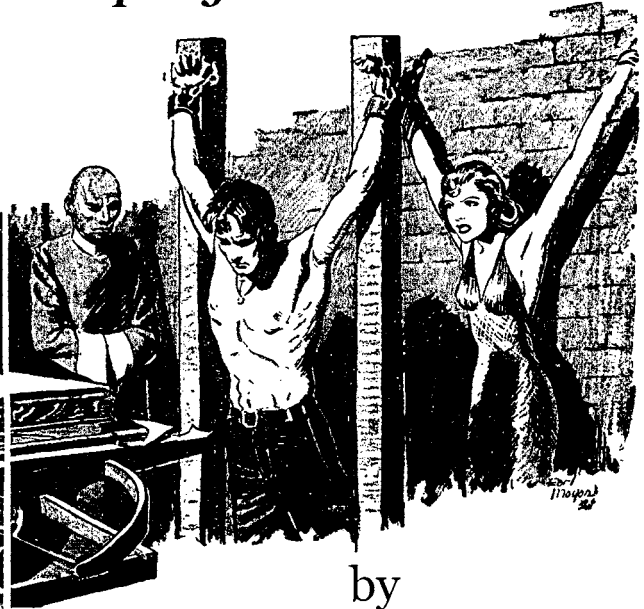


# BLOOD ARROW

*In Chinatown's catacombs of doom,  
the Death Angel recklessly seeks a  
lovely kidnaped girl!*



by  
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## CHAPTER I. THE DEADLY LIMOUSINE.

ANGUS SAINT-CLOUD was trying to take a night off. For once, the dapper bail-bond detective relaxed the vigilance of his keen brain and turned himself wholly to the lovely Lois Marlowe at his side.

That was a mistake.

His usually wary gray eyes missed the swift, malignant glance flung toward him by the man behind the wheel of his limousine. He missed seeing that the man was not his chauffeur, "Sloppy," but a Chinese with slant, malevolent eyes!

Angus handed Lois into the car with a meticulous bow and, bending low, did not see the false chauffeur strike a match and drop it to the ground; did not see the signal returned from the shadows of dark trees across the street! Angus sprang in beside Lois and the limousine was instantly in motion. Every window in the back was tightly shut, despite the glorious summer weather.

Beside the chauffeur, they were wide open and there was a thin-lipped and ruthless smile on the driver's yellow face.

"Your hair," Angus murmured to the girl, "has precisely the sheen of lake water in moonlight."

The girl threw back her head and laughed, and the line of her throat was soft and young. Lois was particularly lovely in a severely white gown, with her hair square-cut and boyish about her face. She merited all Angus's attention. Besides, she was the boss's daughter, and she was equally engrossed in Angus.

The car's speed was mounting rapidly. From a small register near the floor, intended for heat, a spiral of grayish vapor crept out into the tightly closed tonneau. Tentacles of it reached up toward Angus and the girl.

Lois said, "I must compliment you, too, Angus, on your attention to detail. No one but you would think of using incense in your car."

Angus said blankly, "Incense?" Abruptly, all his nerves snapped taut. His gray eyes, masked

behind the glitter of his nose-glasses, hardened into fierceness. It was true that he had caught a faint whiff of sandalwood when first he stepped into the limousine, but he had thought it was some perfume that Lois used.

His head whipped about and, in a single glance, he took in the hunched, powerful shoulders of the chauffeur, so much more powerful than Sloppy's; the tightly closed windows. And the scent of sandal-wood was suddenly overpowering!

Angus felt fear rip through him like a knotted cord dragged through a cut. Not for himself, but for this lovely girl at his side. And he was unarmed! It was like Angus, even in that first chilling moment when he knew his unwariness had let them step into a trap, that he should seek to save Lois from anxiety.

"We need a bit of air," Angus murmured, almost absently; but his hand, when it moved to the lever to open the window, sped out with the rapidity of a rapier thrust! His hand closed on the lever and the tendons stood out, white and taut, as he threw his explosive strength against it. There was a metallic snap. The lever swung loosely in his hand—but the window remained closed!

LOIS said, "What's the matter, Angus?" Her voice was thick, dreamy, and Angus knew abruptly that his own head was humming as if his breath had been cut off. That incense! It was an overpowering gas! Panic slashed through Angus. He wrenched at the catch of the door and could not move it. He jerked at the panel of glass that separated him from the chauffeur and it would not budge.

"Hold your breath!" he panted to Lois.

"What?" the girl's voice barely reached him. Already, she was succumbing to the gas! All her body was relaxing, slumping down on the lavish cushions. A strange weakness was coursing through his own powerful muscles. It was labor to knot his fist, to set his shoulder for a smash at the glass panel which was closing them in, which was strangling them. If he could shatter it, seize that impostor behind the wheel—

He drew back his fist, the fist that had earned him the terrifying title of the "Death Angel" in the prizefighting ring. He tried to drive it forward with all the weight of his body behind it, with the last bit of his strength. It was a nightmare.

It was as if he moved in a dream—a dream of a slow-motion picture. His fist seemed to float forward, without volition, almost without direction

from himself. He saw the gloved knuckles hit the pane, saw the rigid wrist flex. A few cracks radiated out from his hand, so he must have hit it, but he could feel nothing—nothing at all.

His eyes were straining toward the chauffeur. Lord, something had happened to his faithful man, Sloppy—something that soon would be happening to Lois, to himself. He was on his knees, Angus realized, and it was only by a powerful effort that he could hold up his head at all.

