

# QUEEN of HEAVEN

By E. HOFFMANN PRICE

*Her tong-leader father tried to sell her to seal a treaty of peace! And she would have none of it. But the Chinese girl was only one of Cliff Cragin's headaches when he braved the death of a thousand cuts*



REMEMBER," rumbled the heavy-jawed, ruddy-faced owner of the Diesel-engined *Medea* as he paused at the rail to address Cliff Cragin, proprietor of the one-man detective agency engaged as a guard, "absolutely nobody comes aboard without my initialed card. And that includes newspaper men."

"Okay," acknowledged Cragin.

Another half hour of shivering; but, as Cragin's teeth began to click like Salvation Army castanets, a stoop-shouldered, wrinkled Chinese in a tattered, greenish-black overcoat came slip-slopping up the gangplank.

"What the hell do you want? demanded Cragin.

"My got plenty tickee," beamed the wizened, sharp eyed old fellow; and as he spoke, he produced a card reading, "Glenwood Hassler—Oriental & Pacific Export Company."

The initials looked bona fide, but the ragged Chink didn't. Before he could repeat his remark, Cragin had him handcuffed to the rail. He took the "tickee" and headed for the salon. It was vacant.

Cragin strode down the corridor toward the master's stateroom. He barged in.

They say that the swiftness of the hand deceives the eye, but Glenwood Hassler did not qualify by a mile.

The girl on the lounge had the kind of legs hermits dream about. From her dazzling ankles

to her beaded garters they were a delirium in silk. Hassler had been making enviable progress.

The girl with the bronze-gilt hair pulled her skirt down over her knees and flashed ironic topaz eyes at Cragin. Hassler growled, "Who the hell sent for you?"

"An old Chink handed me this card," explained Cragin, "and he looked—"

"It's none of your business how he looked as long as he had a card," rasped Hassler. "Send him in. Into the *salon*, I mean."

C RAGIN released the shriveled Chinese; but he no longer shivered. Not after that warning glimpse—

Five more Chinese presently filed up the gang plank. Each had an initialed card. They were scarcely aboard when the *Medea* cast off and nosed into the biting chill of the open bay.

Cragin went down to the engine room. Maybe Olson, the engineer, would have a drink. That, however, was a bum hunch.

"But I tank there bane one bottle in das galley," said the engineer, "Only, maybe it bane locked."

It was. Cragin decided to hail the steward as he left the salon; but at the head of the companion-way, he abruptly halted.

The canvas covering of the lifeboat was stirring, and not because of the wind. A moment later a man emerged, dropped silently to the deck, glanced about, and tiptoed toward a porthole of the *salon*.

"As you were!" growled Cragin, jerking his automatic into line. "What's the big idea?"

The stowaway waited, raised his hands, then grinned disarming!

"I'm Denby. Financial reporter for the *Times*," he explained. "I heard the directors of the Pacific & Oriental were having a meeting."

The sound Cragin made could be described as a snort.

"I'll show you my card," offered Denby,

lowering his hands as Cragin holstered his pistol.

If he thought he had Cragin off guard, he was wrong. Just as he reached for his inside pocket, Cragin's fist connected. The impact lifted Denby off his feet and dropped him in a heap in the scuppers.

The financial reporter, however, was far from out. Cragin, warned by the first sign of fight, closed in. He was met half way; but as they connected, the *Medea* rolled, pitching them against a ventilator. Denby, however, got the breaks. He backheeled Cragin, sending him crashing to the deck.

A blackjack plastered home. Cragin's head exploded, but the hastily aimed blow missed enough to keep it from being lights out. He kicked, doubling Denby and catapulting him against the rail.

For a moment Denby was draped over the brass. The *Medea* rolled. Cragin, scrambling across the deck, clutched at the newsman's ankle, but missed his grip. Denby went over the side.

"Man overboard!" roared Cragin. "Starboard quarter!"

Hassler burst out of the cabin before the skipper could signal a halt.

