



An entire tong seeks revenge for the
Death of a Chinaman
By Richard Wormser

THE map at the radio station on the roof of headquarters showed a queer concentration of the little iron washers that represent cars on patrol. They were ringed so close together—a good number of them—around a thin line marked Howley Street, that the dispatcher had had to lay the edge of Car 19 over that of Car 31.

Of course, this did not mean that Car 19 had had a collision with Car 31; Doug Lucas, driving 19, had not seen Frank Orcutt in 31 in an hour.

This was because they were circling Howley Street, Lucas driving always a block away from it, around and around, and Orcutt doing the same thing two blocks away.

Meanwhile, plainclothesmen and detectives occupied as many doorways on the street itself as seemed dark enough; and a dozen other cars prowled the district for a half mile around.

Trouble seemed in the making.

All this was because of one lone Chinese—an obscure laundryman named George Lee in life, and Li Gi Fang where he now lay, in the expensive coffin that represented years of saving.

“Calling Car Nineteen,” the dispatcher rasped. “Calling Car Nineteen, one-nine. Investigate noise in Bedclothes Alley. Calling Car Nineteen, one-nine, investigate—revoke that order. Authority was plainclothesman on peg post. Noise has proved to be backfire. Revoking order to Car Nineteen, one-nine—”

Doug Lucas grunted, and twisted the car around another corner. They were going so slowly in their two block radius that the motor protested every now and then by missing.

“This’ll keep up all night,” Lucas said to Jeff Milton, sitting next to him. “Around and around till I’m as dizzy as the car.”

Milton was older and more serious than his driver. “These Chinese,” he said, sententiously, “are not people to take the murder of one of them quietly. There’ll be trouble on Howley Street.”

Lucas turned another of the interminable corners. Looking to the right, he saw the taillight of Car 31 rounding its own corner; looking to the left, Milton could see the garish fronts and laden fire escapes of the city’s one-block Chinatown. There

were about two thousand Chinese in the city; of these, a thousand or more lived on Howley Street.

George Lee had not lived there; his home had been on the outskirts of the city, behind a tiny hand laundry. The front of the store was painted red, the Chinese color of happiness and success in business. When a passing patrolman had looked in, earlier in the evening, the floor had been red, too, but not with paint, and not for happiness.

Li Gi Fang had gone to his ancestors fighting, and his celestial blood had stained the shop. The job had been done with an automatic; one shot. So it was not a Chinese job, the Orientals being addicted to shutting their eyes and emptying their guns.

ALL this Lucas and Milton knew. Headquarters had told them to call in, from their post on the northern sector of the amusement area. Inspector Martin had talked to Milton himself.

"A Chinese laundryman's been killed," the inspector said. "And as soon as the medical examiner was through with the body, two sleeks from Howley Street were up here with their lawyers, claiming the body. We had to let them have it, and we couldn't hold them, either. Their lawyers were too good for us. But we trailed them back to Howley Street, and they're holding some kind of Chinese wake for the murdered man in the rooms of the Lip Quong Tong."

"I know where it is," Milton had said. "Want us to crack it?"

"No!" the inspector barked back. "We've nothing on them. I'm sure they didn't do it, but they probably know who did. And that means they won't leave the murderers to the cops; they'll revenge their own dead. So take Emergency Patrol B, Chinatown service. You know the one?"

The route was marked in the radio car's code book. There was nothing to say but, "Yes, sir."

"O.K.," the inspector finished. "If there's a mass movement of Chinese out of Howley Street, you can't stop them unless they do something against the law. So trail them, and contact Car 31 on E.P. 3. Orcutt'll phone headquarters, and we'll shoot as many cars and men after you as we have—and break this thing up."

Again a "Yes" was the best you could do—and Doug had steered the car into the rough circular channel of Emergency Patrol B, Chinatown service. Around, and around, and around.

The radio continued to talk to them, but not in a language that meant anything to Car 19. Car 107 was informed that a truck was blocking traffic at the junction of a couple of roads on the outskirts of the City; Car 76 was given a second-story man to investigate; Car 5 netted a lost child.

