



CARGO UNKNOWN

A Doc Savage Adventure by Kenneth Robeson

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*Scanned and Proofed
by Tom Stephens*

Chapter I

RENNY RENWICK had felt uneasy all day. He had narrowed it down in his own mind to one of two possible causes. The first was the London fog. He disliked fogs unreasonably. Today's was a stinker; it made you feel as if eels were crawling all over you.

The second probability, which Renny Renwick thought was more likely, was that he was being followed. However, he hadn't been able to prove this to himself. He hadn't caught anybody hanging around on his trail—exactly.

He was worrying about it, wondering if it was possible that he was merely a nervous old fuddydud, when he got a telephone call.

“This is Commander Giesen,” said the caller. “Could I see you immediately?”

“What about?”

“I'd rather not say over the telephone.”

“Come on over,” Renny said. He was mystified.

But a little thought while he was waiting for the man's arrival convinced him that he had heard of Commander Giesen. The Commander was someone important attached to, or in charge of, the staff of one of the liaison departments set up to smooth the working-together of English and Americans. This was

all Renny knew about him. It was just a fragment of fact that stuck in Renny's mind. It might not even be the same Commander Giesen.

Only it was. He identified himself.

"Can we talk here?" Commander Giesen asked.

"Sure," Renny said.

The Commander was a tall middle-aged man with a rather stony presence and no little dignity. He was not a man you would like as a boon companion, not a fellow you would invite out for a drink with the expectation of having a roistering evening. But he was a man you would instinctively trust.

"This may strike you as unnecessary," the Commander told Renny. Then he went to the door, and spoke to three men who were outside.

The three men proceeded to go over Renny's hotel room as if hunting diamonds. They gave particular attention to the windows, pictures, openings, but omitted nothing.

"No microphones or eavesdroppers, sir," one of them reported. And the three left.

Renny wondered if he looked as startled as he actually was.

The Commander said, "What I have to say needs a preliminary speech which will go something like this: You are Colonel John Renwick, an engineer by profession, and you are also associated with Doc Savage. You have been in England as a consultant on industrial conversion back to peace production. Your work is finished. You have been complimented by the government office, banqueted by the factory men, decorated by the queen, and now you're ready to go back to New York."

Renny waited. He wondered what was coming.

The Commander leaned forward. "I am not flattering you, but instead am pointing out that you are a man of considerable ability and consequence, and that we are fully aware of it."

"I'm not such a big shot," Renny said modestly.

"Big enough to awe us somewhat," said the Commander. "And additionally you have a reputation of being quite frequently interested in the unusual, the mysterious."

Renny frowned. "Mysterious and unusual—what do you mean?"

"You are," said the Commander, "supposed to be a man who likes adventure."

"It sounds rather corny when you put it that way," Renny said. "But it's probably true. Anyway, I've heard other people say that about me. I guess it applies to all five of us. There are five of us associated with Doc Savage, you know."

"I know," agreed Commander Giesen, nodding. "Your prestige as a Doc Savage associate influenced us quite a lot in deciding to ask you to do this rather unusual job."

Renny examined the other. "You came here to ask me to do something?"

"Righto."

"What is it?"

"I understand you have some submarine experience," said Commander Giesen.

"That's right."

"What sort of experience, may I ask?"

"I've designed them," Renny said. "I've built them and I've test-dived them. I've done every kind of creative engineering job there is to do around a submarine."

Commander Giesen looked relieved. "This isn't an engineering job."

"Well, what kind of a job is it?"

"We want you to go back to America aboard a submarine," the Commander said.

"Ride back to the United States on a sub? That what you mean?"

"Yes."

"Look, I'm not so hot about the idea," Renny said immediately. "I've been over here quite a while, working my tail off, and now I'm done and I want to get back to God's country. I've got passage wangled on a plane. I can be in New York in twenty-four hours or so. A submarine trip would be fast if it took less than two weeks. And submarines aren't built for comfort. No, thanks."

"What if I insisted?" asked Commander Giesen.

"You'd have to insist pretty loud."

"You don't want to go?"

"You bet I don't."

"Then I won't insist."

"That's fine," Renny said. "I won't have to hurt anybody's feelings by refusing."

Commander Giesen smiled thinly. "Will you give me five minutes of your time?"

"What for?"

"To convince you that you really want to go to America on this submarine," said the Commander.

Renny hesitated. "Five minutes," he grumbled. "Go ahead."

Commander Giesen gestured at the door. "You saw those three men come in here and search the place before I began talking to you?"

Renny showed sharp interest.

"That's right," he said. "What was the idea?"

"A precaution," said the Commander, "against our being overheard."

"Overheard by whom?"

"I wish I knew!"

“Don't you?”

“No.” Commander Giesen leaned forward earnestly. “There is the damndest mystery connected with this submarine trip.”

“Eh?”

“What we want you to do,” said the Commander, “is go aboard the *Pilotfish*. The *Pilotfish* is the name of the submarine. After you get aboard, and immediately after sailing, you will be handed a sealed envelope containing an explanation of the mystery, or as much of it as we know the answer to.”

Renny frowned. “You want me to sail on this sub without knowing a damned thing about why?”

“The sealed documents will tell you why.”

“After I sail?”

“Yes.”

“Why not now?”

“You mean, why can't we tell you what we know of the mystery now?”

“Yes. Why not?”

“Because,” said the Commander, “it is too risky. There is a chance that you might be forced, much against your will, to divulge the information.”

Renny's frown changed to a grin.

“You're quite a psychologist, Commander,” Renny said.

“I had no intention—”

Renny interrupted with a snort. “How much more can you tell me about this thing?”

“Nothing more,” said Commander Giesen. “Except the name of the submarine commander, the location of the craft, and the time of sailing.”

“That,” said Renny, “is what I meant by psychology.” And he began laughing.

Commander Giesen was disturbed by Renny's mirth. “I am not trying to be funny, I assure you,” he said stiffly.

Renny hammered his knee delightedly.

“I'm laughing at myself, not at you,” Renny explained. “You have heard of the fire-horse who snorts and prances when he hears the firebell? Well, that's the way your talk about mystery and danger affects me. It's as funny as anything.”

Commander Giesen looked confused.

“You couldn't keep me from sailing on that submarine now if you wanted to,” Renny told him. “I'm like the old fire-horse. You've told me just enough to fascinate me. Just enough for me to smell smoke and hear the firebell.”

“That pleases me very much,” said Commander Giesen.

“It doesn't please me!” Renny rumbled. “A man of my age shouldn't let a smell of excitement stampede his common sense. It makes me wonder when I'm going to grow up.”

“I WON'T go,” Renny said, “unless Doc Savage okays it.”

Commander Giesen showed anxiety. “But how long will it take to find out about that?”

“Not long. We'll try the trans-Atlantic phone.”

Renny fretted as he waited. He was not certain that Doc Savage was in New York, and if so, whether he could be located at once. Doc had a great many interests, aside from his avocation of chasing excitement, so it was possible Doc wouldn't be around their headquarters hangout on the top floor of a midtown New York skyscraper. Doc might not even be in the States. Now that the war was winding up, Doc was giving most of his attention to getting his industrial holdings back into peace-time production, and Renny knew it was proving to be a headache of proportions.

Renny asked Commander Giesen, “How much of what you've told me can I tell over the telephone?”

“All of it,” said the Commander. “However, I wish you could code it somehow.”

A moment later, the operator reported Doc Savage on the wire in New York.

Renny said, “Doc? . . . Renny . . . How are things going? . . . Yes, I've finished and I'm ready to come back. It's about that I want to talk to you. I'm going to say it in Mayan, so listen.”

Mayan was one of several languages Renny spoke, the particular one which he figured was least likely to be understood by an eavesdropper. The lingo, which had a preponderance of grunts and cluckings, was one which Renny and Doc and the others of their group had picked up a long time ago on a hair-raising venture they had taken into Central America. As far as Renny knew, he and Doc and the other four of their group were the only ones in so-called civilization who spoke it. There might be others, but they weren't likely to be hanging around London or New York telephone offices.

“Did you understand all that, Doc? I'm pretty rusty with the language,” Renny said when he had finished explaining about the mysterious submarine trip to New York which he was being asked to take.

Doc said he had gotten it.

“Any objections to my going?” Renny asked.

Doc said he hadn't any. His only objection was that he wasn't there, so he couldn't go along. He sounded intrigued by the thing. “Go ahead, and good luck,” he said.

“By the way,” Doc said, “did you know Monk and Ham are in London?”

“Holy cow! I didn't know that!”

Monk and Ham were two other members of their group.

Doc explained, “They are at the Strand Palace. I just got a cable from them giving their address, and saying they were on the way home.”

Renny was delighted. "Hey, I'm going to call them and see if they'd care to make this sub trip with me."

"That's up to you," Doc said. "You're sure you gave me all the dope you have about this matter?"

"All I know."

"It sounds extremely queer," Doc said.

"As queer as a goose riding a bicycle," Renny admitted.

"Good luck."

COMMANDER GIESEN clapped his cap on his head and extended his hand. "The *Pilotfish* is waiting for you at Pier B, Southampton. Her skipper is Commander Tomkins Wickart. Goodbye and good luck."

Renny said, "Wait a minute. I'm taking along two friends, Monk Mayfair and Ham Brooks, if they'll go."

"So I gathered."

"Is it okay?"

"Better than okay. Goodbye."

"Hey, when do I get that envelope with the sealed orders?"

"Not sealed orders, old chap. Information. That is, information to the best of our knowledge."

"What's your rush?" Renny asked.

The Commander smiled. "No rush at all, really. I can stay all afternoon, if you wish. But there is nothing more to be said. I supposed you wouldn't want me around bothering you. I can't tell you another thing."

"One thing before you go," Renny said thoughtfully.

"Yes?"

"At different times today," Renny said, "I've had a feeling someone was following me." He stared at Commander Giesen intently. "Hey, what's the matter?"

The look on Commander Giesen's face startled Renny. It was a sick expression. The man moistened his lips uneasily.

"Could you," he asked, "be mistaken?"

"I might."

"Did you actually see anyone?"

"No. That's why I'm admitting I could have been having an attack of imagination.

"I hope," said Commander Giesen grimly, "that you were. Because if you were actually being followed, you may be in for something."

“What do you figure I would be in for?”

Commander Giesen didn't sound cheerful when he answered.

“Hell,” he said.

“Oh, come now.”

“Hell!” said Commander Giesen. “Purgatory, I mean. A very purgatory of excitement and terror. I do hope you're wrong about being traileed. I do hope you are.”

Chapter II

MONK and Ham were glad to see Renny Renwick. They called Renny a big-fisted bum and wrestled him down on to the floor, all in delight.

Monk's full title was Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Blodgett Mayfair. He was a chemist. The peculiar thing was that he was an actual genius of a chemist.

Monk was a short, wide, hairy, homely, apish fellow with approximately an inch of forehead and a squeaky tin can voice. He looked like a fellow who would have barely enough gumption to dress himself. His manners were as direct and tactless as a St. Bernard puppy's. He had an endless supply of practical jokes and wise-cracks with which he haunted his pal, Ham Brooks, and innocent bystanders, alike.

Ham Brooks also had a large title and reputation. But Ham at least looked the part.

Ham was Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks. He was a lawyer. He was a wide-shouldered, flat-bellied man with the large voice of an orator. He always dressed, or overdressed, to dandified extremes, and affected a Harvard accent so thick you wanted to scrape it off him. He was a good guy. The clothes and accent were affected largely because they irritated Monk.

Renny asked, “Have you two got anything special on your mind?”

They said they had no plans. Except that they were returning to New York, of course. They had been in France on some kind of a commission, one of the Allied special advisory committees which were currently flitting all over the world telling nations how to run their business.

Renny was pleased.

“You're going back to New York by submarine with me,” he said.

No hats were thrown into the air.

“Not me, brother,” Monk said firmly. “I've been on a submarine. And I made a little discovery to the effect that a submarine is one thing that scares hell out of me. I don't like 'em.”

Ham also had his opinions.

“No, thanks,” he said. “I'll just crawl in a barrel, pour cylinder oil over myself, and practice hitting myself on the head with a gaspipe. Same thing, exactly.”

Renny hid a grin. He'd had about the same reaction himself. He wondered how Monk and Ham would respond when they heard the rest.

“That's too bad,” Renny said. “There is something very mysterious about the sub trip. On top of that, I think someone has been trailing me around all day. I was hoping you fellows would come along for the ride, and I've been assured it may be a hair-raising ride. However, if you're not interested—”

Monk grinned at him. “Baiting us, eh?”

Ham demanded. “What's this about a mystery?”

Renny told them all he knew about it. Before he was halfway through the story, he saw that he had them hooked.

He could only keep a straight face until Monk and Ham had said they guessed they'd better go along. Then he burst out laughing.

Monk asked, “What are you cackling at, anyhow?”

“I'm just beginning to realize,” Renny told him, “how much alike we are.”

THEY caught the three-ten train which put them in Southampton before dark. They boarded the train separately, and Monk and Ham snooped and prowled, trying to find out whether anyone was really trailing Renny. They had no luck, and tried to blame Renny for the absence of excitement.

“Listen, you two,” Renny snarled at them. “I don't *know* that anything at all is going to happen. Get that through your heads.”

They found one of the scarce cabs at Southampton, and rode it to the pier, where they found the *Pilotfish* was not lying at dock, but had her hook down in the bay. The sub's launch took them out after they identified themselves.

They stepped out on the low deck and climbed over the rail.

A square, amiable looking man came on deck. Obviously he had dashed below to put on his black necktie and uniform blouse.

“I'm Commander Tomkins Wickart,” he said.

The skipper of the *Pilotfish* did not look at all excited, Renny noticed. Wickart was either unaware of any mystery, or else he was an excellent actor.

Renny said, “You may think this is a bit unusual, Commander. We haven't any orders in writing. However, we were told to sail with you.”

“That's been straightened out,” Commander Wickart told him. “You'd better show me some personal identification, though.”

He checked over their personal papers and was quickly satisfied.

“You won't find the ship the most comfortable in the world, but we'll do our best to take care of you,” he said. He called a mess boy to show them below.

The utter placidity of the man moved Monk to speak. There was supposed to be something cooking, but the skipper was giving no sign of it. Monk was puzzled.

“What's going on, Commander?” Monk asked.

Wickart placidly stuffed tobacco into his pipe. “Why, nothing much. I'm afraid you're in for a dull trip,” he said. “However, you should be able to get enough routine color.”

“Color?” Monk exploded. “Who wants color?”

“You do, don't you?” Wickart asked idly. “You three are war correspondents, aren't you? At least I was told you were.”

Monk opened his mouth, but caught Renny's eye and didn't say what he was planning to say. Instead, he remarked, “So you're not figuring on any excitement?”

“Very little chance of anything, I'm afraid,” Wickart told him.

“When do we sail?”

“Midnight.”

They were guided below. They found they were to bunk separately, Monk and Ham in the forward torpedo room and Renny doubling with the skipper.

“I don't get this,” Monk told Renny. “You suppose the skipper doesn't know anything about what's going on? Or is the guy stringing us?”

They discussed it and decided they couldn't tell. Ham joined them and complained, “War correspondents! Who told him we were war correspondents?”

“Maybe this sealed envelope I'm supposed to get will straighten it out,” Renny suggested.

THE messenger carrying the sealed envelope was at that time getting out of the plane which had brought him from London. He had the envelope strapped to his left thigh with adhesive tape, and he carried a leather satchel handcuffed to his wrist as a dummy. There was another envelope in the satchel, the contents a meaningless gibberish that anyone not in the know would think was a code.

The operations officer at the field explained, “There's a jeep waiting to take you wherever you're going.”

The jeep contained a corporal and a private, and they had what appeared to be the proper documents. The messenger made certain about the documents before he rode with them. The two in the jeep explained that they didn't know where they were to take him.

The messenger told them the waterfront.

The sun was now down. It was fairly dark. The private at the wheel of the jeep drove rather recklessly, and on a lonely stretch of street, he hit the curbing. It was a glancing blow, but the jeep rolled to a stop.

“What the hell's wrong?” demanded the corporal.

“It won't go,” the private explained. “The motor runs, but nothing happens.”

“Get out and see what's wrong, dammit,” the corporal shouted.

The private alighted and walked around to the back of the jeep. He had a wrench in his hand.

The messenger must have been somewhat suspicious, because he turned alertly, endeavoring to watch the private, and at the same time keep an eye on the corporal. He failed. It was the corporal who brained him.

The messenger made a gurgling sound after he was hit. He sprawled back with his head hanging down, his nostrils, mouth and split skull leaking blood.

“Damn you, you sure made a mess of him,” the private said sickly.

“Push him back in. You better hold him. Let's get where we're going,” the corporal said.

They drove only a few blocks, then turned into a small garage, the doors of which opened to take them inside.

There were several men waiting there.

It was quite dark, and the corporal peered around blindly, then demanded, “Clark here?”

“Yes.”

“Here he is,” the corporal said.

“Close the doors. Then let's have a light,” Clark ordered.

As soon as the doors were closed and the lights on, the corporal and the private went to the back of the garage. They began exchanging their army uniforms for sailor outfits with the insignia of the submarine service.

CLARK was a thin man with the single quarter-inch stripe of a warrant officer, and the sparks of a radio electrician. He had soft, brown calf-like eyes, and they were completely tender and gentle as he examined the dead messenger.

“Too bad he bled like that. We can't use his uniform,” Clark said quietly. “But get that bag loose from him, empty his pockets, and strip him.”

Nobody moved, and Clark looked at them. He cursed them mildly.

“What the hell's wrong with you?” he asked them. “Get busy.”

He sounded completely mild and harmless, which had the effect of sickening and startling his men. But the men went to work on the body efficiently enough.

The lock on the satchel balked them. Clark said, “Cut it open. We'll find another bag that will serve.”

They swore at the unreadable contents of the envelope after they got it out of the bag. Then they found the other envelope, the genuine one, which was taped to the deceased messenger's leg.

Clark read the contents. He began reading with a pale face and the expression of a cowboy who is suddenly wondering if a rattlesnake has crawled into bed with him during the night. He looked more satisfied with himself after he finished.

It apparently occurred to him, as he folded the document, that he had forgotten to control the expression of his face, because he frowned slightly, and then was looking gentle and mild again.

“There ain't been any hitches?” one of the men asked him anxiously.

“No hitches,” Clark said, using a sweet, boyish voice.

He examined the envelope seal, which he had not broken, having removed the documents by slitting the envelope end. “This is a standard seal,” he said. “It won't give us any trouble.”

He went to a handbag in the back, and returned bearing another envelope, which he compared with the first one.

“See, there's no difference anybody would notice between the genuine one and this dummy I had already fixed up.”

He was pleased about this.

He gave an order. “Fall in! Full gear, and fall in!”

