

"Call me Shang-Chi, as my father did, when he raised me and molded my mind and my body in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. I learned many things from my father. Since then, I have learned that my father is Dr. Fu Manchu, the most insidiously evil man on earth... and that to **Wound** him would bring nothing but **dishonor** to the spirit of my **name**."

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

MASTER OF KUNG FU!

Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

PRESENTING
by POPULAR
DEMAND:

SHANG-CHI, MASTER OF KUNG FU
and IRON FIST THE LIVING WEAPON
BATTLING TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME--AND PROVING THAT THE
FURY OF MARTIAL ARTS ACTION WILL NEVER AGAIN BE THE SAME!



THE **FORTRESS** of **SAHRA SHARN!**

A MODERN-MYTH CLASSIC,
COURTESY OF
DOUG MOENCH & KEITH POLLARD
WRITER ARTIST

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"MY LONDON APARTMENT, PROVIDED AND FURNISHED BY SIR DENIS HAYLAND SMITH--



"--CONTAINS ONLY MY BODY..."

"...WHILE MY MIND FLOATS IN THE BLUE DARKNESS OF OTHERWHERE, FREE, CALM, IN A SILENCE UNBROKEN BY--



TOK!
TOK!
TOK!

"BLACK JACK TARR?"



"RESTON...?"

"OR, PERHAPS, HAYLAND SMITH HIMSELF...?"



"NO. NONE OF THEM. I'M DANIEL RAND, SHANG CHI. SORRY FOR THE INTRUSION, BUT..."



WELL, COULD I COME IN?

YES.

NICE PLACE YOU'VE GOT HERE-- HOMEY. ME, I'M A STRANGER HERE IN LONDON...



"...WHICH IS PART OF THE REASON WHY I NEED HELP

YOU MAY SIT WHILE YOU EXPLAIN, DANIEL RAND..."

I CAN OFFER YOU ONLY TEA...



"...AND RIGHT NOW, I'M JITTERY ENOUGH.

THANKS, BUT NO-- I JUST LEARNED THAT TEA'S GOT MORE CAFFEIN IN IT THAN COFFEE DOES...

ANYWAY, THE REASON I NEED HELP-- AND WHY I CAME HERE-- IS BECAUSE..."

LISTEN-- MAYBE I'D BETTER START AT THE BEGINNING.

I WENT TO SCOTLAND YARD FIRST...



"...AND MANAGED TO SEE A THIRD-GRADE JUNIOR OFFICIAL WHO WAS GREAT AT PASSING THE BUCK..."



"HE SENT ME TO WHITECHAPEL HEADQUARTERS OF THE BRITISH SECRET SERVICE..."



"...OR MI-6, AS THEY LIKE TO CALL IT.

"THIS TIME I HAD BETTER LUCK-- GOT TO SEE ONE OF THE BIG BOSSES, NAYLAND SMITH. HE WAS FRIENDLIER, BUT ALSO PASSED THE BUCK..."



...AND SENT YOU TO ME.

I HAVE FOUND HIS "ESPIONAGE" BUSINESS TO BE MOSTLY A GAME OF DECEIT AND DEATH-- A GAME I DO NOT WISH TO PLAY.

HOWEVER, I HAVE AIDED SMITH IN MATTERS WHERE HONOR DICTATED, OR WHERE INNOCENT LIVES HAVE BEEN JEOPARDIZED.



"WHY IS IT, I WONDER--"

-- THAT I FIND TEA ... CALMING? "

IN OTHER WORDS, YOU MIGHT BE WILLING TO HELP ME-- IF MY REQUEST MEETS YOUR APPROVAL.



ALTHOUGH I HAVE BEEN SHELTERED MOST OF MY LIFE, MR. RAND--

--AND STILL FIND IT DIFFICULT TO INTERPRET WESTERN SPEECH, YOUR SARCASTIC HAS NOT ESCAPED ME. PERHAPS IF YOU SIMPLY STATE YOUR PROBLEM?



MY PROBLEM IS THAT A GIRL WHO HAS HELPED AND COMFORTED ME--

--AND WHOM I HOLD VALUABLE AS A FRIEND AND AS A PERSON --HAS BEEN KIDNAPPED. HER NAME IS COLLEEN WING.



WING? SHE IS CHINESE?

DOES IT MATTER?

NOT TO YOU OR ME, PERHAPS, BUT IT COULD MATTER A GREAT DEAL TO HER ABDUCTORS.

SORRY-- SHOULD'VE KNOWN YOU WOULD NOT CARE IF--



IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW?

WELL, HAVE YOU HEARD OF-- K'UN-LUN... OR IRON FIST?

YES, SMITH HAS TOLD ME-- AND LEIKO HAS SHOWN ME NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS...



WELL, I AM IRON FIST.

I KNOW.

YOU KNOW--? BUT HOW?!



YOUR POISE... YOUR STANCE AND CARRIAGE-- YOUR EVERY MOVE-- AS WELL AS THE INTENSITY OF YOUR INNER SPIRIT-- PROCLAIMS THE FACT.

ANY MASTER OF THE MARTIAL ARTS, IF HE IS A TRUE MASTER, CAN RECOGNIZE ANOTHER MASTER... AS SOON AS THEIR EYES MEET.



GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, SHANG-CHI-IY... BUT YOU HAVEN'T SAID WHETHER YOU'LL HELP ME FIND COLLEEN. CERTAINLY FELT YOUR VIBRATIONS AS SOON AS I SAW YOU...

