaders of Chinese groups had already assured the law that repressive measures would be welcomed.

One man alone felt grave concern. That was Yat Soon, the arbiter. He had talked with Chinese leaders and had gained their assurance that the whisperings were not to their liking. But none had been able to give him facts concerning the Fate Joss; that was why Yat Soon worried.

He wanted the menace of the Joss removed. So did the important men with whom he had spoken. Since crime had struck, Yat Soon had cause for action; yet he was powerless to move. His one hope involved The Shadow. If the cloaked master had acquired the Fate Joss, all would be well. But Yat Soon had received no word from The Shadow since that one visit in which the arbiter had given his veiled approval of the quest for the Joss.

Seated alone in his inner room, Yat Soon observed the blinking of a signal light. It meant that a visitor had called to see the arbiter. It could not be The Shadow; for this light was sent by an outer guard. It must be some one of importance, however, for only those of recognized status were brought to Yat Soon's sanctum without preliminary announcement.

Rising from his chair, Yat Soon went to the outer reception room and closed the panel behind him. He was standing there when a beat sounded against the brazen entrance. Yat Soon pressed a switch; the front panel raised and the visitor stepped into the room. Yat Soon was faced by a Chinaman in resplendent crimson

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robes. He recognized Shan Kwan the Mandarin.

THE arbiter conducted his guest into the inner room. Solemnly, they exchanged courteous greetings. That formality ended, the pair seated themselves. Yat Soon's bland, inquiring air brought a revealing smile to Shan Kwan's lips.

"You are right, Yat Soon," declared the mandarin, solemn despite his expression. "I have come to speak concerning the Fate Joss. There are facts that you must know."

Yat Soon bowed his wish to hear more.

"I am of old China," resumed Shan Kwan. "To me, the Fate Joss holds tradition. It is right that the statue should be honored. That is why I sought to gain it. In hope of its arrival, I prepared a place where the Joss might dwell."

"Until such time when it could be returned to Jehol?"

"Exactly so, Yat Soon. My desire is to serve the Fate Joss. To do its every bidding. Its word has told me that I should give it welcome." Solemnly, Shan Kwan tapped his forehead.

"Once the Joss has honored my humble dwelling, its word will speak again. Then shall I prepare for its departure; for I am an instrument that serves it."

Shan Kwan paused. His smile had faded; his present expression was a serious one. Yat Soon saw indications of perplexities within the mandarin's mind.

"The Fate Joss relies upon human aid," affirmed Shan Kwan, "and it rewards such effort. Thus have I been taught; thus shall I always believe. Yet the Fate Joss has power of its own. Tradition states that it once returned, of its own accord, to the temple of Je Ho."

"I have heard of that tradition, Shan Kwan."

"The ancient power of the Fate Joss, however, depended upon the faith of those who believed in it. That, too, was taught to me, Yat Soon. In China, the Fate Joss controlled the destiny of men. Here in America—where few believe—its power has been limited. Events have proven that, Yat Soon."

"That, too, would be in keeping with tradition, Shan Kwan."

The mandarin nodded; his face was pleased. He was experiencing that tactful treatment which had enabled Yat Soon to gain his fame as arbiter.

"The place was prepared," resumed Shan Kwan. "The Fate Joss did not come to it; though I knew my humble abode would be welcomed by the Joss as a refuge in this strange land. I was troubled, Yat Soon, until I learned of an American who had come among the Chinese. One who knew of the Fate Joss."

"Raymond Roucard?" inquired Yat Soon.

"Yes," replied the mandarin. "He was sent to me, I listened to his words. He said that he could gain the Fate Joss for a sum of money, which I paid him."

"The sum?"

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"Many dollars. Fifty thousand."

Shan Kwan produced a folded paper and handed it to Yat Soon. It was the receipt that Roucard had given for the money. Yat Soon read the paper; then started to return it. Shan Kwan shook his head,

"It was to be destroyed," he declared. "By myself, once the Fate Joss reached me. But I do not have the Fate Joss. With you, the arbiter, I must leave this receipt. As proof of the facts that I am telling."

Yat Soon kept the paper. Shan Kwan proceeded.

"ROUCARD did not tell me from whom he meant to buy the Joss," he stated. "He went forth on his mission. I called him later at his hotel. He declared that he had paid the sum; that the Joss was already at a place called the Calumet Theater. It was my task to bring the Joss, and its War Dogs, to my abode.

"My servants are few, Yat Soon. They are men of China, who seldom leave my habitation. I sent one who spoke but little English, to seek some man who might provide him with a truck and workers. It was late; it was long before my servant could gain the conveyance which he needed. When he reached the place by the theater, the Fate Joss was not there."

Shan Kwan paused. His face was reminiscent. Slowly, he continued his story.

"I believed in Roucard," he declared. "Though the man seemed a schemer, I thought of him as an instrument of the Fate Joss. Dawn had arrived; I planned to wait until the next night, hoping that Roucard would visit me again. That day, my servant brought me a newspaper. I learned that Roucard had been slain."

Yat Soon nodded his understanding.

"Ignorant of where the Joss might be," resumed Shan Kwan, "I could do naught; another night went by. Today, the newspapers have told of Chichester Laudring's death. They say that he and his servant both spoke of having held the Fate Joss. It was to Laudring that Roucard must have gone."

"That was also stated, Shan Kwan."

"Yes, Yat Soon, in the newspaper. Moreover, the police believe, by their finding of the knives, that both Roucard and Laudring were murdered by Hoang Fu."

"Only Hoang Fu could have delivered such deaths. Hoang Fu was strong. Once his thoughts of gentleness were ended, he became a mighty killer."

Thus did Yat Soon express his belief in the police report. Shan Kwan's nod showed that he coincided. But the mandarin had another point that Yat Soon had not considered.

"What of the money?" queried Shan Kwan. "The fifty thousand dollars which I paid to Roucard? It has not been found, Yat Soon."

The arbiter pressed both hands flat upon the teakwood table that stood before him. His eyes stared at the slip of paper that lay spread between his fingers. He nodded slowly, at sight of Roucard's receipt.

"One man," declared Yat Soon, solemnly, "was given money with which to buy the Fate Joss from the other. Roucard went to Laudring one night; yet the next night, the Fate Joss was still with Laudring."

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"Perhaps Roucard did not buy. Perhaps he did buy; but Laudring did not send away the Fate Joss. Whichever may be true, the money must have remained with one man or the other. The evildoer who killed both is the one who removed the money.

"It was Hoang Fu who killed. Yet the money did not remain with him; for the police would have found it when they saw Hoang Fu dead at Laudring's. The money, therefore, had been with Roucard. His words to you—by telephone—were lies, Shan Kwan."

"YOU have spoken wisely, Yat Soon," nodded the mandarin. "Yet in the newspapers I have read that the servant of Laudring did swear that the Fate Joss had once been taken away. It had returned, only to be gone again."

"By some pretext," decided Yat Soon, "or by some promise, the man Roucard may have caused the man Laudring to yield the Fate Joss. He may have spoken truth concerning that matter."

"Yet the Joss was not where Roucard said —"

"Because others may have found it there. Others who carried it back to the house of Laudring; to hide it where neither Laudring nor Roucard would expect again to find it. To keep it in a place whereof you knew naught, Shan Kwan."

The mandarin was impressed by the arbiter's keen discernment of these hidden facts. Hopefully, he listened while Yat Soon spoke further.

"Upon the one who sent Hoang Fu to deliver death," declared Yat Soon, "upon that one lies blame of crime. With him will be found those funds of which you have informed me; the money which Hoang Fu stole from Roucard.

"To me, the arbiter, belongs the power to mete justice only when claim of wrong has been brought by one who recognizes my position. You have come here with such claim, Shan Kwan. I shall seek the man whose way is evil."

"It has come to my ears," acknowledged Shan Kwan, "that Hoang Fu, the mighty, was servant to one called Doctor Roy Tam."

"So have I heard," assured Yat Soon. "But the place where Doctor Tam dwells remains unknown to me. Doctor Tam has left the paths of the Chinese. He does not acknowledge my decisions. I had no quarrel with him because he made that choice; but since his ways are those of crime, I shall seek him, to compel his speech.

"Should he possess the Fate Joss, I shall take it from him. Before me, your claim will be heard, Shan Kwan, with the answer that Doctor Tam may offer. Yet you must hope not for a decision on the morrow, nor the next day after it. Moons may pass before I can bring Doctor Tam hither."

Worriment showed on Shan Kwan's features. In encouraging tones, Yat Soon added:

"Of those others who lay dead with Hoang Fu, one was Chang Look, who also served Doctor Tam. The others were unknown to me, as would be many who belonged to Doctor Tam. The search shall begin, Shan Kwan; but it will not be finished early."

Shan Kwan considered; then spoke.

"There is a way, Yat Soon," said the mandarin, "whereby someone who is close to Doctor Tam might well be reached. I hold the key to that way. If I may use it —"

"You may do as you see best," interposed the arbiter. "The claim is yours, Shan Kwan. Those who serve Doctor Tam are not among those who recognize my judgment. While I seek paths, you may do likewise."

Shan Kwan arose. With a profound bow, the resplendent mandarin acknowledged his thanks of Yat Soon's favor. His face, though solemn, showed pleasure as Yat Soon conducted him out through the reception chamber.

Just claim had been made, with evidence. Yat Soon, the arbiter of Chinatown, had been stirred to action by the statements of Shan Kwan the Mandarin. Doctor Roy Tam, though he did not hold the Fate Joss, would soon be sought to answer for the crimes of his dead servant, Hoang Fu.

CHAPTER XII. THE CRAFT OF DOCTOR TAM

WHILE Yat Soon, the arbiter, was still pondering on the facts presented by the mandarin, Shan Kwan, two men were guarding the Fate Joss in its obscure abode. Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland, on duty since six o'clock, were together in that little side room that adjoined the abandoned garage.

The evening was still young. As The Shadow's agents kept vigil, they chatted. At times, their talk concerned the Fate Joss. That subject came up suddenly after a lull in conversation. Harry Vincent mentioned it after noticing an item in the final edition of an evening newspaper that he had purchased before coming here.

"Look at this, Cliff!" Harry pointed to a paragraph. "The police have been getting all sorts of rumors about that Chinese truck. Half a dozen persons have reported that they saw a truck last night. Some say Chinese were aboard; others were not sure. But they all talk of a truck near Laudring's."

"What of it?" queried Cliff. "There might have been a hundred suspicious looking trucks along the avenue last night. We passed a bunch when we were bringing in the Fate Joss."

"Not trucks on side streets, Cliff. Of course these reports are exaggerated. The way they read, you'd think that half of Chinatown had gone into the trucking business. These people who talked to the police may have been mistaken as to the time they saw a truck. But I'm wondering —"

"If somebody spotted our truck coming away from that street in back of Laudring's?"

"You've guessed it, Cliff. It may mean trouble if the police begin checking up on trucks at different garages."

"That's possible, Harry. Still—the Howland Garage is thirty blocks south of Laudring's. That truck we used is —"

Cliff stopped. The telephone was ringing. Harry answered it. Cliff heard him talk in brief, affirmative phrases. The call completed, Harry eyed Cliff solemnly.

"It was Burbank," stated Harry. "The police are starting a check-up on trucks. They figure there was more than one up at Laudring's. Clyde Burke must have gotten that dope at headquarters."

"Any instructions?" queried Cliff.

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"Yes," returned Harry. "We're to leave here as soon as my coupe comes in. We'll go to the Howland Garage and get the truck. But it's to be done openly, so there'll be no suspicion."

"Where are we taking it?"

"Up to Scranton, Pennsylvania, to deliver it to a garage there. The truck has been sold to some coal mining outfit. We'll come back by train, tomorrow afternoon."

"Won't the garage wonder about the truck going out again? The Howland Garage, I mean?"

"No. That's the neat part about it, Cliff. The Howland Garage has received a letter from the supposed owner of the truck, telling them to deliver it to Mr. Dyke, who will call, carrying the owner's license. Dyke is to take the truck to Scranton, where he will wire back after he arrives."

"Back to the Howland Garage?"

"Yes. So the supposed owner—a Mr. Middleton—can call up the Howland Garage and learn if the truck reached Scranton safely."

"And you'll be Dyke. Is that it, Harry?"

"That's it, Cliff. Give me those license cards that you used when you took the truck out last night."

Cliff grinned as he passed over the cards. The plan pleased him because of its openness. It would be Harry's first visit to the Howland Garage. The people there would suspect nothing concerning a truck like this one. Nor would the police, should they learn of it.

The law would be looking for trucks that were secretly removed. This truck, its coming trip fully accounted for, would be passed by in the search. Particularly after the Howland Garage received a wire from "Dyke," stating that he had delivered it in the proper Scranton garage.

WHILE Cliff still chuckled, the sound of a motor purred softly from beyond the door. Harry extinguished the light; the two went out into the storage room. Harry's coupe had arrived; its driver had slid open the outer door without betraying noise.

Both agents saw the outline of the car in the darkness and guessed the identity of the driver who still sat within it. They knew that The Shadow had come to watch the Fate Joss.

The two agents departed, locking the outer door behind them. Darkness stirred within the coupe. The Shadow stepped from the car which he had temporarily taken over for his own use. He glided to the back of the coupe; his flashlight glimmered, showing a large black box which he removed from the rumble seat.

The box was oblong in shape; it had been carefully wedged in place so that it would not shift with the motion of the car. Carrying the long box, The Shadow blinked his flashlight as he progressed toward the inner storage room.

He reached the abode of the Fate Joss. His flashlight focused on the great idol; then the gleam turned to one of the War Dogs. The light blinked toward the second cannon; then went out. With a whispered laugh, The Shadow began to open the oblong box in darkness.

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Since Harry and Cliff had gone off duty, Hawkeye and Jericho must be given time for rest. Their vigil would begin again at midnight and continue until Harry and Cliff returned from Scranton, tomorrow night. Yet, in addition to his evening watch, The Shadow had found some task to occupy him in the abode of the Fate Joss. The oblong box was testimony to that fact.

SOME fifteen minutes after their departure, Harry and Cliff arrived at the Howland Garage. This was a fair-sized storage building, a half block east of the avenue which Cliff had used in his drive to Laudring's. The garage fronted on a narrow street that permitted westbound traffic only.

Cliff stayed near the corner while Harry went to the garage. Entering the broad door, Harry noted that the floor was practically deserted. Back in a far corner he saw the truck he wanted; but he did not go in that direction. Instead, Harry stepped into a little front office and sat down.

Five minutes passed. A garage superintendent entered the office and eyed Harry. The Shadow's agent introduced himself as Dyke and presented his credentials. The garage man nodded when he saw the licenses. He picked up a letter that was lying on the desk.

"This came from Mr. Middleton," he said; "He told me you'd be coming here, Dyke. You're to take the truck to Scranton and leave it at the West Side Garage. Send me a wire when you arrive there. That's all; you'll find the truck at the back of this floor."

Outside, a small coupe was parked on the left side of the westward street, directly opposite the lighted office of the garage. Within the car were two observers, whose faces showed yellowish in the tiny glow of the dashlight. The man beside the driver spoke.

"It is the man, Doctor Tam. The same one that I saw when I called you from the drug store."

"You are sure of it, Satsu?" came the purred response.

"I am certain, Doctor Tam. Look—he is reading the letter that the garage man has shown him. The letter which I saw twenty minutes ago, when I went unseen into that office."

"I commend you, Satsu. You did well when you overheard that man speak of somewhere thirty blocks south."

"Is was you, Doctor Tam, who guessed that he might mean a garage. Look—the man is going for the truck."

"That is well. Tuan and Leng have followed the order which I gave them when you told me of the letter. Like you, Satsu, they were fortunate in finding no one present when they entered the garage."

Doctor Tam started the motor of his car. While the engine throbbed, a roar came from the garage. The truck appeared, with Harry Vincent at the wheel. It swung westward and stopped to pick up Cliff Marsland, who clambered aboard the front seat. The truck crossed the avenue; Doctor Tam started the coupe on its trail.

ROLLING along the side street, Harry spoke to Cliff. He told his companion that the garage man had suspected nothing. The Middleton to Dyke transfer had been accepted as an item of ordinary business. As Harry talked, he neared the next avenue. A stop light was glowing red beneath an elevated structure. Harry applied the brakes.

As the truck came to a standstill, two figures arose from behind the wide front seat. Clutching yellow hands thrust forward from the darkened interior. One pair of claws gripped Harry's throat; the other pair tightened about Cliff's neck.

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Fiercely, The Shadow's agents struggled; they could not wrest away those clutching hands that yanked them backward. Over the low seat, into the darkness of the truck; there they writhed as they fought with their assailants. Tuan and Leng, secreted in the truck, were the men with whom Harry and Cliff struggled.

The Chinese were skillful fighters. Wiry and powerful, they had gained an advantage at the start. Each was choking his victim into submission; yet The Shadow's agents rallied against the odds. Twisting, Harry pushed Tuan to the floor, while Cliff made a fierce yank to free himself from Leng.

Then came two new attackers, piling across the front seat. Doctor Tam and Satsu had stopped in front of the truck. Coming fresh into the fray, they stopped the rally. Flattened beneath four fierce assailants, Cliff and Harry were lashed with ready thongs. Half choked, they could give no outcry before gags were stuffed into their mouths.

Tuan and Leng took the front seat. Doctor Tam and Satsu returned to their coupe. The traffic light had changed to green; then back to red, but no interrupting traffic had come along this little-used thoroughfare. Doctor Tam waited for the green, then started off toward Chinatown.

They reached the little street by the tea shop and the truck was backed against the curb. Doctor Tam superintended the removal of the prisoners. The Chinaman in the tea shop opened the door that led through the rear shipping room. Others, upstairs, aided in carrying the captives through Doctor Tam's office, off through a labyrinth of passages in an empty house at the rear.

