



# HELL BELOW

## A Doc Savage Adventure by Kenneth Robeson

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- ? [Chapter I. THE OLD THIEF](#)
- ? [Chapter II. THE SCARED MEN](#)
- ? [Chapter III. DESIGN FOR DEATH](#)
- ? [Chapter IV. LENA](#)
- ? [Chapter V. TRAIL TO TROUBLE](#)
- ? [Chapter VI. AMBUSH](#)
- ? [Chapter VII. LIGHTNING FLATS](#)
- ? [Chapter VIII. SEA TRAIL](#)
- ? [Chapter IX. THE UNEXPECTED HERR SCHWARTZ](#)
- ? [Chapter X. THE DARK TURN](#)
- ? [Chapter XI. RABBIT AND SEAL](#)
- ? [Chapter XII. BAD BREAK](#)
- ? [Chapter XIII. THE FAT FISH](#)
- ? [Chapter XIV. GEEK!](#)

### Chapter I. THE OLD THIEF

"I USED to fight Indians," the old gentleman said. "I used to eat their ears. I would stew their ears, then eat them with salt."

He stopped and looked at the man across the desk while he tried to think of something that would express his feelings.

"But I wouldn't feed your ears to my dog!" he finished.

The young man said, "Hah, hah!" Then he waved at a chair. "Go sit down, pop. Go sit over there and have a good cuss."

"I wasn't trying to amuse you," said the old gentleman.

"I wasn't amused," said the young man. "You can rest assured of that."

The old gentleman spat. You could tell from the look of him that he had come from a hard, bleak desert country, and he spat the way he would spit to kill a bug on the sun-baked earth.

"I'm old Too-Too Thomas," he said. "And to think I would sink to taking sass off a clerk in a Washington bureau."

"I'm not sassing you, old-timer," said the young man back of the desk. "I'm just asking you kindly, please go over there and sit down. Cuss, chew tobacco, spit on the floor, but just leave me alone."

“I want to see the main guy.”

“No.”

“Listen, pup, I tell you—”

“Sit down. The head guy can't see you. He's got troubles of his own right now.”

Old Too-Too Thomas gave his tooled leather belt a hitch, the belt that had an enormous silver and gold buckle set with diamonds of respectable size. He crossed the room and took a chair, stretched his feet out in front of him and scowled at the toes of his embroidered cowboy boots.

Then he frowned at the door of the inner office. There were voices behind the door, and he had noticed that they were getting a little louder.

“I been in Washington seven hours,” he said. “And as near as I am to that door is as close as I've got to anybody who amounts to anything.”

“Believe me, pardner,” said the young man, “some fellows are in Washington seven months and don't get that close.”

“Mule feathers!” said Too-Too Thomas.

Suddenly there was no question about the voices getting louder in the inner office. They were very loud. They were angry.

One voice said: “You're not going to get in the shooting end of the war. That's the decision. You keep right on with what you are doing.”

“Who's that?” asked Too-Too Thomas.

“The head guy,” said the clerk.

A second voice said: “That is the same song and dance you've been giving us since the war started. My five aides are tired of it. I'm tired of it. We want action!”

“Who's that?” asked Too-Too Thomas.

“A man who wants to fight,” said the clerk.

“That makes two of us,” said Too-Too Thomas. “Who is he, besides a voice that's shaking the building?”

“His name,” said the clerk, “is Doc Savage.”

“Doc Savage, eh?”

“Ever hear of him?”

“No.”

“Bless us!” the clerk said. “Where did you say you came from, the planet of Mars?”

“I came from the Dirty Man Rancho in the foothills of the Sierra Santa Clara in Lower California, where the pigs chase mountain lions,” Too-Too Thomas said. “A man's country.”

“Oh!”

“Is this Doc Savage going to get to fight?”

“Not,” said the clerk, “if we can help it.”

TOO-TOO THOMAS listened to the voice of Doc Savage which was causing the door to bend on its hinges. He chuckled and said, “I’ll bet you he does. I’ll just bet you.”

Then he leaned back to listen.

The head man was speaking, trying to soothe Doc Savage.

He was saying, “You’re doing the work we want you to do. It’s the work for which you were fitted when you were placed in the hands of scientists, as a child, and given the remarkable training which lasted until early manhood. You were given that specific training to fit you for the job of righting wrongs and punishing evildoers who are outside the law, and to do the job in the far corners of the earth if necessary. We want you to go right ahead.”

Doc Savage said loudly, “There’s a war going on!”

“Yes, a modern war,” the other said. “A war being fought on the home front just as much as in the foxholes and behind bombsights.”

“The home front,” Doc Savage shouted, “is getting along extraordinarily well! Capital and labor and other special interests now and then try to push across one of their pet greedy ideas under cover of the war excitement, but the newspaper publicity and the people are taking care of that very nicely. The war is where the shooting is. We want to be in it.”

Doc Savage had a remarkable voice, a voice that was full of controlled power, deep and modulated, giving the impression of vast strength and ability.

“You are not feeling very reasonable, are you?” the head man asked.

“Not particularly,” Doc said. “Not to the brand of reasoning you are offering.”

Now the other became indignant.

He shouted: “There is more to this war than just shooting Japanese or Germans. They can sink a battleship and we can build another one. But if they kill you, where would we get another man with your inventive skill and your thinking equipment? Where would we get a man with your almost fantastic ability to ferret out the most remarkable plots and intricate schemes?”

“You won’t,” asked Doc, “assign us to active service?”

“I will not.”

Another voice, a small, squeaky one that the owner should have outgrown about the age of twelve, burst into the discussion. “What about me?” it demanded angrily.

Old Too-Too Thomas glanced at the clerk and asked, “Who’s that one?”

“They call him Monk Mayfair,” the clerk said. “But he is Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Blodgett Mayfair, one of the world’s most able chemists.”

Inside, the voice of Monk repeated, "What about me?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Let a chemist of your ability waste your time packing a rifle? Anyway, you're a Doc Savage aide."

A fourth voice, a cultured Harvard voice, said, "I take it you are going to include me in this ridiculous refusal?"

"We are and we have!"

Outside, old Too-Too Thomas looked questioningly at the clerk.

"That one," said the clerk, "is Brigadier General Theodore Marley Ham Brooks, a lawyer."

Inside the office, Doc Savage said loudly, "This quarrel over whether we see action has been going on since the war began."

"That's right," said the head man.

"And the answer is still no?"

"It's still no."

"We're disgusted."

"If it's action you want," the head man said, "you get plenty of it the way things are."

Monk Mayfair said, "That's no argument—"

"How many times," demanded the other, "were you shot at in the past six months?"

"Not over a dozen times," Monk said. "What has that—"

"More than half the soldiers in the army never hear an enemy gun explode!" yelled the head man.

Doc Savage, in a quieter voice, said, "Come on, fellows. We're wasting breath."

They walked out of the inner office and old Too-Too Thomas stared at them in astonishment. He was impressed.

"They look even more capable than they talked," he said.

"They are," the clerk said.

"I got me an idea," said Too-Too Thomas.

DOC SAVAGE, Monk Mayfair and Ham Brooks were walking angrily down the impressive hallway when Too-Too Thomas overtook them.

"My craw," said Too-Too Thomas, "is stuck plumb full of red tape."

Monk Mayfair examined the leathery old Westerner. Monk was a short man who gave the startling

impression at times of being as wide as he was high. He had a large crop of rusty hair, a big grin, and affected the manners of a circus clown.

“Tsk, tsk,” Monk said, shaking his head. “Poor fellow. But I guess it happens often.”

Too-Too Thomas scowled. “You think I’m crazy, pardner?”

“Yes, and you have my sympathy,” Monk said. “I’ll bet you’re not the first one got twittery trying to get something done.”

“If you wasn’t so homely,” Too-Too said, “I would pop you right in the eye.”

“You’re offended?”

“Yeah, mad as a hornet. I ain’t no crazier’n most.”

“We’re perfect strangers,” said Monk. “You walk up and start talking about your crew. What do you expect us to think?”

“Don’t care what you think,” said Too-Too Thomas. “You fellers want action?”

“Action?”

“Heard you talkin’ to that guy back there.” Too-Too eyed them speculatively. “Right likely lookin’ fellers, you-all. Figure you’ve sort of been up against a thing or two in your time.”

Monk grinned. “Old-timer, I’ll bet you’ve eaten a few tacks yourself. What’s on your mind?”

“Crew’s full of red tape, like I said. Got a job that has to be done, and there ain’t time to fool around no more about doing it. Need help.”

“What kind of help?”

Too-Too Thomas winked. “Kind you can give me, I expect.” He gestured. “C’mon. Let’s get outa this wickiup so we can talk.”

They walked through numerous corridors and showed their passes to watchmen, took an elevator down, ran the gantlet of more watchmen, then finally stood on the street.

“Now, old-timer,” Monk said. “What’s this bur you’ve got under your saddle?”

Too-Too Thomas eyed them intently.

“Know anything about submarines?” he asked.

Monk said, “Sure. Why?”

“Fine,” said Too-Too Thomas. “Now the first thing we do is steal a navy airplane with some bombs on it and a can of quick-drying paint.”

DOC SAVAGE was a man with more qualities than a remarkable voice. He was a giant of a man who was so symmetrically proportioned that his actual size was not evident until one stood close to him; then it became startling. When he moved, the play of sinews in his neck and wrists indicated strength that was equally startling. His skin was a deep bronze color, his hair was straight and slightly darker, and his eyes

were like pools of flake gold always stirred by tiny winds.

Until now he had, as was his habit, remained silent and expressionless. But the old Westerner's calm mention of stealing a navy plane was unusual enough to bring a startled expression to his face, and cause him to speak.

"Steal a navy plane?" he said.

"That's the only chance we got to make it in time."

"Stealing a navy plane is something they shoot you for," Doc reminded.

Too-Too Thomas shrugged, not impressed. "Done things I could've been shot for before."

A small park, pleasant in the sunlight, was across the street. Indicating the park, Doc said, "We had better go over there and sit down while you explain this."

They crossed the street, dodging traffic, which was thick. There were benches along the sidewalk, one of which they selected.

Too-Too Thomas took a deep breath.

"Lives," he said, "have a relative value, I've noticed. In wartime, they somehow ain't as important. But these are important to me. They're my friends, the ones that'll die right away. The other ones, the ones who'll die later, ain't people I know, probably, but they'll be nice folks."

Doc Savage said patiently, "The best way to tell a story is the way you read a book. Begin at the beginning and don't leave anything out."

"I do it a little different," said Too-Too Thomas. "You savvy what I'm telling you? I got to save some lives. They'll die right away, tonight probably, if I ain't fast enough on my feet. Later on, more will die."

"Where?"

"I'll take you to the place."

"Where is it?"

Too-Too Thomas looked at Doc Savage steadily. "Don't push me."

"Are you," Doc asked, "going to tell us the whole story?"

"Not now, I ain't."

"Why not now?"

The leathery old man thought about the question for a few moments, then shook his head.

"There's somebody I don't want to involve until I'm danged sure," he said. "That's why. I just ain't going off half cocked, that's all."

"Do you," Doc asked, "expect us to steal a navy plane and a can of paint on the basis of no more than you're telling us?"

Too-Too Thomas got to his feet.

“You could buy the paint, not steal it,” he said. He shook his head slowly. “Reckon it was a kind of a locoed idea I had. I was feeling kind of desperate or I wouldn't have tried it. Feel like the time the Yaquis chased me into the ocean and I couldn't swim a lick.”

He eyed them and shook his head some more.

“You're right likely lookin' gents, too,” he said. “Well, so long. I would tell you not to take any wooden nickels, only I can see you wouldn't. So long.”

He walked off and left them.

DOC SAVAGE, as soon as Too-Too Thomas was out of earshot, said quickly, “Monk, follow him. He is going north. Ham will go west, in case he turns in that direction. I will go east.”

“I didn't think the old fellow was kidding, either,” Monk said, and got to his feet.

Monk was rather proud of the job he did shadowing Too-Too Thomas. He ambled casually across the sidewalk as if he was going back to the building they had just left. In the street, he got into a taxicab. He felt sure he had disappeared in the street, as far as Too-Too Thomas was concerned, as if by magic.

Following Too-Too Thomas wasn't too tough, although the leathery-looking old gent behaved in a way that showed he was afraid he was being trailed. He walked fast, took a cab, and the cab went in and out of streets.

Doc Savage and Ham Brooks did not appear, for the simple reason that they'd had no chance to catch sight of Too-Too Thomas.

Washington is a city of contrasts, where a remarkably shabby street often adjoins a fine one. Too-Too Thomas picked one of the most ragtag thoroughfares to leave the cab.

He walked to a narrow alley and entered, striding along rapidly as if he knew where he was going.

Before Monk entered the alley, he cautiously used the shiny inside of the lid of his large silver watch as a mirror, and examined the alley periscope fashion. He saw no sign of his quarry.

However, Monk found after he had walked about twenty feet into the alley that he had walked against a gun. The gun was an impressive weapon of the type called a hogleg by cowboys. Too-Too Thomas, who held it, had stepped from a niche that Monk hadn't noticed.

“If this gun was to go boom-boom,” said Too-Too Thomas, “it would blow you right out of this alley.”

Monk didn't doubt it. As a matter of fact, Monk was wearing a bulletproof vest, but thinking about the kick that old gun would give his middle made him turn green.

“Figured one of you gents would trail me,” said Too-Too Thomas. “Trapped you neat, didn't I?”

“What do you want with me?” Monk asked.

“Why, you're gonna run that submarine for me,” Too-Too Thomas told him.

## Chapter II. THE SCARED MEN

MONK was not concerned so much about the submarine as he was about what might come out of the pistol. "You know about them things?" he asked uneasily. "They make a loud noise and a piece of lead flies out."

Old Too-Too Thomas chuckled. He was quite calm, a man who had walked in the path of danger before. He was somewhat proud of himself, too.

"Before you start something," he said, "just tell me where to send the body."

They walked to the other end of the alley. Just before they reached the street, Too-Too Thomas stowed his enormous piece of hardware inside his coat.

"We're going to take a ride in a taxicab," he said. "Behave yourself. If you don't, I give a sort of twitch, and the bullets fly around."

"A model boy," Monk assured him, "is what they always call me."

They found a taxicab, although it was a job. Cabs were not plentiful in Washington, and the drivers had more business than they could take care of.

Monk was familiar with the address which Too-Too Thomas gave the cab driver. It was a military air field.

The cab got moving, and Monk said, "Since we're partners, you might tell me what we're undertaking."

"Shucks, I don't see what makes you think we're partners," old Too-Too Thomas said. "We're man and lackey, that's what we are. You're the lackey."

"We going to steal a plane?"

"Sure."

They did not steal a plane immediately, though. They did not steal one from the military field at all. They got out and dismissed the cab and Too-Too Thomas looked the flying field over.

The man was evidently an old campaigner, because he correctly surmised that there were too many sentries and armed men around the place.

"Even if the guards were that many Yaqui Indians, the chances would be too long," he said. "And these soldiers may be tougher than Yaquis."

"So now I can go home?" Monk asked hopefully.

"No, no," said Too-Too Thomas. "I'll work the pump on my resources some more."

They went back to the city of Washington. This proved to be tiring, because they could not find a taxicab until they had walked through the heat and the dust for about a mile.

Monk felt foolish riding around, a prisoner. But he did not make a break.

The reason he was being meek, Monk told himself, was so he could stick around and find out what this was all about. But that big revolver was a consideration, too.

They went to a hotel. It was a remarkably fine hotel, where the minimum rate was fifteen dollars a day, American plan. The surroundings were impressive and rich.

“Be a very genteel place to be found a corpse,” warned Too-Too Thomas, “if you want to try anything.”

“No, thanks,” Monk said. “I hope to die of old age.”

SEVERAL small square envelopes had been shoved under the door of Too-Too Thomas' room. Some of the square envelopes protruded under the edge of the door, and Too-Too eyed them before he unlocked the door. He immediately picked up the envelopes.

“I telephoned a bunch of agents to rent or buy a good seaplane for me,” he said. “I'll bet these are the answers from them.”

He began opening the envelopes—they were the envelopes hotels use for telephone messages—and reading the contents.

“I can read with one eye and shoot with one hand,” he warned Monk.

“Your modesty is giving me cold chills,” Monk assured him.

Too-Too Thomas waved one of the envelopes.

“Eureka!” he cried. “Hot snakes! This guy found one for me! He says its a big new seaplane, and I can buy it.” He glanced at the message again. “A hundred and twelve thousand dollars. Cheap enough. I just want it for this one trip.”

Monk was quite startled.

“One trip!” he said. “That's a lot of dough to put out for one trip.”

“It's a lot of trip.”

A spick and span new suitcase stood on a folding baggage rack. Too-Too Thomas opened the suitcase, which held a suit of underwear and a safety razor. Packages of U. S. currency filled the remaining space in the bag.

Too-Too Thomas stowed packages of money into his pockets until he ran out of pockets.

He looked at Monk.

“I ain't got time to count out a hundred and twelve thousand, plus expense money,” he said. “Here, you'll have to carry some of it.”

Monk obediently loaded his own pockets with packages of greenbacks. The bills were tens, twenties, fifties and hundreds. Monk was not able to judge the total of his burden as closely as a bank cashier, but he felt it was impressive. He thought he must be packing anyway a hundred thousand.

“I feel like the mint,” Monk said.

“Just so you don't get to feeling like a rabbit.”

“I feel like that, too,” Monk told him. “Now it would be profitable to escape.”

“Yeah, maybe they could shingle your angel wings with greenbacks,” Too-Too Thomas said, and sounded as if he meant it.

They got another taxicab in front of the hotel. When the cab driver heard the address, he informed them it was farther than he was allowed to drive in his zone, on his gasoline allowance. But when Too-Too Thomas showed him one of the greenbacks, he agreed to take them.

“This place is a farmhouse in the country, close to the Potomac,” Too-Too Thomas explained. “We go there, and the feller shows us the plane, which is in a shed on the river.”

Monk said nothing, but looked to see if the old man seemed to be telling the truth. He did, and Monk was puzzled.

There could not be any civilian plane, Monk knew, in any shed on the river. There was a government regulation against keeping planes anywhere but on airports where there was a guard twenty-four hours of the day. That is, it was against the law unless the motors were taken out of the plane. If this was a plane without motors, Monk wanted to be around to hear Too-Too Thomas cuss.

“So you want me to run a submarine,” Monk said.

“You can get me a few cases of dynamite, some caps and fuses, too.”

“What's that for?”

“To take the place of a bomb.”

“What's the bomb for?”

“Now your nose is too long,” said Too-Too Thomas.

THE farmhouse looked deceptively innocent. The building was a long, low, pleasant structure which needed paint, and the weeds in the yard needed cutting. If the door of the house had not been standing open, with a man leaning in it, Monk would have sworn the place was deserted.

“Gent's waiting for us,” said Too-Too Thomas, pleased.

They walked to the door, leaving the taxi waiting at the gate, and Too-Too Thomas asked, “You the feller with a seaplane for sale?”

“You the guy who wants to buy one?”

“That's me.”

“Come in.”

They walked into the house, and there was no furniture in the room. Not unless half a dozen men crouching against the walls with leveled revolvers or leveled and cocked rifles could be counted as fixtures.

“One jump makes you dead,” said the man who had been at the door. His remark seemed unnecessary.

Disturbed, Too-Too Thomas eyed them.

“Too bad I only got one gun with six shells in it,” he said. “If I had my usual two guns, I'd have enough bullets to go around, and I would start something.”

The armed men, Monk noticed, were impressed by the old fellow. They took him with deadly seriousness. The two who came to search him stood far from him and reached out, acting as if they wished they had forked sticks.

“Wow, wow, wow!” said one of the men, looking at the money.

They kept taking money out of the old man's pockets.