He watched his men as they fell in. He lost some of his smug satisfaction. Two of them had not done a very snappy job of the simple maneuver. He cursed them. “I thought I told you so-and-sos to get the fundamentals of drill into your heads!”

The two, who had obviously never been in a navy, showed alarm. They had been working on it, they protested.

Clark snorted. “It's a damned good thing there isn't much formality on a submarine, or you two would fall on your faces at the first inspection.” He scowled at the group. “Attention!” he rapped. “Open ranks, march! . . . Right face! . . . Forward march! . . . By the right flank, march!”

He worked them for a few moments, his purpose being to get their attention, to impress on their minds his position of command. Then he stopped them and made a speech.

CLARK said, “All but one of you will go aboard the submarine. You will have the regulation papers installing you as replacements for certain members of the submarine crew. By the time you get there, Commander Wickart of the sub will have received, through what he will think is official channels, information of the change. In other words, six of you will go aboard the submarine and take the places of six men of the regular crew who will receive leaves of absence and orders to report later to another division.”

He smiled at them gently, confidently.

“There is no reason for you to be scared,” he told them. “I can assure you that every official order necessary to this trick has been counterfeited with complete accuracy. In every case possible genuine official forms have been stolen and used.

“Of course, you are going to be afraid anyway. But when you are scared, the thing to remember is that the only man who does not get scared is the one who hasn't any brains to get scared with.”

He made an emphatic gesture. “This is going to work. You all know me, and you know my reputation for careful planning.” He smiled again. “Most of you know me from Chicago in the old days. And you know that I've never been in the penitentiary myself, and no man who has worked for me has ever been in the penitentiary as a result of doing anything in which he followed my orders. Now, this is all the speech I'm going to make. We've been over this before, and all of you know what you're going to do when we get

on the submarine. Remember your instructions. Follow them. Don't get squeamish. Don't pick the wrong time to get a conscience. And you might as well keep in mind this point: any man who, through losing his nerve or failing to follow orders, endangers the rest of us or our plan, will have to be disposed of. We naturally hope that won't be necessary."

They got this point.

Clark turned to the former corporal who had helped waylay and murder the messenger.

"Gross," Clark said, "you are the only man we are leaving behind. You are the guy who is going to deliver the envelope containing the explanations, or what purports to be, to the sub."

Gross nodded. He wore now the appropriate uniform and insignia for his part. He was a wide man of about thirty with loose cheeks and an effect of perpetual dampness about the eyes.

He picked up the phony envelope.

"I deliver this, get it signed for, and clear out," he said.

"That's right. And don't be afraid something will go wrong."

"I'm not expecting anything to crop up," Gross assured him.

Clark nodded. "After you do that, get the hell busy trying to get back to New York. You should be able to make it. You've got war correspondent's credentials and plenty of money."

"I'll do my best."

"When you get to New York, start preparing things to complete the job from that end. You know what men to contact, and what you'll probably need in the way of equipment."

Clark gave them his benign smile. "Let's get going," he said tenderly.

Chapter III

RENNY RENWICK, Ham Brooks and Monk Mayfair had mess with Commander Wickart and some of the other officers including Lieutenant Gifford, the navigator, and an engineering officer called Speck. They never did learn Speck's last name. There was also Gallyhan, an assistant engineer; Kovic, electrical officer, and Clark, who was communications officer.

Commander Wickart had the idea he was going to raise turkeys after the war, and he was very hot about it. The early part of dinner was sprinkled with turkey talk. Later Clark, the communications man, said that he had been ashore almost the whole afternoon trying to raise some 6L6 tubes for the sound apparatus. He told about finding a quart of Scotch whiskey in a little shop, marked way under the current high price, apparently because the proprietor had no idea what it was. Clark had bought the Scotch, and he produced the bottle to prove it. Monk thought Clark was going to offer everybody a drink, but instead of that, Clark contributed the Scotch to the medical locker.

When they were on deck, Monk said, "I wonder if that Clark guy has been an actor?"

"What makes you think that?" Renny asked him.

"That sort of deliberate way he has of talking, and of giving everything he has just the right emphasis."

“Probably an ex-radio announcer,” Renny said. “He sounded more like a radio announcer to me.”

Their discussion ended, because they heard one of the deck force reporting to the petty officer of the watch. “A launch standing this way, sir.”

“I hope that's our sealed envelope,” Monk said. “I'm beginning to itch to know what this is all about.”

The launch warped up to the port sea ladder, and a petty officer bounded aboard, slipped on the damp deck, and would have fallen if a deckhand hadn't grabbed his arm. The man swore, and produced some papers.

A few minutes later, Commander Wickart popped out of the torpedo room hatch and sailed past them. They heard him saying, “—the damn, pin-headed navy, never satisfied to let something alone!” He said more that contained more feeling.

Renny, nervous, jumped up and asked, “Anything wrong, skipper?”

Wickart thumbed his own chest indignantly. “Twenty years I've been in the navy,” he said. “You'd think I had seen all the jackass tricks they can pull on a man. By God, what do they do now? They furlough part of my crew and send replacements who, for all I know, may never have seen a submarine!”

He went over and beat his pipe angrily against the conning tower.

“Just before sailing, too!” he snarled. “Lord, will I be glad to get on that turkey ranch!”

He went away and Ham Brooks chuckled and said, “Give you two to one he never goes near a turkey ranch until they ease him out of the navy in a wheel chair.”

“No sealed envelope,” Monk grumbled.

For a while they listened to confusion in the forward torpedo room. The leave party was going ashore, and the newcomers moving in to take their place. The talk was the talk you would expect, with profanity and laughter. The men who were being relieved were glad to get ashore.

Renny drew one conjecture from what he heard.

“Evidently the sub has been at sea quite a while, and just in port a little time,” he said. “Otherwise those sailors wouldn't be so anxious for shore leave.”

Monk listened to the pleased talk of the shore party. “That speaks for the accommodations on this pigboat, doesn't it?” he said gloomily.

ABOUT ten o'clock, Commander Wickart confronted them nervously. “You fellows really were supposed to get a sealed envelope, weren't you?” he demanded.

“So I was told,” Renny said.

“We're scheduled to sail at midnight,” Wickart said anxiously. “It should be getting here.”

Ham told him, “Here comes a small craft. Maybe this is it.”

It was. The messenger came aboard, saluted, and asked for Colonel John Renwick. Renny identified himself. He signed the receipt for the envelope, and fingerprinted it by request for further identification.

It was a standard navy department envelope, and the contents did not have much bulk. The wax seals made big warts on every seam. Renny suddenly stared at it, then looked at the others.

“Holy cow!” he wailed.

“Now what?” Monk asked.

“It's marked to be opened twelve hours after sailing,” Renny yelled. “What the hades do you think of that!”

The uproar brought Commander Wickart back to find out what was wrong. He puffed his pipe placidly, not much impressed by the news.

“Sealed orders aren't unusual in the navy,” he said. “I have it happen to me frequently.”

Renny was indignant. “Orders! This is supposed to be information!”

The skipper shrugged. “We're going to sail now,” he said.

LIEUTENANT GIFFORD, the navigator, came on deck with the small wooden box that contained the stadimeter. The engines began to pound. There was a rumbling forward as the anchor came up. The bos'n reported, “Anchor secure, sir.”

The *Pilotfish* picked its way toward the breakwater with stadimeter and pelorus. Renny glanced at his watch and found it was twenty past eleven. The night was dark, no moon and not too much starlight. A battle wagon, anchored to port, was a large grim lump of deeper night. They dropped some headway, worked through the net, and the sub began to roll a little with the feel of the open sea.

Renny stood with the skipper in the conning tower. “Rig for diving,” Wickart said into the voice tube.

“Will you tell me why we have to run submerged today?” Renny demanded.

“We don't.”

“I shouldn't think so, with the war so nearly polished off as it is.”

Wickart poked his thumb down in his pipe bowl, burnt it and swore softly. “Orders are to run under battle conditions, which means ready to dive any time.”

Reports came in. “Rigged forward,” from the electrical officer. “Rigged aft,” from an assistant engineer somewhere. The voices had a soothing routine sound. “Main induction open, main ballast flood valves closed. Rigged for diving.”

The skipper said, “Station the submerged cruising section, but hull and battery vented outboard. Take over, Lieutenant.” Wickart turned to Renny and the others. “How about a spot of coffee below?”

Renny thought they'd probably have to listen to more talk about turkey farming, but it turned out they were spared the turkey farm.

Commander Wickart waited until the mess boy who brought the coffee had gone. The air-conditioning whispered softly. It was comfortably cool, but the air already had the characteristic oily smell.

“I gather they didn't tell you much,” Wickart said unexpectedly.

“Much!” Renny laughed sourly.

“They haven't told me much, either.”

Renny looked at the skipper speculatively. “Do you feel free to tell us anything that might be interesting?”

“I don't know how interesting it will be. But I can tell you what little I know.”

“By golly, do that!” Renny exclaimed.

THE skipper of the *Pilotfish* began talking so matter of factly that it was not immediately evident that what he was saying was important. Or at least interesting and mystifying.

The preliminary part of his recital, the normal-sounding portion, filled about five minutes. The *Pilotfish* had left an unnamed port, French not English, a week ago. The sailing had been under sealed orders, and the orders, opened after they were at sea, had directed the *Pilotfish* to proceed to the German coast, to Nordstrand, which was a neck of water on the west coast of Schleswig Holstein, between the North Frisian and East Frisian Islands. The place was really a part of Heligoland Bay.

“I wasn't too happy,” Wickart related. “The Fritzes had sowed mines around there thicker than fleas on an African dog. To make it more interesting, we were to travel submerged, as much as possible, which didn't make much sense. But the funny thing was that we were supplied with exact course bearings to take us through the mine fields. I saw the series of bearings, the original document, not a copy, and they were in German. The German language.”

Renny said, “The Germans had furnished you with a course through the mine field, you mean?”

“They had furnished somebody with it. Somebody higher up. Maybe Commander Giesen.”

“Was Giesen aboard?”

“Yes.”

“Giesen,” Renny explained, “is the guy who roped us into the affair.”

“I surmised he had. He's the big cheese for our side, I'm fairly sure.”

Eventually the *Pilotfish* had come to anchor offshore from a small north German town named Husum. Not close in, but out far enough to have deep water.

“Then there was funny business,” the skipper said abruptly, and stopped talking for a while.

It developed that the entire crew of the *Pilotfish* had been herded into the forward one-third of the submarine and locked up there for three hours.

“Except me,” said Wickart.

He grinned at them slyly.

“But I haven't the least idea what they brought aboard,” he said. “I was kept in the conning tower, and they used the torpedo room hatch.”

“Who used it?”

“I don't know who. I don't know whether they were Fritzes or not, because I heard both English and Fritz language talked, and American, too. Like I say, I was asked to remain in the tower. It was as dark as a witch cave, and no lights were shown.”

“Commander Giesen had charge of this?”

“That's right.”

“Something was brought out of Germany and put aboard your vessel?”

“That's right.”

“You don't know what it is?”

“No idea.”

“Is it still aboard?”

“Yes.”

“Where?”

“In what was my cabin.”

“Is there any reason,” Renny asked thoughtfully, “why we shouldn't take a look and see what was brought aboard?”

Wickart smiled slightly. “I have been tempted myself, although I have strict orders not to attempt to enter the cabin, nor to permit anyone else to do so.”

“No chance of sneaking a look, eh?”

“It's hardly feasible.”

“Sealed, eh?”

Wickart nodded. “Welded shut.”

“Welded!”

Wickart said, “There are four spot-welds along the edge of the door, and these are sealed with documentary-type wax.”

Chapter IV

THE *Pilotfish* ran at three quarters speed throughout the night. An hour before dawn they dived, and stayed down until the sun was twenty degrees up in the sky in order to escape the dangerous twilight time. They surfaced again.

Renny and Monk and Ham learned they were not expected to stand the regular four-hour watches. Renny, knowing about the monotony of the long voyage ahead of them, advised that they take the same four-hour watches as everyone except the skipper. Renny took the bridge watch with the navigator.

They had sailed at midnight. At least midnight was the official time, which meant that it would be noon

before Renny could open the envelope. It was now nine. He felt uneasy, consumed by curiosity.

With Monk and Ham, he visited the skipper's cabin, which was the one room aboard the submarine which had no dual purpose. It was a captain's cabin, solely. They didn't get inside the cabin, of course, since the door was welded shut, as Wickart had said.

While they were standing in front of the door, Renny began laughing.

“What's so funny?” Monk wanted to know.

“Us,” Renny said. “Us, standing here looking at the door like a bunch of awestruck kids.”

The *Pilotfish* continued to charge ahead at sixteen knots. Gifford, the navigator, got his sun shots, and Renny checked them with him, getting about the same position on the chart.

Renny was off watch at twelve. Monk and Ham had been watching him like eager owls for the past half hour. He nodded at them, and produced the envelope.

They held the official opening of the envelope in the maneuvering room, which was at the moment deserted. Renny inserted his pocket knife blade and slit the flap. There were four sheets of paper inside, and he unfolded them one at a time, and examined them each from top to bottom.

Renny's long face had the queerest of expressions when he had finished his examination.

“Holy cow!” he said.

“What's it say?” Monk demanded.

Renny said, “This'll surprise you, anyway.”

He showed them the sheets of paper.

The four sheets were quite blank.

THE ship was running through a slight sun-kissed sea, rolling comfortably. They found Commander Wickart on deck. Renny told him about the envelope contents.

The skipper of the *Pilotfish* gave them a blank look, for the words had been startled out of him. He fell back on the solace of filling and lighting his pipe, then finally he said, “Unusual.”

“I call it damned queer,” Renny rumbled. “What the blazes was blank paper doing in that envelope? You know something? I wonder if that envelope could have been tampered with.”

Wickart contemplated them. “Just what do you know about this?”

“Just what we've told you—nothing,” Renny growled. “Why? Have you got some more information?”

Wickart shook his head. “Except this. I rather think I was to take orders from you fellows. However, I got the idea that Doc Savage was going to be aboard.”

“Doc Savage is in New York,” Renny told him.

“I guess that's why he isn't aboard then.”

“What gave you that idea about Doc?”

“Giesen said something. He said that Doc Savage would probably be aboard for the trip from England to America. He just said that once, then didn't mention it again.”

Renny said, “We work with Doc Savage.”

“I know that,” Wickart told him. “Quite a man, I've heard.” The skipper smoked silently for a few moments. “But you fellows work with Savage, so you're supposed to be on the extraordinary side. If you have any suggestions, let's hear them.”

“You've got a radio?”

“Of course. But I'm supposed to keep radio silence.”

“I think,” said Renny, “that we had better break radio silence, get hold of Giesen, and find out if that envelope was supposed to be full of blank paper.”

“Will you give me a written order to that effect?” the skipper asked.

“If you want to be in the clear, yes.”

They found Clark, the communications man, routing him out of his bunk. Clark's responsibility was the radio, and he had the key.

A moment after he opened the radio cabin door, Clark swore wildly. “Dammit, look!” he cried.

RENNY knew radio. He fingered around over the equipment, picking up shattered parts. The radio wouldn't function. They could neither transmit nor receive.

The skipper's temper split, and he suddenly had Clark by the jacket lapels. “Who smashed the radio?” he yelled. Clark looked sick. He mumbled that he didn't know.

“By God, we'll find out who smashed it!” Wickart shouted.

The outburst caused Renny to do some thinking. It seemed to him that the skipper was unduly excited, unless there was more than the smashed radio to cause it. It seemed to him that Wickart had already been worried.

The skipper did not take them into his confidence until the following morning.

“It's the replacements,” Wickart told Renny. “I'm beginning to wonder if they've ever been on a submarine before.”

“You're talking about the men who came aboard at the last minute before we sailed?” Renny demanded.

“They're the ones.”

“How many?”

“Eight.”

“And you mean they've never been on a sub?”

Wickart scowled. "By God, I don't know. They know some of the stuff they should know, but there are other things they should know and don't. They act like rookies, and the ones that don't act like rookies seem to be working like hell to show the others the ropes."

"Let's talk to them one at a time," Renny said.

"I think we'd better."

The interviewing occupied a full day and was generally not very satisfactory. The eight sailors had papers which were in order, and they answered most of the questions as they should be answered. But as a whole, they did not give complete satisfaction, although there was nothing directly suspicious. Nothing to warrant taking action.

THE next surprising thing was the complete placidity of the following days. Life settled into a humdrum routine of watches, of eating and sleeping and working. Clark spent his off time fiddling with parts from the radio, endeavoring to rig emergency equipment. He finally had to report that he was not able to make even a receiver that would work.

Finally there came a night when Gifford's star observation showed them in Long Island sound, the outer end.

Wickart was pleased. His relief showed when he said, "Well, we've practically made it, and we're still a happy family."

He gave orders to stand in toward New London. Their destination was the New London submarine base. They ran on the surface, chugging along peacefully. The stars were out and the night air was balmy. Renny noticed Clark, the communications man, at the navigator's table. Apparently Clark was looking at their last position figures, which were written on a pad. Renny's suspicions were not aroused, which was an oversight he forever regretted.

When it came, it was sudden. The diving alarm sounded. "Get her down! Crash dive!" a voice screamed into the tubes. The engines choked to a stop. Everyone on the bridge tumbled below, through the conning-tower hatch. No one knew as yet what had happened. Then the whole ship jerked, wrenched, belched with the sound of an explosion.

Renny was near the gun access hatch when the blast came. The ship was still on the surface. Renny's first idea was to get on deck, and quick. He clawed a life preserver out of a rack and was shoving his arms through it as he made for the ladder.

Someone was climbing ahead of him. It was Clark, Renny saw. And when Renny reached the top of the ladder, Clark turned and kicked him in the face. A hard kick. It knocked Renny loose from the ladder, and he fell to the floor plates with an agonizing impact. He was stunned, for a few moments unable to move.

The gun, access hatch slammed. They had closed it from the outside.

The second explosion came. Another nasty belch and jolt. The lights went out.

RENNY fought his helplessness, fought with a brain that seemed to have lost all of its connections with his body. For the moment, he couldn't make any of his muscles function.

The *Pilotfish* was sinking by the nose. The floor took more and more of a tilt until it would have been impossible to stand. A few loose objects clattered across the floor, then Renny felt himself sliding. He stopped against a bulkhead.

There were voices. The voices were men screaming, but they were beyond the bulkheads somewhere and very small. Louder was the noise of another explosion, after which the shrieking of high-pressure air escaping drowned out all small sounds. There was the smell of burned insulation and ozone as the water got into batteries and shorted them.

Feeling came back to Renny's hands. He could move them. When he could bend his arms, he fastened his life preserver.

There was a banshee squealing somewhere close. It was high-pressure air bleeding into the compartment, probably from a ruptured line. The pressure was building up. Renny began swallowing hard and pumping at his ears with his palms to equalize the pressure.

