



# THE PHAROAH'S GHOST

A Doc Savage Adventure by Kenneth Robeson

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*Scanned and Proofed  
by Tom Stephens*

## Chapter I

A DOVE, says most dictionaries, is one who is regarded as pure and gentle. The Arabian word for dove is the word *hamamah*. And that leads around to the bold-faced fact that whoever named the Arabian waterboy Hamamah was an awful joker.

Hamamah wasn't really a waterboy. He was—well, it would go something as follows: You would say, who is he? Oh, that's Hamamah (the Arabian word for dove) you would be told. And who's Hamamah? Why, he's the waterboy. This would not be very enlightening, so you might ask for whom he carried water. Oh, Hamamah didn't carry water any more. But it was true he carried a little blood now and then.

Then your informant would laugh like everything, for no other reason than that there wasn't a thing funny about it.

In Cairo there were quite a few police officials, native and Colonial, who mentioned Hamamah in their prayers, asking to be bestowed the privilege of shooting or hanging him legally.

Hamamah wasn't even an Arab by blood. He had come from the south, down in the *tall* somewhere. The general consensus was, his father had been a jackal and his mother a handsome snake.

Hamamah had been a handsome boy. But he wasn't handsome now because too many knives and fists and diseases had worked on his face.

He was a lean cur who skulked in alleys from habit. When he was prosperous, he was a great one to

dress up. He bought the finest that Vowels, the store on *Gharb* Street in Cairo had to offer, and before the war he would immediately cable Bonfils, the fine gentleman's tailors on Bond Street in London, for a new wardrobe. Or he varied that by cabling Farques et Cie, Boulevard Haussman, Paris. They were good, too. Both firms had Hamamah's measurements on file.

At ten o'clock this morning, Hamamah was particularly well-dressed. He strolled out of his hotel, the Zaibaq Mansion, a shifty dive on Mi'za Street in full glory from dust gray bowler to striped morning trousers.

He gave old Amil, the doorman at the Zaibaq Mansion, a one-hundred piastre note. It was equivalent to a little less than five dollars, American, in normal times.

"For you, my dear father," said Hamamah grandly.

"Thank you, my loving son," said old Amil.

Hamamah strolled up the street.

Old Amil smiled benignly until Hamamah was out of sight.

Then old Amil spat on the hundred-piastre note. He wiped the spit off as if that cleaned it. Old Amil took a knife, a frightening knife with a blade like fourteen inches of needle, and stuck it through the note. He stood there looking at it and thinking how fine it would be if that was Hamamah's heart impaled on the sticker. Two years ago Hamamah had gone off on a honeymoon with old Amil's daughter, and old Amil was fairly sure Hamamah had sold the girl to the slave market on the edge of the great and mysterious country which was labeled Rub Al Khali on the maps. For two years old Amil had been planning to kill Hamamah, and the only reason he hadn't done it was because he was hoping he could figure out a still more painful and gruesome way of doing it.

At that, old Amil was probably as good a friend as Hamamah had.

Hamamah was anybody's snake. He could be bought. He usually was.

HAMAMAH discovered the American sucker in front of the Mosque, the big one north of the cluster of shops on *Gharb* Street where they sell camel trappings.

The American sap was a long drink of water decked out in a forty-dollar New York suit and a splintering new sun helmet. He had yap written all over him. He even carried some of the junk jewelry the camel boys hawked to the fool tourists as a sideline.

Hamamah, who had nothing else to do, decided to clip this guy.

There were no regular Yankee tourists these days, what with the war. There were plenty of soldiers, American and English, who could be shystered, but the trouble with them was that they had the habit of beating the hell out of a poor hard working thief when they caught one.

This one was perfect. He was thin and pale-looking, and Hamamah catalogued him as a dopey American clerk sent over here by some Yankee company handling war material.

Hamamah walked up to the sucker with another hundred-piastre note in his hand.

"*La tukwakhidhni,*"

said Hamamah.

The American jumped and turned.

“Huh?”

“*Wad-darahim ahi tamam?*”

asked Hamamah.

The sucker scrooged around and finally said, “*Ma atkallam 'arabi* —is that the way you say it? I don't speak Arabic.”

Hamamah bowed and grinned very big.

“The English I speak great,” he said. “Beg your pardon, I am say. The money, is it right?”

The American looked at the hundred-piastre note. “What about the money?”

“You drop her.”

“The heck I did!” The sucker went through his pocket in a hurry. “No, I didn't.” He took out a bull-choking roll of bills and counted them. “No, I've got all my dough. That's not mine.”

Hamamah tried not to choke as he saw the roll of bills.

“You no drop?” he said.

“Nope.”

“So sorry,” Hamamah acted confused. “Someone drop. Best give to police, they find owner, no?”

Hamamah then called a native policeman to whom he handed the bill and the story that he had found it, and thought the American had dropped it, but no, the American hadn't. So would the officer find the owner?

The officer took the bill, put it in his pocket, and said—in Arabic—that now he had seen everything. He called Hamamah a buzzard who had eaten his mother and a stinking something on a pig's hoof. He knew Hamamah.

Hamamah bowed and half his face was grin.

“The policeman thanks us and says he will get it to the rightful owner or donate it to the war fund,” Hamamah told the American, telling a whopping lie.

The object of all this was to establish Hamamah's good honest reputation with the American sucker.

It seemed to have done the job.

“You sightsee, no?” asked Hamamah.

“Yep. Interesting place, Cairo,” said the American. “Darndest place I ever saw. Sure wish the people back in the Bronx could see it.”

“Bronx? What is Bronx?” asked Hamamah.

“Shucks, that's the biggest state on the Pacific Ocean,” said the sucker, and he laughed uproariously.

“Ah,” said Hamamah. “You sightsee, eh? Have you seen the camel-singing school?”

“The which?”

“The camel-singing school. They teach the camels to music.”

“Say, I'd like to see that.”

“I show you,” said Hamamah. “I am head teacher man in school.”

Hamamah knew darned well the Bronx was a part of New York City, not a state on the Pacific Ocean. But there was no such thing as a camel-singing school, either, so they were even.

“This way,” added Hamamah.

THE sucker took Hamamah by the throat when they were passing an alley. It was quite a surprise to Hamamah. The American jerked Hamamah into the alley.

The alley was a stinking deserted gloomy one—gloomy even at ten o'clock in the morning—and it was the kind of an alley Hamamah should have been at home in. He'd cut more than one throat in such an alley; alleys were practically his place of business.

Hamamah tried to stick two fingers in the sucker's eyes. Hamamah wore the nails long on the two fingers, and under the fingernails he kept a concoction—a particularly stinging pepper and some other worse stuff—which would blind an opponent in a jiffy.

It didn't work. The American sap got the two long-nailed fingers, and quickly and efficiently broke one of them and disjointed the other.

Hamamah was hurt. He screamed a scream that would have reached the topmost spire of the Rahib mosque, had the shriek been a success. It wasn't. The American sap knocked the screech and one of Hamamah's teeth back down his throat. Hamamah gagged, and they fought.

They actually went end over end in the alley. Hamamah knew some of the Cairo alley brand of judo, which was pretty nasty stuff.

The American sucker knew more and better of the same stuff. Hamamah began to squawk and pant and gasp. He lost hide, another tooth, some hair, his courage.

Now another American appeared. This one came trotting down the alley—he had been concealed behind a rubble pile a short distance away—to join the scrap.

The newcomer was a wide, short, apish fellow with a remarkably homely face, a big mouth, and an impressive crop of red hair which looked somewhat like rusty shingle nails.

“Stay with him, Long Tom,” he called.

Hamamah had a piece of luck. He got one of his knives out. He put it into the shoulder of his opponent, and put the point of the knife on into a wooden door against which they were fighting at the moment. The American was pinned to the door.

Hamamah turned and ran. He ran as he had never run before. He was scared. He was so scared he was blue.

The squat hairy American reached the sucker American.

“What happened?” he demanded.

“Monk, he got a knife into me,” said the other.

Monk dragged an overgrown and complex looking pistol-shaped weapon from an underarm holster.

“No, Monk! No, no!” yelled the other.

“Listen, the dirty so-and-so stuck you—”

“He just got some hide. Get me loose!”

Monk eyed the other anxiously. “Long Tom, you're sure it's not in you bad?”

“Just pinned the hide, I tell you,” Long Tom insisted.

Monk examined the knife. “Yeah, that's right.” He pulled the blade out, looked at it, said, “Probably a trillion germs on this thing. I'd rather have a snake crawl through me.”

“You and me both.” Long Tom worked with the wound to make it bleed freely.

“I oughta shot his head off!” Monk said violently.

“Don't be crazy. He's important to us.”

Hamamah by now was out of the alley.

“You think he'll get away?” Monk asked anxiously.

“No,” Long Tom said. “Doc Savage will collect him.”

“Doc better,” Monk muttered.

HAMAMAH was afraid of being collected. He traveled like a goose that had been shot at, rounded a couple of corners, and sighted a rattletrap of a taxicab. He almost moaned with pleasure when he saw the cab. It was an old hag of a cab, and Hamamah knew from experience that the drivers of such would do practically anything for a few piastres.

Hamamah went into the cab like a groundhog into a hole.

“Drive!” he gasped. “Drive like the devil.”

The cab driver was an enormous villain with an almost black skin, a patch over an eye, scar tissue on his face, and a scratchy voice like a rat running over tin.

“Five hundred piastres,” he said.

“You dog! You jackal! You stinking piece of muck!” said Hamamah. “Drive, you piece of dirt.”

“A thousand piastres,” said the driver calmly.

“A thou—” Hamamah choked. “All right. Drive.”

The driver snorted.

“In advance,” he said.

Hamamah shelled out the money. “You're a damned thief,” he said. “Get going, you pile of camel puke.”

The driver chuckled. “Hang on.”

The old cab took off. Hamamah settled back, wiping off sweat. His scare didn't subside, but at least he could breathe normally again.

Allah, I was lucky to find this driver, thought Hamamah. The fellow is as big a rascal as I, and exactly what I needed.

Hamamah's approval of the scamp driver increased as they twisted through Cairo streets. The driver was from the south, the Nubian country around the Red Sea port of Suakin, concluded Hamamah. The man had the accent of that district in his speech. It was unusual, thought Hamamah, that he hadn't heard of such a rascally fellow before.

“You are a stranger in Cairo?” he demanded.

The driver grunted.

“Maybe,” he admitted.

The driver pulled into a side street and changed the identification plates on his car. He substituted a spare set. Also, the engine cover had been off the taxicab, and the driver calmly produced the cover from under the front seat, where he obviously must have a special place to store such a large object, and put it on the car. The addition of the cover would change the most conspicuous descriptive angle of the cab. It was no longer, “the cab had a missing engine cover.”

“You are a dog who has barked before,” Hamamah said.

The driver—he was really an enormous fellow, although the stoop in his walk made his size deceptive—grunted again. “I do not bark often at a thousand piastres.”

“You call that a big bark, eh?”

“Big enough to scare me somewhat,” admitted the driver.

He was so obviously not scared that Hamamah laughed with relief. “Maybe I could get you a job that would really be profitable,” he said.

The driver scratched one of his face scars. “Are you just making a camel noise?”

“*La!*”

said Hamamah violently. “It is truth.”

“Profitable work?”

“*Na'am, aiwah.*

Very profitable.”

“I might rattle it in my head for a while.”

“This job is right now.”

The driver considered. “All right, what is it?”

Hamamah grinned. “Take us to the red house at the junction of the Street of Shrews and the new boulevard.”

The driver nodded. He headed in that direction, taking a somewhat roundabout route which put him past a certain street corner. He paid no attention to the corner in passing, but an old touring car with curtains was waiting there.

The touring car pulled out and followed them.

The driver had a grin of his own.

## Chapter II

THE house looked in general pretty much like most of Cairo's houses on the outside, which meant that it was picturesque to some extent, but nothing to make an architect happy. The color of the house was the color of a soiled white rat, the only red being on doors, shutters and window-bars.

The driver, stopping in front of the place, said, “Here is your buzzard's roost.”

The other car, the touring with the curtains that had been following them, went on past. The man driving it was tanned and had one large earring. His hat was big enough to make it hard to tell much about his face.

Hamamah got out. “Come on inside.”

The driver laughed. “And give you a chance to knife me and get back the thousand piastres?”

“So you're an old she-camel, afraid of a dog's breath.”

That made the driver angry. He got out, said, “But what is the sense of my going along?”

“I want to talk to you about this job,” Hamamah said.

“Job?”

“Yes. Come on.”

The driver spat. “I want no job that a camel-fly the likes of you could give me.”

“I wouldn't hire you.”

“No?”

Hamamah squinted up at the other. “Ever hear of Jaffa?”

The driver's expression got wooden. He casually gave his robe a hitch, and a dark automatic pistol dropped out of one fold into his hand and was quickly transferred to a more accessible hiding place. He was impressed.

“Jaffa?” he said.

“You've heard of him?”

“Naturally not,” the driver said, and grinned without humor. The grin said he had heard, though.

Hamamah gestured. “Come inside. I may be able to get you on the payroll. That is what I was talking about.”

The driver snorted. “Hire somebody he knows nothing about? So you really want me in there to cut my throat?”

“Come and see, you goat-smell,” Hamamah said.

The two of them crossed to the door of the house. They seemed to feel quite friendly toward each other. At least Hamamah was pleased. This *turjuman* was truly a rare devil, and Hamamah felt as happy as a buzzard who had just met another buzzard.

A thin boy with a missing ear showed his face at a little barred opening when they kicked on the door. Hamamah called him “little carrion,” and told him to open the door before he got his remaining teeth kicked down his throat.