His vision was blurring, but in flashes it was extraordinarily keen. He could see, for instance, that the chauffeur had a particularly mongoloid type of head. His ears— Strange that a man's ears should be pierced through the lobes, as women's were in olden days. Pierced ears—

Angus knew that his mind was wandering; that he was slipping off into unconsciousness. He fought against it and the perspiration beaded out on his forehead. He couldn't get his breath. The sandal-wood was choking him—

Abruptly, the chauffeur twisted his head and peered back into the tonneau with an evil, twisted smile, and Angus Saint-Cloud knew an overwhelming horror. There was such cold cruelty in that face and the man was—Chinese!

Dimly, Angus felt that he should recognize the man, but he could never remember faces. Sloppy was useful for that. Sloppy always remembered faces—

The face blurred out before Angus's eyes and he knew that he was falling. Fathomless blackness was below him, and he plunged down and down into it for seeming aeons of time. Then, abruptly, his descent was checked and he was rushing upward again.

ANGUS broke from the darkness as from the surface of an inky-black pond. He plunged up, gasping, and darkness was still around him, but it was the blackness of night. He was sitting bolt upright upon comfortable cushions and, as his body began to awake, he found himself still in the car.

"Lois," he muttered thickly.

He peered drunkenly around him, and there was no trace of Lois Marlowe, nor of the evil-faced Chinese who had taken the place of Sloppy. Angus was alone in the limousine, parked on a dark side street, and the windows were open now. He moved a hand heavily toward his forehead and became aware of a sheet of paper, folded and thrust into the palm of his glove.

He fumbled it out, flicked on the dome ceiling light to read—and a great cry burst from his constricted throat. He saw:

Take this message to George Marlowe. He has until two o'clock this morning to pay two hundred and fifty thousand dollars ransom for his daughter. Otherwise, he will never see her alive again. Wait for a telephone call from—

The signature was an arrow, crudely drawn in red that was the color of blood, of a young girl's blood. Lois, lovely Lois, was the prisoner of Chinese kidnapers! And by two o'clock—Angus's burning eyes sought out the clock on the dashboard of his car.

God! It was already twenty-five minutes after twelve!

## CHAPTER II. FIGHT FOR LIFE.

**G**EORGE MARLOWE, the president of Gold Seal Bonding Corporation, was a self-made man and a fighter, but when he heard Angus Saint-Cloud's story, the pallor of his heavy face was like death itself. He moved toward the telephone and his stride faltered a little. While he dialed, his eyes held steadily on Angus,

"You're not hurt," he stated flatly.

Angus Saint-Cloud felt blood stain his cheek bones. It was a condemnation and a just one, he felt, that he should have allowed Lois to be kidnaped without putting up a fight. The fact that the incense must have been an anaesthetic gas of some sort was no excuse. Before he could answer, Marlowe's call went through. In brief, curt tones, he ordered the bonding company offices to get together a quarter of a million dollars and bring it to him at once.

Then he called the police.

"It's a felony case," Marlowe told headquarters shortly. "I don't care to say more than that over the phone. And send some men from the Chinatown detail."

Angus Saint-Cloud started toward the door. "The police will be too slow," he flung over his shoulder. "I'm going down to Chinatown and try to learn something."

"Wait!" Marlowe's crisp tones spun Angus around at the door.

"We're wasting time, Marlowe!" Angus cried.

Marlowe's grim mouth moved in a slight smile and Angus Saint-Cloud felt anger run its slow, tautening course through him. Damn Marlowe! Did Marlowe suspect him of complicity in his daughter's disappearance? Angus's head lifted challengingly and, behind the glitter of his nose-glasses, his gray eyes were fierce. He was a lithe, commanding figure in full evening dress, tall even without his silk hat.

"I want the police to get the details from you firsthand," Marlowe said quietly. "Better wait, and—" The whirring of the telephone cut short his words and he scooped up the instrument with a hand that trembled a little.

"Lois!" he cried, and his face brightened. "Are you all right? *My God!* Yes, I'll have the money here in an hour at most and—Lois! *Lois!* You devils! If you hurt her I'll—"

Marlowe let the phone drop from his hand and his shoulders sagged. Angus Saint-Cloud reached him in a bound and signaled the operator frantically. He was aware of Marlowe staring at him with eyes that scarcely seemed to see, but he was concentrating on the phone call. While he still hammered at it, the police came tramping into the room. Marlowe's voice, snapping out the curt details of the abduction, was more like the familiar tones Angus knew so well.

**A**NGUS slammed up the telephone. "That call came from the Chop Loy restaurant in Chinatown, A public phone! Damn it, I tell you we're wasting time here!"

He swung around to find Marlowe's eyes boring into him. There were four police detectives in the room and, at the door, two uniformed men stood guard. Angus had a sudden trapped feeling. Hell, he was right. Marlowe did suspect him!

Marlowe said heavily, "A girl can't scream in a restaurant without attracting some attention, Saint-Cloud. I'm afraid the call was traced wrong—or else you're lying!"

Impatience tightened Angus's muscles. It was all right to suspect him, probably inevitable under the circumstances, but while they fooled with him, time was speeding past—and Lois was in the hands of those damnable Chinese! Casually, Angus Saint-Cloud removed his glasses and put them away in their metal case.

Marlowe's voice snapped out, "Be careful! When he takes off the glasses, he's getting ready to fight! And don't make any mistake because he looks so harmless. He has killed men with his

fists!"