DOCTOR TAM remained in his office. With him was Satsu, who had been relieved as burden carrier. Also present was one other: Noy Dow, the Chinese student. The bespectacled young Chinaman had been in the office when Tam and the others entered.

"It is wise," declared Doctor Tam in a low, hissed undertone, "that the mission of those prisoners be completed. Soon the police may be stopping many trucks that leave the city. Time is precious at this moment.

"There is no one, Noy Dow, to whom I can entrust the task. None save yourself. I have the cards brought by the man who calls himself Dyke"—Tam was turning to Satsu as he spoke—"and I shall drive the truck to Scranton. You shall come with me, Satsu.

"To you, Hoy Dow, I entrust the keeping of the prisoners. See to their wants; but speak no words of comfort. The caged bird longs for the open; finding it not, he becomes tame. So it shall be with those men whom we have captured.

"Hours might fail to urge them should I demand their speech at present. After my return, minutes alone may suffice. Moreover, when I tell them that their mission has been completed, they will weaken, fearing that their master can never learn of their plight."

With such philosophy completed, Doctor Roy Tam turned from the office. Satsu, a grin upon his face, was prompt to follow the departing physician. Alone, Noy Dow seated himself behind the desk. He waited until the troop of Chinese underlings reappeared. Four men stood ready to accept the secretary's command.

"You may depart, Tuan," declared Noy Dow. "You likewise, Leng." Then, to the others: "You, Fong and Wook, shall take Doctor Tam's car to the parking place where it belongs. He and Satsu have gone away in the truck."

Perplexed looks showed that the four men were puzzled because none were required as guards. Noy Dow explained.

"None can enter through the tea shop where our watcher waits," he stated. "Nor can any enter through the Hunan Cafe; for I shall descend thither and remain there. None will be needed here. Our captured guests can remain alone until the morrow; that is the time when all of you must return."

Noy Dow watched the four minions depart. Alone, he gripped the telephone that rested beside him on the oak desk. His fingers were quick but nervous as they dialed a number. A voice responded; Noy Dow spoke in guarded but high-pitched Chinese.

His conversation ended, Noy Dow left the office and descended by the stairway toward the avenue. He opened a panel at the bottom and stepped into an alcove, from which he passed into a secluded portion of the second-story Hunan Cafe.

Agents of The Shadow had been trapped. Doctor Roy Tam, their clever captor, had departed with Satsu to fulfill the task given Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland. Doctor Tam had learned their orders; he would dispatch the required telegram from Scranton to the Howland Garage. Burbank, phoning there as Middleton, would think that all was well. The Shadow would not know, before tomorrow night, that his aids were prisoners.

Such was the craft of Doctor Roy Tam. Though he preferred the ways of America, the Chinese physician still used the cunning of his native race. His secret headquarters unknown even to Yat Soon, Doctor Tam had left with the belief that his schemes were safe. Though his purpose was to gain the Fate Joss, he had deliberately decided to wait before he questioned the two men who knew where the idol had been taken.

Doctor Tam had given his shrewd reason for such delay. He believed that when time had passed, his cause would be more secure. He was confident that no one could counteract his moves. In that one assumption, Doctor Tam was wrong.

Soon a countermove would come from an unexpected quarter. It would be a stroke that Doctor Tam had no reason to expect. For its instrument was to be the man he trusted most—the Chinese student, Noy Dow!

CHAPTER XIII. BROUGHT FROM BONDAGE

"HOW long have we been here, Harry?"

"A couple of hours, I guess. I could tell you better, Cliff, if I could get a look at my watch."

"Same here, Harry. I wound mine just before we started."

"So did I. I noticed it was nine o'clock when —"

"Psst! Easy, Harry! There maybe snoopers! The less we say, the better. About certain matters."

"A good point, Cliff. Let's forget the past and stick to talk of the future."

"The future looks black, Harry."

Both men chuckled. Despite their plight, they found Cliff's prediction a humorous one. For the two prisoners were surrounded by an inky darkness that betokened windowless walls and a thick door.

Gags had been removed; but both captives were still bound. The thongs had loosened slightly; but offered no

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more slack. Any effort to tug at the bonds brought cutting resistance to wrists and ankles.

Lying on straw mats upon the floor of the pitch-black room, Cliff and Harry found comfort only in shifting their positions from side to side. While they talked, they lay on their backs; but that position soon became uncomfortable, as it placed too much pressure on their bound wrists.

"I've been figuring something, Cliff," remarked Harry, rolling on one side to speak directly to his companion. "That one fellow must have been Satsu, the Korean who slipped the police. If he –"

"Stick to the future, Harry," interrupted Cliff. "I've been thinking about the truck. I'll bet it's on the way without us."

"You think the head man of these bandits took it along?"

"Why not? His strong-arm boys were in the truck, weren't they? It's easy enough to guess that they wised up to where we were going."

"You're right, Cliff. That letter was lying in the office of the Howland Garage. Right on the desk –"

"Psst! Harry—listen –"

Footsteps were barely audible, apparently they came from beyond a door. Both men became silent; they heard a key click in a lock. A puff of air followed; but no illumination. Next, the door closed. Slight footsteps, whisperings, told that two persons had entered the inky-black room.

Tense moments; then the clicking sound of the chain on a hanging lamp. An instant later, a single bulb brought startling light that made both prisoners blink. Hazily, Harry and Cliff saw that the room was square-walled and windowless. Then they focussed their attention on those who had entered.

ONE was Noy Dow. He was recognizable, for he had been in the office when Cliff and Harry were carried through. The other was a young woman, and the light revealed her as an amazing beauty. Though clad in American clothes, the girl had all the semblance of an Oriental. Her charm was dazzling, for this was none other than Loy Ming, the niece of the mandarin, Shan Kwan.

Noy Dow was speaking to Loy Ming. His words were in Chinese; the prisoners saw the girl nod, then heard her speak in calm reply. Noy Dow became sober; his words were troubled. The girl laid a tiny hand upon the secretary's arm and spoke in pleading tones. At last, Noy Dow sighed; then nodded.

Turning to the prisoners, he made an urging gesture with his hands. Understanding, Harry and Cliff managed to work themselves backward and reach seated positions, leaning against the wall. Reverting to English, which he spoke without an accent, Noy Dow introduced himself.

"My name," he stated, "is Noy Dow. I am the secretary of Doctor Roy Tam. He is the man who captured you and brought you here. He performed that deed because he seeks the Fate Joss."

No reply from The Shadow's agents. Noy Dow seemed unperturbed as he resumed.

"Doctor Tam has left you in my charge" he explained. "He wishes to hold you prisoners, that he may question you, upon his return tomorrow night. I have long served Doctor Tam. Yet I am willing to aid you, at the request of this lady. She is Loy Ming, the niece of the mandarin, Shan Kwan."

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Neither of these names were familiar to the listening prisoners. Noting that fact, Noy Dow uttered more.

"Shan Kwan is honorable," he stated. "He also sought the Fate Joss; but for it, he paid a price. His money was taken from the man to whom he paid it. Taken by Hoang Fu, the mighty killer, who had long been one of those who served Doctor Tam.

"Tonight, Loy Ming called me, to tell me of the evil that Doctor Tam had done. She asked me to serve her uncle, Shan Kwan. When you were brought here prisoners, I called Loy Ming. She told your story to her uncle. He is concerned because of your plight."

This time Noy Dow made a longer pause; Harry decided to speak.

"THE mandarin wants to aid us?" he questioned.

"He does," nodded Noy Dow, while Loy Ming, understanding English, added her affirmation. "Though he knows not who you are, he favors your cause because he knows that Doctor Tam is evil. Shan Kwan wishes that you be brought to his presence."

"As prisoners?" questioned Cliff, abruptly.

"As guests," replied Noy Dow, emphatically. "To talk with him; yet without obligation. To tell him only those facts which you feel free to state. He promises that if you come to him, you will be allowed to leave whenever you may wish. He desires only that you do the courtesy of speaking with him, in his own abode."

Cliff looked at Harry, who nodded.

"Sounds fair enough," said Harry, "Much better than this present set-up."

"Suits me," returned Cliff. "I'd rather be some place where we're invited than remain here."

"All right, Noy Dow," decided Harry. "Cut us loose. We'll make the journey."

Noy Dow shook his head; his lips trembled, troubled.

"It is not so easy as that," he declared. "To serve Shan Kwan best, I must remain with Doctor Tam. Therefore, I must arrange to have Doctor Tam believe that you escaped without my knowledge. He must think that through some scheming of your own, you left this prison.

"There is a guard who must be passed. The one who dwells in the tea shop through which you were brought here. You must be carried by him. That can not be arranged until morning. However, your place of waiting shall be changed.

"You will dwell in tea boxes in the storeroom. In the morning, at an early hour, men will come to take away a shipment. They will arrive long before those who are the actual purchasers of the tea. Thus shall you both be carried to the residence of Shan Kwan."

Noy Dow paused; Harry was about to put a question when Loy Ming spoke a reminder in Chinese. Noy Dow nodded as he heard the girl's words. He translated her expression.

"Shan Kwan has promised that you will be his guests," he explained, "but he must have assurance that you come to him. He can assume no risk until then; nor can I. Therefore, you must sleep while time passes

between now and morning."

Loy Ming produced two tiny bottles and handed them to Noy Dow. Cliff darted a look at Harry, who frowned, doubtfully.

Seeing their expressions, Noy Dow stood by to let the prisoners talk between themselves.

"Dope," suggested Cliff, indicating the bottles with his head. "What about it, Harry? What is your feeling?"

"It's not poison," returned Harry, managing a shrug of his shoulders. "If these friends of ours want to do away with us, they wouldn't have to talk us into it."

"I agree with you," said Cliff, with a smile. "Well, Harry there's merit in the suggestion. We can't ask these people to let us loose. They would have no guarantee against our making a break for it."

"And we can't sleep while we're tied up like this, Cliff. Those green bottles don't look so bad."

"You have my promise," asserted Noy Dow, "my word that these draughts will be harmless. I would be glad to trust you, gentlemen; but remember, time passes slowly within the confines of a tea box."

"Should you stir about within the chests; should you sleep and mumble the guard outside might hear. Sometimes when midnight comes, he retires within the storeroom and sleeps there, behind a locked door. He will be close at hand, perhaps awake to hear any disturbing sound."

"You are talking sensibly, Noy Dow," decided Harry, with an approving nod. "I'll take my medicine. Are you ready for your dose?"

The question was put to Cliff, who nodded. Noy Dow gave one bottle to Loy Ming. Simultaneously both uncorked the greenish phials. Noy Dow approached and placed a bottle to Cliff's lips. Loy Ming did the same with Harry. Both men drank together.

THE effect of the concoction was immediate. Cliff looked at Harry and blinked in exhilaration. The liquid did not burn, nor was its taste unpleasant; but it brought a stimulation that gave each man a feeling that he could break the thongs that held him. Instinctively, they struggled; but the bonds held.

A minute went by; the effect of the stimulant passed. Cliff sagged back, exhausted; Harry did the same. Both felt a slight dizziness; Noy Dow observed it and approached. He drew a large-bladed pocketknife and cut the thongs that held the ankles of the prisoners.

Noy Dow and Loy Ming helped the men to their feet. Cliff managed to steady and find his balance. Harry nearly toppled, but Noy Dow gripped him until his dizziness ended. He put a question:

"How do you feel now?"

"Pretty tired," acknowledged Cliff. "That stuff hits quickly. I'm getting groggy already!"

"Sleepy," added Harry. "All that strength is fading."

"We must hurry." Quickly, Noy Dow cut the wrist bonds and gave the prisoners full release. "Follow Loy Ming. Keep steady."

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The girl had opened the door. She was blinking a flashlight, leading the way along a passage. Cliff came to motion; the activity roused him somewhat and he followed. Harry came close behind him, while Noy Dow extinguished the light of the prison room and brought up the rear of the procession.

Loy Ming reached the open panel of Doctor Tam's office. She stepped through and waited until Harry and Cliff arrived. Both were moving steadily, but their steps were slow and deliberate. A feeling of sleepiness was becoming paramount with the released prisoners.

Noy Dow arrived and nodded as he noted the increasing stupor of The Shadow's agents. Loy Ming opened the door beyond and led the way down stairs. Gripping the rail, Cliff and Harry followed with careful, slow-moving steps. Thus they arrived, Noy Dow behind them, in the storeroom behind the tea shop.

Both were wavering. Noy Dow hurried silently to a pair of large, square tea chests. He opened the lids and gripped Harry, who was the closer of the pair.

Managing a high step Harry entered the box; then sank wearily to the bottom. He relaxed without a sigh, shifting comfortably with arms and legs limp.

Noy Dow and Loy Ming guided Cliff into the second chest. Their combined efforts were necessary to help him settle silently. Noy Dow carefully closed the lids and padlocked them. He gave the keys to Loy Ming. He pointed to tiny air-holes drilled in the sides of the cubical boxes. These were scarcely noticeable; but they provided sufficient air for the men within.

SILENTLY, Noy Dow motioned to the stairs. Loy Ming ascended; from the third floor, the pair went down to the second. But this time, they chose the way to the restaurant. In Chinese, Noy Dow told the girl to make her departure; then he added:

"I shall call Fong, to tell him that he must guard this entrance to the Hunan Cafe, while I remain within the office. He will never know that you came here and departed, Loy Ming."

Noy Dow opened the panel so that the girl could go out through the cafe.

In the dim light Loy Ming paused and sighed. Noy Dow embraced the Chinese girl and gave her a farewell kiss. When she had gone past the panel, he closed the barrier; then delivered a sigh of his own.

Noy Dow, the secretary of Doctor Tam, was in love with Loy Ming, the niece of Shan Kwan. Through knowledge of that fact, the mandarin had offset the craft of the wary physician. Wisely had Shan Kwan spoken when he had told Yat Soon that he held the key through which Doctor Roy Tam could be reached!

Though The Shadow had not yet learned that his agents had been captured, the prisoners were already as good as free from the toils of Doctor Roy Tam. When he returned tomorrow to question Harry and Cliff, the shrewd Chinese physician would find his captives flown.

Comfort and sleep were theirs for the rest of the present night. On the morrow, they would awake refreshed, to enjoy the luxurious hospitality that guests received in the home of Shan Kwan the Mandarin.

Strange and bizarre were the experience of those who sought to play a part in the destiny of the mighty Fate Joss from Jehol!

CHAPTER XIV. THE LOOKOUT POST

IT was approximately midnight when Noy Dow and Loy Ming had completed the arrangements that insured the departure of the prisoners from Doctor Tam's. At the same hour, The Shadow was ready to fare forth from the hiding place where he kept the Fate Joss.

Sounds from the outer room of the old garage had told him that Hawkeye and Jericho had arrived to begin a long watch. The Shadow, blinking his flashlight, made a final survey of the Fate Joss and the War Dogs.

Stooping by one of the squatty cannons, The Shadow examined the plug within the muzzle. He did the same with the second weapon. Extinguishing his light, he departed silently through the darkness. He left Harry Vincent's coupe parked where it was. Unlocking the outer door, The Shadow blended with darkness.

Soon after that, a light gleamed in The Shadow's sanctum. Reaching for earphones, The Shadow formed contact with Burbank. He gave brief commands.

"Instructions to Hawkeye," stated The Shadow. "He and Jericho to take quarters in the room with the Joss. To remain there until notified that Vincent and Marsland are ready to relieve them."

"Instructions received," came Burbank's response.

"Emergency precautions have been arranged," added The Shadow. "Give Hawkeye full details of steps to take in case of an attack, in accordance with instructions that you have already received."

An affirmative response from Burbank. The light clicked off. The Shadow departed from his sanctum. There was time, even yet, for a visit to another place. The Shadow was on his way to see Yat Soon, the arbiter.

TEEMING Chinatown still glimmered, even after the midnight hour. Gawking tourists strolled past buzzing clusters of Orientals. Uniformed police maintained their reinforced patrol. The Shadow, however, skirted the thicker regions. Using every device to avoid spying eyes, he reached the entrance that led into Yat Soon's. Once past the portal, The Shadow threaded his way to the arbiter's reception room.

Yat Soon received him in the inner chamber. Greetings exchanged, the arbiter studied The Shadow with inquiring eye. Then Yat Soon spoke.

"Of the Fate Joss I know naught," remarked Yat Soon, cryptically. "My hope, honored friend, is that the idol is held by good hands. Should such be the case, I do not need to know. I, the arbiter, am sometimes forced to speak when I am questioned. What I, Yat Soon, have not heard, I do not have to tell to any one."

The inference was plain. Yat Soon had decided that it was best for him to remain unacquainted with The Shadow's actions. Such was the arbiter's confidence in his black-clad visitor.

"I have learned, however," resumed Yat Soon, "that two have sought the Fate Joss, One has come to me, with a just claim. He brought me this, did Shan Kwan the Mandarin."

Yat Soon passed Roucard's receipt to The Shadow. The cloaked visitor spoke in Chinese; Yat Soon nodded his affirmation. The Shadow, too, was suggesting that Hoang Fu had taken the money from Roucard.

"Such is my belief," stated Yat Soon.

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Again, The Shadow spoke. The arbiter's eyes opened wide. He was learning, from The Shadow's lips, that Roucard had held the fifty thousand dollars. He was hearing the details of The Shadow's first struggle with Hoang Fu.

Then came new details: those of The Shadow's fight at Laudring's. Once more Yat Soon nodded, as he heard of the attack which had finally resulted in the death of the Chinese giant.

"Hoang Fu was evil," decided Yat Soon. "His death was a deserved one. I, Yat Soon, have spoken."

The Shadow made no further statement. Of the Fate Joss, he had said nothing. Yat Soon smiled wisely; then his sage face sobered. He spoke in English.

"Hoang Fu was the servant of one Doctor Tam," he declared. "That fact was known to Shan Kwan; it was known to me, as well. There are many who have served Doctor Tam. All have chosen—by serving him—to forget the ways of China. Of those others, slain on the night when Hoang Fu died, some are known to have served Doctor Tam.