The hatch! If the pressure blew open the hatch, the sea would come in. He shoved himself along the bulkhead and managed to reach the ladder. Climbing laboriously, he reached the hatch and dogged it tight. He climbed down laboriously. A few more loose objects clattered along the floor plates.

When the ship hit bottom, it was with a heavy shock. There was a shotgun explosion and colored sparks as wires burned out at the other end of the compartment, a small version of hell that lasted a split part of a second. After that the high-pressure air squealed like a pig for a while, then gradually died. There came a few more sounds, nasty ones, as the whole died.

They were resting almost horizontal on the bottom.

Renny rubbed a hand across his nose, then examined it foolishly. His nose was bleeding. That would be the pressure.

He crawled to a bulkhead and put his face to the small round dead-light, trying to see into the next compartment. He failed, then remembered he had a pocket flashlight, and used that. There was nothing but foul ink-black water on the other side. The compartment was flooded.

The sickness that gripped him at the discovery made him lose his grip, and he skidded and fell to the slippery floor, bruising himself.

Submarine lung! The thought beat into his mind. Lungs should be in a locker in this compartment. Some of them, at least. The fourth locker he investigated held one, a single lung. There should have been a regular quota. There wasn't. Just a single lung.

He examined the lung wildly, afraid that it was defective. It didn't seem to be, and he lay down weakly. Relief hadn't made him sick again. It was the awful pressure. The compartment was charged with high-pressure air. There must be ninety pounds to the square inch.

STILLNESS had come. A grisly quiet.

Forcing himself, fighting down the hysteria that would come too easily, Renny got a hammer he had seen in one of the lockers. He began beating on the deck, using code.

At first he got no answering tapping. Then a return signal came, audible enough. Renny began to tap laboriously, wishing bitterly that he was better with his code.

“H-o-w m-a-n-y a-l-i-v-e,” he pounded laboriously.

“Twenty-seven,” came the answer.

Monk and Ham were among them, Renny learned next. The news was wildly good, so good that he sobbed. Monk was doing the sending from the other end.

“Can you see the escape hatch?” Renny asked.

“Jammed. Everything is jammed,” Monk said.

“They did it?”

“Yes. To plan. They intended to kill everyone.”

“Can you get out?”

“No.”

Renny shuddered. The situation was bad. It could not be worse. He asked them about escape lungs.

“No lungs,” Monk said. “We're trapped. How about you?”

“I can't do a thing,” Renny reported.

“Can you get out?”

“Maybe.”

“We can't,” Monk hammered slowly. “We can't use the hatch if it would open. No high-pressure air.”

Directly opposite of his own trouble, Renny thought. There was too much high-pressure air in his compartment. The high-pressure tanks were probably empty, and no doubt a lot of their contents had bled off into this compartment.

“Estimate how long you can hold out,” he transmitted.

The answer did not come for a frighteningly long time.

“Twelve hours,” Monk sent finally.

“Maximum?”

“Twelve hours absolute maximum,” Monk said.

“Who says so?”

“Wickart.”

That was enough. If Wickart said it was twelve hours, it would be twelve hours. Renny reached his decision, the only one he could reach.

“I'll try to get out,” he said. “Can you stream the marker buoy?” The marker buoy was a balsa wood float at the end of a line that would mark the submarine's position.

“They jammed that, too,” Monk reported.

“I’ll try to get out,” Renny said.

“Good luck.”

“Same to you fellows.” It was such an inane thing to say in parting under such circumstances.

THE business of getting the hatch open was a hair-lifting one. The pressure inside was much greater than the outer water pressure. When the hatch was loosened, it would pop open like the cork coming out of a champagne bottle, and the high-pressure air inside would blow out with the violence of a charge leaving a gun. It would have to be done carefully, if he was to escape being killed.

There was the matter of an ascent line, too. Renny believed they were down at least a hundred and fifty feet. If he just popped to the surface, he would die shortly with the bends. He had to ascend slowly, decompressing as he went.

The only line he could find was a manila one of about a hundred feet. It would have to do. He considered himself lucky at finding even that.

He studied the hatch for a while, and finally worked out a method of rigging the rope so as to enable him to stand at the far end of the compartment, where he could cling to pipes, and undog the hatch by hauling on the rope. He got the system ready, and went to the pipes to which he intended to cling, holding the rope.

He charged the lung with pure oxygen, shut off the charging chuck, and adjusted the nose clip, put the mouthpiece between his teeth. He inhaled and exhaled, testing. It seemed to be all right.

He hauled on the rope. The hatch blew open. The outrush of air first jerked him. Then water poured in, a round solid snake of it that hit the floor plates and dashed itself all over the compartment. He had, while the compartment filled, the most frightening few moments of his life.

He worked his way to the hatch, made the rope fast by its end after undoing it from the dogs. Going up, the lung gave him plenty of buoyancy.

Being unsure of the depth, he decided at least six minutes would be needed for the ascent. That would give him a margin of safety, time for decompression, the flutter-valve in the lung taking care of pressure equalizing between his body and the sea.

An experienced submarine man would have had less trouble than he was having, because ascents with the lung were part of their training.

He reached the end of the line. The line was no longer. He had no means of knowing how far the surface was above him. He would have to give himself time to decompress fully, then take a chance and let go. He counted off the minutes, then released his grip.

He shot upward for a long enough interval to frighten him intensely. Then he was on the surface, tearing the lung from his face.

He heard someone say, “Hell, here’s one of them!”

Someone grabbed at him, got the mask. He let go the mask when he saw an arm swinging a clubbed oar against the starry heavens. The mask was torn from his face.

The oar came down on his head.

There were shots, three of them he believed. He didn't know whether they hit him. The oar had already bashed out his comprehension of what was happening. It was just that unconsciousness was a little slow coming. He was under the water, and it was very black, before he stopped knowing anything.

Chapter V

BLACKNESS changed to two things, blackness and sound. The sound finally became predominant over the blackness. It was a monotonous sound of *wham—chug—chug— wham— wham— chug— chug—chug— wham— chug*. An engine. Renny realized that it must be an engine, and it followed when he got the smell of fresh fish that it must be the engine in a fishing boat. A one-lung motor in a fishing boat. Renny opened his eyes, to a dome of stars and the irregular silhouettes of a small boat and at least three fishermen.

Renny's lungs felt scorched, and he knew that salt water must have been in them. His skull, to feel as it did, surely had holes in it, and his ribs ached intolerably. A little thought gave him the probable reason for his ribs aching. Artificial respiration. He must have been hauled partly drowned from the sea and brought out of it.

Two round balls, a little one and a big one attached together, appeared above him. This was a very round fat man who said, "How you feel, bub?"

Tension flowed out of Renny and relief flowed in. This man hadn't been on the submarine.

"Okay," Renny muttered.

"I bet," the man said. "Yeah, I bet."

"Who're you?" Renny asked.

"Name's Nick. Nick Padolfus."

"This your boat?"

"Mine and the finance company's, yeah." The fat man grinned.

"Fisherman, eh?" Renny said slowly.

"Yeah."

There were two other men in the boat. One of them was steering. The other was sitting on a box over the one-lung motor, and he splashed a flashlight on Renny. Renny gasped painfully, for the light felt as if it was going to destroy his aching eyes.

The fat man spoke suddenly. "Listen, bub, we ain't gonna get in trouble, are we?"

"How you mean?"

Nick was silent a while. "Was that shooting we heard?"

"Eh?"

"Noise like shots, and flashes of fire," Nick explained. "We saw them as we were coming down the

Sound. We could hear the shots. Three shots. Signal of distress, like in Boy Scouts.”

He paused and rubbed his fat round face with a palm. “Only boat run away. It was no distress signal, huh?”

“A boat ran away, eh?” Renny said.

“Uh-huh.”

“What kind of a boat?”

“Cabin cruiser. Pretty good one, about fifty feet, with big motor. She sound like airplane, that boat.”

“And you picked me up?”

“Yep.”

“Pick up anybody else?”

“Nobody else around.”

“Thanks,” Renny said. “Let me rest a minute.” He didn't need rest, but he wanted to get his thoughts into something resembling order. The disaster to the submarine had rattled him, or at least he was rattled now that it was over.

“Nick,” Renny said tensely.

“Yah?”

“Take me back to where you picked me up,” Renny said grimly. “You've got to mark the place with a buoy.”

Nick considered this for a while. “No,” he said.

Anxiety gripped Renny. “Why not?”

“Two hours since I pick you up,” Nick said readily. “Too far back. Look. Almost in port.”

Renny raised up and looked. He had been in New London before, and it wasn't New London. It was, he decided, the little town of Noank, not far from New London. The submarine had actually gone down in Block Island Sound, instead of Long Island Sound proper.

But where, exactly, had the sub gone down?

He asked Nick. “Nick,” he said, “get your chart and mark the exact spot where you picked me up.”

Nick laughed. “Charts, I never use him.” And then, probably because of the way Renny gasped in alarm, Nick added, “Me, I don't read.”

“Can't read?”

“No read, that's right. I don't tell everybody that.”

NICK had a cottage in Noank, and so did the other two men, who were his brothers-in-law. They lived

on the same street, the same block. Nick Padolfus block, it was called, Nick explained cheerfully.

Desperation must have been helping to drive Renny into recovery. He was not back to normal, but he could get around unaided and think fairly straight.

Twenty-seven men trapped in the *Pilotfish*, in a sweating steel tomb between one hundred fifty and two hundred feet below the surface. Twelve hours, Monk had said. They could hold out twelve hours. At least three of the twelve hours were already gone.

Nick was sure he could find the spot where he had picked up Renny. "Sure I find him," Nick insisted. "Not on chart, though."

One hundred and fifty or two hundred feet. That was deep. You would need more than shoal water stuff to get down that deep. You needed the best equipment and needed it fast.

"Where's a telephone?" Renny asked.

Nick didn't have a telephone. But one of his brothers-in-law, whose first name was Jake, had one.

Renny called Doc Savage from Jake's. He got Doc immediately at headquarters, although it was past midnight. Doc slept at headquarters more often than not when he was in the city. Doc Savage had no sort of family life.

Renny said, "I'm in a jam, Doc," and told the story. In the telling, he started with being approached by Giesen in England, the envelope containing the blank paper, the new men who had come aboard the *Pilotfish* at the last minute, the Atlantic crossing, and what had happened tonight.

"Clark, the communications officer, was one of the gang, maybe the ringleader," Renny said. "The eight sailors who came aboard just before we sailed pulled the job. Why they sank the sub I don't know, but I can guess that it's connected with the sealed compartment."

"What sealed compartment?" Doc asked.

"Holy cow, I left that out." Renny explained about the submarine getting something off the German mainland in the dead of night, something mysterious that was sealed in a compartment aboard.

"This is enough talk," Doc said. "I'll start getting salvage equipment together."

"What do you want me to do?"

"You can come to New York if you can get hold of a plane. But be sure this Nick Padolfus is where we can pick him up at any time."

NICK said sure, he would be home any time they wanted him. He hadn't heard the story Renny had told over the telephone. The brothers-in-law hadn't heard it either. They were puzzled, but did not seem alarmed. Renny had been afraid they would get scared and that the fear would make them hard to handle.

"Just call on me," Nick said. "I be here. Me and my brothers will get some sleep. Wake us up any time."

"This is important," Renny said.

"Sure, sure," Nick agreed. He did not seem particularly impressed.

The lummoX may think nothing of it and go off on a fishing trip, or a visit somewhere, Renny thought uneasily.

“Look, Nick, there's a thousand dollars in it for you if you can find the spot where you picked me up,” Renny said. “Another thousand apiece for your brothers-in-law.”

Nick's eye's popped. He was sufficiently impressed now.

Renny went back to the telephone. Twelve hours.

Nine hours now. Eight hours and forty-five minutes, as a matter of fact.

He started telephoning for a plane. A light plane, a charter ship, anything. Anything that would fly. He finally found one, a T-craft, at Foster field. Foster was close. He telephoned for a taxicab.

He made two more calls, one to the State Police of Connecticut, the other to the navy. For the State Police he merely identified himself as a Doc Savage associate, and described, as nearly as he could, Clark and the other eight sailors. He asked that they be picked up on sight, and received assurance that they would be.

The navy call was to Washington. He tried to get hold of the officer who was Commander Giesen's department superior. This call was a flop. The officer was not available, but the operators would try to find him. Renny left instructions that the call be completed, if it could be completed, to Doc Savage in New York City.

The taxi was outside now.

“We be here,” Nick assured him. “You come back any time.”

The taxi driver, for an extra ten-dollar bill, broke every speed regulation ever dreamed of by the ODT and the state of Connecticut.

At Foster, they had called the Hartford CAA weather station for the winds aloft. He ran his eyes over the report, reading surface wind eighteen miles, forty-four miles at two thousand, forty-eight miles at three thousand, fifty-one at four thousand, all from sixty degrees. There was luck. A spanking tail wind, fifty-one miles an hour at four thousand.

The T-craft was a BL with a sixty-five-horse power motor. It was one of the fastest of the light ships. But he needed that extra fifty-one miles on the tail.

He flew without a chart. New London was his first check point, and he got an estimated ground speed of a hundred and thirty. That was about right. He'd been climbing some. It was a hundred and thirteen miles to La Guardia Field.

HE ignored the traffic pattern when he came into La Guardia to save time. There was plenty of runway, so he set down downwind, then didn't wait for his green light. He'd been getting nothing but red lights anyway. He'd broken every rule in the book. He cut the switch and locked the hand brake and piled out and ran for the administration building.

Someone yelled at him. Someone in a uniform. Somebody who wanted to raise hell about that landing, he knew. He went on. The CAA would probably jerk his license for this, but a license was a small thing now.

He got a break at the taxi stand. There was a police prowler car there, two officers inside. He ran to the machine.

"I'm Renwick," he said. "I work with Doc Savage. Can you get me to his place in a hell of a hurry?"

The two policemen examined him. Apparently they knew him. The one on the right opened the door and got out. "Take my seat," he said.

The prowler car ran through the night, chasing its headlights and pursued by the whimper of its siren. The driver asked no questions. He just drove.

Renny's ankles were cramped from riding the rudder pedals of the lightplane. He ached all over, and his lungs still burned from the salt water that had been in them, making him cough almost continuously. But he leaned back, and for the first time since disaster had hit the *Pilotfish*, he began to entertain something like hope.

The name of Doc Savage was magic. Particularly was it magic with the New York police, because Savage had worked for and with the department over a length of time. Doc had lectured frequently at the police academy, and at special meetings, so almost all the cops knew him by sight and by reputation.

Magic. A good example was the way this prowler car was rushing him into town, no argument and no questions.

He was fortunate to be able to put this in hands as capable as Doc Savage's. He knew this. And the knowing it put a tight, eager constriction in his throat.

Chapter VI

RENNY'S destination was one of the most prominent midtown skyscrapers. He scrambled out of the police car, and for a moment he glanced up at the building. It was a thundering giant in the darkness, and it was a good thing to see that men could create such things.

Renny went inside, wondering just why the building had comforted him. That was a goofy idea. What he had felt, more likely, was the comfort of being home, because the building was probably as much home as he had. It was more accurate to consider it the home of Doc's group. They were all in pretty much the same boat in their aloneness as far as having family ties was concerned.

That, Renny thought, must be why we're so close. Why we feel that trouble for one of us is trouble for all. We have no close relatives. Life has cheated us that way. They made up for it by the closeness of their association, Doc Savage and the five others. A psychologist would probably explain it that way.

Their aloneness might account for their liking for adventure, too. Renny had never thought of it that way. But it might be.

Doc Savage himself, for example, had no family, and only one relative, a cousin named Patricia Savage, who lived in New York and was a bit remarkable herself.

The strangeness of Doc's upbringing, Renny was quite certain, accounted for Doc Savage's being unusual. It was surprising that he wasn't more extraordinary than he was. Doc had been placed, when he was a baby, in the custody of the first of an endless succession of scientists, philosophers, thinkers, who had been charged with the job of educating him and training him. There was no publicity. The scientists, thinkers—now and then a quack, too—had been paid for their work. The elder Savage paid them. Doc

had never known his mother; she had died when he was less than a year old. The elder Savage had died about the time Doc's unusual training had been finished.

Renny had never heard Doc talk much about his youth. Doc preferred not to do so. There was, Renny knew, a mystery. A mystery about the motive of Doc's father in giving Doc such a queer upbringing. The elder Savage had been a sane man, even if his handling of the boy hadn't indicated it. During the twenty years of Doc's strange training, the father had been driven by some grim, unwavering purpose. He had died, through misfortune, before he had been able to tell Doc the real reason for the strange training. Why? Doc didn't know. The mystery had remained to plague him.

The weirdness of Doc's early life was a path which had led him naturally into the profession he followed now. If it could be called a profession. It was hard to define. The newspapers sometimes said that he was an extraordinary man who was devoting his life to righting wrongs and punishing evildoers who were outside the law. But Renny didn't quite agree with that. It was true as far as it went, though.

The newspapers also called Doc a mental wizard, a scientific genius and a muscular marvel. This was the kind of copy newspapers liked, but it was also partly true. Not that Doc was anything abnormal. He wasn't. He was just a man with enough ability to overawe you, and enough in his early life to make his actions unaccountable.

Doc liked the unusual. The unusual in all things, mechanical as well as mental. A sample of the mechanical was the special high speed elevator which operated to his eighty-sixth floor suite in the building. Renny gritted his teeth now as he rode the elevator upward. The damned thing always scared him.

"I'm glad you came," Doc said. "I need your help getting stuff together."

Doc Savage was a physical giant whose skin had been semi-permanently bronzed by tropical suns. His features weren't regular, but it was a handsome face, and the remarkable thing was how few marks it bore from the exciting, dangerous life he had lived.

Renny said, "I'm not going to tell you how scared I am. We haven't got much more than six hours to get down to that submarine. I'm scared stiff. I don't think we've got a chance."

And then suddenly he was in a chair, shaking uncontrollably. Suddenly he wanted to blubber, and he couldn't keep back the tears. He put his face in his hands and cursed his fright, his weakness, which wasn't weakness at all, but exhaustion plus the awful fear that they weren't going to be able to save those in the *Pilotfish*.

Doc looked at him. "You've had a rough go," he said. He went into the other room. There were three rooms in the eighty-six floor suite, this reception room, the library and the laboratory. Doc came back with something in a glass. "Swig this."

Renny took the glass. "It won't make me sleep?"

"No. It'll let your nerves down a little, is all."

Renny drank the stuff. He leaned back in the chair. He began coughing. He was still coughing almost continually, because of the effects of the water that had been in his lungs.

He listened to Doc Savage making telephone calls. It dawned on him finally that Doc was trying to locate a rescue chamber. No rescue chamber? The thought hit him hard. He hadn't dreamed they wouldn't be able to get a chamber.