Angus Saint-Cloud laughed lightly. He made a debonair figure in his faultless evening dress, complete even to the white gloves he dangled in one hand. There was a slight discrepancy in those gloves, however. Instead of being white silk, they were made of thick leather. They would protect his knuckles. Idly, he began to draw them on. He wouldn't stay here while Lois—*died!*

"Really, Marlowe," he said, smiling, "I thought better of your brain power than this. It's plain you suspect me. Surely, you can't think I would stage an abduction in such a stupid fashion!"

Marlowe nodded his big head. "That's why you almost got away with it, Saint-Cloud," he said heavily. "It's clever because you have deliberately thrown yourself under suspicion. But your men made a mistake when they allowed Lois to speak over the telephone. She told me that you are the one who kidnaped her!"

Angus Saint-Cloud stared at his powerfully built employer and felt his own eyes widen in amazement. "Lois—said that? But of course she did! Her kidnapers made her! You fools! Can't you see that they're trying to keep you from doing anything until it's too late!"

Marlowe made no answer, and one of the detectives shouldered his way forward. He was a gray-haired man with a jaw like a bulldog and a mouth as uncompromising as the flap of a government mail box.

"Take it easy, Saint-Cloud," he said gently, "and don't try your Death Angel punch on me. It might work, but there are too many of us. Suppose you just run over your story of the kidnaping."

Angus Saint-Cloud beat his fists together. "There isn't time, Dugan! They only gave us until two o'clock, and it's almost one now! You don't think they'll turn her loose, do you, once they get the money? Not Chinese criminals!"

The detective named Dugan wagged his gray head. "Don't be impatient with an old gray-head like me, Angus. Just start at the beginning——"

**F**URIOUSLY, Angus raced over the story again. "A Chinese with earring holes in his ears?" Dugan interrupted. "Now, you see, Angus, you're giving us too good a story. Chinks don't do things like that. Superstitious, you know. They got to go whole and perfect to their ancestors. Why, they even save the hair they cut off and their fingernail parings!"

"Can't you see, fool——" Angus began, then stopped as he recognized the futility of his protest. Somewhere in the house, a clock began to chime the hour. One o'clock! In another hour—Lois would die! He had to get out of here and at once. Marlowe and the police were so convinced of his guilt that they would do nothing as long as he was a prisoner.

But Dugan was right. There were too many of them for him to fight his way clear. He was standing beside the table on which the phone rested and there was a lamp there, too, though there were other lights in the room.

Angus took out his glass case and pined the spectacles on his nose while he talked rapidly. "Dugan, you're an expert on the Chinese," he said. "I'm not, but somewhere I've read about some men in north China, a brotherhood of criminals, who pierce their ears. This man looked larger than the south and central Chinese, and northerners are larger."

Angus was tapping the table now with the edge of his metal glass case. It was open a little and the edge of the top was sharp. He was tapping just beside the lamp cord——

Dugan nodded encouragingly, "Go ahead, Saint-Cloud. Confession is good for the soul, so I've been told."

Angus cursed at him angrily, but in a pleasant voice. "You're as hard-headed as all Irishmen, Dugan!" He rapped the edge of the glass case down on the electric cord and the strength flowed into his hand, so that the tendons stood out in his wrist. He ground the sharp edge down through the insulation——

There was a sudden, blue-white flash of light. It was exactly as if that electric flash drew all the light of the room into that one focus. When it went out, there was not a gleam of light in the entire room. But Angus didn't need to see. At the instant the flash started, Angus was in motion. A short step forward and his left drove into Dugan's jaw.

**D**UGAN'S startled curse stopped short. There was a tearing crash as he went over against the table and carried it to the floor with him. The lamp made a tinkling, continuous sound of broken glass that lasted for long seconds. Men were shouting in the darkness, taking stumbling, blind steps. A flashlight's dazzling white beam cut through the room. Across it flickered the shadow of a thrown chair. The light went out. A moment later, window glass smashed under a heavy impact.

"The window!" Marlowe shouted. "Outside and get him! I'll go after ——" His voice died out with a grunt of effort and Marlowe's huge bulk blotted out the faint light at the window. Men stormed across the room and out through the hall doorway. Their feet made a thunderous racket through the corridor.

In the darkness, Angus Saint-Cloud laughed softly. He bent over Dugan's unconscious body and found his revolver, then he moved soundlessly out into the hallway also. He began to run, heavily, shouting, and strangely his voice had a brogue like Dugan's!

"Get the black traitor!" he cried. "But don't hurt him too much. Let me get my hands on him!"

He lunged out the front door. "Around to the back!" he shouted. "I saw him through the window!"

Men circled the house shouting and, a moment later, Angus's heavy limousine purred into life. He whirled it down the drive from Marlowe's stately home, burst out into the street at forty miles an hour.

The limousine heeled far over, then straightened out on screaming tires and accelerated rapidly. There was a slight smile on Angus's lips, but no man would have smiled in response. It was his fighting smile. He had worn it when he killed men with his fists.

Five minutes past one by the clock on the dashboard, and Chinatown was twenty minutes away—if nothing happened to slow him. Thirty-five minutes to locate and smash open a Chinese gang of kidnapers, to save Lois. Lovely Lois, with her gay laughter and the smile in her eyes and that curious, quick way of lifting her chin that made her throat so soft and inviting—— Angus choked down a curse.

Thirty-five minutes!