"My task is to find Doctor Tam; to learn of his abode; to be ready to call upon him for speech, in answer to the claim of Shan Kwan the Mandarin. Yet Doctor Tam, in forsaking the ways of his native land, has chosen not to recognize the authority that I, Yat Soon, possess.

"Should I send a servant to Doctor Tam, nothing could be gained. Doctor Tam would not listen to the messenger of Yat Soon. Yet Doctor Tam must be reached—by some one to whom he will speak."

YAT SOON'S eyes were steady. His suggestion carried the inference that he would welcome The Shadow's aid. After a momentary pause, Yat Soon added:

"The one who will seek Doctor Tam shall have my aid. Yet that seeker will be allowed to act as he may choose. He may delay his visit to Doctor Tam until such time as he may deem best."

There was depth to Yat Soon's statement. The arbiter had guessed that The Shadow might be holding the Fate Joss, intending to dispose of it. If such were the case, Yat Soon decided, The Shadow might wish to wait until the shipment had been made, before attempting a move against any one concerned in crime that involved the idol.

Yat Soon's guess was a good one. It fitted with The Shadow's actual plans. Therefore, it brought a question, uttered in Chinese, that indicated The Shadow's willingness to cooperate with the arbiter. Yat Soon nodded as he heard The Shadow speak; then replied:

"You have asked how I, Yat Soon, can be aided, since I do not know the abode of Doctor Tam. I shall answer by telling of something that I have learned, within the hours since Shan Kwan the Mandarin did leave my presence.

"I have learned that Doctor Tam was seen on two nights, passing through the quiet street whereon the empty curio shop of Kao Dwin is located. It was Kao Dwin who saw Doctor Tam. For Kao Dwin, since he has closed his business, has been in my employ.

"I sent for Kao Dwin, in hope that he might tell me news. I was fortunate to learn what he had seen. Tonight, at this very hour, Kao Dwin is in his empty shop. From behind its windows, he is watching the street.

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"I have told Kao Dwin that another may soon join him, bearing a token from myself, Yat Soon. Should you choose to watch with Kao Dwin, that token shall be yours."

The Shadow spoke agreement. Yat Soon bowed. He opened a panel and showed a large closet filled with clothes of American and Chinese pattern. He pointed to a dressing table, where wigs and make-up box were ready. Leaving The Shadow, Yat Soon went to the outer room and closed the portal behind him.

A DOZEN minutes later, The Shadow stepped from Yat Soon's inner room. He was no longer cloaked in black. Instead, he was wearing dark trousers of an American cut, with a loose tunic of Chinese style. Over this, he had a large jacket; his features, fully in view, were those of a Chinese.

Yat Soon blinked at the excellence of the make-up. He noted a hawk-like characteristic of the yellowed face before him; yet The Shadow's expression was so bland and solemn that it offset any American resemblance. The wig that The Shadow wore seemed part of his own head. When he donned an old felt hat, he looked like a typical resident of the Chinese quarter.

The Shadow was carrying a bag. He handed it to Yat Soon, who nodded and spoke.

"It is wise," declared the arbiter, "that Kao Dwin should come for this. Kao Dwin is known to those of Chinatown. None would be suspicious seeing him leave the abode of Yat Soon. None would be so unwise to follow or molest Yat Soon's servant.

"One who is unknown must be cautious." Yat Soon's tone was significant as he eyed The Shadow. "As one unknown, you must leave this place as secretly as you came. Here is your token,"—he handed The Shadow a curious signet ring that bore a Chinese character—"and with it, you can meet Kao Dwin. The rear door of his closed shop is open. Enter there; when challenged, speak the name of Yat Soon; then show the token."

Yat Soon pressed a switch; a panel opened in the outer wall. The Shadow left by this exit and chose a threading course that led him to the street. His course did not lead him through the entrance by which he had come to see Yat Soon. Instead, it brought him to a guarded portal that was opened by a solemn, bowing Mongol.

Stepping from a short blind alley, The Shadow joined Chinamen who were passing back and forth along the street. He was not far from the chief corner of Mott and Pell; he avoided that crossing and picked a less frequented thoroughfare. Yet in his brief passage, The Shadow had noted the sidelong looks of various Chinese.

Rumor was rife here in Chinatown. Many eyes were suspicious; and although none took The Shadow for other than a Chinaman, there were those who picked him as a stranger. As on that night when Raymond Roucard had left Shan Kwan's, there were men of this quarter who studied the yellow face of the stranger from Yat Soon's.

High-pitched voices babbled from a group that The Shadow passed. Men were in argument; their words—even to one who knew Chinese—seemed insignificant. Yet that short outcry could well have been a signal for men beyond. The Shadow heard the dispute; turning into a narrow darkened street, he crossed his hands against his tunic and lowered his head.

Both actions were typical of a Chinaman; The Shadow used them to render his way obscure. Yet even with such natural action, he was at a disadvantage in his present garb. His course became shifty; but not elusive, as it would have been had he retained his cloak of black.

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Changing pace: first quick, then slow, The Shadow trekked along the gloomy street. He saw shady figures passing; others loitering. He reached the entrance of an alleyway. There he paused suddenly; then performed a sudden, twisting leap that carried him backward and half across the street.

The quick move was timely. From a forward-springing form had come an upswung arm. A long knife slithered through the haze. Its whizzing blade skimmed inches wide of its mark—that Chinese figure that was The Shadow. An assassin had thrust from darkness, only to miss.

AS the blade point clashed against a brick wall, The Shadow whirled about. His yellow-stained hands flashed out from beneath his jacket. His turn around was another timely move. A trio of murderous Chinese were springing from a doorway, with knives in hand that they hoped to drive into the back of the man whom their fellow thug had missed.

Close together, these rogues kept tight grip on their dirks, intending to down their victim by a mass attack. A dozen feet separated them from The Shadow; they were hissing their belief of triumph as they plunged forward. But they were met by stabs that came quicker than any knife thrust.

Automatics boomed a greeting. Tongues of flame were withering. One attacker staggered; his cry told that he had been clipped. The second sprawled headlong at The Shadow's feet. The third surged on, despite the close-ranged blast that should have stopped him. He thrust his knife mechanically; but The Shadow sidestepped the stroke. The Chinaman's hurtling body rammed The Shadow's shoulder. Both rolled to the curb.

The knife-flinger from the alley had drawn another blade. As he poised to hurl it, an automatic flashed quick shots from the paving. Wildly, the would-be assassin dived back into the alley. Though The Shadow had gained no time for proper aim, his bullets made the foe show preference for flight.

The man who had staggered was scrambling away along the street, clutching a wounded arm. The one who had fallen at The Shadow's feet was motionless; he had driven too deep into the barrage from The Shadow's guns. The third man, though he had taken greater brunt, was still stirring as The Shadow rose. Mortally wounded, the fellow was babbling phrases in Chinese.

Stooping, The Shadow stared into glassy eyes. He made sharp queries; his fierce gaze forced answers from the dying assassin's lips. Choppy though the sentences were, The Shadow caught odd words from the babble. He demanded further utterance. The Chinaman's eyes narrowed; his lips tightened.

The police whistles were shrilling. Shouts were coming from the ends of the street. Yet The Shadow persisted in his effort to make the Chinaman talk. Glazed eyes opened. Weakly, wearily, the foeman talked, as if his resistance had fully sagged. The Shadow had demanded his identity. This time the Chinaman spoke in English.

"Toian!" he gasped his name. "Me—Toian! Toian Soi! Doctor tell me – tell me to come here. Doctor Tam—Doctor Roy Tam –"

Nightsticks were clattering on sidewalks. Bluecoats, having signaled their companions, were charging into the gloomy street. Now whistles were shrilling; footsteps were pounding closer, on the run. Toian Soi could gasp no longer. His lips had straightened, closed forever.

Rising, The Shadow sprang away from the man's body. A gleaming flashlight showed his yellowed face. Arriving police gave shouts for him to stop. Instead, The Shadow dashed across the street, into the alley opposite. Revolvers barked; their fire came too late to stop that fleeing figure.

HOURS later, patrolmen still made search of this terrain. The pals of Toian Soi had escaped before their advent; they were looking only for a tall, limber Chinaman who had escaped their closing cordon. They believed that he, too, must be a member of the band.

The police found no sign of their quarry, even though they patrolled far and searched in many places. Some of them passed through the street in front of Kao Dwin's closed curio shop. It was there that the one they sought saw them, without their knowledge.

The Shadow had completed his journey, unchallenged and unfollowed. Through the slits of closed windows, he was keeping vigil with Kao Dwin, waiting for the law to end its futile search. For The Shadow believed it possible that another was lingering also, ready to enter that street once the police were gone.

The Shadow was on the lookout for Doctor Roy Tam. He was maintaining vigil for the very man who had trapped his agents, even though he did not yet know of the part that Doctor Tam had played. In a sense, however, the game had been evened. Doctor Tam, still absent, remained unaware that his prisoners were gone.

The Shadow, as the hunter, was watching for a secret trapper who had already lost his prey!

CHAPTER XV. THE MANDARIN'S GUESTS

HARRY VINCENT opened his eyes and blinked in bewilderment. He was conscious of strange surroundings and the scene seemed hazy. Walls of red and gold vied in visual conflict beneath mellow light. Staring across the room, Harry saw Cliff Marsland stirring upon a couch. Cliff, too, was waking.

Glancing about amid the subdued glow, Harry found his thoughts reverting to last night's episode. He remembered the capture at the hands of Doctor Roy Tam; he recalled the matted floor of the pitch-dark room. Then he recollected the advent of Noy Dow and Loy Ming; the light that the man had turned on to reveal a barren room.

Could this be the same place, transformed? This room was square; but its walls were gayly colored. It had no windows; only a single door, yet that was faced with brass instead of wood. The floor was thickly tufted, not bare except for mats which served as resting places. As for the mats themselves, they had changed into luxurious couches, one for each of the two occupants.

That slow walk to the tea chests; the sleep oblivion that had followed it; the promises that Noy Dow had spoken—all drifted through Harry's brain. Realization followed. He knew where he and Cliff must be. This was the promised destination, the home of the mandarin, Shan Kwan.

Cliff was propping himself on one elbow. He grinned at Harry, proving that he, too, had guessed their new location. Both men were fully dressed save for their coats, vests and shoes. Rising from their couches, they found those garments resting on quaint taborets.

"How do we get out of here?" questioned Cliff.

"Try the gong," suggested Harry, indicating the center of the brass door, which was shaped like a rounded bell target. "That's a hammer, there, isn't it?"

The latter object was hanging by the door. Cliff went over, examined it; then used the hammer to clang against the brazen circle. He stepped back as the door clicked. A bowing Chinaman appeared as the portal

slid open.

THIS fellow was clad in yellow robes with crimson trimmings. He must have been a chief steward or some such officer, for when he clapped his hands and babbled in Chinese, scurrying footsteps answered. Two lesser Chinamen appeared carrying bowls and towels. They set these objects on taborets and went away, to return soon afterward carrying teakwood chairs.

The bowing steward motioned for Harry and Cliff to seat themselves. The servants produced razors and brushes. The guests removed their neckties and the two Chinamen proceeded to act as barbers. Harry grinned at Cliff through a wealth of foamy lather.

"That sleep helped the whiskers grow," chuckled Harry. "This shave is going to feel good. I guess we'll be in for breakfast next. I won't feel sorry."

"I'm mighty hungry," returned Cliff. "I guess it must be the middle of the morning. Say,"—he raised his head to address the steward— "you tellee timee? Gottee watchee? Clockee?"

The robed man bowed, apparently understanding. He produced a massive gold timepiece and held it so both could see. Cliff noted that it was quarter after nine. With a relieved smile, he settled back to let the Chinese barber complete the shave.

Harry, too, was pleased. He knew that the tea chests were to have been removed very early. They had probably been taken away by half past seven and the trip here must have been a short one. A few hours of stretched slumber had apparently served to counteract the kinks caused by huddling in the tea chests. Harry was feeling quite limber; and Cliff looked the same.

Shan Kwan had been fully thoughtful of his guests' comfort. It was not long before Cliff and Harry were following the steward along a passage, en route to meet the mandarin. They noted the mellow light of this corridor; and they observed several doors of brass that indicated other rooms like their own.

This corridor was wide; so were others that they entered. Various hallways formed a maze, all softly glowing with indirect lights; and as they proceeded on their way, the two guests realized that they could not hope to find the return path without a guide.

The steward was familiar with this silent, deserted honeycomb of corridors. He brought them finally to one where they observed two wide-swung doors of brass; beyond that portal a room with brazen walls. Golden-hued screens were visible in that room, with a square teakwood pedestal upon the thick-rugged floor. They were passing the tiny temple that Shan Kwan had shown Raymond Roucard.

The guide unlocked the door at the end of this corridor. Harry and Cliff followed him up the stairs. They reached another door; it was opened, and the steward bowed them through. Passing curtains, the guests stopped short, lost in awe of the new room that they had entered.

All about were gorgeous dragon tapestries. Luxurious rugs covered the floor; teakwood furnishings were in abundance. The very center of the room was occupied by a large table, with seats for four. Upon it were plates and goblets of solid gold. Choice fruits and viands were visible, in bowls of the same metal.

A man was seated at the table. He rose as Harry and Cliff entered. His robes were of vivid crimson; his saffron face was wreathed with a pleasant smile. The arrivals needed no introduction. They knew that this must be Shan Kwan the Mandarin.

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"I GREET YOU," stated the host, with a profound bow. "As my guests you are welcome. Pray, join me, and hold repast with Shan Kwan, the Mandarin."

The guests approached the table; Shan Kwan motioned them to the seats at the sides. A voice came from the doorway; the two men turned about to see Loy Ming enter the room. The mandarin's niece was smiling her welcome as she took the chair opposite her uncle. When she was seated, Shan Kwan bowed. Harry and Cliff sat down; and Shan Kwan followed suit.

Servants entered promptly. They served the luscious fruits and filled the goblets with liquid from sparkling decanters. As those at the table began to eat, one servant went about igniting incense burners. Pale, tantalizing smoke trailed upward to perfume the air.

While the guests still sniffed the exotic aroma, a sound reached their ears. It was music, from some hidden source, with tones that formed a softened melody.

Plucking of zither vied with tinkling bells; though the harmony seemed to be of mechanical origin, its lightened tones were captivating. Once begun, that music seemed as necessary to the ear as light was to the eye. It formed a gentle rhythm that was soothing, more and more with each succeeding strain.

Shan Kwan spoke. His words were audible above the tinkling tones. His voice became melodious because of its accompaniment. Harry and Cliff listened while they leisurely sipped sweet-tasting liquid and drew long breaths to gain the perfume of the incense.

"My humble abode is yours," announced Shan Kwan. "You are welcome to remain so long as you may choose. Until now, your stay has been a short one. I should indeed be honored if you decide to prolong your sojourn."

"Yet you may wish to be soon on your way. The day is still young; you may have work to do. So I shall not burden you with long discussion. I shall be brief with the questions that I have to ask; and I shall be pleased to have you answer. Should there be questions that you do not choose to answer, we shall forget them."

Shan Kwan paused. He stroked his chin in solemn fashion. There was no eagerness in his expression; his manner indicated that he was anxious not to embarrass his guests by asking them too much.

"You were prisoners," remarked the mandarin, at length. "Prisoners captured by Doctor Tam. Are you in the service of some one who is a foe of Doctor Tam?"

Cliff looked at Harry, who took a sip from his goblet, then replied:

"I do not know. We are in a service, yes; but we had never encountered Tam before. Nor had we ever heard of him."

"Your services, then, is opposed to those who deal in evil?"

"Yes. That, I suppose, would account for Doctor Tam's enmity."

Cliff had finished his goblet; a servant filled it for him, while Harry, as spokesman, waited for Shan Kwan's next question.

"You have heard," inquired the mandarin, "of an idol from the temple of Je Ho, called the Fate Joss?"

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Harry deliberated, then answered: "Yes, I have heard of it."

"Could you tell me," questioned Shan Kwan, "if the Fate Joss is now in the hands of Doctor Tam?"

"That is a difficult question," replied Harry. "I doubt that Doctor Tam holds the Fate Joss; but —"

"He can't have it, Harry," put in Cliff. "You know that Tam could not have guessed that we had come from the —"

Harry gestured for silence. He looked toward Shan Kwan and saw the mandarin gaze reprovingly at Cliff, who subsided promptly. Harry was pleased that he was to continue as spokesman. He finished his goblet and waited for another question.

"What concerns me," explained the mandarin, "is the safety of the Fate Joss. I am of old China; I grieve that the Joss should have been removed from its temple. I seek to return it thither. That is why I ask these questions.

"Tell me: suppose you should gain the Fate Joss; either you or the one whom you serve. What would you wish to do with it? Would you seek to return it to the land where it belongs?"

Harry smiled as he pondered on the question. Cliff acted as though about to speak; then paused and took another long sip from his goblet. A servant approached with a silver bottle and filled Harry's empty cup with a gurgling, foamy liquid. Harry toyed with the goblet; then answered:

"I believe so. Yes, I think I would want the Fate Joss to go back to China. Suppose, Shan Kwan, that we depart. By tonight, we shall communicate with you again. Then, perhaps, we may know how much we can tell you."

Shan Kwan bowed. He waved his hand; the music ceased. The silence seemed to carry a depressing effect; one realized the haunting power of the melody more fully when it had finished. Shan Kwan raised his goblet to the guests. Harry and Cliff did the same. All drank.

Harry noticed a new taste to the liquid in his goblet. The first was sweet; this was tart, but much more pleasing than the other drink. Shan Kwan spoke with a tone of finality.