“My God, what's wrong with the salvage boat stationed at New London?” Renny asked hoarsely.

“Not available,” Doc told him.

“But they keep it stationed there all the time.”

“That's right. Only just now it is off the New Jersey shore. A school sub got into trouble down there yesterday and they sent the salvage boat out to stand by.”

Renny did some mental calculation. “It couldn't get to the *Pilotfish* in time.”

“Not a chance.”

“We've got to find another chamber.”

“We've got to try.”

A rescue chamber was the best method of reaching a helpless submarine lying as deep as the *Pilotfish* was. It was a big can of a thing with no bottom and it could be lowered and attached to the undersea boat with fittings there for that purpose. Actually it was more complicated than that, but that was fundamentally what it was.

A diver, of course, could reach the *Pilotfish*. The depth wasn't prohibitive. But there was a limit to what a diver could do. The rescue chamber was the answer. If they could find one.

They weren't going to find one, it became certain.

It was agonizing for Renny to sit there and listen to Doc's futile telephoning. Renny knew submarines. The horror of what must be happening in the *Pilotfish* became clear in his mind whenever he gave it a chance.

By now the carbon-dioxide percentage would be climbing. The men would be getting listless as the poison got into their bodies. But their bodies would be in better condition than their minds.

The certainty of death, the most ghastly of the things that can torment a man's mind, would have been working on them for nearly six hours now. Of the twenty-seven men, all would be affected. Some worse than others. The strain would snap minds in some cases.

Renny had never been through such a thing, but he had heard the talk of men who had. It didn't make good listening.

He said hoarsely, “Doc, is our own equipment—”

“What we have is ready to go,” Doc said.

Renny nodded. He understood that with their own equipment, it was a gamble. They had diving stuff, but it was not designed for anything like this. Doc did not want to take a chance with it, Renny realized.

He looked at his watch, then wished he hadn't when he saw how time was flowing. The urge to be moving, doing something, was overpowering. Yet there was nothing to do, nothing better than what Doc Savage was doing. If they could find an escape chamber, if by God's luck they could locate one, these minutes they were gambling in the search would pay off with the lives of twenty-seven men.

Doc Savage was trying factories now. Plants which might be manufacturing escape chambers, which might have one on hand. He was getting no results.

Tormented by the certainty that they wouldn't be able to get a rescue chamber, Renny jumped to his feet. He paced, out of habit, to the window. The windows offered a breathless view of the city. The view would fit almost any thoughts that happened to be in an onlooker's mind, Renny had long ago learned.

He stood looking out, clenching and unclenching his teeth, trying to stop coughing. Trying to make his mind pull a miracle out of thin air. His head ached and his skin was dry and he hurt when he moved, and now, when something stung his face in two or three places, he didn't immediately realize what it was. There had been a noise, too, a *whap!* of a sound.

He thought Doc had dropped something, and half turned to see what it was—when Doc Savage slammed into him. They went down below the window.

“Don't you know when you're being shot at?” Doc asked.

Shot at? Renny flattened out instinctively. And suddenly he could think clearly and normally. It was as if danger had put a solid path under the frightened feet of his thoughts.

He looked up. The hole in the big window was round, with small cracks radiating from it. What had hit his face had been bits of glass.

Another bullet came through, making another hole, and cracking the window more extensively. Now a piece of the heavy plate glass toppled out and landed, jangling as it shattered, on the floor.

Doc Savage looked intently, first at the perforations in the window, then at the wall where the bullet had hit. He was calculating angles, deciding where the bullet probably had come from.

He crawled to the telephone. He dialed the police. “The Mercator Automotive Building,” he told the police. “Someone is shooting at us from there. Probably from one of the top floors.”

He made another call, this one to the night superintendent of the Mercator Building. He got the number from the directory.

“Pull the master switch that supplies current to your elevators,” he said. “This is the police.” He listened for a while, said, “I know it's unusual. Pull that switch. The police will be there in a minute. We're trying to trap a man on one of your upper floors.”

He hung up then, and reached for his hat. “Come on,” he told Renny. “The Mercator Building is the only one where the shot could have come from. And it had to be fired from somewhere above the twenty-fifth floor of the Mercator, because you can't see this window from any floor lower. Too many high buildings in between. Come on.”

They ran into the corridor, entered the elevator. As they rode down, Doc explained, “We can't waste much time on this. But the Mercator Building can be on our route to the warehouse.”

The warehouse was their supply station. It was more in the nature of a seaplane hangar on the Hudson river waterfront. They called it the warehouse, but, the only fact that justified the name was that they kept their equipment there.

Doc took the elevator past the lobby to the basement level. He had a small private garage in the basement, where he kept a car, and Renny had another, and Monk also. Monk's machine was gaudy enough to satisfy a Balkan dictator. The machine Doc selected was Renny's. Renny was an engineer, and he liked fine automotive machinery.

The door had an automatic opener; the panel swung up of its own accord in time to let them out. They

pulled into traffic.

The Mercator Automotive Building was three blocks over and a short drive north. They were turning north when Doc heard the shots. Three shots, as nearly as he could tell.

THERE were four policemen outside the Mercator when they arrived, and a sprouting crowd. Inside, in the lobby, a plain clothes detective and a uniformed policeman were bending over a man dying on the modernistic dappled brown and gray floor, beside a trombone case.

The plain clothes man still had his service revolver in his hand.

“Doctor’ll be here in a minute,” he told the dying man, his voice holding no special feeling.

The dying man had the look of a man of seventy and his years were probably nearer fifty. He was a man whose past was on his face. A man who had through his early life been a glutton in all things, and had gradually become without pride, morals, money or the ability to think logically. He was an old and ugly animal dying there.

The detective had shot him expertly in the chest.

The detective glanced up at Doc Savage.

“Like that.” The detective snapped his fingers. “The janitor shut the electricity off the elevators. This fellow was in one of them. We turned on the current, and he brought the elevator down and came out waving this.” He took a revolver out of his coat pocket and showed it. “There wasn’t much I could do but let him have one where it would stop him quick.”

The uniformed patrolman said, “He was carrying this, too.”

He opened the slide-horn case. It held a hunting rifle, calibre .270, with a scope sight. The rifle was apart and lying in cotton in the case.

“Barrel is still slightly warm from the shots, believe it or not,” the patrolman said.

Renny said, “He’s probably the one who shot at me.” And resumed coughing.

The dying man made a series of bubbling noises. His eyes were widely open.

“Hear me all right?” the detective asked him.

The man moved his eyes enough to show that he heard.

“Here’s the doctor,” the detective told him. Then the detective glanced up at Doc. “If you want to treat him, that is.”

Doc nodded. Kneeling beside the man, he asked, “Know me?”

The man did. The sickness in his eyes, greater than the fear of death, showed that he knew.

He was going to die. Doc knew that after his examination had been in progress a few moments. No medical skill could save him.

Doc glanced at Renny. “The nearest drugstore.” He told Renny what to get. “I haven’t a prescription

blank. Better take a policeman along so you will get it.”

Renny went away. He was back remarkably soon with the prescription. It was a drug, a stimulant that would work quickly. Doc hoped it would enable the man to talk a little.

He gave the stuff time to start working after he administered it.

“Why did you shoot at us?” he asked the man.

The fellow showed his teeth unpleasantly. He wasn't going to talk. But the fear was a filth back in his eyes, in the looseness of his cheeks.

“You want to die?” Doc asked coldly. Scaring a dying man was a job that sickened him. But it had to be done.

The dying man rolled his lips inward and his eyelids outward as terror took hold of him. Probably his body was not suffering much. He apparently did not know he was going to die.

The man said firmly, “I was hired.” His voice was low and pushed out against a bubbling, but it was understandable.

“Who hired you?” Doc demanded.

The man was scared now, and he had no hesitation about ratting.

“Diver,” he said. “Diver Edwards.”

Doc glanced at Renny, who shook his head. Neither of them had heard of anyone named Diver Edwards.

“Where is Diver Edwards now?” Doc asked.

The bubbling and words got unintelligible, but Doc decided the man was saying he didn't know. “Telephone,” the man said, then more that was not understandable, and “called two hours ago.”

“He hired you by telephone?” Doc asked.

“Yes,” the man said distinctly.

“Where does he hang out?”

The dying man made a difficult business of saying something about the navy. Renny didn't get it, and asked, “What did he say?”

“I think he means this Edwards is in the navy.”

Renny said, “Holy cow!” explosively. He got down beside the man and began describing Clark, the communications man of the *Pilotfish*. He described Clark because he suspected Clark and because Clark was easy to describe. “That sound like the guy?” he finished.

“No, that's Merry John,” the dying man said.

Surprise hit the detective hard and he swore. He grabbed the dying man and yelled, “Merry John? You mean Merry John Thomas?”

The dying man made a particularly loud bubbling which trailed slowly into death.

The detective said, “Hey, has he—” He stood up slowly. He looked sick. “Do you suppose I killed him when I grabbed him that way?”

Doc said, “No, of course not.” This was not true. The detective had killed the man, although the man would have died anyway. But what was done was done and the detective had meant no wrong, so there was no use telling him something that would haunt him.

Doc added, “Merry John? Who is he?”

“A smart operator in the old days.” The detective got out a handkerchief to mop his face. “Merry John Thomas, the gentleman of Sutton Place. I guess he was before your time, Mr. Savage.”

“What became of him?” Doc asked.

“He disappeared. It was a good thing he did, too, because we finally had the goods on him. And he was a tough one to build a case against, because of the way he operated. He was an organizer. That was back in the days when we had gangsters running wild. He was sort of a first-class mobster who free-lanced his services. I guess you would call him an efficiency expert. Anyway, he was plenty slick, and as cold-blooded as a frozen fish. He engineered more than one mass killing back in the wild days.”

“How old would he be?”

“Under forty, I think. Probably about thirty-eight.”

Renny said, “That would about catch Clark's age.”

What happened next stunned Doc Savage, made him doubt that he had any intelligence at all.

The detective shoved out his jaw aggressively and said, “I'd like to find this Mystic where Merry Johnny is at.”

Doc stared at him. “Mystic? Nothing was said about Mystic.”

“I thought there was,” the detective said. “The guy said something about the telephone call, the one that hired him, being made from Mystic, wherever that is.”

Doc felt as if he had been hit a blow. “You—you think he said that?”

The detective nodded. He said apologetically, “Maybe I understood him better than you did because I've got a kid who is tongue-tied, and got an impediment in his throat which makes him talk a little like that fellow was talking to you. I mean, I'm used to understanding my kid, and so I probably got it better than you would.”

Renny was staring at Doc.

“Mystic!” Renny croaked. “My God, do you suppose they've found that fisherman, Nick? He's the only one who knows where the *Pilotfish* is lying!”

Chapter VII

RENNY'S car, which Doc Savage was driving, had a standard police siren under the hood and a pair of fog lights with red lenses. Doc switched the siren on, and its demanding wail got them through traffic at about fifty miles an hour; the red lights reassuring any dubious officers and making them easy for motorists to spot. He drove toward the warehouse.

The warehouse was an ancient brick structure, not as large as others in the neighborhood and certainly less prosperous looking. The legend, *Hidalgo Trading Company*, was hardly legible on the front.

Doc liked gadgets. Before the war, when he'd had spare time, he amused himself by devising screwball ideas in the way of gadgets. Trick guns, anaesthetic gases, little grenades which did unexpected things, and chemical mixtures which would do an assortment of things ranging from turning a man's skin green to making sharks afraid of him.

The warehouse door was equipped with a gadget. A radio opener. You pushed a button in Renny's car, and the door opened. It was a fairly simple contraption, and lots of people had taken to putting similar devices on their garage doors.

The air was hazy, the odor of the harbor a heaviness, and the water out beyond the warehouse greasy and lead-covered. The gulls were flying with quick nervous darts and sailings, and there were more of them than was normal. Weather signs! Renny shuddered, and looked at the sky.

There were high cumulo-nimbus clouds here and there, particularly in the east. Renny moistened his lips nervously. Weather. A cold front. That was what that hard tailwind he'd had from Connecticut meant.

Weather, he thought, is all we need to add to our troubles.

Doc had pressed the button which actuated the little transmitter of the door-opener. Renny watched the door begin rising, lifted by the motors inside which had been turned on by the signal.

Renny noticed the small panel truck parked at the curbing near the door. The truck did not belong to them, but there was no reason to be suspicious of it because the waterfront streets were busy these days. But at least he noticed the panel truck a moment before it became a sheet of boisterous flame.

The whole panel truck seemed to explode. The blast gave the car in which Doc and Renny rode a violent kick which turned it half around, then heaved it over on its side.

There was just the one whistling blast. Then silence.

"Stay in the car," Doc warned.

Renny mumbled, "There might be more guys with rifles around. I know." He remained still.

Doc moved his head until he could see out through the rear window of the car.

Where the panel truck had been, there was nothing. There was some smoke above where it had been, and below the brick street paving had been scooped away and the concrete curbing shattered.

Glass toppled out of a window half a block away and hit jangling on the sidewalk. Windows all over the neighborhood were broken.

Doc looked at the warehouse door. His stomach grew hard and seemed to crawl.

Whoever had laid the blast in the truck had tried to kill him, and had known something about explosive engineering. There had been more than TNT in the track. There had been shrapnel, and the shrapnel had been so placed that it would blow back against the door. Bolts, fragments of iron, were embedded in the door where it was not torn and shattered.

Doc said, "The explosive charge in the panel truck was wired to the door. When the door opened, it went off."

Renny nodded. "Holy cow, if we had been opening the door by hand, there wouldn't have been a grease spot left."

"The trick wasn't too dumb."

"You suppose it was the same guy who shot at us? I mean, were both attempts engineered by the same bird?"

"About all we can do is make a guess," Doc said grimly. "I am going to make a run for the warehouse. Have you got a gun?"

Renny brought out a long-barreled pistol.

"Good," Doc said. "If anyone shoots at me, shoot back at them."

Doc made a quick dashing run for the warehouse. Nothing happened. He called, "It seems clear!" and Renny joined him pistol in hand.

The explosion had attracted a normal amount of attention. A crowd was beginning to gather, largely stevedores and waterfront hangers-on.

Doc, on the theory that the police might find something if all the clues in the neighborhood were not trampled out, yelled, "Stay back! Call the police!" He shouted this at the spectators, sounding as alarmed as he could. "Get back! Call the police!"

Renny demanded, "Are we going to stick around until the cops come?"

"We haven't the time," Doc told him.

THEY flew the amphibian. It was not a big plane by modern standards; it would be small alongside a B29, and even beside a Mitchell. But it had two motors and fair speed and plenty of iron in its soul. The sweetest part of all was the way it was at home on land or water, and its sturdiness.

They worked for a while, frantically, loading diving equipment aboard. Renny saw that Doc had already been at the warehouse and had prepared diving stuff. Gotten together as much diving equipment as they had, which was far from adequate for a deepwater job the size of this one.

"When you were here earlier," Renny said, "was that panel truck parked outside?"

"I didn't notice," Doc confessed.

The other end of the warehouse was closed by huge doors which rolled on a track and were operated by motors. They held their breath when they had to open these, afraid there would be another explosion. But the heavy panels rumbled open without incident.

Doc rolled the amphibian down the ramp. There was a clever gadget for maneuvering, a shaft which turned a small steerable propeller underwater. It was as efficient as having an outboard motor attached for maneuvering, and much simpler. Doc taxied the amphibian slowly out into the river with this device. He touched the wheel-up button and the wheels disappeared into the wells, drawing their streamlined covers after them.

Doc got out of the cockpit.

“You get her in the air,” he said. “I am going to start using the radio, in hopes that we may finally find a submarine salvage boat that can reach the *Pilotfish* in time.”

Renny nodded. He went through the check-off list mechanically, worked the primer pumps, engaged the electric inertia starters. The engines caught, and he went through the warm up routine. Oil pressure, fuel pressure, open the manifold-pressure gauge vent line, check cylinder temps, props in low pitch, shutters open. The hatful of things a man had to watch.

Finally he put the ship in the air. Climbing into the east, he saw there was weather ahead.

THE sky had a hot, bold look. The cumulo-nimbus were standing up like monsters, some of them ten thousand feet high, anvil-topped. They were boiling, changing shape continually, some of them with undersides as black as polecats.

The amphibian climbed slowly, for the air was rotten, had no real lift. And it was rough, too. The ship bounced on thermals, lunging upward and sinking and hiking up on first one wing then another.

Renny looked at the cumulo-nimbus clouds and cursed them in a low, awed tone. He was afraid of such clouds. He had a lot of flying time to his credit, but only once had he flown into a really bad looking cumulo-nimbus, and he wouldn't have done that except that he had been flying along on instruments, and bored into the thing without seeing it. If a gigantic dog had seized the plane and tried to shake it to death, the effect could not have been more hair-raising. Finally clear, and thoroughly terrified, he had climbed above the overcast and looked back to see what he had flown through. The cumulo-nimbus had been standing there, a tall black monster of a cloud. He hadn't forgotten it soon.

If there was a cold front, and a bad one, there might be terrible weather over Long Island Sound for hours. Weather could easily prevent them reaching the *Pilotfish*.

Even now, things would be getting desperate on the *Pilotfish*.

For hours now, they would have been sitting there knowing death had its grip locked around them. They would have been sitting there in the utter silence of the deep sea. Listening to their own hearts hammer, to the slow leaking of water through the glands where the electric cables and pipes passed through the bulkheads.

Renny could visualize, far too clearly, their plight.

The carbon-dioxide content would be going up. At the depth at which the *Pilotfish* was lying, the effects of the carbon-dioxide percentage rise would be increased. Six percent or thereabouts was supposed to be fatal. Down more than a hundred and fifty feet, they would have to keep it below six percent. Probably below three per cent.

I hope, Renny thought, that they've got soda lime. The soda lime was absorbent. With the chemical, they could combat for a time the carbon-dioxide rise. But it would only push back death for the moment. Monk undoubtedly had figured all the chances when he gave his twelve-hour estimate.

I don't see how we can make it, Renny thought wildly. And his mind seized the horrors of death by carbon-dioxide and ran crazy with it.

Death by asphyxia. Giddiness, headache, vomiting, a dull helpless drowsiness, a loss of the ability to move, a general weakness. The heat of the body gradually lost. Face getting livid, breathing loud, and the heart at first rapid, then losing its pace and finally stopping.

He had seen carbon-dioxide death cases. Their post-mortem appearance was one of swollen faces and purplish coloration. The limbs frequently rigid. More rarely, the countenances were calm and pale after death. But always the right cavities of the heart, the lungs and the larger veins would be found gorged with venous blood after death.

Suddenly he was aware that Doc Savage's hand was on his shoulder, shaking him.

“What's wrong?” Doc demanded.

The horror of what he had been thinking, Renny realized, must have been on his face. His lungs ached as if he had been having trouble with his breathing.