### CHAPTER III. DEATH WITH PIERCED EARS.

**W**ITHIN minutes the radio was alive with alarms for Angus Saint-Cloud. He heard the police broadcaster weaving a net for him. They knew where he was headed, too—toward Chinatown. His license number! Angus's smile grew thinner and he tucked the revolver under his thigh. He wouldn't shoot a policeman, but punctured tires could stop pursuit, too. He didn't

intend to be stopped!

He chose the most direct course and bored straight down Fifth Avenue. They would hardly expect that, and his limousine would be less conspicuous there, though it was strange for a man in formal evening dress to occupy the chauffeur's seat. He suffered a twinge then as he remembered the man who should be occupying this seat. Sloppy!

What had those Chinese fiends done to him when they put one of their number in his place? Well, if Sloppy was still a prisoner, he would find him in the same place with Lois—Angus hoped.

The enormity of the task before him would have stopped a lesser man than Angus Saint-Cloud cold, but he was used to fighting against odds. The prize ring had never seen him falter, but his heart had gone out of him after a man had died there under his fists. Angus had switched to a profession where such men as he struck would deserve to die! He flexed the fingers of his hands on the wheel. God grant that soon he would have the chance to strike at them!

He jerked the limousine to a halt in a dark side street off the Bowery and was flinging to the street when the shrill note which heralded another police broadcast stopped him.

*"Calling all cars!"* the announcer snapped. *"An armored car of the Gold Seal Bonding Corporation was ambushed and robbed in Fulton Street. The driver and guard were killed and cash taken to the amount of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Angus Saint-Cloud is suspected. Watch out for him. He is dangerous and armed——"*

The broadcast ran on, but Angus snapped it off with a fury too deep for cursing. The blind fools! The Chinese had collected their ransom money now, and there was no longer any reason for Lois Marlowe to be kept alive! And yet, damn it, he couldn't go into Chinatown in this garb! The place would be swarming with police looking for Angus Saint-Cloud. But along the Bowery were all-night second-hand shops, pawnshops. A man could get old clothing there.

**I**T took Angus Saint-Cloud five minutes to make the change and when he shambled finally into Pell Street, there was nothing about him of the meticulous, fashionable detective whom the police hunted.

His clothing was ragged and it did not fit. The hat dragged down over his brows was greasy, and

his shoes were broken. The dapper detective was profoundly uncomfortable in them, but they gave him a blessed security from arrest—he hoped. He did not wear his glasses and, under that hat brim, his eyes stabbed fiercely into the shadows of Chinatown. Somewhere here, Lois was hidden. Damn it, she had to be here, or—or he would fail. And failure meant *death to Lois!*

Minutes dragged past while Angus Saint-Cloud shuffled through the dark, narrow streets of Chinatown. He went directly to the restaurant from which the telephone operator had reported the call made. But that was madness. As Marlowe said, no captive girl would be taken to make a call over a public phone. The wires must be tapped. If he had time to trace out the wiring— There had been no time to tell that idea to the police, even if they would have listened.

On a chance, Angus shuffled into the restaurant and from it called police headquarters. “We have the ransom for the Marlowe girl,” he said in a hoarsely disguised voice. “In three hours, she will be turned loose.”

He left the restaurant hurriedly. They would try to trace that call down. If he had any luck, if the police displayed any intelligence in the matter, they might trace down the wire-tap. He couldn't afford to overlook any chances—not when Lois's life was at stake.

He pushed out again into the dark Chinatown streets, eyeing every yellow face he saw; inspecting their ear lobes with piercing regard. If such a mark were as rare as Dugan indicated, it might give him a lead. But time was so short!

Abruptly, Angus looked up. A group of Chinese were ambling along, chattering. In mid-word, they stopped and, in a body, stepped down from the sidewalk.

At first, there seemed no reason for this; and then a man, taller by a head than the Chinese about him, stepped up from the low, dark entrance of a shop and turned down the street away from Angus. The detective's heart leaped up in his chest. He was remembering what he had told Dugan, of a brotherhood of North China, which marked themselves by piercing their ears. And the men of North China were tall!

**E**AGERLY, Angus took up the man's trail. It was difficult, for as the tall Chinese stalked majestically down the walk, other celestials darted from his path like frightened curs from the menace of a mastiff. It left Angus almost alone upon the

sidewalk. His hand slid under his ragged coat and touched the butt of the revolver tucked into his waistband.

He quickened his pace. Following the man might achieve nothing. He might be going innocuously home. And seconds were precious. He must get close enough to see if his ears were pierced.

Angus was within two yards of the tall Chinese when the man turned toward the dark doorway of a tenement house. For an instant, as he turned, the beams of the corner street light slanted in under his hat brim—and Angus caught a breath high in his throat, then dispelled it while his lips curved into the smile Death knew so well. The ears of the Chinese were pierced!

“Just a minute, friend!” Angus called softly.

In the shadow of the doorway, the tall Chinese turned with the litheness of a crouched panther about to spring. Angus shuffled toward him warily, gun still in his waistband. For what he had to do here, his fists would serve better! He would not use the full strength of his body, but his fists would strike hard enough and painfully enough to force this lean monster to talk!

“I once had a friend,” Angus said softly, “a man of the East whose ears were pierced——”

He was within a yard of the man and he had time to say no more. With a snarl that was animallike in its ferocity, the Chinese leaped. His hand flashed upward in a slashing stroke and Angus caught the glint of metal in his fist. Good God! The man gripped a long pair of scissors, opened and locked in position by clutching fingers. From his fist, the long blades projected murderously. One slash of that fearful weapon would tear a man wide open.