"You wish to speak with the one you serve," he nodded. "That will be well. It pleases me. I shall trust in your promise to communicate with me later. Loy Ming, my guests have had repast. You will conduct them —"

SHAN KWAN paused to stare at Harry Vincent. The young man was wavering in his chair. Harry tried to grin; his smile was sickly. Shan Kwan beckoned; two servants aided Harry to his feet.

"I guess—I guess it was that dope from last night," stammered Harry. "Eating so soon—and drinking something I never had before. I— I feel dizzy —"

Cliff was leaning across the table. He stared at Harry, then turned wildly to Shan Kwan.

"The music!" exclaimed Cliff. "He needs the music! Bring it back— it doesn't seem right without it —"

Shan Kwan clapped his hands; the music began again, as melodious as before. But it seemed a jangle to Harry; the scent of the incense stifled him. Harry sagged; but as his eyelids dropped, he noted Cliff settling back with an air of contentment.

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"You must rest again," decided Shan Kwan. His voice came hazily to Harry. "Help him to his room; his companion will come for him later."

Harry tried to protest that he was all right; but words could not reach his lips. He saw Loy Ming arise to lead the way; then the servants supported him toward the stairs. Harry was conscious of the trip down, then through the corridors. It ended in the room where he had awakened. More comfortable, yet still somewhat dizzy, Harry rested.

Long minutes passed. About a quarter hour had elapsed when Cliff entered the room and surveyed his companion with a grin that seemed bleary to Harry. Resting, Harry managed to speak.

"I—I'm pretty dizzy, Cliff. That tart stuff was too strong, I guess. Did—did you have any of it?"

"My drink was sweet," returned Cliff. "Sweet with sweet music. Perfumed air, the atmosphere of old China—it was swell, Harry, swell!"

"We've got to start, Cliff. I—we—both of us have our duty to perform."

"Don't worry, Harry. Go back to sleep; that's what I'm going to do. I'm feeling light; but I'm steady. Plenty steady. We're all alone here – I had them close the door. Don't worry, Harry."

"But unless we go –"

"I fixed it." Cliff leaned forward and balanced on the edge of Harry's couch. "Fixed it with the mandarin, see? I knew you weren't feeling good, so I talked with Shan Kwan."

"He asked you questions?"

"Not a one. I just told him a few things. Like us being on our way to Scranton. Our having to be back in New York tonight. Said I should have sent a wire—needed to make a complete report –"

"You talked about the Fate Joss?"

"Said I'd seen it once. Told him I guessed it was safe. He and I went into a room where there was a telephone. I called Burbank."

"With the mandarin there?"

Harry tried to rise from his couch. Cliff chuckled and pushed him back.

"Not a bit of it," he laughed. "I wrote out what I was going to say. Word for word, so I'd get it straight. I'm feeling woozy, too, eating and drinking on top of that dope. So I fixed it just right. The mandarin went out before I talked to Burbank."

"He was there until you talked?"

"Just a little while. Had some suggestions; wanted me to write them down. So I could pass them along. I did the rest, Harry, and I burned up what I'd wrote. Burned it up, in with some incense, so nobody would see it. What's more, I've forgotten it already, most of it. Everything's fixed swell, Harry. We stay right here and get a little sleep. Then we'll move along, unless we get some word from—unless we get some word."

"What time is it now, Cliff?"

Cliff looked at his watch; he shook his head and dropped it back in his pocket. He reached for Harry's watch, glanced at it and let it slide back.

"Both of them stopped," he declared. "Don't matter, though. It can't be after ten o'clock. Two hours yet to noon, Harry. You take a nap; I'll do the same."

Harry settled back and closed his eyes. Cliff moved slowly across the room, dropped on his own couch and stretched out with a weary sigh.

"It's all right, Harry," Harry heard him say. "All right, old top; everything's been fixed. Fixed just right—so's we can take a little rest. Fixed just right —"

Cliff's phrases slowed; they became a mumble. Harry, however, heard no more of them. His dizziness had faded; reassured by Cliff's statements, Harry had dropped off to sleep.

Shan Kwan's guests had enjoyed the mandarin's hospitality and had chosen to remain within these comfortable walls.

CHAPTER XVI. THE SHADOW'S RETURN

IT was half past ten in the evening. Dark silence gripped the street in front of Kao Dwin's curio shop. Behind closed shutters, voices whispered in Chinese. The Shadow was holding conversation with Kao Dwin.

The whispers ended. Soon after, a blackened figure emerged from the rear door of the curio shop.

There was no telephone at Kao Dwin's; that had been an oversight on the part of Yat Soon. The Shadow, however, found no difficulty in arriving and departing unseen, for Kao Dwin had brought his bag to the curio shop. Leaving Kao Dwin in charge, The Shadow was leaving to form contact with Burbank.

This would be his first call since last night, for The Shadow had remained constantly in the curio shop. The police had ended their search for one missing Chinaman; the watch had begun for Doctor Tam. Day had followed night; then evening had returned. The Chinese physician had not visited the obscure street, nor had any one who might have passed for Doctor Tam.

The Shadow, when he had taken up his vigil, had done so in the belief that all was secure. Harry and Cliff had started for Scranton with the truck; Hawkeye and Jericho were on duty at the hiding place of the Fate Joss. This evening, however, was the time for Harry and Cliff to return. The Shadow wanted to be sure that they had gained some rest on the road, enough to fit them for a new turn on watch.

Arrived in his sanctum, The Shadow clicked on the bluish light. He studied brief reports from Clyde Burke; these included details of the police search in Chinatown. No clue had been had as to the cause of the fray that occurred there. The reports read, The Shadow picked up the earphones and spoke to Burbank.

"Report."

Burbank responded to The Shadow's command.

"Further report from Burke," came his quiet statement. "Acting Inspector Cardona is taking charge in

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Chinatown. Will remain there until the section quiets."

"Report received."

This new information did not surprise The Shadow. He knew Cardona's methods; they were usually direct and efficient. Cardona had unquestionably linked the missing Fate Joss with disturbances in the Chinese quarter. Stationed there in person, Cardona would be on the lookout for further trouble.

Patrolling policemen would be less in evidence. Plain-clothes men would relieve many bluecoats. Though the Chinese would know that they were being watched, they would not suspect the extent to which the law was ready. This was to The Shadow's liking. Should time arrive for action, he could bring the police into the game.

This was in keeping with The Shadow's standard. Whenever possible, he gave the law its share of action. But until the game had opened, he preferred to work upon his own. The cause of justice frequently demanded a wait until proper opportunity had arrived. The Shadow's first concern still involved the Fate Joss and its shipment from this scene of trouble.

UPON The Shadow's table lay a letter that had accompanied Clyde Burke's written report. The letter was a message from Rutledge Mann, who had arranged for a tramp steamer to take the Fate Joss aboard. Mann had written that the steamship Eastern Moon would be laying to, outside of New York harbor, beginning with tomorrow night. The freighter would await word regarding the port where it would find its expected shipment.

Burbank was delivering another report. His methodical voice concerned Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland.

"Telegram received this morning, at the Howland Garage," stated Burbank. "I called the garage and named myself as Mr. Middleton. The wire stated that the truck had been left at its Scranton destination. It was signed Dyke.

"Telephone report from Marsland received tonight at 9:48. Report that he and Vincent are back in New York. Ready for duty, outside the hiding place. Marsland suggested that Hawkeye and Jericho drive out in Vincent's coupe, as sign that all was well."

Burbank paused. The Shadow hissed a sudden question. Such a move, though seemingly an incidental one, had not been included in original instructions. Burbank's voice, for once, was slightly hesitant. The contact man seemed troubled in his tone; but he calmed and stated exactly how he had handled Cliff's request.

"Instructions given to Hawkeye by telephone," declared Burbank. "He and Jericho to leave at once in Vincent's coupe. Time of order was 9:56."

"Further reports," ordered The Shadow.

"No further reports," stated Burbank. "Hawkeye and Jericho off duty. Marsland and Vincent should be on guard at present; but neither has reported."

"Contact them at once," ordered The Shadow.

The earphones slid across the table. A tiny signal light went out. Three minutes later, it gleamed again, a proof that Burbank had called the old garage where the Fate Joss had been hidden. The Shadow picked up the earphones.

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"Report," he ordered.

"No response," stated Burbank, his tone solemn and deliberate. "Vincent and Marsland apparently not on duty."

"Report received."

Earphones slid away. The bluish light blinked off. A swish sounded as The Shadow moved through the darkness of the sanctum. Then came silence. The master of the night had fared forth on another mission.

FIFTEEN minutes later, a tiny flashlight blinked along a wall. It stopped upon the door of the abandoned garage. The door was slightly opened; its strong lock was broken. With hammer and wedge, some intruders had forced an entry to the place. Cautiously, The Shadow slid the door aside. His light went out as he edged into darkness. Silently, he moved through the gloom of the old garage.

Nearing the door of the little side room, The Shadow stretched his gloved hand forward. It encountered no barrier; the door was open. Creeping inward, The Shadow crouched low on the floor. He raised his left hand and blinked the torch.

Furious snarls sounded within the room; a knife whistled from darkness and skimmed past The Shadow's arm. Had a body been behind the light, it would have received the whizzing blade. Instead, the knife clattered far out in the main room of the old garage. As it clicked the floor, a flashlight gleamed from within the side room; its blaze showed the crouched figure of The Shadow.

The cloaked arrival was already springing forward. Hurling himself upon the man with the flashlight, he hoisted the fellow backward. The flashlight shot up in the air; its whirling beam showed a yellow face and a gleaming dirk as another fighter sprang toward The Shadow.

Dropping as he turned, the cloaked battler swung below the knife thrust. Gripping his antagonist, he hurled the fellow over his shoulder, out through the opened door.

The Shadow had encountered two Chinese, stationed here in place of his agents. Attacking them, he had avoided gunfire, in order not to arouse the neighborhood. That fact gave both Mongols a lucky chance for flight. Babbling wildly, the first Chinaman sprang past The Shadow in the darkness and dashed for the outer door. His companion had been fortunate enough to land unhurt despite the long heave that The Shadow had given him. Scrambling to his feet, he scurried after his companion.

A chase was useless. The Shadow's task was here; to guard the Fate Joss, to hold it in case of a mass attack. Swiftly, The Shadow crossed to the inner storage room. He found the padlock broken; the door partly open. Entering, he gleamed his torch. No glitter reflected the beam of light.

The Shadow had reached the spot too late. Since the time that his agents had supposedly returned, a change had taken place within this inner room. As Satsu had stared that night at Laudring's, so did The Shadow gaze at present.

Barren walls were all that his eyes discerned. The Fate Joss was gone; with it, the squatty War Dogs. Those trophies which belonged in Jehol had slipped from The Shadow's ownership. Once again, the Fate Joss and its twin cannons had gone on a mysterious journey.

TO The Shadow, the answer was plain. One hour had passed since Burbank, tricked, had ordered Hawkeye and Jericho to leave in Harry's coupe. That time had been sufficient for invading Chinese to make away with

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the Fate Joss and the War Dogs. The men whom The Shadow had encountered were a rear guard, posted to deal death should any one come here.

Had Harry and Cliff actually entered here, to be captured when the Joss was taken? The Shadow's grim, whispered laugh told that such was not the answer. Invaders could have attacked Hawkeye and Jericho as readily as Harry and Cliff. The true solution was that Cliff, like Burbank, had fallen for some deception.

The Shadow was sure that his men remained alive. So long as they lived, they might prove useful to their captors. While The Shadow, himself, remained at large, his agents would be held as bait. Hawkeye and Jericho were probably safe; unneeded as prisoners, they had merely been drawn away, that entry might be clear without the danger of battle.

There was something baffling about these circumstances; yet The Shadow's mirthless whisper told that he had grasped a possible solution. To move, he must know more; that was his immediate mission as he glided from the darkness of the rifled hiding place.

The Shadow knew where the answer could be found. In Chinatown, where action, instead of watchfulness, would be the needed course. With the idol now in other hands, The Shadow had no cause to wait before he dealt with men of crime.

Again, The Shadow was in quest of the evanescent Fate Joss; but with it, human lives were at stake. Alone, with no chance for retreat, The Shadow was setting forth to the rescue of his captured agents, whose destiny had become linked with that of the Fate Joss from Jehol.

CHAPTER XVII. THE SHADOW INVADES

IT yet lacked midnight when The Shadow, still garbed in black, arrived back at the closed curio shop to hold speech with Kao Dwin. He found Yat Soon's servant in a state of repressed excitement. Standing within the shuttered window, Kao Dwin was peering through a tiny opening.

"Across the street," declared Kao Dwin, "and one house to the left. That was the door into which a man did go. A man who was quick to move – a man who seemed to me to be Doctor Roy Tam.

"With him was another who was not of China. I say this truly, although I caught but little sight of his face. I would say that he might be the man called Satsu; but to that, I would not swear."

A whispered query from The Shadow. Kao Dwin replied.

"Within the space of the last half hour," affirmed the Chinaman. "Such was the time when they did come. No burden was borne by either; yet it may well be that there is another way to enter.

"On the avenue beyond this street is a place called the Hunan Cafe. On the street between this and the avenue, there are shops. One where tea is sold; another which has long been used as a laundry. The corner holds a store where goods of value may be pawned by those –"

The Shadow spoke an interruption. Kao Dwin stared into the room. The Chinaman could not see his companion in the darkness; but he tried to phrase a protest.

"Yat Soon would not advise –"

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Whispered mirth interposed. To that grim laugh, Kao Dwin could find no answer. The whisper chilled him; but it betokened The Shadow's prowess. Kao Dwin mumbled that he would remain here and keep further watch. For The Shadow had stated that he intended to take the direct route to Doctor Tam's—through that very doorway which Kao Dwin had seen the physician enter with the man who answered the description of Satsu.

Going out through the rear door, The Shadow skirted the curio shop and crossed the street. Kao Dwin, still watching, saw shrouding blackness cover the front of the chosen door. Lamplight, however, did not reveal the full outline of The Shadow's shape. Kao Dwin saw the darkened mass move inward; then he stared blinking at the door itself. The Shadow had entered the house across the street.

TO Kao Dwin, it seemed impossible that any one could have tracked Doctor Tam's path through those opposite buildings. Familiar with Yat Soon's own labyrinth, Kao Dwin believed that Doctor Tam would also have a maze of passages, filled with pitfalls. But could Kao Dwin have watched The Shadow's progress, he would have been astonished at the efficient, yet simple process that the master sleuth was using.

The Shadow had guessed that Doctor Tam must always keep the empty house in shuttered darkness. He had also presumed that Tam knew the proper course so well that he needed no light to trace his way. Therefore, The Shadow was blinking his own flashlight upon the bare floors, looking for a trail. He was finding it, amid deep dust that had settled through the course of many months.

At intervals, the marks of footsteps showed along the hall. None were complete; some were almost obliterated. They were sufficient, however, for The Shadow to trace the course he wanted. Those marks kept him away from side rooms and blind passages. The Shadow, ascending the stairs, found marks that led to the rear of the upper hall. He came to the barring door.

There The Shadow paused. He did not try to open the door; nor did he knock for entry. Instead, he peeled the glove from his left hand and gripped an automatic with his right. Flashlight stowed beneath his cloak, he used his left fingers to give an elusive scratching sound against the surface of the door.

There was something uncanny in the noise which The Shadow produced. The sound ceased; then began again, fading as The Shadow slowly timed his fingers. Easing back, The Shadow thrust his left hand beneath his cloak. He waited; a puff of air told that the door was opening.

The guard within had heard the sound. It had tricked him just as The Shadow had hoped. To the watcher, the noise had not seemed close enough to mean danger; it had merely enticed him to an investigation. The Shadow heard cautious foot steps; he knew that the guard was creeping out into the hall.

The Shadow's flashlight clicked. Its rays blinked squarely into a yellow face. The Shadow had pulled the flashlight with his left hand; into its glare, he thrust his right, with its threatening .45 that loomed like a tunneled opening less than a foot from the eyes of the startled guard.

YELLOW hands went upward. The Chinaman grimaced as he backed away. The Shadow hissed words in English; the guard understood. Turning about, with arms still raised, he felt The Shadow's gun muzzle jab his back. With flashlight blinking, The Shadow ordered the big guard forward. Hissed commands were threatening. The guard was filled with fear. This minion of Tam knew well that he was helpless. He took no chances as he led the way directly to the next barrier. There he obeyed another order.

With upraised hand, he used clenched fingers to tap the second door. The raps he gave were the correct signal. The door swung open; as it did, The Shadow's hands thrust forward beneath his prisoner's arms. A second guard stood startled. From his post, he saw his fellow watcher, a flashlight blinking from the man's

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left elbow, an automatic muzzle jabbing forward from beneath the raised right arm.

He, too, was listening to a hissed voice that threatened death. He knew that a menace lay behind that trembling figure of his fellow watcher.

The second guard capitulated; his hands went ceilingward. He swung about. With a fierce taunt of whispered mockery, The Shadow urged his pair of captives onward toward the goal. They came to the last barrier; the entrance to Doctor Tam's office.

The captured guards were side by side, each feeling the jab of a gun; for The Shadow had brought out a second automatic to replace his flashlight. The Chinamen felt the weapons move away; still, they remained motionless, for they knew that the guns must still be there.

The Shadow was whispering new orders. One man was to rap for entry, using the proper signal. While he spoke in darkness, he had calmly put his guns away; without the knowledge of his frightened prisoners, he was deliberately donning his left glove.

Well had The Shadow guessed that fight was gone from these guardians of the outer portals. Doctor Tam had kept his keener servitors for more important duty than a mere watch in darkness. The fact that the guards were stupid in an unexpected pinch was one that The Shadow had quickly recognized.

One man was rapping at the portal. It opened upward, to reveal a lighted room. The Shadow had told the guards what they must do; hoping for mercy, the fellows stepped promptly into Tam's office, holding their hands raised as before. Instantly, The Shadow followed, his gloved fists already sweeping the brace of automatics into leveled view.