"A guy that didn't have a card," explained Cragin. "Said he was a reporter for the *Times*."

"If you'd kept your eyes open," snapped Hassler, "he'd not have come aboard."

Then the *Medea* slowed down, and the searchlight dipped to the starboard. It picked a small launch out of the gloom. Two men were hauling something out of the water. A man. And as the exporter's yacht swung about, the smaller craft darted into the darkness, not even a whisper of its engine reaching the *Medea*.

That justified Cragin.

"Boarded us after we were under way," he said. "Waited for him to finish his work and go over the side."

Hassler grunted, nodded, and went back to

the salon.

Cragin before going below stooped to retrieve the boarder's blackjack. He found more than he expected. Lying near the ventilating funnel was a small costly camera. It had an imported f-1.9 lens and used motion-picture size film. A job like that could take snap-shots by an ordinary artificial illumination, and in the most fog-obscured twilight.

Half the roll had been exposed.

"Came aboard to get a picture of Hassler and Little Goldilocks," he decided, slipping the camera into his vest pocket. It was worth over two hundred and could be hocked for at least fifteen bucks.

The following afternoon, Hassler phoned Cragin's office.

"Bring your gun and toothbrush out to the house. You've got a twenty-four hour a day job."

"That'll cost you," began Cragin.

"Tell me when you get here," snapped Hassler, hanging up.

There was not a cab in sight. Cragin hoofed it from Kearney toward a stand on Stockton Street. Near it was a loan office, where he could hock the imported snooping camera.

Half a block from Grant Street, Cragin's ears were blasted by Mongolian yells, wrathful screeches, and the vicious chatter of automatics in a cross alley. A tong war, and a damn good one, too.

His vest buttons hit into the paving behind a garbage receptacle as a hatful of slugs spattered glass and brick-dust into his checks. In view of Chinese markmanship, staying was better than running.

The clashing highbinders surged to the mouth of the alley. Cragin reached for the candid camera. An action shot of a tong war was a *rara avis*, which is Greek for a hot number.

A dollar's worth of forty-fives chunked

through the garbage can. Three highbinders paused to blast a survivor, then turned to dash across Jackson—and toward Cragin.

One of them spied Cragin and the camera. Pistols shifted toward him. The Chinese don't like pictures.

Simultaneously, the iron cover of a coal chute erupted from the opposite paving. A bald-headed, wizened little Chinese with a face like a withered apple thrust a shotgun up from a subterranean passage. A gust of flame and a hail of buckshot caught the three highbinders amidships, bowling them into the street, a kicking, writhing, gory mass of torn flesh.

It all happened as Cragin snapped the camera, and before he could react to his peril and reach for his pistol; and only then did the details register. *The subterranean gunner was the first of six Chinese who had conferred with Hassler, on the yacht.* The new job became interesting.

Cragin changed his mind about hocking the camera. Instead, he left the film at a drug store, bought a fresh roll, and hopped a cab for Hassler's palace at the right end of Jackson Street

It was a rose granite heap perched on a steep hill, with *porte cochere*, garage, and tradesmen's entrance in the sub-structure between main floor and the side hill.

He found Hassler in his third floor study, which was at the rear of the house, overlooking the grounds.

"I'm holing in," he explained. "The carpenters and plumbers have fixed up a room that blocks the entrance to this section. That's yours. I guess you noticed it on your way in."

"Nobody can get in unless they pass you. Not a chance to come in through the windows, either from the roof or the ground. You receive phone calls in your room. Give me the dirt over the house wire. Get it?"

"Sold," said Cragin.

Hassler dropped not a hint as to the source of peril. But the tong war made that needless.

That night Hassler instructed, "Call Mona Bartley, and tell her to come up."

An hour later, the bronze-haired girl with the topaz eyes was admitted to the guard house. Mona's smile was a riddle in crimson. Her fingers lingered caressingly on Cragin's wrist, and her fragrance dizzied him.

"If I walk in my sleep, don't shoot," she whispered as she pasted onto Hassler's apartment.