He said, “Nothing.” He cleared his throat. The plane was skidding. He straightened it out.

Doc wasn't fooled. “You were in that submarine mentally, weren't you?”

“That's right,” Renny admitted it in a low voice.

“You are not doing anyone any good. Better stop it.”

Renny shuddered. “I know.” Then emotion crowded his voice upward and he said, “I don't see why the hell I am running around up here while Monk and Ham are in the *Pilotfish*! Why did it have to happen to them? Why not me instead? I got them into the mess in the first place.”

“Cut it out,” Doc said

Renny, louder and more violent, said, “In England, I talked them into going! They didn't want to—”

Doc got a hard hold on his shoulder and showed him a square bronze block of a fist. In a voice that took the wildness out of Renny the way a rasp would take tarnish off brass, Doc said, “You want to cut that out? Or do you prefer a little knuckle anaesthetic?”

Shortly Renny glanced up at the bronze man. “Okay,” he muttered

Chapter VIII

AN updraft got under a wing of the plane, gave it a mighty kick. The motors seemed to sob, and Renny grabbed instinctively for something to hold on to.

Doc Savage glanced out of the cabin windows. He tried not to look discouraged. He knew Renny had turned his head to watch him.

Weather they were going to have. A fine witch's tempest of it.

The cumulo-nimbus was standing up for miles ahead of them. Anvil-tops, the clouds were called. Thunderheads. Inside them lightning crawled and the awful thermal winds roared. No one really knew how fast the winds blew in the bigger cumulo-nimbus clouds. There were reliable estimates of winds above four hundred miles an hour, which were hardly believable. The Caribbean hurricanes were rarely checked in excess of a hundred miles an hour.

No one, Doc reflected, who hadn't flown near those clouds in a plane, or hadn't studied meteorology, would realize the astounding danger and force they represented.

Far ahead, the cumulo-nimbus were black, somber. The blackness meant hail, and hail would chew their plane to a battered wreck and spit it toward the earth. Hail was bad stuff in a plane. It was almost the ground equivalent of driving your automobile into a brick wall.

The strange thing was that, to the average guy on the ground, it just looked like a cloudy day. "Getting ready to rain," was probably the casual remark being passed. It would be hot. Probably still. On the ground the weather wouldn't have the reality that it had here in the sky.

Not that it would keep them from reaching Mystic. It wouldn't. In fact, they were almost at Mystic now. Renny was turning his head, asking. "You want me to put her down?"

"You make the landing," Doc said. "But first, circle over Mystic and show me where this Nick lives."

Renny banked the ship slowly, and just over the thousand-foot legal limit for flying over populated places, pointed out the house of Nick Padolfus. "The green house," he said. "In the block southwest from that vacant lot by the large building with the red roof."

"The one with the garden?"

"That's it."

"Gray roof?"

"Yes."

"Where do the brothers-in-law live?"

Renny showed him. He described the houses. Then the plane was out over the bay. He set the flaps and low-pitched the prop, full-riched the mixture, checked his carburetor heat, set his stabilizer.

There was plenty of room and the sea was calm. None of the turbulence in the sky showed on the water. But it would later. The storm might strike before long.

Doc glanced sourly at the sky, at the harbor. He said, "This is no place to be caught in a blow." He indicated the shore. "And that gang may have something cooked up for us. Better take her in the air, after you put me ashore. I'll have the walkie-talkie with me, so keep the wavelength tuned in."

Renny asked, "That sand bar be all right?"

"Yes."

Renny silently swung the ship into the downwind leg, the base leg, the final approach. He did a good job and there was not much splash and very little roughness. He used the little hull propeller gadget to send the plane cautiously toward the sand spit which was exposed—it was low tide—and solid. He watched the water depth closely, and finally said, "I guess you'll have to get your feet wet after all."

Doc said, "It doesn't matter." He had the walkie-talkie slung over his shoulder. It was a standard army outfit.

"Make this quick!" Renny urged.

Doc nodded. He jumped for the shore. The water was about knee deep, the bottom solid.

RENNY kicked the plane out into clear water, put it on step and took it into the air immediately.

Several people had appeared on the beach. They stared at Doc Savage curiously. Someone, a small boy, yelled a question, wanting to know what kind of a plane that was. Doc told him and kept walking.

Doc Savage moved alertly, watching the people, keeping himself from being stationary long enough to be a target. He wasn't sure he was in immediate danger. He was just being careful.

The men off the submarine were, or had been in Mystic. He was sure. The mumbling of the dying man in New York had proved that. So they were in Mystic when the telephone call was made.

Whether they knew about Nick Padolfus was another matter. He didn't want to think they did.

But it was a frightening possibility. Mystic was a small place, and in such a place the news that three fishermen had picked up a mysterious man in the sea would travel fast. Everyone in town knew it by now, no doubt. Everyone, at least, who was a native resident and belonged to the local gossip circles.

Renny had probably told Nick Padolfus and his brothers-in-law to keep it quiet. That was asking a lot. Nick and his relatives didn't know Renny, and there had been enough strangeness about the affair to make them want to talk. So they'd talk. Human nature was human nature.

Doc turned into an alley. The moment he was out of sight, he ran. He ran until he came to a sort of a park, brush-tangled, where he could travel more slowly and remain out of sight.

He was scared.

Suddenly, now that he was alone, he was realizing how frightened he actually was. Before, he had been busy enough to keep from thinking about it. Now it crowded in and seized his mind.

They had a few hours—four or five, by stretching it—to find a submarine lying under at least a hundred and fifty feet of water and save what was left of the crew.

They had, to be practical about it, no idea whatever where the submarine was lying. The only one who knew that was Nick, the fisherman.

Nick, the fisherman, who lived in a green house with a gray roof in a yard with a little garden.

He was coming to the house now. Because he was afraid, without knowing for sure that there was reason for fear, he did not march straight up to the door. He slipped into the garden.

The garden had high rows of grape vines, a fine arbor of wine grapes. There was sweet corn, with concealing rows which he could follow toward the house.

He came close to the house. Thunder whooped suddenly overhead, a great gobbling uproar that ran back and forth across the heavens. There was no lightning. Just a great crackle of thunder, and after that a stillness that was almost complete. Almost complete, except for something strange in the way of sound that was coming from the house.

He stood very still and listened to the sound, at first thinking it was something cooking on a stove in the house, something boiling and bubbling. It was such a sound. Except that it began and stopped at intervals, at about the intervals at which a person would breathe, if the breathing was done laboriously.

He went into the house hurriedly.

Chapter IX

IT was a youngish man with a large mouth and eyes like boiled eggs lying on his back breathing noisily because of two knife holes in his chest. He should have been dead.

Doc Savage went down beside him and said, "Don't talk now." He did what could be done quickly. There was no telephone, Renny had said. He'd have to send someone for a doctor to finish the treatment.

Condition of the wound, the progress of the clotting, indicated the man had been stabbed probably more than half an hour ago. So it was probably safe to step outdoors. Doc ran to the nearest house.

"Get hold of an ambulance and a doctor. Then call the state police," he said. "Have them all come to Nick's house."

The woman he told it to was fat and dark-eyed. But she nodded competently. "I have a telephone," she said. "Okay to use that?"

"By all means."

Doc went back to Nick Padolfus' small green house. He examined the man on the floor again. He said, "The ambulance is coming. So are the police." Both bits of information seemed to cheer the knife victim.

Doc added, "Don't try to talk yet." He went through the man's pockets, finding some paper money, a pair of dice, a sailor's palm, a part of a ball of Italian marlin, a billfold containing some one-dollar bills and a membership card in a fishermen's association.

"Nick's brother-in-law?" Doc asked.

The man nodded slightly.

Doc said, "Some men came here hunting Nick? That what happened?"

The other nodded again.

Doc said, "If you can write, nod."

The man could write.

Doc got out pencil and paper. He said, "If you talk, you're likely to start a hemorrhage and have all kinds of trouble. So write it out."

The man was more sickly faint than weak. He wrote large letters in a thoroughly legible schoolboy-like hand.

Four men. More outside. They hunt Nick. I tell them go to hell and they stab me.

He paused for a while, thinking.

Doc demanded, "Did they ask you where you picked up the man at sea last night?"

The man wrote. *Yes.*

"What did you tell them?"

Said didn't know.

"Was that the truth?" Doc asked.

Yes.

“You were on the boat when Nick picked Renwick out of the water,” Doc said. “How come you don't know the location?”

We were asleep. Tired.

Doc frowned, then demanded, “You'd had a hard day fishing, and you were asleep, resting. You say we. Does that mean you and Nick's other brother-in-law were both asleep?”

Both of us.

“Does either of you know where Renwick was picked up?”

Only Nick knows. We wake up after Nick pick up Renwick. Not before.

The fat woman had aroused the neighborhood. Faces were appearing at the windows. Doc could hear voices, questions, someone saying the doctor would be here soon, someone else demanding if it was Nick who was hurt.

“Where is Nick?” Doc asked.

The man wrote. *Nick and Jake at Nick's boat. They go clean up boat.*

PREMONITION took hold of Doc Savage like a chilling fever. He straightened. He demanded of the faces at a window, “Where is the doctor? Isn't he ever going to come?”

The faces stared at him with an assortment of puzzlement, suspicion and fright. One finally said, “The doc's out here now.”

“What's he waiting on? Send him in!” Doc said violently.

At length the doctor did come in. He was a round little man with spectacles and a diffident uneasiness. He said, “I didn't come in because I understood you had stabbed this man and I felt the police—“ He went silent, looking at Doc Savage. His eyes got roundly surprised. “Bless my soul! Aren't you Clark Savage?”

Doc said, “That's right, Doctor. This man has two stab wounds, one of which probably has damaged the hyperarterial bronchi, while the other is lower in the lung and probably more serious. Keep him from talking. The police will want to question him, but do not allow him to speak. He can write out answers, however.”

The physician looked uncomfortable. “I didn't know, or I wouldn't have waited—”

“No harm done,” Doc said.

A lie, that. No harm done? It had lost three or four minutes, and minutes gone were great strides taken by death. In the *Pilotfish* by now, minutes were probably very long, dark and frightening.

In the yard, Doc collared the first man who was obviously a native. “Where does Nick keep his boat?”

The man stared at Doc, wet his lips, finally croaked, “A block to your right, then straight ahead.” He was scared.

I must be beginning to look as wild as I feel, Doc thought. He headed for the dock, running easily, with long strides.

The walkie-talkie, slung over his shoulder, beat against his ribs as he ran. He slipped the sling over his head, switched the little radio on and gave Renny a call.

“Renny,” he said, skipping the formalities ruled necessary in radio communication. “Make a pass out over the Sound. Fly over the region where you think the submarine may be. Look for an oil slick.”

He tried to keep his voice normal, but strangeness got into it. Enough strangeness to alarm Renny.

“What's gone wrong?” Renny demanded.

Doc told him. He used no more than twenty words to do it.

“Holy cow! Clark's men are trying to wipe out Nick and his two brothers-in-law.”

“That's the way it looks,” Doc agreed.

“But why? Why would they do that?”

“Somehow they must have learned that you don't know where you were picked up, but that Nick can find the spot,” Doc said.

“How would they find that out?”

Doc said, “From Nick, maybe.”

Horror must have silenced Renny, because he said nothing.

Doc repeated, “Fly out and see if there is any oil seepage to mark the location of the *Pilotfish*.”

After a while, Renny said hoarsely, “You know what those devils probably did?”

“We can both guess,” Doc told him. “When you came to the surface last night after you got out of the submarine, they tried to kill you. Their shooting at you—three shots which Nick mistook for a distress signal—caused Nick to come and investigate. They saw his boat, and it scared them away.”

“Nick thought they'd left—”

“They didn't, obviously. They hung around, then followed Nick's boat to Mystic. That would be simple. They could run without lights. Nick's boat was showing running lights as required by law, wasn't it?”

Renny suddenly began cursing. Profanity was not natural to him, so that as he used it now it had a stilted, frenzied, inarticulate helplessness.

Doc interrupted, “That kind of language will lose you your radio license so quick—”

“Damn the license to hell—”

“Stop that!”

Renny went silent.

“See if there is an oil slick,” Doc said wearily.

THE fishing boat was easy to find. The name across the stern was *Nick's Baby*, which made it simple enough. She was probably thirty-five feet on the waterline, not as large as some lifeboats on liners. She was high-hulled, solid-looking, with a plumb bow, some tumblehome amidships and a double-ender stern. A good sea boat. But the double-ender stern probably detracted from her qualities as a fish boat.

Lobster traps were stacked high on the wharf. Doc moved behind those, stood watching and listening for a while. The wooden lobster traps, like chicken crates, hid him.

Nick's Baby

had the customary large working cockpit, the mast and net gaffs, the swordfishing lookout seat atop the mast and a platform for spearing swordfish stuck out from the bow. She was decked over forward, and there was an ungainly pilothouse.

She was no yacht.

Doc lifted his voice.

He called, "The police will be here before long. I want to talk to you before they get here."

His reply was silence. The boat bobbed a little with the waves. He could hear the small waves clicking against the hull, against the wharf piling under him.

He tried it again.

"Before the police get here, maybe we can make a deal!" he called. He made it loud enough that he was sure it could be heard aboard *Nick's Baby*.

No answer.

He watched, listened, until his eyes ached and his ears got to ringing softly and his apprehensions slowly made him ill.

Another big clap of thunder ran across the sky. It sounded like a big bowling ball on a tin roof. Again there was no lightning. Just the brobdingnagian chuckle of thunder.

Doc ran, jumped aboard *Nick's Baby*. There was a rope fender on the cabin top and he grabbed it and sailed it at the cockpit, bouncing it along the cabin top so it might sound as if he was running to the stern. He himself went forward and jammed his head and shoulders down the forward hatch.

He hung there with his head and upper body inside the hatch. Slowly, the rest of him disappeared into the cabin. In a couple of minutes he came out again, much more slowly, and leaned against the stub of a mast. His facial expression was considerably more ill than it had been when he went below.

After a while, he sat down, sinking slowly and resting crosslegged. He sat there contemplating nothing with the grimmest sort of intentness.

It thundered again, weakly and far off. Half a dozen gulls whipped down like loose gray leaves swirled by a wind that didn't exist. At first the gulls were silent, then suddenly they began chorusing their forlorn cries, and continued making them as they fled. The smell of fish, and particularly the unlovely odor of menhaden, was a heavy presence in the still air.

He unslung the walkie-talkie again.

“Renny,” he said.

There was no response.

He tried it again and again, saying, “Renny,” anxiously, and changing it to, “From Savage to Renwick. Come in. Come in, please.” He got no answer.

He lifted his eyes to the sky. But the sky was empty of everything except the crawling black cumulo-nimbus clouds that were lowering and threatful. No plane. No sound of a plane. No hope, almost.

Hope, he thought grimly, is as necessary as air for breathing. Without it, things ended before there was an end and purpose was not purpose nor was it anything else.

He grimaced. The devil with vagueness. To pot with philosophy. The simple fact was that they were up against a blank wall.

They had four or five hours left to locate the *Pilotfish* and they had no more idea than rabbits where the submarine was.

Unless, of course, Renny located it from the plane. He was out there now, seeking traces of oil that might have bled from the fuel tanks.

Doc eyed the sky bitterly. The heavens were full of smouldering violence, and shortly there would be wind and rain, so that it would be almost impossible to locate anything like an oil streak on the surface. It was impossible right now, probably. Because the clouds and the lightning and the brewing storm would give the sea a strangeness.

He shivered.

Time was a poison. Time was death. Given forty-eight or even twenty-four hours and the *Pilotfish* could be found. The Navy had plenty of sonic locators for just such jobs, and the general location of the *Pilotfish* was known. Her whereabouts was certainly known within a radius of, say, ten miles. The sound bouncers would make duck soup of that. But it would take time.

Was there a chance of the men in the *Pilotfish* lasting more than twelve hours? If what Monk had tapped out to Renny about the high-pressure air, about the high-pressure tanks having bled themselves, it didn't look like even twelve hours.

They probably had plenty of pure oxygen. They must have a little high-pressure air, too. And if they were lucky, they'd have plenty of soda lime which would help absorb the deadly carbon-dioxide. Twelve hours was a long time under such conditions.

SOON Doc got Renny on the walkie-talkie. The walker was not designed for much distance and the sky, gorged with the turbulence of the oncoming cold front, was crackling with atmospheric. Renny had been out of range of the little outfit. But now he was coming back.

“Nothing doing,” Renny reported.

He sounded as if he had aged a decade.

“No oil slick?” Doc asked.

“No oil slick.”

“Would the weather keep you from seeing one?”

“It would help keep me from it,” Renny muttered. “And the weather is getting worse.”

Doc asked, “Did you try the radio?”

Renny said he had. He had guarded the band the *Pilotfish* would use for a radio distress call. There had been nothing.

“Do you think there is much chance they could get a radio signal out?”

“None at all,” Renny said. “Remember, I told you that the radio apparatus was smashed shortly after we sailed. Clark, the communications man, must have done that. He denied it at the time, naturally. But now we know Clark is mixed up in this thing, so he probably did it.”

Doc said quietly, “Come on in.”

He told Renny the location of the little wharf where *Nick's Baby* was lying. He gave Renny the wind direction and probable velocity.

“Taxi up to the boat after you land,” he said.

The plane, noisy and frightened in the storm-charged sky, came straight in on the crosswind leg, did a ninety-degree turn and sat down. The landing was somewhat ragged, bad enough to make Doc realize that Renny was probably in no shape for flying. Renny, as a matter of fact, should be in a hospital after what he had gone through.

There were several dinghies tied to the wharf. Doc got into one, sculled out to the plane, and got aboard. He shoved the dink away with his foot. It would drift up on the beach, because the wind, when it came, was going to be onshore.

Renny's eyes were beginning to get a flat lifelessness. He asked hoarsely, “Nick?”

Doc indicated *Nick's Baby*.

“Nick and the brother-in-law named Jake are in the cabin,” Doc said. “Both have been stabbed to death.”

Chapter X

RENNY stared unseeingly at the instrument panel. He doubled a fist as if his control had slipped and he had to smash something. The fist was enormous, almost an abnormality. It was cut, bruised and still dark with the oil stains which it had picked up aboard the submarine. Renny looked at the lifted fist. He lowered it.

“You'd better fly this thing from now on,” he said. “My wheels are about to fly off.”

He spoke heavily, then got out of the cockpit, moving as if he was stiff and old. He went back to one of the cabin seats and sank into it.

The motors were still turning over. Doc opened the throttle bank slightly, used rudder, and taxied out into

the harbor.

He was going out into the harbor because the plane cabin was no safe place if they were shot at. And there was a possibility that they might be shot at. If Clark or his men were still in Mystic.

“Renny,” he said.

“Yes?”

“What do you figure their chances for lasting more than twelve hours on the *Pilotfish*?” Doc asked quietly.