Covering the room, The Shadow caught an astonished group completely off its guard. At the desk sat Doctor Roy Tam, turning to deliver a fierce, but startled scowl. Standing by the physician was Satsu, whose eyes bulged as he saw the cloaked invader. Just beyond was Noy Dow; the secretary trembled. All three were located by the muzzle of The Shadow's left-hand gun.

By the door stood Tuan and Leng. They were almost on a line with the sheepish guards whom The Shadow had thrust in before him. They were helpless before the right-hand automatic; the guards, also covered, did not even attempt to lower their raised hands.

The Shadow had trapped Doctor Tam and six underlings squarely within the crafty physician's own headquarters. Through sheer daring, he had performed this feat without firing a single shot. The threat of his looming guns brought new hands upward. Six pairs of arms were raised; lips trembled and eyes blinked as startled ears heard the quiver of a sinister laugh.

The Shadow's taunt was ominous, here in this closed room. It might have been uttered by a being from some outer space, that weird tone that threatened ill to evildoers. Six men had responded automatically, placing themselves fully at The Shadow's mercy. One alone had not raised his arms; he, too, was the only one who did not tremble. That cool individual was Doctor Roy Tam.

CALM at his desk, the physician sat with folded hands. His scowl had ended; his lips had curved into a welcoming smile. Tam's eyes met the burn of The Shadow's gaze. The physician bowed as if in greeting. Silence followed The Shadow's menacing laugh; the invader was keen in his study of that one unperturbed person who had not quailed before his challenge.

Despite his confidence, Doctor Tam was helpless. Alone, he could offer no resistance, for his men had deserted him through sheer fear. Yet Tam did not seem troubled by his position, nor was his attitude one of resignation. Instead, he seemed to be a man who expected recognition as a reward for his straightforward behavior. The recognition came when The Shadow spoke.

"Doctor Tam," pronounced The Shadow, solemnly, "I came here to test your wisdom. I find that you have understanding. You may dismiss your servitors, that we may talk as friends."

Still smiling, Doctor Tam looked about the room. He spoke quietly, in English; raised arms came downward. Still trembling, Tuan opened the outer door; one by one, the others filed after him into the hall beyond. The door closed, while Doctor Tam still sat with hands folded on the desk.

The Shadow's automatics dropped beneath his cloak; a gloved hand swung a chair before the desk. Seating himself opposite the cool physician, The Shadow waited for Doctor Tam to speak.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE ALLIANCE

"You have complimented me," spoke Doctor Tam, with a smile, "on my understanding. Let me say, in turn, that your own knowledge of truth must far surpass my own."

Watching The Shadow as he spoke, Doctor Tam could not restrain a blink when he saw the cloak and hat drop backward. For a moment, the physician stared in troubled fashion at the made-up face beneath. The sight of a yellowed countenance was unexpected. Oddly, it was The Shadow's momentary laugh that relieved Doctor Tam.

"I—I had heard of you," faltered the physician, "but I—I had not expected to see you as one of my countrymen. Your guise gave me my first pang of fear." Tam smiled wanly. "Real fear, for my only enemies are certain men from my native land."

"A fact that I have recognized," declared The Shadow, in an even tone. "That, Doctor Tam, is one reason why I have chosen this disguise."

"A fact that you have recognized," repeated Tam, slowly. "Tell me, honored friend, what reasons made you know that crime was not my purpose? Circumstances have made many turn against me. The case of Hoang Fu, for instance."

"Let us consider Hoang Fu," interposed The Shadow. "It is said that he served you, Doctor Tam."

"Quite true. But he had left my service —"

"Before he turned to murder. A fact which I knew must be a true one after Hoang Fu slew Chichester Laudring."

"How did Laudring's death indicate that?"

"Because you already had Satsu as your servant. Had you sought Laudring's death, Satsu could have performed the deed with greater ease and less risk than Hoang Fu."

"That is true. Yet it had not occurred to me that it would stand as indication of my innocence."

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The Shadow spoke again, his tone firm and deliberate.

"After my battle with Hoang Fu," he declared, "I fought with five who had come to take the Fate Joss. They had entered Laudring's house, like Hoang Fu; but they had not been sent there by you. Had they come from you, they would have traveled through the underground passage from the house at the rear. The passage of which Satsu knew.

"Moreover, those men spoke Chinese, not English; they were like one whom I encountered last night, in Chinatown. One who, dying, talked first in Chinese, but who, when questioned, said his name was Toian Soi; then, turning to English speech declared that he served Doctor Roy Tam —"

"Another traitor!" exclaimed Doctor Tam. "Another, like Hoang Fu; another such as Chang Look, who was with those you fought at Laudring's. Trusted men have become deserters—gone to join Shan Kwan — deceived by the mandarin's promises —"

"LET US speak for a moment of others," suggested The Shadow. "Two of my men have been taken prisoners. Shan Kwan holds them —"

Doctor Tam interrupted by a shake of his head. He smiled pleasantly.

"It was I who captured them," he admitted, "but they have not suffered. I told Noy Dow to treat them well. I was about to have them brought to me when you entered. Do you wish to see them at once?"

"Not yet," returned The Shadow, his tone more deliberate. "It would be better first for you to tell me of the Fate Joss. It was taken from my control; and men who talked Chinese remained at its hiding place. Men who certainly served Shan Kwan; yet apparently the idol was gained by some one influencing my own men."

"The ones that I hold here?"

"One of them."

"Some traitor has talked to Shan Kwan. Some new traitor. Shan Kwan possesses amazing skill. He may have managed almost any game by proxy. I assure you, the men are safe. Noy Dow is the one upon whom I can absolutely rely."

"Then let us resume. Tell me your facts; the reasons for your actions. Speak fully, Doctor Tam."

The physician pondered, tapping the desk top. He was thinking back recalling incidents of the past. When he spoke in answer, his story proved concise.

"We of China who now live in America," stated Tam, "compose two groups. One favors old traditions; the other calls for new. Each group has many honorable men; though their hopes differ, men of honor do not quarrel. Yat Soon, the arbiter, is of the old; while I am of the new. Yat Soon and I have always exchanged respects, even though our paths are apart.

"In each group are a few who have proven themselves unworthy. Such men are ones whom neither Yat Soon nor myself will tolerate. Yet men of evil, like the fox, are cunning. They deal in deceit, particularly with those to whom they are close. Such is the way of the mandarin, Shan Kwan; being of the old, he would seek to mislead Yat Soon."

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With this preamble, Doctor Tam paused. His square-jawed face was straight toward The Shadow; his eyes carried a convincing sparkle.

"BEING of the new school," resumed Tam, "I have friends in many cities. Through those in San Francisco, I was informed long since that the Fate Joss from Jehol was in America, brought by a man named Chichester Laudring. For the idol itself, I cared nothing; but I feared the consequences should it fall into the hands of an evildoer.

"No danger could exist among those who believe in the new; who wish that Chinese in this country would assume the ways of America, instead of their old customs. For we of the new school seek to break down superstition. The danger could lie only if the Fate Joss were acquired by some schemer who retained and taught old beliefs.

"Soon after the Fate Joss reached America, certain of my followers deserted me. I questioned them in person; though they would say but little, I discovered that they had listened to the promises of Shan Kwan the Mandarin. His purpose, so I gathered, was to form a cult, with the Fate Joss as its center. He was leading his proselytes to believe that he would soon possess the idol; that through it, he would control the destinies of all Chinese in America.

"Through such a course, Shan Kwan could gain great power. He could break down all the progress that I have made. His recruits would come from every class. Wealth would pour into his coffers, yielded by honest Chinese who would fear the mandarin's strength. To prevent such calamity, I used every measure to see that the Fate Joss went where Shan Kwan could not gain it.

"Through a friend in San Francisco, I gained the services of Satsu – not to injure Laudring, but to protect him. When Chichester Laudring took the Joss to Chicago, Satsu reported to another of my friends in that city. The idol was sold to a millionaire named Dustin Clabb. It was bestowed within a massive vault. I believed then that Shan Kwan could never gain it."

Before he continued, Doctor Tam shook his head; his face was grave as he recalled the episode that followed.

"My man in Chicago was too zealous," remarked the square-jawed Chinaman. "He and his friends watched Dustin Clabb after the millionaire had bought the Joss. Clabb must have known it and decided that he would be unwise to keep the Joss. He summoned Raymond Roucard, a man of doubtful integrity, and arranged with him to remove the Fate Joss. The deed was done so quickly that my friends could not follow; they learned only that Clabb had given Roucard the Joss and paid him to get rid of it."

"The circumstances are plain," stated The Shadow quietly. "The police are still perplexed about the house that Laudring occupied. They found a letter from a lawyer who does not exist, saying that the house was a gift from an uncle who has since been proven fictitious."

DOCTOR TAM blinked at these details. The Shadow had gained them from Clyde Burke's reports. The facts had not as yet been printed.

"Clabb does not own the house," added The Shadow. "Roucard evidently knew of it and suggested that he would place the Fate Joss there. Clabb probably insisted that the idol be returned to Laudring anonymously." This time, Doctor Tam nodded.

"That much I guessed," he affirmed. "But when Roucard came to Chinatown; when he visited Shan Kwan, I knew that he was scheming to make extra profit through another sale."

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"Fifty thousand dollars was the price," declared The Shadow. "That sum gained, Roucard bluffed Laudring into giving him the Joss."

"You have learned much," said Tam, with a bow. "I shall add the details that Satsu gave me. When Laudring found the Fate Joss, Satsu was with him; and Satsu was prompt to inform me of the fact. I sent men to the house—Tuan and Leng—that they might watch.

"Roucard arrived; his talk frightened Laudring. There was no mention of a price. The Joss was removed by Roucard's truckmen. Tuan and Leng followed them to the old Calumet Theater. The Fate Joss and the War Dogs were left there, to be picked up by Shan Kwan.

"I acted promptly. My own truck gathered the crates before Shan Kwan's carriers arrived. Tuan—Leng—and others—they served me capably by taking the Fate Joss and the cannons back to Laudring's. Satsu unbarred the cellar while his master was asleep. He barred it after the Joss and the cannons were unloaded.

"Shan Kwan had no watchers at Laudring's. I felt sure that he did not know from where the Joss had come. Satsu was to leave with Laudring the next day. All seemed well; but I had reckoned wrong."

"Regarding Shan Kwan," inserted The Shadow. "He had guessed that Roucard would keep the money. He also suspected the possibility of a double cross. He called Roucard while I was listening on the telephone. Hoang Fu, watching from outside the hotel, must have seen the lights that indicated Roucard's return. Hoang Fu entered. He slew and robbed. He escaped me that night."

"Hoang Fu was the last of my deserters," nodded Doctor Tam. "He had acted strangely when I talked with him, early on that evening. Noy Dow saw me cross the name of Hoang Fu from my list."

"With the money," revealed The Shadow, "were papers. Hoang Fu took all from Roucard; Laudring's address was certainly mentioned in the papers."

"And they went to Shan Kwan," observed Tam, "through Hoang Fu. That was the reason why Hoang Fu lurked at Laudring's the next day, awaiting darkness so that he might kill. Others were ready to enter afterward, that they might search for the Fate Joss. Shan Kwan, regaining the fifty thousand dollars from Laudring, believed that Roucard might not have gone to the house at all."

Aiding The Shadow, Doctor Tam was piecing new portions of the puzzling past. He had followed The Shadow's lead; the facts were understood. In his next statement, however, Doctor Tam was apologetic.

"I DID not know that Shan Kwan had gained Laudring's address," he explained, in sober fashion. "Nor did Satsu. He thought that Laudring was safe. Purely by chance, Laudring discovered that the Joss had again reached his cellar. He wanted to call the police; Satsu went out, pretending that he was going to the precinct. Unwittingly, Satsu paved the way for Hoang Fu's entry.

"Satsu talked to me. I told him to delay until my men arrived. He saw Shan Kwan's searchers arrive and mistook them for my servants. He went back to the house; he saw you battle with the mandarin's men. Satsu had intended to go straight to the cellar; it was the entry of five enemies—by the back door that made him hide instead.

"My men—Tuan, Leng and the others—had experienced delay. Satsu was bewildered. Trapped by Cardona; learning that Laudring had called headquarters, he decided to tell much that he knew. He led his captors to the cellar, only to find that the Fate Joss had vanished."

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Gazing inquiringly, Doctor Tam saw the semblance of a smile upon The Shadow's disguised lips. The physician understood that the Joss had been removed by agents of The Shadow.

"My men arrived in their truck," said Tam. "The police chased them; they escaped. Satsu, believing that the law would consider his story false, was quick to make flight of his own. He came to me; his only clue was a conversation that he had heard a young man make, across the telephone.

"Words of a place some thirty blocks south. Between us, Satsu and I decided that it must be the Howland Garage. We watched there—with Tuan and Leng aboard the truck. We captured the two men who took it from the garage. I left them here in the care of Noy Dow, while Satsu and I drove the truck to Scranton. It was I who sent the telegram for which the letter called. The telegram signed Dyke.

"I wondered all the while why Americans would have served Shan Kwan. I know now that the two men were yours; had I known it last night, I would not have seized them. I intended to question them on my return. Haste was not needed; for if Shan Kwan held the Joss, long planning would be required to regain it."

AS he finished his explanation, Doctor Tam pressed the buzzer twice. The door opened and Noy Dow entered, blinking anxiously through his spectacles. In that brief interval, The Shadow had again donned cloak and hat. Noy Dow saw his black shape rising as Doctor Tam moved upward from behind the desk.

"Lead the way, Noy Dow," ordered Tam. "We shall visit the prisoners."

Noy Dow hesitated; then opened the rear panel. He conducted Doctor Tam and The Shadow through a barren hallway and unlocked the door of the prison room. Entering, Noy Dow turned on the light. He blinked, staring in feigned amazement at the empty room.

Doctor Tam gasped. Trembling, the physician faced The Shadow. Like Satsu, with the police in Laudring's cellar, Doctor Tam was fearful that his story would not be believed. He heard a grim laugh from The Shadow's lips; a tone that was mirthless. Words failed as the physician tried to utter them; but his statement was unnecessary.

The Shadow's eyes were fixed on the paling, square-jawed face. Keenly, The Shadow recognized that Tam's terror was real; that it was the fright that comes to a man who has dealt honestly, only to find himself the victim of false circumstantial evidence. Solemnly, The Shadow spoke.

"Fear not, Doctor Tam." The Shadow's whispered tone was awe-impelling. "You have spoken truth. The fault is not yours. Come; let us return to your office. There we can learn the facts of treachery."

Turning about, The Shadow stalked along the hall. Doctor Tam followed close behind him, wearing a strained expression. Noy Dow was last; in the gloom, the secretary's face was twitching; but when he reached the lighted office, Noy Dow had regained composure.

His own display of nervousness had been unseen. Tense, yet alert, Noy Dow was prepared to tell a well-rehearsed story. One that he believed would deceive Doctor Tam, who trusted him; a tale that he was sure would bluff The Shadow, who trusted Doctor Tam.

CHAPTER XIX. THE SHADOW'S TRICK

THE SHADOW and Doctor Tam were seated side by side behind the Chinese physician's broad desk. Like a pair of judges, they were awaiting others. Doctor Tam had sent Noy Dow to summon all the henchmen.

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Rigid, the Chinese doctor's face was severe; but his pose was mild compared with that of the personage beside him.

As the door opened and Chinese filed in, their eyes passed Tam to waver at sight of The Shadow. Fully cloaked, his visage muffled, that judge was a being of blackness. Only the burning glitter of his eyes was visible beneath the shading of his lowered hat brim.

"Tuan—Leng—Fong—Wook—" Doctor Tam indicated each servitor in turn. He pointed to the two outer guards whom The Shadow had first encountered; then named them: "Charn—Wahai." Two others were present; one was Noy Dow, beside him was the Chinaman from the tea shop. Tam named the latter: "Wing Sook."

Satsu entered just as Tam had finished. The physician pointed him to a chair; as Satsu took it, Tam remarked to The Shadow:

"Satsu was with me. He is clear of all suspicion."

That statement given, Doctor Tam eyed the faces of the lined-up Chinese. Briefly, he told the cause for this assemblage.

"Our prisoners have departed," explained Tam. "Some one of our band has aided them. We shall hear Noy Dow speak. Others may add words later."

Noy Dow stepped forward and bowed. In careful, deliberate words, he told his story.

"All ways were guarded," he declared. "Charn and Wahai held their posts. Wing Sook was present in his tea shop. I stayed a while in the Hunan Cafe; when I left there, I brought food and drink of varied sorts to the prisoners.

"They seemed peaceable, so I unbound them; but locked the door on my departure. They had provisions; they had no means of escape. I decided not to visit them again; for they could await your return, Doctor Tam.

"I came here to the office. I called Fong and told him to station himself within the portal that leads to the Hunan Cafe. He was there on guard when I went out last night. I passed the tea shop; it was locked and I knew that Wing Sook remained within.

"Yet on this morning, all came early. One might have gone to the prisoners and released them. How they could have passed the portals, I can not say. Unless one let them pass."

Noy Dow paused. Wing Sook, his upraised finger trembling, was quick to speak in a quavering voice.

"What Noy Dow says sounds true," the tea dealer told Doctor Tam. "But there was a way whereby those prisoners could have gone. After I went into my shop at dawn, men came to take away a shipment of tea boxes. This was after all present had arrived.

"The chests were ones that had been ordered. I gave no heed to their removal. It was afterward that other men came, Doctor Tam, to ask for those same chests. I thought that the new men were mistaken. They went away with their truck.

"To me has come the thought that there was no mistake. Those first men with their truck could well have come from Shan Kwan, the Mandarin, to carry away chests that held prisoners instead of tea."

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WING SOOK subsided, quivering. Doctor Tam's cold gaze passed along the line. Harshly, the physician spoke: "Which of you turned traitor?"