“He must be stuffed with it!” one said.

“This one, too,” said a man who was searching Monk.

The one who had held the door open for them and who seemed to be in charge, sank to his knees and rapidly totaled the amount of the money from the figure written on the band of paper that inclosed each package.

“Whew!” he said. “Nearly one hundred thousand dollars.”

“Shucks, less than a hundred thousand,” said Too-Too Thomas, surprised. “It didn't count up like I thought it would.”

Unfortunately, the men were not so impressed by the money that they became careless, and Monk saw no opportunity to make a break.

Too-Too Thomas suddenly yelled and pointed at one of the men.

“Great guns, I've seen you before!” he shouted. “You're the hombre who kicked me in the ribs because I complained about the sun shining in my cell!”

“H'yah, you old buzz saw,” the man said.

“So you trailed me east!” Too-Too Thomas said.

The old man's tone made Monk look at him sharply. Too-Too Thomas sounded discouraged. Abruptly he was an old man, a defeated old man.

“I wasn't so smart,” he said. “You trailed me.”

The man he had recognized said, “Some job it was, too. We didn't really catch up with you until about two hours ago.”

Too-Too Thomas groaned. “Was there an airplane?”

“No.”

“How come?”

“We just located your hotel room, and saw those little telephone envelopes sticking out from under the door. We read 'em, and found out you were after an airplane. So we put a note of our own under the door, to bring you out here.”

“I must be getting old,” Too-Too Thomas muttered.

“Maybe you are,” the young man told him, “but you haven't shown many signs of it.”

MONK now went through the motions of dusting his hands. "Well, boys, thanks, for rescuing me," he said. "Now I'll be on my way."

"What about the money?" someone asked.

"Ask old fire whiskers," Monk said indicating Too-Too Thomas. "It was in his custody, but he didn't seem to care much for it."

"He wouldn't, considering where he got it," the man said.

Monk dusted off his hands again. "Been nice being rescued by you." He headed for the door.

At least three rifles cocked, and other weapons pointed at him. Someone said, "Take it easy, brother. That was a nice line, but you didn't hook us."

Monk stopped. He could tell by looking at them that they would shoot him if they thought it necessary. He had learned to look at men and tell when they were thinking that.

"Go tell that taxicab we're through with him, and pay him off," a man said.

One of them went out and got rid of the taxi without trouble.

Old Too-Too Thomas asked, "How did you fellows know about this farm?"

"Oh, one of us used to live in Washington, and we just drove down the road until we found an empty place close to the river. We didn't have much time to be choosy. Why, ain't the place elaborate enough for you?"

Too-Too Thomas grunted and resumed a miserable silence.

Someone pointed at Monk, and asked, "Who's this funny-lookin' bird, anyway?"

Monk, who was indignant, said, "I won't look funny to you by the time this is over."

They were not scared, and they went to a pile of his belongings on the floor and began going through them. The searcher picked up all of Monk's private money, removing it from his billfold, and pocketed it. "Commission," he explained.

Then he inspected the cards in Monk's billfold. He let out a yell.

"Dammit, I knew I'd seen pictures of this homely guy somewhere!" he shouted.

"Who is he?"

"Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Blodgett Mayfair."

"Holy cats!" someone said.

The name of Mayfair apparently meant nothing at all to some of the others, one of whom asked, "What is he, half toad or something?"

"Ever hear of Doc Savage?"

The man who had made the bright remark about the toad didn't feel so funny. He swallowed with some difficulty. "Huh?"

“This guy”—the man indicated Monk—“is one of Doc Savage's five assistants.”

Monk had seen the effect which Doc Savage's name had on crooks before. Usually it pleased him.

He had never, however, seen a more pronounced effect at the mention of Doc Savage, than he did now. But Monk wasn't entirely pleased.

It gave him a cold feeling when they walked off into a corner, the three who seemed to be the ring-leaders, and had a conference. Most of what they said did not reach Monk's ears, but he heard a word now and then that added up to violence and sudden death.

They came back with the verdict.

“Doc Savage has got to be caught or killed before he gets wind of this,” the spokesman said. “We'll get busy on him right now.”

### **Chapter III. DESIGN FOR DEATH**

THE time was past, Monk realized, for any more fooling around trying to find out what was going on. He saw that he had made a mistake, a bad one.

Monk cast around in his mind, and remembered that he knew a few words of the language the Yaqui Indians spoke. He had gone to Mexico with Renny Renwick, another Doc Savage aide, on a trip Renny had taken down there to put a mine on a profitable basis.

Monk had learned just enough Yaqui to get along with the Yaqui girls. Monk being Monk, his interest in the Yaqui language was satisfied when he had learned that much. One of the Yaqui phrases Monk had learned was the equivalent of, “How about some action, baby?”

Glancing at old Too-Too Thomas, Monk—in Yaqui—said, “How about some action, baby?”

Old Too-Too Thomas started. He looked as if an angel had spoken to him.

“Yippee!” he yelled. Then he said two or three quick sentences in Yaqui.

Monk didn't understand a word of it.

Nor did Monk have long to think about it, because a man standing behind him hit him over the head with a blackjack, dropping Monk senseless.

“They were cooking something up,” the blackjack wielder said. “Pop the old geezer, too, somebody.”

They popped the old geezer. Two of them had to hold him while they did it, and they had to pop him more than once. A man said. “Give me your blackjack, Willis. It's heavier.” But finally they knocked Too-Too Thomas out.

“Head like a rock,” a man said.

The straw boss of the group said, “Tie them up, tape their mouths, shoot some cocaine in them, wrap them up in blankets and put them in the back of the delivery truck we rented.”

The man then selected four men whom he named as Willis, Pet, Frederick and Bummy.

“You,” he told them, “are going to help me get Doc Savage.”

The four men he picked looked very unhappy.

The leader was addressed as Sam. Sam's actions showed that he was, in his special line, a competent fellow.

Back of the house, in a shed, were two delivery trucks with panel bodies. One of these bore the name of a dry-cleaning concern and the other was white and advertised a dairy. Sam and his four selected men took the dairy truck.

As they drove down the highway, he explained his reasons for using panel body trucks instead of passenger cars.

"The ban on pleasure driving has been put on again back East, I hear," he told them, "and you can't tell about the cops and these government men. They're liable to stop a passenger car, just to ask if we're on essential business, but they won't be likely to mess with a delivery job."

His four helpers were silent. They had long faces.

"Cheer up," Sam told them.

"Sure, sing and be merry," one muttered. "Like the blackbirds in the pie."

Sam said, "Savage won't eat you."

"Is that what he *don't* do to you?" the man asked sourly.

FIRST, they had to find Doc Savage. This was a job which they tackled systematically and with some foresighted cunning.

"He has a headquarters in New York," Sam said. "We'll see what they tell us."

Sam was on the telephone about fifteen minutes, and came out of the booth minus a number of dimes and quarters as well as his confidence.

"They've had that gag pulled on 'em before," he said.

The man Willis, alarmed, demanded, "You didn't get 'em on our trail?"

"Heck, no," said Sam. "I told 'em I was General Shoozis, calling from a pay telephone, wishing to locate Doc Savage. They told me to hold the phone for about five minutes, and they would get Doc up from downstairs."

"Oh, oh!" Willis said. "They were going to trace the call in that five minutes."

"Sure."

"We better blow."

"We are, and fast, too."

They got away from there in a hurry.

Sam, far from being thwarted, tried various war departments by telephone. This wasn't satisfactory. "I should've known the army and navy ain't givin' out any information," he complained.

“What we need,” said Willis, “is something direct.”

“Such as?”

“You notice that guy Monk's voice?”

“Sure. Sounds like he was twelve years old.”

Willis said, “Listen.” He screwed up his face and pulled in his chin and said, “You guys might use this kind of a gag, huh?”

They stared at Willis as if he was an answer to a prayer.

“Boy, that's swell!” exclaimed Sam.

“Sounded like Monk, eh?”

“Sure did!”

Willis was pleased. “Here's what I thought. Why don't we make another telephone call to New York, with me doing the calling and using Monk's voice. I tell them in New York that I'm in trouble and need help, and that I've lost track of Doc and to get hold of him and send him to help me; and I give them an address.”

This delighted Sam. “That's great, Willis. Simply great. You're not as dumb as I thought you were.”

“What address do we tell 'em in New York?” asked the man called Bummy.

“We'll find one,” said Sam.

The man called Pet was the one who was familiar with Washington and the surrounding environs. He immediately stated that he knew just the spot they needed. The others accompanied him to look at it, and they agreed.

“Just the ticket,” admitted Sam.

The building was in the active commercial part of the city. Shabby, about six stories high, with dirty windows half boarded up. It was empty.

Pet explained that the structure had been vacated and closed preparatory to demolishing it in order that a new building might be erected. But there had been a legal hitch before any wrecking had been done, so that everything was intact. Even the elevators and lights were still functioning.

“Only hitch,” Pet pointed out, “is a watchman and a janitor who are on duty during the day.”

“That's not such a hitch,” said Sam.

They went in and slugged the watchman and janitor and tied them up in the basement.

“Make your call, Willis,” directed Sam.

“To make it good, the call should come from here, huh?”

“Willis, your brain is growing, isn't it,” said Sam.

Willis made the telephone call to Doc Savage's headquarters in New York, and did his imitation of Monk

to perfection. Sam listened at the receiver, becoming elated.

When they hung up he said, "Yow! Swallowed it like a seal taking a fish!"

Willis said, "Mind if I make another suggestion, Sam?"

"Shoot," Sam said. "Boy, you're leaking brains today."

"What do you say we call the others. We ought to have all our crowd down here to help in this. After all, this isn't exactly a mouse-catching we're pulling."

Sam sobered. "You got something there, too."

They made two telephone calls and looked more relieved after that.

"Everybody is going to help," Sam said.

THEY settled down to wait, hoping the rest of their gang would show up. This was just the Washington part of their crowd and Sam said, "I wish everybody else was in town so they could help."

Willis said he wished they were, too. "I wish the two big guys could have seen my two ideas awhile ago," he said. "Might get me a bonus, huh?"

Sam, in an expansive mood, said, "It will get you a bonus anyway, because I'll recommend one. What I recommend usually goes through."

"You'll put it up to the two big guys?"

"Yeah."

"Put it up to the fat one," Willis suggested cunningly. "I think he's more inclined to be reckless with his dough than the shriveled one. So put it up to the fat one, huh?"

"O. K." Sam agreed. "But let me give you a piece of advice. Don't ever let him hear that you called him fat. He's touchy as hell about his weight."

"Thanks," said Willis.

In about twenty minutes, there was an influx of men into the old building. They were men who had taken care to dress so that they were not too noticeable in a crowd. As far as clothing went, they were a colorless group. But none of them looked honest or at ease.

Sam took charge. He distributed the reinforcements at various points on the first floor, and in the alley, also in the street outside. They gave some thought to the men posted in the street, finally placing two of them in a greasy-spoon restaurant halfway in the block, and two more in the parked dairy truck. Another pair began to dicker for furniture they had no intention of buying in a secondhand store.

Hardly were they placed when a lookout hissed loudly.

"Coming up," he said.

Sam peered out of a window, and became a little pale. It was the first time he had seen Doc Savage in person, and he was suddenly afflicted with the wish that he was somewhere else.

Doc Savage was far from the building, at the end of the block. He seemed in no hurry, but stood there surveying the vicinity. He looked the ground over so thoroughly that Sam got the jitters.

"He's waiting to see who is hanging around suspiciously," Sam gasped. "He'll spot the guys in the dairy truck."

But the pair in the dairy saw Doc, too, and they started the truck and drove away. Sam heaved a sigh of relief. He was sweating.

"I might pick him off with a rifle from here," a man whispered.

"Too risky," Sam said. "That Monk was wearing a bulletproof vest. So Savage probably has one, too."

DOC SAVAGE noticed the two men drive away in the small dairy truck. Milk companies did not usually put two men in trucks that small these days when help was scarce.

Two men were sitting in a greasy-spoon restaurant and they were a little too well-dressed to be loafing in a dumpy restaurant at this time of day.

Two more men were dickering in a secondhand furniture store. The dickering was over a carpet, and this particular carpet was the only one in the front of the store, although there were others in the rear; and the traders did not go back to look at the other carpets, although the one they were looking at was in bad condition.

Doc Savage decided not to go in the front of the old building.

He had not intended to do that anyway, as he was suspicious about the call.

His aides in New York had contacted him by radio. All three of the five remaining aides were in New York. They were Renny Renwick, Long Tom Roberts and Johnny Littlejohn, engineer, electrical wizard, and archaeologist-geologist, respectively. In New York headquarters at the time they called was Patricia Savage, Doc's cousin. Pat was a young woman who liked excitement, and now that she knew something was going on, she would be in their hair.

What had made Doc Savage suspicious was the fact that there had been a previous telephone call from Washington in an effort to locate him. A call from a General Shoozis, who hadn't waited around to have the call traced.

"He skipped, so he might've been a phony," said Long Tom Roberts, who gave the information to Doc over the portable short-wave radio which they used for communication.

Doc Savage himself had said, "In this second call, someone might have imitated Monk's voice, the idea being to decoy me to some spot where they could get at me."

"Move slowly and cautiously," Long Tom had warned.

So Doc Savage was being suspicious, and he was sure he was justified.

He went around the block and, finding an alley, he entered. He did not go along the alley directly to the rear door of the old building.

Instead, he climbed to the roof of the next building. The buildings were standing side by side, one roof against the other. He grabbed the ladder of a fire escape, leaped, and pulled it down; which gave him an

easy route to the roof he wanted to reach.

He took great care and crawled across the roof toward the old building.

Because he was alert and watching, he noticed that there were tracks in the dust which overlay the blacktop covering of the roof. They were the footprints of men. A quick glance around convinced him they came from the windows of the old building which was his objective.

It was obvious that at least three men were concealed on the rooftop, probably behind chimneys or skylights.

Possibly they had seen him. If so, this was no time to be reckless about sticking his head into view. He felt he was in danger.

He was taken completely by surprise when a voice, a young woman's voice, called, "Stand still if you don't want to get shot!"

He heard footsteps and the young woman came up from behind and seized Doc around the neck.

He felt something hard gouge him in the ribs, looked down, and saw that it was a gun. A blue gun about five inches long with a pearl handle, a .32-caliber. The hand that held the gun had faintly tinted fingernails.

"Stand still!" the young woman repeated.

Then she raised her voice and shouted, sounding desperate and a trifle triumphant.

"Now!" she cried. "Now! You dare bother me, and I'll put a hole in your friend!"

Doc had been right about the number of men concealed on the surrounding rooftops. There were three of them. They stepped into view. All were well-dressed and had guns.

They approached.

"Keep away!" the girl cried, "or I'll shoot your friend!"

The men kept coming.

Sounding increasingly frightened, the girl told Doc, "I was up here on the roof, and they must have seen me. They came out and were hiding around, getting ready to sneak up on me. But I'll show them."

Doc thought she was mistaken. The men had been hiding around waiting for him, not the girl. He was sure, from the expressions on their faces as they approached, that they hadn't dreamed the girl was around.

But it was also evident the men knew the girl.

"I'll shoot!" the girl cried, jabbing Doc with the gun.

"Go ahead," a man said.

"Bing him, sister, and save us the trouble," said another.

"You can't fool me!" she cried. "I'm going to shoot."

## Chapter IV. LENA

THERE was no shooting, however. The girl lost her nerve. At the last moment, she released Doc, whirled and tried to run. They caught her and took the gun away from her.

Doc Savage was actually disappointed that she had not shot him. The little .32-caliber bullet from her gun would not have had much effect on his bulletproof undergarment, except that it would have given him a hard whack on the ribs.

If she had shot him, he would have had a chance to fall over and play dead, possibly getting a chance to surprise the three men. Now there was nothing to do but put up his hands, and this he did.

The man who had disarmed the girl was pale and perspiring when he finished, although it only took a moment.

Another man laughed at him. "Is she something that'll explode, Willis?" he asked.

"She's been known to," Willis said. "And when Lena doesn't explode, it's only because she's thought of something more disastrous."

"Lena?" The man pointed at the girl. "Her? Lena Carlson?"

Willis nodded.

"You're sure?"

"Would I be sweating like this if I wasn't?" Willis asked.

Doc Savage glanced at Lena Carlson with interest. He saw a tearful young woman, blue-eyed, red-headed, with an unusual quantity of good looks. But she didn't seem like a person who would make somebody like Willis burst out in a cold sweat.

Doc said, "So you are *the* Lena Carlson?"

"Yes," she said. "So you've heard of me."

"No," Doc admitted. "I haven't."

"You must have lived in a barrel all your life," Lena Carlson told him. She seemed disappointed.

Doc was a little irritated and he said, "I'm Doc Savage. Have you heard of me?"

"I would like to say I haven't, but I have, vaguely." She was not impressed, or didn't sound as if she was.

"Anyway, we are even," Doc admitted, and was amused by the fact that the girl had managed to irritate him slightly.

"What are you grinning at?" she demanded. "You're not one of them, are you? They're pointing their guns at you."

"That's right," Doc agreed.

"I thought you were," she said.

"You made a mistake."

“I did not,” she said sharply. “A good idea is never a mistake. That was a good idea, grabbing you and pointing my gun at you. It just turned out that you were not what I thought you were.”

Willis took whatever levity there was out of the situation by asking, “Shall we shoot them here, Sam, or what?”

“The shots would make a hell of a noise outdoors,” Sam said. “Take them inside.”

Doc Savage went through the motions of becoming frightened. He looked terrified and his captors would have been suspicious if it hadn't been for the impressive show he put on.

Doc's face became almost purple. A pale face would have been more effective, but it's possible to make your face purple by holding your breath and bulging your neck against your collar, whereas a pale face is difficult to fake. He trembled and his lips moved wordlessly.

He tried to speak. What he said was inarticulate, but loud, and sounded like a frightened gurgling and moaning.

“Stop that!” a man snarled. “Or we'll shoot you right here.”

Doc became silent.

“What'd he say then?” Willis asked.

“Hell, nothing,” said Sam. “He just blubbered from fright. Boy, I've heard a lot of this Doc Savage. They had his nerve overrated.”

Lena Carlson looked at Doc Savage thoughtfully. She did not seem convinced.

“I wonder,” she said, but only with her lips.

THE trick which Doc Savage had just pulled paid off as soon as they were in the old building. The trick was a simple one. The pretended fright was a cover-up for the loud gurgling, which was really a single word in the Mayan language. Mayan was a little-known tongue, and Doc and his associates used it, because of its unorthodox sound, when they wished to converse without outsiders understanding them. The tongue was ancient Mayan, and as far as they knew they were the only men in the so-called civilized world who understood it.

Ham Brooks was following Doc closely, so Doc had spoken loudly enough in Mayan for Ham to overhear.

Ham had thereupon come into the building.

The enemy had, it seemed, incautiously drawn his lookouts from the street and the lower floor of the old building, after learning that Doc Savage was captured. So Ham Brooks was free to walk up to the second floor unmolested.

Ham felt in the coat pocket in which he had placed gas grenades. He had placed gas grenades in one pocket, smokers in another, explosives in still another, and so on.

Without being aware, he got a smoke grenade instead of a gasser. The grenades all felt alike, but were different colors.

Holding the grenade aloft, Ham said, "It's all off, you guys! Nobody move! This is a grenade I've got!"

The way the men reacted told Doc Savage something about them. It told him they were not mere crooks. Common criminals would have been confused, and would have given up.

But these men had military training. It was evident from the way they acted.

Ham saw what he was up against, threw his grenade. The anaesthetic gas in the grenades was a quick-acting, odorless and colorless vapor which would bring sudden unconsciousness. Too late, Ham saw this was no gas grenade. It was a smoker.