I WILL HELP YOU.

WHEN--?

IF SHE IS IN DANGER, THE ONLY TIME TO BEGIN IS...NOW

THEN LET'S GO-- NOW THAT I'VE GOT MY WORK CLOTHES ON...



I UNDERSTAND THE COSTUME, TO ALLOW FREE MOVEMENT DURING COMBAT...



... BUT IS THE 'WOOD' NECESSARY?

THAT'S ONE THING, SHANG-CHI--



-- THAT I REALLY HAVEN'T FIGURED OUT YET.

YOU ARE IRON FIST, AND YOU HAVE JUST GRINED AN ALLY--



-- HERE IN THE BRISK NIGHT OF LONDON.

'Y WANTIN' VINEGAR WI' YER CHIPS, MATE?

JUST A BIT O' TOMATY SAUCE-- AND SOME TARTAR FOR THE FISH, O' COURSE. AN' BE A BIT QUICK, IF Y'DON'T MIND-- I'M NEEDIN' 'T BE ON ME WAY TO--



EH? WOT IN THE--?

THE DEVIL TAKE ME AN' ME GOLD TOOTH BOTH--



-- IF I'M NOT SEEN' A HOLE OVER THERE...

... A HOLE RIPPIN' RIGHT THROUGH NOTHIN' BUT EMPTY AIR--!!

Y'KIN KEEP VER
GOLD TOOTH,
MATE, B'CAUSE
THERE IS A
BLEEDIN' HOLE...



...AN' SOMETHIN'S
STEPPIN' RIGHT
OUT OF IT...



...THOUGH WHAT
KIND O' SUPER-
NATURAL BLOKE
HE COULD BE...



... I AIN'T
WILLIN' T'
GUESS...!



AN' I AIN'T NONE
TOO EAGER TO
SHAKE HANDS WI'
IN EITHER!

HAALLP!!



HERE,
NOW!

WHERE IN BLOOMIN'
HADES ARE YOU
TWO RUSHIN' OFF--



OH, SO IT'S A
TROUBLE-MAKER,
IS IT?

YOU CAN STOP
RIGHT THERE,
MATE--



--BECAUSE
WE'RE NOT
HAVIN' ANY
OF YOUR
KIND
CHASIN'
AFTER
GOOD
PEOPLE'S
MONEY.

YOU'RE COMIN' WI'
ME DOWN TO THE--



SILENCE.



YEEEEARRHHH!!



FOOL.

"THE FOG IS THICK TONIGHT, A GARMENT CLOAKING THE BREEZE..."

-- BUT THE MAIN REASON I WENT TO SCOTLAND YARD IS BECAUSE I SIMPLY DON'T KNOW WHERE TO LOOK. LONDON'S A COMPLETE MAZE TO ME.



IN FACT, HAVING SPENT TEN OF MY NINETEEN YEARS SECLUDED IN K'UN-LUN, ALMOST ALL EARTH CITIES ARE UNFAMILIAR TO ME.

THEN PERHAPS YOU SOUGHT ME IN VAIN... FOR, HAVING SPENT SEVENTEEN OF MY NINETEEN YEARS SEQUESTERED IN MY FATHER'S NONAN FORTRESS--

-- I KNOW THIS CITY LITTLE BETTER THAN YOU.

YEAH, I NEVER REALLY THOUGHT OF THAT...



GUESS I SHOULDN'T HAVE EVEN BOTHERED YOU.

... UNLESS YOU REQUIRE MY ASSISTANCE IN OTHER RESPECTS:

WELL, I MAY BE COCKY, BUT I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF-- AGAINST ALMOST ANYTHING.



STILL, I SUPPOSE ANOTHER PAIR OF FISTS WON'T HURT...

SAY, YOU MENTIONED YOUR FATHER, SHANG-CHI-- FU MANCHU, RIGHT? ISN'T HE SUPPOSED TO BE IMMORTAL, TOO-- LIKE THE INHABITANTS OF K'UN-LUN...?



YES... MY FATHER HAS LIVED BEYOND HIS LIFETIME.

HMMMM...

WELL, SINCE NEITHER ONE OF US HAS A CLUE AS TO WHERE WE SHOULD LOOK, I GUESS OUR FIRST STOP SHOULD BE SCOTLAND YARD AGAIN...



... TO SEE IF THEY'VE PICKED UP ANY LEADS.

BY THE WAY I'VE HEARD THAT FU MANCHU SUSTAINS HIS IMMORTALITY BY USING SOME SORT OF SERUM OR ELIXIR...

... AND I KNOW THAT THE INHABITANTS OF K'UN-LUN SUSTAIN THEIR IMMORTALITY BY AGING ONLY ONE DAY OUT OF EVERY TEN YEARS...

... THE ONE DAY K'UN-LUN APPEARS ON EARTH.



BUT DO YOU SUPPOSE FU MANCHU COULD'VE GOTTEN THE IDEA FOR HIS SERUM FROM--





I DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY CAME FROM, SHANG-CHI...

--BUT IT SURE DIDN'T TAKE THEM LONG TO GET HERE...



...AND I DOUBT THEY'RE BRINGING US GLAD TIDINGS--

--FROM THE LAND OF PEACE AND JOY.



ANY IDEA WHO THEY ARE?? P

YOU SPEAK FROM BRAVADO MORE THAN FROM CURIOSITY, TO INCREASE THE FLOW OF YOUR ADRENALINE AND TO UNNERVE YOUR OPPONENTS.