To Hamamah's astonishment, the boy immediately did so.

“Northeast whisker of the prophet!” Hamamah muttered. “So Jaffa is not here?”

“This one has never heard that name before,” said the boy.

Hamamah grunted. “Put it this way: The eagle sits not in his nest today?”

“True,” the boy said, “if you put it that way.”

Hamamah turned to the driver. “The black bird sits in your soup today, my friend. In other words, I will have to see you another day about that job. The—ah—eagle is not here today, so he can not interview you.”

The driver spat angrily. “You waste my time like an old dog baying the morn. You are a bluff, a liar, a braggart, who knows no Jaffa.”

That touched Hamamah's pride. “Wallah, I have not lied!”

“Will you see this Jaffa today?”

“No.” Hamamah shook his head. “It is not likely. I will not lie to you—I am about as important to Jaffa as one whisker is to the cat. But I will see him. And tomorrow, or the next day, I will see you again and—”

The driver had been speaking Arabic.

Now he said in English, “That's too long, much too long!”

And for the second time in the last couple of hours, Hamamah was unexpectedly taken by the throat.

THE cab driver underwent a fearsome change, too. He stopped being a cab driver. He seemed to grow a foot by just taking the slump out of his shoulders and the kinks out of his legs. Hamamah got the wild

feeling the fellow had been doubled up like a folding-rule under the loose burnoose. Anyway, the driver was suddenly a giant

“U'a!” gasped the door-boy, and got a long-bladed knife out of the back of his collar. The way he drew the blade gave the suspicion that was where his missing ear had gone. Sometime or other he'd made a slip getting the knife out and sliced off the ear.

The driver's left arm went out, the edge of his hand chopped the boy's throat, and the boy staggered back making croaking sounds.

Hamamah tried to stamp the driver's feet and break the foot-bones. He had no luck. He was suddenly hit behind the right eye, hit so hard the world turned black and ringing.

When the big driver dropped Hamamah, the fellow remained loosely where he landed on the floor.

The one-eared boy, shaking his head, got organized. He shifted his feet like a boxer, readying the knife, and looked for the bad places on the big driver to cut or stab—the brachial, radial or carotid arteries, the subclavian or the heart and stomach areas. Somebody who knew had taught him how to use a knife.

There was a spindle-legged European chair made of hardwood to one side of the hall. The big cab driver got that and advanced.

A chair, next to a bullet, is probably the most effective offensive weapon against a man with a knife, or against any opponent with a cutting weapon—which is why lion tamers carry them.

The one-eared boy made some slashing motions and danced about a while. He could see that he was up against an expert.

He didn't exactly lose his nerve. But he began to want very badly to get out of there. The first chance he got, he ran.

The thrown chair—the boy was quick and lucky—missed him. The boy went on through the door, slammed it, kept going through other doors. Straight on through and out the back, he went.

And almost into the arms of three men, three Americans.

“Hold it!” barked one of the Americans.

The boy tried to stop his headlong flight, and in doing that caused his feet to slip. He crashed sidewise into a wall, landing against the point of his knife. The knife blade stuck a steel tongue two inches beyond the burnoose that covered his back over the heart.

THE three Americans—one was the sucker Hamamah had roped in earlier, another was the hairy man named Monk who had appeared in the alley, and the third was a dapper fellow who had been driving the car that had followed Hamamah's machine to this house.

The three of them stared at the fallen boy, shocked.

The boy kicked around some and died.

The driver came out of the house, looked at the boy, demanded, “What happened?”

“He barged into us, tried to dodge, slipped, and fell on his sticker,” said the homely Monk.

The big driver eyed Monk and asked suspiciously, "You didn't trip him?"

"So help me!" Monk said earnestly.

The big driver turned to the dapper man with a questioning look.

"No, Doc, Monk didn't touch him," said the dapper man. "For once in his life, Monk is telling the truth. It was an accident."

"Where is your car?"

"In a side street."

"Notice anything suspicious, Ham?"

The dapper Ham shook his head. "We were waiting in the car at the corner where you agreed to drive past so we could get on your trail. We followed you here, saw you go into the house, parked, and were coming around the back to cover the exits when this boy burst out and accidentally killed himself."

Monk asked, "Doc, do you think this is the right place?"

The big man said, "No time to tell yet. Suppose you fellows search it."

The big man went back to Hamamah, who hadn't come out of the fog yet. The others searched the house. They went over the place thoroughly, pulling up rugs, jabbing at suspicious places, and sounding walls.

Long Tom—Hamamah's original American sucker—reported the results.

"Nobody home," he said. "No clues that appear to be worth anything."

"Then it all depends on this fellow," the big man said. He slapped Hamamah unexpectedly.

Hamamah, who had regained consciousness, and was faking continued stupor, gave himself away by dodging as the blow approached his face.

Monk said, "Let's see what this cookie has in his pockets," and proceeded to strip every stitch of clothes off Hamamah and tear them to rags. Hamamah's pocket change, a roll of about fifty thousand piastres, went into Monk's pocket with the remark that, "The local Community Chest can probably use this."

"You are thieves!" Hamamah screamed.

Monk leaned over him ominously.

"Brother, we are more than that," Monk said.

Hamamah gaped at him. "Eh?"

"We are friends of Johnny Littlejohn," Monk said.

HAMAMAH had been fighting as best he could. Now, when he heard the name Johnny Littlejohn—he gave one violent jump, was fixed and rigid with his lips slowly peeling off his teeth. He looked like a man who was dying.

“Doc,” Long Tom said. “He’s the guy, all right.”

Ham nudged Hamamah angrily. “All right. Where is Johnny Littlejohn? Spill it.”

Hamamah’s first efforts to talk were mostly unintelligible breath-spurtings.

“I never knew anyone—that name,” he managed finally, in English.

Monk kneeled beside him. “Look, you alley rat, do you know what you’re up against?”

Hamamah licked his lips, finally shook his head.

“Ever hear of Doc Savage?” Monk asked.

Hamamah got that white, lip-peeled look of a man who was about to die. He knew, all right.

“This is Doc Savage,” Monk said, and indicated the giant who had been the cab driver. “Now, Hamamah, the thing for you to do is talk fast. Begin by telling us what became of Littlejohn.”

Hamamah said hoarsely, “*La hilah li.*”

“What’d he say?” Monk demanded. “I don’t sling this lingo so good.”

“Says he can not help the situation,” Doc Savage said.

Hamamah, trying to act innocent, asked, “Who is Littlejohn?”

Monk, glancing at Doc, asked, “Don’t you suppose he knows?”

“Probably. But he might not. So tell him. It might help him to see that we mean business.”

Monk Mayfair told the story of Johnny Littlejohn, or as much of it as they knew.

WILLIAM HARPER LITTLEJOHN, the archaeologist and geologist who was known in scientific circles all over the world, was a member of a group of five associated with Doc Savage, Monk explained.

Doc Savage and his other aids—only one of whom, Renny Renwick, the engineer, was not present in the room now—had been associated with Littlejohn for a long time. Because of the unusual profession in which all of them had been engaged, it was more than an association. It was a different kind of a group. They had come to be closer to each other than a family, one might almost say, because there was not one of them who had not saved the life or lives of the others at one time or another.

“Our profession,” Monk reminded Hamamah, “is no secret. You might call it righting wrongs and punishing evildoers who are outside the law. We do most of our work in odd corners of the earth.”

Johnny Littlejohn, the geologist, had been in Russia supervising a geological seismographic survey of oil possibilities for the Soviet. The Soviet had needed the crude oil urgently because of the war, and because of the expense and time needed to dig deep wells, they had urgently required shallow-well production. Johnny had been successful in his project. Not spectacularly successful, but the Soviet was quite satisfied, as satisfied as the Axis was disturbed.

“What I’m telling you now we got from the Soviet secret police,” Monk said.

His job in Russia completed, Johnny Littlejohn had started back to the United States via the Iran—Cairo—Dakkar—Brazil route.

“But for some reason, he stopped off here in Cairo,” Monk said grimly.

What had stopped Johnny Littlejohn in Cairo, they did not know. Doc Savage, Monk, Ham and Long Tom had been in New York at the time. The other member of their group—there were five assistants who worked with Doc—was Renny Renwick, the engineer, who was in the interior of China at the moment, and presumably knew nothing about anything that had happened, and was on a job so important he couldn't very well abandon it anyway.

Doc and the others, in New York, had become alarmed when Johnny did not appear, and did not report in. Their first thought had been that he was a victim of enemy action, improbable as that seemed, since there was no longer much enemy action in the part of the Mediterranean over which his plane would have flown. But the thing had been more mysterious than that.

Johnny had disappeared in Cairo.

Monk said, “So we got the Cairo police, the Colonial authorities, the military police organizations looking for Johnny. When all of them put together couldn't find a hair of him—we came over by plane.”

They had been in Cairo a week, Monk advised.

Because they suspected by now that something ominous had happened to Johnny, they had assumed disguises. All of them except Monk spoke Arabic to varying degrees. Doc and Long Tom handled the language fluently, while the lawyer, Ham Brooks, knew just a little.

Their prying had unearthed one fact: A Cairo gangster by the name of Hamamah had been seen frequently in the company of Johnny Littlejohn prior to Johnny's disappearance.

Hamamah's face got even whiter.

“I know no Littlejohn man,” he gasped.

Monk said, “I'll describe him. Johnny is very long and very skinny. In fact, he's skinnier than you'd think any man could be and still be in good health. And he uses big words.”

Ham said, “Johnny uses big English words, you mean.”

“Listen, he would use them in Arabic, too,” Monk said. “I've seen him with his nose in foreign-language dictionaries, digging out big words in the languages he speaks.”

Hamamah blinked. “Why the big words?”

“Some people stutter,” Monk said. “Johnny uses big words.”

“Don't know him,” said Hamamah.

Monk scratched his head. “Well, we know you're lying, of course. We have reliable reports that Johnny was seen with you almost continually before he disappeared. The presumption is that Johnny hired you for a guide.”

Hamamah looked at them uneasily. “What do you plan to do to me?”

Monk said, “Pal, we got on your trail, and we threw a scare into you. We figured when somebody, an

American tried to attack you, and you escaped, you would grab the first cab you found. We arranged for Doc to be in the neighborhood, disguised, driving a cab, figuring you'd take that one. You did. We figured you'd go to whoever you were working for, if there was such a person. You did."

"What—"

Monk leered. "What do we do to you now?"

Monk told him what they would do. Monk could look as fierce as a gorilla and tell a very convincing story. What Monk told was entirely lies, except the truth serum part. They did intend to use the truth serum. But it wouldn't blind the victim and make his teeth fall out, as Monk said it would.

When Hamamah broke, the words came out of him as if a dam had split.

### Chapter III

BEFORE Allah, on his mother's grave, by the Khaliq's beard, the following was the truth, declared Hamamah.

Johnny Littlejohn, the archaeologist and geologist, had indeed been in Cairo, and he had heard a remarkable story. A story about the ghost of a Pharaoh named Jubbah Ned.

Hamamah spoke glibly of ancient Egypt for a moment, explaining who Jubbah Ned was.

During the Eighteenth Dynasty, he said, the last of a wave of Asiatic conquest was pushed out of Egypt, and it was believed that this Pharaoh Jubbah Ned was one of the new dynasty of "liberators" immediately preceding the reign of Thutmose I, who was the first Pharaoh to carry the Egyptian arms into Syria. Either that, or Jubbah Ned was actually Thutmose II, there being some argument to that effect among archaeologists.

Ham interrupted, "Where did you get all this archaeological dope?"

Hamamah drew himself up. "I am an educated man."

"Nuts! Where'd you get it?"

"From Johnny Littlejohn," Hamamah confessed.

Anyway, continued Hamamah, whether Jubbah Ned was actually Thutmose II or not, he had been an unusual ruler. He was responsible, it was believed, for adoption of the horse and horse weapons, the Egyptians having discovered that the Syrians had such an animal as the horse, hitherto unknown in Egypt. The chariot was another adoption, and the curved scimitar. There was some argument that these changes, inventions or what-not were made by Thutmose III, known as the great conqueror, who seized the chariot secret from Hyksos, the Syrian.

There was another school of thought which considered Jubbah Ned to have been the vizier of Thutmose III, preceding Queen Hatshepsut's day, but then it was not important except to scholars.

What was important was that the tomb of Jubbah Ned had not been located on the Nile, neither at Dair al-bahri, nor at Thebes. In fact, he had not been entombed in Egypt at all, but in a "far-away land of great magic."

Johnny Littlejohn had told Hamamah that just what was meant by a "far-away land of great magic" was

problematical. Far away might not mean very much. For instance, the Queen Hatshepsut had made an expedition to the Somaliland, not a great ways as modern distances go, but it had been recorded in Egyptian history for centuries as a great feat. It undoubtedly lasted longer and was better known in the world of that day than the feat of Christopher Columbus in discovering America is in this day. So distances might not mean much.

The phrase “land of great magic” might even mean less.

Again, one couldn't be sure. Ancient Egypt, particularly through the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Dynasties possessed skills—tempering copper, mummy preservation, certain drugs—not known to any age thereafter. And even now unknown in this day of sulphur drugs and five-hundred-mile-an-hour airplanes.

Monk got impatient.

“What the heck are you leading up to?” he demanded.

Hamamah grimaced. “All I have been telling you is very important to understanding what happened.”

“Yeah? Why?”

“This Pharaoh Jubbah Ned was a mysterious figure, purported to possess great magical powers. From the nature of the reports in the hieroglyphic records about him, he was truly extraordinary. He—”

Monk jabbed Hamamah impatiently.

“All right, that's enough blabbing around,” Monk said. “What happened to Johnny Littlejohn?”