This grenade was black and white checkered, which meant smoke. For simplicity and to avoid confusion, Doc followed the same system of marking by colors as the navy—red for gas, yellow for explosive, white for shrapnel, and so on.

The smoker popped loudly and in an instant the room was full, incredibly full of smoke. Smoke that was as black as drawing ink.

The room became full of confusion.

"Drat it!" Ham said. "I'm sorry, Doc. I didn't know that was a gas grenade."

"Have you got a gas mask?" Doc demanded.

"No!" Ham cried. "We'll all be killed!"

ACTUALLY there was no gas, unless the harmless smoke could be called a gas. But the smoke had an acrid stinging effect on the lungs and a heavy pungent odor. The smoke, in fact, smelled a great deal more like gas than most gases smelled.

Sam yelled, "Don't shoot! We'll hit each other!"

He also shouted, "Gas! Get out of here!"

The girl, Lena Carlson, thought there was gas, and she made a break for the window. Doc Savage, knowing that if she got out of the smoke she might be shot, lunged for her and caught her.

"Let go of me!" she said, taking a judo hold on his little finger, and trying to insert a thumb in his eye.

"Sh-h-h!" he warned, rescuing his little finger just before she disjointed it. "There's no gas"—this in a whisper—"and the thing to do probably is get down on the floor and stay there."

She obeyed.

The enemy rushed from all directions toward the door. No one could see where he was going, and no one wanted to stay in the room. There was no shouting, probably because they thought the place was full of poison gas and were all holding their breath.

They ran out into the hall and went thundering down the stairs.

Doc Savage, trying to capture at least one man, had no luck whatever. Someone had kicked a packing box into the middle of the floor and he had the misfortune to stumble over that and lunge into Ham, who hit him a respectable wallop thinking he was an enemy. They got that straightened out, and charged into

the hall.

There was a little smoke in the hall, but none on the stairs.

They reached the stairs, but quickly ducked back, just in time to avoid a flock of bullets which came up. The fusillade was deafening.

After the one volley, Sam's voice said, "Savage, can you hear me?"

"I can hear you," Doc answered.

"We've got Monk Mayfair and Too-Too Thomas," Sam said. "You bother us any more, and we'll kill them both."

"Aren't you a little mixed up," Doc asked, "as to who is doing the bothering?"

"Did you hear what I said?" Sam demanded.

"Yes."

"Well, think about it."

Sam and all his men then made their escape.

THEY all got away in the street so quickly that Ham Brooks whistled two or three times in reluctant admiration. Ham was still carrying his sword cane, which he hadn't had an opportunity to use, and he waved this angrily.

"I'll bet we discover," he said, "that those fellows have been trained in that sort of thing."

"Go telephone the police descriptions," Doc said.

Ham dashed off to find a telephone.

Doc Savage went back upstairs, suspecting the girl Lena Carlson would have fled, but she hadn't. Lena was sitting on the floor, and she was indignant.

"That was a great idea, telling me to lie on the floor," she said. "They all used me for a carpet on their way to the door."

"Things were a little confused," Doc admitted.

"I think you stepped on me yourself," she said. "There was one who weighed a ton, anyway."

Doc was irritated with her again. "You succeeded in messing things up nicely," he said.

"What's the matter, sensitive about your weight?" she asked.

Doc was not sensitive about his weight. He was not fat. He knew she was trying to rib him, and knew he should not be irritated, but he was angry anyway.

"Your interference," he told her, "wrecked our plan."

"What plan?"

“Ham Brooks was stationed outside,” Doc told her, “and he was going to follow them when they left. He was going to trail them around until we found out what we thought it necessary to know, so we would be able to round them up.”

“If Ham Brooks is the one who made that smoke, he wasn't in the street,” she said.

“Naturally not,” Doc said. He explained that he had called out a signal which had brought Ham to their aid, not telling her however that the signal was in the Mayan language or that it was even in any language at all. He just said his loud gurgling noise had been a call for aid.

“And because you grabbed me, they got away,” he told her.

“I thought you were one of them.”

“They didn't even know you were on the roof,” Doc said.

“I guess they didn't,” she admitted. “But I thought they did.”

“They didn't come out on the roof because you were there. They came out to set a trap for me.”

“All right, all right, I made a mistake,” she said.

Ham Brooks returned. He was breathing heavily, and he looked bothered. “I called the police and gave them descriptions of all those fellows, and told them you wanted them picked up,” he said.

Then Ham pointed at Lena Carlson and asked, “Is she the monkey wrench that dropped into our plans?”

Doc admitted she was.

Ham gave the girl an enraged stare.

“They've got old Monk Mayfair,” he shouted angrily. “Except for you, we would have been able to rescue him.”

Ham was not in the habit of shouting angrily at pretty girls. But then Ham thought a great deal of Monk, although he and Monk never spoke a civil sentence to each other if they could think of an insulting one.

The girl, for the first time, looked slightly contrite.

“Maybe,” she said, “you would feel better if I told you my story.”

“MY name is Lena Carlson,” she said.

Then she paused as if that ought to mean something, as if the whole world ought to know that name.

Ham, noticing that she thought her name would carry weight, was impressed. But Doc Savage's reaction was quite the contrary. He felt that the young woman should be spanked, shaken or otherwise relieved of self-importance.

Lena wasn't satisfied with the reaction to her name, so she said, “I trust you've heard of me.”

Doc had. He had just remembered where and when. Or rather, he had concluded that she must be Madelena Smitz-Carlson.

And who hadn't heard of Madelena Smitz-Carlson? Possibly Hottentots in Africa hadn't heard of her, and perhaps some of the inhabitants of Germany and Italy where the news was censored. Because, before the war, in fact, before there was much conviction there was going to be a war, Madelena Smitz-Carlson had made headlines by offering to kidnap no one less than Herr Hitler himself, but the government and newspapers had clamped down on her hare-brained bid for publicity.

Before that, there had been other things that had put Madelena Smitz-Carlson on the front pages and made her notorious. She was a spoiled, extremely wealthy heiress who had never known a restraining hand. She had flown oceans, gotten in and out of all kinds of scrapes, and generally pursued a career of making headlines.

She was Madelena Smitz-Carlson, all right. Doc Savage listened to her as she identified herself proudly, with a touch of anger because they were not awe-stricken.

"Here," she said, "is what has happened to me."

It was simple. Somebody had tried to kill her. She didn't know who.

"Three times," she said. "The first time they drilled the exhaust stack of my plane and piped the fumes into the cabin. Carbon monoxide, you see. My mechanic found that. The second time it was poison, cyanide in a champagne cocktail in the Club Lido out West; and the last time it was simpler, just a plain shot."

She had seen who had taken the shot at her.

"So I trailed him," she said. "He was not hard to follow, because I was riding when he shot at me, riding a horse. I fell off the horse, and he thought he had killed me. So he was careless. I followed him here to Washington."

She shrugged. "To make a long story short, and to include everything that is important, I followed him here, to this old building."

"Why did they try to kill you?" Doc asked.

"I don't know."

Doc Savage and Ham Brooks were both silent when she stopped talking and she became indignant.

"I'm not lying!" she snapped.

"You have no idea what's behind this?"

"None," she said sharply.

Doc Savage considered the situation for a while.

"Do you," he asked, "know a man named Too-Too Thomas?"

"Too-Too—oh! Oh, yes, of course," she said. "I know him, yes, of course."

"Who is Too-Too Thomas?"

"My partner," she explained. "My partner in the ownership of a ranch called the Rancho El Dirty Man, in Lower California."

“Have you seen him in Washington?”

She looked surprised. “Is he here?”

Ham told her, “Either you're a twenty-four-carat, fifty-caliber liar, or you know almost as little about this mess as we do.”

## Chapter V. TRAIL TO TROUBLE

APPARENTLY they had deflated the notable Lena Carlson somewhat. She seemed uncomfortable.

“Maybe,” she said, “I did sort of wreck things.”

“Amen,” Ham assured her.

“Maybe you'd pick up your faces if I redeemed myself?”

“Eh?”

“I know where they have been hanging their collective hats.”

Ham's jaw fell. “You know where their headquarters are?”

“That's right.”

Doc Savage gripped the young woman's arm and they hurried out of the building and along the street.

“We'll have to move fast on this,” Doc said. “Those fellows will guess that you've probably been watching them, and they'll change their headquarters on the chance that you know where it is.”

Lena Carlson nodded. “That's right, too. From what I saw of them, they're pretty sharp.”

The car which Doc and Ham were using was a borrowed one, a coach model which would have been on a junkpile if there had not been a war in progress. They got going.

“Which way?” Doc asked.

“Go north,” Lena Carlson said. “It's out on the edge of town, a house in the suburbs.”

Doc told Ham, “Get Long Tom, Johnny and Renny on the radio.”

The radio was a portable outfit. It was so compact that it didn't look as if it had the power to reach New York, but the set would work even the Pacific coast under most conditions. Ham used the loud-speaker built into the set instead of the headphones, so that Doc could hear.

“I'll be superamalgamated,” said the voice out of the radio. “We've been waiting to hear from you.”

This was William Harper Johnny Littlejohn, the archaeologist-geologist and walking dictionary.

Ham asked, “Who's there with you?”

“Everybody.”

“At headquarters?”

“Yes.”

Ham explained, “Something has up and wrapped itself around our necks down here in Washington. This is one time we didn't go looking for trouble.”

“You went down there to get into the fighting army,” Johnny said.

“Well, we're in something,” Ham assured him. “It's started off like a house afire, and it doesn't make the least kind of sense. But one thing is sure, we've been marked up for a killing and the gang that is after us already has Monk.”

“What are they going to do about Monk?”

“We wish we knew,” Ham said grimly. “They tried to kill Doc and me, so I don't like to think about Monk.”

“I'll be superamalgamated!”

Ham said, “Doc has something to say.”

Doc Savage, taking over the microphone, said, “Johnny, you and Renny and Long Tom get the planes' equipment ready. Get set to operate.”

“Right-o,” Johnny said. He sounded pleased. “You want us down there in Washington right away?”

“Yes. You had better take individual planes.”

“Does that mean Pat?” Johnny asked.

“Is she there?”

“I didn't figure you would burst into song. Yes, she is.”

“Tell her to go home.”

“We did,” Johnny explained. “You want to know what she said?”

“Never mind,” Doc said. “But discourage her some way.”

The bronze man switched off the radio. Lena Carlson was examining him thoughtfully. “Who is Pat? Is she by any chance Patricia Savage, who operates that beauty salon on Park Avenue?”

“That,” Doc admitted ruefully, “is Pat.”

“I've heard of her,” Lena said, “the way you hear about electric sparks.”

THE house was new. It looked as if it had been built since the war. Although it was new and in a nice suburban section, the design was so standardized that one could tell at a single glance the number of rooms and the layout. Six rooms, two upstairs with two baths, attached garage, basement stairway opening off the kitchen. Even the shrubbery looked as if it had come out of a standard-lot catalogue.

Lena Carlson indicated the place.

“Now,” she said, “you can see why I know so little about the gang. Show me how anyone could get

close to that house without being seen. It's as exposed as a fly sitting on a billiard ball.”

Doc Savage did not pass the house. “Get down,” he said, as soon as it came in sight. Ham and Lena Carlson were down on the floor boards while Doc drove calmly into a driveway of a house in the same block. The garage of this house was open. He drove into it and stopped the machine.

“Ham,” he said. “In the back of the car is an equipment case holding the large stuff. Get the kite out.”

“Kite?” Lena said. Then she stared at the object Ham was removing from the case. “You really mean a kite, don't you?”

It was a flat kite, and there was a bridle gadget of light alloy which could be changed simply by jerking the kite string. With this, the direction of the kite could be changed somewhat; it could be flown to the right or the left. The kite string was made of a slender, strong, twisted pair of wires.

To the tip of the kite—the sticks were airplane metal tubes—Doc attached a pear-shaped gadget with a sharp spike on the end.

“Fortunately,” he said, “the house has a wooden shingle roof.”

Lena pointed at the pear-shaped gadget. “Mystifies me,” she said.

“Contact microphone,” Doc said. “Very sensitive and so sturdy you can almost hit it with a hammer. At least, it's made so that it can withstand the force with which it will strike that roof.”

He put the kite in the air. There was a smart breeze, and the kite darted around. Doc maneuvered it carefully.

The fact that they had calmly driven their car into a strange garage was attracting attention. A face, a woman's face, was pressed to the window of the house to which the garage belonged. She looked alarmed.

Doc, Ham and Lena all smiled at her. But the woman did not smile back.

“I better tell her we're not after the family silver,” Lena said.

She went to the door of the house and knocked, but she got no answer. The frightened woman's face did not appear again at any of the windows.

Doc Savage got the kite into position, jockeying it with skill which indicated he had done it before. He sent it point first into the roof of the house in which they were interested.

“Turn up the amplifier, Ham,” he said, “and see if we hooked anything.”

(In the old days when there was peace in the Orient (China and Japan), the art of kite fighting became a highly developed one. At one time it was almost as popular as cockfighting, and more elite. The idea was to wreck the other person's kite, and the kite strings were coated with broken glass, so one could see an opponent's kite string in two.—Ed.)

THERE was movement in the distant house. They could hear feet stamping, apparently on a stairway, then moving through a hall, or through rooms.

“I think the noise was in here,” a voice said, and there was the sound of a door opening. Then the man said, “I don't see anything, Willis.”

Willis said, "What do you think that noise was, Sam?"

"It sounded as if something fell," Sam grumbled. "I thought for a minute someone was hiding up here. But I don't see anybody."

Ham clutched Doc's arm. "That's two of the men who were at the old building downtown. I know their voices." He became more excited. "I wonder if Monk is there?"

Ham got to his feet, picking up his sword cane.

"I'm going in there," he added. "I'm not going to fool around."

Doc agreed, "We might as well. We fooled around downtown, and were left holding the sack."

Lena Carlson looked at them unbelievably. "How many do you think you are, anyway?" she asked. "There're only two of you. There may be fifteen men in that house. And there's something about them that makes me think they're trained fighters."

"Trained?" Doc said. "You mean army men?"

"I don't know," Lena said. "They're fighters, anyway. And, there're just two of you."

"Listen," Doc said.

The others had no trouble hearing what he had heard. "Police sirens," Ham exclaimed.

Doc indicated the house to which the garage belonged. "The lady of the house must have called the police. You can't blame her."

Another police siren joined the first. This one was very close. In the same street, apparently.

"Come on!" Ham yelled. "Now's the time to close in on that house. We've got help."

Doc Savage thought so, too. Ordinarily he would have preferred to use more caution, but the arrival of the police would alarm the occupants of the house.

THEY went along an alley, moving fast, and headed for the house on the roof of which the kite lay. They saw a man standing in front of the house, in the yard.

The man was staring up at the roof, at the kite and the kite string. He turned around and looked at the street. He ran, jumped, got hold of the kite string and examined it.

"Wire!" he yelled. "A wire kite string. Dammit, they've got a microphone on the roof."

He ran into the house, bellowing the same information again.

The house garage was a double one, and now two delivery trucks, one the dairy truck that had been in the downtown street, popped out.

It careened into the street on two wheels. A police car was in the street, and the cops who were looking for trouble, instantly yelled and blew whistles. A man leaned out of the dairy truck and shot at a policeman. The cop jumped behind a fire hydrant, getting out his gun. From his gun came flame and noise.

The dairy truck fired back at the cops and all the policemen began shooting as they scattered for cover.

The second panel truck came out of the garage. From it also there was shooting.

In the second truck, a voice was yelling, and bellowing, making a tremendous uproar, and it was a voice which both Doc and Ham recognized.

“Monk!” Ham shouted. “Monk is in that truck!”

HAM dashed wildly into the street, hauling out an unusual weapon which he carried, a supermachine pistol of Doc Savage's design. The little gun was too complicated and delicate for military use, but when properly cared for, it could turn loose an unbelievable number of small bullets in a second. In operation, it sounded like a deep-voiced bull fiddle.

The machine pistols could be charged with different types of bullets—smokers, gas, demolition, and most often a type of “mercy” bullet which would produce unconsciousness without harming the victim a great deal.

Ham had the idea there were mercy bullets in the pistol, but instead there were smokers. The little smoke bullets made a great cloud of smoke around the truck, but the vehicle soon raced out of the pall.

Both trucks rounded a corner.

Ham expressed his feelings violently. “I'm sure having my troubles with smoke today!” he complained.

Doc Savage had wheeled back. He seized Lena Carlson, hauled her after him, and climbed into their car in the garage. As he was backing out, Ham landed on the running board. He scrambled inside.

“Chasing them is going to be a job,” Doc said. “There are so many routes they can take.”

Lena said, “I think I can help there. Go north three blocks, then west.”

“Why?”

“They did some driving around during the time I was watching and trailing them,” Lena exclaimed. “It was obvious they were spotting get-away routes in case they needed them. The one they drove over the most is the one I just told you.”

Doc Savage fed the engine all the gasoline it would take. They gathered speed.

“Think of the tires,” Lena said, “and cross your fingers.”

The tires held. The speedometer climbed to eighty-five, which was miraculous speed for such an old car. Doc took streets which paralleled the route they were going to intercept, and finally turned into the main boulevard.

“Good guess!” Ham yelled. “There go both cars.”

Then he ducked, and glass fell out of the windshield at the upper right corner. The noise a bullet had made rang in their ears.

“Either that was an accidental hit,” Ham gasped, “or they've got the world's best marksman.”

Lena Carlson had been riding in front. She crawled over into the back seat, and lay on the floor.

"I'm beginning to wish I had joined something peaceful, like the Commandos," she said.

## Chapter VI. AMBUSH

THERE was some shooting, evidently quite a bit of it. They could hear the popping of the guns faintly over the noise their car engine was making. Only two bullets hit their machine, and one of these hit Ham squarely in the stomach.

When the bullet hit Ham, he barked loudly, and doubled over. First he wrapped his arms tightly around his stomach, then unlocked them and beat his stomach frantically with both fists.

Doc grabbed Ham's arms to stop the beating, and said, "If the bullet went through the vest, that isn't good for you."

Lena Carlson had gotten up in the seat. "You're shot," she said. "Here, let me take care of him." She began trying to hold Ham still.

"Get away from me, blast you!" Ham yelled, getting his breath. "And leave my shirt alone!"

But she had already wrenched open his shirt. She looked surprised, and held up a misshapen blob of lead. "You've got a bulletproof vest," she said.

"It sure wasn't kickproof," Ham said, and went off into a fit of coughing.

"Back out of sight," Doc told the girl. "Get down on the floor boards where you were. Ham, you too."

The girl got down. Ham said, "I'll be all right as soon as I get my lungs acquainted with some air again."

There was no more shooting for a while. The two trucks ahead kept together, and concentrated on speed, trying to lose their pursuers. They were not successful.

"Airport," Doc said. "They are going to an airport."

"But there is no civilian flying in the coast zone right now, because of the war," Ham objected.

Doc Savage glanced at his wrist watch.

"There is an airlines plane fueled and on the line ready for the St. Louis flight right now," the bronze man said gravely.

IN the dairy truck, the man called Sam had also consulted his watch. He said, "Give it more gas, Bummy."

"She's got it all now," Bummy said. "We'll make it. There's the airport."

The other truck, a few yards ahead of them, rocketed into the airport.

"Plan two," Sam said. "Use plan two. And let's not pick any flowers."

The runways of the flying field were separated from the parking ground by a conventional factory-type

steel wire fence which was closed by metal gates. The gates were closed and locked.

The lead truck slowed just enough so that nobody would be damaged by the shock, and hit the gates squarely. Both front tires blew out and the radiator caved back on the engine, but the gates burst open. The truck skewed off to one side, rocking drunkenly, and stopped.

The men in that truck piled out with their guns and began shooting at everybody in sight.

The second truck went through the gate, straight for the big airliner which stood in front of the passenger building. They did plenty of shooting from the truck, and the airline employees scattered.