"WORDS IN COMBAT ARE AS UNNECESSARY AS THE WARMTH OF CLOTHING IN HOT SUMMER, BUT IN THIS INSTANCE, A DETERMINATION OF THEIR IDENTITIES COULD PERHAPS SPEED THEIR DEFEAT..."

I CANNOT BE CERTAIN, IRON FIST-- BUT I DO NOT RECOGNIZE ANY OF THEM AS MEMBERS OF MY FATHER'S SI-FAN...



AND THEY'RE NOT FROM K'UN-LUN-- TOO NASTY AND DIRTY-LOOKING...

BUT SOMETHING BEYOND THEIR LOOKS, IRON FIST, TELLS YOU THEY CANNOT ORIGINATE FROM THE GOLDEN CITY OF YOUR YOUTH...



THEIR APPEARANCE IS MATCHED BY THEIR METHODS OF COMBAT...



"BUT LETHAL WEAPONRY--"

"--AND UNSAVORY FIGHTING TECHNIQUES--"



"-- MAY BE OVERCOME--"

"--BY THOSE WHO HAVE CLEANLY HONED THEIR SKILLS..."



"... AND WHO STAND SIDE-BY-SIDE, CALMLY, IN THE CENTER OF THIS STORM OF CHAOS."

"BRACE YOURSELF, SHANG-CHI--"



"--THERE'RE STILL PLENTY OF THEM LEFT!"

"...HE SPEAKS ACCURATELY, OF COURSE, BUT MUST HE CONTINUE TO SPEAK--?"



YOU DECIDE TO CONTINUE TO FIGHT IN SILENCE. THEY ARE BEGINNING TO ATTACK MORE FRANTICALLY NOW, REALIZING THEIR ATTACK IS FAILING AND AGAINST SUCH FURIOUS DESPERATION...

--YOU FIND NO TIME FOR THE DISTRACTION OF BRAVADO.





"BUT ARE THEY THE LAST... OR WILL MORE OF THEM APPEAR, AS ABRUPTLY AS THE FIRST GROUP--?"

YOU STAND TENSELY, HALF-EXPECTING A SECOND WORDE TO MATERIALIZE FROM THE SAME SHADOWS OF NOWHERE... BUT IT DOES NOT HAPPEN, TO YOUR RELIEF.

GUESS IT'S OVER, SHANG-CHI...

MAYBE THEY'RE CONNECTED WITH WHOEVER KIDNAPPED COLLEEN. AT LEAST WE'LL HAVE SOMEONE TO QUESTION, AS SOON AS ONE OF THEM WAKES--



HUH--?!

THEY... THEY'RE FADING AWAY--!



"BUT... NOW... COULD THEY...?"

GONE-- I DON'T BELIEVE IT, SHANG-CHI! IT'S NOT POSSIBLE, UNLESS...

NO-- THEY COULDN'T HAVE BEEN FROM K'UN-LUN-- I'M SURE IT...

BUT THEN... WHO WERE THEY THAT THEY COULD JUST--



THEY WERE ASSASSINS FROM SAHRA-SHARN, SENT TO SLAY YOU, IRON FIST...

WHAT THE--?!



...AND THEREBY PREVENT YOU FROM JOINING ME IN A COMMON STRUGGLE.

YEAH? AND JUST WHO ARE YOU?

I AM QUAN-ST'AR... A FELLOW CITIZEN OF K'UN-LUN...



...AND I HAVE COME TO ENLIST YOUR AID IN PREVENTING THE COMPLETE DESTRUCTION OF K'UN-LUN.

DESTRUCTION--?! NOW WAIT JUST A MINUTE HERE...



HOW DO I KNOW YOU'RE FROM K'UN-LUN? HOW DO I KNOW YOU'RE NOT THE LEADER OF THE THUGS WHO JUST TRIED TO KILL US?

I ASSURE YOU, IRON FIST--



...MY INTENTIONS ARE ENTIRELY NOBLE...



... AND YET THE **OPPOSITE** OF K'UN-LUN IN EVERY **RESPECT**. WHERE K'UN-LUN IS A CITY OF **HARMONY** AND **LIGHT**, S'AHRA-SHARN IS A PLACE OF **DARKNESS** AND **VILE EVIL**. AND EVEN **NOW**, SAHRA-SHARN GATHERS AN ARMY TO **INVADE** K'UN-LUN-- AND TO **DESTROY** IT.



THIS ARMY WILL **SUCCEED**-- UNLESS YOU JOIN IN **STOPPING** IT. WILL YOU **DO SO**...?

NOW YOU ARE FACED WITH THE TASK OF **SAVING AN ENTIRE CITY**. IT WOULD SEEM YOU WILL NEED ASSISTANCE MORE THAN **EVER**.



I GUESS WE'RE **READY**, GUAN-STAR...



... AND I WOULD **NEVER TRY** TO KILL **ANYONE**.



AND WE'LL JUST HAVE TO TAKE YOUR **WORD** FOR IT-- IS **THAT** THE **STORY**...?

WELL, EXPLAIN **THIS**: IF YOU'RE FROM **K'UN-LUN**, HOW DID YOU **GET HERE**? THE CITY WON'T **APPEAR** IN **THIS** DIMENSION FOR ANOTHER **NINE YEARS**...

