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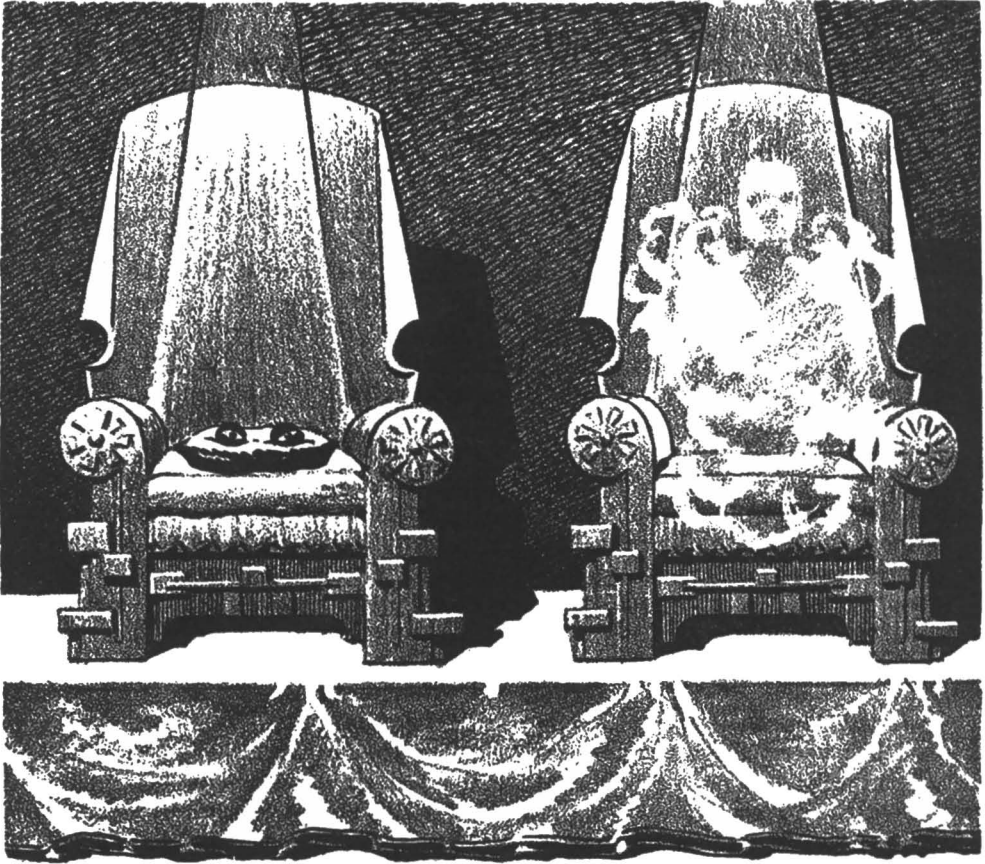
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They stared in fascination
- at the old Oriental, and
at the strange occupants
of the other thrones.

**Old Ting Sun Fu knew the secret of
the passage to the fourth dimension.
But you had to drink his tea to get
there—and the taste was very bitter.**



The STRANGE TEA of TING SUN FU

By LEROY YERXA

BOB HANNIGAN paused before the window display of Chinese novelties. This was the shop of Ting Sun Fu, where delicate glass ornaments and beautiful metal pieces reminded one of some remote Chinese temple.

Hannigan grinned at a two-foot rep-

lica of a Chinese peasant, buckets slung across the shoulders, moving stolidly along in the midst of the display. Hannigan liked Ting Sun Fu's windows. He'd never been in the shop because there was little room in Hannigan's life for pretty things. Reporters who worked for Clamface Bailey of the *World Tele-*

gram didn't take time out from murder and crime to decorate their rooms with Chinese jade or rare ivory carvings.

Yet, Hannigan was thinking, there wouldn't be any harm in just going in for a look. He didn't have to buy anything.

It was growing uncomfortably warm on the sidewalk. A three o'clock sun slanted its heat from the West, and left a small shadow close to the window. Hannigan shuffled toward the door a few steps, then saw a big car drive up to the curb.

Sheila Mann climbed out of the back seat, leaned toward her chauffeur, and spoke in a low, urgent voice. Hannigan knew the Mann girl because she made the front page of the Society Section every Sunday, and her face was so lovely that even the worst photographer on the *Telegram* couldn't spoil a print of it.

He watched her come almost directly toward him across the walk, then realized vaguely that something was wrong—decidedly wrong.

She stopped short as she came up to him. He touched his hatbrim in a quick, rather neat motion, and his face turned slightly red.

"Will you pardon me?" she asked. "You know, you are blocking that door very effectively."

"I'm—I'm sorry." His dignity was gone. He felt like a fool as he sidestepped and allowed her to enter.

He watched her as she went in and let the door close slowly behind her. Then, his mind brought back that little error, and placed it where he could study it. His mind was trying to re-deliver a message that he had almost received before, but not quite. It was while Sheila Mann had been tripping lightly toward him. Sure, her eyes were blue and sparkling, and her hair

long and sleek and chestnut colored. That was enough to make a man remember her a long time.

But it wasn't that.

Hannigan's mind was trained for details. Trained to notice with the help of his eyes, not the pleasant everyday things, but the small, sometimes well concealed oddities.

Then, what was it that he had missed? The sun was hotter than ever. Hannigan ran his index finger around under his collar and lifted his hat higher on his forehead.

THE sun. Didn't the sun have something to do with it? He stepped away from the cool shadow of the building, and the heat of the sun hit him with fierce intensity. His shadow, distorted and rather undignified, flopped along beside him, half in the street, half in the gutter.

Good God, that was it. His eyes had noticed it because it was all wrong—different than it should have been. It had taken all this time for his inner mind to convey the message.

His shadow pointed to the East, bouncing along in the gutter. The sun was in the West.

Yet, when Sheila Mann walked toward him across the sidewalk, her shadow travelled ahead of her, a dark blob on the sidewalk, defying the bright rays of the sun, located directly opposite from the direction it should have been.

IN HANNIGAN, there was an ever active urge to get to the bottom of things. That was what made him valuable to Bailey of the *Telegram*. That was what made him one of the best writers on the sheet, because Hannigan hated bloodshed, horror and crime. Hated them so much that he wrote vividly of every crime he was forced to cover. Hannigan, they said, could cover

a story about a killer and make the man turn himself in the next morning, sobbing and broken hearted to think that he was responsible for such a horrible crime against humanity.

Clamface Bailey, aristocratic, bald-headed managing editor of the *Telegram*, said, on one occasion, "The trouble with you, Hannigan, is that your mother gave you a homely face, an innocent expression and a clean, honest way of facing things. You can't chase criminals that way. The minute you start walking with some gorilla who's just knifed his wife, he breaks down and wants to join the Salvation Army. You're too damned easygoing, boy. Get tough and make your killers sound tough. This sheet needs sensation, not accounts of poor old ladies who get hauled into police court because their husbands beat them with mop handles. Get tough stuff, and make it live."

Hannigan made his stuff live after that. He started picking up stories that even Bailey checked on before he dared use them. Hannigan became the "sensation kid" of the office. He got into the "damndest places," Bailey told him, "but you come back with the stuff, and it's always hotter than bathtub gin."

And now Hannigan was on another story. A story that even he refused to believe until he checked his own eyesight.

He turned casually and retracted his footsteps toward the shop. Two or three customers went into Ting Sun Fu's, but their shadows were normal and where they should be. Hannigan chuckled at himself. Funny how a man's eyes could deceive him. Yet, he waited.

The door opened several times. Each time, he expected to see Sheila Mann come out. She didn't. Four o'clock came, but not Sheila. Then four-thirty, and he had a date at Police Court at

five. Hannigan swore softly. If Sheila Mann dropped her shadow in the wrong direction . . . If you stopped to think of it, the idea had to be false. It was certainly impossible for any such thing to actually happen.

Or was it?

Hannigan shrugged. To hell with Sheila Mann. He glanced at his watch. Twenty to five. A cab was moving slowly down his side of the street. He hailed it and started across the walk. The sun was low, directly behind him. And his shadow, which should have been directly in front of him, was suddenly missing. It all happened in a few seconds, because the cab drew up, and as Hannigan turned the door handle, he noticed carefully that the line of cars all threw shadows to the East. Frantically, he whirled around, as though to catch his shadow before it escaped completely. There it was, long and dark, stretched out on the sidewalk pointing directly West, *toward the sun*.

Queer panic flooded Hannigan's mind. He slipped quickly inside the cab and sank back into the cushions. "Police Court," he said. "Fifth and—"

"Yes sir." The cab pulled out into traffic. The driver didn't have to be told. He'd been there before.

IT BECAME increasingly evident to Bob Hannigan that somehow he had to be alone with Sheila Mann—had to share with her this strange secret of his. Sheila was as far away from him as a peacock from a sparrow, and outside of the shadow thing, he had no wish to enter her private world. Overnight, however, Sheila had become the most important woman in the world to Hannigan. Perhaps she would have an explanation of the reverse shadows.

Hannigan hid himself in the dark halls of Police Court and didn't venture out until after sundown. He slept little

that night, and at seven o'clock the following morning, he hurried downstairs from his third floor room at the Exter Hotel. There was a small garden at the rear of the hotel, and he was going to test his shadow there.

Hannigan had a queer, shaky feeling in his knees when he opened the door and went out into the sun. The bright ball of heat was already well established in the East, and the hotel threw its long shadows toward the alley. He kept going until he reached a grassy spot close to the alley fence. He stepped out into the sunlight, still half expecting his shadow to leap ahead of him, against the stained boards of the fence. The shadow wasn't there. It had been yesterday, and the day before, but it wasn't there this morning.

He turned slowly, in case anyone might be watching him from the windows above, and stared back. The shadow was there, where it had been last night, completely defying any attempt on the part of the bright sun to force it back to its proper position.

Very nervous about the whole thing, Hannigan hurried back into the hotel and up to his room. What next? He couldn't go around all day with that shadow sneaking along on the wrong side of him. As a rule, you didn't pay much attention to people's shadows. But this was different. It seemed as though everyone in the city would be waiting to stare and make remarks about him after he passed.

Hannigan looked up Sheila Mann's number in the telephone directory. Hollywood Hills, 35 Wenshire Drive. He shuddered. He'd never so much as pointed his feet in that direction before, and he was awed. Carl Mann, Sheila's father, owned the entire south portion of the Hills, or at least held a mortgage on it. Sheila was pictured posed on the edge of million dollar swimming pools,

or wrapping Red Cross bandages in someone's thirteen thousand dollar living room.

Well, maybe he could get up the courage to see Sheila Mann, but at a later date. He would try Ting Sun Fu's shop now.

TING SUN FU'S was a big store, and two huge windows faced the street. Each night, and Hannigan knew, for he had passed the place for years, blinds were drawn to make the windows dark and a little mysterious. Now, at nine o'clock in the morning, a small Chinese boy was carefully pulling the blinds up. The doors were still locked.