The pilot made a run for his cockpit, but the truck stopped in front of the plane, so that it could not move. The pilot came out of the ship with his hands in the air.

A man removed the wheel chocks.

More men loaded Monk Mayfair and Too-Too Thomas into the airliner.

The others had flopped behind anything that was handy, and were shooting. Some shots were coming back from the armed guards around the field. But no one seemed to be hitting much.

Two men out of the truck climbed into the plane. They were fliers, experienced on big two-motored ships. They ran forward, got into the cockpit buckets, and looked over the instruments.

They started the motors and began warming them up.

The men from the other truck were now picked up by a quick trip which the first truck made back to the gate. None of the raiders were down, although two had been hit and slightly wounded. Two airport employees were on the ground, one of them motionless, the other crying and trying to stem the flow of blood from the wounds where a bullet had gone through both his legs.

The raiders loaded into the big passenger plane. The ship had capacity for all of them, and more.

“Highball,” Sam said.

The ship moved slowly, gathered speed, and went rocketing across the field, paying no attention to the runways or the frantic signals from the control tower.

It took the air, made a dangerous bank with a wingtip stabbing at the ground, and came back. Men were sticking rifles out of the windows.

DOC SAVAGE saw the plane coming. He was still in the car with Ham and Lena Carlson, and he swerved the machine, sent it to a spot near a drainage ditch close to the factory-wire fence.

“Into the ditch,” he said.

The ditch had about a foot of water, but it was narrow, and the steep sides offered shelter. They splashed into it, then crawled rapidly so that the men in the plane wouldn't know exactly where they were.

“The water is muddy,” Doc said. “Submerge as much as possible, and they will not be able to spot us as well.”

The big plane boomed overhead. A few bullets smacked into the ground, some driving up water spouts in the ditch. But none of them came close.

The plane went off into the distance like a cannonball and did not come back.

Ham looked around the airport, dumbfounded. "Do you realize," he asked, "that they pulled that whole thing off in not much more than a minute. Why, it must have been less than a minute."

Lena Carlson shivered. "I'm lucky, I guess!"

"I don't see anything lucky about it," Ham said. "They got away."

"I mean before," Lena said. "They tried to kill me three times, remember? As efficient as they are, it's lucky they didn't get the job done. Then where would I be?"

"They got away with Monk!" Ham said. He sounded despondent.

Doc Savage got out of the ditch, stringing water, and went to the car. He put the short-wave radio into operation.

"Johnny," he said into the microphone. "Or Long Tom, or Renny."

A feminine voice came from the loud-speaker. "Don't leave me out, if you please." It was Pat Savage.

Pat's voice had some of the qualities of strength and ability which Doc's voice had.

Doc ignored her, said, "Johnny, Long Tom, Renny! Come in, please."

"Johnny to Doc," Johnny's voice said. "O. K. What is it?"

"They just stole the air-line plane for St. Louis," Doc said. "They have Monk aboard." He gave them the department numerals and a description of the plane. "Keep your eyes open. The plane took off for the north, and was going north when last seen."

"A fairly thick overcast extends south of Baltimore," Johnny said. "They are heading for that. They'll get into it before we have a chance to overtake them."

"Try, anyway!"

"Sure, we'll try."

Doc started to put down the hand microphone, changed his mind, and said, "Pat?"

"So you've decided to notice me," Pat said.

"Where are you? Your own plane?"

Pat sounded angry and said, "One of your helpful pals put my personal plane on the fritz. He thought that would keep me at home. I know who it was. It was Renny."

"What did you do?" Doc asked sourly.

"Why, I just climbed in with Renny," Pat said. "I'm with him now. Say, is this Lena Carlson the beautiful and notorious Madelena Smitz-Carlson? If true, you had better watch out or you'll find yourself shopping for rings."

Doc switched off the radio without bothering to answer.

DOC SAVAGE, Ham and Lena Carlson went back to the house from which they had flushed the men. There was nothing they could do at the airport, the police had taken over, and army officers were on hand. The army had come because there was something too precise and military in the manner in which the plane had been stolen.

At the house, Doc Savage unearthed nothing of value. He got plenty of fingerprints, or rather the police got them and furnished him with copies.

The house had been rented—for a startling price—three days before. The police picked up the landlord immediately for violating the rent ceiling edicts, filing the technical charge of suspected complicity in the crime of attempted murder. None of the police had been killed when the men burst out of the house, but some had been wounded.

Doc Savage told Ham, “You might get the ultraviolet projector.”

This ultraviolet projector was a strong source of light rays outside the visible spectrum, equipped with a good filter lens. Doc switched it on, and pulled down the curtains in the various rooms in the house.

Then the bronze man began going over the floor, over the lower walls and the furniture with the ultraviolet light.

Ham knew the object of the search, but Lena Carlson and the police were puzzled.

It had been a practice of Doc Savage and his aides for a long time to have at least one button on their clothing which was composed of a chemical plastic. When used as a pencil for writing, on almost any surface, it would leave a mark that was invisible to the naked eye, but which would fluoresce under ultraviolet light.

“What's the idea of the lantern, Diogenes?” Lena Carlson asked.

Ham Brooks explained about the invisible writing which would fluoresce under the black light.

“What's fluoresce?” Lena countered.

“I can see keeping you posted scientifically is going to be quite a chore,” Ham said. “Let's leave out the details and just say that when something fluoresces, it glows under the effect of black light.”

“Oh, like a firefly, you mean?”

“Could be,” Ham admitted. “As I understand it, they don't know exactly what makes a firefly shine, though.”

Doc Savage made an unexpected small trilling sound which was low and exotic, strangely musical and yet completely tuneless. It was a small, unconscious thing which the bronze man did in moments of astonishment.

“What's that?” Lena asked.

“It's Doc's substitute for a grunt of astonishment,” Ham said. “But don't ever kid him about it. He learned it from an old mentalist and master of mental control in India a long time ago, and Doc has never been able to get rid of the habit.”

Lena Carlson hurried forward to see what Doc had found that provoked the trilling sound.

THE message had been written on the new varnished hardwood floor of the house. The fluorescence was very faint until Ham went into another room and got a blanket and came back and made the room considerably darker than it had been. Then the scratching on the floor was more decipherable.

It said:

THEY HAVE TWO BOSSES, NAMED DER HASE AND DAS SEEHUND. Submarine involved. Is big business. Monkey business, too. Am keeping big ears fanned out but learning little except couple of new cusswords. Learned those when they found out Doc was on their trail. They are keeping me around because of mysterious order from boss named Der Hase to do so. Glad to know I am such a worthy character to this Der Hase. Am well and hope you are the same.

Ham Brooks read the message, and he chuckled. His chuckle was so relieved that it almost held tears.

“That's old Monk,” he said. “Old Monk wrote that.”

“How can you tell?” Lena asked.

“Nobody but Monk would write a silly message like that.”

“Is it his handwriting?” Lena asked, amazed.

“That toad-scratching aspect of the writing,” Ham explained, “was probably caused by Monk's hands being tied behind him. The chemical-plastic button he used for the writing was doubtless one of the suspender buttons off his trousers, in the back. He could get to that button, with his hands tied.”

“He certainly wrote a long message and said very little,” Lena said.

“That's Monk. He must have had plenty of time, and not much to say.”

Lena frowned. “Der Hase and Das Seehund. Who are they?”

“Was about to ask you the same thing,” Ham said.

“I never heard of them. Why should you think I had?”

Ham shrugged.

Lena said sharply, “I don't know why I'm involved in this. I have no idea what it's about.”

Ham shrugged again, more elaborately.

Doc Savage was examining the note written on the varnished floor with invisible chemical script. “Der Hase and Das Seehund,” the bronze man said. “The words are German. They mean the Hare and the Seal.”

“Nicknames,” Ham said.

“Obviously.”

“Ever hear of them?”

Doc evidently had not. The bronze man was silent for a while.

“Ham,” he said, “go down to the war department and borrow a couple of enemy prisoners. Borrow a couple who have seen the light, and have been willing to talk to the American military authorities.”

“Where do you find such an article in Washington?” Ham asked.

“The War Department will tell you.”

AS soon as Ham had departed, Doc Savage got in touch with the airport by telephone and asked whether his aides had landed as yet. They were just coming in, he was told. “Put one of them on the wire,” Doc requested.

It was Renny who came to the telephone. Renny Renwick was an eminent engineer with a voice which habitually shook the surrounding scenery, and a pair of fists like suitcases, nearly.

“Holy cow, Doc,” he said. “We didn't see fuzz nor feathers of that plane that carried Monk off.”

“Is there much excitement at the airport?” Doc asked.

“There is still quite a bit.”

“Inquire around and look over the situation,” Doc said. “It might be that someone recognized one of the raiders, or one of them might have dropped something that would be a clue.”

“Right,” Renny said.

“Call me back by radio.”

“Right.”

“Are Long Tom and Johnny in yet?”

“No. They got started a little later, and their ship is not as fast as mine,” Renny explained. “They'll be showing up soon.”

“Good,” Doc said.

“Wait, don't hang up,” Renny said. “Doc, Pat came down with me. She just barged in, and when I told her we didn't want her mixed up in this, she said go to the devil. What do I do?”

Doc sighed wearily.

“Try telling the police or the Army Intelligence she is a notorious international spy, a regular Mata Hari,” Doc suggested. “Maybe they will lock her up and keep her out of our hair.”

“That won't work. All the cops know Pat by sight.”

“If they did not, she would probably smile at them and hypnotize them,” Doc said wearily. “Think of something.”

“I've got a headache from thinking,” Renny said.

“It is probably nothing to the headache we will have if you don't think of something that will work,” Doc

assured him.

RENNY RENWICK, at the airport, hung up the telephone receiver, looked at the telephone and complained, "That was a lot of help." Finally he grinned at himself.

Pat was in their hair, all right. And all of them knew, Doc as well as the others, that there was not much they could do about it.

As a matter of fact, Pat wasn't quite the calamity they pretended she was. There were times when she had been a considerable help, but there were other times when she had complicated matters.

Renny was thinking of that when the man in the white coveralls accosted him.

"They told me you were a Doc Savage associate," the man said. "I'm Reeves. I'm a mechanic, a grease monkey here at the field."

Renny eyed him. "What have you got on your mind?" Renny was not too impressed by the man, and he did not want to be bothered by somebody who just wanted the distinction of having talked to a Doc Savage associate.

"Found this," the man said. He fumbled in a pocket. "It help you any?"

It was a folded bit of yellow paper.

"Where'd you find this?" Renny asked.

"Over by where they smashed through the gate in the car, them guys who stole the plane," the man said. "They tumbled out of their car after it was wrecked by hitting the gate, as you may know. I happened to be standing where I could watch them. I saw this fly out of one of their coat pockets, but I didn't think much about it at the time. There was so much going on that I don't think I hardly noticed it."

It was a telegram.

Renny glanced over it.

"Holy cow!" he said. He looked up. "Why didn't you give this to the police?"

"I just remembered about it, and went out there and found it where some dust had been scuffed over it," the man said. "To tell the truth, I was looking around for a cop when I saw you, and I thought I'd show it to you."

"Good," Renny said. "What did you say your name was, Reeves?"

"That's right."

Renny beckoned to an airport executive who was passing a man in the mechanical end. He indicated Reeves, asked, "You know this fellow?"

"Yes," the airport man said. "Hello, Reeves."

"He work here?"

"Sure," said the airport official. "What's wrong? He done something?"

“Not at all, he's been helping me,” Renny said. “I just wanted to check on his identification. Thank you. And thank you, Reeves.”

Renny headed for his plane. He encountered Pat Savage on the way.

“Come on, Pat,” he said. “We're taking off.”

“What's up?”

“I hear a hen cackling,” Renny said, “and I'm pretty anxious to get there before she lays the egg.”

THEY took off in Renny's private plane. Renny went through the business of getting a clearance and filing a flight plan after he was in the air, a matter that kept him busy and red-faced for some minutes.

“Dang the official red tape,” he complained. Then he switched on the private short-wave radio, and began trying to raise Doc Savage. He got Doc without much trouble.

“Doc,” he said, “something came up. I am heading for the Arizona desert country.”

“What on earth?” Doc said, sounding surprised for once.

“One of those raiders dropped a telegram,” Renny explained.

He got out the telegram, which read:

TANK TRUCK AVIATION GAS BE AT LIGHTNING FLATS FOR USE ANY TIME.  
LIGHTNING FLATS IN ARIZONA. SIGNAL BLINKING RED LIGHT RAPIDLY.

H. I. JACK.

Renny read the telegram to Doc, and added, “Holy cow, I couldn't take a chance. With that big plane, or with any plane the way it is in wartime, they've got to land at some out of the way place for gas. Maybe this is the tip-off.”

“Where are you?”

“In the air headed for Arizona and the place.”

“We will join you,” Doc said.

“Good. Here is where I got the message.” Renny explained about the man at the airport, the fellow who had found the telegram.

Doc Savage made no comment on that, except to check on the man's name. Then Doc asked, “Pat with you?”

“Yeah. What am I going to do with her?”

“Put a parachute on her,” Doc said, “and drop her over a nice wilderness somewhere.”

Renny chuckled, and the radio conversation ended.

“I'm very popular, am I not?” Pat said. “My own cousin, dropping me in a wilderness. Nice stuff.”

Renny said, "We'll have to drop off in Kansas City and pick up an Arizona chart. I don't know where this Lightning Flats is in Arizona."

"It sounds interesting, anyway," Pat said.

Renny was fiddling with the radio. "Holy cow!" he said.

"What's the matter?"

"Blamed radio," Renny said. "Seems to have gone on the fritz."

"That's strange," Pat said.

## Chapter VII. LIGHTNING FLATS

DOC SAVAGE, in Washington, told Ham Brooks, Johnny Littlejohn and Long Tom Roberts, "The trouble with investigating is that it takes time."

Lena Carlson looked a little irritated, but the others did not take it as criticism.

Ham said, "The guy had been working at the airport about four months. His record wasn't too good. About borderline, I would say, not bad enough to be fired and not good enough to make them think much of him."

"Four months," Doc Savage said. "When Renny asked, and found out the man had been employed there that long, he would not be suspicious."

Long Tom Roberts, the electrical wizard, was a thin man with an atrocious complexion. His sallow coloring didn't mean a thing as to his health, but he could stand alongside a mushroom and make the mushroom seem rosy-cheeked.

Long Tom said, "I had a heck of a time with the telegraph companies. They wanted a special edict from the president, and a personal threat from Hitler, apparently. Anyway, they finally got busy and put a currycomb through their files."

"And?" Doc asked.

"No messages from Arizona," Long Tom said. "They checked by wire with the Arizona relay offices, and the Arizona point of origination, and there was no such message sent."

"Trap," Doc said.

"It doesn't look good," Long Tom admitted.

Doc turned to Lena Carlson and asked, "What about your contribution?"

"Well, all I can say is if you're not satisfied with the time I made, you should have seen the amount of work I did," Lena Carlson said.

"What did you find out?"

"You asked me to learn where these men could get a truckload of high-test gas," Lena reminded him. "I was supposed to check the whole country in no time at all, comparatively speaking. Anyway, I got the job done after a fashion. I will say that your name worked wonders with the government people I talked

to.”

“Did you get any results?” Doc asked patiently.

“Sure. A truckload of high-test aviation gas was hijacked in Arizona, but in eastern Arizona, which is nowhere near this Lightning Flats.”

“What happened to the truckload of gas?”

“They're hunting for it. The thieves got away with truck and gas, both.”

“I'll be superamalgamated!” Johnny said. “That makes it look as if they're going to refuel in Arizona, anyway.”

Doc turned to Johnny. “Any contact with Renny and Pat on the radio yet?”

“None,” Johnny said.

“We had better get out to the airport,” Doc said, “and talk it over with that fellow who said he found the telegram.”

THE man who had found the telegram was in the locker room, getting out of his work clothes. It was not quitting time, and he looked uneasy when he saw them.

“I wasn't feeling so good,” he told them. “I guess it was the excitement got my nerves. I'm taking off the rest of the day.”

He was a somewhat flabby looking man, and his uneasiness grew.

Doc Savage took the man by the arm.

“Want to tell us all about it?” Doc asked.

The man jerked wildly to get away. “What're you talking about?” he gasped.

Doc said, “Ham, the truth serum. We might as well give it to him here and now and have it over with.”

Ham then produced an impressive hypo needle. As a matter of fact it was one of the huge needles used by veterinaries to treat horses and cows. The mechanic took one look at it and bleated uneasily.

“Truth serum!” he yelled. “What you mean?”

“Makes you talk,” Ham assured him. “Sometimes it is such a shock to your system that it kills you, but we've got to use it anyway. We haven't time to fool around prying information out of you.”

The man did some struggling, some bouncing around, some sweating. Ham knew by the signs that he was weakening, so Ham clicked the needle noisily, and filled it with orange pop from a bottle which he had thoughtfully provided with an impressive skull and crossbones label.

Words began coming out of the frightened man.

“They told me it was a gag,” he whined. “I didn't know it was anything like it was.”

“Who told you?”

“Them guys. They paid me to give the telegram to one of your gang and say I had found it. I was to give it to Savage or one of the others. They told me it was a joke.”

Long Tom said ominously, “Now look, brother, let's cut out the lying right now. You know danged well that shooting wasn't a joke, and you gave the telegram to Renny after the shooting, so let's not have any more joke talk. You knew it wasn't any rib.”

The man grew pale.

“They paid me so much money to do it!” he mumbled.

“The telegram was a phony?”

“Yes. But I didn't realize—”

“Who were the men who hired you? What do you know about them?”

“Nothing,” the mechanic said, and he sounded sincere.

Just to make sure that he was not lying, however, they worked the fellow over thoroughly with words, and Ham did some more impressive flourishing with his prop hypo needle. In the end there was no doubt but that the mechanic had told them all the facts in his possession.

“I didn't realize it was wrong!” he kept wailing.

“The only thing you didn't realize,” Ham told him grimly, “was that you'd get caught.”

Long Tom growled, “Let's try to overtake Renny and Pat. We'll do our best to intercept them by radio. They may have to set down for fuel somewhere.”

IN the meantime, Renny Renwick and Pat Savage had decided to make a nonstop high altitude jump to Lightning Flats, in Arizona.

Pat had gone through the chart case in the plane. She flourished a chart triumphantly.

“Why don't you clean out your chart box now and then?” she asked. “Look here. A map which shows Lightning Flats.”

Renny examined the map. He found that Lightning Flats was a desert section which apparently had no distinction other than being flat, arid, and as hot as the hinges of that place, probably.

It was then that Renny decided on the nonstop flight.

“I've got the fuel,” he said. “And old Monk is in that other plane. So we'll not waste any time.”

He took the plane up above thirty thousand where the air currents were favorable enough to add another hundred miles an hour to the near pursuit-plane speed of his craft, and they unrolled miles for a few hours.

Pat pried into the radio to see what was wrong with it.

“Look here,” she said, indicating a soft black mess of stuff in the radio mechanism.

“What is it?”

"It's wax," Pat said, "mixed with graphite dust apparently, to make it a conductor of electricity. A lump of it was put in the radio, and the heat of the radio tubes melted it a few minutes after the radio was switched on."

"Hey, that's sabotage!" Renny rumbled. "When the radio was switched on for a test on the ground, it would test O. K., then go out a while after it was in the air, after it had been on for a time."

"That," Pat said, "is the hole the polecat came out of."

"What do you figure it means?" Renny asked.

"I don't know," Pat said. "But to me, it means I'm going to keep at least one eye open."

Renny scratched his head and finally muttered that he didn't know when the dirty work had been done, although it might have been done in Washington while they were refueling the plane.

"We got something else to think about," he added. "Down there is Lightning Flats."