THERE ARE A **SELECT FEW**, IRON FIST, WHO ARE ABLE TO BRIDGE THE GAP FROM K'UN-LUN TO EARTH **BETWEEN** THE COINCIDENCE OF THE TWO DIMENSIONS... AND BECAUSE OF THIS **ABILITY**, THEY'RE CONSIDERED **MAGICIANS**. I AM **ONE** SUCH **MAGICIAN**, AND **THUS** I HAVE BEEN **CHOSEN** TO **ENLIST** YOUR **AID**.

KNOW THAT K'UN-LUN IS NOT THE **ONLY** CITY TO INHABIT ITS DIMENSION-- THERE IS ALSO **S'AHRA-SHARN**... **TWIN** TO K'UN LUN...



I'VE HEARD **LEGENDS** ABOUT AN **EVIL MIRROR-CITY** OF **K'UN-LUN**-- **LEI KUNG** SPOKE OF IT **OFTEN**, CALLING IT A **LIVING HELL**...

SO PERHAPS YOU'RE TELLING THE **TRUTH**...



IF I **REFUSE**, AND YOU ARE TELLING THE **TRUTH**, THEN I'D BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE **FALL** OF **K'UN-LUN**. I DON'T SEE HOW I'VE GOT ANY **CHOICE**.

SHANG-CHI, THANKS FOR YOUR **HELP**...

... BUT THERE'S NO REASON FOR YOU TO GET INVOLVED IN **THIS** MATTER.



YOU HAVE REQUESTED MY AID IN **SAVING** A **SINGLE PERSON**, IRON FIST.

... ALTHOUGH WHAT IT **IS** WE'RE **READY** FOR, I DON'T--



VERY WELL. YOU SHALL **BOTH** ACCOMPANY ME--

... ON THE **JOURNEY** TO **S'AHRA-SHARN**.



"WE... VANISH?"

CHAPTER II: *THE EVIL WHICH IS S'AHRA-SHARN*

IS... IS THIS...
MADNESS...?

MORE ACCUSTOMED TO
THE REALMS BEYOND
REALITY, YOU ARE ABLE TO
ACCEPT THE BIZARRE
JOURNEY BETWEEN
DIMENSIONS... AND TO
REPLY TO SHANG-CHI'S
GENUINELY AWED QUESTION
WITH A TRACE OF SARCASM...

IF IT IS
MADNESS,
SHANG-CHI,
THEN IT'S
CONTAGIOUS...

... BECAUSE IT
LOOKS EXACTLY
THE SAME FROM
WHERE I'M
SITTING.

BUT EVEN SO, YOU REALIZE THAT
SARCASM IS MERELY ANOTHER
FORM OF ... BRAVADO.



--FROM THE MYSTICAL REALITY OF THE BEYOND!

"[D]IRT EVERYWHERE, AND DARKNESS CRAWLING WITH A SENSE OF EVIL... FACES WHICH BRAND THEIR WEARERS AS THIEVES, CUTTHROATS, MURDERERS... AND WORSE.

YOU HAVE EXPECTED GOLDEN SPIRES AND SILENT MUSIC SHIMMERING ON THE BREEZE.







WELL, LOOK WHAT JUST CRAWLED IN! STRANGERS!



SISSIES, TOO, BY THE LOOKS OF THEIR FANCY CLOTHES.

YOU FEEL IT COMING.



I'VE BEEN LOOKIN' FOR TROUBLE ALL NIGHT-- MAYBE THE SISSIES CAN OBLIGE ME.



WHAT'S YOUR BUSINESS HERE IN THE DEN OF LAST DESPAIR?

WE AWAIT A MAN NAMED SHAI-TAHN.

WELL, HE AIN'T HERE, AND ONCE MY BLADE'S BEEN SATISFIED, YOU WON'T BE--



SLAKT

--RITH--



PRAKSH

HUMP!



STOK RIPT

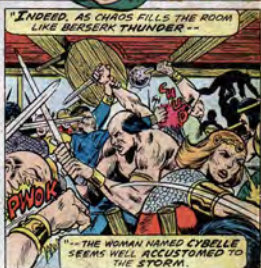
HOW DID YOU--



KRASH HA HA HA

HA HA HA







WHEW! THAT WAS CLOSE--



--A LITTLE TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT, FRIENDS!

AND I'M GLAD TO SEE MY PREDICTION ABOUT THE RAFTERS WAS WRONG-- BECAUSE THIS RAFTER IS SURE COMING IN HANDY.



"BEHIND ME..."



...THE ONE WHO PREPARED TO LEAP AN INSTANT EARLIER--

-- IS NOW WITHIN RANGE.



IT SEEMS CHIVALRY HAS ITS DRAWBACKS--

-- WHEN YOU'RE DEALING WITH THUGS AS ROUGH AS THESE.

A REPLY--

KRATCH



-- IS UNNECESSARY.

'ROUGH'-- P ARE YOU JESTING?! THESE BLACKGUARDS ARE STILL FIGHTING FOR FUN-- THEY'RE NOT EVEN MAD YET.

"PERHAPS NOT, BUT THE FIGHT NEVERTHELESS ENDS ABRUPTLY..."

SKRASH

STOP THE DISTURBANCE-- AND KILL THOSE WHO RESIST!!

YOU FREEZE AS A SQUAD OF UNIFORMED-- BUT STILL EVIL-LOOKING-- MEN RUSHES INTO THE TAVERN. THEIR LEADER SEEMS PARTICULARLY RUTHLESS, AND EVEN HIS STEED'S HORN SEEMS TWISTED AND CORRUPT...