"Car Nineteen, one-nine, stand by; Car Nineteen, one-nine, stand by. Here it is!" The dispatcher sounded somewhat excited. "Car Nineteen, one-nine, to the north end of your patrol; Car Nineteen, one-nine, to the north end of your patrol. Mass movements of cars coming north in suspected area. Authority—Detective Hanratty, on peg post at patrol box. Car Nineteen, one-nine, fall in behind suspect cars coming out of north end of suspect district."

DOUG had already doubled back on the trail, and was now using gentle brakes at the north end of their circle. He stopped at the mouth of the street while two cars went by. Both of them had Chinese drivers. The radio repeated their orders, while three more cars went by. This was no false alarm.

Milton was lifting down a shotgun clamped to the roof. He laid this across his lap. Doug raced the motor a little, almost drowning out the next clear-cut speech from the radio.

"Car Thirty-one, three-one—calling Car Thirty-one, three-one. To the north end of your patrol."

"They're already there if they have any sense," Doug grunted. "They heard our orders."

The radio, having repeated the preliminaries, went on. "Fall in behind Car Nineteen, one-nine, when it passes your post. Fall in behind Car Nineteen, one-nine, when it passes your post. Carry out emergency orders from Detective Milton in Nineteen, one-nine."

Jeff Milton twisted uneasily in his seat. He and Doug Lucas had counted ten cars pass now.

"That's all," Doug snapped, and took his foot off the clutch, slowly. He turned east, running after the Chinese procession. A block farther on, Frank Orcutt and his partner shot out of Race Street, and ranged themselves alongside for a moment, waving.

Then Car 31 dropped back, keeping a car's length behind them.

Doug sped up until he could see the taillight of the last Chinese car.

Meanwhile, the radio was snapping orders at all the other cruisers and scout cars on the special

Chinatown service, and elsewhere. A tight line of police cars was forming around the Chinese; they would not revenge the death of George Lee that night.

The Chinese are not the best drivers in the world. Suddenly, the rear car of the Howley Street motorcade skidded, and slid halfway across the street.

There was nothing for Doug to do but slam on the brakes. Then, as Car 19 started its own little slithering act, he saw in the mirror that Car 31 was going to hit him. He released the brakes again, shot over towards the sidewalk, and pulled the emergency on, hard—a maneuver that probably saved the lives of the men in the car behind him.

Ahead, the Chinese car was going on again; behind, Car 31 was circling them. Car 19 sat there, with its nose plunged into a lamp post.

Doug hopped out, looked under the car. One end of the steering rod was dangling loose.

Car 31 came up alongside, tires scraping the pavement viciously.

“She’s snapped,” Doug cracked at Jeff Milton.

But Milton had already swung out of the car, still holding his shotgun, and jerked himself aboard Car 31. They were gone then, leaving Doug Lucas out of it.

DOUG climbed down and poked under the car. A cotter-pin had snapped, and the driving rod was loose. A ten minute job to fix—if you had a new cotter-pin.

The detective straightened up, tall and somber in his plainclothes, and then locked the car and headed back toward Howley Street.

At the south end of the patrol he had followed so diligently there was a little junk shop, a scrap-iron yard. It was the quickest and nearest place he could hope to find a pin.

As Doug Lucas hit the north end of Howley Street again, a big car came screaming down it. He jerked his gun out of its holster, and stepped into shadows, prepared to shoot a tire if—

But he had been picked for plainclothes radio work because he had a good memory for numbers, and he spotted this number now—one of the three homicide squad phaetons. The police who had hidden along Howley Street looking for trouble, were starting after the motorcade they had flushed.

Howley Street was completely deserted.

Growling at the luck that had kept him circling

dully all evening and then put his bus out of business at the moment when the fun started, Doug walked rapidly past shuttered Chinese shops—places that sold strange vegetables to the natives of the street, and cheap curios to tourists.