“The ghost of this Jubbah Ned—”

Monk gave Hamamah a belt with his fist. “Talk sense, you rascal! Where is Johnny now?”

“I must first tell—”

“Do you know where Johnny is?”

“Yes.”

“Where?” Monk yelled. “Where?”

“The Sunhara have him. The ghost of Pharaoh Jubbah—”

Monk said violently, “That ghost stuff is beginning to gripe me!” and gave Hamamah a wallop alongside the head.

Hamamah howled in pained rage.

But Ham's howl was much the larger and more astonished.

HAM'S yell—a bark of rage and pain—was totally unexpected. Ham was standing behind the group, well clear of the others, watching proceedings. He jumped as he bellowed, and snapped the fingers of his left hand violently.

“What's the matter, you overdressed shyster?” Monk demanded.

“Something bit me,” Ham said.

Hamamah was staring with eyes as wide as they possibly could get, most of the whites showing, his mouth a gaping split of horror.

Doc Savage happened to be looking at Hamamah, puzzled by the utter horror on the Arab's face, when a small damp yellow spot appeared on Hamamah's forehead.

The coming of the yellow spot was utterly mysterious. It appeared, with no immediately apparent explanation, on Hamamah's forehead, halfway between his eyebrows and hairline, but a little to the left of the middle of his forehead. It was as yellow as paint, somewhat the size of a silver five-piaster piece, or roughly the size of an American quarter-dollar. It was not exactly round.

Hamamah seemed to feel something on his forehead. He put up a hand, felt, brought it away, stared at the yellow stain on his fingers. He had smeared the mark on his forehead.

He screamed. His shriek put to shame any howling that had been done hitherto.

Ham was jumping around, snapping his fingers.

“It burned me!” he gasped. “Something burned me!”

He started the unconscious gesture a man makes of bringing his scorched fingers to his mouth.

Doc said, “No!” then jumped and kept Ham's hand away from his face.

For a moment, there was silence in the room. For ten seconds, or twenty. It seemed longer. It seemed a minute, or minutes. They could hear each other breathing, and nobody was breathing normally for one reason or another. It was not light enough in the room to see their faces, although it was not dark either. The one window opened on a court.

Ham broke the silence, saying, “Something stung the devil out of me, I tell you!”

And Hamamah yelled out: “The Pharaoh's ghost!”

Monk stared at him, suddenly pointed at the Arab's forehead, demanding, “Where did that yellow come from?”

“The Pharaoh Jubbah Ned—”

“Nuts!” Monk yelled angrily. “Cut out this stuff about Pharaohs! All the Pharaohs died four thousand years ago or so. So stop—”

He was interrupted by the dying of Hamamah.

THE dying of Hamamah was noisy. It would have been hard to imagine a noisier death, and likewise one with more mystery and implausibility. Nothing about it was believable except the noise, and the undeniable horror, terror and pain the man underwent.

Hamamah flailed his arms in front of his face along with his shrieking, and fought and clawed and stumbled backward trying to escape. He seemed to go blind, and lose his direction sense, because he plunged to the side and crashed headlong into a wall. That silenced him—he was stunned—and he flopped on the floor, where he lay making mewling sounds and pushing nothing away from his face with

both hands.

The whole performance was uncanny.

When the significance of it had time to soak in, it became hair-raising. There was something horrible about the Arab's expression.

“He's dying!” Monk gasped.

“Keep back!” Doc said.

Monk evidently didn't hear Doc's warning, or it didn't penetrate, because he jumped forward and started to reach for Hamamah.

“Oh!” Monk jerked his hand back. “Oh, my God!”

He went around and around, nursing the hand that hurt horribly—it seemed more of a hurting than a stinging—from something that he seemed to have touched where nothing was.

Hamamah by now had both arms wrapped over his mouth, and was having a series of most unpleasant convulsions in which he flopped like a fish.

Monk kept jerking his hand about, staring at it, staring at Hamamah.

“What's going on here?” he gasped.

Long Tom shouted, “Monk, what happened to your hand?”

“I don't know. Something made it hurt like anything!”

“Did you touch something?”

“I don't know.”

Long Tom picked up a chair. He began moving around the room, poking suspiciously at the air.

And Hamamah died. With rattling violence.

AGAIN there was stillness in the room. Long Tom poked around for a bit longer, then stopped and stood there holding the chair foolishly. Monk and Ham were silent. Doc Savage was motionless, grim.

The crazy improbability of what had happened held them speechless. Probably all of them had the same chilly sensations around the spine. There seemed to be no explanation to the thing because there was nothing about it that made reasonable sense.

The silence lasted quite a while, thirty seconds probably, and when Doc Savage broke it by speaking, everyone jumped as if a firecracker had let go.

“Monk, Ham, Long Tom—go through the house,” Doc said.

“What do we look for?” Long Tom asked.

“Anything.”

There was only one door to the room. Monk and Ham and Long Tom went out through it. Doc closed the door behind them.

“Doc!” Monk called back through the closed door. “What you going to do?”

“Stay in here. You fellows search the place.”

“You think there's something in there with you?” Monk demanded.

Doc said, “Search the house. Do not worry about me.”

“Okay.”

“And another thing—do not come after me if you find anything. Handle it yourself.”

Monk said, “Right.”

He looked at Ham and Long Tom as they began searching the house. There was no talk of separating. They kept together.

“Monk,” Long Tom said. “Your hand—what do you think you touched?”

“I couldn't swear I touched anything.”

“But you yelled—”

“I know. I just reached out, and suddenly my hand hurt like the devil, and I pulled it back.”

Long Tom grunted. He turned to Ham Brooks, the lawyer. “What about you, Ham?”

“Same thing, almost.”

“But you said your hand stung, not hurt.”

“Well, I don't know what the difference would be. If your hand stings, it hurts.”

Long Tom said patiently, “There is a difference in hurting. There is the kind of a hurt a blow would give—an impact and a tingling or aching. Then there would be a pinching hurt, or stabbing pain. And a shock of the electric kind. Then there would be—”

Ham shook his head.

“I couldn't tell you just how this felt,” he said. “I don't know. I was so startled that I didn't notice, except that it was a hurting.”

“You fellows notice that yellow spot on Hamamah's forehead?” Long Tom asked.

“I saw it. It was paint, or anyway liquid. He rubbed some off on his fingers,” Ham said.

“But where did it come from?” Monk demanded.

They poked through rooms in silence for a while. Nobody had a satisfactory answer.

“Didn't anyone *see* anything?” Monk growled. “How the blazes could a thing like that happen?”

Ham had been passing a window. He jumped back suddenly, stood staring.

“Come here,” Ham said.

They crowded beside Ham and stared down into a narrow hot street which was as deserted as a street could be. Ham muttered, “The gap between those two houses. Watch it.” They watched for a while.

It was Long Tom who said, “Yeah, I see it. What’s he using, a pocket mirror?”

“I think so,” Ham said. “Anyway, he’s looking over this place, and I think that makes it worth investigating.”

“You see who it was?”

“No,” Ham said. “I just got the mirror flash, and a part of an arm.”

Before they left the house, they called to Doc Savage, who was still in the locked room.

“You need us, Doc?” Monk demanded.

“No.”

“We got somebody spotted across the street. Okay to go take a look into that?”

“Go ahead.”

Ham was puzzled, and he lingered behind to call through the locked door, “Doc, what the devil are you expecting to accomplish, staying locked up in there with the dead man?”

The bronze man did not answer that directly.

He said, “Go on and see who is watching from across the street.”

## Chapter IV

THE pocket mirror was one of those celluloid-backed atrocities which used to be made in Japan and peddled in all the dime stores.

The man had reached out and propped it up with a small stone at just the right angle to show the house across the street. The man was lying flat on his stomach and watching the mirror. He was very scared.

He was a slick-haired young man. But he was more than slick-haired—there was quality about him, the kind of smoothness and genteel good looks that shows quality and expense. Saying merely that he was a slick-haired young man would be like calling a fourteen-dollar cravat a necktie. He was somewhere in twenty-to-thirty, wore a dark blue pinstripe suit, and his light tan hat—about the same hue of tan as a piece of chamois—was spotless.

“Apparently,” he said, “we got out without being seen.”

The girl said, “Joe, we’re silly to be staying in the neighborhood, aren’t we?” Her voice was crawling with fright.

“I can’t make up my mind about that,” Joe said. “You know, I think I recognized—or at least there was something familiar—about those men who went in the house with Hamamah.”

“You’re always recognizing someone,” the girl said. “Usually, though, they wear skirts.” Her voice had a

whistling-past-a-graveyard tightness.

She was a brown-eyed, brown haired girl in man-tailored gray slacks and a gray sweater that fitted like a coat of suntan. She was carrying a long slate-white coat and a hat.

“Do—do you see anyone yet?” she asked anxiously.

“Not yet. I thought I saw movement at a window, is all.”

“Joe, let's not stay here. Please!”

Joe shook his head. “Wait. Avis, did you get a good look at those fellows—the ones with Hamamah? I mean the big one with Hamamah, and the other three who came in later?”

“I—I saw them.”

“Did you recognize them?”

She shook her head. Her face was pale, and her hands kept loosening and tightening.

Joe said, “Ever hear of a man named Doc Savage?”

She shook her head again.

Joe said, “Your education has been neglected. This Doc Savage is an unusual fellow, most unusual. He headquarters in America, in New York City. He is reported to be one of the most skilled contemporary surgeons. But you wouldn't call that his profession. His profession is other people's troubles. In other words, he frequently turns up in things like this.”

“Why—wasn't—” The girl's eyes got round.

“That's right. The archaeologist, William Harper Littlejohn, was one of Savage's associates.”

“You think one of the men with Hamamah was Doc Savage?” she demanded.

“I've got a hunch the one with Hamamah was Doc Savage himself, and the other three his aids.”

“But that evil-looking fellow with Hamamah—”

“Savage could be wearing a disguise.”

The girl thought about it for a while. “I think we had better be getting out of here.”

Joe nodded. “I think you're right. I wanted to stick around here and make sure it was Savage, but maybe we had better get out now.” Terror was riding his voice, too.

MONK MAYFAIR, Ham Brooks and Long Tom Roberts followed the boy and girl across about half of Cairo. The route took the Rue Neuve until it became Muski Street and finally emptied into the street railway center on Place Atabeh, from there to the Ezbekia Gardens, the center of the foreign district, at last entering a rather native-looking house in the new part of the city.

The boy and girl evidently did not live at the house, for they knocked for admittance.

Monk said, “I'll take the back of the house, and get inside if I can. Give me fifteen minutes, and if you

don't hear a peep out of me, come in and give me a decent burial.”

“How is your hand, the one that got hurt in such a damned funny way?” Long Tom demanded.

Monk showed them the hand. It was red, as if it had been lightly scalded or run through a flame, except that the reddish hair on the hand was not singed.

“It don't feel too bad,” he said.

“Fifteen minutes,” Ham said. “You want a native funeral? I understand they just throw you out and let the dogs and jackals eat your corpse.”

“Taint funny,” Monk muttered.

Ham and Long Tom watched Monk scuttle up a street, making an incongruous figure in his native burnoose.

“Damn!” Long Tom exploded a few moments after Monk disappeared.

“What happened? What's wrong?”

“Why the devil did we let Monk go in there?” Long Tom demanded. “He's the only one of us who can't palaver Arabic.”

Ham grinned wryly. “Yeah, that's right. He outfoxed us, didn't he. Knew we'd leave him standing here in the street if we thought of that.”

MONK reached the rear of the house. He was losing no time, because he was afraid Ham and Long Tom would remember he couldn't speak Arabic, and would want to cancel his venture into the house. Monk liked the idea of exploring the place. He liked excitement.

The house, like nine of every ten others in Cairo, was built around a square court. It was large, the lower story constructed from the conventional material, a soft stone which was quarried in the adjacent hills. The upper story was of painted brick, another common method of construction.

Monk decided to lose no time, and he leaped, got hold of a ledge, hand-walked along it to a balcony, climbed on that, went on up, and into a second-story window of stained glass.

The room in which he found himself looked like a harem interior, which was possibly what it had once been. It was not the main room—Monk knew that it was the custom in these homes to pave the main apartment with marble.

He sidled over for a look down into the court. It was typical. A fountain, quite an elaborate thing, squirting thin streams of water. And above that a great ornate, decorative lantern suspended. To the left, the recessed niche containing the typically Arabian seat, the *divan*, which had given its name to similar pieces of furniture the world over.

The boy and the girl and a fat dark-skinned, hook-nosed man came into the court while Monk was looking down into it.

There was a metal table and metal chairs under a circular candy-striped canopy. They sat there.

The dark-skinned man had brought along a tray with tall drinks. He was a smooth-looking fellow, not

especially evil of face. Thirty-five would probably catch his age.

Monk kept his head down and listened.

*“Ya anta!”*

The dark man lifted a glass. He added in English, “A drink will make you feel better. This stuff would pacify a gorilla.”

“Thanks, Hotah,” said Joe. “My nerves are acting like apes.”

The girl drank. “Whew! Kill a gorilla, didn't you mean!” she gasped.

Hotah, the dark-skinned and hook-nosed man, chuckled. They sat there silently. Hotah made moist rings on the table. He chuckled again.

“Will you stop laughing!” Joe said wildly. “It isn't funny.”

Hotah grimaced. “I'm sorry. That's a nervous habit—that chuckling—when I'm very scared.”

They were speaking English, and evidently the acoustics were good from the court, because Monk could hear most of it.

Hotah said, “So Hamamah is dead?”

“Yes.”

“The same way as the others?”

“Yes. The Pharaoh's spirit.”

“Do you actually believe there's such a thing?” Hotah asked.