But Hassler, at about 2 A. M. buzzed him to root out Giles, the chauffeur, who was to drive Mona home.

"I wish I was an exporter," he grumbled as Mona emerged.

He grabbed an armful. Before it reached the high compression stage, she wriggled clear, and left without a word. Her geared-up breathing, however was as good as an oration....

SEVERAL days passed, Hassler, despite the sweetening effect of Mona's visits, was becoming peevish. The splintering of wood brought Cragin to Hassler's hide-out. He had kicked the radio to pieces.

"Don't stand there, gaping like a—damn fool!" he roared. "Order me a good one!"

Mona returned that evening, which eased the riot that followed when Cragin reported that the new radio had not arrived. The shipping clerk had pulled a boner; an empty packing case had been sent. Hassler's rage kept Cragin from noticing the singularity of such an error.

Hours later, Mona emerged from the study.

"Don't phone the chauffeur yet," she whispered.

Cragin's heart hammered like voodoo drums. She meant it; but he was not quite sure until she wriggled out of her coat.

"He's so jittery," she whispered that I told him he'd better try reading, or something."

"I'll be any dirty name," Cragin assured her,

"if my financial worries keep me from appreciating the beauties of nature."

He proved that point without further discussion; and when Mona finally broke away from his kiss and came up for air, she murmured "Oh . . . Cliff . . . you're hurting me... don't hold me quite so close. ..." In spite of that presently Mona clinched and began making inarticulate sounds that mean the same in any language....

WHEN Mona finally left, Cragin winked at the door of Hassler's study and quoted the one about not missing a slice from a cut loaf. Then he lighted a cigarette and sat down to figure out whose loaf it was, anyhow.

His pondering was interrupted by a faint whiff of bitter almonds; Cyanide fumes!

Cragin yanked the door open. Hassler lay on the rug at the foot of his desk. Two men were searching his filing cabinets. Their faces were concealed by gas masks.

Cragin, holding his breath, fired a shot as the startled intruders whirled.

One staggered, leaped to the window, and cleared the sill. The other stood fast and returned the fire.

Cragin squeezed another wild burst, retreated to the hall door, kicked it open. He gulped a lungful of clean air, then whirled to sift lead past the door jamb; but the rear guard was clearing the sill. He flinched, wavered as a slug hit him, then slipped from view.

Cragin, holding his breath, dashed to the window. The raiders were clearing the rear wall of the estate.

Certain that the brisk breeze had swept out the deadly fumes, Cragin turned toward Hassler.

His face was no longer, ruddy but slate blue. There was no pulse. When cyanogen hits, they stay hit.

His expression indicated surprise and query rather than alarm; amazed recognition. He had died before realizing his peril. But most peculiar of all was his hands.

The left, touching his chest, had three fingers extended, with the index curled to touch the tip of the thumb. The right, thrust out, gestured oddly: the third and fourth digits were bent in, touching the palm, the other two, and the thumb were extended. It looked like a lodge sign.

Before he could stoop for a closer look, he heard a sound behind him. He turned. A slender girl in a pale blue Chinese tunic and silken trousers was emerging from behind a bookcase and dashing toward the hall.

Cragin bounded after her.

She tripped at the entrance of his guard annex. She lay there gasping for breath; but despite the distortion of her features, she was uncommonly attractive. A slender, exquisitely formed creature.

"What the hell's the idea?" he demanded "And how come you're not blue in the face?"

"I was hiding when they came in through the window," she gasped. "Right at a furnace outlet that feeds hot air into the room. That kept most of the fumes from reaching me. They walked up to him, then broke a glass globe against his desk. Then put on their gas masks."

Cragin noted fragments that confirmed her account. "You saw them before they put on their masks?" Then, as she nodded: "Were they Chinese!"

"Yes. And when you broke in, I was so nearly dead from holding my breath, I couldn't wait to slip out."