Upstairs chop suey joints were dark. Across the way he saw the dingy tenement that housed, he knew, the Lip Quong Tong. It was all dark, and, since it was on his way anyway, he allowed his hard-heeled stride to carry him to its doorway.

The marks of a jimmy were plain on the cheap, weather-beaten wood. The homicide squad had dusted up there when the parade started, he figured, found the joint empty—and had gone on, after the tong motorcade.

A slight man stepped out of the doorway and shoved a gun at Doug. The dick stepped back, and spoke.

“Put that down, Lakely—” he said softly.

“Sorry, Doug, didn’t see your face.” Lakely was a plainclothesman attached to homicide errands. “The boys were upstairs. The Chinese are all gone—and the squad’s after them. I’m to pinch anyone showing up.”

“Any line on the killing?” Doug asked. He was already walking away.

“Yeah,” Lakely called after him. “The inspector got a stool pigeon tip-off. Some racket crew was trying to put the squeeze on the hand laundries—which means the Chinese.”

Doug walked on towards his junkyard. So that was it. The rackets were trying another shakedown—intimidation in the form of insurance. Well, the Chinese boys were tough customers to shake. They minded their own business, and resented anyone helping them do it.

He took another half-dozen steps. A racing motor fought its brakes at the south end of the street, skidded, and then slammed into Howley Street as though the devil, the homicide squad, and all the Oriental gods were after it.

But no one was. It made half the distance down Howley, and nothing else turned the corner.

Something flashed—there was a boom—another flash—another boom—and then Doug was down on his left knee, his left arm crooked, the barrel of his pistol shining across that crook.

He sighted along the barrel very, very carefully, with his heart bitter and contracted in him.

For those shining things had been grenades—pineapples—and they had landed square on the

front of the Lip Quong Tong headquarters.

A TIRE crossed the sights of Doug's gun—and he squeezed the trigger. His hands were big, clever and powerful, and the gun didn't jump much. He brought it back into line again, fired a second time. The tire blew up!

The big car had been going too fast. Its tire roared with a louder roar than Doug's gun had given, and the car swerved. Howley Street was dead-end at the north; you had to turn either west or east, couldn't go on.

The big bus, completely out of control, hesitated, as though wanting to do one or the other, wavered, then hit square-on into the storefront that blocked the street. As the nose of the car started to climb through broken plate glass, Doug was already running.

His pistol was still in his hand, and his mind was almost completely on capturing any man left alive in that wreck. But out of the corner of his eye, he saw, as he ran, the wreck of the tong building. The whole lower floor was gone; boards and chairs and hunks of plaster were slowly falling streetwards from the second floor, and the building was a complete wreck.

There was no sign of Lakely. Doug couldn't even see where the plainclothesman had been, and he knew, harshly, that he never would see Lakely again. He was past the building, now, and halfway to the car.

A bullet cut air not far from his ear, and he checked, throwing himself to one side. The racketeers—whoever they were—had come for the Lip Quong Tong at the same time that the Lip Quongs had gone for them. That was plain.

And the homicide squad had gone in the wrong direction.

He was on the spot, Doug knew. The men in that car were not dead—not all of them; and they were criminals. He was on the spot for either glory or death. He alone, of the department, was there to carry on.

If he could get to a phone, there would be radio cruisers to be reached; that was why Lakely had been left—to call in any information.

But there wasn't a chance of getting to a phone.

Another bullet roared, sending a dozen reflections in the shattered edges of the window through which the car had run. It was as though the wrecked tonneau was encircled with flames.

These reflections kept Doug from shooting back at the place where the flare had been; he couldn't see which one of the flares had been real, which ones reflections. He fired at random, heard his shot *ping* off the steel of the car.

There was a police box at the corner. Doug ran for it, knowing suddenly that he was sunk anyway. The car made too good cover for the gangsters.

He was halfway to the phone when the bullets started pouring down Howley Street, a stream of hot lead.