“I—I don't know.”

“Did you actually see it happen?”

“Not actually. This man, the man I believe is Doc Savage come from New York to try to find his friend Littlejohn, had entered with Hamamah. The houseboy was killed accidentally. Three more men, three more of Savage's aids, came into the house. Then I heard Hamamah screaming, and heard those men talking. I didn't actually see anything. I just heard.”

Hotah twirled his glass nervously. “You think the men were really Doc Savage and three of his crew from New York?”

“Yes.”

“Well, that could be,” Hotah said slowly. “That fellow Littlejohn was a Savage aid. Savage would be getting curious about him by this time.”

They sat there in silence. Monk, watching them, concluded he had never seen three people who were more knotted up with tension and fright.

Joe leaned forward. “Hotah, have you ever thought that you might be killed?”

Monk happened to be looking down at them at that point, and he saw the yellow spot—it was more of a splash this time—appear on Hotah's face. It was on his cheek, not his forehead.

The girl screamed.

Hotah put a hand to his cheek, brought it away, stared at it. His expression got sick and wild.

He struck at Joe, missed.

“Damn you—the thing followed you here!” he screamed.

“Run!” Joe yelled. “Get away from it!”

Hotah heaved up wildly, and raced across the court to a door. The door was locked. He pounced on it. “Who fastened this?” he screamed. Then he made for another door, found that locked.

Only three doors gave into the court, and he tried the third one, which was back under an overhanging balcony where the light was not too good, and which was, incidentally, out of sight from where Monk stood.

When Hotah began wailing in agony, Monk disregarded caution and leaned far out of the window to see.

HOTAH seemed to be down. He was threshing about on the flagstones, fighting with his arms and feet against, as far as Monk could tell, nothing at all. It was gloomy under the balcony, not dark, but murkier than the bright court.

Monk was left with one vague impression—the idea that he saw a shadowy, nebulous figure—shapeless mass was a better description than figure—embroiled with Hotah. But he wasn't sure.

Hotah's struggles became more aimless, weaker.

Monk frowned at the window opening, decided he could get through, and did so. He landed in the courtyard with a slam of feet and a windy grunt.

The girl jumped and cried out.

Joe started a convulsive grab for a hip pocket. Monk moved with short-legged haste, got hold of Joe's hand while it was still in his hip pocket. They grunted and wrestled around a while, and in the end Monk had Joe's hip pocket and a gun which was tangled in the cloth.

When Joe tried to jump away, Monk took him around the neck, wrestler fashion.

The girl dug around in her slate-white coat and brought out a remarkably big automatic for a girl to be carrying.

Joe started some commando stuff on Monk's feet and ankles and stomach.

Monk said, “Boy, I'm trying not to hurt you!” and tightened his neck-hold. Joe's tongue stuck out and he gurgled.

The girl pointed her gun at Monk and said, “Let him go!”

The fear that had been in her voice earlier had grown and so filled her with tightness that what she said was a hoarse whisper.

Monk twisted around, keeping Joe between himself and the girl's gun as best he could. But Monk was

acutely aware that various parts of him, and quite considerable parts too, stuck out around Joe. Joe was too slender.

“Take it easy, babe,” Monk said earnestly. “Find out who's your friend before you shoot off that thing.”

The girl was undecided, apparently.

Monk raised his voice. “Ham, Long Tom! Get in here and help me!”

HOTAH stopped struggling and lay in a shape which no man with life left in him would occupy.

Ham and Long Tom banged on the front door, which was locked. They tried to break in, had no luck, finally had to climb into the house the way Monk had come. Monk shouted directions.

While they were getting in, Monk also squeezed and shook Joe until the young man became meek. Then Monk took a knife from Joe. The knife had a handle ornate with gold, ivory and two red jewels.

Joe's pistol, which Monk had obtained earlier when he tore the hip pocket out of Joe's pants, was also covered with gold, ivory and jewel-work.

Ham and Long Tom dropped from the second-story window into the court.

“See what killed him!” Monk indicated Hotah. “That is, if he's dead.”

“When did he die?” Ham demanded.

“Just now. Right in front of my eyes.”

“Well, you dope, didn't you see what killed him?”

“No, and it's not funny,” Monk growled. “Is he dead?”

Long Tom approached Hotah's body gingerly, watching it closely, but not touching it. “He's dead, all right,” he said. “I'm afraid to touch him. The same thing happened to him that happened to Hamamah, didn't it?”

“The same thing,” Monk agreed. “Try all the doors leading into the court, will you.”

Ham tried the doors, all three of them. And all three were locked—from the other side.

The girl cried, “But when we came into the courtyard, we didn't lock the doors!”

“They're locked now,” Ham said.

The dapper, dark-haired boy, Joe, sat on the court flagstones feeling of his ribs and the other parts Monk had squeezed.

He pointed suddenly—at the door behind Hotah's body—and said, “What do you mean? That door's open!”

“Blazes!” Ham yelled.

He dashed to the door. It was undeniably open now. “I tell you it was locked when I just tried it!” he shouted.

Monk was excited.

“Stand there and jabber all day!” he bellowed. “Why don't you guys search the house!”

Ham and Long Tom searched the house. The first time they did it cautiously. Then they went over it again with haste and indignation. There was no one.

They came back and found Monk staring at the body.

“It's gone,” Monk said foolishly.

“What is? What're you talking about?” Ham demanded.

“There was one of those yellow spots on him when he started dying,” Monk explained. “Now it's gone.”

## Chapter V

THE slick dark boy, Joe, had recovered his breath and some self-possession. He got up and dusted himself off. He told Monk, “Be careful of my pistol, please. It has a hair-trigger.”

Monk eyed the gun. “This genuine gold?”

“Of course,” Joe said. “And the red stones are rubies, not garnets.”

When Monk didn't seem impressed, Joe added, “The weapon is worth about ten thousand dollars.”

Monk hefted the inlaid, jeweled dagger. “These sparklers phony?”

Joe said indignantly, “That knife is an antique piece. It was given my great-great-great grandfather, the Prince of Calabria, by Joseph Bonaparte. To our family, it is priceless. To a dealer, it would be worth easily twenty thousand or more American dollars.”

Ham, listening to this, rubbed his jaw thoughtfully. “Would your family name be Shiraz?” he asked.

Joe bowed.

“Shiraz, yes. I am Count Carducci Capuana Giampietro Leopardi Josephini Marini Shiraz.”

Monk asked Ham, “You know this slick-hair?”

“He belongs to one of the most influential families in Italy,” Ham said. “If you read anything but comic strips, you would know that.”

“If you're an Italian Count, what are you doing in Cairo?” Monk asked.

“Oh, Mussolini chased me out years ago. So I live in Cairo, and dream, and suffer for Italy.”

Monk indicated the girl. “This the countess?”

“I wish she were!” Joe said enthusiastically. “It is an idea I have been trying to sell her for some time.”

Monk grunted. He was pleased to discover the girl was not the Countess, or at least whatever she would be if married to this smooth young guy. “Mind telling us who you are?” he asked the girl.

She didn't mind.

"I am Avis Wilson," she said.

"That sounds American."

"I wish it were," she said. "As a matter of fact, it is Irish. My father was Irish, but he became an Egyptian citizen, so I am Egyptian."

Monk said, "We'd like to know a little more than that."

Ham said, "Telephone number and such, he means."

"Shut up," Monk said to Ham. To the girl, Monk said, "Don't mind this overdressed lawyer. And don't trust him. He has a wife and thirteen—thirteen, believe it or not—semi-bright children back home in New York."

Ham turned purple. The wife-and-thirteen-halfwit-offspring story was a lie he generally told about Monk when they encountered an interesting girl.

Avis Wilson said, "My father once operated a large rug business in Cairo. He and my mother were killed in a plane crash long before the war. They left me enough money to put me among what I suppose you would truthfully call the worthless rich. I have enough money to stay in that class about six months longer, after which I'd be looking for someone who needs a fairly poor stenographer."

Joe said gloomily, "Don't talk that way, Avis! You are going to marry me, you know."

MONK introduced himself and Ham and Long Tom, explaining that he was a chemist, Long Tom was an electrical expert, and Ham was a lawyer. He said that they were associated with Doc Savage, and added that there was another member of Doc Savage's group, a man named William Harper Littlejohn.

"Johnny disappeared in Cairo, and we're over here investigating," he said. "We found out Johnny had been seen with a rascal by the name of Hamamah before he disappeared and we grabbed Hamamah for questioning. He was killed—you know how. We found you hanging around the place, and trailed you here."

Monk paused and eyed them grimly.

"Now give us reasons for thinking you and Joe didn't kill Hamamah, then come here and kill Hotah, if that's his name," he added.

"You think we killed Hamamah and Hotah?" Joe blurted.

"Why not?"

Joe was disturbed.

"Good God! That's ridiculous!" he gasped.

Monk said, "Anyway it gives you something to deny. Let's hear you talk."

Joe hesitated. "Would you—ah—I would like to confer with Miss Wilson."

"Go ahead. What's holding you?"

“Privately, I mean.”

Monk glanced at Ham and Long Tom, and they nodded. Long Tom asked, “Is over there by the fountain private enough?”

“Sure,” said Joe. “Come here, Avis.”

He and the girl stood by the fountain, and talked earnestly. They kept their voices low, and the swishing of the fountain helped to keep their conversation a mystery. In the end they nodded their heads at each other.

Joe came back with the girl saying, “Miss Wilson agrees with me that you men are our friends, and that we should tell you all we know.”

“I couldn't have thought of a better idea myself,” Monk assured him.

Ham said, “Wait a minute. Is there a telephone in that house where Hamamah was killed?”

No one knew.

Ham went to the telephone to find out. He came back with a long face and considerable alarm.

“There's a phone,” he reported. “But Doc didn't answer it. I wonder if anything has happened to him?”

Monk said grimly, “Let's get this story, then find out.”

FEAR, according to Joe and Avis Wilson, was behind it. They had noticed the fear in their friend, Hotah, several days ago.

Hotah had been a close family friend of the Wilsons for a long time. In fact, he had purchased the rug business owned by Avis Wilson's father after the latter had died with his wife in the plane accident. Relations had always been amicable, and Hotah, Count Joe and Avis Wilson often played golf, tennis, or night-clubbed together.

From the very first, it was unmistakable that Hotah was frightened to the point of being frantic. When Joe and Avis first noticed this, they had questioned Hotah, and received unsatisfactory answers. But later—yesterday—Hotah had talked frankly with them.

Hamamah, one of the most notorious rascals in Cairo, had approached Hotah with the information that the ghost of Pharaoh Jubbah Ned was going to kill Hotah unless he, Hotah, paid a considerable sum of money to Hamamah.

It was that simple.

Hotah had refused. But he had been hearing rumors about a mysterious Pharaoh's ghost, or curse, which was killing men in Cairo. Investigating this story, Hotah found that it was true, that several such deaths had occurred. Hotah, by nature an easy-going fellow, had grown terrified.

“Wait a minute,” Monk interrupted. “Is that a fact—about a series of killings by this thing?”

“Yes.” Joe nodded vehemently. “The thing is growing into a terror all over the city. The police can tell you that.”

“It sounds goofy.”

“What is goofy? I do not understand the word.”

“Fantastic,” Monk said. “What’s the rest of your story?”

Joe explained that he and Miss Wilson had decided to help their friend, Hotah. So they had been trailing the rascal, Hamamah, in hopes of learning something which they could turn over to the police, securing Hamamah’s arrest.

They had simply been following Hamamah when Doc Savage finally collared him. That accounted for their presence on the scene when Hamamah was killed.

Monk scratched his nubbin-shaped head. “Hey, you haven’t told us anything about this mystery.”

“All we know, we’ve told you,” Joe said.

Avis Wilson nodded confirmation.

Monk muttered, “Hamamah went to that house to see somebody he called Jaffa. Do you know this Jaffa?”

They had never heard of any Jaffa.

Ham blurted, “Wait a minute! The house where Hamamah was killed, and where we left Doc Savage, is listed in the city directory as the home of a man named Ali Ghurab.”

Joe grunted explosively. “Ali Ghurab! That is the houseboy who was accidentally stabbed to death when he met you fellows!”

Suspicion filled Monk’s eye. “How’d you know that?”

“Didn’t we tell you?” Joe asked. “We saw this Ali Ghurab with Hamamah earlier in the day. They had breakfast together.”

Ham waved both arms suddenly, violently.

“Talk, talk, talk—around in circles!” he snapped. “I’m getting worried about Doc. I’m going to try to call him again.”

THE telephone was a white-enameled instrument of the overdone Parisian type. He had trouble making the operator understand his, “*Suakin elf wa khamastasher.*” Then he discovered she could speak English and relieved, said, “Suakin one-o-one-five.”

He could hear her ringing. There was no answer. He gave it up.

The telephone was in an alcove off the main room of the house, the room that was floored with marble in the usual fashion. The others had remained in the court. Ham hurried to join them.

He entered the court saying, “No answer, and I think we better go see what—”

Something was wrong. The others were giving him pained, uncomfortable looks.

“What’s the matter with you?” Ham demanded.

A voice behind him said, "They're just sorry they couldn't warn you, I imagine."

Ham went up on his toes, remembered in time not to jump, and settled back to the floor. When he had his astonishment swallowed, he asked, "Can I turn around?"

There was no answer.

Watching the expressions on the faces of Monk and Long Tom and Joe and Avis Wilson, Ham got the impression that they were sure the man who was behind him was going to shoot.

## Chapter VI

THE girl, Avis Wilson, broke the silence—which was hair-raising as far as Ham was concerned—by saying uncomfortably, "This is a protector I seem to have collected."