No answer to the query. Tam's fists tightened; he began to rise from the desk, when The Shadow clamped a gloved hand on his forearm. Doctor Tam sat down and blinked at his fellow inquisitor.

"None needs to speak," whispered The Shadow, his tone carrying a taunting tinge. "There is an easier way by which our answer may be learned."

Slowly, he removed his black gloves to reveal the white hands beneath. The girasol did not glitter; for The Shadow turned it inward as he took off the glove. That shimmering fire opal, The Shadow's talisman, was lost from view within his palm.

A desk drawer was partly opened. With his right hand, The Shadow reached within it and dipped out a supply of loose coins that belonged to Doctor Tam. These were Chinese cash, thin brass coins with square holes in the center.

The money clattered, rolling on the desk. The Shadow gathered it; then divided the cash into little piles of six coins each, leaving a few disks extra. He beckoned to Satsu, who approached. Raising one stack of six coins between his left thumb and second finger, The Shadow dropped them into Satsu's hand; then had the Korean clamp his other hand upon them.

"Are you the traitor?" queried The Shadow, in a sharp whisper.

Satsu stared, puzzled; but made no reply. The Shadow hissed a laugh; then spoke in quiet tone:

"Count the coins that you hold."

Satsu counted the cash upon the desk. He spoke aloud as he did, counting "one—two—three" until he arrived at "six." That was the last coin of the lot. The Shadow turned to Doctor Tam.

"Satsu is not the traitor," he stated solemnly. "We know that fact; so I used him for the test. But if Satsu had been the traitor, those coins would not have remained the same. Let us see once more; this time with a different question."

As he spoke, The Shadow slid the odd loose coins into his left hand and tossed them out of the way, back into the drawer from which he had taken them. That left only the stacks of six coins each.

In performing this maneuver, The Shadow added a touch that no one present observed. While the coins were in his left hand, he pressed one with his thumb and forced its edge beneath the girasol that projected from his ring. The coin remained there, loosely clamped. With his right hand, The Shadow beckoned again to Satsu. The Korean was ready.

AGAIN, The Shadow picked up the stack of six coins with his left hand. He held them between thumb and finger tip and let them drop into Satsu's palm. The Shadow spread his fingers with the motion; the act released the extra coin from beneath the ring. Unseen, unnoticed, that one coin fell with the six. Satsu, clamping his hands together, became the unwitting holder of seven coins.

"Did you once serve a man named Chichester Laudring?" queried The Shadow.

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Satsu understood that he was to make no reply. He kept his hands clamped and merely stared. Again, The Shadow turned to Doctor Tam.

"Satsu did serve Laudring," pronounced The Shadow. "We know that fact. We shall find that the coins uphold it. There will be seven when Satsu counts them."

The Shadow turned his gleaming gaze on Satsu. Carefully, the Korean counted the coins on the desk. He came to six; then found himself holding another. Satsu blinked as he uttered a surprised grunt.

Thronged Chinese had moved closer as they watched. From their lips came high-pitched exclamations of surprise. Doctor Tam noted it and nodded wisely. To a man, his servitors still possessed a nucleus of superstitious belief. They were impressed by this marvel, just as others had been swayed by Shan Kwan's fables of the Fate Joss and its power.

The Shadow was beckoning. As each Chinaman approached, The Shadow's long fingers raised a stack of coins and dropped them into a trembling palm. Instinctively, each fellow clamped his other hand upon the money. None were omitted. There were eight in all, including Noy Dow. Each stepped back, sober of expression, clinging tightly to the coins.

"Who is the traitor?"

The Shadow's query was a hiss that brought shudders to huddled shoulders. Then came The Shadow's own answer to his question:

"The traitor! His coins shall name him!"

The Shadow beckoned to Tuan. Shaking, the first Chinaman came to the desk and half opened his hands. He was about to count the coins when The Shadow delivered an order:

"Drop them!"

Tuan let the coins clatter on the desk. The Shadow stopped their rolling and spread them out for the count. There were exactly six. Scooping the loose cash, The Shadow swept them into the opened drawer.

Leng was next. He neared the desk, then opened his hands as if he had experienced an electric shock. The Shadow trapped the coins and counted them. Six again. The cash went into the drawer.

Wing Sook of the tea shop laid his hands calmly upon the desk and let his coins fall gently so they did not roll. He, too, had six. He stepped back with a relieved smile.

The Shadow motioned to Noy Dow, the next in line. Copying Wing Sook's example, the secretary let the cash fall from his half-opened hands, then, with a confident grin, joined the other Chinese.

"Look, Doctor Tam!" The Shadow's exclamation made Noy Dow stare. "See these coins that Noy Dow has returned. They are not six in number."

"There are only five!" put in Doctor Tam, his tone perplexed. "Only five coins –"

"There stands the traitor!"

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THE SHADOW'S accusing finger pointed out Noy Dow. A changed expression had swept the student's bespectacled face. Noy Dow was cringing; half-faltering, he tried to edge toward the door. His left fist was closed, stealing furtively toward his pocket.

"Each had but six coins." The Shadow's sinister tone was almost a contemptuous sneer. "There was to be no seventh. Yet the guilty man believed there would be one coin more; for he had seen Satsu count out seven.

"I knew that whoever feared his guilt would also fear possession of a seventh coin. So sure was Noy Dow that he held it that he kept one coin within his left hand, thereby hoping to drop only six.

"Instead, he dropped but five; for six was all he held. He tricked himself into his own betrayal. Within his left hand, he holds the coin he stole from the six. That missing coin is the mark of his treachery!"

Doctor Tam came leaping from his desk. With driving hand, he caught Noy Dow's wrist and forced open the student's fingers. The stolen coin lay glistening in Noy Dow's perspiring palm.

Realizing the folly that he had performed through his own tenseness, Noy Dow could only blurt a single gasp.

Dragging the guilty man to the desk, Doctor Tam waved for the others to leave. All departed, including Satsu. Noy Dow was slumping, moaning piteously. Doctor Tam settled him in a chair. When the student looked up, he saw himself faced by the eyes of his master; turning, Noy Dow shuddered as he caught The Shadow's gleaming gaze.

"I—I gave up the prisoners," gurgled Noy Dow. "I yielded them— to Shan Kwan—because—because of his niece, Loy Ming. She came here when I called her—they took the drink that brought long sleep —"

"Long sleep!" queried Doctor Tam.

"Yes." Noy Dow steadied. "So they would not wake until this evening. Loy Ming has called me, telling me that they dined with Shan Kwan. Dined, though they believed that it was no later than morning."

The Shadow's burning gaze showed understanding. Cliff had called Burbank from Shan Kwan's. That part was logical; but why had Cliff made false statements? Noy Dow's next words explained.

"Shan Kwan had given them—given them the torture," stammered the student. "The—the torture that is pleasant; that he calls the torture of delight. One man withstood it; he was given a drink that dazed him. The other—the other had drunk pleasantly. He had smelled the incense; he had heard the music. Both were sweet.

"Shan Kwan cajoled him. The prisoner told much; then wrote as Shan Kwan directed. After that, he called by telephone, repeating what Shan Kwan had said to say; believing that he was doing as he should do. Through that prisoner's speech, guards were drawn away. Shan Kwan has gained the Fate Joss—with its War Dogs."

DOCTOR TAM was seated with head bowed. Noy Dow's treachery had crushed him. At last the physician straightened; his eyes glinted with just frenzy. But before he could loose a tirade against Noy Dow, The Shadow stopped him.

Strangely, The Shadow's tone had taken on a gentleness. Its mild and kindly understanding astonished Noy Dow. Expecting condemnation, the secretary was amazed to hear The Shadow's plea in his behalf.

"I suspected Noy Dow," The Shadow told Doctor Tam, "but I knew you trusted him. That was why I wanted you to realize—of your own accord – what he had done. Sometime, however, acts are performed through

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fear. Not fear for self, but for another. Such deeds are not always treachery. Let us hear Noy Dow tell why he yielded to the command of Shan Kwan."

Doctor Tam nodded slowly. His eyes lost their outraged glare. He, like The Shadow, gazed in kindly fashion. Noy Dow spoke soberly.

"I feared for Loy Ming," he said, slowly. "Shan Kwan is powerful. Unless I aided him, she would have suffered. Had you been there, Doctor Tam, I could have told you; but your stay was too short to allow me time.

"While Shan Kwan holds Loy Ming in his power, she will suffer if she disobeys him. Not only that, he threatened to make me suffer if she failed him. I did not care for myself; but Loy Ming cared because of me.

"If I could find a way to release Loy Ming from her uncle—to protect her with no future fear, I would go through any ordeal. Shan Kwan has told me that I may come with him; that I may marry Loy Ming and dwell with them. But that will not be happiness, not while Shan Kwan still lives.

"I have listened to his words; but I was never more than half believer. Those who come to him are influenced by the compelling hospitality that he offers. Drink, incense, music—those delights control the senses and make men the slaves of Shan Kwan. Yet only those of less resistance—such as Hoang Fu—will become fanatics at the mandarin's wish.

"To me, there is no such happiness. My love for Loy Ming counts more than all else. Should I dwell in Shan Kwan's palace, my consciousness of his evil would bring me constant fear for Loy Ming's safety. Yet I must go there; that I may suffer with Loy Ming."

SINCERE were the words that had poured from Noy Dow's lips. Doctor Tam sat stupefied. He was impressed by the student's statements; and his feeling was one of utter hopelessness concerning the struggle with Shan Kwan. Then came The Shadow's whispered laugh.

Doctor Tam stared, almost challenging; but his face changed as he heard the words that followed. With The Shadow's speech came a solution that brought a firm smile to the physician's lips, an expression which Noy Dow reflected.

"Noy Dow has spoken well," pronounced The Shadow. "He shall go to live with Shan Kwan the Mandarin. His purpose will not be to suffer misery with Loy Ming. Instead, Noy Dow shall serve in the very cause which he approves.

"Your aim, Noy Dow, will be to gain the facts we need. To be ready for the stroke that we shall deliver. To serve in the rescue of men who are prisoners. To regain the Fate Joss that belongs in Jehol. When you have paved the way, Noy Dow, I shall visit the palace of the mandarin.

"I, The Shadow, shall come there to forever end the menace of Shan Kwan."

Whispered echoes followed The Shadow's forbidding pronouncement. Strange silence filled that little room where Doctor Tam and Noy Dow sat nodding, their unblinking eyes fixed steadily upon the black-cloaked visitant. The lips of both were firmly smiling, as hope of the future envisioned itself within their brains.

Doctor Roy Tam, honest in his efforts to aid the progress of his fellow Chinese, had reached the low ebb in his struggle against the evil mandarin, Shan Kwan. Even Noy Dow, the right arm of Doctor Tam, had yielded to the thrusts of the superfoe.

Had Doctor Tam learned this alone, he would have given up all struggle, gone into hiding to avoid Shan Kwan's machinations. Incriminated in the eyes of Yat Soon, the arbiter, because of Hoang Fu's murders, Doctor Tam's only resource would have been in flight.

But such plight had not fallen. In face of all adversity, Doctor Tam's cause had been revived. A counterstroke would soon be prepared, with Noy Dow as the instrument. The case against Shan Kwan had been established. The thrust against that fiend of evil was to be delivered by The Shadow!

CHAPTER XX. THE LAST GUEST

DOCTOR ROY TAM was seated alone within his little office. It was the third night after The Shadow's first visit; and the Chinese physician was busily engaged in studying papers that lay before him. A knock at the door caused him to give an order. The portal opened and Tuan entered.

"One more, Doctor Tam," announced Tuan, placing an envelope upon the desk. "It came to my little restaurant, like the others. Brought there by Leng."

"Excellent, Tuan!"

Doctor Tam nodded; Tuan departed. Hastily opening the envelope, the physician drew out folded papers. As he spread them upon the desk, a gleaming smile came to his lips. Tam thwacked one hand upon the papers and reached for the telephone with the other.

"That is unnecessary, Doctor Tam," came a quiet voice behind him. "A call would be useless, since I am here."

Tam wheeled about to face The Shadow, who had entered, unnoticed, from the rear panel, just after Tuan's departure from the front. Eagerly, Tam sprang to his feet and pointed to the papers.

"All is here!" he cried. "All that we need! Noy Dow has finally gained everything."

The Shadow seated himself while Doctor Tam arranged papers all over the desk. Together, they began a study of the information, while Doctor Tam, unable to restrain his enthusiasm, kept talking of the facts that they had gleaned.

"Your men are safe, of course," he said to The Shadow. "Noy Dow learned that the first night at Shan Kwan's. His story went well with the mandarin: that I had learned of his treachery; he had been forced to flee. That was all he had to say."

"As you decided in our conference, Noy Dow was able to enlist Loy Ming's aid in sending out this word. The girl has wisely built up the mandarin's trust. She goes frequently on errands; but never far from home. Leng was clever enough to be waiting when she passed. He received each envelope unnoticed."

"Noy Dow's last message states that he received the package," observed The Shadow. "That was well accomplished."

"Loy Ming gained it this afternoon," chuckled Tam. "The gold-leaved vases that Shan Kwan had ordered were ready at the store of the Cantonese merchant. Wook has been employed there. He placed the package in the largest vase. One of Shan Kwan's servants carried it for Loy Ming."

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THE SHADOW was examining a chart that lay on Tam's desk. This showed a complete diagram of Shan Kwan's abode. Three floors, cellar and subbasement were all outlined in full detail. Doctor Tam checked certain points.

"There are four ways of entry to Shan Kwan's," he stated. "That at the front—the only one that is supposedly known—would be hopeless. Dropping barriers and trap-like floors are prevalent. They would cut off all escape.

"The way through the Ancient Chinese Bazaar is better; but there are men there who secretly serve Shan Kwan. They would offer resistance; they would spread alarm. The barriers that exist, though few, would hold back even a large attacking force.

"This third is but poorly guarded. One single barrier is all; though probably it is fitted with a signal. Shan Kwan relies upon its obscurity; for it opens into the unused cellar of a laundry. That obscurity would serve others, however. Others such as ourselves, who might wish to enter secretly."

"What of this?" inquired The Shadow, pointing to a dotted passage that followed off from the sub-basement. "It is not explained in the diagram."

"This message mentions it. That is where Shan Kwan keeps his long, swift power boat. It is in a channel that leads to the East River. Should danger threaten, he could depart at great speed, carrying a few tons of valuable furnishings. That channel, however, affords no entrance. The boat is isolated, within barred iron doors. I have shown the way, here, through the laundry —"

The Shadow's long forefinger moved across the chart. It stopped at the front entrance, the way that all visitors went to see Shan Kwan.

"You will enter there?" queried Doctor Tam, astounded. "Straight into the trap?"

"Yes." The Shadow's tone was decisive. "I shall come to see Shan Kwan as a friend. As one sent to him by Yat Soon, the arbiter."

"You have talked with Yat Soon!"

"He has heard all. As arbiter, he can not move without a complaint from one who acknowledges his authority. On that account, Doctor Tam, he cannot hear your plea. He does, however, send you greetings, with wishes that you may live long and finally dwell within the tomb of your ancestors."

"Old China," chuckled Tam. Then, soberly: "Your path into the mandarin's abode is prepared; but what of your departure?"

THE SHADOW considered the chart. At one place on the lower floor the diagram showed a row of rooms; it was in one of these that Harry and Cliff were kept as imprisoned guests. No other apartments were available for such purpose.

The Shadow started his finger from that point. He traced a labyrinth of passages, finally arriving at the underground temple. Doctor Tam watched The Shadow's finger pause.

"These doors will be open," declared The Shadow, emphatically, "for they are temple doors. Through the secret passage at the back of the temple, then to the side door that leads into the laundry basement.

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"That shall be the mode of exit, Doctor Tam. While I am within, you and your men must be preparing. Strike through to meet us, aided by the two men whom I am sending with you."

"Your plan is wise," nodded Doctor Tam. "I would have said to go directly down the passage that leads to the side door; but I see that there is one barrier to conquer there. Unless it should be open —"

"It would not serve our purpose. We must gain the Fate Joss in this fight. That is why I have chosen the route through the temple. The rear portal will just be large enough to carry the great Joss through."

Doctor Tam gaped in admiration. He had pictured a fight with minions of Shan Kwan; he had even hoped for a chance to deal with the mandarin in person. His imagination, however, had been limited to thoughts of rescue as the greatest culmination.

The Shadow was making an examination of notations that had come from Noy Dow. The secretary, apparently a convert to Shan Kwan's cult, had been allowed to visit the temple. He had reported that the Fate Joss was standing on a teakwood pedestal, with a War Dog on each side.

"Noy Dow has done well," commended The Shadow. "He did not forget to obtain the description that I asked, the exact condition of the Fate Joss—those thin, straight lines that cross the plugged muzzles of the War Dogs. He added those facts to the measurements that Loy Ming gave him of the rear door."

The Shadow studied another paragraph.

"We are fortunate," he declared, "to have gained news this evening. At midnight, Shan Kwan holds a meeting of his cult. The gathering will take place in his reception room, on the floor above the temple."

"Which means," assured Doctor Tam, "that a full hundred will be there: Shan Kwan has gained many listeners in Chinatown. It means also that your visit will have to be postponed."

"It means," pronounced The Shadow, with a mocking tinge, "that our stroke shall come this very night. At midnight!"

DOCTOR TAM stammered. He did not think The Shadow could be jesting; yet the suggestion of action at the hour of assemblage was the last possibility that he had expected.

"At midnight," added The Shadow, firmly, "Shan Kwan will be occupied with his cult. The very fact that he has numbers will make him derisive of opposition. Moreover, he will not wish to bring these new followers into a fray. He would prefer to rely upon his servants."

"Most of them will be upstairs. Our work will be half accomplished before they arrive. Midnight, Doctor Tam, will be our hour. That is when you are to invade by the side entrance. Be careful to assemble your men quietly; because police are present."