On the instant, memory came flooding back to Angus's brain. He knew now the whole of the history of the organization of which he had read in college days, the brotherhood of criminals he had mentioned to Dugan. The scissors had done it.

They were the Brotherhood of *Er-Chien*, of the “Ear-Arrow” as the Chinese satirically termed scissors. The brotherhood had had its birth long ago in the ancient days when it was considered quite right to cut off the ears of a servant who didn't hear his orders correctly. Ear-arrows——

By a frantic leap aside, Angus evaded the first upward stroke of the scissors. He jumped in again as that horrible weapon flashed upward—and suddenly it was slashing down again at his face! With that double-pointed weapon, the Chinese had

no need even to take the time to turn his fist!

It was too late to check his leap toward the man. Angus's left was lancing toward the unprotected jaw and his whole body's weight was driving in behind the punch. One thing he could do. He changed the direction of his blow, stabbed it upward at that descending arm of death!

The scissors were knocked fractionally aside, but the stroke was too vicious to turn entirely. The blade raked through Angus's coat, gashed into his shoulder muscles as the Death Angel pivoted on his left foot and slammed his right fist up under the jaw of the Chinese!

The smarting shock of the wound lent added power to his blow. There was a strangled, croaking gust of breath from the man's throat, then the Chinese fell writhing to the floor of the narrow areaway!

**I**NSTANTLY, Angus stepped down hard on the wrist that gripped the scissors, kicked them away and dropped on his knees beside the man. The eyes of the Chinese were bulging, his lips blue. Angus swore under his breath. Once more, the power of his fist had betrayed him. His punch had crushed the man's windpipe. Even as Angus knelt beside him, the man died with a final convulsive shudder.

Angus threw a quick glance over his shoulder. The street behind him was deserted. All the other Chinese had run for cover. Down at the corner, two men in police blue were swinging around into Mott Street. They checked, staring about them at the empty thoroughfare, then began to move cautiously forward.

One of them whipped out a flashlight and its brilliant beam quested over the dark tenement fronts, focused abruptly on Angus where he crouched!

Guns glittered at once in the hands of the police. The men began to run toward him.

"Halt!" was their hail. "Halt, or we'll shoot to kill!"

Angus dived head-first into the areaway. A gun crashed out behind him and he heard the bullet crunch through the flimsy woodwork of the door. His shoulder was paining damnably now, and its heat ran through him like fever-weakness. Grimly, he seized the dead Chinese by the collar and dragged him from sight.

It was a laborious task to get the man to his shoulders, but Angus, that grim smile set on his mouth, managed it and darted up the steps seconds ahead of the pounding feet of the police.

Their whistles were piping shrilly now, the beams of their white lights intensifying in the darkness of the areaway. Within a moment, they would be in sight, their hungry guns would—

Angus strained up the shaking stairs. If he could once round the platform turn a half-dozen steps away! Now four steps—now two steps—

The light of the flashes washed over him. With a desperate effort, Angus flung himself up those last two steps with the body across his shoulders. Guns crashed out thunderously behind. He felt the dead Chinese jerk to the impact of their bullets, then he was around the curve. Somehow he was on his feet and running. The police pounded heavily behind him.

Angus hit a closed door with the combined weight of his own body and his burden. It crashed inward. He went through, glimpsed a window. With a heave of his shoulders he hurled the dead Chinese through it, pivoted and raced back to a post beside the doorway.

The cops burst through in the next instant. Angus thrust out a foot to trip the first, caught the second behind the ear with a lightning right. While the second man still plunged through the air, unconscious from the instant of the blow, Angus took a light step forward and drove the toe of his shoe accurately, and not too hard, against the temple of the man he had tripped.

There was abrupt silence in the halls that a moment before had echoed to the hammer and shouts of the chase. Below there were little creepings and squeaks like the sounds of frightened mice.

Reeling, panting from effort, Angus raced down the stairs, out along a black hallway toward the spot where he had hurled the dead Chinese. He burst out into the court—and stopped dead in his tracks. He teetered back against the wall and something very like a sob burned up through his throat.

The dead Chinese had vanished!

#### CHAPTER IV. CATACOMBS OF DOOM!

**U**SELESS to search through the night for some trace of the dead man and those who had carried him away. Angus Saint-Cloud could feel the liveness of the dark around him. Eyes were there, watching, he knew. And death waited.

Angus Saint-Cloud threw back his head and laughed. To hell with death! His fists knotted.

He pivoted on his heel and raced back through the narrow hallway toward the street. The police would be out there now; other police answering the pipe of those danger whistles, the crash of guns. He reached the areaway where he had killed the Chinese and stopped, staring at the glitter of metal on the floor—the scissors.

With a swoop, Angus had the vicious weapon, open in his fist as the dead man had held it, stained with his own blood. The Brotherhood of the *Er-Chien*, of the Ear-Arrow. Why, damn it, that ransom note had been signed with a blood-red arrow!

Laughter pushed once more to Angus Saint-Cloud's throat, the deep chest laughter of a man with fight-madness in his brain. Angus Saint-Cloud stepped out into Mott Street and he moved no longer with a shuffle.

His left arm hung useless at his side, the muscles gashed and stiff with pain. His right hand clutched the open scissors and he moved lightly, moved on his toes as a man going into battle—the Death Angel going into battle!