"THE SOLDIERS -- IF INDEED, THEY ARE-- OBEY THEIR CAPTAIN..."

FRAX

BUK

"... FINISHING THE FIGHT, RATHER THAN STOPPING IT..."

"...UNTIL THERE ARE BUT THE TWO OF US LEFT TO FACE THEM..."

ARREST THOSE TWO!

THEY'RE PROBABLY THE ONES WHO STARTED THIS BRAWL!!

WE DID **NOT** START THIS FIGHT.

WE CAME HERE ONLY TO MEET A MAN NAMED SHAI-TAHN.



WELL, YOU'VE JUST MET HIM-- AND HE'S JUST PLACED YOU UNDER ARREST.

I'M SHAI-TAHN.



...???

WHAT THE--?



SOMETHING'S WRONG HERE, SHANG-CHI...

IN FACT, THIS SMELLS SUSPICIOUSLY LIKE A TRAP.

YES, IRON FIST...

...AND IT IS TIME TO CONFRONT THE TRAP.



FOOLS! I FULLY EXPECTED YOU TO RESIST ARREST!

AND THAT IS-- PRECISELY WHY--



... WE HAVE ARRANGED SOME SUBTLE PERSUASION.

HEH HEH HEH.

PLEASE... I...



SHE WILL DIE, YOU KNOW-- UNLESS YOU SURRENDER.

YOU DESPISE THE SMIRKING, GAUNT-FACED MAN.

THERE IS NO CHOICE.



"WE SURRENDER." A WISE CHOICE, MY PRISONERS...

TAKE THEM AWAY!

YOU HAVE ALREADY TESTED THE CHAINS.

THEY WILL NOT BREAK.



AND SO YOU ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE TAKEN AWAY WITH SHANG-CHI, GLANCING A LAST TIME AT THE WOMAN CYBELLE...

...WONDERING IF THEY WILL SLAY HER ANYWAY.



FIVE DAYS HAVE PASSED-- FIVE DAYS OF STONE WALLS AND NOTHING ELSE.



AND YOU FEEL THE NEED TO SPEAK, THOUGH YOUR VOICE IS NO MORE THAN A HALF-HEARTED, WHISPERING CROAK...

I'VE SPENT MORE THAN HALF MY LIFE, SHANG-CHI...





**FIVE DAYS,
IRON FIST!**

I BELIEVE YOU
ARE SUFFICIENTLY
WEAKENED
NOW...

QUAN-STAR!
WE'VE ALREADY
FIGURED AS
MUCH...



...ALREADY REALIZED THAT
IT HAD TO BE YOU BEHIND
ALL THIS.

SO WHAT'S THE
TRUE REASON
FOR BRINGING
US HERE--?

...NOW THAT YOU'VE
SHOWN YOURSELF
TO BE A LIAR.



AH, BUT I DID NOT LIE, IRON
FIST. AN ARMY IS BEING
GATHERED HERE IN SAHRA-
SHARN...



...AN ARMY WHICH SHALL ACHIEVE THE
TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF K'UN-LUN...

...AN ARMY WHICH SHALL STORM THE
GOLDEN WALLS OF K'UN-LUN, AND
COVER THEM IN DARK DEATH AND EVIL...



-- A HIDEOUSLY
DISGUSTING FATE,
I'M PLEASED
TO SAY.

"JOINING
HIM IN THE
DOORWAY--
CYBELLE!"



NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE
ME, SINCE I'M QUITE
CONVINCED THAT YOU
ARE BOTH TOO WEAK TO
OFFER RESISTANCE...

...AND SINCE
I HAVE MUCH
TO DISCUSS
WITH MY FUTURE
QUEEN...



...AND I AM
SUPERVISING
THE GATHERING
OF THAT ARMY

FURTHERMORE,
I SHALL BE THE
LEADER OF
THAT ARMY.



YOU STILL
HAVEN'T SAID...

... WHY YOU
BROUGHT US
HERE...

"TO KILL YOU
IRON FIST-- TO
PREVENT YOU
FROM INTER-
FERING WITH
MY CONQUEST."



AS FOR YOUR
FRIEND, HOW-
EVER, WE WAS
BROUGHT HERE
UPON HIS OWN
INSISTENCE.
HE WISHED TO
SHARE YOUR
HEROISM-- SO
NOW HE MUST
SHARE YOUR
FATE...



... CYBELLE AND I
SHALL TAKE OUR
LEAVE OF YOU...



...FOREVER.

SLAMM

"DISGUSTING FATE," HUH? THAT DOES IT-- WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE. GOT TO TRY IT AGAIN!



YOU HAVE TRIED IT A DOZEN TIMES ALREADY, IRON FIST.

I KNOW... BUT I'VE GOT TO TRY AGAIN, SHANG-CHI...



...GOT TO SUMMON MY STRENGTH... CONCENTRATE... SUMMON THE POWER OF THE--

--IRON FIST!

SHHKOW



YOUR COMETING FIST DRIVES FORWARD, SHEDDING FLAME, SLAMMING INTO THE DUNGEON WALL WITH GREATER FORCE THAN ANY OF YOUR PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS, IMPOSSIBLY DRAWING UPON STRENGTH WHICH NO LONGER EXISTS.

AND YET AS BEFORE--



NOTHING.