Renny answered immediately, in a way that showed he had been thinking about it, had been giving it all the thought that he could.

He said, “Monk has had submarine experience. He had quite a bit before this thing came up. And Wickart, the skipper, was alive in there with them. Wickart is a good sub man. I don't think those two would be fooled.”

“They had time to form a judgment? Time to look over the damage, the air supply, the oxygen, the soda lime, and all the rest?”

“They'd had time.”

“Then it's twelve hours?”

Renny glanced at the clock on the instrument panel. “It's less than four hours now,” he said.

Doc Savage was watching the bay. It was very slick looking in places, and riffled with small waves in other places. Little gusts of wind were beginning to move about.

Off to the west, he saw a fish jump, or make some kind of a violent flip with its tail. He didn't see the fish, but the splash was considerable. . . . He became rigid. He watched the bay. Two more “fish” jumped, this time about a hundred yards apart.

Not fish, of course, but ricocheting rifle bullets. They were being fired upon. He hadn't heard the bullet sound, because the motors were running.

He swung around slowly.

“Renny,” he said. “Renny, we have one chance.”

Renny stared at him. “Eh?”

“We are being shot at.”

Renny shook his head, not understanding. He said, “What do you mean, chance? What chance? I see we're being shot at. It's coming from the headland, isn't it?”

Doc studied the spot where the bullets had ricocheted. The headland was probably right. It was brush-grown, and he remembered that a road swung out around the point, but that there were no houses. He'd noticed that much from the air.

The reason the snipers had picked the point, however, was more obvious. Their take-off route, the into-the-wind line the plane would logically follow in taking off, lay directly over the point. The snipers, no

doubt, had planned to pump bullets into the plane as it went overhead.

They must have become impatient.

Doc Savage said, "Let's see what we can do toward holding them there until one of us can get on their trail."

In a moment, Renny's hands were fastened to Doc's shoulder. "Doc, if we can catch them!" he yelled. "They must know where the sub is lying! If we can get one of them!"

"That's probably our one chance," Doc agreed.

He fed the engine's throttle, just enough to make the ship gather speed. He kicked rudder, sending the plane in a circle back toward the other side of the bay. His idea was to make the snipers think that he was preparing to take off.

Renny was talking wildly, elatedly, saying. "You know what's behind this? That room! That compartment in the *Pilotfish*, welded shut. It's what's in that compartment that they're after. It's got to be. They're sticking around to be sure we don't know where the sub is. But they know, because they must plan to go back!" He said all this with seemingly one breath, and then fell to coughing nervously.

"Renny!" Doc shouted. "Renny, something to make smoke."

The engineer looked up vacantly.

"Something to make smoke," Doc repeated.

Renny pulled himself together. He went back to the equipment cases which were clamped to the solid framework of the fuselage. He dug around in the cases until he found smoke grenades. The smoke grenades were part of a more or less standardized assortment of weapons which they carried.

These were "scare" grenades. A few police departments had them. They would make a surprising amount of extremely black smoke, and the smoke would have an acrid, choking quality and a distinct odor of mustard. It almost exactly imitated mustard gas, and would scare the devil out of anyone who knew what mustard gas was.

Renny passed them to Doc Savage.

"One is enough," Doc said. "Here is what I am going to try: Well put the plane in position for a take-off, then fake a fire, using the grenade to release a cloud of smoke. There is enough breeze to drift the smoke toward shore. I think I can swim fast enough to stay ahead of the smoke, so that the snipers cannot see me. In other words, I want cover to reach shore."

Renny nodded. "What do I do?"

"Tease them into thinking you're going to take off and they can get a shot at you."

The plane was fairly close to the far shore now. About as close as it was safe to sail. Doc kicked the nose around into the wind. He opened the throttle smoothly to the fullest, as he would for a take-off.

Renny had the cabin windows open. Doc dropped the smoke grenade on the floor, pin pulled. Instantly it disgorged black smoke in enormous quantities which the draft whirled out of the open windows.

"It's all yours, Renny," Doc said.

He closed the throttles, slid back in the cabin, wrenched open the door, waited until plenty of smoke had boiled out around him, and dived. Enough smoke was swirling out of the cabin door that he was sure they couldn't see him from the other side of the bay. It was more than a mile from here to where the snipers must be hidden.

He came up and swam rapidly for the shore. It was about a hundred yards. The smoke, heavy, hung to the surface of the water. Shortly beach mud was underfoot. He slogged ashore.

There were spectators by now. Several persons near the shore had been watching the plane, and seen the smoke appear. They had raced to the beach.

Some of them saw Doc.

He heard his name. Someone had recognized him. He went on, keeping ahead of the wind-carried smoke, until he reached the cover of trees. As he ran, he searched for a car.

Back on the shore, they were shouting at the plane. Did the plane need help? No, it didn't, Renny bellowed. There had just been a little fire. It hadn't hurt anything. Renny's bellowing voice sounded remarkably robust, healthy, fresh. His big voice would probably be the last part of him that would collapse.

Now there'll be silly stuff in the newspapers, Doc thought sourly. Something goofy about him coming ashore from the plane in a cloud of smoke, only some reporter would be sure to dress it up with wild feathers. He scowled, embarrassed by the prospects.

Publicity of the wild sort always embarrassed him. The newspapers invariably picked out something spectacular, which usually meant something silly, and played it up. There was nothing particularly goofy about using the smoke grenade. It was an accepted military practice to cover maneuvers with smoke screens. But when this got in print, it would make him red-eared to read it.

THE car he found was a taxi. It was a marvelous place to find a taxi. Pure luck. But the driver wasn't hot about getting a fare. "I want to see that plane burning," he said.

"The plane isn't burning," Doc told him. "If you want to make about a dollar a minute for the next half hour, let's get going." He shoved a bill into the man's hand. "Here's twenty minutes in advance."

The man looked at the bill with appropriate respect. He folded it and stuck it in the defroster guard so that he would have it under his eyes.

"What's the catch?" he asked.

Doc described the point of land where he wanted to go. "How quick can you make it?"

"That's about four miles," the driver said. "Say about two minutes."

"Don't overdo it," Doc said.

As a matter of fact, they took only a little more than five minutes for the trip.

"Cut off your engine and kick the clutch out," Doc said. "Let's do the last half mile without undue uproar."

The curves in the road were gentle and the going slightly downhill. They raced along in what would have

been a satisfactory silence if the springs had not squeaked like hungry mice.

When the spot where the snipers were probably located was about a quarter of a mile ahead, Doc indicated a place where cars had been leaving the road. Where picnickers had been pulling off to park. "See how quietly you can put it in there."

The old car rolled off the road and behind the bushes as quietly as could be desired.

"Now you wait here," Doc said. "Better stay in the car. If you're asked questions, say you're watching the plane."

The driver stared at him. "How legal is this?"

Doc hesitated. Minutes, the way things were going, were worth more than diamonds. But he didn't want the driver getting dubious and leaving.

Doc showed the man a folder. It was an impressive folder complete with picture and fingerprints, and it identified Doc as a special agent, civilian section, the United States Navy. The commission was a survival of some earlier work he had done for the Navy.

The driver nodded.

"There's a double-barreled shotgun in the trunk, with some number fours," he said. "You have any use for it?"

"I hope not," Doc said.

"It's there if you want it."

"Thanks," Doc told him. "Just so you're here when I want you."

"I will be."

Doc went toward the tip of the neck of land.

He could hear the plane out on the bay. The motors were whooping alternately, then settling down to idling speed. Through an opening in the brush, he saw the ship. Renny was out on a wing at the moment, pretending to tinker with one of the motors. The amphibian was far enough away that it was not likely to be shot at.

The distant noise of the plane, Doc hoped, had covered any sound the taxi had made. If his luck held, it had.

HIS luck was good enough. He found their car first. It was parked carefully in a lane, turned toward the road ready for a hurried departure.

He moved very carefully then. He wished he'd brought the walkie-talkie, but he hadn't. He'd been afraid the set wouldn't stand the wetting when he swam ashore. With the set now, he could have suggested that Renny create a diversion, draw the fire of the snipers.

The snipers would, he assumed, be near the beach. Probably lying in the tall salt water grass which grew near the shore. He operated on that theory, and searched the sand for footprints. He didn't find any tracks. He heard the voices first.

The initial voice was uneasy, demanding, "By God, how much longer we going to stay here?"

The second voice was gleeful with ridicule. "What's the matter, Joney?"

Joney cursed. He had a slight Irish accent. He said what half-smart so-and-sos he thought they were. "That plane is messing around out there for some reason," he said.

"Sure it is," the other agreed. "One of us put a bullet into the works somewhere, and they're trying to figure out what happened."

"There's no more smoke."

"Sure. They got the fire out."

Joney said, "You damned guys don't seem to get it through your heads you're dealing with Doc Savage."

"Scared, Joney?"

Joney said damned right he was scared.

Where's the third man, Doc Savage wondered. They were talking as if there were more than two. There might be more than three, too.

"I wish to hell I had a telescope sight," Joney said. "I bet I could pick off that guy the next time he comes out on the wing. And listen, why is it the same guy on the wing every time? You know what? I think there's only one of them on that plane."

They didn't laugh at that. It gave them something to think about.

Doc had been working forward cautiously. Now he found where they were hiding. They were sitting behind a thin bush, two of them together. They had Garand rifles, standard issue types. Looking at the rifles, Doc wondered if they had brought the weapons from the submarine. If so, it meant the men had been aboard the sub.

The two men wore civilian clothes. They didn't look as if they had been out in the sun much, which might mean they had been on the *Pilotfish*. It might mean they had been lying around the city, too.

Doc studied the pair, estimated his chances of getting to them, of overpowering them. It would be dangerous.

That had been his idea. Catch one of the men who had been on the *Pilotfish*. Force the fellow to reveal the submarine's location. Simple and direct.

Joney was grumbling again. He said, "We're suckers to fool around Savage. That Renwick doesn't know where the submarine is lying. That fisherman, that Nick, was the only one who knew. Okay, Nick's out of the picture. Nick's kapoot. Why don't we let it lie until the excitement dies down?"

"Pipe down."

"Pipe down hell! We've the same as got the sub in our pocket. We know where it is. We let the noise die down, and in a few weeks or a few months send a diver out to the sub and open that compartment. That was the plan. Why not go ahead with it?"

"The plan," someone told him sourly, "didn't include the noise."

Doc jumped. The third voice!

THE third man had spoken, and he sounded so much like Joney's companion that Doc had almost missed the difference. The third man was close.

Joney said, "How do you suppose they came to put Renwick, Mayfair and Brooks on that submarine in the first place?"

The third man swore.

"Giesen," he said. And swore again.

"Yeah, Giesen," Joney agreed. "Giesen smelled a rat, all right."

"You reckon he suspected Clark?"

"Of course not, or he would have clapped Clark in the brig and damned quick. Giesen just had a hunch something was up. So he put Savage's three friends aboard to stop it."

The third speaker, Doc decided, was about fifteen feet ahead, a little in front and to the left of the first two. A thick bush stood at this point. The man must be inside it.

But were they off the submarine? Did they know the location of the craft? He had to have the answer. The alternative of a mistake now was paralyzing to think about.

It certainly sounded as if they had been on the *Pilotfish*.

He lay there mentally writhing on the horns of the dilemma, in as devilish a mental spot as he had ever occupied. Then the thing solved itself. Or at least he was suddenly without the necessity of making any choice. The choice was made for him.

Chapter XI

A NESTING bird flew wildly from almost under Doc's nose. The bird had been sitting there, unnoticed because of protective concealment, tied to the nest by its protective instinct. Suddenly the bird's patience came to an end. It flew.

Doc never did see the bird. But it was a large one, and made plenty of noise. With a flailing of feathers, hitting bushes, it left.

The man Doc had not yet seen sounded alarmed. He demanded, "What the hell was that?"

"A bird," Joney said.

In the stillness that followed, the distant aeroplane motor sputtered. Thunder got loose in the heavens, and the noise of the plane engine was completely lost in the greater uproar overhead.

The earlier rifle shots, Doc thought, must have been fired during the thunder-bursts. That would keep them from being heard. He had this side thought with one part of his mind. The rest of his mind and all his nerves waited for what was coming.

The unseen man said, "A damned funny acting bird, if you ask me."

Joney, not alarmed, jeering, asked, "Who's scared now?"

"Hold it," said the unseen man. "Let's take a look."

He came up out of the bush. He was a long, hungry fellow with leathery hide and water-colored eyes. His blue suit didn't fit him.

Doc Savage had his hat off by now. He leaned it against a grass clump, where there were weeds all around. Then he moved back, to the left.

The long man came forward, walking as if he was on eggs. He had a thin-lipped mouth, as if a slit had been made in a football. His lower lip hung downward and outward.

He said, "God!" He had seen the hat.

He began firing the submachine gun he carried, walking into it as he fired. He did not have the web belt and magazine cases which are military regulation whenever the submachine gun is carried. He had only the gun. It shook and rattled and spouted empties.

The hat jumped around, turning ragged, climbing into the air.

Doc Savage had two rocks in his fists. They were hard flint rocks, not round but nearly enough so for throwing, and somewhat larger than baseballs. He came up on his knees, throwing both rocks.

He threw the left rock first, because he was not as good with his left hand. As it turned out, the throw he made with that hand was better than the other. It dropped the man neatly by grazing his head. The other rock, thrown much harder, hit the man in the stomach pit. He went over backward. The gun, moaning a long burst, cut leaves out of the trees and sprinkled lead over the sky.

Doc went flat again. There were plenty of rocks. He got two more.

He yelled. "Use a grenade on them!"

Then he tossed one of the small rocks. It was dark, and under the circumstances certainly looked like a hand grenade.

The way the other two men flattened out told him one thing: They'd had combat training, at least simulated combat. Whether they were off the sub or not was still a question.

While they were down, Doc moved. He scuttled forward on all fours, keeping as low as he could, and reached the man he had hit with the rock.

He got the submachine gun. He didn't want the fellow shot in the course of whatever was going to happen next, so he kept going. There were large rocks in the weeds and brush. He found one, and hit the dirt behind it. It was as effective as a foxhole, if they didn't flank him.

He had the other rock in his left hand. He threw that. One of the men, Joney, cursed and flattened again.

An uneasy, waiting silence followed.

Doc broke it by calling, "Come in from the right and left, men! Be careful!" He hoped that would worry them. He hoped it would make them think there was a large party surrounding them.

More stillness.

Joney said, "That wasn't no grenade! That was a rock!"

Doc had been inspecting the ammunition supply left in the submachine gun. There wasn't much. About two good bursts. He set the gun for single shot.

Picking out as nearly as he could the place where Joney lay in the weeds, Doc put two bullets through the tall salt-water grass and brush. Apparently he hit nothing. He was not shot at.

"Joney," Doc said.

Joney didn't answer.

Doc said, "Get your hands up, both of you. You haven't got a chance."

No response. Doc watched the grass and low brush alertly. A long time passed. It was about thirty seconds, but it seemed almost that many minutes.

"Joney!" It was the other man.

"Yeah?"

"You going to give up?"

"And stand in front of a firing squad? Hell, no!" Joney sounded hoarse.

Doc lifted his own voice again. He shouted, "They're going to put up a fight! Come in on them! But be careful!"

Then he picked up small rocks, very small ones, and began flipping them here and there, hoping Joney and the other man wouldn't see them, hoping the sounds the small pebbles made would be mistaken for an ambush party creeping closer.

There was not much of that, about thirty seconds, and Joney said, "Let's get out of here!"

"Okay."

They leaped up and ran. Doc came up himself. It was important that they not get away. But they were sharper than he expected. One was running sidewise, so that he saw Doc instantly.

And the man had another submachine gun. Not a rifle. He'd had a rifle earlier, but he had dropped that, exchanged it for an army model Thompson.

The man swung. The gun put out lead and noise. Doc dived wildly. He got down in time. But there was a shower of twigs, dirt and rock fragments.

He didn't lift his head again. He didn't dare. Not until he had crawled a few yards to reach a spot where they wouldn't expect him. By then, the pair had gotten away.

THEIR car motor started. Doc sprinted, trying to reach a spot where he could see the car. He did see it, but the machine was going fast through the trees.

He took what seemed the best chance. He put the gun on automatic and emptied it, except for three or four cartridges, into the car motor. The distributor was on the near side of the engine. He should have

smashed it, cut wires, shattered spark plugs.

The car left like a smoothly functioning rocket, still hitting on all eight cylinders.

Doc wheeled, ran back to the man he had clubbed down.

The long man had turned over on his face and was mumbling and trying to push himself off the ground. In another minute or so, he would have been on his feet and gone.

Doc seized the man's bony shoulder, jerked him over on his back, and struck the point of the man's jaw with a fist. Then he shouldered the fellow.

The cab driver was out of his cab. He had the trunk open, had the double-barreled shotgun in his hands.

"You okay?"

Doc said, "Yes. See what kind of a following job you can do!"

He piled into the back seat with his prisoner. The cab began moving, the driver handling the wheel with one hand, repeatedly slamming the door, which wouldn't catch, with the other hand.

They traveled perhaps two hundred yards along the road before there was a squealing noise from underneath. The driver brought the cab to a stop and jumped out.

He pointed. "Ruined a tube, too!" He sounded near tears.

The head of a roofing nail, round and shiny and about the size of a dime, was partly embedded in the casing.

Doc walked along the road, back the way they had come, looking at the blacktop. He found more tacks.

"Better take some branches and rig something across the road to flag down any other cars," he told the taxi driver when he returned. "They dumped roofing nails all over the road."

"My ration board is going to love this," the driver said.

"The navy will take care of it," Doc told him. He got out his billfold.

The driver shook his head. "The twenty you gave me will cover it."

"Whatever you say."

"It's covered."

Doc dragged the long man out of the cab. He shouldered the fellow and walked toward the beach.

Renny Renwick saw his arm signals immediately. The plane approached, motors drumming, dragging a long wedge of wake across the oily, threatening water.

THE beach was bad, with partly submerged rocks and sharp reefs. Doc had to wade out into water above his waist. Renny had forgotten to put out a boarding ladder, so that he had difficulty getting aboard with the long man. Renny finally got out of the cockpit long enough to give him a hand. The plane almost drifted on to the rocks. Renny dashed back to the controls, and got them clear.

Doc said. "Take it off. Go over the point and land in New London harbor."

Renny nodded wordlessly. He had seen the long man's face, and he was scowling. "That's one of them," Renny said.

The plane gathered speed, rode the step for a while and climbed off. The rest of the bay fled under them, then a beach and trees, houses, roads. The air was getting rough.

Doc asked, "This fellow was on the *Pilotfish*?"

Renny nodded. "He's one of the sailors who came aboard at the last minute."