"My men are watching the police," stated Tam, still lost in admiration at The Shadow's explanation of his midnight choice. "My men, moreover, are of quiet, abiding nature. The very last whom the police will observe. Despite the fact that their leader—the famous Detective Cardona—is in charge of their forces."

"The law will have its part," assured The Shadow. "That will begin, once we have made our rescue. Have the truck in readiness for the Fate Joss, within the garage behind the laundry."

The Shadow was donning his black gloves. A look of query came upon Doctor Tam's face. Hopelessly, the Chinaman pointed to the diagram, his finger upon that block of rooms that flanked the chamber holding Harry and Cliff.

"Your stroke starts from here!" exclaimed Doctor Tam. "But how can you reach this spot? Once you begin battle with Shan Kwan, in his reception room, your path will be blocked by —"

"I shall not start conflict with Shan Kwan," interposed The Shadow, with a whispered laugh. "I shall visit him as his guest. As his guest I shall remain."

The cloaked figure swished through the opened panel, while Doctor Tam stood wide-mouthed. For the first time, Tam had realized the daring of The Shadow's strategy. The Shadow intended to dine with Shan Kwan tonight!

As guest, The Shadow would experience the delights that gave the mandarin power over those who met him. Lulled and stupefied, he would sink beneath Shan Kwan's power. Helpless in the mandarin's control, he would be carried to the confinement of a prison like the one his agents occupied.

Yet The Shadow's stroke was set for midnight; he had commanded Doctor Tam to attack at the same hour. For a moment, Doctor Tam felt doubt; his confidence in The Shadow wavered. Then came the realization that if The Shadow dared this venture, he must surely know that he could endure it.

Doctor Tam's mind reverted to three nights ago, when that lone black conqueror had invaded this very room, herding a squad of temporary foemen beneath the muzzles of his automatics. That recollection brought a smile of surety; a nod of the physician's head.

With The Shadow—so Doctor Tam was willing to concede—the incredible was possible. Despite the dangers that lay ahead, the odds that The Shadow must encounter, there was a chance of full success. Wild though it seemed to him, Doctor Tam could even visualize the recapture of the Fate Joss from Jehol.

CHAPTER XXI. THE SHADOW'S TEST

TINKLING music; perfumed incense; soft light that added to the languor of an exotic scene. Such was the interior of Shan Kwan's reception room, for the present a dining hall, where two figures sat beside a teakwood table.

One was Shan Kwan the Mandarin. Clad in a robe of vivid scarlet, adorned with golden dragons, Shan Kwan was chuckling as he surveyed his guest. For the cloaked visitor across the table was leaning heavily as he toyed with a newly filled cup.

"Time passes pleasantly here," observed Shan Kwan, speaking in high caste Chinese dialect. "It is an honor, always, to have as guests those who are friends of Yat Soon."

The Shadow, hatless, allowed a smile to appear upon his lips. He was wearing the disguise that Yat Soon had given him; his face was that of a Chinaman. His features, however, showed no inflexibility. Under Shan Kwan's delightful torture, his firmness had relaxed.

"In courtesy," declared The Shadow, slowly, "I have come as one of China. A courtesy to Yat Soon; and to yourself, Shan Kwan. I have spoken the language of your choice."

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He paused and raised the golden goblet to his lips. Shan Kwan watched him quaff it at a single draught. It was the same sweet nectar that Cliff Marsland had tasted. Shan Kwan clapped his hands. A servant arrived, with a silver bottle. He poured a cup full of the liquid that had dazed Harry Vincent.

"I have returned your courtesy," reminded Shan Kwan. "I have told you of those men who served you; those whom I rescued from the schemer, Doctor Roy Tam. They are my guests; and they are happy here.

"They told me much concerning you. Too much, perhaps." Smiling, the mandarin paused: "But I would not allow them to continue their indiscretion. They have dined with me since; but always with little conversation.

"For I expected you in person, Ying Ko. You, whom men of your own country call The Shadow. I wished to tell you of Doctor Roy Tam, that you might deal with him. It is rightfully your task, Ying Ko. For Doctor Tam, through his servant, Hoang Fu, has dealt doom to your countrymen."

THE SHADOW'S eyes revealed a sudden blaze. Soft light glinted from those optics as indication that his fury had been aroused. The flash ended; apparently The Shadow was too lulled to think further concerning punishment for Doctor Tam.

The girasol sparkled as The Shadow's left hand raised the golden cup. The guest drank of the tartish liquid; moved his lips in enjoyment of the taste; then finished the goblet. He tried to speak; but wavered slightly.

Another clap of Shan Kwan's hands. The servant arrived with the bottle and again filled the cup. Eyelids half closed, The Shadow drank again, this time slowly. His words were mumbled, incoherent. Shan Kwan spoke.

"The hour of nine had passed when you did me the honor of arriving here," he said. "Since then, two more have gone; we have talked of China. I had told you of the Fate Joss that stands within the temple of the open doors.

"Though I, through odd circumstance, became the instrument of its removal, I did not take it willingly, Ying Ko. You have told me that you gained it in hope that it would be sent to China. There, some day, it shall be; if the Joss itself so chooses.

"For the present it dwells with me, along with its muzzled War Dogs, in a resting place that well befits it. The destiny of the Fate Joss is its own. You were once its instrument. The doors of its abode are always open for those who served the mighty Fate Joss. If —"

Shan Kwan stopped. The Shadow was swaying. His cloak had fallen, revealing the top of his Chinese tunic. The mandarin beckoned to two servants. They came forward and caught The Shadow as he slumped. While they raised him to his feet, another person entered the room—Loy Ming.

Placidly, the girl watched The Shadow rally long enough to pick up his slouch hat and groggily place it on his head. For a brief instant, Loy Ming's eyes reflected deep concern. Then the girl caught her uncle's gaze. She heard his order to conduct this stupefied guest to his room.

Loy Ming led the way down the stairway, past the open temple. Even the glitter of the Fate Joss, standing on its pedestal, did not capture The Shadow's interest. His staggers became greater as he was moved along the hall. Looking back, Loy Ming saw that her uncle's servants were searching their human burden in quest of hidden weapons.

They found none. The Shadow had come unarmed. When he reached the door of his designated room, he floundered heavily. Swaying almost from the grasp of the servant, he jolted toward Loy Ming and thrust out a

hand to clutch at the girl's arm.

Loy Ming aided the men to support The Shadow. As she did, she felt his hand tighten on hers.

OPENING her fingers, the girl received a squarely wadded note. Keeping it hidden, she stepped back to let the mandarin's men carry The Shadow into his room. She saw the slouch hat fall to the floor. The cloak trailed as The Shadow sprawled wearily upon his couch.

The servants returned. They dropped the brass door. Loy Ming let them precede her along the passage. When they made a turn, she quickly opened the paper, to find two folded wads within. One was addressed to her—Loy Ming—the other to Noy Dow. Both names faded as the girl stared.

Remembering her own slip, Loy Ming unfolded it and read instructions for both herself and Noy Dow. This writing vanished word by word, for it was in the same special ink as the names. She realized that the still folded note—Noy Dow's—would retain its writing until it contacted the air. She knew also that it must contain duplicate instructions, in case she did not have opportunity to speak with the young Chinaman.

That was forethought on The Shadow's part; for Loy Ming was not sure that she would see Noy Dow except in the presence of her uncle. Moreover, time was short; it was quite close to midnight, and The Shadow's instructions called for action at that hour. He had told nothing of his plans; only the parts that she and Noy Dow were to play.

The girl realized that she had lingered long when she reached the passage that led by the temple. The servants were waiting for her to arrive and unlock the door. The papers safely in the pocket of her robe, Loy Ming hurried along and unbarred the way. As she opened the upper door, she encountered Noy Dow, just about to unlock the door from the other side.

Shan Kwan was still at the table. Evidently he had wondered why Loy Ming had delayed and had sent Noy Dow to get her. Shan Kwan had shown great courtesy to his prospective nephew, giving Noy Dow full liberty to do as he chose. This was not only good policy with a new convert to the cult; it was also in keeping with the tradition of old China. As a male member of the family, Noy Dow was entitled to complete privileges.

Loy Ming, a woman, was little better than a servant, in Shan Kwan's estimate. Realizing that her uncle meant to chide her, Loy Ming gave a quick whisper as she thrust the message into Noy Dow's hand. The student bowed low to Shan Kwan and spoke in English,

"Honored sir," he declared, "I shall visit the temple. I shall bow before the mighty Joss, that favor shall be shown to me and all within this abode."

Shan Kwan dismissed Noy Dow with a nod of approval. The student heard him speak to one of the servants, using a dialect with which Noy Dow was familiar. Then, without daring a glance toward Loy Ming, Noy Dow descended.

OUTSIDE the temple, he opened the note and read it. He glanced at his watch and saw that it lacked only twenty minutes until midnight. Already, Noy Dow knew, cult members were being admitted through the outer portal; but they were being herded in a lower reception room.

This part of the long-halled building was deserted. Noy Dow had every chance to hurry about unobserved. He reached the hall where the prison rooms were kept. He paused in that portion of the maze and looked down a long corridor which ended in a door.

That was the way to the sub-cellar; Noy Dow had gained keys from Loy Ming. There was no need, however, to go in that direction. Instead, Noy Dow hastened along the passage past the prison rooms.

At the end of it, he came to a low-ceilinged arch that housed an emergency door. That was the possible barrier which Doctor Tam had pointed out to The Shadow. It cut off the side of the building and could be controlled from the reception hall. The barrier was up; the way being open, Noy Dow took it. He followed a passage that brought him to the secret side entrance.

Here was a barred door. Laboriously, Noy Dow loosened its fastenings and unlocked it with one of his keys. He grinned in satisfaction. The Shadow had ordered it opened, if possible, for exit; Noy Dow had guessed that invaders might be coming in by that opening. They would still have to break a wooden outer door; but Noy Dow was too cautious to risk a trip through the passage that led to it. He had to be on the watch for a chance prowling servant.

Time was getting shorter. Hurrying back, Noy Dow stopped and listened to footsteps in another passage. Some one of Shan Kwan's servants was on inspection duty. Noy Dow had found since his arrival here that the mandarin had a much greater retinue than the outside world supposed. Fully fifty attendants were in Shan Kwan's employ.

Footsteps lingered; Noy Dow guessed they were in the passage by the prison rooms. At last they departed. Noy Dow hurried past the archway with its raised barrier and reached the prison rooms. He stopped at the door of the one where The Shadow had been placed. He looked at his watch; it showed six minutes to twelve.

As Noy Dow waited, a sudden clang alarmed him. He swung about just in time to see the archway barrier drop shut. Another clang came from further away. Noy Dow gasped; it was a dropping barrier of which he had not learned; one that cut off the passage to the deep sub-cellar. Noy Dow's exit keys would be useless because of that intervening door.

Metal-faced barriers had made this place a trap. Before they could be beaten down, Shan Kwan's attackers would be here. Somehow, the mandarin must have learned that an escape was under way. Still, the cause was not lost. The path past the massive solid brass doors of the temple room stood clear. Those doors were always open; and the course through the abode of the Fate Joss was the one that The Shadow had chosen.

By the little door at the back of that temple room, a way could be found to the obscure side exit into the laundry. Haste was essential, before Shan Kwan guessed that the temple route would be used. Noy Dow waited no longer.

Fumbling for the proper key, he started to unlock The Shadow's door. As he did, he heard the sharp babble of approaching voices, coming toward this passage. Seconds only remained for Noy Dow to open that room wherein The Shadow—only a short while before—had been flung upon a couch in helpless stupor!

CHAPTER XXII. WITHIN THE TEMPLE

INSIDE his prison room, The Shadow was seated on the edge of the couch. His dizziness still persisted, despite the fact that he had stood the test. Through sheer will, The Shadow had conquered the effects of those two last draughts that he had taken to deceive Shan Kwan.

All during his repast with the mandarin, The Shadow had fought off the overpowering influences that had inflicted themselves upon his senses. His besotted actions had been feigned; but he had actually felt the daze-provoking liquid that Shan Kwan's servant had poured as a finishing touch.

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The Shadow heard Noy Dow's key in the outside of the door—the only side that could be unlocked. Rousing, he drew a tiny phial from an inner pocket of his Chinese tunic. He quaffed a purplish liquid from this little bottle that Shan Kwan's men had not discovered. The elixir gave The Shadow vigor.

Dizziness counteracted, fully garbed in cloak and hat, The Shadow was springing forward as the door came open. Out into the hall—not one second too soon. Already two of Shan Kwan's men had arrived to discover Noy Dow opening the door. The Shadow sprang past the student, to deal with the attackers.

Both clutched knives. The first lunged to hurl his blade. Sweeping in, The Shadow clutched the assassin and drove the rogue's arms upward. The knife flew to the wall. Hurling the man with terrific force, The Shadow bowled over the second attacker with the first man's body. Another knife skidded wide.

Noy Dow had unlocked another door. Harry and Cliff, their faces gaunt from imprisonment, were coming to The Shadow's aid. Shan Kwan had lied when he had said that he had shown them new hospitality at his own table. They had been living here on simple fare, brought them by his servants. That, after all, was fortunate. Their senses were keen again; they were weary of confinement and ready for battle.

"The package," blurted Noy Dow, starting to unlock a third door. "I hid it—in this room—after Loy Ming gave it to me."

The door came open. Noy Dow sprang through and pulled a package from beneath a couch. It contained automatics and their ammunition. Not waiting to open it, Noy Dow dashed back into the hall.

Harry and Cliff yanked the package open; as they did, they followed The Shadow, for he had hissed a command. The sprawled Chinamen had scurried away while The Shadow was gaining their discarded knives. As The Shadow neared the turn of a passage, four Mongols headed into view – two with knives; the others with revolvers. With a flash, a blade whirred from The Shadow's hand.

Yellow lips screamed as the knife ploughed deep into the breast of a revolver-bearing Mongol. The other gun carrier aimed; as his hammer clicked on that inevitable empty chamber, The Shadow's second knife whistled straight for his heart. Leaping, twisting; the Chinaman received the blade in his side. As he sprawled, the other pair of Mongols hurled their dirks at The Shadow.

The black shape faded sidewise. One knife sliced the edge of the hat brim; the other slithered through the folds of the cloak. The Shadow laughed his challenge, his mirth a mockery. The knife-throwers dived for cover; beaten at their own game, they left their sprawled companions.

REVOLVERS lay where The Shadow could gain them; but he did not need the weapons. Cliff was coming up from the last passage, swinging automatics for his chief to clutch. The Shadow snatched a brace of weapons and led a mad dash forward. Cliff and Harry were close behind, guns in hands and pockets. Noy Dow lingered long enough to grab up the Chinese revolvers.

They met with fight when they reached the passage that led by the temple room. In that wide hall, a dozen men were ready; fierce Mongols, who, like the others, varied in their choice of knives and guns.

The Shadow's automatics thundered; Harry and Cliff joined the barrage. The promptness of the attack sent Shan Kwan's vanguard scudding.

The Shadow did not pause as yellow forms dived into side passage. He had one objective: the room of the Fate Joss, where Loy Ming should be waiting. He and the others reached it; they dashed through the opened portal. Past the Fate Joss and its War Dogs; there, The Shadow stopped. Bound and gagged upon the floor

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was the form of Loy Ming. The girl's eyes were plaintive. They tried their best to speak in response to The Shadow's gaze.

A key was lying beside Loy Ming. Noy Dow snatched it up; in hope of safety, he leaped to the rear of the room and unlocked the rear panel, just past one of the screens. He turned about, stuttering hopelessly. The panel was open—but beyond it lay a huge barrier of steel. Shan Kwan had dropped a secret bulwark; there was no escape this way.

The Shadow saw the barrier. He wheeled toward the outer doors, where Cliff and Harry were standing ready between the gem-encrusted Fate Joss and the steps. Before he could give a command, babbling cries of triumph sounded from without. Swinging sheets of brass curved into view.

The big brass doors were coming shut, manned by arriving henchmen of the mandarin. Mongol forms were safe behind those closing walls. The Shadow sprang forward, too late; the doors clanged tight and huge chains clanked beyond them.

Then came a strange, tremendous hissing from all about. Through slits in the brass walls and ceiling surged jets of greenish smoke. Curling inward, loosed fumes of poison gas were threatening their final doom. Trapped within metal walls, with a barred double door the only exit, The Shadow and his companions were faced with the prospect of short minutes in which life remained.

Loy Ming, released by Noy Dow, was blurting out the hopeless news. Her uncle had suspected her; he had forced her to tell facts. He had sent down serfs to slay; but he had been ready with this final trap for any who might reach the temple.

The cult had assembled. Within ten minutes, the deadly gas would fulfill its task. Outside were all of Shan Kwan's henchmen, completely assembled to gloat at the fate of the unfortunates. That squad of nearly fifty would open the doors later, that the gas might thin.

Then would Shan Kwan come; the mandarin and a hundred of his cult, to see the dead forms of unbelievers, sacrificed at the feet of the mighty Fate Joss. Such was Loy Ming's brief, spasmodic tale, delivered in less than fifty seconds.

THE gas hissed on, its venomous wreaths coiling snakelike toward the center of the room. Ominous was the sound; yet it seemed to lose its terrifying aspect when it was drowned by an eerie burst of rising laughter that broke back from brazen walls with clanging echo.

The laugh of The Shadow. Rising in fierce crescendo, it mocked the devices of Shan Kwan. Even within this trap of doom, the black-cloaked warrior was unperturbed. Shan Kwan the Mandarin was yet to learn of The Shadow's stalwart might!

Solid though this trap might be; overwhelming though the numbers were beyond it, The Shadow was ready for conquest. Outlined before the leering statue of the Fate Joss, he had issued challenge to the unhearing foe. Golden eyeballs glared from the idol's face, their jeweled pupils glittering amid the slow-increasing wreaths of poisonous green.