He upended the plane, sent it boring down in a steep dive until about five thousand feet, close enough to the earth so that they could distinguish the general contour of objects.

It was a flat place in the desert, nothing more interesting than that. The desert itself wasn't particularly picturesque, for it had few of the colorful qualities of the Painted Desert. There were hills. They didn't seem to be much as hills seen from this height, but Renny knew they were large hills.

It was dusk, too, nearly dark, and in that light in this clear air, measuring distance with the eye could lead you astray.

"Looks peaceful," Renny said.

"So does a stick of dynamite," Pat said. "Sometimes one looks just like a harmless candle."

"See anybody?"

"No."

"They couldn't hide a plane down there," Renny said.

"True," Pat admitted. "But trouble doesn't always come in planes."

RENNY dropped the plane lower, examined the place some more, and finally said, "I think I see a hump of dirt that is either a Navaho hodag, or a structure of some kind."

"Hodags are round," Pat said. "This one isn't round."

"Give me the flashlight," Renny told her. "We were supposed to signal with a blinking red light. Isn't that what the telegram says?"

Pat found a flashlight. "It doesn't have any red lens."

"I thought of that," Renny said. "I have one of those card holders in my billfold, and it is made of red celluloid. I'll just hold a sheet of it over the flash lens."

While Pat handled the plane controls, Renny tried out his idea.

“Holy cow!” he said immediately. “I got a bite. Look! Down there by that structure I noticed.”

It was another red light, also blinking rapidly.

“All's well in sneaky town,” Renny said, chuckling. “Now we land and have a surprise party.”

Pat said, “I don't like this.”

“What don't you like? They don't know we are enemies, and we'll be right up on them before anything goes wrong, before they know there isn't any butter on their bread.”

Pat shook her head.

“It's too open and shut,” she said. “I keep thinking about the doctored radio.”

Renny was enthusiastic for a fight. “When we get down there, we'll doctor somebody,” he said.

“You're getting as bad as Monk where a fight is involved,” Pat told him. “You'd better stop, look, listen, and whistle at the crossroads.”

“Maybe,” Renny said, “you'd like to cancel your ticket for this trip.”

“Eh?” said Pat.

“You weren't invited, you know.”

“You,” Pat said, “get my goat at times.”

“I can remember the times,” Renny told her, “that you've brought out a cold sweat on me, too.”

Pleased with himself, he put the plane into its landing bank, the usual triangular approach which he used. He straightened out for the landing glide.

A noise, a rush of air, made him turn his head.

“Hey!” he bellowed. “Holy cow!”

“I think I'll check out,” Pat said, “and watch from the side line.”

She jumped, the parachute pack dangling on its straps, her hand on the ripcord.

Renny twisted his head around and watched to make sure she landed safely. By that time, he had overshot his landing, so he hauled up the nose and went around again. That time he set the plane down without trouble.

Lightning Flats apparently was an old lake bed which had dried as smooth as a concrete highway. Because of its high speed, the plane which Renny handled landed hot, and he nursed it along, sending it toward the end of the lake where the light signal had been returned.

He would, he decided, sit in the plane with a gun and take the enemy by surprise. The plane cockpit was armored.

BY the time he reached the other end of the field, Renny had his machine pistol ready, and had opened the cockpit windows. He opened the windows only a slit, enough to shove the machine pistol barrel

through, because the windows were also bulletproof.

Straining his eyes, separating objects in the rapidly increasing dusk, he saw that the structure he had seen from the air was not a hogan, nor one of those round structures of logs covered with sod which the Navahos sometimes used for a winter house.

This was a tank truck, a big transport truck covered with a camouflage of sagebrush and tumbleweeds.

The refueling truck, Renny thought. This is where they were going to refuel, all right.

He knew enough about the speed of his plane to be quite sure that he had beaten the stolen air transport to the spot.

Renny rolled his plane up to the concealed truck, stopped it.

Men walked out from under the truck camouflage cover. One of them waved sociably. They did not seem to be armed.

Renny shut off his motor.

“This the spot?” he called.

The men stopped.

“Hell!” one of them said. “That guy ain't one of the outfit.”

Renny laughed loudly, gleefully. He shoved the snout of his machine pistol through the window slit.

“You bet I ain't,” he said. “I'm a wolf in sheep's clothing, that's what I am.”

They stared at him in horror.

“You boys,” Renny added, “had better jump for a star. Come on! Try to grab one!”

There was an explosion, a very loud one. Sand, fire in a sheet, came from under Renny's plane. The plane itself gave a big jump straight up and changed its shape somewhat. The plane fell back to earth.

The men dashed forward and hauled Renny out of the wreckage.

The man who had thrown the big grenade approached also. He had been concealed cleverly under the ground, in a shallow pit scooped out and then covered over with paper which was the same color as the dried lake bed.

Other men had been concealed in the same fashion in the earth in the neighborhood. They were shouting questions, demanding to know if their help was needed. Evidently it was quite a job to conceal them, and they were not breaking out unless they were needed.

“Is he dead?” the grenade thrower asked, staring at Renny.

“Probably just overcome by surprise,” a man said, chuckling.

RENNY was affected by something more substantial than surprise. His head had banged against the side of the plane cabin. But it was not serious.

He was tied hand and foot, and was kicked in the ribs when he regained consciousness.

“Who used the parachute?” they demanded. “Who jumped just before you landed. And why?”

Renny thought: Pat wasn't smart—she couldn't have known this was a booby trap. She was just lucky. And how lucky! From now on, she'll be hard to hold. I won't be able to tell her a thing, without her pointing to what happened this evening and laughing in my face.

A man kicked Renny again and repeated, “Who used the parachute?”

“My personal gremlin,” Renny said. “And brother, that's closer to the truth than you think.”

This wisecrack brought him another kick in the ribs. But they did not get more information from Renny. He just howled indignantly and mentioned specific parts of anatomy, such as ears and arms, which he was going to snatch off his captors individually before this thing was finished.

The captors sent off an expedition of four men to search for whoever had used the parachute.

They came back empty-handed and uneasy.

“Too dark to find anybody out there,” they said.

“The thing to do,” a man decided, “is get out of here.”

“What about our plane from Washington?”

“Get on the radio. See about it.”

They used a portable radio—it was a very modern and efficient set operating on various wave lengths to which it was switched in succession by a synchronized clockwork arrangement, which was the latest method of defeating eavesdropping and the use of a direction-finder in locating a radio transmitter.

“Plane's only about fifty miles away,” the man said. “They're going to land, refuel, and we'll all pull out.”

Before long, Renny was watching the stolen transport plane from Washington drop down on the dry lake bed.

He watched the ship pull up close, and the gasoline truck roll to the craft and refuel it.

Then Renny, still tied hand and foot, was tossed into the cabin of the airways craft.

He found Monk Mayfair there.

“How are you?” he asked Monk.

“Indignant,” Monk said.

“How come they haven't shot you?”

“They got orders not to.”

“Yeah? Who from?”

“Somebody,” said Monk, “called Der Hase. That's German talk for the Hare, or the Rabbit.”

“Where is this Der Hase?”

“At the place we're heading for.”

“Where's that?”

“You now know,” Monk said, “as much as I know about it.”

Renny looked around, and saw another figure, that of a leathery, weather-beaten, elderly man who looked as if he had reached old age on a diet of cactus and sage.

“Who's Methuselah, here?” Renny asked.

“You big-fisted, sad-faced lump of gristle,” said the old man sourly. “I'm twice your age and twice as active right now. When you're my age, I'll be six times as active.”

“Who's he?” Renny asked Monk.

“Name's Too-Too Thomas,” Monk explained. “And he's the key that unlocked all of this for us. He's the match that fell in the gasoline barrel.”

“Old-timer, where they taking us?” Renny asked.

“If you fellers had talked sense to me in Washington,” Too-Too Thomas muttered, “you wouldn't be asking silly questions now.”

A man walked back into the cabin. He had a short automatic.

“All this talk is getting tiresome,” he said. “Give us a rest, huh?”

## **Chapter VIII. SEA TRAIL**

PATRICIA SAVAGE lay flattened out in a desert gully and listened to the motors of the big plane warming up again. The engines had been shut off during the refueling, so now she knew that the refueling had been completed.

Pat smiled grimly. She lifted her head to watch. The night was dark, but they were using flashlights around the plane, so that she could tell what was going on. They were getting aboard the plane.

With clenched fists, Pat waited. It was hard waiting, but she could think of no way of disabling the plane, so there did not seem to be much to do but wait.

She watched the plane go hiking across the flat dry lake bed, pick up its tail and lift heavily into the night sky. The pilot did not fool around the vicinity, but went droning out over the desert.

Now Pat crawled closer to the gasoline transport truck. It was not where it had been—the covered spot where the truck had been camouflaged earlier was much easier to reach. But the truck had been rolled out to refuel the plane.

The plane had left three men behind. They were talking. Their voices came plainly to Pat.

She listened for a while, then relaxed. There was no sense in making an effort to capture these men, when such an attempt would be a long chance anyway. Because these men knew nothing of value, obviously.

The trio had been hired to steal the truckload of aviation gas. They were talking about that now. They mentioned the amount of money they had been paid, speaking in tones of awe. They discussed the

division of the payment, and one man seemed to think he was entitled to an extra share. He was voted down immediately.

The men had a small car concealed under the camouflaging. They got in it, and drove away. Pat let them go.

She hadn't liked the looks of the men. The old-fashioned bad man, who wouldn't harm a woman, was a thing of the past in the West, she was afraid. There was too much at stake to take chances.

She sat and waited. She wished she had a radio, but the one in Renny's plane had been smashed. The smashing job was an expert one.

However, Pat did find Renny's flashlight, and the bit of red celluloid from his card case which he had put over the lens of the light. She got this.

Gratefully soon—not more than twenty minutes later—she heard the drone of a plane engine. The craft circled the field.

Pat used her red light, signaled rapidly. She got an answer. She listened for the sound of the motors of the big plane, and decided they had enough distinction for her to recognize them. It was Doc's plane.

Pat, with the white light, signaled, "Get down here, Doc. This is Pat."

She sent the signals in a phonetic spelling of Mayan, partly, so there would be no delay while Doc made sure she was Pat. Doc would know that few persons other than his aides knew Mayan, so he would take it automatically as identification.

Doc landed. Ham, Long Tom, Johnny and Lena Carlson were with him.

Pat told them what had happened.

"Now don't tell me I'm a nuisance any more," she said. "If I hadn't jumped, both Renny and I would be prisoners, and you fellows would be looking for a needle in a haystack."

"Your modesty becomes you," Doc said dryly. "Why did you jump? Feminine contrariness?"

Pat laughed. "My particular brand of it," she said. "But it turned out all right."

"How do you figure it turned out all right?" Doc asked, "They got Renny."

"Oh, yes," Pat said triumphantly. "But I fixed it so we could trail them."

"Eh?"

"That's right," Pat said.

LENA CARLSON had been standing by listening, and now she entered the conversation.

"That," she said, "is ridiculous. Trailing a plane is ridiculous, unless they have a radio transmitter switched on in the craft, or something."

"Ridiculous, eh?" Pat said.

"Certainly. I've done enough flying to know."

Pat eyed Lena Carlson. Apparently the two young women weren't going to get along too well together.

"You've done too much talking in your time probably, too," Pat said.

Turning to Doc Savage, Pat asked, "You have infrared filters for the landing lights?"

Doc Savage was astonished. So were Ham, Long Tom and Johnny. "I'll be superamalgamated!" Johnny said.

Doc asked, with frank admiration, "How did you get the stuff into their gasoline?"

"I took it with me when I jumped from Renny's plane," Pat explained. "That was why I jumped, and why I took the stuff along—there had been mention before, you know, of high-test gasoline, and that meant refueling their plane. So I took this stuff along—Renny had a supply of it as part of the equipment in his plane—when I jumped."

Doc said, "How did you get it into their gas, though?"

"I didn't put it into their gas. I put it into the truck tank, and they filled their tanks from the truck, so everything is hunky-dory."

"Gosh, I hope they use the gas out of the refilled tank right away," Long Tom said. "Otherwise, if they filled a tank that isn't feeding for a while, we'll play heck picking up the trail."

Pat said, "Flying this distance, from Washington here, in a commercial plane, their fuel supply would be pretty well exhausted. I thought of that, and watched. They filled all the plane tanks."

Doc Savage said, "Come on. Get in the air, and fast."

They piled into the big ship—the plane was about the size of a B26 army job, but since it was an experimental job, it had many bizarre features—and got off the ground.

Doc Savage turned the controls over to Ham Brooks. "Switch on the special filaments in the lights," he said.

Ham obeyed—with the result that the wingtip lights seemed to become extinguished.

"What's the matter, the lights burned out?" demanded Lena Carlson.

"Keep your bustle straight," Pat said. "And watch."

Doc asked, "Pat, which route did the plane take?"

"I lined it," Pat said, "as making directly for that tall rock over on the horizon."

Ham laughed, said, "That tall rock just happens to be one of the biggest mountains in Arizona."

"Well, if it's Adam's beard, what's the difference," Pat snapped. "Try lining up and flying toward it. I would say an altitude of about five hundred here, and a climb of about five thousand feet to the mile."

Ham nodded. The plane began to swing from side to side as it climbed, making S turns slowly.

Lena Carlson said, "This is a silly business. If you're going to chase them, why not chase them."

Nobody answered her. Doc said sharply, "There! We went through it!"

Ham nodded. He had seen. He banked back cautiously.

A luminous green material as nebulous as the tail of a comet appeared in their path. It came out of nothingness, and it stretched ahead in a powdery stream that had a few waves in it.

Pat turned to Lena Carlson. "I put a chemical in the gasoline of the other plane," Pat said. "The chemical, when burned in the motors, leaves an exhaust trail which is ordinarily invisible, but fluoresces in the presence of infrared light. Our infrared projectors are in the wings."

Astonishment held Lena Carlson silent for a while.

"That's marvelous," she said finally. "Why doesn't our army and navy use it—why don't they have spies get the stuff in the enemy gasoline supply?"

Pat shrugged. "It was tried. The trouble is, the enemy only has to add a tiny amount of a counteractive agent to their gasoline, and the thing is worthless."

"Everybody get busy," Ham called. "Following this trail in the sky isn't the cinch it would seem to be."

Lena Carlson nodded. "I can see that. The varying air currents will push it all out of shape in a little while."

THEY were exhausted when, an hour and a half before the official sunrise time, they came to the end of the air trail. They had not, somewhat to their surprise, headed toward the Dirty Man Ranch for the last hour.

Lena Carlson had been positive the Dirty Man was their destination.

It turned out, however, to be nothing of the kind. Not just now.

Lena had explained, "It would all tie up. Old Too-Too Thomas has been managing the Dirty Man spread for years. He built it up from nothing, on capital furnished by my father, and by myself."

"I thought you were his partner?" Long Tom said.

"I am, legally."

"What kind of a place is Dirty Man?"

"It's the kind of a place Too-Too Thomas would like. You saw him."

"A hard country, eh?"

"Made of trouble and glory, if you get what I mean," the girl said. "It's big. Hundreds of square miles of mountains and range around, inhabited by the toughest kind of Yaqui Indians, who are all afraid of Too-Too Thomas. But the Indians aren't afraid of anybody else, and they run strangers out of the country so fast it isn't funny. I don't think anyone but Too-Too Thomas could operate Rancho El Dirty Man for any length of time. He has the Indian sign on the Yaquis, you might say."

"You think," Long Tom asked, "because Too-Too Thomas is half owner of the Dirty Man, that the trouble centers around the ranch."

"Don't you think it's obvious?"

But as they got into Lower California, then turned sharply out to sea, she wasn't so positive.

"Why are we flying out to sea?" she kept asking. "Could it be that the air currents have swept the trail way out here?"

"No. There is hardly any wind. Look at the sea."

The sea, as they all could observe, was calm. It was amazingly calm even for the Pacific, which is a tranquil cow among oceans. There was hardly a swell at all, and in the bright moonlight the water looked as slick as if greased.

They saw the plane easily.

The trail of fluorescent particles led down to it. The plane had apparently sought to land on a narrow strip of reef, hitting the water first and then side-slipping onto the bit of land to keep from sinking.

"Look!" Ham yelled, pointing at the plane. "Doc, you want to land?"

"Circle a few times," Doc suggested. "These fellows have shown themselves to be tricky."

THEIR big ship cannoned over the surface of the sea, and they saw that the airliner had landed on a reef. The surrounding ocean was miraculously calm.

Figures stood on the wings, waving at them.

"Only three," Long Tom said, counting them. "I wonder where the others are?"

"Did one of those look like Monk?" Ham demanded anxiously.

Long Tom said, "The way you worry about Monk, nobody would think you two have been acting as if you were about to decapitate each other for years."

Ham, his nerves driving him into a sudden rage, snarled, "Did you see Monk, I asked you!"

"Take it easy," Long Tom muttered. "No, I didn't see Monk."

They circled back, and the figures on the airliner windmilled their arms, signaling for help.

"Wait a minute," Pat said. "I think one of them is signaling by semaphore with his arms."

Doc Savage kept the plane in a slow circle in which it held its altitude not far above the sea, and watched the man signaling.

Pat cried, "He says the others are unconscious or injured inside the plane. Says gas failed."

Doc Savage said, "We will have to land, regardless of the possibilities of trouble. They might not be lying."

"What makes you think they are lying?" Lena Carlson asked skeptically. "It looks strictly O. K. to me."

Doc made no comment. He brought the plane in slowly, set it on the surface—the plane was an amphibian suitable for operation from either land or water, so taking off again from the surface of the sea should present no complications, as calm as the water was. He gunned the motors, first one then the other, to guide the plane more readily, and sailed up to the other plane on the reef.

“How are they?” Doc asked.

“Pretty bad,” the man called from the top of the plane, “they are inside.”

Doc Savage, Johnny and Long Tom were on the wing of their own plane, along with Lena Carlson. Ham Brooks was handling the controls, jockeying the ship closer to the beached plane.

Then, unexpectedly, Pat Savage cried out in horror. She pointed at the water.

Lena Carlson saw, gasped, “A shark! A big shark!”

“Made of steel,” Doc Savage said grimly, and tried to reach the cabin of their plane.

He was too late, because the submarine was coming up under them fast. It had been lying down there, concealed by the blackness of the water, lurking, waiting.

Now the submarine came up. It hit the plane hull; hit it hard.

It came up so that the forward mounted deck gun hit the ship, and impaled it. And as the submarine rushed out of the water, snorting, bubbling, compressed air whistling and spurting, the plane was lifted partly out of the sea and held there as if it was a duck which had been seized by a shark that had a mouth in the middle of its body.

Doc Savage and Ham were both thrown into the sea. The others managed to stick with the plane, except Pat, who fell off on to the deck of the submarine, where she managed to land without too much of a shock.

Pat, as soon as she hit the submarine deck, got up and worked frantically with the deck gun, a piece of about five-inch caliber, in hopes of getting it ready to operate, and pointed at the deck of the submarine.

But men came out of the sub hatches, and seized her. There were many men, all efficient. They showed Doc Savage and Ham Brooks, who were in the sea, some grenades.

“*Kommen,*”

a man said. “*Kommen Sie os bald wie moglich, bitte.*”

“Hey, they're Hiller's boys,” Long Tom called.

## **Chapter IX. THE UNEXPECTED HERR SCHWARTZ**

HAM BROOKS whispered to Doc Savage, but Doc couldn't hear the whisper, so Ham remembered that he could use Mayan. Ham spoke in that, and asked, “Any chance of disabling this fish? Maybe get one of our explosive grenades against the hull?”

Doc, also in Mayan, said, “Our pocket grenades would not discourage that submarine hull. It is built to withstand depth bombs. Three hundred pounds of TNT has to explode within fifty feet of it to crush it.”