The little Chinese boy walked carefully among the art goods, and watched Hannigan with slanted, soft brown eyes. Hannigan moved along and pretended to be interested in a fruit and vegetable window next door. People were busy along the street. Women fought over the counter of the fruit and vegetable store. A furniture man came out of the store across the street and started giving soundless, vivid instructions to his window decorators inside. Hannigan watched him as he ordered a curtain to the left, a chair to the right.

A coupe drew up and a frowsy headed woman got out and hurried toward Ting Sun Fu's.

Shadow trouble evidently wasn't limited to Sheila Mann and himself, Hannigan thought a little grimly. This stout, unhappy looking dame almost ran until she reached the door of Ting Sun Fu's. Then, she relaxed, let her hand rest momentarily on the handle of the door, and went in. Her shadow had been as completely careless of its actions as his own. This made number three. Hannigan wondered if there were any more.

He took a small book from his pocket, entered the license number of the coupe in it, put the book away with shaking

hands and went around the corner to breakfast.

AT NINE-THIRTY he was back, but this time he didn't dare hang around in front of the store. He had a feeling that a dragon might shoot its head out the door at any moment and cook him to a tender brown with one blast of flame.

He found a spot in the shade across the street near the furniture window. The day was clear, and he could see the shadows of people who passed on the opposite side of the street. The shadows, growing shorter as the sun mounted into the sky, touched the front of Ting Sun Fu's.

Hannigan glanced at his watch. Ten o'clock sharp. A police car crept into the block and slowly made its way down the far side of the street. Hannigan knew the uniformed men in the car. Two cops from the First Street Station.

A tall, heavy set man in a dark business suit was ambling along the sidewalk, a companion on either side of him. His clothing was very good. His face, dark and not unpleasant, was pock-marked and a little grim at the moment.

"Jerry Warner," Hannigan said half aloud.

Jerry Warner, big time one-man-crime-wave, protected by a dozen crack lawyers and five or six gunmen, was followed in every move he made by the cops, who now made it a business of staying within fifty yards of Warner day and night, rain or shine.

Jerry Warner, rough-spoken king of the rackets, was number four of the Wrong-Way-Shadow Club. Hannigan whistled softly and wiped beads of sweat from his nose. A nice, cozy bunch—high society girl, gangster, newspaper reporter and a dame with the license number D-640-222. How many more? He wondered.

"CLAMFACE" BAILEY got his nickname because of the totally unresponsive way he stared at people while they were emptying their hearts and their trade secrets to him. The name Clamface had nothing to do with his nature, however, for he talked fast and pleasantly. It was just that he "looked" the way a clam "sounds"—silent and locked within himself. You could never tell whether an earthquake or a five-alarm fire was affecting him little or not at all—that is, not until he started talking.

He listened to Hannigan patiently for ten minutes. Then he said, "Get off that desk. We're going down for a drink."

He slipped the eyeshade from his creased forehead, and they went down the long line of desks. In the corridor, he placed one arm around Hannigan's shoulder. He tried to act fatherly, but it was a little hard because he was short and his arm wouldn't reach far.

"How long you been feeling this way?" he asked abruptly.

Hannigan stopped. "See here, if you think I'm bats . . ."

Bailey shook his head sadly. "I'm a fair man," he said patiently. "I give everyone a chance. We are going to walk the half block to Sam's, where we will partake of a glass of weak spirits and a ham sandwich with mustard. During that walk, your story will have ample time to prove or disprove itself. Someone once wrote a song, 'Me and My Shadow,' and it seems that the lyric went to your head." Bailey started humming the song softly.

They reached the street. Bailey's arm dropped at his side. He said, "Well, here is the sunshine, and what —"

HE STOPPED talking and clamped his jaws together tightly. His

shadow pointed East. It was five in the afternoon. Hannigan's pointed directly West, like an arrow marking the direction of the sun.

Bailey didn't say anything. He just stared ahead and Hannigan could almost feel Bailey's reluctance to accept what he was seeing with his own eyes.

They moved gratefully into the twilight of Sam's heavily shuttered bar and found a booth. Hannigan could smell one of Sam's everpresent hams sending up rich odors from the stove in the kitchen. Sam was laying out white slices of bread and spreading them thickly with butter. He came over, grinning, the knife in his hands.

"Mr. Bailey, Mr. Hannigan. White or rye, and how many?"

"White," Hannigan said, "with lots of lean meat and two bottles of beer."

Sam nodded and waited for Bailey to speak. After a while he said, "White or rye, Mr. Bailey?"

Clamface Bailey was staring at the wall. He said, "Huh?" Then, "Oh, just a beer, Sam. I—I guess I'm not hungry."

Sam's jaw dropped. He felt personally insulted. "The ham is good, Mr. Bailey. New one. Smoked it six months ago. It's—"

"I know," Bailey interrupted grimly. "Your ham is always good. I'm just not hungry."

Sam wandered away, crestfallen. This was the first time in seven years that Clamface Bailey had lost his appetite.

Bailey looked at Hannigan. "What we going to do about it?"

Hannigan shrugged. "I came to you because you always know the answers."

Bailey was quiet for a while. Then he stood up. "Never mind the ham," he said. "It's clear as a crystal what we've got to do. Every one of the people who has a screwy shadow goes to see Ting Sun Fu. What are we waiting

for? He's the man to answer our question."

IT WAS just six o'clock when Bailey and Bob Hannigan left a cab opposite Ting Sun Fu's and started across the street. The sidewalks were overflowing with the usual assortment of pretty office girls and tired looking clerks. Buses and cabs roared, chugged and blasted their horns at each other.

Bailey stopped short halfway across the street and grasped Hannigan's arm. Hannigan was jerked back just in time to avoid being run over by the green sedan that roared down the street.

"Jeez!" Bailey's cry was cut short by the sudden staccato hail of bullets that tore from the speeding auto.

Across the street, in front of Ting Sun Fu's, a man cried out in pain and slumped forward on the pavement. A girl, young, panic-stricken, started to run around in circles screaming at the top of her voice and holding a bloody hand. One of the bullets had clipped her wrist. Suddenly, the whole mass of shouting humanity along the street paused, hesitated and swept toward Ting Sun Fu's.

"Come on," Bailey said. "This is gonna be . . ." His voice was drowned by the throng as he rushed forward. Hannigan was close behind him.

Together, they fought their way through the crowd around the body on the sidewalk. Hannigan saw the body first, and a queer chill shot through him. The slain man was Jerry Warner.

A burly cop was shouting, "Get back there. Keep moving. This ain't no picnic. Get moving."

"Get on the phone," Bailey told Hannigan. "We got time to stick in new headlines for the late edition."

BECAUSE he was trained to work fast, Hannigan didn't hesitate. He

rushed past the enraged cop who tried to push him back, and on into Ting Sun Fu's novelty shop. He was vaguely aware of two or three clerks and a very old Chinese gentleman grouped near the door.

"Telephone," he said quickly, then saw it, a coin model mounted at the end of a counter. He slipped a nickel from his pocket and dialed. As he waited for the *Telegram* to answer, he was aware of a police siren outside and of a lot of people creating the loud, disturbing sound that a mob makes when it is trying to pass on knowledge by word of mouth.

Clayton on the re-write desk said, "*World Telegram*. Who is it?"

"Hannigan." The reporter spoke hurriedly. "Tell Speed Williams to hold the presses. Bailey wants a banner lead. Make it 'JERRY WARNER DIES.' Here's the dope. Warner was shot five minutes ago in front of Ting Sun Fu's novelty shop on Larrent Street. Play up a mysterious green sedan that opened up on Warner with a submachine gun. Get photographers and men down here for more story. Make it good."

He could hear Clayton's pencil scraping, then, "Okay. Good news. Warner getting bumped, I mean. He's one of the lowest—"

Hannigan hung up. He pushed his way past the group at the front of the store and into the street. A police ambulance was parked at the curb. A half dozen cops had made a small circle around the spot where Warner was shot. Warner's two henchmen were dragging him toward the ambulance. The toes of his shoes scraped the sidewalk.

Hannigan forgot the crowd; he didn't hear Bailey speaking to him. In the slanting rays of sun that touched the outer side of the sidewalk, two shadows were thrown on the white panel of the

police ambulance. Two shadows pointing to the East, and Jerry Warner's shadow still pointing West.

TING SUN FU stood behind the counter. He studied Bob Hannigan with quiet, interested eyes. Ting's face was wrinkled and brown. It was devoid of hair and resembled very old leather, washed many times by the sun and the wind. He wore a round, silk hat of blue, and his body was covered with a robe, with a huge dragon of many colors twisting itself around and around the robe.

Ting Sun Fu spoke in a gentle, very low voice. "You are gentleman who used our phone this afternoon? You desire more information concerning what I saw on the street?"

Hannigan was in no mood to do word exercises. He wanted to get to the point quickly. "I know what went on in the street, Mr. Fu," he said. "I'm interested in the ones who are left. Warner was only one of us."

"Us?"

The word was hardly more than a whisper. It hissed from Ting Sun Fu's lips. His face didn't change, but his voice expressed amazement.

"It's none of my business, but Sheila Mann came here. A woman named Nora Williams came, also. Warner was the third party. They are the only ones I know so far, beside myself."

He had checked on the Williams woman through her license number. She operated a beauty parlor on Fifteenth Street.

He watched Ting Sun Fu's long fingers. They were more expressive than the man's face. The fingers curled slightly and started to shake. Fu stared at him; ran a slim finger along the top of the showcase, searching for an imaginary bit of dust, and then studied the finger.

"You speak in riddles," he said. "Chinese love riddles only when they can be answered. You mention three names. You link them with me. Why?"

Hannigan leaned over the counter and brought his face very close to Fu's. "Because," he said deliberately, "I stopped to look at your damned collection of knickknacks, and I saw Sheila Mann come in here. There was a very peculiar thing about her, and I'm trained to notice anything odd. Her shadow was, shall we say, behaving oddly."

Fu's expression didn't change. It betrayed nothing. "So?"

"When I left the front of the shop, my shadow had also changed. In other words, Fu, I've picked up a backward shadow, and I'm in no mood to carry it around the rest of my life. I want to know how come? I think you have the answer."

THE store was very quiet. Ting Sun Fu backed away from him slowly, studying him from head to foot. A slow smile touched his lips and wrinkled his mouth. "So? I think, Mr. Hannigan," he pronounced the name slowly, "you and I have something to discuss. First, I suggest you take a short walk. When you return, I shall be in my office."

Hannigan knew why he must leave the store. He grinned. "Don't worry," he said. "Proof is something I can give you fast, and I wish I couldn't."

He wheeled around and went to the door. He heard Fu's feet patter lightly behind him. He went out into the sunlight and walked across the street. The shadow followed him, slipping silently along over the cement, pointing toward the sun. He turned when he reached the opposite side of the street and saw Ting Sun Fu at the door, nodding his head. Then Fu disappeared into the

darkness of the store, and Hannigan went back across the street.