Ham pulled his heart out of his throat, asked, "Is he going to shoot me?"

The voice behind Ham gave a great gusty laugh. "Shoot you? What with?"

Ham whirled. He saw a tall man, thirty or slightly more, with shoulders like a jeep, a big grin and rusty hair. The individual was sans gun.

"Who the devil are you?" Ham demanded, angry because he had been badly scared.

The wide young man clicked off a bow. "I am the unexpected, the startling, the wide-eyed and unpredictable, the sometimes delightful and always welcome Bondurant Fain," he said.

Ham blinked. "All that, eh?"

"Wait," the wide young man said, "until you know me better."

Ham, confused, asked Monk angrily, "Why were all of you looking so fish-faced when I came back from telephoning?"

"Our many-worded friend had just dropped in on us," Monk explained. "It somewhat surprised us."

"Dropped in," said Bondurant Fain, "is literally, concisely and extemporaneously the fact. I dropped from the second story window. To tell the truth, I followed the same means of ingress as you three gentlemen." He indicated, with a beam-shaped forefinger, Monk, Ham and Long Tom. "I was tarrying outside and saw you enter in succession, and the first thing I knew, my impetuous nature had overtaken me, and here I am."

Ham scratched his head.

"You know this talk-box?" he asked Avis Wilson.

She nodded.

"He's my watchdog," she said.

"Watchdog?"

"Self-elected."

The wide-shouldered Mr. Bondurant Fain said, "The word is not watchdog. The word is knight-errant. Other words are protector, Paladin, defender, bodyguard, etcetera."

Count Joe Shiraz said, unpleasantly, "The word is a five-letter one beginning with S and ending with K, and meaning a small black animal with a white stripe."

Bondurant Fain turned to face the Italian nobleman.

"Coming from a greasy four-flusher, that is flattery," he said directly and insultingly.

Joe said coldly, "I don't like you, Fain!"

Fain snorted. "So what?"

"I think," said Joe, "I'll knock your block off."

"Knocking a bubble off a glass of champagne is more your speed, isn't it?" Fain asked.

Ham said, "Cut it out, you fellows!"

They paid no attention to him.

"By Heaven!" Joe said. "I think I'll do it now!"

Fain sneered. "Better wait until you can get in an alley with that gold gun, or dirk me in the back with that ruby-crested knife."

Joe made an explosive sound and lunged. He didn't get far because Ham grabbed him. Long Tom grabbed him. Long Tom grabbed Fain. There were a few seconds with everybody trying to push everybody else around.

"Let 'em fight," Monk suggested. "I'd like to see a good fight."

Avis Wilson said, "If they fight, I don't want to see it."

She took Monk's arm. They went into another room.

THE room was tall-ceilinged, quiet, with a trace of incense odor.

Monk looked down at Avis Wilson. "Friend of yours?"

"Fain? He—yes, he is. Anyway, he has been proposing daily, or oftener, for a month."

"Wants to marry you, eh?"

"Yes."

"And so does the Count, Joe."

She nodded. "They don't like each other on account of that."

Monk, looking at her, conscious of her in the strongest way, could understand how two fellows who wanted her wouldn't like each other.

“Who is this Fain?” he asked.

“American. Chemist for an oil company. Been in the East—Egypt and Arabia, for years.”

“American, eh? How does he keep out of the Army?”

“He says it's a technicality. He applied for Turkish citizenship before the war, and the Americans won't have him because of that.”

Monk listened. It was quiet in the court, so he decided there was not going to be a fight.

Joe and Fain entered shortly. They were straightening their neckties and their coats and scowling. Ham and Long Tom followed them.

Ham said, “We had better call the police about Hotah being killed.”

Bondurant Fain said, “Wait a minute. Let me tell you something first.”

“You know something about this mystery?” Ham demanded.

“I think I do. I'm not sure. Did you know there is a scare going around about something called Pharaoh Jubbah Ned's curse. And that the curse is supposed to be killing people the way Hotah was killed. First, a yellow spot appears on their face somewhere, then they die, and the yellow spot vanishes.”

Ham said, “We knew about that.”

“Have you heard about somebody named Jaffa?” Fain asked.

“No, we—wait a minute!” Ham frowned. “Jaffa. Say, that was who Hamamah was taking Doc to see when he thought Doc was a crook.”

“That all you know?”

“Yes.”

“Then,” said Fain, “you don't know anything.”

“Eh?”

“This Jaffa is the ogre of the Near East,” Fain said. “He is a figure of mystery and terror, as I heard a fellow express it.”

Monk said, “Those are just words. Who is he? What is he? What does he do? Who does he scare?”

“Who does Hitler scare?”

“Practically anybody who knows about him. But what has that got to do—”

“Wait, that's a good answer,” Fain said quickly. “So does this Jaffa. He scares anybody who knows about him. But there's a difference. Hitler is a public figure. Jaffa is undercover.”

“What you mean, undercover?”

“He's like the devil. You hear plenty about him. You never see him.”

Monk eyed Joe and Avis Wilson, demanded, “Have *you* ever heard of this Jaffa?”

“A little,” Avis said. “Nothing definite.”

Joe grunted. “Same here.” Apparently he hated to agree with anything presented by Fain.

Monk wheeled back to Fain. “Now—where'd you learn so much?”

“I got worried about Avis and her associates,” Fain said instantly. “So I began investigating, and I found—”

“*Badate!*”

yelled Joe, using Italian for the first time. He was excited. “If you accuse me of being—“

Fain stopped him.

“I wish I could, Joe, I wish I could,” he said. “But I think your pal Hotah was connected in some way with this Jaffa. I can't prove you were, which breaks my heart.”

Joe sneered at him. “*Ascolate!*” he jeered. “A bigger liar than Mussolini.”

Fain grinned at Monk. Monk rather liked the American, possibly because he somewhat shared Fain's obvious desire to take a poke at the smooth Joe.

“Would you gentlemen like me to show you a fellow whom I am sure knows who this Jaffa is?” he asked.

Monk jumped.

“That's silly question number one for the year,” he said.

THE spot was the bank of the Nile upstream from the Kasren-Nil, the new bridge—new ten years ago, anyway—over the Nile to Gezira island, the island where stood the Ismail's palace that had long ago been turned into a hotel.

It was low ground. There was some brush, some dilapidated buildings. The rest of the city, with its ancient walls, lofty towers, gardens, squares, palaces and mosques with delicately carved domes and elaborate tracery, was behind them. Facing them was the broad river spotted with islands, the pyramids faintly distinguishable on the southern horizon.

“The houseboat,” said Bondurant Fain. “The guy may be aboard. I don't know.”

“What's he look like?” Ham asked.

“Oh, little old walking skeleton. Big scar on his forehead, no teeth. Looks like a stinker. Has the beggars in the city organized.”

“Should be easily recognized.”

“Yes, if he doesn't recognize us first. That might be bad. We better sneak up on the boat. And we should leave someone ashore on lookout.”

“Not me,” Monk said immediately. “Nobody leaves me ashore on lookout.”

“You missing link!” Ham said. “You got in on the excitement at Hotah's house, and we waited outside.

So you're tail-end Charlie this time.”

Monk put up a fervent argument, but they left him on shore. They left him crouched in the rubble of an old stone building, the roof and one wall of which had fallen in.

Ham and Long Tom, Fain and Joe, approached the houseboat. Avis Wilson went with them, keeping a little back and under better cover.

The houseboat was an old gull of a thing which probably wouldn't have floated on any river but the Nile. She hung nose-down, as if she was contemplating sinking to the bottom. She had a mast and a yard for a lateen sail that hung to the spar like a dirty shirt.

They approached and boarded the boat with all the cautious ceremony of a Marine crawling into a Jap sniper's nest.

For their pains, they found nothing.

“Not home,” Fain said. “Well, we'll wait on shore. Where Mayfair is waiting is a good place. We can watch from there.”

They went back.

They didn't find Monk. They did find signs of violence. There was a sleeve torn off Monk's coat, scratches and scrapes on the ground, a scattering of wet red drops.

“Somebody grabbed Monk!” Ham breathed, so shocked his words were hardly audible.

Avis Wilson discovered the note. “This wasn't here before,” she said.

The note, hastily done with pencil on a flat rock, said:

*Wait here. We have something to discuss. Your friend isn't dead—yet.*

## Chapter VII

DOC SAVAGE after more than two hours in the house where Hamamah and the houseboy had died, was beginning to wonder about two things. First, was he wasting his time here? Second, where had Monk, Long Tom and Ham gone?

Quite unexpectedly, and belatedly, he remembered some small buzzing noises he'd heard earlier. At the time, he had ignored the sounds, thinking they were made by some kind of insect.

The telephone? Why hadn't he thought of that before. He investigated, and found folded cardboard jammed down between the clapper and the bell of the telephone.

Doc went back to the body of Hamamah. He had made two previous inspections, but he was still interested, because he had not decided how the man had been killed. He knew what had killed the fellow, in a general way.

You can know that a man died of being crushed, without knowing what crushed him; or you can know that a man was cut to death, without being sure what cut him.

That was about as far as Doc had gotten.

He knew the man had been burned to death.

How? That wasn't as simple.

He had gone over the house closely, with care. He could read Arabic, complex as it was with its twenty-eight alphabet letters, written, like most Eastern languages, from the right to the left, and with each letter assuming a different form according to its position at the end, middle or beginning of the word.

The house was leased by one Ali Ghurab, Doc found from rent receipts. And Ali Ghurab, he found without much trouble, was the houseboy who had accidentally fallen against his knife.

Hamamah had said he was coming here to meet someone called Jaffa.

There was no sign anywhere, not the least trace, of anyone else living, or having lived recently, in the house. Which didn't mean Ali Ghurab hadn't rented it as a blind headquarters for someone.

Doc Savage turned these thoughts over as he looked at Hamamah's body. Doc had a defeated feeling. From the very first, when they came to Cairo, they'd had trouble finding a trace of William Harper Littlejohn, the archaeologist. By chance alone they had discovered that Johnny had been seen with Hamamah.

It was an ominous sign that violence had hit so suddenly after they had seized Hamamah. It indicated they were looking into something dangerous.

Hamamah had been their one known chance of getting a line on Johnny Littlejohn's whereabouts, or his fate, if something unpleasant had happened to him—which they suspected. Hamamah dead, that source of information was closed. Doc had gone to elaborate lengths to deceive and trail Hamamah, and to have the thing end in such sudden disaster was discouraging.

Doc moved uncomfortably, feeling the mystery about him as if it was something that tied him hand and foot. He grew more depressed.

He still wore the disguise. He didn't like it, and now he removed it. The removal took some time, because the almost black skin and the scar tissue were not easily removed. He found, fortunately, some cold cream—evidently the slightly sissified Ali Ghurab had used this—and it helped take off the stuff.

The house had a steam bath of the type called *hammam*, heated by a *bormah*, or furnace below. It was quite elaborate for a private residence. It was one of those baths the old-time Egyptian enters left-foot-first, with a request that Allah deliver him from unpleasantness. There was a *gilla*, a dressing alcove, and Doc hung his clothes there, and climbed into the tanks of water.

The hot-room of the bath was hot—evidently Ali Ghurab had planned a bath, and had fired up. There was plenty of *halfa* grass wash-cloth substitute. Doc finished bathing, wished there was an attendant to give him a *kibs*, a massage with plenty of *tartak*, or joint cracking.

He came out feeling much better.

Came out to find himself confronted by a man in civilian clothes and four men in police uniforms.

“With two murdered men in the house, you take a bath,” said the man in civilian clothes. “Even for a murderer, you are a cold customer.”

A man stepped forward with handcuffs.

THEN the civilian recognized Doc Savage.

“Wait!” he barked at the man with the cuffs. “This man is the American, Savage.” He frowned at Doc intently. “I hope I’m right about that. Am I?”

There was something familiar about the civilian. Doc groped for the reason, finally got it—a group picture he’d seen of the Cairo police officials.

“You are Martin-Burnwood, and if you were in New York, we would call you the chief of the detective bureau,” Doc said.

Martin-Burnwood admitted that. He introduced the four men with him, efficient-looking Egyptians, by last name only. They were police detectives.

“We got a telephone call. Anonymous. Informed us that Hamamah and Ali Ghurab had been murdered in Ali Ghurab’s house, and we might find the murderer on the premises,” Martin Burnwood said.

Doc said he was not surprised. It was a logical move for anyone who wanted to embarrass him. Then Doc went ahead and explained the situation. He left out nothing, because there was no reason to leave out anything. From the non-return of William Harper Littlejohn to New York to the outrightly unbelievable death of Hamamah, he omitted nothing.

On the death of Hamamah, he went into detail.

The Cairo police official was thoughtful. “I understand you are a physician and surgeon by profession.”

“Yes.”

“All right, what would be your professional opinion of the cause of death?”

“Death from burns,” Doc said.

Martin-Burnwood nodded. “One of our experts called it scald, in the case of a previous victim.”

“There is no clinical distinction,” Doc said. “The burns range from first to fourth degree, with the most of the area being second-degree, as indicated by the formation of vesicles over the area. There are no fifth and sixth degree burn areas, of course. A sixth-degree burn is one where the bones are charred. There may be other toxic effects, but it would take laboratory analysis of the tissue to be sure.”

“Exactly where,” asked Martin-Burnwood, “are the burns?”

“Face, nostrils, sinus passages, mouth, throat and lungs, and the hands to a lesser degree.”

“No trace of a yellow spot now?”

“None.”

“And there was no trace of anything visible around or on the man when he was dying?”

“I would not say definitely. The light was not good.”

“Did you see anything?”

“No. But the light was not good.”