NOT EVEN A DENT.

DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, SHANG-CHI. MAYBE THE WALL IS ENCHANTED...



MAYBE THIS WHOLE DARK FORTRESS IS WRAPPED IN SOME EVIL SPELL.



SURE FEELS LIKE IT-- MY SKIN HASN'T STOPPED CRAWLING SINCE WE WERE DUMPED HERE...

HARD TO BELIEVE CYBELLE IS PART OF IT.

"YES... THOUGH THERE WAS SOMETHING IN HER EYES..."



GUESS WE'RE STUCK HERE FOR--



WOK

OWTCH!



WHAT THE--?

OUR ROUTE OF ESCAPE, IRON FIST.

AND AS WE FOLLOW IT, THERE COME SOUNDS FROM BELOW...



...THE GRATINGS OF STONE PORTALS...



"... FOLLOWED BY SHUFFLING, HISSING, AND STRANGE SNARLS..."

"... AND, TOO, EVEN WORSE SOUNDS..."

"... SOUNDS SURELY MADE BY THE DISAPPOINTED AGENTS OF QUANTAR'S 'DISGUSTING FATE'..."



THE ROPE IS ANCHORED TO A TREE. WE DROP UPON REACHING IT.

WONDER WHO OUR SAVIOR IS SHANG-CHI?



I AM... CYBELLE-PI!

HER EYES DID NOT LIE.

YOU MUST BE HUNGRY.



YOU ARE-- EXTREMELY SO.

AND HER WORDS, TOO--

...IMMAY UNDERSTATED TRUTH.



EXCUSE OUR MANNERS, CYBELLE. BUT TELL ME-- WHY DID YOU SAVE US, IF YOU'RE TO BE QUAN-STAR'S FUTURE QUEEN?

THAT WAS MERELY AN ACT.

YOU SEE, I AM REALLY A SPY...



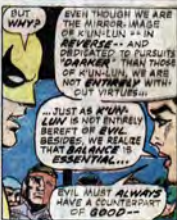
...THE LEADER, IN FACE OF AN UNDERGROUND NETWORK OF SAHRA-SHARNERS DEDICATED TO STOPPING QUAN-STAR AND HIS ARMY.

YOU MEAN THERE ARE OTHERS LIKE YOU?



THERE ARE MANY OF US, SHANG-CHI-- WE ARE BUT A FEW.

AND WE APOLOGIZE FOR OUR ATTACK ON YOU IN YOUR DIMENSION. IT WAS NECESSARY TO GAIN QUAN-STAR'S CONFIDENCE.



BUT WHY?

EVEN THOUGH WE ARE THE MIRROR-IMAGE OF K'UN-LUN-- IN REVERSE-- AND DEDICATED TO PURSUITS "DARKER" THAN THOSE OF K'UN-LUN, WE ARE NOT ENTIRELY WITHOUT VIRTUES...

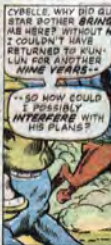
...JUST AS K'UN-LUN IS NOT ENTIRELY BEREFT OF EVIL. BESIDES, WE REALIZE THAT BALANCE IS ESSENTIAL...

EVIL MUST ALWAYS HAVE A COUNTERPART OF GOOD--



--IF EVIL IS TO MAINTAIN ITS EXISTENCE.

BUT COME-- THERE IS MUCH TO DO THIS NIGHT...



CYBELLE, WHY DID QUAN-STAR BOTHER BRINGING ME HERE? WITHOUT HELP I COULDN'T HAVE RETURNED TO K'UN-LUN FOR ANOTHER NINE YEARS--

...SO HOW COULD I POSSIBLY INTERFERE WITH HIS PLANS?



WE WISHED TO TAKE NO CHANCES, IRON FIST--

BUT HIS REAL MOTIVE FOR WANTING YOUR DEATH GOES MUCH DEEPER THAN THAT. IT IS A MATTER OF PRIDE AND VENGEANCE.

WHAT?

QUAN-STAR WAS NOT ALWAYS A CITIZEN OF SAHRA-SHARN-- NOR WAS HE BORN HERE. HE WAS BORN IN K'UN-LUN, AND LIVED THERE MOST OF HIS LIFE.

"INDEED, QUAN-ST'AR WAS HIGHLY FAVORED BY YU-TI, THE AUGUST PERSONAGE IN JADE..."



"...AND OFTEN STOOD BY HIS SIDE, SUCH AS THE TIME THEY WERE ENTERTAINED BY AN EXHIBITION OF SKILL, STAGED BY THE DRAGON RIDERS OF K'UN-LUN."

IT WAS A DARK DAY FOR QUAN-ST'AR...



"...HIS LAST DAY WITHIN THE GOLDEN CITY OF K'UN-LUN..."

"...FOR ONE OF THE DRAGONS WENT BERSERK-- AND ATTACKED THE AUGUST PERSONAGE."



"WITH LOYALTY AND COURAGE, QUAN-ST'AR LEAPED FORTH TO DEFEND THE EXALTED YU-TI."

IT WAS A LONG AND VICIOUS BATTLE, QUAN-ST'AR NEARLY LOST HIS LIFE THREE TIMES TO THE DRAGON.



BUT FINALLY, HE SLAY THE BEAST-- AND WHEN HE HAD TAKEN OUT ITS HEART--

"--HE PRESENTED IT TO THE AUGUST PERSONAGE, WHOSE LIFE HE HAD JUST SAVED, AS A TOKEN OF HIS LOYALTY."