Cragin, lifting her to her feet, learned that the straightness of her Chinese costume was deceptive; that her apparent flat-chestedness was a delusion, fostered by the Oriental version of a brassiere.

"Trot along," he said, catching her by the wrist.

She followed him toward Hassler's body.

"What do you know about that?" he demanded, indicating the oddly arranged fingers.

"If I knew what you were going to do with me," she countered, smiling mysteriously, "we might get somewhere."

Cragin reached for the telephone, but the girl caught his hand.

"Keep me clear of the police, and I will tell you plenty."

"Okay," he conceded "They won't search that clothes closet. But who the devil are you?"

"I'm Anita Tsang," she said "You'd be surprised at what's ahead of you."

"I can stand surprises," he countered, pausing for a left-handed appraisal of Anita's right knee.

Nevertheless, he locked the closet door before he returned to the study.

WHILE awaiting the arrival of the police, Cragin noted that the assassins had escaped by sliding down a silken cord which reached to the ground. But who had anchored it there in the first place?

The hot air register was out of place. Anita had entered from a lower and unguarded floor. Better not turn her over to the police at once. Let the papers play it up, then crack the case. He had to, with his client murdered.

A news hound entered with the cops. Mr. Denby, recovered from his plunge in the Bay, was representing the *Times*.

"Financial stuff?" mocked Cragin.

Denby's thin face hardened, then he chuckled.

When the law's quiz was over, he edged Cragin into a corner.

"I'll trade horses with you," he proposed. "The G-men were on Hassler's trail. Opium smuggling. You know that. Cut me in on the dirt and I'll put you next to some velvet."

"Nuts!"

"The government," resumed Denby, "has heavy reward money out for the round up of the ring. Let's work together for a split."

"Fair enough," Cragin agreed. He told

Denby that Mona's presence of the *Medea* must have been business, not pleasure. That was the lousiest steer he could at the moment think of.

He smoked a pack of butts before he saw a chance to smuggle Anita out of the house. When he approached the closet door, it was no longer locked. A twisted lingerie clasp lay near the door jamb.

"Clever gal," he gritted, jamming his hat on and slipping into his top coat.

Cragin's wrath was still simmering when he barged into his inner office, which was equipped with an army cot and a gas plate. It cut down expenses, and came in handy for serving tea to feminine clients.

Denby, for all his newspaper credentials, was a sour note. A financial reporter with a candid camera and a blackjack did not ring true. When Cragin heard the tapping at the front office door, he yanked the knob and thrust his automatic into line.

Anita Tsang had returned.

"I couldn't take any chances on that clothes closet," she explained, "So I waited outside and followed you."

"Better make this good, or the cops get you," warned Cragin as Anita followed him to the inner room.

She smuggled up, warm and confidential, then resumed, "The position of Hassler's fingers proves he was a member of the *Tien-Hau Hoi'h*."

"The which!" gasped Cragin, somewhat distracted by Anita's exotic fragrance. The sleek



silken tunic's high collared reserve made her supple curves all the more tantalizing.

"The Society of the Queen of Heaven," she explained. "They just called off their war with the Hop Wang Tong."

"Nice while it lasted," reminisced Cragin, who was interested in finding that Anita's waist was designed to fit the curve of his arm. "But then what?"

"That's where I come in," she continued. "My father is chief of the Hop Wang Tong. The old louse agreed to give me to Yut Lee, the leader of the Queen of Heaven outfit. To seal the treaty of peace. And he's just poisonous!"

"So when I listened in on a tapped wire the Hop Wangs used to check up on Hassler, I heard you order a radio. I got into an old crate and had it substituted for the loaded one. So I got into Hassler's house."

"But why!" demanded Cragin, for a moment forgetting his interest in the embroidered trimmings around Anita's knees.

"The Tien Hau Hoi'h is smuggling opium into the country. I was trying to get the dirt on Hassler, have the whole works rounded up, and with Yut Lee spending the next ten years in the federal pen, I'd not be added to his string of

playmates.”