“You know,” Martin-Burnwood said, “you are the first actual dependable eyewitness to one of these mysterious deaths.”

“Have many died that way?”

“Three we know about. A dozen, if we would believe rumors, of a reliable sort. And a couple of hundred, if one listened to the wild talk.” He paused and frowned. “My guess would be there have been more than two dozen.”

“But why have you personal knowledge of only three?”

Martin-Burnwood grimaced.

“The misfortune,” he said, “seems to happen only to crooks, the type whose friends and relatives don't run to us.”

“Just how much do you know about it?”

“Very little,” the Cairo police official confessed. “They're calling the thing the curse of an old Pharaoh named Jubbah Ned, of course.”

“What about Jubbah Ned?”

“We don't know a thing definitely. The grapevine has it that the tomb of this Pharaoh Ned was opened and rifled a few months ago. And the curse is getting those involved.”

“Was Hamamah involved?”

“We don't know. We don't even know if there was a tomb. But Hamamah would have rifled his mother's tomb, so a Pharaoh wouldn't stop him.”

Doc said thoughtfully, “Ever since I can remember, there have been stories going around of men opening a Pharaoh's tomb and being cursed for it.”

“The tomb of Tut-ank-Ahmen, for instance? Strange accident and death met almost everyone engaged in opening that one.”

“All tommyrot.”

Martin-Burnwood looked strange for a moment. He eyed his hands thoughtfully, as if trying to make up his mind about something. And finally he looked up.

“I can tell you something else that's *not* tommyrot,” he said.

“What?”

“Come on. I'll let you listen-in on the conference. I think your reputation will get you in.”

THE reputation barely did, at that. It was astonishing to see all the brass and braid at the conference. Doc Savage, who looked like a bum, became acutely conscious of looking like a bum when he saw and recognized some of the men present.

There was another tip-off. This was big. Four nations were represented. American, Russian, English and

Chinese. These were just the mainsprings. There were official representatives of Turkey, Greece, and various governments in exile, but only countries in the Mediterranean section.

A man named Culver from the State Department, Doc knew, and a Colonel Chapman, and a General Farrar. There was an English officer named Richleister, whom he had met in London two years ago.

Martin-Burnwood, the Cairo police official, made them a little speech.

“Mr. Savage has just discovered—or rather, I have just discovered that Mr. Savage is in Cairo on a matter in some way connected with the thing being discussed here. So I thought it wise to have him sit in as an observer.”

After considerable hand-shaking, Doc Savage took a secluded seat. He was impressed. Whatever this was, it wasn't peanut-sized. There was enough officialdom present to arrange a Nazi surrender.

A young man began reading reports.

Listening, Doc Savage suddenly realized that he was hearing the reports of counter-espionage agents from the Russian, English, American and Chinese governments, all of whom were working under a single central office. Yes, it wasn't peanuts.

The reports were scattering. Or rather, there would be a series from one spot—Lebanon, for instance—then a whole group of reports from Albania, Greece, Italy or some other spot.

The picture that began to build up in Doc's mind was hair-raising.

The reports had to do with political trouble. Not with anything the Axis was doing, or had done—except that the Axis had caused the conditions which made it possible.

In America, there had been considerable in the newspapers about the problems the Allies were having with local governments of captured territory. Different factions squabbling for power. Rebellions. Demands for immediate freedom. These were the rumblings, but only the bigger rumblings of the story, which had reached America. Doc Savage, who had done considerable traveling, and kept in touch with conditions, knew that there was considerable more than had been printed.

Now he learned something more.

The troubles—all of them, whether in Greece or in Tunisian backcountry—were being manipulated by a single mind, a single organization.

The reports showed pretty clearly that a ring was causing most of the political trouble which was being encountered by the Allies in the Mediterranean area.

It was not Axis work.

It was the effort of somebody who was making a plain out-and-out gamble for money and power—someone who was putting his own pups in wherever he could.

Someone was going to second-rate politicians in captured territory, and in territory not yet captured but which would be soon, and saying I make you prime minister—or president, premier, king, as the case might be—and you take my orders. We'll make ourselves plenty of money.

Who was the someone? Well, everywhere his name was known. Jaffa.

But that was all they knew. Just Jaffa, the name.

It was a fabulous gamble, an unbelievable thing.

MARTIN-BURNWOOD told Doc Savage, "You see how big it is?"

"And you think these Pharaoh Jubbah Ned murders are hooked in with the other, this king-maker thing?" Doc asked.

"The truth hit me after I talked to you today—like lightning, it hit me."

"When was that?"

"You said that rascal Hamamah told you he could get you a job with Jaffa. That is the kind of a boast a small-brained scamp like Hamamah would make. Hamamah has been suspiciously rich lately, so evidently he was working for Jaffa. So it is possible the Pharaoh Jubbah Ned mystery and the Jaffa thing are related."

Doc pondered for a while. He was alarmed. He had come out to the Near East on a simple disappearance mystery, which was nerve-racking because Johnny Littlejohn was the missing man. Now it had spread, with possibly thousands of people directly affected, and indirectly—millions, maybe.

"Have you people any idea at all what became of William Harper Littlejohn?" Doc asked grimly.

"None whatever," confessed Martin-Burnwood.

## Chapter VIII

THE sun as it prepared to sink was casting a fuzzy purplish light into the ruined building on the Nile bank above the *Kasren-Nil* bridge. The pyramids to the south were already lost in dusk haze.

Ham Brooks, Long Tom Roberts, Count Joe Shiraz, Bondurant Fain, Avis Wilson—they were all waiting, and not very patiently. The note they had found where Monk had disappeared had told them to wait.

True, they didn't trust the note. They thought it might have been a ruse to delay them, so they had searched the whole neighborhood thoroughly, and futilely.

"I wonder what Doc's found out, dang it," Long Tom complained.

Ham said nothing. Strain showed in the pinch of Ham's eyes, the sick hang of his mouth. He was worried about Monk.

The relationship of Monk and Ham was peculiar, or at least spectacular. Close acquaintances of the pair could not recall either of them having spoken a civil word to the other, unless by accident. Most of their leisure time was spent quarreling and perpetrating practical jokes on each other. Sometimes the jokes stopped just a little short of mayhem and disaster. Actually, though, they were the best of friends in their peculiar fashion. Each had saved the life of the other quite a number of times in the past, and when one got into difficulty, the other worried intolerably.

So Ham was bothered.

"*Leylt-ak saidah,*"

said a hearty salesman-voice. "*Tismah li?*"

Everybody jumped violently.

The speaker came out of the surrounding shadows. He was a round young man in rich cream pongee, two gold rings on each hand, a gold watch chain, gold spectacles, and fat-lidded eyes which you at first thought twinkled; but it didn't take long to decide the eyes did not twinkle.

He repeated his greeting in English.

"Good evening," he said. "Will you allow me?"

"Allow you what?" Ham asked.

The newcomer didn't answer that. He seated himself, took out a gold cigarette case, selected a cigarette, smiled and offered the case.

Long Tom asked, "Any of you know Santa Claus?"

Avis, Joe, Fain, all shook their heads.

"What you want here?" Long Tom frowned at the jovial man.

"You have been waiting for me," the man said.

Long Tom decided he was about as jovial as a grinning corpse.

Ham indicated the note. "That?"

"Yes."

Ham came up slowly. He was going to take the man by the throat and choke him. But the fat man asked, quite casually, "Do you want your apish friend dead?" And Ham subsided reluctantly.

"What do you want?" Long Tom asked.

THE proposition was: Ham and Long Tom should approach Doc Savage with a reasonable story. The suggested story was that Monk Mayfair was on a hot trail, following the trail of William Harper Littlejohn, and had gone south through Abyssinia, and into the Tanganyika Territory, or possibly into Rhodesia. Into southern Africa, anyway.

"The idea," said the fat grinning man, "is to get Doc Savage off in South Africa investigating a wild goose."

Long Tom said contemptuously. "That's a dopey scheme. Doc wouldn't be sucked in by anything like that."

"Oh, but listen to the rest," the grinning man said.

They would get coöperation. In other words, a trail would be laid. It was all planned, and here was the plan: First, the trail would begin at Heliopolis airport, with a witness who had chartered Monk a private plane for the flight south. Then at various points—El Damer, Addis Ababa, Nairobi—there would be other witnesses to testify Monk had landed and refueled.

Ham said bitterly, “You got it all figured out, eh?”

The other smirked.

Long Tom shook his head. “Doc wouldn't be sucked in. He would have to know he was trailing Monk, and he would know it if he wasn't.”

“That is true,” said the man. “So we will leave various mementos of Mr. Mayfair here and there. We would have his handwriting on receipts, and so forth.”

A sigh ran out of Ham with a pleased rush.

“Monk is still alive?”

“Oh, assuredly. What else did you think is the price your coöperation?”

Ham said, “You better turn him loose.”

The man sneered. “Get it through your heads. Lead Doc Savage off on a wild-goose chase, and we will not kill this Monk Mayfair.”

“How do we know you've got Monk?”

The fat man shrugged. “Listen to this: 'Habeas Corpus likes pickles.' That mean anything? Mayfair said it would.”

It meant that they had Monk prisoner. Habeas Corpus was Monk's pet pig—he had left the animal in New York—and the pickles referred to a fuss Monk had had with Ham over a practical joke.

Ham said grimly, “Suppose we grab you, fat boy, and hold *you* for Monk?”

The fat man shrugged.

“I wouldn't like that. I am a small fish in this lake, and it would get you nowhere, believe me. Early in this war, you Americans got a word for such a man as me. Expendable.”

Ham, seeming to explode from a sitting position, suddenly had the fat man's arms pinned, and was searching him for a weapon.

“Wait, Ham!” Long Tom barked. “He's not lying. He's what he says.”

Ham, enraged by the danger to Monk, mauled the fat man around, and searched him thoroughly. When he had finished, empty-handed, the fat man laughed, asked, “Did you think I would be fool enough to have anything on my person?”

Ham said, “Brother, you're going to talk.”

“Sorry. I can't give you information.”

“That's what you think. You ever see a good modern truth serum tried out? It will work, believe me.”

The man looked worried. “I wouldn't like that. But it will not help you—because I know nothing.”

“Eh?”

“Do you think Jaffa is fool enough to send a man who knows any real facts to talk to you?” the fat man

asked.

It was a predicament. Ham and Long Tom leaned back against the tumbled stone. Both of them were perspiring, although it was not hot and they had not been moving about.

Bondurant Fain said quietly, "This puts you fellows in a spot, doesn't it?"

The fat man looked at Fain and Joe and Avis Wilson. His expression wasn't pleasant.

"I have something I was told to tell you, too," he said. "Will you listen to me?"

"Shoot," said Fain. "I'll bet it ain't good."

"On the contrary, very good," the fat man said. "It is information which will enable you to go on enjoying fair health. It's a piece of advice. It's this: Take a trip, the three of you. Go up the Nile for a few months. Or go over to Palestine and take it easy in one of the resorts. And forget all about this."

Fain and Joe and Avis thought that over for a while.

Fain jerked a thumb at Joe. "Me go off with this grease ball? That's an insult by itself."

Joe glared.

The fat man chuckled. "I imagine it would be all right if you went by yourself. The point is: Stop playing with this particular firecracker."

Avis Wilson snapped, "Hotah was our friend. We don't like people killing our friends, then telling us to go off and forget about it."

The fat man shrugged. "Suit yourself. I had a message to deliver to you. I delivered it."

Ham and Long Tom got up suddenly, moved out into the gathering night, out of earshot of the others, and began discussing what they should do.

"We've never doublecrossed Doc," Long Tom said grimly. "That's what this amounts to."

"Do you suppose they'll kill Monk if we don't?"

"What do you think?"

What Ham thought made him shiver.

They went back to the tumble-down building without having reached any conclusion.

The fat man smirked. "You will be doing Doc Savage a favor. Probably the little lie you tell him will keep him alive."

Ham muttered, "We need to think this over."

The fat man got up. "I'll see you later, then."

"Wait a minue! Where'll we find you when we decide?"

"I'll find you, don't worry," the fat man said.

He walked away into the night.

But he was back unexpectedly, grinning.

“Oh, yes, something else,” he said. “Your friend, William Harper Littlejohn, will be returned to you safely—if you cooperate.”

This time he went away and didn't come back.

## Chapter IX

DOC SAVAGE went to the new modernistic hotel facing the Ezbekia gardens. He and his aids had taken a suite there, and he thought there might be some word from Monk, Ham, or Long Tom. There wasn't.

He didn't like the continued silence. He got hold of the Cairo police by telephone, and had a general alarm put out for the three.

Then, not having eaten since morning, he changed, showered and went down to the hotel dining room. He asked for and received a table in a corner behind some ornamental shrubbery where he would not be recognized, then sent word to the desk where he could be found.

He was midway in a dish called *Ginainat samac* on the menu—the Arabic words meant “fish garden” and the dish turned out to be seafood and a lot of vegetables—when Ham and Long Tom came in.

They were in a hurry and looked excited.

“Where is Monk?” Doc asked.

Ham looked a little ill. He pulled out a chair, took some water, and began talking.

“Here is the story,” he said. “Outside the house where Hamamah was killed, we got on the trail of a girl and two men. We kept them in sight, although they moved around quite a lot. We had a little accident, and they recognized Long Tom and myself. They didn't recognize Monk, because they didn't see him.”

At this point, a waiter came with the information that there was a telephone call for Doc Savage at the desk. Would he take it now?

“Can this hold a minute?” Doc asked.

Ham nodded.

Doc went away.

His face warped with self-disgust, Ham looked at Long Tom and muttered, “I don't know whether I can go through with this.”

“We decided we'd have to do it to save Monk.” Long Tom didn't look happy himself.