Had they possessed sight, those eyes of metal would have been prepared to witness the most amazing episode of all that the idol had experienced. Upright before the towering image of the Fate Joss, The Shadow was prepared to prove that he—not the lifeless idol—was the one who could shape his chosen destiny!

CHAPTER XXIII. THE JOSS CULT MEETS

MIGHTY doors of massive brass, their joined opening airtight, so closely was it shut. Those were the barriers that blocked escape—so formidable that they baffled human strength. The Shadow had foreseen their danger and their use. He had known that he already held an answer to their strength.

Cliff Marsland had been careful with the package that contained the guns. The Shadow, eyeing him in the passage, had seen him thrust small objects in his pocket. One was a flashlight, which The Shadow did not need. The other was a long but slender metal cylinder.

It was for this The Shadow called. Quickly Cliff produced it. He watched The Shadow draw forth fuses. Waving his companions back behind the massive Fate Joss, The Shadow inserted the first fuse in an opening at the base of one squatty dog cannon.

A sudden understanding came to Noy Dow as the young Chinese saw The Shadow twist away the plug that was wedged within the War Dog's muzzle. Those marks that he had seen on muzzle and plug, that he had looked for at The Shadow's order. Being exact, those thin lines indicated that the plugs had not been removed!

A match from the metal cylinder flared. Greenish amid the gas-filling room, The Shadow lighted the fuse. In that deed lay the crucial test. Should the incoming gas be inflammable, and already thickening, it might ignite. But apparently Shan Kwan, always wise, had preferred to store away poison vapors that were fireproof. Only the fuse from the dog cannon took the flame. It sputtered rapidly.

The Shadow was at the second cannon, inserting its fuse. He wrenched away the plug; then spun about and joined the others behind the Fate Joss. No need to aim that first War Dog; Shan Kwan himself had set it facing toward the portals.

The War Dog barked as the fuse finished. The blast from its throat was like a huge, hoarse cough. From its muzzle roared a bomb-like, rounded shell, lost amid the volume of smoke that issued from the ancient bronze mortar. The missile reached its mark, the closed brass doors.

The room shook with a powerful explosion. Coiling green gas quivered. Flame roared from the blast; with it, sheets of brass twisted wide in a riot of ripping glitter. Into that ancient cannon, The Shadow had inserted a shell filled with explosive of modern power.

He had done this as a protection when he had held the Joss; that his agents, in emergency, might battle off a horde. Here, in Shan Kwan's underground temple, the War Dog and its load had served a greater purpose.

BRAZEN doors had vanished. Their centers had been blown to fragments; what was left of their sides had hurtled outward with that terrific burst of power. Beyond lay the nearest members of Shan Kwan's cohorts, buried in the wreckage. The greenish vapor was spreading out into the hall; its deadly fumes were thinning into nothingness. Smoke was still issuing from the seated War Dog; like a faithful beast, the statted cannon seemed proud of the task that it had done.

Fierce shouts from the hall. Yellow faces came to view. Still forty strong, Shan Kwan's men were ready to attack. They saw The Shadow swinging out from behind the Fate Joss, stooping, with lighted match in hand. Revolvers barked as he whirled back to cover, leaving a sitting fuse at the base of the second War Dog.

A phalanx of invaders was forming on the steps. With wild shouts, the horde surged forward, bent on

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annihilating their victims. An automatic flashed from behind the Fate Joss, and below the pedestal. Revolvers answered, by the dozen. Amid the bedlam, the second War Dog growled.

Its blast brought no crash. Instead, it delivered withering results. The first shot had struck the doors a few feet above the level of the steps. This bomb encountered the surging herd instead. It exploded amid a thick rank of downward-driving Mongols.

The foremost invaders were thrown to the floor by the concussion, as were those who were still coming from the sides of the hall. Sprawling Mongols were everywhere, except in the center of the doorway itself. That stretch was an absolute void. Nearly half of Shan Kwan's murderous array was swept into oblivion at a single burst.

A dozen fighters were coming to hands and knees, to open bewildered fire toward the Fate Joss. Bullets ricocheted from statue and pedestal; in return, automatics boomed from behind the shelter. The Shadow, with Harry and Cliff, was ready for those who still remained within the room.

Three against twelve—now four, for Noy Dow was joining in with his revolvers, while Loy Ming crouched behind her protectors.

Out in the hall, a dozen robed Celestials were scattering, abandoning their foolish companions who had remained to attack an ambush. The futile revolver fire ended; a handful of beaten invaders fled from among sprawling bodies, scurrying for the safety of the corridor.

THE SHADOW led the pursuit. His automatics pumped as he, too, reached the wide hall. The others with him, he drove along the passages, heading back toward the corridor where the prison rooms lay. As his fire ceased for want of foemen, huge, clanging sounds came to his ears. Brass was clattering as The Shadow reached the final passage.

The sliding door that Noy Dow had seen drop from the archway had been demolished. Strong, yet far less formidable than the doors of the temple room, it had yielded to the blows of an enormous sledgehammer. Jericho was standing beyond the wrecked barrier; clutching the sledge in his mammoth fists. He had entered—he and Hawkeye—with Doctor Tam and the loyal Chinese.

Doctor Tam had news when he dashed through to greet The Shadow. The physician gave it quickly.

"The police!" he uttered. "Trouble started in the Ancient Chinese Bazaar. I heard the report from Leng; the mandarin has called in more men. Cardona saw the excitement; he is forcing an entry. Police are all about! We cannot use the truck!"

The Shadow beckoned Tam toward the passage to the temple room. Tam's squad, a mere half dozen, came with their leader. On the way, The Shadow pointed to the brass door that cut off the passage to the sub-cellar. He ordered Jericho to work. The huge fellow attacked it with his sledge; the door clanged and quivered.

The combined forces reached the temple room. Doctor Tam's six men raised the Fate Joss. Harry and Cliff caught the ends of the statue; carrying it horizontally, the crew took it through the passage. No sign of the remnants of the mandarin's men; they had gone for cover.

The Fate Joss reached the door where Jericho still hammered. Men dashed back to get the War Dogs. The door's usefulness was ended when they returned, accompanied by The Shadow. Carriers prepared to move the Fate Joss through the passage. It was then that distant cries resounded.

"The reserves!" gasped Doctor Tam. "Coming from that direction, from the Ancient Chinese Bazaar. They will rally the others. Coming in between us and the empty temple room."

The Shadow hissed a command. His agents started the Joss through the passage. They were the same four who had moved it once before. Loy Ming preceded them, with the keys; while Noy Dow helped hoist the idol.

The Shadow spoke to Doctor Tam; he nodded. He and his men would cover the departure; and hold out until the War Dogs, too, had been removed.

The Shadow turned away, alone. He hastened back, toward the temple room; he reached a passage and halted there. He could hear cries from Doctor Tam's men—a lure for those who were coming. The Shadow saw a final flood of Shan Kwan's followers. Cutting into a passage that he had passed, they dashed in the direction of the cries.

Shots began as The Shadow followed. Doctor Tam had ordered a prompt fire. Amid the yells of the new attackers, The Shadow opened with his automatics along a flanking corridor. His fierce laugh rose to a mighty pitch. Foemen turned; sight of the avenger startled them.

Tam's men were surging, given opportunity through The Shadow's enfilading fire. Shan Kwan's remnants broke for shelter. As The Shadow gave them leeway, they chose passages that led back to the bazaar. They were ready to meet the police, in preference.

Shots died. Scudding footsteps told that The Shadow's men had obtained the War Dogs; and that Doctor Tam, in consequence, had ordered his slim but capable band out through the way by which they had come.

Alone in silent, bullet-riddled halls, The Shadow was moving toward the barrier that blocked the stairs. He had one with whom he must deal; the arch-murderer who had inspired all this evil. He sought another meeting with Shan Kwan.

As he neared the door of the empty temple, The Shadow halted; then turned quickly through the portals and dashed down the steps toward the teakwood pedestal. Turning, automatics in his fists, he faced the cleared doorway.

A babble of fierce voices. A huge inpour of men. The fighting ended, Shan Kwan had thought that victory was his. Down to the temple room were coming the members of his cult. In through the wrecked doorway they surged, a hundred Chinese intent upon their goal.

Shan Kwan had talked—evasively—of a sacrifice. His gas, long since exhausted, had surely cleared by this time. Heading the fanatic crew, oblivious to the wreckage that he passed, was the mandarin himself.

The meeting had come. Again, Shan Kwan faced The Shadow. A hundred men behind him, flooding in a surging mass, the evil mandarin stood glaring at The Shadow!

CHAPTER XXIV. THE SHADOW DECREES

SHAN KWAN'S face grew livid as the mandarin stared at the cloaked form before him. Rigid as a statue, The Shadow gazed from a spot before the pedestal. The very grimness of his silence stilled the babble of tongues. From far away came drum-like beats; a token that the police were hammering through the doors that they had found. But all who saw The Shadow were oblivious to those sounds.

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Shan Kwan found words. His mask had lifted; venomous in utterance he snarled his enmity. Creeping forward, the mandarin scorned the menace of the automatics. He knew that if The Shadow fired, that horde would overwhelm the cloaked fighter who stood alone.

The mandarin's outburst ended in an accusation. As his hand whipped a long knife from his scarlet robe, Shan Kwan delivered words that brought an approving rumble from his fanatical following.

"Thief!" accused Shan Kwan. "You have stolen the Fate Joss! To such as you there is one fate. Death!"

The Shadow's laugh came in sinister reply. The growls of the Chinese subsided. Struck by the weird significance of that tone, they listened. To their ears came startling echoes; brazen reverberations from the metal walls. The Shadow's voice intoned; its words were in the Chinese tongue.

"None can steal the Fate Joss," he announced. "Those who carry it from place to place are but instruments in its service. So Shan Kwan himself has taught you."

The Shadow paused. Babbles followed; but they lacked hostility. These words, in Chinese, were the very phrases that carried weight. These men had come to seek the Fate Joss; not to kill.

"The Fate Joss has gone on its final journey," pronounced The Shadow. "It has gone in a boat belonging to Shan Kwan. One which he kept, should he wish to flee, with his treasures. That boat will take the Joss to another. It will arrive in China."

More babbles; wilder with excitement. The Shadow's tones rose above them.

"In China," was his word, "the Joss will reach Jehol. There, it will be placed within the temple of Je Ho, to remain in its chosen abode. I, Ying Ko, have spoken this truth. I, Ying Ko, who sought the Fate Joss and its War Dogs, that I might do them true honor."

Shouts from the Chinese. Shan Kwan quivered, not through fear, but rage, as he heard the cries of approval. Above the thudding at a last barring door came the vocal outburst:

"Ying Ko! Ying Ko has spoken! The Fate Joss has returned to Jehol! Ying Ko is wise!"

The Shadow's arm was raised. Shouts subsided. Again, his voice sounded; this time, its tone a whisper:

"Where are the promises of Shan Kwan? Where are the unbelievers whose bodies he promised as a sacrifice? Look about you! See the corpses of Shan Kwan's own men. Those who fought for him—against the Fate Joss!"

THE SHADOW was striding forward as he spoke. Shan Kwan grimaced; then backed off at an angle as his followers drew apart. The mandarin clutched his knife; but he feared The Shadow's guns. If shots were forced, Shan Kwan knew that he would be the first to fall.

As The Shadow passed him, Shan Kwan began to edge in a wide circle, seeking to get behind the cloaked avenger; he wanted to be free of The Shadow's vision. But his ruse failed.

Nearing the cleared steps, The Shadow whirled about. His automatics had dropped beneath his cloak; he raised his gloved hands empty. For he saw that massed Chinese had closed in between him and Shan Kwan, as the mandarin edged quickly toward the pedestal where the Fate Joss had stood.

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The Shadow's tone was sibilant. His whisper, high-pitched, resumed its questioning and its statements, all in the Chinese tongue.

"Could doors of brass have fallen?" The Shadow's arms spread wide in indication. "Could a few have overwhelmed many? Could the Fate Joss have been carried forth against its wish? Could any of those happenings have come to be, without the aid of the Joss itself?"

Wild roars broke anew, as the hundred cultists raised their arms toward the cloaked figure who had spoken from the shattered portal.

"Ying Ko! Ying Ko! He has prevailed!"

"Ying Ko has served the Joss! Shan Kwan has not! The promises of Shan Kwan have been lies!"

"The Joss has left us because of Shan Kwan's lies!"

"Raise no hand against Ying Ko! Who touches him offends the Joss!"

"Shan Kwan has offended the Joss!"

"Death to Shan Kwan! Death!"

A SCARLET-ROBED figure sprang upon the vacant pedestal. It was Shan Kwan; the mandarin's shrill cry rose high above the babble. Turning, the crowd saw his scarlet sleeve swing wide. With a furious snarl, the mandarin hurled his gleaming dagger. It left his clawish fingers on a long high arc, aimed for The Shadow, standing in the portal.

Heads bobbed about as clamoring Chinamen watched the blade's curved flight. Staring, they saw The Shadow, rigid and unmoving, his empty hands still raised. Sighting above the heads of the Chinese, The Shadow had witnessed Shan Kwan's move. Nevertheless, The Shadow had not stirred.

The range was long—too long—for an accurate knife throw. Shan Kwan lacked the strength and skill of his blade-hurling minions. The high course of the blade was proof, moreover, that he had outdone himself through rage.

The zimming dirk winged wide above The Shadow's head, missing even the border of the motionless cloak sleeve that garbed his upraised arm. The Shadow, immobile, had shown his contempt for Shan Kwan's endeavor. He seemed a being backed by some protective force. He was—for that power was his own strength of nerve. But to the hundred Chinese who saw the blade sweep wide, there came a different explanation.

"Ying Ko! He is the chosen of the Joss! Death to Shan Kwan! Death to him who sought to slay Ying Ko!"

The mandarin's move had proved suicidal. Before he could leap away from the pedestal, a seething mass overwhelmed him. Unsheathed knives glittered downward as they were buried into the body beneath the scarlet robe. The murderous mandarin rolled dead upon the floor, hidden under the overwhelming surge of his former followers.

A weird laugh had sounded from The Shadow's hidden lips. It was a triumphant gibe, a prophecy that had followed the failure of the knife. It broke, that laugh, as Shan Kwan's followers began their spring upon the mandarin. Its echoes had faded, tongued back by walls of brass, at the moment of Shan Kwan's fall.

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The Shadow had gone; he was passing the last barrier which the police were breaking down. Out through the way that Doctor Tam had taken, he was away from view before police came driving through from the Ancient Chinese Bazaar. With Joe Cardona as their leader, a squad was following a trail of scattered bodies, straight to the temple room.

There they found a hundred Chinese, bland and solemn, their tumult quieted. Gathered as if in conclave, they were waiting—they knew not why. Unless, perchance, it was through respect for The Shadow, that personage whom they had accepted as the appointed of the Fate Joss—the one whom they would always identify with the famous idol from Jehol.

WEEKS afterward, Joe Cardona still talked about the episode. Regarding it as the most astonishing experience of his career, the ace detective confided his impressions to Clyde Burke.

"Not a move from any of them," testified Cardona, referring to the Chinese. "They were peaceable; they gave no argument. When we questioned them, all they would say was 'Ying Ko'—and they kept repeating it.

"Sounded like a name; but there's nobody in Chinatown with that moniker. It's not a place, either—I've looked through atlases trying to find it. 'Ying Ko'—that's all they would say.

"What did we do with them? What could we? They hadn't been in the fight. The mandarin, Shan Kwan, was lying there, knifed; but we figured the fellows that finished him were gone. Shan Kwan's servants had been in a fight—most of them dead—except for some that came creeping out of passages to give themselves up.

"No, Burke, those hundred men we found weren't in the battle. They were respectable Chinese, who had fallen for some hokum, handed them by Shan Kwan. We had no evidence against them. What evidence have you got when nobody says anything but 'Ying Ko'?"

"Anyway, Shan Kwan proved to be the man we wanted. His niece, Loy Ming, came to headquarters with her husband, a smart young Chinese, Noy Dow. They had run away from Shan Kwan, knowing him to be crooked. They gave us the lowdown on his hiring Hoang Fu to murder Roucard and Laudring.

"Satsu, the Korean, showed up, too. His evidence fitted. All three of them were scared of Shan Kwan—they'd taken refuge with Doctor Roy Tam. He was the fellow who sent them to us, Doctor Tam was. He's a straight shooter, Tam, more American than Chinese. He keeps out of mix-ups in Chinatown; that's why the girl went to him for help.

"Shan Kwan got what he deserved; and that ends it. Chinatown's quiet; we're satisfied. But I've got a hunch that the fellows who cleared out Shan Kwan's dirty crew made a get-away in a boat from an underground channel that we uncovered. I think they took that idol they called the Fate Joss and shipped it aboard some freighter off shore, to send it back to China.

"Yes, the Fate Joss was in it; and the Fate Joss is gone, for there's no more palaver about it. The Fate Joss—Ying Ko—Say! There's an idea! Maybe they meant the idol when they kept saying 'Ying Ko'; yes, maybe Ying Ko was the Fate Joss. I'm going to look that one up, Burke."

A LATER episode concerned The Shadow; this aftermath found him visiting Yat Soon, within the wise arbiter's concealed abode. To Yat Soon, The Shadow showed a letter that he had already allowed Doctor Tam to see. The letter was in Chinese; Yat Soon nodded solemnly as he scanned its upward-reading lines.

"The thanks of Cho Tsing," affirmed Yat Soon, in English. "His word – the word of General Cho Tsing—to you, The Shadow, whom he terms Ying Ko. He tells you that the temple of Je Ho is once more open; that the

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Fate Joss stands within its own portals, guarded by its brazen War Dogs. That is well."

Smiling, Yat Soon returned the crinkled rice paper into the gloved hand of The Shadow, that it might be preserved with the first message from Cho Tsing. For these proofs of a successful cause were to remain with him whom the Chinese called Ying Ko.

With other records that referred to conquered crime, those curious letters would repose among the archives of The Shadow.

THE END