A Chinese clerk met him as he went in, bowed slightly and turned to move along the rows of delicate glassware toward the rear of the establishment. Hannigan followed. His heart pounded so hard that it gave him a headache. His fists were clenched and the palms were wet with perspiration.

The clerk stopped at a large, beautifully carved door, and knocked lightly. He pushed the door open and Hannigan entered.

The room was Ting Sun Fu's office, and blinds, drawn tight, hid the daylight which normally would be coming in from the alley. Ting Sun Fu was seated on a low divan, legs crossed, hands resting in his lap.

He waited until Hannigan crossed the deeply carpeted floor and stood before him. Hannigan stared around him in amazement. He might have walked across the threshold into another world. The office was at least twenty feet square, and nowhere in it could he find a desk, a phone, or any of the necessities used by business men. The walls were like paper, painted with lovely scenes of distant mountains, multi-colored birds and green gardens. The carpet reflecting warmth and color, was soft enough to sleep upon. Divans, low chairs and several small tables overflowing with flowers, completed the scene.

"You are enchanted," Ting Sun Fu said. "You had not expected this?"

Hannigan could only shake his head. "Only the shadow of the Second Sun allowed you to come here," Ting Sun Fu told him. "No one else is allowed beyond the door."

Hannigan's head started to clear. This was all very nice, but what he wanted was an explanation, not a sales talk about the beautiful room. "Now,

you're going to tell me why—"

TING SUN FU halted him by raising one hand graciously. "The Chinese seem slow in their methods of living, and perhaps in their explanations," he said. "First, we will rest and be refreshed. Then, perhaps you will learn something of the world of the Second Sun."

Hannigan felt laziness creeping over him. While he was here, he supposed, he should at least be polite. He sat down on the edge of the divan. He wondered about Fu's reference to the Second Sun. Probably some Chinese philosophy. If he were to learn the secret of the shadow, he must be polite, careful not to anger the old man.

Fu clapped his hands together sharply. From the side wall, a Chinese girl came. She entered through a small panel which closed at once behind her. She wasn't pretty, but the serene, quiet look on her face made her attractive in that strange way of the Orient. She carried a small tray, and steam emerged into the room from the tall, spigoted, gracefully painted teapot.

She placed a tiny handleless cup before Hannigan and poured it full of dark tea. The aroma was good. Hannigan kept his eyes on the girl. She moved gracefully, without a sound. She did not speak. She poured tea for Fu, who at once picked up the cup and held it carefully with the fingers of both hands. Hannigan lifted his, and they drank. The heat of the tea made him sleepy.

"We should no longer be hidden in this semi-twilight," Fu told the girl. "Open the blinds."

The girl bowed low and went to the rear of the room. Hannigan felt a delightful drowsiness sweeping over him. He watched the girl's long fingers as they touched the cords that controlled the blinds. Then she pulled the cords

and a vast, glittering new world unveiled before him.

THOSE next few seconds were strange to Hannigan. Strange and unreal. Afterward, he could never quite describe them. When the blinds flew upward, he had expected to see the dismal, garbage-filled alley. Instead, a blaze of sun hit his face. Before him, stretched as far as his eyes could see, was a vast, green world. The green was a setting for myriads of colored flowers. Trees, tall, leafy and graceful, made a perfect backdrop for the scene.

Then, the warmth of the tea and, he realized vaguely, something in the tea, made him close his eyes. There was no pain. He opened them again with a struggle, and grinned crookedly at Ting Sun Fu. "Funny . . . I'm sleepy as the devil. Can't . . . seem . . . to . . ."

He saw something then that made his eyes widen with amazement. He had been sitting with his back to the East. The afternoon sun should be sinking into the West. Instead, it was bright and sparkling in this new world, and the sun shone from behind him—from the East.

"The Land of the Second Sun," Fu said. "Later . . . perhaps. . ."

Hannigan felt his head reeling. He tried to hold on.

"You . . . will . . . learn. . ."

The voice wast going far away, over those mountains—where Hannigan couldn't hear it plainly. He leaned forward, clutched at a pillow to hold himself up, then fell into the softness of the divan.

CLAMFACE BAILEY sat on the edge of the bed, a hobgoblin in green pajamas, drinking from the bottle he had drawn from a nook under the mattress. His face was sour as he stared

at Hannigan.

"No, I don't believe it," he said. "I had to believe the shadow, because I saw it. I'll figure out an explanation for it, too, in time."

He paused, took another snort, and continued: "Now, you wake me up in the middle of the night. You went to see Ting Sun Fu, and you had a cup of tea with him, and you walked out into a strange new world full of trees and flowers.

"Are you sure that Chink didn't give you a pipe instead of a cup of tea?"

Hannigan was confused. He had been badly mixed up ever since he awakened, long after dark, in the alley behind Ting Sun Fu's.

"As sure as I've ever been of anything in my life," he said. "Honest to God, Bailey, I'm telling you what happened. Don't crucify me. I'm crazy as a loon already. I don't know what to believe any more."

Bailey's eyes softened a little. He had been awake a half hour now, and was beginning to understand just how bewildered his reporter friend was.

"Okay," he said. "Let's be sensible about this. You see the Land of the Second Sun, whatever that is. Maybe it was a movie on a screen. Maybe it was just the result of hypnotism, or the stuff you drank. Anyhow, you didn't drink tea. You drank a drug strong enough to make you sleep in a back alley for several hours. Now, all you've got is a headache. What am I supposed to do, go out looking for the Land of the Second Sun with you?"

Hannigan nodded. "I hoped you would. I want to go back to Ting Sun Fu's, now, and with someone along to keep an eye on me."

Bailey swore. "I'm damned if I'll—" He stopped short and grinned. "Okay. Anything for a pal. Anyhow, almost anything."

TING SUN FU'S was dark—and the door was locked. Bailey kept an eye on the street, while Hannigan tried some of the keys he carried in his pocket.

Bailey was nervous. "Editor of *Telegram* Picked Up for Breaking and Entering," he chanted softly. "Nice mess we'll be in, Hannigan."

Hannigan didn't answer. He found the right key and the door opened softly. They went back along the line of counters. Hannigan stopped at the rear wall. A huge oriental rug hung in the center, covering the door to Ting Sun Fu's private room. He took the corner of it and drew it aside. In the dimness of the room, he could see the huge door. He used force, but the thing wouldn't give. Suddenly, he kicked it savagely with his foot. The sound was amplified in the quiet shop.

"Take it easy," Bailey told him, "You'll wake up every Chink in the place."

Hannigan wasn't going to give up easily. He started searching for a keyhole. There was none. The door was without a handle or any object to help open it. He turned back toward Bailey, very discouraged.

"Let's get out of here," Bailey decided, "before we start seeing dragons."

They went out and locked the door behind them, walked around the block and up the narrow alley where Hannigan had awakened earlier.

The rear of Ting Sun Fu's shop was constructed of dirty red brick. Two large windows faced this alley. They were covered by tightly drawn blinds, the same blinds that Hannigan had seen open this afternoon. Hannigan studied the windows carefully. He found a door that led to the back room, but it was bolted from the inside. There was no keyhole. The door was made of steel.

Down on his knees, he lit a match. In the thick coal dust and filth of the alley, he could see his tracks leading out the door and along the wall to a couple of ash cans. There, the imprint of his body was clear where he had slept between the cans.

He sighed and stood up. "I need sleep," he said. "Sleep—and time to think more clearly."

"You need a brain specialist," Bailey chuckled, and led the way back toward the street.

THE CHARM SHOP—Nora Williams, Proprietor" was a neat place, wedged between a barber shop and a restaurant, on Fifteenth Street. It had clean venetian blinds at the windows, a small, oval fronted desk inside and a pretty young girl of sixteen sitting behind the desk. She looked up and smiled at Bob Hannigan as he came in. Hannigan removed his hat.

"I'd like to speak to Miss Williams," he said.

"She's busy at present." The girl smiled. "Was it about an appointment?"

He had a hunch she was laughing at him.

"Not this time," he said. "Guess my permanent will hold up for a while yet. Will you tell Miss Williams it will only take a minute or two. Tell her it's about her shadow."

The girl, who had a nice figure, went back through the curtains that led to the main shop. She stopped before she went out, gave Hannigan a curious stare, then shrugged.

Hannigan smiled. That line about the shadow would sound funny to anyone—anyway, that is, except the Williams woman. He waited. Two minutes passed. He had the feeling that someone was staring at him through the crack in the curtains. Then the recep-

tion girl came out. She motioned Hannigan toward a door at the side of the room.

"Miss Williams' office," she said. "Will you wait for her there? She'll be in shortly."

She waited as he went through the opened door. Then, smiling a little, she said, "I don't get it, but Miss Williams must think her shadow is pretty important. She seemed quite excited."

She closed the door. Hannigan looked around the small stuffy room. He found a rocking chair near a front window and sat down. There were two or three love story magazines, a couple of movie books, and a box of needles and wool, all on the table beside the chair. In the center of the room was a small desk cluttered with opened envelopes and trade magazines. A half dozen pictures cluttered the gray walls. They illustrated hair-do's popular since 1917.

Hannigan sighed. He couldn't get the connection between the sophisticated Sheila Mann and this dowdy woman who ran a second class beauty parlor.

MISS WILLIAMS came in abruptly.

Her face was very red, and she was wiping her hands on a limp towel. She came straight across the room and stood before Hannigan. She seemed frightened.

"You tell Ting Sun Fu that I'm not coming back, and he can't make me," she said. "If he thinks—"

She stopped short. Incredible amazement swept over her face. "You aren't one of his men," she accused. "How did you . . . ?"

Hannigan sat where he was. He extracted a cigarette from his pocket, and offered one to Nora Williams. He noticed the lines on her forehead, the way her heavy body quivered, perhaps with excitement, perhaps with fear.

"Sit down, Miss Williams," he said. He stood up while she slumped into the chair near the desk. He helped her light the cigarette.

"I'm a sucker like yourself," he told her. "My shadow falls in the wrong direction, too."

He watched her eyes narrow slightly. She had better control of herself now. They were both stalling for time, each trying to fathom what the other knew.

"You've been to see Fu?" she asked.

He nodded. "I've seen the Land of the Second Sun," he said in a low voice. "I want to know more about it before I go there myself."

She laughed at him then. Laughed a low, gurgling, sardonic laugh. It grew higher and more forced, until he was afraid she was becoming hysterical. Then she stopped laughing abruptly. "You think you have a choice? You believe you can go, or not, as you choose?"

He remained silent. This was more like it. At last, she was talking.

"Look at me," she said. "Six weeks ago I was a normal, easy-going woman, with a good business, plenty to eat and cash in the bank. I was dumber than hell, but I was happy." She arose and walked to the door. "I don't know why you were chosen," she said sharply. "Nor why you came here. But don't come again."