Police came pounding around the lower corner of Mott Street, too late to see Angus turn the "Bloody Angle" that joined it to Pell. Shutters were slamming home on the windows of shops. Frightened yellow faces peered out. Somewhere a gun roared angrily, but if the lead whipped near Angus he did not hear or heed. The shop from which the man of the *Er-Chien* had emerged was just ahead. Angus went in with the stride of a conqueror.

**B**EHIND the counter, a fat-bellied little Cantonese crouched. His eyes glittered under fat brows, slid off sideways beneath the assault of Angus's glare.

"Thou *Ta Tu Tzeurh*." Angus said raspingly. "Thou fat-belly, tub of butter, *Hwang Yo*. Take me to the *Wong*, the chieftain of the *Er-Chien*!" He stepped closer, wagging the blood-stained scissors. "Quickly, before I open that so-fat belly of thine, with my little *Er-Chien*!"

The scissors poised threateningly and the fat shopkeeper prostrated himself, banged his forehead on the floor. "At once, oh power of *Er-Chien*!" he whined. "At once!"

He bobbed up from the floor, scuttled toward the rear of the little shop. Angus Saint-Cloud followed, free-striding, that reckless smile on his

lips. Minutes now before Lois was to die. Nothing else mattered. He knew that he walked into a trap. The shopkeeper would fear the *Er-Chien* too much to betray them. That did not matter. So that he came in time to Lois's side, nothing mattered. The Death Angel would find a way.

Thoughtfully, smiling sardonically as he went, Angus drew a design in blood on the sides of the passageway through which he walked. It was a blood arrow, and it pointed the path he had taken. Eastern eyes had seen him enter here and they would be eager to point the way to the police. Torture itself would not make them betray their own, but Angus was not of the East.

Yes, they would betray the interloper to the police—he hoped. The blood arrows would point the way—he also hoped. But he did not depend on them. He leaned upon the strength of his right arm and the *Er-Chien* he grasped in his hand.

There was a feverish glitter in Angus's eyes. They would take the scissors from him. He would be overpowered, bound, a sacrifice with Lois to the greed of these monsters. The smile hardened on his mouth. The Chinese liked torture, didn't they?

Slowly, he lifted the scissors until they hovered over his wounded left shoulder. He laughed explosively; then that sound stopped, on a caught breath. When the Chinese rushed out at him from, behind the cover of the drapes forming the walls of the chamber into which he had been led, Angus threw high his right arm.

"I come in peace!" he cried harshly. "Take me to your *Wong*!"

The light was pale and faint in the chamber, but the Chinese caught the glint of metal on Angus's left shoulder. The Chinese stopped, stared at Angus, at this man who walked with steel thrust into his body, and they broke into a high chattering. Presently, hands gripped his arms and he was thrust forward through the curtains.

And Angus had guessed right. They did not remove the scissors. Only, one of them carelessly slapped the steel and it bit deeper into his muscles, so deeply that Angus sagged momentarily in the grip of the men who carried him. They burst into high, thin laughter.

**A**NGUS did not lose consciousness, but for moments his senses swam in the half-light where he knew only pain and despair. When the room was clear before his vision again, his arms were bound to his sides and two men held him prisoner in the middle of a great underground



chamber.

Before him, a man sat upon a dragon throne, a gaunt, cruel-faced Chinese, tall as men are tall in North China, thin-lipped and ruthless in his exquisite robes of golden silk. With a start, Angus realized that the man was the same who had acted as his chauffeur to trap him. Once more he had a haunting sense of familiarity about that face. If only Sloppy could see it, he would remember. But Sloppy might well be already dead!

Even in the midst of such horror, Angus knew a brief joy. His deductions, at least, had been right. He was in the hands of the same men who had stolen Lois. The man on the dragon throne proved it.

At the foot of the throne, flanked by stalwart North Chinese, lay the body of the man Angus had slain. And through the ear of each man, Angus saw, was thrust a tiny golden arrow!

"I come to bring you a message," Angus said when he could find words. "It is this: Free the girl. Your ransom has been paid. If you kill her, not all of China can hide you from the white man's vengeance!"

The man on the throne, the *Wong* of the *Er-Chien* as he plainly was, uttered a low laugh. Its sound was soft, yet it rasped like a saw cutting into living bone.

"Do you talk of vengeance, white man?" the Chinese *Wong* asked softly. "You who come to us after killing one of my slaves?"

Angus's head was high. "It is the first taste of the vengeance to come!" he rapped.

THE Chinese laughed again and moved languidly a hand on which long nail-guards glittered with jewels. Instantly, the curtains at one end of the room were whipped aside. Angus saw Lois then, a pale and shaken Lois. She was spread-eagled against the wall and, before her, Sloppy was similarly tied to two upright beams.

Angus felt a brief joy that they were still alive, but his gladness left him in a breath. As he realized the reason that they were placed so, helpless, one before the other, agony shot through him more fiercely than any pain from his wound. He struggled against his bonds, but it was in vain.

Poised before those two helpless prisoners was a powerful catapult. It was cocked, and in the arrow-slot there lay a gigantic golden arrow! At a touch on the trigger, that giant arrow would be hurled straight at Sloppy's body. It would rip through him in a breath and—pin Lois to the wall!

Even as the full enormity of the thing struck Angus, as he fought in frenzy against his captors, he was lifted and carried forward until he stood behind the catapult. In a trice, the rope lanyard attached to the trigger had been run through an overhead pulley and knotted about his neck in a hangman's noose!