"HE WOULD SOON BE SHOCKED BEYOND BELIEF--"

"--FOR, INSTEAD OF RECEIVING GRATITUDE FROM YU-TI, HE WAS CHASTISED AND REVELED-- AND BANISHED FOREVER FROM K'UN-LUN."



"HE PROTESTED, INSISTING THAT HE HAD SAVED YU-TI'S LIFE..."

"-- BUT YU-TI SAID THAT FACT WAS IRRELEVANT."



ALL THAT MATTERED HE SAID, WAS THAT A SACRED DRAGON HAD BEEN SLAIN-- AND THAT QUAN-ST'AR HAD SLAIN IT. AND FOR THAT UNFORGIVABLE CRIME, QUAN-ST'AR MUST BE BANISHED.

"YU-TI THEN PLACED THE DRAGON'S HEART IN A SACRED CAVE, AND BY MAKING THE HEART MOLTEN, HE RESTORED LIFE TO THE DRAGON."



"...AND CHARGED THE DRAGON WITH THE DUTY OF GUARDING ITS OWN HEART--"



"--WHICH IT DID-- UNTIL YOU, IRON FIST, CHALLENGED AND DEFEATED THE DRAGON, THEREBY GAINING YOUR POWER OF THE IRON FIST."

"BANISHED FROM THE CITY OF HIS BIRTH, QUAN-ST'AR WAS FORCED TO DWELL IN SAHRA-SHARN-- THIS PLACE WHICH IS THE OPPOSITE OF K'UN-LUN..."



"BEING A MAGIYAN, HE WORKED SIMPLE SPELLS TO IMPRESS THE CITIZENS OF SAHRA-SHARN... AND GATHER FOLLOWERS FROM AMONG THEM."

...FOR HE FELT HE WAS A VICTIM OF INJUSTICE, AND WAS A MAN OBSESSED. HENCE, HIS HATRED FOR K'UN-LUN AND HIS VOW TO SOMEDAY RETURN TO THE CITY--

--AS ITS CONQUEROR.

BUT EVEN MORE IMPORTANT--

--HE IS CONSUMED WITH A PERSONAL HATRED FOR YU-TI, AND LUSTS FOR VENGEANCE. HE WISHES TO HURT YU-TI IN THE WORST WAY POSSIBLE.

SO YOU SEE, QUAN-ST'AR PLANS TO CRUSH K'UN-LUN-- TO RIDE INTO THE CITY AS ITS CONQUEROR-- AND SINCE YOU ARE YU-TI'S NEPHEW, IRON FIST, TO THROW YOUR SKULL AT YU-TI'S FEET.

"SHE LEADS US IN A CIRCUITOUS ROUTE THROUGH THE DARK CITY STREETS--"

"--UNTIL WE ARRIVE AT THE FRONT ENTRANCE OF THE FORTRESS FROM WHOSE DUNGEON SHE HAS RESCUED US.

CYBELLE, IT SEEMS QUAN-ST'AR IS EVEN MORE CHARMING THAN WE'D IMAGINED...

MY SKULL, HUH?

WELL, WHAT'S NEXT?

WE MUST STRIKE TONIGHT-- NOW-- WHILE THERE IS STILL A LAST CHANCE.

ALL AROUND US, MY FOLLOWERS ARE HIDING AMONGST THE STREET URCHINS AND DRUNKS-- WAITING TO RISE UP.

THERE ARE ENOUGH OF THEM TO DEFEAT QUAN-ST'AR'S ARMY-- BUT WE CAN NEVER HOPE TO DEFEAT QUAN-ST'AR HIMSELF.. UNLESS HIS GLOBE OF ETERNITY IS DESTROYED.

GLOBE OF ETERNITY?

YES, SHANG-CHI -- THE SOURCE FROM WHICH HE DERIVES HIS SORCEROUS POWERS.

UP THERE IN THE TOWER.

IF YOU CAN DESTROY THE GLOBE, AND DEFEAT HIM--

-- MY FOLLOWERS WILL DO THE REST.

WE SHALL TRY, CYBELLE.

GOOD. NOW GET OUT OF SIGHT WHILE I --

TOK TOK TOK

-- GAIN US ENTRANCE.





"-- WHILE WE MOVE FOR THE TOWER.

TROUBLE, SHANG-CHI!



YES.

ANYONE EVER TELL YOU THAT YOU TALK TOO MUCH?



NO.

I DIDN'T THINK SO.



WELL, NOW THAT THEY'RE OUT OF THE WAY--

-- THERE CAN'T BE MORE THAN A COUPLE THOUSAND OF THESE STAIRS BEFORE--



"WE REACH THE TOWER.

WHAT THE--?

HALT! IN THE NAME OF THE--



--OOOOOPH!!



"WITHIN THE TOWER CHAMBER... QUAN-STAR... STANDING BEFORE THE HUGE GLOBE OF ETERNITY--"

"-- HIS HANDS... IMMERSSED IN IT?"

FORGIVE ME IF I AM NOT SHOCKED BY YOUR ENTRANCE, FOOLS. YOU SEE, I WITNESSED YOUR ESCAPE IN MY GLOBE...

...AS WELL AS YOUR PROGRESS THEREAFTER.





I FEEL LIKE SWITCHING TO THE OFFENSE NOW--

--FOR A POWER-PUNCH RIGHT TO YOUR UGLY PUSS!!