The man on the submarine with the hand grenade said, “Are your chappies saying your prayers, or are you going to climb aboard?”

“We are feeling very meek,” Doc told him.

The bronze man and Ham Brooks got aboard the submarine. They were tossed lines.

The others were unloaded off the impaled plane.

Pat and Lena Carlson created quite an impression.

“Ah, *Fräuleins*,” one man said as he straightened his necktie.

Some moments were spent in an admiring inspection of Pat and Lena. Then a walrus, or what could have passed for the head of one, put its head out of the side hatch of the conning tower and spoke pointedly in accented English. The words were American, but the accent was definitely Teutonic.

“Vot is it, a tea party?” the walrus head asked. “Do you want to get below, or shall we submerge and you swim?”

“What,” asked Long Tom, “was that?”

“According to its hat,” Ham told him, “it is the commander of the submarine.”

“I thought sub commanders were all Prussian ramrods with acid for blood,” Long Tom said. “This guy looks like something out of a funny paper.”

The walrus head advanced from the conning tower hatch. It was followed by a body equally as comic, round and jovial, but probably quite muscular and efficient.

“Get down below,” the skipper said, “or somebody gets der pants kicked.”

From the way the sailors behaved, they evidently got their pants kicked now and then. None of them seemed to think the comical-looking old gentleman was fooling.

Doc Savage and all the others were hurried below decks, being efficiently searched as they passed, one at a time, down a hatch.

Several sailors showed great interest in the project of frisking Pat and Lena.

“Nix, nix,” said the walrus-faced skipper. “Vun or two of us are gentlemen, regardless of what the rest of the world thinks.”

He confronted Pat and Lena and bowed. “In my cabin,” he said, “are two silk bathing suits. I purchased them for my two daughters, bought them in Japan. I guess there is noddings to do but contribute them to this good cause. You vill put on der bathing suits. Then I vill feel safe about you hiding veppons.” He chuckled. “My cholly boys will enjoy dot, eh?”

The grins on the faces of his jolly boys showed that they would enjoy it immensely.

THE submarine, Doc Savage noted, was one of the late type of U-boats, a craft built for efficiency and strength rather than impressive size and cruising ability. In the present war, it had been discovered by the enemy that smaller submarines took less material, were more compact, and could be maneuvered more readily under circumstances where maneuverability was the answer to whether the crew got back home or not.

The craft was evidently quite new. Long Tom noted this, and said, “We're evidently sinking their U-boats so fast that they're putting them in the water while the rivets are still hot.”

The walrus-faced sub commander snorted. “You do pretty goot, at dot,” he said.

They were escorted into a forward compartment, squeezing through the cramped quarters of the submarine, bending often to get under pipes and machinery.

In the compartment, there were about fifteen people. Monk and Renny and Too-Too Thomas were among them. The others were the men who had been in the airlines plane.

Ham stared at Monk.

“You all right, you homely bassoon?” he asked.

Monk sneered at him. “What’ve you done, joined up with the Nazis? You couldn’t be just a common captive. Not with that great legal brain you’re always bragging about.”

Ham made his voice disappointed and said, “I guess they haven’t beat any sense into you.”

Lena Carlson and Too-Too Thomas looked uneasy, distressed by the soured meeting between the pair.

Doc Savage and the others were impressed also, but only by the fact that Monk and Ham’s meeting had lacked fire. Usually they managed some really original insults, and enough thunder and lightning to make a bystander think a mutual murder was imminent.

Now one of the submarine crew, who had been guarding the prisoners, shouted and waved his arms.

*“Ich nein kenne diesen Mann!”*

he yelled. *“Nein!”*

*“Was ist?”*

blurted the sub commander.

There was a rapid exchange of German.

Doc Savage and his men, who understood the German language, listened with much interest. The word exchange was enlightening.

The sailor who had spoken was an informant.

He had, it seemed, been a spy on two men called Der Hase and Das Seehund. He had put the finger on the prisoners, the men who had seized the airways plane, for the submarine commander. He was responsible for the capture of the other plane.

But, pointing again at Doc and his associates, and at Lena Carlson, the sailor shouted that they were strangers. They didn’t belong.

Moreover, the man insisted, the big bronze man was the American scientist, Doc Savage.

*“Herr Doktor Savage,”*

he said excitedly.

“Is dot right,” said the walrus, examining Doc. “Well, well, I caught me a whale, seems as if.”

He turned then, and gave an order in German. Separate the prisoners, he commanded. Put Doc and his group in another compartment.

He pointed at old Too-Too Thomas and ordered, “Put him in with them.”

THE submarine compartment in which Doc's group was locked was smaller, not at all comfortable, and the air had that typical heaviness of grease, electricity and machinery. It was air to which they would soon become accustomed, however.

"Sorry dot you have no carpets," the commander said. He waved to indicate the cell. "Herr Hitler's private suite," he said.

Monk grinned at him, said, "If they had you back in Berlin, they would hang you up by one leg for saying that."

The sub commander chuckled. "Dot they have tried, two or three times," he said. "They find old Adolph Schwartz does not hang so well."

Doc Savage asked, "You are Schwartz?"

"Herr Oberleutenant Adolph von Schwartz," the man said.

When he said that, he popped his heels, and a snap and an impression of iron attention came into his stocky body. For that moment he was a different man, not a genial old German naval officer who made gags about the Nazis.

In that moment, Schwartz was an iron-fisted old-line Prussian with the soul of a rifle barrel and the backbone of one.

It was impressive, the change.

Having identified himself, Schwartz made a little speech.

"It is unfortunate—for you—that I happened to catch you in the net with the rest of my blackbirds," he said. "For that I am sorry."

He looked at Doc Savage and chuckled. "No, I am not sorry at all. It will be good for Germany, having a man like Doc Savage out of the war." He leered at them like a comic strip character. "Undt now I say *aufwiedersen*."

He left them. The door was fastened from the outside. They were alone.

Monk sighed when the skipper had gone.

"If you ask me," Monk said, "that old gaffer is something to watch out for. Something you don't want to find in your breakfast dish."

"One sure thing," Long Tom Roberts agreed, "he isn't the hooligan he pretends to be. Notice his accent? He must have read that in the Sunday papers. He puts it on and takes it off at will."

Old Too-Too Thomas cleared his throat.

"If that's the Schwartz," he said, "that Der Hase and Das Seehund have talked about, he is hell on wheels."

Monk turned to old Too-Too Thomas.

"Pop, you can tell us what this is all about," Monk said. "Would do?"

“Sonny,” said Too-Too Thomas disapprovingly, “you keep on calling me pop, and I’ll breathe on you and bake you to a crisp.”

“You resent it, eh?”

“You ain’t fooling.”

“If I apologize,” said Monk, “would you tell us all the little details?”

“Might be.”

“I apologize,” Monk said.

“Here,” said Too-Too Thomas, “are all the little details.”

## Chapter X. THE DARK TURN

TOO-TOO THOMAS took his time, ignored interruption and demands that he get at the heart of the mystery at once, and gave them a brief resume of Rancho El Dirty Man, in Mexico.

“Maybe you would just call it a big ranch,” he said. “But me, to me it’s something special. She’s a big place and we’ve got our own dock and warehouse down in the cove where we ship our beef out by sea. Our own packing plant, too, where we process our own beef, before we ship it out.” He nodded at Lena Carlson, “Remember, Lena is a partner in the Dirty Man.”

“Get to the point,” Monk said.

Too-Too Thomas ignored that and said, “No other civilization within many a mile. Get that. In this day of airplanes we are probably as isolated as any part of the world except the Arctic. We’re isolated because down there there’s no place for a plane to be heading, much, that would take it over our neck of the woods.

“Now,” he continued, “here’s a general idea of who this Der Hase and Das Seehund are. They are both big-timers in the enemy set-up that’s caused all the trouble in Europe. This Der Hase has been sort of public hypnotizer for the mob since it began. He decides what they’ll tell the public, what they’ll feed the suckers. He’s the twisted mind behind their publicity. Not the figurehead, mind, but the real brains.

“Das Seehund is the fellow who set up the submarine campaign for the enemy. You’ve seen his pictures—a great, fat guy. Enormously fat, and covered with medals. In a different uniform and a different big car every time.”

“I know the guy you mean,” Monk said.

“All right, they’re scrambling out of Europe,” Too-Too Thomas said.

“Leaving Europe? Der Hase and Das Seehund, you mean?”

“That’s right.”

“Rats,” Renny said, “and the sinking ship. Holy cow!”

Too-Too Thomas grinned. “You said it.”

“The war must be closer to the finish than we figured,” Renny remarked.

The older man shrugged. "Anyway, the two are beating it out of Europe."

"How?"

"By submarine," Too-Too Thomas explained. "What they did was get a bunch of guys who could be bought, or who were ready to get out anyway, and a submarine, and they began moving out, and bringing their money."

"Money?" Ham Brooks said. "Listen, that German money is not going to be worth much after this is over. Nor the other Axis money, either."

"Gold," said Too-Too, "ain't gone out of fashion."

"Where would they get gold?"

"Plenty of it in Europe. Not all in Fort Knox, you know."

"I guess those two cookies could get their hands on it, too."

"They have."

"Eh?" Ham stared at him. "You mean that they've already moved in?"

"Couple of months ago."

"Where?" Ham yelled.

"The Dirty Man Ranch in Mexico," Too-Too Thomas said. "That's what all the whirling around is about."

Big-fisted Renny Renwick rumbled, "Holy cow!"

LEATHERY, frowning old Too-Too Thomas became longwinded again. He spoke rapidly, sourly, giving a clear picture. "Two months ago they moved in on the Dirty Man," he said. "They already had the place planted with some of their men. I had taken these birds on thinking they were all right. They spoke English better than I did, and most of them spoke Spanish, too, with the accent of an American."

He waved an arm to indicate the crew of the submarine. "You take these guys on this tin fish, now. Notice how all or most of them look and sound like Americans? Well, they're picked men, men picked because they speak English and look American, and probably most all of them have spent some time in America one time or another.

"Der Hase and Das Seehund," he continued, "picked their men the same way. You got acquainted with some of them in Washington."

"You mean those fellows were all Europeans?" Monk demanded.

"That's right."

"Why'd they chase you to New York?"

Too-Too Thomas said, "I got away from them. They had me a prisoner in Mexico on the Rancho El Dirty Man, and I got away. I scammed right out of there. I did it in a plane. You could not tell it to look at an old cuss like me that I can fly a plane, but I can. I got to Los Angeles in my plane, and they were

right after me. I could see the plane in which they were following me in the air to the south. If they'd had machine guns, they would have shot me down before. There was an airliner ready to take off for the East, and I got on that. It was headed for Washington, so I stayed on. I got to Washington. I was trying to get to somebody important to tell my story confidential, when I met you fellows.”

Doc Savage had taken no part in the questioning, but now, after Too-Too Thomas became silent, the bronze man asked, “How did it happen that the men were well established in Washington? They did not get that well established in a few hours—the few hours which elapsed after you got to Washington, and before you met us.”

“That wasn't over a couple of hours,” Too-Too Thomas said. “But the way I figure it now, they were planted there for Lena.”

“For me?” Lena Carlson said. “Gracious, why?”

“Hadn't they tried to get rid of you?”

“Yes.”

“I thought so,” said Too-Too.

“But why?” demanded Lena Carlson. “Why would they do that?”

“If they killed you, the ranch would go to me according to your will,” Too-Too Thomas explained. “And they already had me, or had until I got away. What could be simpler.”

“But if you had the ranch entirely for yourself,” Lena said, “how would that help them?”

“Oh, they were going to whittle on me until I deeded over the place to them, all legal and everything.”

AT this point, there was an outburst of noise in other parts of the submarine. It began with animal howls, angry yells, profanity in English and German, and shots. There was plenty of shooting.

The fight outside developed, became furious. They could hear men dashing back and forth in the narrow steel-walled corridor outside, and the submarine tilted sharply upward with the ballast tanks blowing.

Doc Savage and Monk were instantly working at the steel bulkhead door. It was too tough for their barehanded efforts, however.

Monk listened to the fight, said, “Brothers, that sounds like something I hate to miss.”

“What do you suppose has happened?” Pat asked in alarm. “We were running submerged, so it can't be an attack by American naval forces—they would use depth bombs.”

“Consarned thing sounds like a family row to me,” Too-Too Thomas said.

The fight died away. There was some more profanity, a few blows, and finally one shot.

Then the bulkhead door into their compartment was undogged from the outside, thrown open and they were ordered back.

“Holy cow!” said Renny, looking at the man who gave the orders.

It was the man called Sam, who had straw-bossed the group which had first seized Monk and Too-Too Thomas in Washington.

“I feel sort of triumphant,” Sam told them. “So I might have the courage to shoot the first one of you who bats an eye at me.”

No one batted an eye, probably.

“Throw old faithful in with them,” Sam ordered. “Safest place for him.”

The walrus of a submarine commander, Schwartz, was pitched headlong into the compartment. The place was so crowded that Schwartz crashed into them, bringing down Renny and Ham, who tangled up with him on the floor.

Schwartz was apparently in a mood to fight anything that moved, so he immediately began slugging Renny and Ham, who were in the same mood and lost no time slugging back. While this was going on, Sam slammed the steel door and his men dogged it on the outside.

Schwartz and Renny and Ham hammered each other with vigor, nobody doing much harm, but venting plenty of steam.

“Let me in on that!” Monk said eagerly. “I want to hit somebody, too!”

Doc Savage said, “This may not be a time to entertain yourself.”

He got busy and stopped the slugging.

Commander Schwartz sat up indignantly. “*Es ist wirklich argerlich!*” he said.

“What'd he say?” Too-Too Thomas asked.

“He remarked that it was rather annoying,” Pat translated.

“He's got a good choice of words,” Too-Too Thomas said.

COMMANDER SCHWARTZ composed himself. He did this by waving his arms violently and calling on Davy Jones to witness a fine mess. He shouted, “*Heil, der Fuehrer!*” But this last he didn't say as if he meant it at all. He said it the way a man would say, after falling on his face and bruising himself, “That's what I get for eating my spinach.”

That was apparently the wind-up of his rage, and intended to be humorous, because he leaned back against the bulkhead, mopped his walrus face on a sleeve, and grinned sheepishly.

“The path of a patriot has its thorns,” he said.

“What happened?” Monk asked.

“One of my goot men,” said Schwartz, remembering to use his comic accent, “vas so careless as to bend over mit a pistol sticking out of his hip pocket. Vun of der prisoners got hold of it.”

“Can you,” Monk asked him, “speak the English without all the vuns and ders and mits?”

“Vots wrong, isn't dot goot Cherman accent?” asked the skipper.

“Suit yourself,” Monk said. “It might make us laugh, and bless us, we need some entertainment.”

“Goot,” said Schwartz. “When you feel depressed, say so and I will talk some of the funny accent for you. I like to do it. I used to get your comic papers and study it, perfecting myself.”

Monk eyed him. “You're quite a guy,” Monk said thoughtfully. “But you don't fool me. You're a good guy to watch out for, aren't you?”

“There are those who say so. And if I'm not, I have wasted a lot of time acting fierce.”

“What happened?”

Schwartz surprised them by talking readily and telling what was obviously, from the sound of his voice and from what they knew of the situation thus far, the truth.

“Ever hear of Der Hase and Das Seehund?” he asked by way of beginning.

“We were just talking about them,” Monk admitted.

“Good. Then you know they are leaving the ship like rats.”

“Leaving the sinking ship like rats,” Monk agreed. “We used the same words.”

“The ship isn't sunk yet,” said Schwartz, and there was a flash of the ramrod-backed Prussian in him for a moment.

“O. K.,” Monk said. “But the point is becoming less and less a basis for argument. Go on. What happened?”

Schwartz scowled at his own thoughts.

“This fellow, Das Seehund,” he said, “has corrupted some of the men of our underseas division. Word got to me that something strange was going on. So I investigated.”

Commander Schwartz paused and spat to show how he felt. “For investigating, I got a good bust on the shoulder straps. I was reduced in rank from a vice admiral with a good swivel-chair job to going to sea again as commander of a submarine. I was supposed to keep my nose clean, as I believe you would express it.”

“But you didn't stop investigating?” Monk surmised.

“I certainly kept right at it. And that is why I am here with my submarine. I planted a spy with the group working for Der Hase and Das Seehund. By devious means, I got the spy, who was piloting that commercial plane, to land on the sea where I could capture them. Then I was going to the hide-out, get Der Hase and Das Seehund, take them back to the fatherland, and turn them over to Der Fuehrer.”

He grimaced. “To Der Fuehrer, I wouldn't give a dog that had bitten me. But I was going to give him Der Hase and Das Seehund.”

“What would have happened to Der Hase and Das Seehund then?” Monk asked curiously.

The skipper made a cutting gesture across his throat with a forefinger.

“Geek!” he said.

## Chapter XI. RABBIT AND SEAL

THE mystery of why Doc Savage and his aides were being kept alive was explained when they were taken ashore at Mexico to the Dirty Man.

The mystery had been bothering walruslike Oberleutenant Schwartz, too. He did quite a bit of snorting and muttering during the course of the night, and when Monk asked him if he was nervous, he disclaimed it much too violently.

Pat and Lena Carlson had a quarrel. This fracas began when Lena mentioned the extremely highbrow and expensive beautification and body-reducing establishment which Pat conducted on Park Avenue. Lena called the place, "that gold-plated thieves' roost you run." Pat resented that, although it was a fact that she unmercifully overcharged clients who could afford it.

"That's a very pretty feather-lined head you have, dear," Pat said. "Didn't it occur to you to ask the police for help when these first attempts were made to kill you?"

"I thought of it," Lena said.

"Then why didn't you?"

Lena glanced at old Too-Too Thomas, and said, "I might as well tell it. I got the idea that these men who were trying to kill me had been at Dirty Man. And I was afraid Too-Too was mixed up in something that might get him in trouble if the police knew about it."

Too-Too Thomas grinned at her.

"I'm sorry, Too-Too," Lena said.

"You apologizing for thinkin' I might be a crook?" Too-Too asked.

"Yes."

"That's so durned nice of you," Too-Too said, "that it moves me to return the favor."

Lena stared at him. "Eh?"

"You heard how, when I first approached Doc Savage and his men in Washington, I wouldn't tell them what was going on?" Too-Too said.

"Yes."

"Well, that was because I thought *you* might be mixed up in the crooked mess," Too-Too told her. "I knew that if we could get a plane and a bomb and sink the submarine—not *this* submarine, but the one Der Hase and Das Seehund use—it would stop the affair without involving you. I figured if that happened, you would get scared out."

Lena Carlson was startled.

"So you thought I was a crook?"

"Sort of was led to believe it," Too-Too said, "by them two lads, Der Hase and Das Seehund."

"Well," said Lena sharply, "I never in my heart, not once, really believed you were a crook."

“Same here,” said Too-Too, “about you.”

“You're probably both lying,” Pat said.

THE submarine traveled on the surface the rest of that night, but submerged during the day, which cut down its speed somewhat, and then it laid offshore with motors barely turning for a considerable time.

“We're probably lying outside the cove of Dirty Man,” Too-Too Thomas surmised, “waiting for it to get dark so we can go inside.”

This was obviously what they were waiting for.

Later the motors picked up, and the U-boat surfaced. They could hear the hatches clang open, and heard men tramping around on deck.

The craft bumped against something gently, and stopped.

“That's the dock,” Too-Too Thomas said. “They let the sub lie on the surface during the night, and on the bottom during the daytime.”

“Do you suppose they'll take us ashore?” Pat asked.

“What I can't understand,” Too-Too said, “is why they don't just tie rocks to us.”

Eventually the bulkhead door was opened. The prisoners were at once shown a formidable array of submachine guns and other weapons, for the purpose of intimidating them.

Sam said, “This is Mexico. You wouldn't want to die in a foreign country, would you?”