It was exactly calculated. If Angus Saint-Cloud stood on his toes, the rope was taut, but it did not pull the trigger of the catapult. If he settled on his heels, or reeled off that balance even for an instant, the catapult would be discharged and that arrow would rip through Sloppy, through Lois's lovely body like a bullet punching through tissue paper!

"It is nice problem, eh, my fine vengeance-bringer?" said the *Wong* softly. "How long can a man stand on his toes? It is a pity we are not able to give the matter a perfectly fair test. You are not quite as strong as some men, because of the arrow in your shoulder. But it would not do to remove it now, would it? It would weaken you, and we want you strong for the ordeal!"

Angus Saint-Cloud said, stiffly, through his rope-constricted throat, "Kill me, if you must, but that girl is——"

The *Wong* laughed, and once more the sound was rasping. Angus remembered the simile that had come to his mind—like a saw on living bone!

"But I shall not be killing her, my bringer of vengeance. *It will be you!*"

He clapped his hands together lightly, and the curtains fell. Angus Saint-Cloud was alone with Lois Marlowe, with Sloppy—and with the torture machine. Already his legs were aching. If he so much as reeled, off balance, for an instant—Even the Death Angel's fighting smile grew stiff, faded from his lips!

The curtains parted briefly and the evil face of the *Wong* of the *Er-Chien* peered through. "One thing I forgot to tell you. When the catapult is discharged, it will also spring open a trapdoor under your feet, Saint-Cloud. It's too bad. I'm afraid it will hang you!"

## CHAPTER V. BLOOD ARROW.

SLOPPY'S blurred face was white and drawn, but fear was no longer there. Only an intense weariness. Angus Saint-Cloud tried to bring the

smile to his lips for Sloppy's benefit, and could not. Behind Sloppy, he could catch the sheen of Lois Marlowe's hair; but her face was hidden. She did not speak. Her hands, bound to the walls by the wrists, were knotted into white, impotent fists.

"Geez, boss," Sloppy said hoarsely. "If it was only me, I'd say shoot and get it over with. I been here so long that——"

"Courage!" Angus squeezed the word hoarsely past the rope that was slowly strangling him. He had a faint chance to save himself and the others. Not the police. He put no real reliance in their coming. He nerved himself to the attempt.

Already, the muscles of his legs were knotting with cramp from standing on tiptoes. Heaven knew how much longer he would be able to maintain himself in this position. Soon his feet and legs would go numb and after that—after that, he would reel, briefly off balance, and the mighty arrow would snuff out two lives an instant before he himself was hanged!

The hang rope, which also was the trigger lanyard of the catapult, was fastened beneath his left ear with a hangman's knot. It was so tight already that his head was beginning to buzz from constricted blood vessels, from scanty breathing. Yes, he must take his chance at once—or not at all. If the Chinese were watching— Well, he would have failed and he could win a quick death for all of them by dropping down on his heels.

Cautiously, Angus strained his neck within the noose of the rope, not attempting to loosen it. He knew that was useless, for a hangman's knot is tied so that it tightens, but never relaxes. He was attempting to get it out from under his ear, move it forward toward his mouth. He staggered once, saw the rope tighten through the pulley, heard its brief metallic creak as the lanyard threatened to yank the trigger. He heard Sloppy suck in a deep, slow breath.

Lois cried out, "For God's sake, get it over with!"

ANGUS made no answer. The rope, in that effort, had slipped out from under his ear and by twisting his head, he might work his plan. He bent his head sideways then, and groped with his teeth for the handles of the scissors embedded in his shoulder!

Angus's eyes were strained wide and unseeing, and there were ridges out along his jaw. If for the barest moment, the pain of those scissors made him sway——

They would not! He braved himself for the pain, for the effort.

It was a fierce strain upon his neck muscles to reach for those scissors against the tug of the rope. He hunched his shoulder and pain made the sweat spring out on his forehead. His lips were drawn back from his teeth and his breath whistled out hoarsely.

Sloppy watched with widening eyes. Incredible, the thing Angus must do; balance himself on tiptoes, hands lashed tightly behind him, while he fought the hang rope to reach those scissors with his teeth and tear them from the wound! And that would be only the beginning!

His lips touched the steel first and the faint shock of that, running along the blades, made weakness wash over him like heat. But he did not desist. He must be swift now or not at all. He gripped the handle with his teeth and, in the same moment, wrenched his head back again. A scream crowded up against his locked teeth and darkness swam before his eyes. Even in that moment of vertigo, he remembered to brace his rigid legs, to balance on tiptoes.

"You got them, boss!" Sloppy whispered softly. "My God, you've got them! They can't lick you, boss. Nobody ever can!"

Slowly, the sharp agony of Angus's shoulder subsided to the old dull ache and he could see again—see the stained, razor-sharp scissors, one handle of which he gripped in his teeth. But how much longer could he balance like this?

There was an intolerable aching in his legs. They were fast going numb! And he was weak—weak. Angus twisted his head about and brought the blade against the hang rope, began to saw on it with quick forward-and-back movements of his head.

It was agonizing work. His jaw muscles tired and the smooth, cold handle slipped between his teeth. There was nothing to press the rope against, nothing but the noose about his neck. His working drew it tauter. It jerked and quivered, creaked in the pulley overhead. There was a drumming in his head like distant tom-toms, like an ax beating on wood. The police?

No, that was nonsense. His mind was breeding hallucinations. His head kept moving, the blade bit into the rope. Sloppy was crying something. He could hear the girl's voice, too, but they formed no articulate words in his brain. He was too far gone.