"You can stay here as long as you please." She was defiant now. "But after you go, don't come back again. I haven't anything to tell you."

She closed the door behind her quietly, leaving Hannigan at the window, staring with puzzled eyes at the street outside.

HE SAT there for some time, pondering her words. At last he stood up, put his hat on slowly and went to the door. He pushed it open, heard a

little cry of surprise on the other side of the door, then a sharp crack of wood against bone. The door was heavy, and he had pushed it harder than he thought.

He looked down to see Sheila Mann, dressed in a tightly fitted green suit, sprawled on the floor. She sat up, her face red with anger, pulled down her skirt hurriedly and struggled to her feet. They stood there facing each other, Hannigan feeling like a clumsy fool.

"Do you," she asked heatedly, "usually open doors with the same force you'd use to kill a prize-fighter in the third round?"

Hannigan said, no, he didn't, and she found room for a tiny smile.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I didn't expect anyone in Nora's office, and you caught me off guard."

She rubbed her knee and grimaced painfully. "I don't make a habit of falling for people," she said. "It seems to me this is the second time you've blocked my progress this week. Aren't you the man I had to walk around to get into the Chinese novelty shop downtown?"

He nodded. "That's why I'm here," he said. "About the novelty shop, I mean." He felt his courage rising. The girl was human, warm and intensely feminine. She had prolonged their conversation and seemed to be enjoying it. "I'd like—that is, it's pretty near lunch time. Could I talk you into eating something with me? I have been pretty rough on you. I'd like to make it up somehow."

Her eyes flashed. He couldn't decide whether they reflected anger, amusement or interest. He felt flushed and uncomfortable.

"You said you came here because of something that happened at Ting Sun Fu's? What was it?" There was an

urgent note in her voice.

Hannigan searched carefully for the right words. He had a chance now to fit Sheila Mann into the rest of the puzzle. He hoped he could do a better job than he had with Nora Williams.

"I haven't heard it for years," he said slowly, "but there's a song that has been running around in my head now until it's driving me crazy."

"A song?"

"Me and My Shadow. Catchy tune, and of current interest, it seems, to quite a number of people, including myself."

She turned pale. "You—aren't . . ."

"Do we go to lunch?" he asked. He looked hurriedly behind her, as though to make sure they were alone.

"We do," she said, and took his arm. Her fingers were shaking, and she leaned against him as though she had needed someone to lean on for a long time.

THE Ham Bone wasn't a high class restaurant. Hannigan often ate here because the small room was spick and span, the food cheap, and the ham was in a class of its own. He hoped that Sheila Mann wouldn't object to the place. He wasn't sure how a girl who had a ten-million-dollar father lived.

To his amazement, she liked it. She acted as though she'd been at home with the common people long before he met her. In ten minutes, he had watched her chew contentedly on small slices of ham, and had been so content to stare at her lips and her deep eyes, and to listen to her pleasant voice, that at last she had to remind him that he hadn't eaten a bite.

They talked about the town, and new name bands, and the fire at the waterfront, and anything but the subject that was uppermost in both their minds. Then, when they had finished eating,

Sheila Mann dropped her gay manner abruptly.

"I know you quite well now, Mr. Hannigan," she said. "You see, I wanted to learn something about you, because I need—a friend. I haven't one at present."

He chuckled. "What about those well dressed dummies you're photographed with every week? The yacht club, polo grounds and the race track."

"We'll let that pass." She frowned. "I'm desperate. That 'Me and My Shadow' gag may have been funny to you, but it isn't to me. You're the first person I've felt I could mention it to, because I think you understand a lot of things that others do not."

"And what gives you that idea? Perhaps I'm just a news hound, guessing at a lot of things, and bluffing to find out the rest."

She smiled, easily this time, and warmly. "That's exactly what you are doing. Guessing and bluffing. However, you overlooked one thing. I've checked up on you."

IT WAS his turn to be puzzled. "How?"

"On the way here from the beauty shop," she said. "You forget that it's a bright day. I notice that although 'Me and My Shadow' are inclined to act queerly, yours does the same thing. It kept company with us all the way from Nora's."

Hannigan didn't say anything for a full minute. He was thinking hard. The Mann girl was smart. She had made sure of him before she spoke. When he looked up again, she was staring at him with a mixture of fear and confidence in her eyes.

"Bob," she said, "you've got to help me. I need your help. In turn, I'll try to help you."

Hannigan felt his heart swell and

grow warmer. The most beautiful girl he had ever seen, asking him for help.

"I'm a dumb ox," he said. "You'd better go to your real friends if you need advice. I'm a two-bit reporter, rummaging around to find what I can for the headlines. I'm a bad partner. I'd get you into trouble."

Her hand crept across the table and touched his. Her fingers were warm and firm. It wasn't a cheap flirtation. She was sincere—sincere and frightened.

"You're going to turn me down?"

He looked at her—straight—his eyes searching hers. "Do I look like a fool?"

Hannigan couldn't remember when he had been so strangely excited before. It might compare, this quiet meeting, to that time when, during his high school days, he was chosen to take the school's prettiest girl to the prom. It might, but he didn't think so. There was a subtle, easy charm about Sheila Mann that dwarfed every other woman he had ever met. She seemed a combination of perfectly poised society and eager school girl.

HE LEFT her with the promise that she would meet him at eight, at the Ham Bone. From there, they would go to Ting Sun Fu's. She was urgent about that. They must go together, and at once. It seemed so important to her that she refused to tell him why until they met again.

Hannigan entered the Ham Bone at seven-thirty. He looked around anxiously, for although Sheila wasn't supposed to be here for another half hour, he had hoped that she would come early.

She wasn't among the small group of diners, so he found a table where he could watch the door, sat down and waited. Seven-fifteen, then eight

o'clock, and no Sheila. For a time, Hannigan blamed her delay on the usual little things that a girl must do before going out. Then, he knew that something was wrong. Sheila Mann wasn't the type to make a promise and break it.

He waited for another half hour, then called her home. It took a lot of courage, because he felt as though he was placing a call to Washington, and he feared talking with Mr. Mann more than he'd fear a conversation with the President.

A formal, gentleman's gentleman voice answered the ring. "This is the Mann residence. Who is calling, please?"

Hannigan mentioned his name, then asked for Sheila.

"Sorry. Miss Sheila left an hour ago. She isn't expected home for several hours. Was there a message?"

He said no, and that he was sorry he hadn't caught Miss Sheila before she left, that maybe he'd try again in the morning. He hung up.

There was only one other place Sheila could be if she didn't come to him. She had gone to Ting Sun Fu's, or worse yet, been taken there against her will.

For some strange reason, he called Nora Williams. He had seen a small room off the office where he interviewed her yesterday. Perhaps she lived there.

But the voice which answered the phone sounded like an old colored woman's. "H'lo. Who's calling?"

"I want to speak to Miss Williams," he said quickly. "Is she there?"

"No sir," the voice said. "Miss Williams, she gone out with a Chinese gentleman. I'm the only one here. I'm Miss Vanity. I do the cleanin'. I'm—"

HANNIGAN had heard enough. He hung up. He slammed his hat on

tightly and went out into the street. There was a Yellow Cab cruising slowly up the other side of the street. He didn't bother to hail it. He sprinted across the street, opened the door while it was still moving and said tersely, "If you've got gas, brother, burn it fast."

The cab driver turned around, amazed at Hannigan's quick entrance, recognized the reporter, and said with a grin, "Well, if it isn't Speedy Hannigan. Where to, newshawk?"

Hannigan recognized the man, too, and gave him quick instructions. Five minutes later, the brakes squealed and the cab halted before Ting Sun Fu's.

Hannigan hadn't thought about the shop being closed, and a deep, unreasonable anger flooded through him when he found it so. He started pounding on the door.

At first there was no response. Then, a cautious head appeared where the curtain was lifted a crack. It was Ting Sun Fu himself who opened the door, holding a thin finger to his lips for silence.

"I want Miss Mann," Hannigan said, and moved in quickly.

Ting Sun Fu backed away from him. "I do not know a Miss Mann. *Tai lai* (lady) has not been in Ting Sun Fu's humble shop."

Hannigan reached out with one hand and grasped the old man by the neck. He was shaking with rage. He kicked the door behind him, slamming it closed. He leaned close to Fu.

"You know nothing about the Land of the Second Sun, either, or how I come to be lying out in the alley behind your shop. Don't kid me, mister. I'm seeing Miss Mann here personally, or your scrawny neck isn't worth an ounce of rice."

FU WENT down to his knees slowly, his eyes glassy. "*Chan-choh*," he

wheezed. "Stop."

Hannigan helped the old man to his feet. They stood there facing each other, Fu stroking his neck, Hannigan trying to puzzle out what he should do next.

"Listen," he said, "I don't usually go around choking old men. You know something about the girl. I've got to find her. You're going to help me."

Fu shrugged. "I wonder. There are times when I wish it were '*tong wang la*' (finish) for me. When I shudder to go on."

He backed away from Hannigan a few steps. There seemed to be no fear in his eyes. No fear, nor anger. That was what had puzzled Hannigan from the first. Ting Sun Fu seemed to be beyond human emotions. He seemed to fit into a master role as a dime store villain, yet he refused to act as a villain should act.

"Mr. Hannigan is very worried about the lady. *Mei-yi sahtzu* (it cannot be helped). Miss Mann has been called by the Ruling Three. Mr. Hannigan is fortunate that he has not been called. He should leave here at once."

Hannigan grinned sardonically.

"I'm leaving—with Sheila Mann." "I'm not leaving until you tell—"

Suddenly, the silence of the shop was shattered by a throaty, terror-filled scream. The sound made Hannigan's blood freeze. It came from the rear of the store, from Fu's office.

With a bound, Hannigan passed Ting Sun Fu and ran toward the sound. He found the rug that covered the wall and whipped it away. He turned to Fu, who had followed him. "You can open this door," he said tensely. "Do it, or by God, I'll kill you, for sure."

The Chinese hesitated, then touched the door with his thin hand. The door flew open. Ting Sun Fu stepped away.

"Enter—and repent," he said. "You

would not listen to me."

Hannigan heard no more. He leaped forward.

BEFORE him was the same room he had been in before, and beyond that, where the alley should have been, he saw the beauty of the Land of the Second Sun. It was real, all right. Real, in spite of Clamface Bailey. Real, in spite of the fact that he himself could not find it alone, after that first drug-filled journey.

Near the windows, facing the door that led to the other land, was Sheila Mann. Two strange men held her by the wrists, dragging her away from Hannigan. Even as Hannigan ran toward her, she managed to twist half around and cry out again.

"Bob . . . Bob, help me!" It was a broken, helpless sob.

Then the door opened, and she was dragged through it.