He turned and fired at a hand that had inadvertently come out from behind the car. The hand went away, and Doug continued running.

His outstretched fingers touched the post. The box was on the other side. The pavement under his feet sang with the impact of half a dozen bullets every ten seconds. He fired again into the confusion of the window. Then he whipped open the cover of the box.

Someone shouted in the window.

"Run for it, gang. Scram!" the man screamed. "The guy's phoning the coppers—"

Men started pouring out of the window, flinging lead at Doug as they came. He recognized one of them in the flash from the guns. Then he jerked the receiver off the hook—and a bullet hit his shoulder, hurled him around so that his head hit the opened box-cover.

As things got black, Doug remembered. The man he had seen was "Snowy," who trailed with the Eastman gang.

WHEN Doug came to, Howley Street was full of policemen again. These were emergency squad boys—uniformed men who had taken over the district around Howley Street in their long wagons that looked like fire engines. They had taken it over when the regular cruisers were all drawn out by the Chinese motorcade.

"Sure," a sergeant told Doug, "wherever it is those Chinamen are going, and whoever it is that killed their friend, he must live a long way from here. The radio's fair crackling with the orders. They're out by the city limits now, I figure."

Doug sat up abruptly, and then wished he hadn't. The bump on his head that the door had given him hurt, horribly.

"It's a phony!" he yelled. "It's the Eastman gang—and they don't live half a mile from here!"

He was on his feet, then, and running down

Howley Street, the sergeant after him. His only idea, at that time, was to get to the junkyard. For it had occurred to him that the rule for handling Chinese troubles was pretty well set. The police figured—and they were always right so far—that when a tong member was killed, the whole tong turned out to see about it.

But—supposing that this time the tong had turned out, not to blast the gangster that had tried to shake down Li Gi Fang, but to take the cops off the trail while a few men—the hatchetmen of the tong, they had been called in an earlier day—went to do the blasting.

And the junkyard, by the very geography of Howley Street, was a good way out. The only way out. The Chinese had gotten wise to the white police ways after the last tong wars. They would know that the street would be watched.

And, if you reasoned this way, they might send their hatchetmen to wait in the junkyard—which was open, and easy of access, and the only place on Howley Street where a fight could be staged without killing Chinese women and children—until the cops were drawn away.

The front of the yard was barred by a high gate. It was open. Doug skidded through, fishing for a flashlight in his pocket. Empty!

He pulled his gun and pounded with the butt on the wall of the shack adjoining the yard, until a bearded head was stuck out.

“I’m a cop!” Doug yelled. “I got to get a cotter-pin for my car.” He called the name and size of his car.

His head was still woozy from the rap.

The man who ran the junkyard flashed on a light inside the shack that lit up the place. Doug looked around and saw a clew.

The place had its scattering of cigarettes—cigarettes that were only smoked half down. And they were fresh and white—sure sign that they had been left here by someone that evening, someone nervous and jumpy.

Doug bent over and scooped one up. It had a trademark on it, in characters that he couldn’t read. Chinese! The hatchetmen had been here, and had gone—probably out a back way, while their compatriots drew the watchers to the north end of the street.

Forgetting all about the cotter-pin, Doug dashed out again.

Blood throbbed in the radio dick’s head as he

caromed up Howley Street, to find the sergeant and the rest of the emergency crew standing in a knot, arguing.

“Have you gone crazy, Doug?” the sergeant began.

But Doug had already climbed on the running board of the emergency wagon.

“Dean Hotel!” he yelled at the uniformed men. “Dean Hotel! It’s the Eastman gang that did it—murdered the laundryman, and fought with me. If the Chinese know that, they’ve gone to get Eastman!”

Maybe there was something about his voice that got them. Maybe it was something else. But the crew swung aboard, and in a minute the long emergency wagon was attempting to manipulate the difficult turn at the south end of Howley Street.

THE Dean Hotel was known as the headquarters of the Eastman gang. The Eastman gang was also known widely as a murdering bunch of thugs whom the police department had been trying to hook for a long time.