Only Angus kept sawing away, and the blade

kept slipping. It slipped finally and he swayed, off balance. My God, he had no feeling in his legs at all! He was falling, *falling!*

Agony shot through his brain; not pain, but the dread of the thing he knew must be happening. He waited for the heavy twang of the releasing catapult. He didn't hear it. Instead, he thudded against the floor.

ANGUS SAINT-CLOUD lay there numbly, bewildered. But he was supposed to be hanged the instant he tripped the lanyard. Hanged and——

Gradually, he understood and realization brought him surging up from unconsciousness. He had won! He had sliced through the hang rope!

A sound between laughter and a sob pushed itself out between his lips. He thrust his bound, helpless body up from the floor. His feet at least were free, and his mouth. He could still wield those scissors!

Angus stared about him. Sloppy sagged in a faint, in his bonds. Lois Marlowe was staring at him, white-faced. "What happened?" she whispered. "I closed my eyes so long ago, so that I couldn't see. I thought I heard the police breaking in."

Angus's throat hurt when he spoke. "We've got a chance now!"

He mouthed the scissors, staggered to his feet and went, wooden-legged, toward Lois, began to saw at her bonds. He was still laboring over it, vainly, when he heard the whisper of the silken curtains behind whipped aside. He whirled, in an agony of apprehension, and was gazing into the cruel, mocking eyes of the *Wong* of the *Er-Chien!*

For a moment, the man's eyes held his; then, the man came forward slowly until he stood beside the catapult.

"Very good," he said softly. "Very, very good. You're a better man than I thought, Angus Saint-Cloud, you have even released the police upon us, but they will not come in time to save you!"

The *Wong* clapped his hands softly and one of his servitors darted in under the curtains. With a wave of his long-nailed hand, the slit-eyed Chinese indicated the catapult!

A great cry rose in Angus's throat and the man darted toward the trailing lanyard of the machine. He seized it in his fist and Angus saw him set himself for the wrench that would release that awful arrow! Death! Death for Lois and

Sloppy!

With an oath, Angus drove himself forward, straight at the *Wong* himself! Even in his desperation, Angus did not act blindly. As if bolted from a catapult himself, he hammered his shoulder-squarely into the *Wong* and hurled him fairly atop the catapult's arrow!

Pain flashed through Angus's wounded shoulder; he stayed and fell atop the squealing Chinese at the instant the catapult let go with a deep bass twang like the snapping of a Gargantuan cello string. Angus was snatched up and hurled as if by a giant's hand—and his senses blotted out.

IMPOSSIBLE to tell how much later it was his eyes opened, but there was a horrid fear in Angus's breast. He stared about him, saw men in police blue, saw Lois in her father's arms. And Sloppy—Sloppy lay beside him with a bandage about his ribs. He smiled faintly at Angus.

"It's all right, boss," he said. "Your knees caught me in the ribs, that's all."

"But the arrow!" Angus stammered. "The arrow——"

He twisted his head about and saw the butt of the arrow. It protruded from the back of the *Wong's* neck, and its head was still buried somewhere inside the man's body. Because it had struck through the whole length of his body, because of the double weight of the Chinese and Angus, which it had carried, the arrow had been turned from the terrible execution for which it was intended! Angus closed his eyes and breathed out a thankful sigh.

It was the rasp of Dugan's voice which snapped Angus's head toward him. "It's very pretty, Saint-Cloud," he said. "But it won't work. You're not the first man who has turned on the men under him when he got in a jam. We've got you sewed up tight for this kidnaping!"

Angus stared up at the man's face incredulously. "Surely," he said, "you can't believe—— Ask Miss Marlowe over there!"

"I've asked her," Dugan said. "She says these men called you boss, and that's that."

Sloppy said thickly, "These cops are nuts, boss. You know me. I never forget a face!"

Angus said dully, "No, Sloppy, you never forget a face."

"Okay. Then you get Mr. Marlowe to look at the dead chink over there. The one that swallowed the arrow." Angus stared at Sloppy and felt hope surge. Then Sloppy had remembered!

Dugan was scowling. "What the hell is this?"

SLOPPY smiled up at him with his battered, blurry face. "Oh, just a little memory trick, copper. That chink is one Marlowe fired about six months ago. Used to be the Marlowe's house boy. I don't remember his name, but Marlowe will. He was fired for crookedness. The Death Angel here got the evidence on him. When the chink left, he swore he'd get even with both Marlowe and the Angel. Ain't that right, Mr. Marlowe?"

Marlowe crossed, quickly for a big man, and peered down at the dead Chinese. "Damn, you're right," he cried. "Dugan, I withdraw my charges. That man did swear to get even with us both. That explains why he tried to put the blame on Angus."

Lois came forward eagerly. Her face was

alight now. "Angus risked his life to save mine," she said. "He even tried to stop that arrow with his own body— Oh, Angus!"

Lois dropped down on her knees beside Angus and Marlowe was smiling at him.

"Forgive me, Angus," Lois whispered.

"Forgive me, old man," said Marlowe. "I was pretty much upset. Lois——"

Angus drew in a deep breath, "Think nothing of it," he said lightly. "Lois could turn any man's head. Don't, Lois. Confound it, you know I hate to look—well, like this. I had to buy some perfectly disreputable clothing to avoid the imbecilic police."

Lois said, "I think you look lovely."

Angus laughed, "That, my dear, shows how little you know about sartorial elegance!"