As the men who held Sheila turned to go through the door, Hannigan stopped short, overcome with amazement. A moment ago they had looked quite normal. *Now, viewed from the side, Sheila's captors had no depth, no substance.*

They were like horrible, dancing paper dolls, dragging Sheila away with them. Hannigan tried, but he never quite reached that door. Something, or someone, tripped him, and he went down hard, hitting his head against the floor. He tried to get up, but a great dizziness swept over him. He closed his eyes and shook his head, trying to clear it. When he opened his eyes again, the windows to the Land of the Second Sun were covered by blinds. He was alone in the back room with the aged Ting Sun Fu.

HANNIGAN struggled to his feet. He stood there, arms hanging

loosely at his sides, head forward with chin outthrust. His head felt bad, very bad, but he was angrier than he had ever been before, and the anger helped lessen the effect of the pain. He stared at the plain, wrinkled little old man.

"You're plenty smart, you think, don't you," he said. "You've closed the door to that phony, hypnotic world, and you've destroyed Sheila Mann. Now, you've kept me from following her and you think everything's going to be all right."

Ting Sun Fu shrugged. His face remained expressionless. "I have been forced to bring about certain things," he said simply. "I cannot guess the outcome."

Hannigan took a step forward. "Well, I can," he said roughly. "I know that if I draw those blinds apart, I'll find nothing but the back alley. I also know that Sheila Mann is not in the alley. If you don't take me to her now, I'm going to tear you apart piece by piece, and to hell with your age and dignity."

The room was quiet. Hannigan fidgeted nervously. He had to reach Sheila soon. She had been very frightened.

"Do you help me," he shouted suddenly, "or am I going to tear down the joint?"

THE face of the old man was thoughtful. Hannigan knew that expression would drive him mad. His fists doubled. Ting Sun Fu stepped back one pace.

"*Chan-choh*," he said sharply. "Stop. Do not act like a young fool. This is a problem for men.

"Listen closely," Ting Sun Fu continued. "I can tell you the secret of the other land. I can take you there, but you will regret it. I have tried to save as many as possible. Some had

to go. You could be saved. Once you meet the Ruling Three, your fate is sealed. Do you wish to go and face death, or return to your normal life in safety?"

Hannigan laughed. It was a hard, almost brutal laugh. "Would you desert the girl you loved?"

The Chinese man's voice did not change. "You will go to the Land of the Second Sun, but first you must understand why you go. Sit with me. I must talk to you."

They sat facing each other on the broad low divan. One, an ancient sage of the East, born with patience and steeped in the tradition of living slowly and learning much. The other, a man of the West, impatient, with a driving force that made him push forward against any odds, to rescue the girl he wanted.

Ting Sun Fu's face was a mask that reflected nothing. His fingers, his entire body, became motionless. The slanted eyes were almost closed. "Understand," he said in a monotone, "that you have not been affected by hypnotism. Everything that has happened to you, everything you have seen, has been real."

The voice had a lulling effect on Hannigan's nerves. He found himself relaxing. At last, he was gaining some of the knowledge which he had fought so long and hard to obtain.

"There is a true Land of the Second Sun," Fu went on. "It is a land, or world, in every sense, although perhaps it would not be classed so by our earthly standards. It is a land that is flat, depthless. A land that looks perfectly normal if you are staring straight at it or its people. Viewed from the side, it would be almost nothing. Objects would seem flat and without order or sense. This is because the Land of the Second Sun is squeezed tightly into a space

pocket, hardly wider than the room in which we sit."

HANNIGAN wanted to interrupt. He didn't dare. He couldn't break the spell. He listened attentively.

"For example, picture a huge stage, many miles wide, filled with hundreds of intricate bits of background. Viewed from the theatre, it is a vast world. Viewed from the wings, it becomes a series of flat, colorless bits of wood and cardboard.

"The Land of the Second Sun came into being crushed between space pockets. Hardly wider than the room, by our standards, it seems quite normal to the flattened, paper-like creatures who live within its borders.

"If you go there, you will become as they are."

Hannigan's fists started to ball into tight knots. "Sheila, Miss Mann, has been changed into one of these flat creatures?"

Fu nodded. "She is like a paper shadow, beautiful to look upon but quite without depth. The Ruling Three demanded that she be sent."

Hannigan forgot his anger for a minute. He remembered the shadow that had started all this. The inevitable entering of Fu into the picture. "The Second Sun," he said thoughtfully. "I assume that another sun shines on this strange world. That it is in a different position than our own."

Fu nodded. "A Second Sun, in our own planetary system, but hidden from us by the same space wrinkle that hides the other world," he explained.

"Then, if it is hidden from us, how does it affect certain people? Why did I suddenly find my body ignoring the rays of our own sun and responding to the one in this other world?"

Ting Sun Fu shook his head. "Understand me clearly," he said. "I do not

know all the answers. We of the East are very old, yet there are things that even we do not understand. There was a morning when I, a simple merchant, opened the blinds that should have allowed me to gaze upon the familiar, ugly scene of the alley behind my shop. On this morning, I was amazed to see a fairyland beyond belief. At first, I rubbed my eyes in wonder. For many days, I yearned to open the door and step into this wonderful world that only I knew existed.

"Something warned me that I should leave it alone. That it was a trap.

"At last, even I, who should have been wise, could not resist temptation. Like the first Adam tasting of the fruit, I went into the other world and my body was flattened.

"I became an agent in this world. Through me, they would bring certain earth people to their land. If I promised to be loyal and help them as I was asked, they would return me to earth and restore my normal appearance and life. If I refused . . ."

HIS eyes met Hannigan's and they were filled with mist. "They can be very cruel," he said. Then, more hurriedly, "I returned, promising them aid. This, then, became the entrance to the Land of the Second Sun. I have never questioned their reasoning. They let me know that, from the many people who entered my shop, they would choose a few that they wanted. I was to lure these few to this room and they would do the rest."

He was speaking swiftly now, as though anxious to be rid of the story.

"Once a person saw the Land of the Second Sun, his or her shadow was reversed. The power of that sun outshone our own."

He arose. "I have served them well, though not proudly. The men and

women who came to me went to the Land of the Second Sun. Perhaps I should not hold my own life so dearly. Yet, I am not entirely a criminal, for they have promised that no harm will come to those who do as they are told."

Hannigan was on his feet, wondering how much of this wild tale he could believe. "Then what about me?" he demanded. "I want to enter that other world. I have a wrong way shadow. I've been chosen. Send me."

Ting Sun Fu shook his head slowly.

"When I was ready to send you the first night you came here, they refused to accept you. You recall, I'm sure, that you went through the door and awakened in the alley."

Hannigan remembered it clearly enough. Remembered how he had tried to convince Clamface Bailey that he hadn't been dreaming or partaking the pleasures of the pipe.

He was watching Ting Sun Fu closely now, a plan growing slowly in his mind. Would it be possible to slip into the Land of the Second Sun despite Ting Sun Fu?

THE blinds were drawn, but the doorway leading to the Land of the Second Sun was open a crack. He could still see the dazzling brilliance of the backward sun. The contact had not yet been lost.

"You do not think that they will harm Sheila Mann?"

"I know nothing of their plans," Fu said. "Who would imagine that they would choose a man of Warner's type. He was bad, all bad. If he had not been murdered by his own gangsters, he would now be in the other world. The Ruling Three demanded him, and are now looking for another of his kind."

"The Ruling Three aren't too fussy whom they pick," Hannigan said. His

body was tense. He could feel his leg muscles tightening automatically. "They shouldn't object to me."

Before Fu could stop him, he was past the little man, through the doorway and over its threshold into the Land of the Second Sun.

For a moment, he felt as though a huge roller had hit him head on, and he went down, falling backward, flat on his back. The door and the windows were gone. There was no Ting Sun Fu, no normal world. Intense agony crept into his body. Every inch of flesh, every bone and muscle, was wrenched and tortured. He lay flat, panting and trying to keep breathing. The pain grew worse, until he was sure that he couldn't stand it. Then, as suddenly as it had come, the pain was gone, and he felt normal once more. He was lying on his back, staring up at an intensely blue sky. He tried to get up, failed to make it, then lay back again, taking it more easily. After a while, with a grim smile on his face, he tried again.

This time, he managed to get his feet under him, but it wasn't easy.

It was going to take some adjusting, he thought, to ready himself for this new world. He had asked for it when he stepped out of Ting Sun Fu's office, and he had certainly gotten the full treatment.

HE LOOKED down at himself a little ruefully. He would have to find Sheila, and he would have to arrange a meeting with the Ruling Three if he could ever find them.

Although he felt quite normal now, and appeared so from the front, Hannigan guessed that he must be about as thick as heavy tissue paper.

He stood in the center of a pretty field. Grass and bright flowers grew in profusion about him. They were real enough, he knew, from the pleasant

odor and the manner in which they waved in the warm breeze. Real, but not in the sense that things were real on earth.

He had to learn to move, to exist, even to change his manner of thinking, if he planned to invade the Land of the Second Sun. He stared around him with growing wonder. After the pain of changing was once over, he felt entirely normal once more. He moved his arm about in front of him.

He remembered words, vague words, spoken before he had come here. "The Land of the Second Sun is like a huge stage. From the front, it seems normal and perfect. From the side, it is flat, paper thin, a vast land squeezed into a narrow space."

Yet, was that explanation correct? On the surface, it seemed so. There was more to it than that, however. Somehow, this land had been subjected to terrific pressure. Pressure had squeezed it into a small space wrinkle. A wrinkle no wider than the alley behind Ting Sun Fu's. To compensate for that wrinkle, the people of this land were also made flat and shadowlike, so that they could move forever like shadows on a wall, and never reach the borders of their narrow land.

Hannigan started to move about. He seemed to move normally. It was as though he could move East and West, but could never hope to penetrate the mysteries of North and South.

THUS far he understood few of the mysteries of this land. It was certainly impossible to return to Ting Sun Fu's, for the room was gone and he had no knowledge of how to search for it. This meadow—bright, flat, lovely in the morning air—seemed a long way from his goal. He saw a forest in the distance and started to walk toward it. The sun left his shadow on the trees

near the edge of the wood, and the shadow was tall and unnatural.

Hannigan tried desperately to think of a plan to save Sheila Mann. How could he save her, before he even knew what fate lay in store for her?

He was tiring easily, because, though his body seemed light as a shadow, the terrific punishment it had taken had weakened him considerably. He found a path through the forest. He realized that one could hardly call it a path. It was more like the opening between two stage flats, for looking sidewise all he saw was a series of flat props. He looked ahead again, to reassure himself, and the forest and the fields looked as he was used to them.

He wondered how he looked, drifting along, flat as a pancake, yet alive and seemingly in perfect health. It might be funny, he thought, if I had any idea how I could get out of this mess when I've had enough of it.

Once, he heard voices ahead. Hardly knowing how to hide, he chose a large tree and flattened himself against it. Five men came down the trail, past the spot where he hid. They were, viewed from his hiding place, quite normal appearing. Their dress was simple. Long, loosely knitted robes of a blue material and flat sandals. As they passed him, they became thin flat shadows, almost colorless, out of a crazy-quilt stage.