“Yes, I guess so. But it makes me about as sick as anything I've ever done. You know, we've never doublecrossed Doc before.”

“I don't know anything else to do.”

“Me either,” Ham mumbled. “You think Doc believed what I had time to tell him?”

“Yes, I think—psst! Here he comes back.”

Doc Savage returned to the table, saying, “That was the head of the Cairo police. They are sending over special credentials which will enable us to get around, and cross the Egyptian border if necessary.” He glanced thoughtfully at Long Tom and Ham. “You fellows look rocky. What is it? What happened to Monk?”

Ham took up the story as if it were a large sack of filth.

“We overheard the two men and the girl talking, and found out that Johnny Littlejohn is down south in Rhodesia, but in some kind of trouble. We think Johnny is being held a prisoner, but we're not sure.”

Doc was suddenly tense. “Then we are on Johnny's trail?”

“Yes. These two men and the girl were scared. They had seen you, Doc, and recognized you. That was what frightened them. They had decided to leave town. That was why they were scurrying around so much—getting money and clothes together to skip. We were so busy following them we didn't have time to contact you.”

“And they left?”

“From the Heliopolis airport. About an hour ago. Monk followed them. He got hold of a plane, and followed the ship they took. We are fairly sure, from what they said, that the first stop would be El Damer, then Addis Ababa.”

Doc said, “You fellows let Monk go it alone?”

“We had to. We got in a spot. They knew Long Tom and I because they had seen us. But they didn't know Monk. And the only way we could get this plane to follow them was for Monk to walk right out past them and charter it. We were in a spot. So Monk went alone.”

Long Tom cleared his throat. “We came right away to get you.”

“Then,” Doc said, “we had better follow Monk immediately. Is that the idea?”

Ham, straining to keep the misery out of his voice, said, “That's the general idea.”

HAM and Long Tom went to their rooms, ostensibly to get their equipment together for the dash to Rhodesia. Doc Savage had stopped downstairs, saying he was going to telephone the airport and have their plane readied.

Their plane was a new two-motored stratosphere job with a pressure equipped cabin, the pair of motors packing in excess of five thousand horsepower all told. Structurally, the ship was a rather drastic venture into the flying-wing type of design. This design was not exactly an innovation. The really new thing was a gadget which a technician would call a four-stage supercharger. Most superchargers used only one stage of compression, two in a very few cases, such as the gadget on the P-51 Mustang or the new Hurricane fighter. The plane was amphibian, land or water operation. Doc Savage had done most of the design himself, and was not too pleased with the results.

Ham groaned. “That was awful damn lying, wasn't it?”

“I don't know what else we could do,” Long Tom muttered. “I wonder when that fat guy will show up.”

The fat man showed up immediately. There was a knock at the door, and there he was. In a waiter's uniform, with a tray of liquor.

“Your order,” he said.

Ham scowled and said, “Look, fat and bright, we don't drink. We're not bluenoses; we just don't happen to drink.”

“You alone?”

“Yes.”

“All right. Your answer.” The fat man looked anxious.

Long Tom grimaced, told Ham, “You tell him.”

Ham said, “We told Doc that Monk followed Fain, the girl and Joe south toward Rhodesia. We said Monk left from the Heliopolis airport. Said Monk would leave word at El Damer, or Addis Ababa.”

The fat man complained, “Yanking Fain, the girl and Joe in wasn't such a bright idea.”

“Nuts,” Ham said. “Take it or leave it.”

“Sure, we take it.” The fat man eyed them intently. “This Monk will have to leave message at El Damer. Leave trail.”

“That's right.”

“Okay. We take care of it. But one thing: You fellows use password, maybe? Should this Monk know password he could leave. Make it look genuine, you see.”

Ham glanced at Long Tom. Long Tom nodded.

“The thing isn't a password,” Ham told the fat man. “Monk will try to buy a silver bracelet with a dog-face on it.”

“What kind of a bracelet is that?”

“Dammit, just the kind he will try to buy.”

“Where will he—”

“Anywhere, anywhere—that's the way Monk will let us know he has been there.”

The fat man nodded.

“Okay. I'll see there's a good trail of dog faced bracelets for you to follow into Rhodesia.”

He started away.

“Hold on,” Ham growled. “What about Monk and Johnny Littlejohn?”

“We'll deliver them down there to you—as a bonus,” the fat man said.

He went away whistling, balancing his tray and glasses.

DOC SAVAGE appeared almost immediately. Soon enough to startle Ham and Long Tom. The bronze man had a large book—it looked like a scrapbook—under his arm.

He handed the book to Ham.

“You might take a look at it,” Doc said.

That was all he said. He turned quickly, and made for the stairs, leaving Ham somewhat astonished. Ham scratched his head, complained, “That was a funny thing to happen.”

“What's in the book?” Long Tom asked.

Ham glanced at the cover, read, “The Cairo police department. What the heck!”

They began turning leaves. Long Tom grunted explosively, pointing.

DOSSIER OF PERSONS

DEFINITELY CONNECTED WITH

JAFFA GROUP

Ham said, “Oh, darn!” He turned more leaves.

“Look!” Long Tom pointed.

It was their fat man. His name was Theodolphus Cooissus, a renegade Greek who had served three prison terms. His specialty, it appeared, was confidence games, with a little murder of the more genteel kind suspected but not proven.

Ham and Long Tom looked at each other sheepishly.

“Doc seemed pretty disgusted,” Ham said.

“You blame him?”

Ham tossed the scrapbook on the bed. “The Cairo police must have given this to Doc so he could familiarize himself with the known members of this Jaffa's organization.”

“Yeah, and Doc saw the fat guy and recognized him.”

“You think so?”

Long Tom tossed the scrapbook on the hotel room bed. “I know so. I could tell.”

Ham nodded slowly. “You suppose he trailed—but of course that's what he did. Followed the fat man.” Ham fell to pacing sourly around the room. “I wish I knew whether Joe Shiraz, Avis Wilson and Bondurant Fain were telling the truth about themselves. I'd like to know—” He stopped. He looked at Long Tom. The same idea hit them both simultaneously. They jumped for the scrapbook.

They turned pages together, holding their breath, staring at each sheet, then breathing again, and repeating the process on the next page. They passed the last sheet.

“Not in there!” Ham said.

“Whew!” Long Tom got out a handkerchief and wiped his face. “That had me scared. The idea we might have been palling around with some of Jaffa's crew would be tough to take.”

“We didn't get far fooling Doc.” Ham held a thumb and forefinger a quarter of an inch apart. “I feel about that high.”

THE fat man took a Place Atabeh streetcar, then walked toward the Mokattam hills section. He went slowly, sauntering along, making no great business of being in a hurry, stopping often to look at objects. A plump gentleman out for a stroll, he could have been. But he was mighty careful about seeing that no one followed him.

Doc Savage had considerable difficulty. Trailing the man out of the hotel had not been hard, because the fellow had waited to get rid of his waiter's rig, and it was possible to stand in one spot and see all entrances or exits to the hotel, because of the way it was constructed on a corner.

Now, however, the trailing was tough. Doc had followed the streetcar in a cab, used that to trail the man for a while. Then he had left the cab, and calmly appropriated a donkey, which he had ridden, enwrapped in a voluminous *k'sa*, which was about the most elaborate piece of clothing ever worn by man yet the simplest because it actually consisted of one piece of cloth about one yard wide and six and a half yards long with a fringe at one end.

From the donkey, he switched to the sidewalk, then made a quick deal with a peddler for a pushcart, and shoved this alongside the ambling fat man for nearly ten blocks.

The fat man finally entered a house just west of the old citadel on the southwest spur of the Mokattam hills. He went through a ritual, some door tapping, some scraping of feet, and apparently a password, before he got in. So Doc stayed away.

About fifteen minutes later, a big man in European clothes and a sun helmet came out and hurried away. But he returned shortly with an automobile to which was hitched a two-wheel trailer. He parked at a side door, and began loading handbags and packages in the trailer. He brought the handbags and packages out of the house.

Later the fat man came out to see how the loading was getting along. He was smoking a cigar. He stood there blowing smoke and knocking off ashes with his little finger, then went back into the house. He had changed to a voluminous burnoose.

The big man lashed a canvas over the stuff in the trailer. Then he went into the house.

Doc decided to take a chance. He made a quick run, got to the trailer, loosened the cover, climbed in, made room among the packages and suitcases, and pulled the cover back over him.

The cover was tied with a rope which ran through grommets in the canvas and through rings on the side of the trailer. In re-fastening the cover, Doc used the old magician's trick, pulling a lot of spare rope inside and tying it in a bow-knot which he could loosen with a jerk. At the same time, anybody yanking at the knot on the outside would think it was solid. Magicians who were tied in sacks escaped with that scheme.

The big man came back. The fat man and at least three others were with him. The fat man spoke, complaining.

“Here's this extra canteen.”

“You want me to put it in the trailer?”

“No. I will carry it in the car.”

They spoke Arabic, the way it was spoken in Egypt. The Arabian tongue, but with some words and sounds different.

THE trailer bumped over rough pavement and cobbles for about twenty minutes, then stopped.

A new voice: “This seems senseless. Aren't you unduly scared?”

“You bet I'm unduly scared,” said the fat man. “I've been unduly scared ever since I heard Savage had popped up in Cairo.”

“But if you tricked his two men into leading him on a blind-alley chase into Rhodesia—”

The fat man said wearily, “How long do you think that will keep him fooled?”

“Well—”

“Maybe until tomorrow, maybe another day or two. Then he'll be back here in Cairo, hotter than a lit firecracker.”

They were speaking English, but with the accents of men to whom it was unfamiliar.

The other man said, “It sure won't help their dispositions any when they find out they are going to be doublecrossed—that that Mayfair fellow isn't going to be turned loose, and Littlejohn isn't going to be given back to them.”

“Some more reasons to be out of Cairo the next few days or weeks.”

“Listen, if Mayfair and Littlejohn were returned to them, maybe they would clear out. Go back to America.”

“No can do.”

“But they came from America solely to find Littlejohn, and if we could get Littlejohn back from the Sunhara—”

“Not a chance. You know that.”

“But—”

“Oh, stop arguing. You got your suitcase packed?”

The man said he had. Doc decided the second man was from eastern Persia, probably the section north and west of Baghdad. Iran, the country was called today.

The car and trailer got going again. It traveled over a few more city streets, then took a paved highway, gathered speed and whistled along.

They got away from the Nile. The different smell to the night told Doc that. Quite a while later, the

roadway changed from blacktop to rough desert going. From the grumbling effort as they hit sand, Doc could tell they were on the open desert.

He was glad when they stopped.

Someone said, "I hope you brothers of camels have food prepared," in Egyptian.

"Aywa,"

someone said.

There was a general rush away in the night.

DOC SAVAGE, cautiously loosening the trailer cover, found typical desert night outside. That is, typical for this time of year, with the sky dark and sultry, and the thunder bumping around in the distance. It was near the rainy season.

There seemed to be two low buildings, and beyond them a larger object barely distinguishable, apparently partly covered with canvas.

The buildings and the bulky object, whatever it was, were slapped up against the face of a considerable cliff which overhung. On the south, about fifty yards away, there was another cliff, indicating this was the bottom of a dry canyon. No window-lights showed in the buildings, but at the bottom of a hanging blackout curtain, a very little showed.

Doc eased out of the trailer. He replaced the rope so that it would not attract suspicion.

He investigated the bulky object first, and found that it was a two-motored plane, not a military machine—at least not a light bomber. It was a cargo carrier of medium size. French made, a design about four years old. Doc was familiar with the plane, which was a Bloch of an early model, predating the Bloch 174 which was built in Vichy France for the Luftwaffe. It had the same type of Gnome-Rhone radial engines as the 174, but they were lower horsepower. The silhouette was very similar, low-wing, twin-engined, all-metal, the two engines slightly underslung.

It would carry about four thousand pounds weight.

Doc approached the house warily.

There were about ten of them. They were eating.

Doc took a chance, got down low, edged the curtain up and looked inside. All the men he could see had guns strapped on them. There were eleven, instead of ten, and out of the eleven, six had been in the rogue's gallery scrap-book which the police had prepared of Jaffa's associates.

Extremely curious to know whether Jaffa was present, Doc crouched beside the door and listened.

Jaffa, it seemed, was not one of them.

Another fact came out. They were scared of something else other than Doc Savage. They discussed it gloomily as they ate. Savage, they agreed, was a danger. But since they were going to clear out of Cairo and out of Egypt—it came out at this point that they were going to stay with something, or someone, called the Sunhara—Doc Savage probably would not be a continued menace.

They were afraid of what had happened to Hamamah and Hotah. Doc already knew Hamamah and

Hotah were members of Jaffa's circle—they had been in the rogue-book. But what intrigued the bronze man was the talk about the deaths—and the impression it was having on the men.

“The two today,” said the fat man, “make fourteen.”

Someone muttered, “There's no doubt now but that our men are being picked off.”

Two men fell to cursing, and one ended up by swearing great oaths down on the head of Pharaoh Jubbah Ned, hoping him the worst of luck in whatever corner of hell he was toasting.

The fat man laughed, not very heartily.

“You fellows really believe the Pharaoh's curse is doing it, don't you?” he said.

He was sworn at.

“We opened the tomb. It's only killing us off—and furthermore, killing the men who were actually in on the tomb looting!”

The fat man said, “I would keep my mouth shut about the tomb looting, if I were you.”

The other cursed him. “Why?”

“You want the Sunhara to find out the truth?”

That silenced the other.

DOC got a lucky break. That is, it was about ten per cent luck and the rest manipulation on his part. But the ten per cent was enough.