It was all clear now, except for Cragin’s part.

“You raid the Queen of Heaven headquarters and get the evidence they took from Hassler. He must have double-crossed them so his fellow members finished him. I’ll tell you how to get to their lodge room—”

“The hell you will,” growled Cragin. “Take a walk for yourself!”

**B**UT getting Anita to the door was not so easy. She was slender, but an armful. It happened so fast that Cragin for an instant believed that a young anaconda had been coiled about him. While he could not see more than a third of the curves, he knew where each one was.

Just as he was beginning to get groggy from the exhalation of jasmine, she kissed him and made a job of it.

Thrills raced all the way to his ankles.

But the iron will of generations of level-headed Cragins broke the spell. He jerked her arms from his neck, and thrust her from him.

He used more force than he intended. She went spinning half way across the room. She tripped, lurched against the edge of a chair, slumped to the floor, a pathetic little heap of disarrayed garments and ivory-tinted flesh. Her head was twisted at an alarming angle.

Cragin’s blood froze as he knelt beside her. After a moment he relaxed. Her neck was not broken. He straightened her out on the cot, propped her in the crook of his arm.

Her recovery was dizzying. Before he knew it, she kissed him into a volcanic delirium. He knew he was a sap. . . . What if she had faked that spiel?

When he viewed the slender shapely length of silk and old ivory that shimmered in the half gloom Cragin shed his last qualms about getting messed up in tong wars. This alarming Chinese stuff had its points!

“Darling,” she murmured as her arms seconded the invitation of eyes that had become long, black opals, “you really didn’t hurt me so much . . . you simply didn’t realize your own strength....”

**P**ACIFIC standard time had made considerable progress before Anita found occasion to discuss the Tien Hau Hoi’h without seeming grotesquely irrelevant

“Cliff, darling,” she whispered, “I’m so glad we had this stolen hour or so. I’ll remember you when I am in Yut Lee’s house and—”

“Yut Lee’s hell!” growled Cragin. “Where does this society hang out?”

Anita gave him the address and described the approach.

“You can get into their lodge room from there,” she concluded. “I once got a peep, when I was just a kid.”

Cragin paused to glance at the snapshots developed from the roll taken from Denby’s camera. The photographer had mailed them to Hassler’s house. The one of the wrinkled Chinese using the shot-gun testified to the merits of the camera. Cragin pocketed the instrument. Anita’s tip made it seem peculiarly useful.

Presently he was creeping up a dark flight of stairs opening from a cross alley. At the end of a hallway on the second floor, he lifted a window and climbed over the sill.

By balancing himself on the ledge, he was able to reach across a narrow airshaft and to the coping of the adjoining building. He flung himself across the gap, and made it.

He drew himself over the low brick parapet and to a flat roof. His destination was a sheet iron ventilating cupola.

Crouching in its shadow, he could peep between the warped louvres and into the loft below him.

It was an attic dressed up like a Chinese funeral. The walls were hung with green and red

banners marked with black characters. The air was thick with the fumes of joss sticks. At a shrine just behind the table at the end of the loft was a brazen statue of the Queen of Heaven.

A score of Chinese in American clothing were seated in a semicircle, facing the elders of the society, who were dressed in resplendent silks.

While he was waiting for a chance to search the place for Hassler's stolen records, a snapshot of the gathering would clinch things, particularly if he mugged one of the two assassins Anita had seen.

Cragin wracked out the lens, and carefully bent a loose corner of the rufted sheet metal cupola to give him a direct line.

Two Chinese approached the elders. One, whose shoulder was bandaged, handed the chief a flat, paper wrapped parcel. They must be the two assassins, reporting success. Was that a break! He clicked the shutter. Photography, however, was interrupted by a pistol prodding his ribs.

"Steady," warned a whisper. "Don't drop my camera."

Denby was the man behind the gun. He pocketed the instrument, then added, "I figured you'd do something like that. Mighty nice of you to show me where Hassler's Chinese enemies hang out."