He went on again, alert, waiting for another alarm. The path widened, and at last became a pleasant, fairly wide foot road. Ahead of him, springing into sight from nowhere, was a town. He was in it before he realized, for the thin, depthless homes had looked no different than had the forest, until he was among them and viewing them from the proper perspective.

H HE HAD no choice now but to keep on moving forward, ignoring the

curious children and older people who came to their doors to stare at him.

The homes were simple, thatched affairs, made of white, lime-like material and covered with straw. Adults and children wore robes, blue, white, pale green or soft brown.

Somewhere, close by, a voice shouted hoarsely, excitedly. Hannigan gritted his teeth. If he started to run, they would overcome him at once. Maybe he could bluff his way through. He looked to both sides of the street and saw more of the flat houses, looking like scenes cut from wall board. A child, fitting into his line of vision and out again, by turning quickly sidewise, tripped him and sent him sprawling in the dust. He got to his knees and brushed the dust from his clothing. People were laughing at him. Hannigan was confused.

People were closing in about him as he went forward down the street. He watched larger homes appear. He knew that he was in some sort of a city now for, as he went along, high buildings appeared, flat as the small houses but built of huge stone blocks and rearing stubbornly, stolidly, up toward the sky.

There was a mob about him now. The children were the worst. They treated him like a strange beggar visiting their streets. They had a clever, devilish trick of sidling up to him, their thin sides exposed and almost impossible to see. Then, they would whirl around suddenly, strike at him or kick him and sidle away again, flat, nearly invisible shadows that flitted out of range before he could fight back. The sounds of their voices were loud and tangled so that he could not understand the words. The older ones closed in about him.

"Two can play that trick," Hannigan whispered to himself. His lips were dry and his throat felt dusty and full

of fuzz. He didn't mind admitting to himself that he was plenty scared.

HE TURNED a full circle suddenly, and sprinted for the side of the street and the doorway of one of the buildings. The move was made too quickly, for what had appeared flat, suddenly became full and natural in appearance, and what had been natural was suddenly flattened by the new angle he had made in turning. Dizzily, he tried to catch himself, headed for the door and dashed in, slamming it behind him.

He was aware of a shadow, turning slowly, until it became a lovely girl who frowned at him in a puzzled manner. The voices in the street arose to a howl of protest.

He had outwitted them for an instant, for he had turned and run so quickly that each person saw only part of him, and no one had a clear idea of where he had gone.

He was panting with fear.

The girl did not look unkind. She might have been out of the line-up at the Fifth Street Theatre, for her garment was made up briefly of a crepe-like stuff that covered her breasts and thighs. She had been bathing, for steam rose from a pink tub placed in the center of the room. A half dozen other tubs, all empty, were scattered about the room.

She cried out, as though it had taken a moment for her to realize what had happened, "What are you doing here? No man enters the bath house, ever."

She found her robe, a rough, soft texture of pink, and slipped into it. The last bit of glowing flesh disappeared under the fabric.

Hannigan said, "They're after me. I've got to get away."

He watched the girl's face carefully, seeing the dark black eyes that traveled

slowly over his face, her high, pink forehead, the carefully combed, still wet tresses that clung to her soft throat and shoulders.

Her eyes were warm. "You are an outsider?"

He nodded. No use lying to her. "I must see the Ruling Three," he said quickly. "I deserve protection until my mission is finished."

THAT sounded impressive enough, and it had the desired effect. He had that astonishing experience of seeing the girl whirl about the room, now normal, now thin and shadowlike. She threw her robe from her and he caught it.

"Into the tub," she said, and pushed him toward one of the tubs in the room. Hannigan swore under his breath. He climbed in and sat down, and pulled the robe over his head. He barely had time.

Someone was pounding on the door. "Go away," the girl cried. "This is the bath."

A loud, grating voice shouted, "We search for a stranger. We must come in. He is hidden close by."

The girl stood before the tub, her brief garment hiding little, her hands on her lips. Her jaw was stubborn. "You cannot enter. We are bathing."

Hannigan heard the door grate open, and ducked under the robe. Then the door slammed shut again, quickly, and the girl cried out in indignation, "The Ruling Three will hear of this."

The voice outside the door was humble and forlorn. "We did not realize. Our deepest apologies."

The girl was not content. She was a perfect actor. "You will be even more chagrined when the Ruling Three call Council." While she scolded, she came to Hannigan and snatched the robe from him. In a moment, she was once

more wrapped snugly inside it. She motioned him out of the tub, continuing her chatter to the unseen man outside.

She took Hannigan's arm and moved toward the rear of the room. Hannigan was growing accustomed to the strange optical changes that took place. The room seemed flat, then full, depending on the way he viewed it. The girl changed from a shadow to a full-sized, red blooded girl, then back to a shadow again.

SHE pushed open a small rear door. Beyond it was a sunlit courtyard and a small, half-moon shaped vehicle on three wheels. She opened the door and pushed him inside.

"On the floor," she said. "They will not see you there."

The courtyard was deserted. Hannigan guessed that it led to the street behind the bathhouse. Then, the girl was in the car, and her fingers touched the controls. He dared not look up. He crouched close to the floor and felt the momentum of the car as it swept out into a wide circle and shot ahead. The motor was purring smoothly.

"You search for the Ruling Three?" Her voice was softer now, and quite calm.

"I do," Hannigan said. "I happened into this land by accident. I'd like to go back, but I don't know the way. If I could see the right people, perhaps they'd release me."

The girl was silent for a while. Then the car stopped. "You are quite safe now," she said. "Follow me as I leave the car. If we meet anyone, say nothing and keep moving. I will explain your presence."

He had constantly marvelled at her presence of mind and the cool authoritative manner in which she handled everything. He got out of the car, star-

ing ruefully down at his soiled and torn clothing. They were once more shielded from the street by a high wall. Before them was a tall, slim shaft of a building constructed of pink stone, with a huge door which led into its base.

Hannigan followed this girl who had saved him. She walked swiftly to the door, never looking back. He followed and waited without speaking while she opened the lock on a thin silver chain around her neck, and removed a tiny, fork-shaped key hanging from it. She rapped the key sharply against the solid rock of the door and a single, bell-like sound greeted his ears. The key must have started a series of bells inside, for the sound grew louder and the door started to open, inch by inch, with each echo of the original sound. Then, he was staring down a long, narrow corridor. No doors marred the surface of the stone. It was like walking into an endless tunnel cut through solid rock.

The door closed after them. Together, they went along the corridor. At last, as though she had counted each stone they passed since they entered, she stopped. Facing the wall, with no visible object to guide her, she rapped sharply again with the forked key. And again, the bell was heard, and the sound grew in volume, and a second door was opened.

SHE motioned him inside.

Hannigan halted just inside the threshold. This was a wonderful place. He had grown so accustomed to flat surfaces now, that he ignored them. He saw ahead of him a huge pink bed, as large as his entire room at the hotel. Soft, colorful chairs filled this room, and a vast fireplace warmed it. It was like stepping into a huge house all contained in one room.

"I didn't expect anything like this.

I can't stay here. This is your room."

She nodded. She crossed the floor and perched daintily on the edge of the bed. A slow smile covered her face and made her teeth appear brilliantly white and appealing. He thought he had never seen such perfect surroundings.

"I have every right to bring you here," she said. "I like you very much."

He felt uneasy. "If you'll tell me where to find the Ruling Three," he said, "I'll stop troubling you. You've done enough."

She shook her head, still smiling, and he saw stubbornness in the smile now. "You will see the Ruling Three at the proper time," she told him. "Until then, you must do exactly as I tell you."

Hannigan was puzzled. Puzzled and greatly worried. Under ordinary circumstances, he might be quite flattered at her attention. Right now, he wanted to find Sheila Mann. Wanted to get out of this madhouse of flat surfaces.

"I'll cooperate in any way I can," he said stiffly. "I owe you a lot."

She nodded. "That is better. You see, I am not accustomed to helping strangers. I have been content, until now, to remain quite alone. You chose to intrude at a most delicate time. I—I liked it. I've never been quite so touched emotionally. No man has ever been able to thrill me before, and I'm not going to release the first one who does."

"I'm flattered," he said. "Not every man can boast of attracting the attention of so beautiful a girl."

SHE colored prettily. "A nice speech," she said. "The nicest speech that has ever been made to the daughter of the Ruling Three."

Hannigan felt his brain reeling. "The—the . . ." He stopped trying to speak. Words would not come.

A peal of silvery laughter suddenly escaped her lips. She fell back on the bed. "So you wish to see the Ruling Three? I warn you, you'll be quite unpleasantly surprised. You had better linger here until you are quite sure that your decision to meet them cannot be changed. You may regret it."

She stopped laughing as suddenly as she had started and sat up once more. She wrapped her robe more closely about her and looked at him with mock sternness.

"Am I so ugly that you cannot stand to be here long with me?" Her voice was gay, and yet there was a pitiful quality to it, as though grave doubts arose in her mind:

Hannigan was still too overcome to speak. He found his way to a huge cushioned chair, and sank into it. He continued to stare at her for some time.

"Well?" She stood up and moved toward him swiftly, stopping before him with arms outstretched. "You would rather go away?" He saw tears in her deep eyes.

"I—I don't know what to say," he faltered. "Can't you understand? I've been tossed into a strange world. I came here with definite plans. I hoped to meet the Ruling Three because I knew I needed their help. I met you. You're . . . not included in my plans."

"Then I am attractive?"

She said it so gravely that he couldn't help smiling. She arose and came closer to him. Her arms were outstretched. This was an amazing experience to Hannigan. He knew that the girl was only a thin shadow, and that he also was a shadowy form. Yet, his arms creeping about her had the sensation of warm, solid flesh. And his lips on hers were vibrant.

Suddenly, the vision of Sheila Mann rose before Hannigan. Sheila, crying out for him, begging him to save her.

He drew away from the girl, slowly, so that he would not anger her. Suddenly, his eyes halted on the strand of silver, the tiny forked key hanging against her throat where she had replaced it.

He had to get that key. The key was his escape, and Sheila's escape.

His arms went around her. His fingers touched the key, twisted and broke the narrow silver chain and she cried out, "You—you pinched my throat. You hurt me."

He had the key palmed in his hand. "I'm sorry," he said awkwardly.

Her fingers went slowly to her throat. Her eyes widened and tears came.

"YOU stole the key." She jumped to her feet. To his surprise, she didn't seem angry. There was only deep hurt on her face. "You did all that, kissed me tenderly, so that you might steal the key."

Her voice became stern. "You wish to see the Ruling Three?"

He nodded, knowing that he was caught, feeling like a fool to betray her in such a manner.

"Then," she said, "you shall see them. I am very sorry for you, man of another world. Sorry for myself, also, for I would have given much to have had your love."

She moved across the room, and he watched her with dull, wondering eyes. He had never felt so much like a dog before. The girl was a sport, a real sport. She could have had him killed but, instead, she was going to give him a chance.