He was obviously very pleased with himself.

They were carefully shepherded out on deck, in groups of three. Pat and Lena were the last to go, and purely by accident, Lena slipped and fell off the side of the sub. As Pat grasped her hand, some of the guards stepped forward, guns ready. But it was purely accidental, and nothing worse than a wetting of the silk bathing suit came of it.

All got onto the dock. The dock was a most substantial affair. On the other side of it lay a second submarine, somewhat larger than Schwartz's charge.

Schwartz groaned disgustedly when he saw this other submersible. “Lying around here,” he muttered, “when it should be out sinking Allied ships.”

“March,” ordered Sam. “Up the hill.”

The hill was more of a cliff, with stone steps, slowly angling back and forth, overhung by vines. It was a pleasant spot, and lighted by plenty of hand flashes, so that there was no chance for a break.

The ranch house, or houses, were at the top, at the foot of another cliff, sitting on a wide tableland that probably included four or five hundred acres. The tableland extended along the seashore, and it was its narrowest here, with a cliff coming in from the mountains behind to stand close to the buildings.

The moonlight was bright, putting a pleasant silver sheen over everything.

“Not bad-looking,” Monk said.

“You should see in the daytime,” Too-Too Thomas said. “The packing plant and the loading corrals are down on the shore of the cove, a quarter of a mile from the dock where the submarines are lying.”

They came to the ranchhouse, apparently the main building of several structures. Ham eyed the walls, saying, “They built a fort, didn't they?”

The walls were ponderous, thick, and the building itself a vast affair of cool interiors. The rugs and carpets were thick, and the ornaments on the walls, the pictures and the armor, the silver-mounted saddles, the inlaid revolvers and swords, were all good pieces.

Sam sent a messenger away, instructing him, “Tell them that I made a clean sweep. All prisoners are here.”

Sam sounded as if he was about to burst with self-esteem.

The messenger came back and said, “Der Hase will see Herr Savage, *alone*.”

Sam frowned. “But did you tell Das Seehund—”

“Der Hase will see Doc Savage alone,” the man repeated meaningfully. He also spread his hands in a gesture that said he shouldn't be blamed.

Sam told four men to take Doc Savage to Der Hase. Sam also added, to the messenger, “I ought to kick a window in your anatomy. I told you to tell Das Seehund we were here, and that you needn't tell the other.”

“The other one caught me first,” the man complained. “What could I do?”

Doc Savage was a little puzzled at the evidence of dissension between the higher-ups.

The bronze man was soon straightened out on what was what, however. Almost the first thing Der Hase said did that.

Der Hase turned out to be pretty typical of the pictures of him which had been published in the American newspapers.

Der Hase was a small, emaciated man, but not crippled in one leg as had been claimed. He moved forward with ease and agility, although his gait had a twisted swing to it due to some difficulty with his hip rather than his leg. The story of deformity probably had arisen from the nature of his face, which wasn't deformed; but was a face with such unusual mobility, such powers of expression and flexibility, that it seemed unnatural. The man had a deep voice which was artificial, a voice that he had painstakingly trained in an effort to use his voice as a mob-swaying device. He had failed. He had bright eyes, bad teeth, a bad breath which he seemed to be able to blow several feet as he talked.

Der Hase said, “You are yourself proof of what can be done with a master race system, Herr Savage, so I think we will have no misunderstandings.”

Doc Savage did not comment.

Looking at the man, Doc suddenly realized he had seen the fellow once before. He had known Der Hase briefly, some years ago when Doc was undergoing the course of specialized scientific training to which his father had subjected him beginning in childhood.

Der Hase then had been a student, as was Doc, at a Vienna University. His name was not Der Hase, but Vogel Plattenheber; but he had been called Der Hase, it suddenly came to Doc's mind, even in those days. He was called the Hare, or the Rabbit, because of his timidity and fear. Looking at him now, Doc saw that the man still had the fear, but that he had turned it into an artificial superiority complex that was a honey. That, if you wanted to get tangled in psychology, was what had put this Master Race stuff in the man's head.

Der Hase frowned at Doc.

"I could use many words," he said.

"You have, on occasion," Doc said.

"All the words would just express more fully, what I wish to say." Except for a slight stiffness in phrasing, the man's English was good. "It is obvious now that we have made mistakes in Europe. But the noble experiment must not be allowed to fail. That is why I have retreated to this out of the way place to form a nucleus for a new effort and plans for the new effort."

The man wheeled and walked to a desk. The room in which they stood was enormous, and sitting on a dais at the far end of the room was a tremendous desk. Not only was the desk high, but the light was very bright in the eyes of anyone sitting or standing in front of the desk. Der Hase made good use of all the conventional tricks to make an interviewer feel uncomfortable.

"I could use an intelligence such as yours in making the new plan," he told Doc.

DOC SAVAGE did not ask questions. There was no need for questions, for everything was perfectly understandable. This man they called Der Hase—Doc wondered if anyone called him that to his face and decided that Der Hase would encourage it in his perverse way—had the ability to make things perfectly clear with a few words.

The man was a fanatic. He was sincere in what he was doing; he believed in it. He had not come here to Dirty Man Ranch in Mexico, had not come those thousands of miles from Europe, with any idea of escape. He was not a rat leaving a sinking ship. He was more of a rat in a corner fighting. He had fought, and he was going to fight again.

Doc said, "Why are you keeping us alive?" He knew, but he asked the question anyway.

Der Hase pointed at his own forehead.

"You can see the way the thing is going in Europe," he said. "We are getting licked. All of our ideals will be smashed by this vandalism called democracy and equality."

He indicated his head again and added, "The trouble is with the thinking that was behind it in the beginning. Mistakes were made. The master race idea is sound, but its execution was not properly thought out."

He had something there, Doc reflected.

"What makes you believe," Doc asked, "that some thinking ahead of time wouldn't have convinced you that the whole thing is barbaric?"

"Barbaric?"

“As barbaric,” Doc said, “as the tribes of primitive people who used to go out and take another tribe and make slaves out of them.”

“That is childish talk.”

“It is simple talk, easy to understand, I will admit,” Doc said. “And logical.”

“I take it you refuse?”

“You should have known I would,” Doc said.

Der Hase looked at him unsmilingly. “You will,” he said, “get twelve hours in which to reconsider.”

## Chapter XII. BAD BREAK

THE other man, the one they called Das Seehund, came in then. He made his entrance grandly, with his feet banging the floor as if he were goose-stepping.

Doc Savage looked at him, and kept a straight face.

Das Seehund was wearing a new kind of uniform, a cowboy outfit. The motif was Mexican caballero and Cheyenne frontier days, the loudest of each, and there was probably no louder raiment than these two. His hat was the biggest, his pants the tightest, and there was more color and silverware on him than Doc had ever seen on a cowboy, dude or otherwise.

He wasn't happy, though.

He said to Der Hase, “*Was nun?* Did you have to make a speech before the execution?”

“An execution,” said Der Hase, “may not be necessary, if he sees things our way.”

“The execution should have been done at sea,” growled the enormously fat man in the flamboyant outfit. “They should never have been brought here. That Oberleutenant Schwartz, or any of them.”

“Schwartz will be executed,” Der Hase said.

The fat man indicated Doc. “What about this one? Don't you know he is probably as dangerous a man as we could have caught? Every minute he is around here, we are fooling around dynamite with a lighted match.”

“I admire his brain,” Der Hase said.

“*Ach!*”

Das Seehund shrugged. “Me, I admire my own neck.”

“If this man Savage would help us, sincerely help us,” said Der Hase, “it would be a marvelous thing.”

“He will not help.”

Der Hase glanced at Doc, seemed grimly stubborn. “Savage is a product of scientific training. He is a living example of what men can do with themselves. He knows this. What we want to do, what the master race wishes to do, is handle men on a cold basis of scientific fact, not sentiment.”

The fat man said, “It is a dream.”

Doc Savage, watching them, was suddenly sure of a point. They were not in sympathy, did not have a common aim. They only pretended to have the same object.

Dipping a little bit into his memory, Doc got a general idea of the situation. The fat man, Das Seehund, had always been a fellow who sampled life. He wasn't a dreamer, and he had no high ideals and he carried the sword for no particular cause, other than himself. He was a man who liked his steaks thick and rich. Nothing else described him better than that.

Das Seehund wasn't a man who would travel along with Der Hase on any idea of making another attempt to inflict a super race on the world—not if it meant any trouble and risk on his part.

Doc decided what had happened. Der Hase had come here with what wealth he could get, to prepare for another great effort to change the world. Das Seehund had come along, with the wealth, just to escape the consequences of what was going to happen to the Axis leaders in Europe.

Each man knew the other's ideas. They were too clever not to know that much about each other.

“Lock him up,” Der Hase ordered a guard, indicating Doc Savage.

Das Seehund looked uneasy as he watched Doc being led out.

THE prisoners—the men—had been confined to one large cell. Pat and Lena Carlson were locked up in another room across the hall. Both rooms had stout steel doors, and old Too-Too Thomas was busy explaining how there happened to be iron doors.

“I tell you, they put 'em in since they came here,” he said.

“I halfway suspect,” Monk told him, “that you had jail cells here in the ranchhouse all along.”

Too-Too Thomas snorted indignantly. “When we caught a Yaqui, we didn't use a jail cell on him. And the same went for any of us the Yaquis caught.”

“Where are your ranch hands?”

“Locked up,” Too-Too said grimly, “down at the settlement where the ranch hands live. It's a kind of fort down by the cove edge. Built by the Spaniards four or five hundred years ago.”

Doc Savage was shoved into the prison room at this point, and old Too-Too Thomas took the opportunity to yell loudly at one of the guards, demanding to know whether his Mexican ranch employees were safe.

“We still have them,” the guard said. Then he added frankly, “But they are not safe.”

“What are you going to do with them?”

“Unless they listen to reason,” said the guard, “we shall have to have a wholesale execution.”

Too-Too Thomas, beginning suddenly to perspire, said, “None of my men will go over to your rascality, you lizard! They're good citizens of Mexico.”

The guard slammed the door and locked it. The lock was a small modern one, a padlock, which fitted into a standard hasp that had been welded to the sheet steel of the door.

Monk came close to Doc Savage.

“Careful, Doc,” he whispered. “There’s a microphone hidden behind the picture on that wall over there. We just found it, but let on we didn’t. So don’t say anything you don’t want them to overhear.”

The bronze man glanced sharply at the picture.

And he made, for a moment, the low trilling sound which was his unconscious habit in moments of excitement. The trilling, which had the fantastic quality of a wind in a wilderness of arctic ice spires, caught the attention of the others. Doc shook his head quietly, and Monk and the others understood.

But Too-Too Thomas was puzzled. He demanded, “What the dickens was that noise?”

“Must be the wind,” Monk told him.

“Ain’t no wind in here. They got the air conditioner turned off.”

A bit later, Monk got Doc aside, and with his fingers—using the sign language of the deaf and dumb, in which he could stumble along after a fashion—he asked, “You get an idea, Doc?”

Doc Savage indicated he had one.

The bronze man also gave the others orders in the sign language, instructing them, “Keep your eyes open and let me know if you see Der Hase at some moment when you are sure he is not with his partner, Das Seehund, and cannot be seen by Das Seehund.”

They agreed.

Too-Too Thomas, puzzled, demanded, “What are you fiddling your fingers at each other for?”

“Oh, we do that for exercise,” Monk told him.

THEY didn’t need anyone to point out to them that the situation was serious. Old Too-Too Thomas took it on himself to do this, however.

He launched into a description of how isolated Dirty Man Ranch was, and how iron-fisted were their captors. “These two guys, the fat one and the rat-faced dreamer,” he said, “have been mixed up in that mess in Europe and they’ve seen millions of people killed. At first there were only a few killed, people they had to knock off because they stood in their way. But it got worse and worse until finally they started the war and millions have gotten killed. They belong to the greatest gang of mass murderers in history. Those are the kind of guys who have us. Do you think they’ll let us live? No. Certainly not.”

Monk groaned disapprovingly.

“We know there is a dead cat,” he said, “without you dragging it out and waving it around in front of us that way.”

The leathery old man snorted. “I’m scaring myself.”

“You’re scaring us, too,” Monk said. “And we don’t need any scaring. We’re scared already. Why scare yourself?”

“Well, it’s this way,” Too-Too confessed. “When I’m in a tight spot, I always scare myself good. It seems

to help me to think up a way out.”

Monk advised, “Cut it out. It just paralyzes me.”

Too-Too Thomas grinned thinly. “You seem to be holding up all right.”

IT was late in the afternoon when Renny Renwick, who had been leaning against the barred window looking out sourly at the mountain landscape and the red glow of the evening sun, made a grunting sound, and said in Mayan, “Come here, Doc.”

Doc Savage went over to the window.

Renny had discovered the scrawny dreamer, Der Hase. The man was evidently taking a walk, a constitutional. He had his head back, had pushed out what did him for a chest, and was walking rapidly with his skipping gait that came from the condition of his leg or hip muscles.

Der Hase disappeared in a thicket, following a path.

Renny whispered, in Mayan, “I figured he would go out of sight. You wanted to know if he left without the fat man.”

Doc Savage nodded. He said, also in Mayan, “Gather around, all of you. We are going to start a little civil war.”

Monk and the others approached. They were puzzled. Then, when Doc used an excellent imitation of Der Hase's voice, they understood.

Imitating Der Hase's studied oratorical delivery, Doc said, “I thought this would be a good time for an exchange of opinions.”

Doc, in his normal voice, said, “We had the idea the thing was fairly well settled.”

At this point, Too-Too Thomas, not getting the idea, hurried over and demanded, “Say, what's going on here! If there's any funny business—”

Monk hit him. He didn't hit the old fellow very hard, with the result that Too-Too Thomas wasn't more than jarred, and immediately swung a return blow that almost knocked Monk's head off his shoulders. Monk hit him again, this time without so much politeness. Too-Too Thomas collapsed.

They waited tensely for the guard outside the door to investigate, but the fellow paid no attention. Evidently the thick doors shut out most sounds.

DOC SAVAGE used the fantastic methods he did, his assistants long ago had realized, because he had such unusual tools. His methods worked only because he was good at them. And he was good because of the training which he had received from childhood on. That, and the fact that he kept practicing and exercising continually, an average of about two hours daily, which was a lot of daily exercising when one thought about it.

The bronze man's voice imitations, for instance, were excellent. They weren't letter-perfect, not as remarkable as they somehow seemed, but the fact that he could listen to a man speak a few words, then do the man's voice and delivery so well that no one would notice unless he was expecting something of

the kind, was a very convenient trick. He used it often.

As a matter of fact, though, Doc was quite familiar with the voice of Der Hase. The man was one of the louder Axis orators over the radio, and had been for years, so that Doc had heard him often over the air. And Doc used radio voices in the exercises which he employed to keep in trim with his voice imitations. He had practiced Der Hase before. So he did particularly well with Der Hase now.

Der Hase: "Have you changed your mind?"

Doc (his own voice): "About getting rid of Das Seehund?"

Der Hase: "If you must state it so bluntly, yes."

Doc: "It is an interesting offer, but it goes against our conscience."

Der Hase: "Do it, and I will free you—providing I have your word of honor that you will forget all about me and this hide-out."

Doc: "You put a lot of trust in my word."

Der Hase: "Your word is good."

Doc: "There is one reason why we will not do it."

Der Hase: "It is a reason that is none of your business."

Doc: "We think otherwise."

Der Hase: "You mean, you would refuse just because you do not want me to proceed with my plan of starting another new world order, another project of establishing a master race to cure the ills of the world?"

Doc: "Right."

Monk and the others were tensely silent. They saw now what was going on.

The microphone behind the picture was only a few feet, not more than an arm's length, from where Doc Savage was carrying on the conversation with himself. There was no question but that it could pick up what was being said.

Too, there was no doubt but that there was either a listener, or a recording apparatus, connected to the microphone.

The outcome depended on whether Das Seehund listened to the thing first, or Der Hase, or the two together. There were two chances out of three to get results.

DOC continued his deception.

Doc: "Aren't you afraid Das Seehund will find out that you want him killed?"

Der Hase: "That fat oaf! *Ach!* He does not think."

Doc: "But you will let us go if we kill him for you."

Der Hase: “*Ja.*”

Doc: “But we have to give our word not to interfere with your plan for another new order attempt?”

Der Hase: “*Ja.*”

Doc: “How do you plan to go about this New Order attempt the second time?”

Der Hase: “Use the money we have brought here, and wait until things are quiet again after the war, then start in and get power pretty much as before.”

Doc: “You want to use Das Seehund's money, as well?”

Der Hase: “*Ja.* To put it bluntly, I do.”

Doc: “Which might possibly be why you want us to wipe him out?”

Der Hase: “Are all these questions necessary?”

Doc: “Interesting, anyway.”

Der Hase: “Are we going to get together?”

Doc: “Why don't you take care of Das Seehund yourself?”

Der Hase: “That might be inconvenient. He has many friends. The men here like him, some of them. I would rather an outsider did it.”

Doc: “You figure we could do it and escape?”

Der Hase: “I would aid you.”

Doc: “You want to know something?”

Der Hase: “What?”

Doc: “This would be a more appetizing proposition if Das Seehund was making it.”

Doc made the Der Hase voice splutter with rage, and growl, “You have not many hours to make up your mind!”

Doc then stepped back, and in German, said, “Guard, I have finished talking. Unlock the door.”

To make it a little more realistic, he tried an imitation of the guard's voice also, and said, “Yes, sir.”

Old Too-Too Thomas had been watching them with much interest, as had Oberleutenant Schwartz. The latter understood the German language where it had been spoken, and knew the set-up, and what was happening. Too-Too, on the other hand, had not recovered from Monk's punch in time to get a full understanding. But Too-Too was silent.

Schwartz winked one walrus eye at Doc Savage. He seemed pleased.

“Dot vas goot,” Schwartz said with his best trick German accent. “So goot I could donce and sing.”

“I'll bet that would be a spectacle,” Monk told him unkindly.

## Chapter XIII. THE FAT FISH

THERE was an unscheduled guard change shortly after midnight.

The fat man, Das Seehund, made it, and he said, "I want men I can trust doing this guarding." He said this to the guards Der Hase had posted at the door. There was nothing subtle about the fat man. But he got his guards substituted for those the other partner had placed.

Monk whispered, "It looks like the fat fish got the bait."

Doc Savage was uneasy. It was a long chance he had taken, not so long in risks as in possibilities that it would succeed.

Der Hase and Das Seehund were men who were naturally suspicious of their partners. They had seen too many murders for convenience in the rise of their fortunes in Europe to be otherwise. On that fertile ground, Doc had planted seed. The change of guards probably meant it was sprouting, but he could not tell yet in which direction it would grow.

It grew the way he had hoped.

Das Seehund opened the cell door an hour later. He had a needle-snouted automatic.

"We wish to talk," he told Doc Savage, having trouble with his accent.

Doc stood very still. He had no definite plan beyond splitting the two factions. But now he saw what might be one. It meant immediate action.

Doc held his lips motionless, or as motionless as possible. He used Der Hase's artificial voice.

"I guess I will have to shoot him myself, Herr Savage," Doc said in the imitated voice.

It was good voice simulation and good ventriloquism. Ventriloquism is not the art of throwing the voice, as it pretends, but of speaking in a voice which sounds as if it came from somewhere else, then indicating a spot from which the hearer will logically think that it came.

The only logical spot this voice could come from was the door behind Das Seehund.

He whirled.

Doc lunged forward, came on the fat man from behind, got hold of the thin-snouted pistol. The pistol began gobbling, because the safety was off. Two guards stood in the door at the moment, and they both fell down, both shot through the same leg by the same bullet.

Pat, in the cell across the hall, cried out, "Don't go off and leave me!"

Which was optimistic, considering that the fight had hardly started.