Doc leaned back. He knew he shouldn't feel as relieved as he felt. But he couldn't help it. "Then it wasn't entirely a water-haul," he said.

"What happened?"

Doc told him. He explained, "I made a dumb move. The taxi driver would have helped, I think. But I didn't know him and I was afraid to depend on him."

Renny swallowed. "We should kick. We're so damned far ahead of where we were twenty minutes ago that we should complain."

A thermal caught a wing, gave them a nasty heave. The heavy amphibian did a slip that was scary because they didn't have much altitude. Renny did careful coördination with wheel and pedals and got them level.

"He may not know the exact location of the submarine," Doc said.

The long man stirred slightly. Doc went back to him, and began searching the fellow's clothing. Every one of the man's pockets seemed to contain some kind of a weapon.

Renny put the plane in a landing glide, coming down in a diagonal that would set them on the Thames opposite the coal dock in New London.

"He'd better know," Renny said grimly.

Chapter XII

THEY swung around, taxied the plane out toward the harbor mouth until they reached the yacht club. They picked up a mooring buoy there, and Doc got a line about it. The plane would ride here now without their worrying about watching it.

Not as much thunder was running through the heavens, but what there was of it was louder. There would be a great cannon crashing of sound. The rumbles would die away. Then silence until the next terrific report.

The front, Doc saw, was moving down from the north. It was not far away. Fifteen minutes, probably. It was moving slowly. When it hit, there would be howling winds and turmoil and probably hail and certainly rain. The plane would not be safe here. It would not be safe anywhere except in a stout hanger.

Renny Renwick pulled himself up out of the cockpit. He was ill, exhausted, drained of strength. He moved slowly back in the cabin, keeping hold of things as if he was afraid he would stumble. His long

face was not pleasant.

He sank to a knee beside the long man. "You know where that sub is?" he asked.

The long man looked at him unblinkingly. The fellow had regained some color. There was no sign of fear about him except the perspiration. It was not particularly hot in the plane, but the man was soaked.

Renny said, "Look, I asked you a question."

The man still said nothing.

Renny's face was terrible. He reached out slowly and picked up the man's left hand and dragged the hand to him and seized the little finger on the hand. He broke the finger while the long man suddenly lost his stoicism and began screeching in agony.

Doc Savage had started forward. He stopped. His eyes were on the long man's face.

The long man's face was changing. His expression was altering. Fear. Anxiety, probably for his life. He was suddenly scared stiff of Renny.

Doc retreated. This may be the way, he thought.

Renny hadn't said anything. He was breathing heavily, and his eyes were too wide, his mouth too large and loose, his whole attitude strange. Renny looked like a man who might be losing his mind.

He's just weak and tired and terrified, Doc thought. Just beaten to an emotional pulp by suspense.

Renny got hold of his voice. It sounded as if he had reached into a cage of snakes for it.

Renny said, "I was in that submarine. I was in it just long enough to find out what those others are going through, then I got out. They didn't get out. They've got twelve hours—or they had twelve hours. They've not got much more than two hours now. Two hours. You get that."

He got down and put a hand on each side of the long man's head, put his own terrible face close to the long man's agonized one. He said, "Two hours, pal. We find that submarine in two hours, or Monk and Ham and those other sailors are dead."

The long man looked as if he wanted to shrink down through the cabin floor.

"So I want to know where that submarine is," Renny said.

The long man's answer sounded as if a chain was being dragged out of a box.

"I don't know where it is," he said.

DOC SAVAGE was leaning against one of the cabin seats. He put his weight heavily on it. For a moment disappointment came up and engulfed him. The man didn't know!

Time had come to its end. Time, that was, which would do them any good. Two hours they had to get to the *Pilotfish*, to do what they could do for the men imprisoned in the hull. It was not enough. Not enough to try again to find where the submarine lay.

Renny hadn't moved. He was still on all fours, staring hypnotically into the long man's face.

“Maybe you didn't understand me,” Renny said. “*You've got to know.*”

The long man dampened his lips. Renny, while the man's tongue was between his teeth, suddenly struck the man's jaw, causing him to bite his tongue painfully. The hurt came out of the man in a low mewing.

Renny breathed inward deeply, fiercely.

“Maybe you heard somewhere that we've never killed anybody in cold blood,” he said.

The long man had screwed his eyes shut in pain. He kept them shut.

“Listen,” Renny said. “*I've got to know where that submarine is!*”

Doc had never heard Renny's voice the way it was now. Renny was going to kill the man. There wasn't the slightest doubt about it. And the way Renny would do it would not be nice.

Doc restrained an impulse to stop it. Renny wasn't bluffing. Renny was close to the edge of sanity, and he might kill the man in a sudden frenzy. Commit the deed before he could be stopped.

Wildly, Doc tried to think of some other alternative. Truth serum? Truth serum was the only thing he could think of. But truth serum was not always effective, and the efficient employment of it required three or four hours. He could not, he was positive, get results from any truth serum of which he knew. Use of the stuff was illegal. Not that they would worry about that too much, if there had been time. But there wasn't time.

Renny had shut off the plane motors. It was fairly still, except for the loudness of the gathering storm.

Renny's breathing was quite audible.

Fascinated, Doc watched what Renny was doing to the long man. The process was psychological entirely. Renny wasn't touching the fellow, wasn't laying another hand on him for the time being.

There was not more than a foot between their faces. Close enough for the long man to get the benefit of everything Renny was thinking. Hate. Cold perspiration. Intent to kill.

The staring must have gone on wordlessly for three or four minutes.

Then Renny took hold of the man's left arm. Merely took hold of it. The man screamed, hoarsely and as if he was badly hurt, mixing words in with his shriek.

Doc couldn't understand what the man said, but Renny miraculously got it. Renny's face lighted. The black curtains fell.

“You hear that, Doc?” Renny said clearly and rationally. “He knows where the sub is, and he's going to show us.”

DOC SAVAGE went forward hastily. There was a chart compartment. He'd been foresighted enough to stuff some marine charts into the case, a New York-to-Boston general scale chart, and smaller detail charts of the water where the *Pilotfish* must be lying.

He put the charts in front of the long man.

“Mark the place,” he said.

Then he watched the man. It was important, so important that it was sickening, that they know whether the fellow had lied to temporarily save his neck.

The long man picked through the charts. That was a good sign. He unrolled each and glanced at the area designation. He could be making it look good, though.

He finally selected a chart, eyed it for a while. It seemed to Doc that he was actually picking out bearing points.

"I'll need a protractor and a sharp pencil," the long man said finally. "Parallel rulers, too."

Doc passed him the instruments without comment. He watched the fellow on his knees, marine chart spread out in what clear space there was, squinting, drawing lines with the pencil.

The man looked up finally.

"You can check me on this," he said.

"How were the bearings taken?" Doc asked.

"Clark got them. So did I," the long man explained. "We were on deck with a pelorus and a compass. We shot bearings on Montauk Point light, Fisher's Island light, Little Gull and Watch Hill. Moreover we had clocked off since passing the bell on Southwest Ledge."

"You remember all those figures?"

"Yeah."

Doc thought that unlikely. All those bearings amounted to a lot of remembering.

His doubts must have shown.

The long man looked uneasy. "I had them written down. Then I memorized them. It took about an hour, but I got them pat."

"Why?"

The man shoved out his jaw. "With only one guy knowing where the sub was, there was too much temptation for that guy to doublecross us. To disappear, or something, for a couple of years. He could come back any time. Knowing where the sub was would be like having it in the bank."

Doc said, "Have you some idea of what will happen to you if you are lying?"

The long man nodded. "Yeah. I hope you find the sub there about as much as you hope it is, I ain't kidding."

Doc Savage went back to Renny. He showed Renny his watch. "An hour and fifty minutes, more or less."

"Can the navy get anything out to the submarine in that time?" Renny asked hoarsely.

"Nothing that would do any good."

"What could they get out there?"

"Small surface craft, probably, very small. Nothing in the way of an escape bell."

“Can we do much better?”

“We can try.”

“That's all there is to do, isn't it?”

“That's all.”

Renny nodded. He went back to the long man. “We're going out to where you say that sub is,” he told the man. “One of us will go. And the sub had better be there.”

The long man turned the shade of an old newspaper. “God, you don't expect me to drop a diver right on it!” he croaked.

“That's what we expect,” Renny said ominously.

“But it may be anywhere within two or three miles of the spot!” The long man sounded ill.

IT was daytime. The bearings taken a few moments before the *Pilotfish* was sunk had been taken at night. It was much simpler to get an accurate bearing at night on Montauk Point lighthouse, Fisher's Island, and the others. In fact, it was impossible because of haze to even see Little Gull, which was one of the markers. And Montauk Point, on the tip of Long Island, was not too prominent.

Doc simplified matters somewhat by flying a bearing on Montauk while Renny checked off on Watch Hill, and the other bearing points. At the proper spot, Renny dumped out a little sea trace.

The sea trace was part of the standard kit most planes carry when working over the ocean. A chemical powder which would stain the water a distinctive yellow.

Doc banked back and landed. There was not much sea running. But there was the inevitable ground swell, greasy and unstable.

When the plane was sloughing through the yellowish sea trace, he called to Renny, “Put out the light buoy. The whistler.”

The buoy consisted of an aluminum float which would give out a tweet-tweet sort of a whistle because of the action of the waves. It was anchored by a mushroom weight and a couple of hundred feet of light line. Renny put it overside. He came back to the cockpit.

“What'll we do—work the sound apparatus from the plane or from a rubber boat?” he asked.

“From the plane,” Doc said. “You feel able to work the outfit?”

Renny nodded. “I'm feeling better, now that we're getting somewhere.”

Doc looked at him sharply. “Don't prop yourself up too high. Maybe we aren't getting anywhere.”

The sounding gadget was electrical, and there was nothing new about it. It had none of the hair-raising nearly pseudo-scientific unreality of some of the gadgets which Doc Savage liked to produce to fit a given emergency. This one, in principle, was simple.

A transmitter started a sound wave for the bottom of the ocean. The wave went down, hit the bottom, or any object that was between, and bounced back. The receiver got the bounce, and measured the

time-lapse, putting this on a dial where it could be seen.

The thing had one very good quality. It was sensitive to within a couple of feet. It would readily spot the lump of the submarine on the bottom.

Sonic transmitter and receiver were in one unit. The thing had actually been designed for use from seaplanes in this fashion, or from blimps, during the submarine scare early in the war.

Renny adjusted dials. He stuck the stethoscope in his ears.

Doc began to grill the surface of the sea with the plane. Back and forth. Move over a hundred feet each time. Back and forth. The plane crawled up the greasy swells and slithered down the slopes.

The long man occupied a cabin seat. They had tied him there, lashed him hand and foot. He watched Renny listen to the stethoscope and watching the indicator dial. Perspiration had soaked the fellow from head to foot.

Renny let out a howl. "Got it!" He waved his arms. "Holy cow! Here it is!"

Doc swung the plane slowly. "Check it for length," he warned. He sent the plane back a little north of the previous crossing. He watched Renny's face, saw it grow uneasy.

"Must have caught the first sounding near the bow or stern of the sub," Renny muttered.

Doc circled and made another pass over the spot. Renny shook his head sickly. "That's some other wreck," he said, defeated. "It's not over fifty feet long."

They had two more false alarms. Then Renny got one that wasn't.

Chapter XIII

DOC put out a mushroom anchor and a buoy attached to a line. The buoy had a flashing light and a slow-feeding supply of sea trace which would make it easy to locate from the air for twenty-four hours or so. It would hold the plane.

"You going down?" Renny asked anxiously.

"Not until we try the oscillator," Doc told him.

The oscillator was a standard underwater signalling device. This one was portable, not very punchy. But down in the *Pilotfish*, there was oscillator equipment which could send a whining signal a considerable distance.

Provided this was the *Pilotfish*. And provided there was anyone left alive, and that they had electric current for the oscillator.

Doc submerged the oscillator, turned on the power. He keyed slowly.

"Keep on the stethoscope to see whether you can pick up an answer," he warned Renny.

But they were able to get no response out of the sound receiver. They might as well have been holding their ears to a coffin.

They didn't look at each other. They didn't want to exhibit the stark, ill defeat which had fallen upon

them.

“Put a knotted line over the side,” Doc said.

“Then you're really going down?” Renny demanded.

“Yes.”

Doc went back to the large case, upright in the after portion of the cabin, containing the diving dress. The thing was bulky. It wasn't going to be easy to get in and out of the plane wearing the outfit.

The suit was of metal, of flanged construction for light weight. It was not uncomfortable to wear, not much more uncomfortable than a suit of medieval armor would have been. It somewhat resembled the outfit of an ancient knight.

It was not a terrifically high-pressure outfit. Two hundred feet was probably as deep as it would be safe. But that was enough this time.

Doc stripped off. He put on a special undergarment, something like long-handled underwear, which served mostly as protection against chafing by the suit joints.

“I'll check the air,” Renny said grimly.

The suit was self-contained. No necessity existed for a surface air pump and bulky air hose. The absence of the air hose was a particular blessing. There was a tidal current here, and sometimes the pull of the water against a hundred and fifty feet or so of air hose was more than a man could handle.

The regenerating apparatus supplied an unpleasant, but perfectly serviceable air. Its principal parts consisted of compressed oxygen and air cylinders, mixing valves and automatic pressure regulators, caustic soda chamber for absorption of carbonic acid. The process—supplying air to the suit wearer—was entirely automatic and would continue for about an hour and a half.

There was a telephone in the helmet. There was also a conventional bell-ringing button which could be operated with the chin, and this was also connected with an oscillator by which code signals could be sent if the telephone wire became disconnected.

Renny had dropped into a mechanical check-off of the apparatus. He sounded like the co-pilot of a bomber during take-off procedure.

“What about the light and torch?” he asked.

“They're all right.”

The light was portable, electric, self-contained. It was rather bulky, and had considerable power. The torch was also portable, an underwater hydro-oxygen which could cut through a couple of inches of solid steel two hundred feet below the surface.

“Check-off seems okay,” Doc said.

He found that he couldn't get out through the plane door with the torch and light slung to the suit. He unslung them, and with Renny's aid, finally got out through the door. The plane was never meant to serve as a diving platform. In the end, he lost his balance and plunged into the sea.

THE water looked blue-green, and because the sky was cloudy, it was intensely dark a few feet down. He had fallen headlong into the sea, which meant nothing because the suit was self-contained. But the few minutes of awkwardness were discomfiting, though.

Over the telephone Renny's excited, "Doc, you all right!" reached his ears. The receiver wasn't working too well; it squawked.

"Hold me up for a check," Doc said.

He was attached to the plane by one line, a one-eighth inch braided airplane control cable. It was light and extremely powerful. It had one drawback—cutting it in case he got hung up. But its advantages outweighed the disadvantages. The cable was saturated with a paste lubricant which would, under the action of the salt water, create a bright fluorescence for several hours. The cable was like a red-hot wire around him, and it snapped past as Renny stopped his descent by tightening it.

Carefully, Doc checked air and pressure, movement of the suit joints.

He said, "Checks okay. Give me another fifty feet."

He went down by fifty-foot stages, pausing each time for a thorough check.

At a hundred and twenty-five feet, the suit began to grunt and complain, tortured by the pressure. Some of the joints started sweating drops of moisture, but there were no leaks large enough to alarm him. He would, he decided, try working at not much more than atmospheric pressure. If there had been other divers to aid, he would not have taken that chance.

By working at normal atmospheric pressure, he could avoid the dangers when he surfaced. The danger that would come from the blood taking on a great quantity of nitrogen under pressure, then causing bubbles when the diver came to the surface. But there was always a chance the pressure would collapse his armor, and the sudden shock would probably kill him if it did.

He hung there in the blackness. And it was very black. He hadn't switched on the light. It's like hanging in death, he thought.

Into the telephone, he said, "All right. Lower away."

The telephone wire and the thin cable were his only connection with the surface. He sank rapidly. Or he supposed it was rapidly. He couldn't see anything.

The bottom was fairly hard when he hit it. He had known it would be hard. The tide kept it scoured clean. The tidal current sweeping in and out of Long Island Sound.

"On the bottom," he told Renny.

Renny couldn't hold it back. "The sub?" he asked hoarsely. "Do you see the *Pilotfish*?"

Doc worked the light loose from his belt. There was a head clip for it. He decided to plant it in the clip first, and did so, then turned it on.

He was close enough to reach out and touch one of the stern planes of the *Pilotfish*. He reached out and touched it.

"It's here," he told Renny.

Renny did not answer.

“I have my hand on it,” Doc said. “Anyway, it’s a submarine. And there wouldn’t likely be another submarine right here.”

Renny didn’t answer. Renny wasn’t going to answer, he realized suddenly.

DEATH, black death all around, he thought. The headlamp rammed out fuzzy cone of dirty cotton, which was all there was except the blackness.

“Renny?” he said into the mike. “Renny, what has happened?”

The receiver did not bring Renny’s voice.

He was hit suddenly by an awful loneliness. A ghastly emptiness all around him. He screamed, “Renny, damn it, what happened?” Which was probably the first time he had lost control in years. He got hold of himself.

The telephone wires must have broken. He looked upward. He could see the wires arching upward, near the luminous cable. They were broken somewhere above, of course.

It was nothing to get alarmed about. The telephone wires had just broken.

He began crawling along the *Pilotfish*, doing what he had come down here to do.

The telephone wires had just broken. But the trouble was that the receiver should have been dead if they were broken, and the receiver wasn’t dead.

Chapter XIV

THE pistol was a regulation .45, and Renny knew quite well that it was loaded.

“You’re using,” the man told him, “some pretty good judgment.”

The man was Clark. He wore civilian clothes, and he had dyed his hair and made himself a little trick moustache with hair and spirit gum. The moustache was a good job. But it was still Clark.

“Hold it,” Clark said. “Hold everything.”

That was what he said when the boat came up alongside.

Renny didn’t know how the boat had managed to get so close without his knowing it was there. He’d never understand how it had.

But he’d looked up, and there it was. A cabin cruiser. A big, mahogany fast job. Fast as hell. Not worth much for anything but speed and flash, which was doubtless why the navy hadn’t taken it over early in the war.

Like a dragon, it had been there. Clark in the bow. Half a dozen other men with him. They were all armed. They had more rifles than commandoes.

They were climbing around now and getting into the plane. The boat’s bow had hit the plane. It had gouged quite a hole into the hull, above the waterline. Nobody seemed to care.

“Stand still while you're searched!” Clark snarled.

Renny did it. They relieved him of everything. Every stitch. They tore off everything he wore.

Then they looked at him and someone said, “My God, will you look at the bruises!” Renny looked down at himself. He could understand why he felt so tough. He was a mass of bruises from head to foot. He'd been given them when he was banged around in the submarine during the sinking.

Now that he was naked and helpless, they gave him a little less attention.

The long man got it.

“Well, well,” Clark said, looking at the long man. “It's Stickler, what do you know!”