She reached the wall and drew aside a small curtain that hung against it. Behind the curtain was a small silver wheel. She grasped the wheel and turned it once. Into the room came the rich, full sound of many bells. Bells that he had heard before each time a door opened. This time, the sound

was so loud that it drowned out everything else, and made his ear drums vibrate with pain.

The entire wall of the room slipped up and vanished into the ceiling. Without moving, without leaving his chair, he faced another room, larger than the one they had occupied.

Far away, perhaps a hundred yards, was a platform covered with rich, crimson cloth. On the platform were three thrones, ebony black, with three columns of light that came from above and focused on the thrones.

His eyes adjusted themselves slowly. A man sat on the first throne. He sat motionless. His face was graven. Where his eyes should have been, there were only small, black holes.

HANNIGAN grasped the arms of his chair and held on tightly. He felt his blood pound through his veins. He tried not to cry out or show fear. *The eyeless man on the first throne was Ting Sun Fu.*

On the second throne, there was a small, black cushion. Laying on that cushion, sparkling and alive, were the two slanted eyes of Ting Sun Fu.

On the third throne, there was nothing. Nothing? Well, nothing that the eye could see, Hannigan decided. But there was something there which was invisible to the human eye, something that could not be seen, could only be felt. Like the slight mist of a soul, or of a mind. Perhaps the fog of a brain, able to think but unable to make its presence known to the eye.

"These," the girl said in a strained voice, "are the Ruling Three."

Hannigan's hand clutched the pronged key lightly. Sweat stood out on his forehead. "Ting Sun Fu," his voice didn't sound like his own, it was harsh, out of control. "I might have guessed."

Ting Sun Fu nodded slowly. The eyes, laying naked on their black cushion, twinkled. And from the empty third throne, came Ting Sun Fu's voice.

"How could you have known that a lowly shopkeeper was also the power of a great world? You speak riddles, Mr. Hannigan. You have been most troublesome, even when I tried to save you from your own fate. Now, you have hurt my daughter, and you have sealed your doom once and for all."

"Now you have hurt my daughter."

Hannigan forgot Ting Sun Fu and turned startled eyes upon the girl. She was tall and willowy, beautifully formed. Her eyes were not slanted. Her color was not yellow. How could she be the daughter of the Oriental?

"All this must be confusing to you." Ting Sun Fu chuckled. "Rise and come closer."

Hannigan stood up. He moved forward, like a man in his sleep, entering some weird, nightmarish place. He crossed the carpet into the strange room. Shadows followed him, closed in about him. At last, all he could see was the three lighted thrones: with the man, the eyes and . . . the soul.

HE HALTED finally, about ten feet from the thrones. A strange panic filled him but he tried not to betray his feelings. He stood there, arms on his hips, legs wide apart, defiant.

"I have no quarrel with you," Fu said softly. "If you had remained on earth, you would have lost your strange shadow in a few days. No one would ever have troubled you again."

Hannigan was conscious of the forked key, still resting in the damp palm of his hand. He slipped it into his pocket.

"What about Miss Mann?" he asked grimly. "Would she have returned if I hadn't come for her?"

He heard a gasp behind him and re-

membered the girl, the daughter of the Ruling Three.

Ting Sun Fu remained patient, unbearably calm. "Nothing you have done, or possibly can do, will change Miss Mann's future," he said. "She was brought here for a purpose."

"To be tortured and—"

Ting Sun Fu interrupted him with an upraised arm. Hannigan found himself staring into the black, cavernous holes in Fu's head, fascinated, almost hypnotized.

"I will explain something to you," Fu said. "I don't know why. I have no reason to, except that in a way I am responsible for your being in this embarrassing situation."

"The shadow?" Hannigan asked. Fu nodded. "Many years ago, I studied the mystic science in my home province. I came close to finding many new worlds. Worlds within worlds, locked in space pockets, and lost from ordinary eyes.

THE Land of the Second Sun is only one of many. Like very high pitched sound is locked from normal ears, so other worlds lie about us, above and below, hidden from but a fortunate few who are developed highly enough to recognize them.

"I came to America, always dreaming of finding one of these worlds. Of becoming a ruler. Then, one day, I discovered the secret. I produced a key."

He took a two-pronged silver key from his robe and held it aloft. Hannigan caught his breath. It was a duplicate of the key in his pocket.

"The key was pitched to a very special height," Fu said. "I tapped many walls and secluded nooks, and at last found a doorway to this place from my very room behind the shop.

"When I first came here, the Land of the Second Sun was an odd place in-

deed." A ghost of a smile flitted across his old face.

"There were three phases of life here," he said. "The eyes, as you see them beside me, floating around, unable to work for anyone. The bodies, flattened, and without a will or the ability to work or think." He sighed.

"Third and last, the souls, floating like lost wraiths among the hills and forests of the land. I was their savior. I am not without knowledge of such things. China is a land steeped in mystery and mysticism. After many years, I was able to combine the three parts into a whole. Many people died, but at last there grew a race of strong ones to replace them. People normal in every respect but for their unnatural flatness."

Hannigan felt a presence at his side. He turned and saw the Princess staring at him with misty eyes. He scowled.

"Listen," Fu said, quite sternly, and Hannigan looked back again at the three thrones. "I could not change the flatness of the people, for this space wrinkle is very narrow. They could not live in it if they were normal, according to earth standards.

"But, despite that, I have achieved my purpose. I am the ruler of the world. There was only one thing I had to do for them in return. One strange custom persisted here. The people worship me, but they insisted that I, as a symbol of the land, must divide myself into their original three parts. They insisted that I rule as a god, not as a human. To do this, I must represent what this land once was, a place of separated people, a people who had three parts.

NOTHING is impossible. It was difficult to divide myself thus, but you will remember that I had already placed three parts of a body to-

gether and made complete units. Thus, I was able to divide myself into three parts—the Ruling Three."

"That's all very pretty," Hannigan said. "I wouldn't believe it, but I'm seeing it, and I have to believe what I see. What of me? What of the Second Sun that managed to get itself into my everyday life?"

Fu said nothing for a long time. His eyes glittered, and there was boiling activity in the mist over the third throne. Then he spoke again, "The Second Sun pierced the space between this world and yours," he said. "It shines through only when the windows and the door of this land are open. Whoever it touches, it marks for the period of a week." He shrugged. "I called people to my shop who would be helpful here. They saw the Land of the Second Sun through the windows. The sun touched them and their shadow was changed."

"I hadn't been in your shop when I was affected," Hannigan protested.

Fu's face was a mask. "You lingered by the window," he said. "The sun, released through it, touched you. It was not visible, but the power was great." He shrugged again, and made an idle gesture in the air. "If you had not stopped by the window that day, you would never have known."

Hannigan's mind shot back suddenly to Sheila Mann. "You still haven't told me what happened to Sheila Mann, and the others," he said stubbornly.

Fu arose slowly from the chair. As he did so, the eyes, two small orbs of light, lifted into the air with him and hovered close to his face. The mist on the third throne shifted upward and hung over his head.

"Sheila Mann came to my shop to purchase a rare cup," Ting Sun Fu said softly. "I recognized her great beauty. In Nora Williams, I saw a chance to

produce beauty culture here. In Sheila Mann, the perfect sample for Miss Williams to work from. And so, both were chosen. They tried to escape us, but my agents are experts in the use of hypnotics. When the time came, these women were met by my agents and forced to accompany them to my office. From there . . .”

“Our third choice, the gangster who was shot in the street, was to be a model of strength for our men. Unfortunately . . .”

“What happened to Sheila?” Hannigan said it through clenched teeth. His nerve was breaking. If Ting Sun Fu didn’t take him to the girl soon . . .

“I WILL do better than tell you,” Fu said. “You shall be shown.”

Ting Sun Fu moved across the room, away from the thrones, away from Hannigan and the girl, the eyes and the misty soul following him. He reached the far wall, and tapped it gently with the silver key. The wall slipped away and the bells tolled behind it. Then, Hannigan was staring into another huge chamber. A chamber filled with flitting, shadow-thin people. He saw Sheila Mann, and a hoarse cry came from his throat.

Sheila was lying as in death, stretched full-length on a cushioned divan. People moved about her, carrying what appeared to be sketch books. It was like some sort of weird art school, a studio for the shadow people of the Land of the Second Sun.

Sheila, alive or dead, did not move. Hannigan sprang forward, but stopped short as Fu turned to face him.

“Do not fear,” Fu said. “She is alive and well. They do not harm her. She is the model of beauty for the people of this world.”

Hannigan, relieved for the moment, was more puzzled than ever.

“You see, Mr. Hannigan, you do not fit into this world. You have no talent, nor are you handsome or noticeably strong. You can offer nothing to our culture. I say that so you will know why it was not my wish to have you here.”

Hannigan grinned wryly. “Then there’s no reason for keeping me,” he said. “Miss Mann can leave as soon as your people are done feasting their eyes upon her. I can leave, because I’m not useful in any sense. Is that correct?”

Fu’s eyes, floating about, seemed to halt and focus on him. They narrowed calculatingly.

“UNFORTUNATELY,” Fu said, “once you have entered this land, you cannot go back. Your body is flattened, and would never live in any other air pressure. On earth, you would die within seconds after your return.”

Hannigan didn’t say anything. But he knew that Ting Sun Fu had spoken a deliberate lie. If Fu could return, why could he not? Was Fu afraid of Hannigan?

This was a sign of weakness, the first sign, and Hannigan kept his knowledge of it carefully locked behind inscrutable eyes.

“Then I’m to remain here, doing your will, living my life in this flattened world?”

Fu smiled. “It could be very pleasant here,” he said. “The Princess . . .”

Hannigan had almost forgotten. He turned to see the girl behind him, her face flushed with hope and loneliness. She smiled, a sad, hopeful smile.

He turned back toward Fu and started to speak. The words choked in his mouth. The wall had descended, and Fu was gone. Sheila Mann was gone. Hannigan took a deep breath. He pivoted and walked to the Princess’ side.

HANNIGAN knew more about the girl now. He had been with her for hours—how many he couldn't begin to guess. She stood with him on the stone balcony, looking down upon the city. They were drawn apart, for in spite of himself, Hannigan could give only his respect. His every thought was for Sheila Mann.

A strange place to call a city, Hannigan thought. As long as you looked straight ahead of you, you imagined that it might be a huge, crowded place, many miles square. If you glanced from the corner of your eye, you saw that, like its people, it was a narrow, stage-like place of odd proportions. A city, he remembered with a grim smile, crowded into the alley behind Ting Sun Fu's novelty shop.

He turned to look at the girl. She colored slightly, aware of his eyes upon her.

"Ting Sun Fu said that you were his daughter. That's impossible," he said bluntly. "Where did you come from? You're not Oriental."

She shook her head a little sadly. "Of course not. I am the daughter of the Ruling Three in name only. I don't know my own origin. I was taken from my people when I was very young. I am called the daughter of this land, but actually, I am only a figurehead."