"You dirty louse," muttered Cragin. "Playing me for a sap, and figuring on grabbing the reward yourself."

"Wrong," said Denby. "I'm on the Federal payroll, so I can't touch the reward. I'm just making sure you won't tip off Hassler's friends instead of the law. Raise your hands."

This was no time to ask for Denby's credentials. Cragin's hands rose. Cold bracelets pinned them together.

"Let's go." Denby boosted Cragin to his feet, then he said, "Getting you back the way you came up is going to be tough, with your hands nailed. But don't worry—"

Denby's irony kicked back. As they approached a parapet, a tarpaulin dropped from the adjoining building. It enveloped the G-man and his prisoner. The flat roof trembled from the impact of men leaping from the upper level.

A COMMAND in Chinese was followed by a concerted rush. Denby's pistol crackled once. Cragin lunged. The invisible line behind heavy tarpaulin muffled his charge.

They flattened Cragin and his captor to the roof. They were knocked loose jointed, and half suffocated when the tarpaulin was jerked off.

A dozen Chinese pounced on the dazed captives and rolled them up in the canvas. They lifted the bulky cylinder to the adjoining roof, and hauled it away.

The procession finally filed down a stairway.

"You big boob," Cragin muttered, "a Chink gal steered me into this, but you managed to get into it by good headwork."

When the tarpaulin was dumped to the floor, their captors set about binding the prisoners. The bland, round faced Chinaman who supervised the job chuckled when he saw that Cragin was already hand-cuffed.

They were in the room Cragin had photographed. Their captors laid them on the long table whose center was overshadowed by the brazen statue of the Queen of Heaven. Her placid face mocked them, and her slim hands were making the sign that Hassler had made in his vain attempts to check the assassins.

"Pay day," was Denby's grim comment. "Notice those lads sharpening their knives?"

Cragin shuddered, but remarked, "Kind of small, aren't they?"

"Not for their purpose," was the somber explanation. "Ever hear of the death of a thousand cuts?"

The moon-faced dignitary in the brocaded robe and plumed cap approached with two of the elders. They consulted for a moment in



Chinese, then one demanded in English, "Which of you spied on the ritual? Tell the Honorable Yut Lee; otherwise you will both die the death of a thousand cuts, instead of just the guilty one."

"What happens to the other?" demanded Cragin. If he could jockey them into a huddle, he might be able to make a break.

He saw a chance. If he had thought of it sooner, they would both be loose now, with a slim fighting chance.

"We will strangle him," said Yut Lee. "Which is more pleasant."

Silence. Dry-lipped —Sweat-beaded foreheads. Too quick a death might not be such an advantage.

"Honorable Yut Lee," said a layman, "it must be the one who had a camera."

Denby's teeth gritted audibly. He was regretting his pleasantry. "How the hell do you expect either of us to tell the truth," demanded Cragin. "He might have taken the camera from me."

Yut Lee stroked his chin. "Of course, we can slice both of you."

"Let the person who told you to expect us do the identifying," suggested Cragin.

Yut Lee called a huddle at the further end of the room.

"Hitch around so I can touch the pocket your key is in," Cragin whispered to Denby. "When it gets on the table, grab it in your teeth and unlock the handcuffs. They got your gun, but not mine. When they saw me shackled, they figured I must be disarmed."

Denby hitched over and said, "Make it fast—but a lot of good it'll do!"

**B**IT by bit Cragin worked the key toward the mouth of the pocket. His efforts, however, were checked by a buzz of voices at the further end of the room and the click-click of a woman's heels.

Anita was coming to identify her victim.

Wrath shook Cragin. But he dislodged the key and whispered, "Clear! Watch your moves!"

Only, it wasn't Anita! Mona Bartley was accompanying Yut Lee.

"I didn't expect two," she was saying. "Judging from what I heard him and Anita Tsang planning, he was going alone."

Her topaz eyes regarded Cragin. She almost smiled, then said, "If you hadn't been playing around with that Chink jane, I might give you the breaks, you dirty louse!"