YOU SPRING AT HIM, HOPING THE ACTION WILL DISTRACT HIM-- PREVENT HIM FROM HURLING ANOTHER BLAST OF DEATH FULL IN YOUR FACE.

"THE GLOBE-- FILLED WITH THE SHIFTING, SWIRLING IMAGES OF GUAN-STAR'S EVIL POWER--

"--THEY SEEM TO LEER AND GLOWER AT ME.



KIIYAAATIEE!!

SPRAKSH

"--I SHATTER THE GLOBE'S TRANSPARENT SHELL--

"--AND AS THE BOILING HEART OF THE GLOBE IS RELEASED--

"--I LEAP FROM THE PATH OF THE SPILLING EVIL... AS IRON FIST REACHES GUAN-STAR HIMSELF--!

YOU CHANNEL EVERY BUNCE OF YOUR RAW STRENGTH AND MORTLING WEIGHT INTO THIS ONE FINAL PUNCH--



-- A PUNCH WHICH ROCKS THE SORCERER QUAM-STAR FROM HIS FEET AND SENDS HIM FLYING BACK --

-- TO BE DEVOURD BY HIS OWN WICKED SORCERY.



YAHHH

IT IS DONE, HE IS NOW WITH THE ESSENCE OF HIS OWN EVIL.

"THERE IS AN INSTANT OF BLINDING GLARE..."



"... TERRIBLE SOUNDS WITHOUT NOISE..."

"AND THEN, BOTH THE MAN AND THE ESSENCE..."



"...VANISH."

YOU SAY NOTHING...

"I FEEL A NEED FOR SILENCE..."

"...AS CYBELLE AND HER WARRIORS APPEAR IN THE DOORWAY."



WELL, FRIENDS...

... WE WON.

...MORTALS PASS IN REST AND RELIEF... BEFORE CYBELLE SUMMONS US TO HER NEW THRONE ROOM...

AGAIN, YOU HAVE OUR GRATITUDE FOR YOUR AID IN THE PRESERVATION OF BALANCE BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARKNESS...

...BUT ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU DO NOT WISH TO REMAIN HERE IN SAHRA-SHARN?

THE CITY OF K'UN-LUN, YOU KNOW, DOES NOT HAVE AN EXCLUSIVE CLAIM ON THE BENEFITS OF IMMORTALITY. WHAT SAY YOU--?

YOUR OFFER, CYBELLE, IS RECEIVED AS THE GENEROSITY WHICH IS ITS INTENT-- BUT AGAIN, I MUST DECLINE.

AND I'LL HAVE TO STICK TO MY DITTO, CYBELLE-- FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS.

VERY WELL--MOST OF YOU MORTALS ARE FOOLISH WHEN IT COMES TO IMMORTALITY...

--RETURN YOU TO THE DIMENSION FROM WHENCE YOU CAME.

...INSISTING ON THE RIGHT TO DIE WHEN YOUR TIME COMES. BUT SINCE YOUR DECISION IS FINAL, I WILL HAVE MY NEW COURT SORCEROR--

JUST LIKE THAT, HUH--?

YEP.

GUESS I SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO QUESTION IT, SHANG-CHI--

--AFTER OUR EXPERIENCES WITH GUAN-ST'AR.

YES.

"LONDON: THE HANDS OF THE NEARBY CLOCK KNOWN AS BIG BEN... HAVE MOVED NOT AT ALL."



WELL, SHANG-CHI, I THINK IT'D BE SAFE TO SAY THAT THEY JUST DON'T MAKE NIGHTS ANY WEIRDER THAN THIS ONE'S BEEN.

...WHICH REMINDS ME-- IN THE MIST OF CYBELLE'S BARRAGE OF GRATITUDE, I'VE NEGLECTED TO THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME-- EVEN THOUGH WE NEVER EVEN CAME CLOSE TO FINDING COLLEEN.

BUT SINCE YOU DON'T KNOW LONDON ANY BETTER THAN I DO-- AND SINCE YOU'VE ALREADY DONE MORE TO HELP ME THAN ANYONE COULD BE EXPECTED TO DO--



--PERHAPS WE SHOULD PART WAYS NOW.

I AM STILL WILLING TO AID YOU IN YOUR SEARCH, IRON FIST.



I KNOW YOU ARE, SHANG-CHI-- AND I'M GRATEFUL-- BUT I'VE DONE A LOT OF THINKING ON THE MATTER, MOSTLY WHILE WE WERE IN THAT DUNGEON...

...AND SOMEHOW I FEEL I'VE GOT AN OBLIGATION TO COLLEEN-- OR AT LEAST A DESIRE-- TO FIND HER ON MY OWN.



I THINK I...

...UNDERSTAND.



FAREWELL, IRON FIST-- AND-- GOOD LUCK.

YEAH-- THE SAME TO YOU, SHANG-CHI...

I HAVE A FEELING WE'LL BOTH NEED IT.



"WE PART COMPANY NOW, TO FOLLOW OUR SEPARATE-- BUT SOMEHOW VERY SIMILAR-- PATHS... EACH OF US TAKING WITH HIM THE WARMTH OF NEW FRIENDSHIP."



YOU ARE IRON FIST-- AND THOUGH YOU HAVE BEGUN THIS NIGHT A NEW FRIENDSHIP, YOU ARE A MAN WITH BUSINESS TO ATTEND.