She looked into his eyes long and tenderly. "I am a very foolish girl. I was lonely and I had hoped . . ."

He couldn't look at her then. He felt like a fool.

"You love her very much?" Her question was very softly spoken.

He didn't answer, but he knew that she understood. For a time neither of them spoke. Then, Hannigan said, "You've been a peach. You've done everything for me and I can't return the favor."

She turned toward her room. "You

wish to escape from this land? You wish to go back to earth, with the girl who sleeps?"

"Yes," Hannigan said simply.

THE girl whirled around, her eyes suddenly determined. It seemed to Hannigan that she grew taller and stronger at that moment. Her voice was suddenly tempered with a metallic quality.

"Then we will make a bargain. I will help you escape. If you think so much of this other girl, her safety means more than anything else to you. Would you be willing to give her up, if I promised that she could go safely back to your world?"

Hannigan stared at her. Could she—the one who had been so gentle a moment before—go through with such a bargain?

"You mean that I must remain behind?"

She shook her head. "No," she said stiffly. "I mean that you shall escape also, but that I shall go with you."

Hannigan felt his neck growing warm. Anger closed his fists and made his chest tight. It seemed idiotic that a man should resent so much being attached to so desirable a creature as this one. But he was head over heels in love with Sheila Mann.

Sheila. If he didn't accept the Princess' proposal, what would happen to Sheila?

"Well?" the Princess asked.

"I am to give Sheila up? Is that correct?"

The Princess' head nodded ever so slightly. "To save Sheila," Hannigan said grimly, "I'll accept."

"You must understand the people and the land," the Princess said. "First, the land was here." The Princess was seated on her divan, her feet curled under her, facing Hannigan and regard-

ing him with cool eyes.

"The Land of the Second Sun, which to you seems so odd. It is a flattened shadow-land. We partake of no nourishment, and we flit about, completely satisfied, as though we had full, earth-shaped bodies.

IN THE beginning, there was the land. Through some queer trick of fate, there were the flat, eyeless bodies, wandering about. There were the eyes, and the misty stuff that men call mind and soul.

"Is it any wonder that in cleverly combining these things, the Ruling Three became a God to us?"

"But why did they demand that he take the identity of the three parts? That he take the form he had saved you from?" Hannigan questioned.

"Symbolism," she explained. "He says that the people demanded it. Actually, I believe that the darkness of the room, and the power of the man's mind, combine to hypnotize those who see him. Therefore, he appears to be what our people once were. He constantly reminds us that he saved us, and that we owe everything to him."

Hannigan nodded. That seemed to be a reasonable explanation. Far more reasonable than the one Ting Sun Fu had given.

He felt quite cold and indifferent about the whole thing now. He saw no point to crying over spilled milk. He would see Sheila safe, and pay off his debt. Maybe it wouldn't be too bad, giving up Sheila. But the very thought of doing this made him sick inside.

"The Ruling Three will not be present for several days," the Princess said suddenly. "While the two women he brought here are being studied, he will go back for more. We have only started to study. He will bring dozens, per-

haps hundreds, to our city. We will absorb your culture from them."

Hannigan swore softly. So Fu thought he was going to ruin hundreds of men and women? Bring them here and flatten them out like walking shadows?

"You will take us back tonight? You know the way?"

Her lips tightened into a straight white line. "I know the way," she said. "I will keep my promises and expect you to keep yours."

He looked away for a minute. When he looked at her again, she was brushing her face with the back of her hand. It was a quick, defiant gesture, but Hannigan was sure that a small tear had rolled down her face. He could see its trail, ever so slight, on the softness of her cheek.

He wondered why she should be unhappy. Wasn't she getting her way?

THE trail was dark, and in the darkness, the trees were invisible. Hannigan held tightly to Sheila Mann's hand. Behind Sheila, Nora Williams stumbled along, muttering to herself. Hannigan's other hand was cold, grasping the Princess' fingers.

"You're sure that there was no alarm given?" Hannigan asked.

"Nothing is guarded here," the Princess assured him. "No one would dare to escape. Even if they wished to, they wouldn't know the way."

"But you know it?"

"I have watched the Ruling Three—Ting Sun Fu."

Hannigan didn't reply. They had found Sheila and the hairdresser in a room beyond Ting Sun Fu's. Sheila had cried out in amazement when she first saw Hannigan. Now, she was cool, matter-of-fact. Hannigan had done that to her. He was paying close attention to the Princess, and ignoring

Sheila, though it broke his heart to do so.

Finally, they came to the meadow where Hannigan first found himself in this land.

The Princess halted and turned to Hannigan. Sheila Mann and Nora Williams drew into the tight little circle.

"Remember," the Princess said, "have complete confidence in me. Do exactly as I say. We are in no danger here. No one cares about or suspects our movements. The danger comes after we pass through the door."

Her eyes, close to Hannigan's, were large and misty.

"Give me the key," she said to him.

Hannigan drew it from his pocket and handed it to her. She held it between her thumb and forefinger. They stood huddled together, a tiny group of flat human shadows, in the center of a dark, silent field.

The Princess walked forward until she reached a small stone rising a few inches from the sod. She stopped and motioned them to her.

"This is the door," she said simply. "This is where he stands when he passes from the land."

Hannigan could see only darkness ahead. Darkness, and the outline of the forest. He turned and caught Sheila staring at him with frightened, bewildered eyes.

"Chin up," he told her.

THE Princess raised the key into the air, held it there for an instant, then lowered it slowly. She turned to face Hannigan. Tears were streaming down her face. Before he could move, she pressed close to him and kissed his lips. The warmth of her body, her quivering mouth startled him. Then, before he could speak or move, she turned away and struck at the air with the pronged key.

The key struck something solid, yet invisible.

All the bells in Heaven seemed to be ringing. They grew louder and louder. The Princess stood before them, her body erect. Her arms were raised, her eyes to the sky. Hannigan heard Sheila cry out as though in pain, then a sudden sickening sensation hit his own body.

For a moment, he felt as though he was swelling and growing all out of proportion. His eyes remained glued on the Princess. Then the door opened, and she stepped through.

Hannigan grasped Sheila's arm, dragging her into Ting Sun Fu's back room. Nora Williams stumbled behind them.

Events took place so swiftly after that, that the human mind and eye could not completely fathom them.

Hannigan knew that his body was normal once more, and that Sheila was also safe. He saw two people in the lighted room: Clamface Bailey was standing near the wall, and Ting Sun Fu, sitting on the divan, gazing down with stricken eyes at the figure of the Princess on the floor.

Then, with a feeling of horror, Hannigan saw the girl who had led them to safety. He knew now why she had cried out, why she had stolen that last kiss. She was lying face down, like a cleverly designed paper doll. There was nothing human or alive about her. There was no depth and no roundness. She had belonged to the other land, and Hannigan realized that she had loved him sincerely, for she had died to save him.

He heard Clamface Bailey exclaim, "Of all the tricks I've ever seen!"

HE SAW Ting Sun Fu arise slowly, still staring at the body on the floor. He wanted to look at Sheila, but

he didn't dare.

Slowly Fu's eyes met Hannigan's. "You have returned from your journey."

Hannigan nodded.

"What the hell goes on?" It was Bailey, but they ignored him.

"The daughter of the Ruling Three guided you here?"

Hannigan nodded again. "I—I didn't know that it would kill her. I . . . had promised . . ."

"I should have known it was a mistake. *Mei-yi fahzu* (it can't be helped)." Fu's voice sounded completely hopeless.

He kneeled by the body on the floor. He covered it tenderly with a silken sheet that had been folded on the divan. When he arose again, his face was as old as the world. He looked at no one. He spoke to everyone.

"I was mistaken. I thought I could help my new world by taking into it specimens to be studied. I have brought only great pain and death. Where there is horror and pain, there can be no happiness.

"I knew that the girl loved you." This time he looked straight at Hannigan. "I assume that she made you promise to remain loyal to her. Is that correct?"

Hannigan nodded. He still didn't dare look at Sheila. "I promised her I'd protect her here if she brought us all back to safety."

"I am wise to the way of a young girl's love," Fu said. "You see, she could not have you. Therefore, she did not want life. She chose a way to save you and destroy herself."

Hannigan felt his heart swelling until he thought the pain would break through. "I—I didn't know," he cried.

"ONLY a few of you have been affected by my whims. Now you are safe once more. An old man's love is a

painful thing. I worshipped this child from afar. I gave her everything she wanted, for you see, I was a love-sick old fool.

"So," Ting Sun Fu continued, "I am the only one who has been hurt. She wasn't hurt, for she died with love in her heart and on her lips. Could you leave her and forget the Land of the Second Sun? It will never hurt you or anyone again. I promise that."

Clamface Bailey hadn't moved. He was awed by what was taking place, though he understood little of it.

"See here, Hannigan," he said suddenly. "How about letting me in on what goes on? I don't understand . . ."

Hannigan turned to Sheila Mann. Their eyes met, and he knew that she understood.

"I think," she said softly, "that Fu is tired. He should be left to rest."

Hannigan turned to Nora Williams. "You, too, have the right to express an opinion."

Nora Williams shuddered. "Let's get out of this place. Don't worry about me talking. They'd toss me in the jug and accuse me of drinking my own shampoo."

"But I don't understand," Clamface Bailey protested.

"And you never will," Hannigan said sharply.

He faced Ting Sun Fu. "There are only two keys to the Land of the Second Sun?"

Fu nodded. "My own, and the one that belonged to the Princess." His voice broke.

"STAND up and face the door," Hannigan said. He was surprised at the seriousness of his voice. No more Sheila Manns would suffer, nor would the fitting shadows of the other land come here to die in agony.

Fu understood. He arose and stood

before the door.

"Your key," Hannigan demanded.

Fu produced the key and passed it to Hannigan.

"After I go," he asked, "you will close the shop? You will see that my people are cared for? There is money in the safe."

Hannigan agreed. He lifted Ting Sun Fu's forked key and wrapped sharply on the door. The wall opened, and they stared into the Land of the Second Sun.

Without hesitation, Ting Sun Fu walked into it, his stiff old body upright and determined.

The door closed behind him.

Hannigan sighed. "Now do you understand, Bailey?"

Bailey was still watching the door, and remembering the world he had seen beyond it. "He can't come back again? No one can come back?"

"I have the keys," Hannigan said. "Wait for me outside. I won't be long."

Bailey escorted the women out of the room. Alone, Hannigan faced the door to the other land. "No one will come back," he said quietly.

He avoided the flattened, covered body on the floor. The wall safe behind the desk was of a thick, heavy steel. It would be safe enough.

He stared down at the low divan, thick with colorful fabric. Then he kneeled and scratched a match on the floor. He placed the two silver keys on the divan, where the flames would be hottest. Then he touched the flame to the sheet covering the Princess' body and watched it grow strong and roar upward.

Without looking back, he ran swiftly from the room, toward safety, and Sheila's arms.

THE END