A dozen detectives spent the greater part of their time tracing the activities of the gang. But it was hard, brutally hard, to get witnesses to testify against the Eastmans. They’d gotten the reputation for being tough and nasty, and the public was scared of them.

But the Chinese were not afraid—they just didn’t understand. If Doug could get there before the hatchetmen, he could turn potential Chinese murders into witnesses for turning up a gang the cops had long been after. And he could round up the Eastman gang at the same time, hold them for trial.

All this he thought as the long green emergency car carried him through the streets at a rate that made his hair stand on end.

It cooled the bump, too, and he felt better when the car finally stopped at the tall Dean Hotel—the hotel that, with nine-tenths of its rooms empty all the time, never seemed to go broke.

The reason was that the Eastmans used the penthouse and top floor for a headquarters. The cops knew this—and every time they tried to crack the place, they were asked for warrants. And every time they tried to get a warrant, so far, the Eastman lawyers had outwitted them.

The doorman at the Dean must have seen Doug hop off the emergency wagon, but he caught his

arm anyway, and asked loudly: "What do you want here?"

Doug had to take time to flash his shield. And this, he was sure, gave the desk clerk time to signal upstairs and tell them a cop was coming. But the shield made the doorman release him arm, and he trotted across the deserted lobby to plunge into an elevator.

He never looked back to see what the uniformed men who had come with him were doing, but snapped an order at the elevator boy to run to the top floor.

The car started off. Doug pulled out his gun and shoved new cartridges in the chambers he had emptied on Howley Street. Then the car stopped.

"Top floor, sir," the boy said.

Doug started to get out, then thought better of it. He saw a little trapdoor in the ceiling of the car. He'd heard curious stories about the top of the Dean Hotel, and had wondered if this were really the top floor. So he pulled the trap open, looked up.

He was right! The spool of cable, the other apparatus that should be directly above the elevator in its top position was much higher. And just within his grasp was the bottom of a bell-pull of some sort, dangling down to coil into the car.

Forcing the pale elevator boy aside, Doug tried to make the car run higher by pushing the lever over to "Up." It wouldn't start. He reached out and got hold of the cord that ran down from the shaft, pulled that; nothing happened.

Then he tried doing both at once—and the car ran slowly up another floor.

"This," grinned Doug, "is the top floor." He made ready to get out.

The boy was trembling. He caught at Doug's sleeve. "Please, sir," he said, "they'll kill you. You'd better go back—"

Doug grinned. He opened the door and stepped out into a windowless, carpeted cubicle.

"Is there one of these for each of the three elevators?" he asked the boy.

In answer, the elevator operator slammed the gate, and dropped the cage downward.

DOUG looked around. There was no bell in what might be a door, though it was the whole one wall of the cubicle. He rapped on that wall, but before his knuckles even touched the steel, a small peephole opened.

Black, beady eyes stared out. "What-ya want?"

a voice grated.

"I'm a dick," Doug said cheerfully. "I got information that someone up here is in trouble—that there's murderers on his trail. I wanta see if everything's O.K.—"

"Everything's hunky-dory," the voice under the black eyes said, humorlessly. The steel door started to shut again. Doug rammed his revolver barrel into it, kept it open.

"Don't back off!" he warned. "Don't go for a gun—don't do anything but let me hear locks opening."

The black eyes blinked, there was the snicking of some kind of catch, and then instead of the door swinging in, it started moving up in grooves.

Doug snatched his gun back to keep it from being carried up to the ceiling, and instantly ducked—to go under the door, through the two-foot space already open.

The black-eyed man on the other side had his hands filled with steel. But Doug's duck surprised him, and before he could swivel the guns down, Doug was inside his guard, and jabbing at him with the sights of the police .38.

The jab knocked the black-eyed man's wind out. They clenched and wrestled back and forth, the cop trying to disarm the gangster lookout, the lookout trying to knock the cop out with a blow from one of his two guns.