She turned to Yut Lee, and indicated Cragin: "That's the one."

She accompanied Yut Lee to the group at the end of the room. Two men stepped out and addressed him.

"What's the argument!" Mona wondered. "When does the slicing start?"

"The two highbinders who took care of Hassler," explained Yut Lee, "want to settle their private grudge against Cragin. He wounded them."

Cragin died a dozen times before he felt Denby's key grating on the lock. A click. His hands were free; but no time to grab a ceremonial sword from the altar.

He drew his pistol, jammed the muzzle against the cord at his ankles, pulled the trigger. Yut Lee's mob charged. Cragin leaped to his feet, jerked the table on edge. Denby slid to the floor, sheltered by the heavy top.

"I've got a knife!" he shouted between blasts of Cragin's .45. "Grab it before your gun's empty!"

The heavy automatic drove the enemy to cover. One—two—three deliberately placed shots. Each found its mark. Yut Lee pitched in a heap. Cragin, under cover of panic, snatched Denby's penknife and slashed his bonds.

The Chinks recovered; but two more men knocked off checked the charge.

"One slug to go," growled Cragin. "Got no spare clip. Grab a sword—"

THE dull boom of a shotgun shook the room. It came from the rear of the renewed rush.

Then a drumming of pistol fire, with slugs spattering floor, walls, and ceiling. A clump of Chinese burst into view, shooting, hacking, slugging, yelling as they cornered the Society of the Queen of Heaven.

Their leader was the shriveled little fellow who had settled the tong battle on Jackson Street. It ended before it was fairly started. The leader approached the barricade.

"Alle same gettee hell out," he beamed. "P'lice come click. Savee plenty?"

"If you want to stick around here," Cragin said to Denby, "go ahead. There's no Tien Hau Hoi'h left to arrest. Me, I'm going."

As Cragin followed his guide into an alley, the Chinatown squad took possession.

With Mona helplessly messed up by a stray bullet, he'd have to guess the answers. Or so he thought until the shriveled Chink let him through a dingy doorway and into a room rich with magnificent carpets, lacquers, and bronzes.

In the midst of it all was Anita Tsang, smiling at his perplexity. "I told you that father's tong had signed a treaty of peace with the Tien Hau Hoi'h. But while I was waiting you, thinking of the risk you were taking, I noticed that snapshot you took of the tong battle on Jackson Street

"So I told him that you had the film where the police would get it if you didn't return safely. He led the rescue party."

"You mean this old geeser had enough pull to start a brand new war just to keep from taking a murder rap on account of that picture?"

"Absolutely," said Anita. "That's my old man—Tsang Ah Lin."

"Clistian Chinaman," the old gunner

interpolated, beaming and bowing.

"And he'll stay Christian and out of the opium business," said Anita, "as long as that picture is hanging over his head!"

"But what was the trouble with Hassler in the first place?" demanded Cragin, still perplexed.

"Hassler," she explained, "supplied the Tien Hau Hoi'h with opium.

"Then to make a bigger clean-up, he sold their rivals—my old man's tong—an equally heavy consignment, at the same time. That made them competitors. Also, with such an over-supply, the price dropped. Result, a tong war.

"And the Queen of Heaven outfit, getting wise to Hassler's cold decking them decided to finish him."

That explained it all: Mona, the lovely spy, getting wise to Hassler the night he made the deal with the Hop Wangs on the yacht. And she had planted the cord to admit assassins to kill Hassler and make away with the records of opium dealing which would otherwise kick back.

"Since you've blackmailed your Clistian father out of hop peddling and tong wars," said Cragin, "maybe you can come up some time and look at the pictures. Without—ah—complications."

"You'll get that government reward," said the practical minded yellow peril, "and then you—"

"I'll get your old man a silver mounted shotgun," Cragin cut in.

"Then you can get yourself an apartment," she corrected. "Your office . . . it's awfully uncomfortable—"