It was the first time Renny had known the long man's name was Stickler.

One of the men started to untie Stickler. Clark halted that with, “Hold it a minute!”

Stickler suddenly looked horribly ill.

“How are you, Stick?” Clark asked.

Stickler swallowed sickly. “Okay,” he said.

“Where's Doc Savage?”

“He went down in a diving suit.”

“How long ago?”

“Not long. Ten minutes ago, maybe.”

“How did they know where the submarine was, Stick?”

“I don't know,” Stickler lied. “They just knew.”

“Didn't they ask you?”

“They asked me,” Stickler said. “But I didn't tell them.”

“I was afraid they would beat it out of you,” Clark said.

“I was afraid of that too,” Stickler lied. “But they already knew.”

Clark straightened. He called Stickler a lying son. He shot Stickler once between the eyes.

THE man died without hardly jerking. He did not do much but tilt his head forward, and a yarn of crimson strung down on his knees.

Clark went over to the telephone wires, the cable which ran down to Doc Savage's suit.

“Savage on the end of this?” he asked.

Renny lied, “No. That's the anchor cable.”

He didn't expect them to believe this. But they did. He was dumbfounded, then quickly hid his surprise.

"Anybody left alive in the submarine?" Clark demanded.

"I don't know," Renny said, telling the truth.

Clark straightened. He told one of his men, "Get the dynamite and lash it all together."

"All of it?" the man demanded, astonished.

"All of it," Clark said. "And hurry up."

Renny said, "If you're planning to lower dynamite and explode it down there and kill Doc Savage—it won't work."

"The hell it won't," Clark said. "I know deep water and submarines and I know it will."

"You don't know that much about them," Renny growled. He hoped in some way to talk them out of exploding the dynamite. The blast, at that depth, would collapse Doc's suit instantly.

Clark was scowling at him. "You found out about me, didn't you?"

Renny's thoughts went back to what they had picked up from the dying man in New York. "A little—Thomas," he said. "Yeah, we learned a little."

Clark swore bitterly.

"I wish to hell you hadn't found that out," he said plaintively. "Now I'll have to hide out again." He scowled. "I want to tell you, it isn't no damn fun, this lam business."

"How did you get in the navy?" Renny asked curiously. "Weren't you afraid of your fingerprints getting you in bad?"

Clark, alias Merry John Thomas, shrugged. "No trick to that. Took some dough. I got to the fellow who took the fingerprints, and just in case he fell down on the job, I got to the fellow who got the cards together for mailing. They had a fake set of fingerprints all fixed up. The fakes went on file instead of mine."

Renny said, "I wouldn't think you would have picked the navy for a hideout."

"Why not? The draft would have got me anyway. The armed forces are about as safe a spot as a man could find for a rest."

Renny nodded. "They told me you were an organizer. But I'm surprised you could get eight of your men aboard the submarine, the way you did."

Clark grinned thinly. "Pal, what do you think I spent three years in the navy for? Hell, I was figuring angles all the time. I kept in practice that way. I was afraid I would go stale, so I kept in touch with a bunch of the boys I could call on and depend on, and I was always figuring angles."

Renny said, "You've figured yourself into the electric chair, that's what."

Clark shook his head. "I'm going to shoot you. You know that, don't you?"

Renny knew it. He didn't know much about who Merry John Thomas had been in private life. But from

the way the New York police had reacted, Merry John had been somebody on a par with Capone, Dillinger and Pretty Boy Floyd. The man, of course, intended to kill him.

Renny began talking hastily, hoping to postpone it, hoping to think of some way out.

RENNY said, "You know, of course, that the sealed compartment in the *Pilotfish* doesn't contain what you think it does."

Clark jumped visibly. That got him for a minute. Then he sneered. "Kidding me, eh?"

"What makes you think I'd kid you?"

Clark glared at him. "Look, brother, I went to too much trouble to find out the truth. I know what's in the compartment."

Renny saw that the man was worried. That was what he wanted. Renny said, "Better think about it a minute."

Clark, scowling, said. "Garner, my Bank of England connection, couldn't be wrong."

"Garner is in jail right now," Renny said. He didn't know who Garner was, much less whether the man was in any jail.

Clark swore.

"That's like the damned fool law—lock up an innocent man," he said. "Garner is a nice old chump. His secretary was my girl friend, and I got the dope on the gold shipment through her. Garner never knew anything got spilled."

He stopped and watched Renny intently, calculatingly. He began shaking his head. "No, no, bub, you're feeding me a line," he said. "The whole thing was too cute. They wouldn't go through all that finagling on no water haul. The gold is aboard." He leaned forward suddenly. "When do you claim they got wise and pulled a fake?"

"Right at the first?"

"When was that?"

"Before the stuff was brought aboard off the German coast that night," Renny said.

Clark snorted. "Oh, no, it wasn't. My girl friend handled old Garner's dealings with the German bankers. She did the coding and decoding of the messages. All of them. Right from the time the German bankers decided it was too risky to keep all that gold in Germany the way conditions after the war were. She handled the messages all through the thing, the decision to bring the gold to the United States for safekeeping, how it was to be picked up by submarine so nobody would know about it, and the whole thing. She handled it. And there wasn't no faking, or she would have known it."

Facts were getting together in Renny's mind. He remembered who Garner was. Sir Archibald Rand Garner, financial officer for the British government.

So there was gold from Germany in the *Pilotfish*! He wasn't surprised. Everyone knew the Nazis had quite a supply of gold bullion, largely purloined earlier in the war. And anyone would know also that, with present conditions as upset as they were in Germany, there were safer places for a supply of gold to be.

The secrecy in moving the bullion? That was easy to account for, too. In spite of what the newspaper said, and the diplomats, there was considerable distrust in Europe between interests which were supposed to be friends. The open removal of that much gold to the United States would, Renny could well imagine, raise a fuss. So it had been done secretly.

Clark scowled at Renny. "You're a good liar, big fists," he said sourly. "You kind of worry me."

"You better be worried," Renny assured him. "Your goose is cooked."

"They haven't got any dope on me."

"I'm glad you think so."

Clark grimaced. "Who'd they get it from?"

Renny took a chance. "The girl," he said.

"What girl?"

"Garnet's secretary."

"When? Hell, they couldn't have my late plans."

Lying, Renny said, "You dope, I talked to the girl myself not forty-eight hours before the sub sailed."

That did it. That upset the apple cart. Clark laughed. Briefly, explosively, with relief. He didn't say anything.

Clark swung around to the men who were preparing the dynamite. "About ready?" he demanded. They told him they were. The charge was about ready to lower. The stuff had been bundled, the detonators attached, and the charge wires connected. About ready to go down.

Without turning his head, Clark told Renny, "You know why you didn't talk to the girl within forty-eight hours of sailing?"

Renny stared at him. "Why?"

"She met with a fatal accident a week before that," Clark said.

"You killed her?"

"They can't prove it," Clark said, and in the same tone, he ordered his men to start the explosive charge into the depths of the sea.

Renny got a look at the dynamite bundle as it went over the side of the power boat. It shocked him. They had sacked the stuff; there was as much blasting powder as a depth bomb held. Enough, he knew, to crush Doc's self-contained diving gear instantly.

Chapter XV

DELIGHT, Doc Savage thought, can be an earthquake. It can be thunder and lightning, the moon and stars, the complete glory.

He was sprawled out on the deck of the *Pilotfish*, unable for the moment to move. He was having

something that a neurologist would probably call a nervous reaction, only using larger words. Another way of putting it was that he was so delighted that he was a little hysterical.

Rapping on the *Pilotfish* hull, below him, asked, "Can you loosen the hatch?"

It was Monk.

Monk was alive.

Twenty-six other men were alive in there with Monk. All of them had survived so far. There had been enough oxygen, enough air pressure, enough soda lime, to keep them all alive.

This information Monk had just tapped out through the hull. He had not gone into detail. He had merely said, "*Twenty-seven alive.*"

Unlock the hatch! Or un-block it, rather. They could unlock it from the inside, and they must have done that long ago. Or had they? Maybe they didn't have submarine lungs available.

Doc got hold of himself. He beat against the hull intermittently, asking about lungs.

"Can escape with submarine lung," Monk replied, "if you clear hatch."

Doc crawled to the hatch. Renny had explained earlier that his surmise was that the hatch had been blocked externally.

That was right. Clark's men had blocked the hatch before they sank the *Pilotfish*. The blocking had of necessity been done crudely. But it was an effective job.

He used the light, did some prying. It wasn't effective. He worked the cutting torch out of its bracket, carefully adjusted the valves, and ignited it. He cut through the steel bars they had wedged in place to block the hatch. He extinguished the torch.

"Hatch cleared," he signalled. "Buoy also cleared."

"O. K. Coming out."

Doc stooped carefully, unfastened the midriff weights which gave him bottom buoyancy. He kicked off half of the shoe ballast. He began to rise slowly.

There was no danger in his rising directly to the surface, since he was subject to not much more than atmospheric pressure inside the suit.

It would be different with those in the *Pilotfish*. They would have to come up slowly, clinging to the buoy line. They would have to take not less than five minutes in the ascent.

Procedure inside the *Pilotfish* would now be standard. It would be terrible to undergo, but not necessarily fatal.

The hatch was equipped with a skirt, a tube which extended down a short distance into the compartment. They would open the inboard drain vents, flooding the compartment. The pressure would build up until it reached sea pressure. Then there would be a bubble around the skirt. A bubble of air against the chamber ceiling. They could hang there, clinging to the pipes—the air lines, the conduits, the fuel pipes—while they adjusted the escape lungs.

With sea pressure and compartment pressure equalized, the hatch could be opened. It would probably

blow open of its own accord.

Then the men could duck under the skirt. They could find the buoy line. They could follow it to the surface, pausing at intervals to decompress. They would know how to do that. The method was a part of their training.

He had a good feeling. The men in the submarine were as good as safe, he felt.

Then, electrifying, Renny's roar in the headphone: "Doc! They're lowering dynamite! They're—"

Hoarseness and fear ground together in the yell. And violence shut off the cry.

HIS first instinctive thought was disbelief. Then he began twisting frantically at the ballast weights. He got them off.

Buoyancy shot him upward now. He could tell he was rising. But the water remained intensely black around him. There was not much sensation of lift.

Then there was a paleness about him. A brief glow. He knew that lightning must have flashed in the storm-threatened sky. He was close to the surface. He was on top. He shot out of the water half his length.

He twisted wildly. Trying to get the face-light around. Trying to see what went on.

They shot him twice. The bullets hit the metal suit like sledges. Both went through. The first cut a long rip in the helmet. The second was worse. A hot wire thrust through his left side.

Air, under some pressure, left the suit through the holes. Cold water poured into the helmet, salty, stinging his eyes.

He worked his arms frantically, and sank. More bullets made loud smashing noises against the water.

The suit! He would have to get out of the suit. The suit was designed so it could be removed quickly. He fought with the helmet dogs.

He got the helmet off. It seemed an age. He got the breastplate apart. The hot wire was still in his back, bigger, hotter. The metal suit started sinking as he twisted out of it.

The torch! The cutting torch with its metal gas bottles and connecting hoses! He swam down wildly, got to the suit, and worked with the patent connectors.

He got the torch finally. He could swim up with it.

He couldn't stay under. There was no oxygen apparatus supplying him now. He had to have air. Need for air had become agony in his lungs.

They would shoot at him when he surfaced. They did. But he came up close to the hull, against it actually. They had to lean far over to aim at him. He gave them no time. He got breath, got a look at the side of the boat, then dived.

It was a cabin cruiser with a metal hull. About forty feet. There was a cockpit aft, one designed for deep-sea fishing. They were lowering the explosive from that. Three men working with a line and wires.

He swam underwater, made for the wires. He got to them. He was probably six feet under the surface. They could see him. They shot at him. The lead striking into the water made ear-hurting impacts. But no rifle bullet would do much through six feet of water.

He got the wires. He fired the torch. It would, thank God, light itself.

The glare from the torch was incandescent, blinding. But it parted the thin wires instantly. At least there would be no underwater explosion.

THE propeller shaft! He swam for it, got hold of the rudder. He knew, then, that he couldn't cut the propeller shaft with the torch. That was what he'd hoped to do. But the shaft was too thick, time too short.

He could stay under a while yet. Actually it had been no more than twenty seconds since he got his lungs full of air. He could manage, he believed, a couple of minutes. He had stayed under longer than that in the past. But not under such conditions as these.

This was a stock model of boat. Gasoline driven, probably. He knew about where the underwater intake for the cooling pumps was. He fumbled along the bottom of the hull and found it, a small protruding scoop and a strainer. It was something to cling to. Not much, but something.

He put the dazzling flame of the torch against the boat hull.

The torch began cutting the hull skin like a sharp knife working on a pie crust. That torch would cut four inches of solid steel underwater in a few moments. It was as efficient under water as the best cutting torches in the open air. This would seem startling to a layman, but it was true.

He moved the torch slowly in a circle. Used about a six-inch radius. The disc of metal broke loose. He felt it. Felt the surge of water into the boat.

The cabin cruiser would sink now.

He kept hold of the torch, pushed himself away from the boat hull, and swam.

The plane had not been on the side of the boat where he'd come up for air. It must be on the other side. He swam in that direction. He needed air badly now.

Suddenly the plane hull was a fat, duck-belly shape above him. He barely made it under the hull. He came to the surface fast, got air, sank. All in one motion. Then he realized he had not been shot at. He came up again, cautiously, and took air into his lungs, watching the plane cabin windows intently, ready to dive again if a hand with a gun appeared.

He heard someone cursing. "Get to the plane!" the man was yelling between profanity.

He heard Monk's voice. "What the hell's going on?" Monk bellowed. Monk! Monk had reached the surface, had come up from the *Pilotfish!*

Doc swam, still keeping the torch, to the stern of the plane hull. He looked around it.

The cabin cruiser was down at the stern already. They were leaving it. Jumping into the sea, swimming toward the plane. No life preservers. But with guns.

The man who had been swearing was now shouting, "I'll pull you aboard! Come here! Grab my hand!"

He was evidently alone in the plane. He had the cabin door open, was on all fours, reaching downward. Doc sank quickly. He swam underwater, came up under the man who was reaching. He came up fast, got the man's downstretched arm.

The man screeched. Clark. Doc recognized him from Renny's description.

They began to haul against each other. A wordless kind of a struggle. Then Clark lost the tug-of-war. He toppled out into the water.

Around the bow of the sinking cabin cruiser Monk Mayfair came ploughing.

“Ham!” Monk roared. “Ham, there's a fight!”

He made for the nearest swimmer, flailing both arms.

Ham came around the stern of the cabin cruiser shortly.

More men from the *Pilotfish* followed them.

Clark had dived, Doc kept a grip on the man. Clark tried to stay under. He was fresh, strong, at home in the water.

Doc Savage fought the man, confidently at first, then with terror. Because Doc was weak. He was weaker than he imagined he could be. The wire in his back had become a blazing cable of pain, and everything else was weakness.

He got away from Clark, finally, with the torch. He pulled on the feed trigger, the incandescent cutting flame lashed out, and he was loose. He hadn't burned Clark, just terrorized the man.

Doc lost the torch then. He couldn't hang on to it. He didn't have the strength.

He barely made the surface.

Someone laid hold of him. He clubbed feebly with a fist. “Hey, dammit!” . . . Monk's voice. Anxious. “Blazes, what'd they do to you?” Monk gasped anxiously. Monk was tying a life preserver about him, he thought. He wasn't sure.

He passed out.

THERE was no darkness. Just a gap in time, and then a glare of white light that hurt his eyes so that he could not see anything. He stopped trying to see, and closed his eyes tightly.

After a while, Monk's voice said, “It was some fight while it lasted. Tough, you missing it. You'd have liked it.”

There was a silence.

Very carefully, not opening his eyes, Doc asked, “You get Clark?”

“Commander Wickart did. Shot him. Wickart still had his revolver when he got to the top. He shot Clark and some of Clark's men. Three, I think. Only about half a dozen of the men from the submarine got to the top in time to take part in the fight, and two of them weren't in any shape to be much help. We had us a hell of a time until Ham Brooks took a submachine gun away from one of the gang. A Reising gun. That

made it a pushover for our side.”

“Where are Clark's men?”

“Those who are alive are being looked after.”

“What about Renny?”

“They conked him over the head. He's all right now.”

Still very carefully, Doc said, “Use the plane radio. Get hold of the navy. Have them send planes and boats for us.”

Monk laughed.

“What are you laughing at?” Doc demanded.

“Where do you think you are now?” Monk asked.

“Eh?”

“In the New London submarine base hospital.”

Disbelieving, Doc opened his eyes. After the fireworks in his eyeballs, he decided that he was in a white room with fluorescent lighting.

“What time is it?” Doc asked.

“It's the next day,” Monk said.

“What's been wrong with me?”

Monk laughed again. “First time you've been laid up in ages, isn't it? You've got a hole in you from stem to stern, almost. Nothing you won't get over, though.”

HAM BROOKS came in. He came in bustling, discovered Monk, and stopped hastily. He looked as if he was poised for flight.

Monk scowled at him. “You overdressed shyster!” Monk said bitterly.

Ham ignored this. But he kept a wary eye on Monk.

“How do you feel, Doc?” Ham asked.

“I feel fine,” Doc said sourly.

“You know yet what the shooting was all about?” Ham inquired.

“No.”

“There was gold on that submarine. Tons and tons of it. The Allies were sneaking it out of Germany to keep it out of the hands of the wrong people until things get straightened out. They were bringing it out secretly so as not to stir up a lot of fuss. Just keeping the gold safe in a diplomatic way. Clark found out about it, and he was after it.”

“Can the navy get it now?”

“They've got part of it already,” Ham said. “The divers are working now. I just saw a radio report from the salvage boat.”

Monk was glaring at Ham. “You Judas! You Iscariot!”

Ham grinned. “Smile when you say that,” he said.

“You told these nurses I had a wife and several half-witted children, you stinker,” Monk said bitterly. “That's the same thing you always tell them. You might at least think up a new fib.”

A constellation of stars floated into the room. A blonde in a nurse's uniform. A gorgeous dish, lovely to behold.

The lovely smiled at Ham, eyed Monk coldly, and asked Monk, “How is the little wife and family today?”

Monk said to Doc, “You see what I mean.” He sidled toward Ham. Ham retreated through the door. Monk sauntered after him. The last heard of them, it sounded as if they were both running.

Doc sighed pleasantly. Monk and Ham in a fuss. Things were back to normal again.

He smiled at the blonde job. She smiled back. He said, “Ham has a wife and I don't know how many dim-witted children, too.”

The blonde job seemed startled. She came over and plumped his pillow. She smelled of gardenias. She was distinctly a destroyer. She was a blonde bomber.

“Me, too,” Doc said hastily.

THE END