Doc Savage, in his own voice and loudly, cried, "Run, Der Hase! Run! I will take care of this fat one."

He said it in German, so that there would be no question of the fat man understanding.

It was Doc's idea that it wouldn't hurt if Das Seehund thought Der Hase had actually been in the hall, and had ducked back out of sight.

Doc Savage got the long-nosed pistol. He rapped Das Seehund over the ear with it, and the fat man became limp and astonishingly heavy.

Monk gouged Too-Too Thomas in the ribs.

“Come on,” Monk said. “Show us how you fight Indians, pop.”

THERE proved to be five more guards in the hall, which made seven in all, quite a number. They had been standing at attention, however, as was the custom when one of the leaders was around. It took them a little time to get organized, because nobody was giving orders.

Doc helped the confusion out a little by saying loudly, in Der Hase's voice, “Do not shoot Savage! Hold your fire!” He said that also in their native language.

Monk and Too-Too Thomas and the others piled into the hall, shoving each other in their haste. They got on to the guards, in a flying mêlée. Out of the mess came two rifle shots, an agonized howl, much grunting and scraping of feet and solid fist sounds.

“Here!” Pat cried. “Don't forget us!”

Oberleutenant Schwartz responded gallantly. A valorous expression on his walrus face, he took a run and a jump feetfirst against the cell door.

The door was a steel plate which looked as if it was armor plate, solid enough to hold back a five-inch deckgun shell. But its looks were somewhat deceptive, because it caved enough for the lock to tear out of its fastening.

The steel door burst open, much to the astonishment of everyone but Schwartz.

Schwartz picked himself up, said, “I thought I recognized the metal of which the doors are made. It came from one of our Italian factories. I think the factory formerly made cheese, and forgot to change their formula.”

Pat said, “Good for them!” and came out with Lena Carlson.

Monk and Ham had a guard down on the corridor floor, and were pushing at each other, trying to decide who would have the privilege of knocking him senseless. The matter was settled by another guard, who kicked Monk as hard as he could where the kicking was best, sending Monk galloping down the hall on hands and knees, involuntarily. Ham administered the finishing touch, then got up and went to work on the man who had kicked Monk.

Ham got the fellow out on his feet just as Monk came galloping back, bellowing.

“You kicked me!” Monk howled, misunderstanding what had happened.

“Get away from me,” Ham said, “or I'll kick you again.”

Big-fisted Renny had downed a third guard with a blow from one of his enormous fists.

Too-Too Thomas, with the idea of trying to live up to the reputation he had been giving himself with words, endeavored to take the two survivors for himself. Unfortunately, one of his choices knew a great deal about jujitsu, and got a hold on Too-Too. The result was that Too-Too Thomas ended up on the floor against one wall, gasping and squeaking, with the foe on top of him, preparing to remove an arm.

Long Tom Roberts went over and rescued Too-Too.

“So that's the way you fought Indians,” Long Tom said unkindly, after he had slugged the guard who knew judo.

Old Too-Too Thomas scrambled to his feet, tripped and fell down again.

“You hurt?” Long Tom asked.

“I'm too mad to stand up,” Too-Too said malevolently.

Johnny Littlejohn had his incredibly long thin arms and legs around the surviving guard. He squeezed. There was a cracking sound, and the guard screamed and fell on the floor, where he groveled and held to his leg.

“I'll be superamalgamated!” Johnny said, and kicked him on the temple.

Pat and Lena Carlson were out of the other cell. Everyone was in the hall. The guards were all out. But from other parts of the big ranchhouse, there was anxious bellowing, the men yelling to other men to get their guns.

Doc grasped Too-Too Thomas, asked, “How many men, usually, on the submarines at night?”

“One,” Too-Too said. “One, usually. There'll probably be one on each.”

Doc said, “We will try to get aboard one submarine, and disable the other one.”

Oberlcutenant Schwartz put back his head. “*Achtung!*” he roared. “*Wohin sind sie gegangen?*”

He was so excited he was mixed up. He had asked, in German, where they had gone, which obviously wasn't what he meant. However, it served.

He got an answer, an excited shout.

“*Beeilen sie sich!*”

a voice replied excitedly.

It was down the hall some distance, behind a door.

“My men!” Schwartz told Doc Savage excitedly. “They are imprisoned down there!”

Without more words, he struck out at a lumbering run down the hall toward his men.

Monk pounced on one of the pistols which the guards had dropped, and lifted it. Doc got the gun pushed down.

“Let him go,” Doc said.

“That old geezer,” Monk said, “is all for the Axis. If he gets the upper hand, we'll be no better off than we were.”

Doc reminded, “He is not exactly friendly toward Der Hase. We can use his help.”

“O. K.,” Monk said.

At the far end of the hall, Schwartz tackled a door with the same tactics he had used on the prison of Pat

and Lena Carlson. A run and jump. That door also smashed in.

Doc said, "Come on. Bring the fat man."

Monk and Too-Too Thomas were first to reach the prone, senseless form of Das Seehund. They picked him up, grunted in amazement at the fat man's weight. "Made of bricks!" Monk gasped. "Here, somebody help with this tonnage."

No one heard Monk, however. He and Too-Too wrestled with the burden.

Doc Savage found a room that wasn't a prison cell, and smashed open the window in the room. It led to a flagstone terrace, pleasant in the moonlight.

"Come on," the bronze man said.

He stepped out into the terrace, but got back inside again in haste, as a machine gun began filling the terrace with lead. The gun apparently was on the roof, and the gunner believed in burning powder.

THEY tried the corridor, and the other side of the ranchhouse. They were glad they did, because they found the gold.

Wealth was probably the thing they least needed at the moment. But they were human enough to get a boot out of it. There wasn't a roomful of it, not quite. But then it was a big room.

It was not all gold. There were jewels, good jewels cut and uncut, and bars of platinum, and even two cases of the most expensive of European cameras. Tiny cameras, miniatures worth two or three hundred dollars apiece in packing cases. There were valuable paintings also.

Evidently some kind of an inventory had been in progress, because everything was spread around on tables, or open on the floor, and there were long ledger sheets and adding machines on other tables.

Ham stared at some of the uncrated paintings, said grimly, "I thought they claimed they didn't steal anything from the Louvre!"

Finding all the wealth in that room did them no good, except to give them pleasure in seeing so much wealth in one spot.

There were no windows.

They went back. Now there was more shooting in the ranchhouse.

Monk and Too-Too Thomas labored along with the fat man. "Find a way outa here!" Monk gasped. "We're gettin' tired carryin' this tub!"

Doc found a door. There was a roof over it. He went outside, saw there were bushes, beckoned the others.

They got into the shade of the bushes, the moon shade that was intensely dark, and began moving cautiously.

But the machine gunner on the roof heard them, and cut loose freely with his weapon. He had mistaken their location, or was indefinite, because he began riddling one bush after another.

Monk watched carefully, fired the pistol he had picked up, shooting only once. The machine gun went silent.

Ham said angrily, "You know Doc's rule against shooting, particularly shooting to kill."

"Oh, I just barked him, like you bark a squirrel," Monk said. "Probably just tapped his scalp gently."

It was dark on the roof, too dark for Monk to have seen anything but the muzzle flare of the machine gun which had been shooting at them.

"Here, help us carry the fat boy," Monk urged.

Ham ignored him.

It appeared now that the way to safety down at the submarine lying to the wharf was moderately clear. There was some shouting from down at the cove, but there were only two voices, and both were demanding to know what had happened, and what they should do.

Renny Renwick, who spoke good German, bellowed, "Just wait until we get there, boys!" to them. Then he muttered, "Brother, just wait!"

The pair at the cove seemed to think a friend had addressed them. They asked if the submarine should be made ready for flight.

*"Ja, bitte,"*

Renny rumbled at them.

They should have known that such a voice belonged to no one they'd ever met on a friendly basis, but the echoes from the sides of the cove fooled them.

Doc Savage, with Renny and the others, was descending the long flight of zigzagging steps cut in the cove side. The going was slow for the steps were steep.

Monk and Ham, burdened with Das Seehund, had dropped far behind. So far back that they did not dare shout for aid.

"Blazes, what do they stuff these fellows with?" Monk asked finally.

Too-Too Thomas dropped the end he was carrying, the lighter end. "I'm puffed out," he said. "Can't carry this carcass another step."

"He is a very important prize," Monk said. "The American government would like to get him and ask him some questions about his playmates at home."

"You carry him, then," said Too-Too Thomas. "I don't figure you could 'a' been carryin' your share anyway."

"Blast it, pop, I've been carrying him and you, too," Monk said with conviction.

There was a volley of shots. The echoes whooped and gobbled. It was evident that Oberleutenant Schwartz had gotten his crew into action.

Monk and Too-Too Thomas sat down and puffed for breath.

“We could sit on him and use him for a sled,” Monk suggested, “and slide down on him.”

“Skin him up some,” said Too-Too. “But it ain’t a bad idea.”

At this point, their fat burden came to life. They had been having too much trouble carrying him to realize that Das Seehund had revived. But he had, then had remained doggo until he got his wits organized.

The fat man, lashing out with both legs, managed to kick Monk and Too-Too Thomas simultaneously, upsetting them and tumbling them down the steps. It was quite dark, the steps were steep, and they did some uncomfortable bouncing before they got stopped.

They scrambled back. But the fat man was gone. He was going up the steps with the agility of a freshly awakened mountain goat.

Monk and Too-Too Thomas were too tired to catch him.

“If you had carried your share,” Too-Too said, “we wouldn’t’ve had to lay him down.”

Down at the cove edge, on the submarines, there was a sudden uproar. Automatic rifles and machine guns put down a barrage which had the volume of a battle.

“Two guys ain’t doing all that shooting,” Monk said uneasily. “The crews must be aboard the submarines.”

“Podner, we’re in kind of a pickle,” said Too-Too Thomas. “If they’re on the submarines, they’ve got the foot of the path blocked. A fly couldn’t go up or down this cliff except on the path. And seems I recollect we left some unfriendly fellows up above.”

## **Chapter XIV. GEEK!**

TOO-TOO THOMAS reached the foot of the path ahead of Monk, which disgusted Monk somewhat with his own agility.

Doc Savage and the others were there. They had taken shelter on the steps, which were cut into the stone at this point deeply enough to give cover.

Ham asked, “Monk, where’s Das Seehund?”

“He kicked us down the steps,” Monk said truthfully, “and went the other way.”

“That’s a big help,” Ham said.

The gun cut loose from the submarine. It rattled and gobbled, and knocked rock off the cliff. The gunner had put in a drum of tracers, and these bounced around in the night looking like straight red strings from one point to another.

Doc Savage said, “Get back up the path.”

“It’s blocked at the top by now,” Too-Too Thomas said.

“There is one point,” Doc said, “where the whole group of us can step off the path.” The bronze man began moving. “Quick,” he added. “Before they limber up a searchlight on that submarine.”

The others followed him. They went as silently as possible whenever the machine gun on the submarine

was not gobbling. The spot where Doc was bound was not high.

“Here,” Doc said.

It was a kind of shelf, a niche between an outthrust thumb of stone, and the path. Here they were not only off the path, but they were concealed from bullets and search lights used off the sub.

Doc made sure everyone was under cover, then said, “They will be coming down the path from above, or up from the bottom. Whichever group passes us first, drop in with them. The path is dark enough so that they will not recognize us. That will give most of us a chance to reach the top or the bottom, then make a break.”

No one said anything.

From the top of the path, around the ranchhouse, there was steady shooting. A great deal of it. Some of it was hollow thumping inside the house, but more and more of it was getting outdoors.

From the sub, fifty or sixty bullets.

“*Halten!*”

a voice roared from the ranchhouse. The voice added that it meant the submarine.

No more shots from the submarine.

“Use a searchlight on that path,” the voice ordered. It was Der Hase.

The searchlight sprang out, hot and white in the night, somehow unexpected in spite of the fact that they had known it would appear. It began searching the path.

The beam passed over Doc and his group without disclosing their presence.

From the submarine: “All clear. We see no one on the path.”

From the house: “We are coming down. Shut off the damned light so that Schwartz's men can not see us.”

The path became dark.

They could hear the men coming down the path. Der Hase and Das Seehund were in the lead, and they were having violent words.

Monk listened, chuckled, and said, “They've joined forces, but they're still suspicious of each other.”

THE two Europeans, the thin fanatic and the fat one, were arguing as they passed Doc's group.

“You were a fool to fall for such a trick,” Der Hase was saying. “Where are your brains?”

Das Seehund snorted. His snort said that he still suspected the whole thing.

As they filed past, the leaders first, then their men, Doc Savage stepped out and joined them. The others did likewise, one at a time, as silently as possible.

If the enemy group had been descending the cliff under ordinary conditions, it would have been impossible for Doc and the others to have joined them. Theoretically it would have been feasible, but an

actual impossibility. They would have been discovered.

But they were under fire from above. Oberleutenant Schwartz and his men were firing from above, trying to search out the path. The walrus-faced Schwartz, shouting commands, sounded exactly like a walrus barking, as the echoes mixed up his words.

Doc and his group joined the retreat without being discovered.

They got to the foot of the cliff.

“Keep that light off!” Das Seehund called to the submariners.

Someone—Doc Savage could not tell who it was, but the individual was close behind him—threw a rock. Doc heard the rock whistle past his ear. He heard it hit its target, which was Das Seehund. It knocked the fat man down.

Das Seehund got up, wheeled, thumbed on a flashlight, and planted the beam on Der Hase.

The fat man shot Der Hase four times, seeming to put all four bullets between Der Hase's small eyes.

Der Hase dropped.

The fat man switched out his light, and changed position rapidly.

“Now I am in command here,” he said in his native tongue.

No one said anything.

“Get on our submarine,” said the fat man. “We will get outside the cove, and shell the ranchhouse from out of rifle range. We can blow them to bits.”

No one said anything still.

“The man I just shot was a traitor!” Das Seehund said. “Get moving, quick!”

They walked toward the submarines meekly.

Doc Savage, knowing what to expect, knew that his aides were ducking off into the darkness. Shadow lay over this part of the cove, over the submarines, due to the height of the cliff.

Doc kept with the group. He marched out on the dock with them, until he found which submarine they were taking.

Doc got aboard the other sub. He got aboard fast. There was one man on the grille walk, and he struck that fellow, knocking him overboard.

The bronze man was able to reach the conning tower, went inside. This one hatch would be the only one that was open. And if the others were open, there was a mechanical means of closing them that operated instantly when the controls were thrown into crash dive position.

Doc yanked the conning hatch shut, went down into the control room, and worked frantically with the valve controls.

The submarine, with no headway to make the diving rudders effective, submerged slowly. But it went down as water poured into the ballast tanks.

The mooring lines held the craft for a while. Then they snapped, and the ship sank quickly, grounded on the rock bottom, and lay there.

The bronze man looked around for the listening apparatus. He got hold of a new type of apparatus for underwater communication which at first confused him. Then he found the listener.

He heard the other submarine back out of the cove.

DOC brought the submarine back to the surface, not without difficulty, for that many controls were never intended to be operated by one man.

“Come aboard!” he shouted from the hatch. “Monk, the rest of you.”

They arrived, running, grimly silent, and scrambled aboard. Pat had been aboard a submarine before. Lena Carlson and Too-Too Thomas apparently had never been in one. They stood back gingerly, fearful of touching anything.

“Cast off,” Doc said. “Renny, you and Long Tom in the engine room.”

They operated under electric power until Renny got the Diesels going. By that time, they were out of the cove. Doc let the sub idle there.

“Man the deck gun,” he said.

Monk and Ham did that. Johnny got ammunition ready. They fooled around with the piece” learning its peculiarities.

Monk said, “Ham.”

“Yes?”

“Somebody hit Das Seehund with a rock, and it made him mad, and he shot Der Hase,” Monk said.

“Yes.”

“Nice work.”

“Just like you, praising yourself,” Ham said.

“Wait a minute, I didn't do it!” Monk exploded. “You did it!”

“I never!” Ham yelled. “Don't try to lay it on to me. Whoever did it knew that the fat man would kill the other one, thinking an attempt had been made on his life.”

“Don't you bellow at me!” Monk roared back. “And stop trying to lay it on to me.”

Old Too-Too Thomas cleared his throat modestly.

“You gents needn't get all hot,” he said. “I'm the culprit.”

“You threw that rock?” Monk asked Too-Too.

“Yep. One of my old Indian fighting tricks.”

Monk and Ham both chuckled.

“You murdering old scamp,” Monk said. “Come over here, pop, and let me shake your hand.”

“If I come over there, I’ll kick you overboard,” said Too-Too Thomas indignantly. “Quit calling me pop!”

Out to sea about a mile, there was a gun flash. The shell screamed overhead, hit the cliff and exploded. It had missed the house about two hundred yards.

“Got it,” Johnny said, and called out range numbers, getting confused somewhat, finally saying, “I’ll be superamalgamated! Guess we’ll have to wait for the next shot.”

The next shot came.

Instantly, their own gun barked. The shell was fused to explode when it hit almost anything, and it bloomed out to sea.

They had missed the submarine by an embarrassing margin.

“As a gun pointer,” Monk told Johnny, “you are a good archaeologist.”

But the other sub did not fire again.

THEY waited ten minutes, suspiciously on edge, cautiously changing the position of their own craft, then lying silent, so the other vessel could not locate them with its listeners.

Nothing happened.

Long Tom put his head out of the conning tower. “I’ve been on our listener,” he said. “That other sub is beating it. Full speed out to sea. Want to chase him? We couldn’t catch him, because from the looks of the two subs, that one was faster.”

“Let it go,” Doc said. “Put about, get in position, and let go a few shells at our friends on land.”

“You’ll blow up my ranchhouse!” Too-Too Thomas shouted.

“Miss the house,” Doc said.

They fired about twenty rounds at the cliff, generally banging up the scenery. At first, machine-gun fire answered them. Then there was no response.

Doc said, “We will put into the cove. Where are your men imprisoned, Too-Too?”

Too-Too told him where, and they ran to the spot, carefully beached the sub with its bow high, but not so high but that they could get it higher and back off the beach if necessary. Then they went ashore.

There were four guards in the little village inhabited by the ranch hands. These fled after some shouting and scattered shooting.

Too-Too released his men.

“Get these boys some guns,” Too-Too said. “They’re old Indian chasers, too.”

A few weapons were located.

But the advance on the ranchhouse was without excitement. The birds had flown.

“Go after 'em, caballeros,” Too-Too Thomas told his men.

TOO-TOO THOMAS and his ranch hands returned about four hours after daylight. Considering their bag of prisoners, they should have been happy. But their faces were long.

“One got away,” said Too-Too Thomas sourly. “It was that walrus-faced hombre, Schwartz. He stole one of the best saddle horses in the country, and there ain't a chance of overhauling him.”

“Let him go,” Doc said.

“I can have my Yaquis put out a signal, and maybe round him up.”

“Let him go,” Doc said. “Do not try to catch him.”

After Doc had gone, Too-Too Thomas scratched his head and said, “I don't get that. I think maybe my Yaquis could catch that Schwartz.”

Monk said, “I thought you got your before-breakfast exercise scrapping with the Yaquis.”

“Oh, me and them Yaquis has been brothers for years. This is the first good fight I've had in about seven coon ages.”

“Well, forget Schwartz. Doc wants him to get away.”

“The fellow may have some of that gold on him.”

“No, it's still there,” Monk said. “Somebody slammed the door and locked it when we went out. It's all there.”

“Then why—”

“Doc,” Monk said, “wants that Oberleutenant Schwartz to get back to Europe.”

“He does! Why's that?”

Monk said, “Can you imagine what will happen to Das Seehund when Schwartz gets back and tells the Fuehrer the story.”

Too-Too Thomas grinned. He felt of his throat.

“Geek!” he said.

THE END