They tripped, and went down. A hard voice over their heads stopped them as they rolled around.

"Cut the clowning—you, Brownny! Get up—"

Doug felt the grip of the lookout lessen for a moment, and, kicking himself free, the cop rose to his feet to menace, with his .38, the newcomer and "Brownny."

"Put the popgun down," the hard voice said. "I know you're a cop—and you know I'm Joe Eastman."

A light flared and lit up the hall in which they stood.

At a gesture from Eastman, Brownny put his two guns away; and, slowly, Doug reholstered his own weapon.

"This is a pinch, Eastman," the dick told the thin-lipped gang chief. "The hatchetmen are out for you. They slipped through our dragnet, and they're on their way up here. And that tips me off— You killed George Lee."

The famous gangster let his lip curl up. "Rats!" he spat. "What hatchetmen? And what would they

want with me? I'm a hotel operator—not a Chink.”

Laboriously, Doug went on. “Your gang—admit it or not—put the screws on a laundryman named George Lee or Li Gi Fang. You killed him when he wouldn't kick through. Tonight the hatchetmen—the Chinese killers—are going to get you for it—”

Eastman laughed painfully. “I may be pinched, but you won't do it. You'll be dead. But just to give you a break before you croak,” he sneered, “take a look through the apartment—and see how wrong you are. There's no Chinese here but my butler.”

Doug almost gasped at the recklessness, the stupidity of the gangster. He had a Chinese servant; didn't he know that any Chinese worth his salt would help a fellow tongsman before an employer? And most of the Celestials in the city were Lip Quong Tong.

But Eastman was leading the way. Following Eastman—and followed by Browny—Doug moved on. He'd have to wait his chance to jump them.

Abruptly, his host opened a door into a huge, brilliantly lighted room.

Then Eastman stepped back, gasping, and so did Browny. For there in the room were half a dozen sleek men in dinner jackets—with their hands raised. A polite, sibilant voice spoke from within the room.

“Come in, gentlemen—so, please. You will raise your hands, Mr. Eastman—and the gentlemen with you—”

And under the threatening muzzles of a dozen guns held by as many black-hatted Chinese, the three of them were herded into the living room.

ONE of the black-hatted Orientals said something in rapid, guttural Chinese, and the man who seemed to be the leader nodded.

“You, sir,” he said, gesturing to Doug, “may leave. We realize you are a policeman—but the Lip Quong Tong can handle its own affairs. We thank the police, but—precisely—we do not need them.”

Suddenly, Browny dove at the speaker.

The Oriental's beady eyes snapped once—and then he fired. He didn't fire, Doug noticed, in the old-time Oriental fashion, but with his eyes open. And his aim was deadly. Browny went down.

Doug went for his own gun.

There was a clanging on a steel door some place. Another of the Chinese yelled, pulled a gun and fired. The lights went out.

Doug dropped to the floor, waiting. A knife came plunking into the carpet near his head. He jumped up and, using his gun as a club, ran through the dark until he collided with someone. Then he clubbed the fellow.

The man fell over in his arms. Doug dragged him—yellow or white, it didn't matter—to the living-room door, dumped the unconscious man in the corridor outside. Then he ran back in.

No one was firing now. The confusion was too great. But between knife-slashing gangsters and hatchet-and-knife-thrusting hatchetmen, the place would soon be a shambles. Doug galloped through it, clubbing as he went.

He left his victims on the floor now, figuring that the milling battlers would not bother a man who was down. And then—light flooded the room again.

THE emergency squad! The sergeant was in the lead, and behind him were two men with a blowtorch.

Their flashlights showed the room to be occupied by Doug, one Chinese—and Eastman, cowering in a corner. Half a dozen men or less had been stabbed; the rest were down, clubbed by Doug but not permanently hurt.

“Riot's over,” the emergency sergeant grinned, as his men moved around with handcuffs. “You fool, Doug Lucas, running ahead like that! We had to climb up that hole in the elevator, and blowtorch our way through two steel doors to get here!”