They got out charts. Doc could hear the chart case clattering on the table—it was evidently made of brass—and heard the charts crinkling.

Theodolphus Cooissus, the fat man, swore at someone in Greek, then in Arabic—not the Egyptian language, but the genuine Arabic, the language of the Koran. He ended up, though, with a, “*Yin'al abuk!*” which was Egyptian for the oath, “May your father be cursed!” The man seemed to be a fluent linguist.

“Marking a course with a ruler like that is not accurate,” he said. “You must use a protractor, or at least parallel rulers. Where are they?”

There was some swearing, and finally they got their course marked out on the charts.

There was, someone said, another set of charts in the plane with the course already marked on them. He'd just remembered.

The fat man swore some more, and went out to see about the others. Doc slid away from the door.

The lucky break came when Doc Savage, scuttling for cover, found something with a fearsome stink. It was a small animal, putrefying, and the smell was nauseating.

The windows of the house, Doc had discovered, were open. The blackout curtains inside were set back on frames, so as to allow some circulation of air.

Doc found a stick, carried the putrefying animal, and put it on the ground outside an open window.

In about five minutes, the men were outdoors, complaining about the stinking house. They stood about, smoking, and finally went over to take the cover off the plane.

Doc went inside. The charts were spread out on the table, beside a smoking kerosene lamp.

He studied the course marked on the chart. The directions, bearings in degrees, distances, were carefully figured.

He stared at the charts until he had the route fixed in his mind.

Then he went outside again.

The gang took off in the plane about thirty minutes later.

Doc appropriated their car—they had backed it under the canyon overhang and left it—and headed for Cairo. The starting point of the route marked on the charts had told him where he was now.

There was more lightning and thunder jumping around in the sky. It was going to rain. The storm threat seemed strange in the desert.

HAM BROOKS and Long Tom Roberts were at the Cairo hotel, sheepish and worried.

“You want us to go back to New York?” Ham asked uneasily.

Doc kept his face straight. “We have been working together a long time, haven't we?”

“That,” Long Tom said, “makes the trick we pulled particularly snide.”

Doc shook his head. “We have always had a rule. There is no hard and fast requirement that you follow orders, all the time. When you think you have a better idea—use your own judgment.”

Ham grimaced. “This idea, this wild-goose-chase idea, wasn't so hot.”

“Some of my ideas have not been, either,” Doc reminded him. “How soon can you fellows be ready to follow that gang by plane?”

“In about thirty seconds,” Ham said.

## Chapter X

WHEN the sun came up, Long Tom Roberts looked out of the plane window, taking his time and making a thorough inspection, after which he got rid of a piece of wisdom.

“That country down there,” he said, “is just a heck of a lot of no place to be.”

For hours, at more than three hundred miles an hour, they had been flying over Transjordan, Hejaz, Nejd Hasa—passing about three hundred miles west of the city of Riyadh—and now they were boring into the fat and bleak and forbidding southern rump of Arabia.

The spot marked on the chart had been north and east of Mocha, in the State of Yemen, on the

southwest tip of Arabia, at the Strait of Bab El Mandeb, between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Ham had remarked that it was good to see the name Red Sea on the chart, because it was someplace you had heard of before.

Furthermore, there was nothing at all marked on the chart where they were headed. Nothing. And it was a good chart. The best the British hydrographic offices turned out.

This desert over which they were flying, Ruba El Khali as it was generally labeled on maps, contained one of the largest unexplored areas on the globe, with the exception of the Polar regions. There had been some aerial mapping, but surprisingly little. No streams, no trails, nothing, was shown on a great area of the chart. And it wasn't because there was nothing there.

The place was practically inaccessible by land—either afoot, by camel, or motorcar, because of the rough terrain, the wastes of sand, and the difficulty finding water. By plane, an explorer could see very little.

Doc indicated their position on the map. They had circled west and overtraveled somewhat. He banked the plane around, and began climbing. For a while he checked instruments and controls.

Their climb continued.

At twenty thousand feet, they were still climbing.

“Check the oxygen equipment,” Doc said. “And see what you can do with the heaters.”

During the Atlantic crossing, there had been some aggravating trouble with the cabin heat. At very high altitudes, with temperatures sometimes threatening to drop to eighty or a hundred degrees below zero, the cabin heating gadgets had turned out to be a joke.

Long Tom, the electrical expert, had designed the cabin heating system, so he was more than a little embarrassed about it. He went back in the cabin to putter around.

At forty thousand feet, Doc flattened out.

“Get the best pair of binoculars aboard,” he told Ham. “See what you can find.”

Doc cut silencers in on the two motors. At this height, there was not much chance of their engine-roar being heard on the ground. The real source of noise was the props, and Doc worked with the feathering apparatus for a while, to cut that down as much as possible, and still maintain flight.

He kept their speed as low as possible, and watched the rear-view mirrors constantly. It would take good eyes and good glasses to spot them from the desert. But if they hit a patch of air where conditions were right for the formation of vapor streamers, almost anyone who happened to look up would know a plane was passing.

Ham, watching the desert, beckoned.

“I've got their plane,” he said.

THE plane, a little less than five miles below, was but faintly discernible even through the binoculars. Doc turned the controls over to Ham, and used the glasses.

He decided that the plane was being moved by hand. This was confirmed when, a moment later, it

vanished. It had just landed—their own speed must be close to twice that of the other craft, so they would have made up time—and was being wheeled out of sight. Doc handed the glasses back to Ham.

“Shucks, now I can't see it,” Ham complained.

“They put it out of sight.”

Ham stared for a long time. The terrain must be very rough down there, and the formation seemed peculiar, a great expanse of cone-shaped hills, some of which were flat-topped.

“You see where they took the plane?”

“It just seemed to disappear,” Doc confessed.

Ham stared some more. “Those are strange-looking hills.”

“The cone-shaped ones?”

“Yes.”

Long Tom came forward and said, “I can see those hills with the naked eye. They're hills, all right. It's a formation peculiar to the desert. I noticed some of them back toward the border of Hejaz.”

“Hey, I see a few trees. Quite a few.”

Long Tom nodded. “Reminds me a little of Monument Valley, in the Grand Canyon district of the United States. I flew over that once.”

Doc said, “Long Tom, haven't you got one of your XTR bombs aboard?”

Long Tom nodded, scrambled back into the cabin, and hurriedly heaved out a thing which looked like an ordinary fifty-pound bomb.

“What was that?” Ham demanded.

Long Tom explained, “It's nothing new. I worked it out earlier in the war, and both the English and Americans have been using it occasionally.”

“Well, what is the thing?”

“Just a short-wave radio transmitter putting out a continuous note and made so it won't shatter. It's a special set that can't be tuned, because everything is embedded in plastic wherever possible, to keep it from smashing to bits when it hits. After the thing hits, the radio will send out a continuous signal for about four hours.”

“What on earth is it good for?”

Long Tom grinned. “Well, our boys send a fast pursuit plane scooting over a German target at low altitude. The plane bangs this trick bomb right into whatever factory is going to be the target for tonight. The Germans let the bomb alone, because they think it's a time-bomb, see. They put up the usual sandbag barricades around it, the way you do a time bomb, and the disposal squad starts to work. But that takes a few hours. Before they dig it out, our planes have come over in the night and located the target by the radio signal the bomb is sending out—and *boom! boom!* School is out.”

Astonished, Ham said, “How come I haven't heard about this thing before?”

“I was afraid you'd ask that. All you need to spot the thing is a radio receiver nearby. The Fritzes got wise. They took to grabbing up the bombs, carrying them out in the country, and all the R. A. F. night-bombers did was blow holes in forty-acre fields.”

“What about those fellows.” Ham pointed downward. “Won't they find it the same way?”

“Oh, they wouldn't have a radio of that type. It takes a receiver operating on very high frequencies, way down on the FM bands.”

Doc Savage flew about fifty miles, slanted the plane downward.

“We going to land?” Ham demanded.

“We need sleep,” Doc explained. “And we can hardly get close to the place in daylight.”

THEY landed on a mud flat that, ages ago, had been a lake bed, but which was now a great bare expanse of ground swept as flat as a landing strip by desert wind and sand. There were hills to the west. Doc taxied between two of those.

They shoveled some sand on the wing and on top of the fuselage to help out the camouflaging. Later in the day, the hill-shadow would cover them.

Doc seemed to go to sleep immediately.

Ham had no tendency at all to sleep. He kept Long Tom awake rehashing the situation.

Mostly they argued about the things they didn't understand. First, of course, was the mysterious deaths, the “spirit” of Pharaoh Jubbah Ned. The Pharaoh—they went back over Hamamah's recital about ancient Pharaoh Jubbah Ned—had been entombed in a “far-away land of great magic.” Ham scratched his head.

“That was funny-looking country back there, all those cone-shaped hills,” he said. “You suppose that was the 'far-away country of great magic'?”

Long Tom said, “For my money, the whole Pharaoh story is cock-and-bull.”

“Jubbah Ned actually lived, and what Hamamah said about him was true.”

“Yeah? How you know?”

“Doc. He's done some dabbling in Egyptology. A couple of times I've even heard Johnny Littlejohn ask him about something connected with hieroglyphics and such stuff. Well, I asked Doc about Hamamah's story. He said it checked with known data.”

“You mean the ghost—”

“No, no, I mean there *was* a Pharaoh Jubbah Ned, and he was entombed in some distant land of magic, instead of on the Nile. I don't know anything about the spirit, ghost, banshee, bad breath, or whatever-the-devil that killed Hamamah and Hotah.”

Second subject of speculation, and actually the closest to their fears by far, was the possible fate of Johnny and Monk.

Neither Ham nor Long Tom could see any logical reason for Monk and Johnny not having been killed. But Doc Savage seemed to feel, from what he had overheard, that both were alive, and in the hands of someone or somebody called the Sunhara.

“What you suppose the Sunhara is?” Ham demanded.

“Oh, stop asking questions like that,” Long Tom said. “Who’s Jaffa? What’s the Sunhara? What killed Hamamah and Hotah? Where are we going? Will we get there? Will we get eaten up when we do? Will—”

Doc Savage awakened long enough to say, “Your conversation is lapsing into nothing but plain noise. Don’t you think you had better sleep?”

They did finally go to sleep.

It was hot. Around a hundred and four.

SOMETIME later—it was nearly dark—Ham awoke with a deafening roaring in his ears. Thinking it was machine-gun fire—he made a dash for the nearest gully that would double as a foxhole.

He lit sprawled out as a dark shadow washed over him. “What the blazes?” he gasped.

“Plane,” Doc Savage said. He and Long Tom were already behind rocks.

“Where did it come from?”

“Came in from the northeast. The pilot cut the motors and glided in.”

“You think they spotted our plane?”

“Probably,” Doc said. “The shadows were wrong—the sun was moving between two hills and shining on our plane for the moment.”

The plane had vanished over the hills, but now it came back, fishtailing, motors idling. They could see the landing flaps spring out.

“They’re going to land!”

The plane did a nose-high forward slip, flattened out, hit, bounced like a rubber ball. It took the air again.

“That pilot must think he’s in a lightplane,” Ham muttered.

It developed that the pilot was disgusted and was going to make another landing. The plane arched up, and made a slow circle.

Doc Savage said, “You fellows get ready to close in from this end.”

The bronze man then sprang to his feet, raced to their own plane, got a burnoose, put it on, and dashed along the edge of the lake, keeping to the shadow of the hills as much as possible, heading for the spot where the plane would be when it landed.

The plane completed its half-circle, came in again, this time in another reckless nose-high forward slip. It hit, bounced—but not as violently—settled, and rolled toward the spot where Doc was crouched. The

pilot didn't apply the wheelbrakes quickly enough, with the result that he had trouble stopping the plane when he did. Twice it nearly ground-looped.

The girl—Doc recognized Avis Wilson from Ham's enthusiastic description of her—put her head out of the cockpit window.

There were two men in the ship. Doc couldn't identify them because of the reflection of light on the plane windows.

Doc found a large rock, a flinty stone bigger than a football, and tucked it under his burnoose. He tossed the folds of the burnoose up so that the dark brown folds of the burnoose—this one wasn't white—concealed most of his face. He strode out to meet the ship.

He lifted a hand in the universal gesture of greeting.

He could see the faces at the plane windows. Three of them. They didn't seem hostile.

*“Leylt-ak sa'idah!”*

the girl cried in Arabic.

*“Ya inta!”*

Doc shouted in a coarse voice.

This greeting exchange let him get close to the engine, which was still turning over. The propeller flickered in a metallic disc.

Doc heaved the rock into the prop arc. There was a slash-crash report, some flying flint, some sparks, and the plane began to shake violently. One blade of the prop was bent enough to throw the thing off balance.

Doc went on quickly, diving, and got under the plane cabin.

## Chapter XI

SOMEONE shut off the plane motor.

A voice—it belonged to Count Joe Shiraz—said, “I think that was Doc Savage!”

“It couldn't be!” the girl said. “Oh, Lord, if it was—”

Doc let them stew about that for a few seconds.

He made his voice loud, angry, threatening.

He said, “How would you like for me to turn a submachine gun up through the floor of that plane?”

They thought that over for a minute.

“What do you want us to do?” Joe asked.

“Throw out any and all guns. Then climb out yourselves. And behave.”

That evidently took some more thinking. Too much. Doc became impatient.

“We are not going to fool around much longer,” he said as ominously as he could manage.

“Coming out,” Joe grumbled.

Four guns—including Joe’s jeweled little automatic—hit the sand. Joe followed. Then the girl. They had their hands up.

Doc said, “All right, Fain!”

He was guessing that the other man was Bondurant Fain. The guess proved good.

“How do you expect me to get out?” Fain remanded. “Take a look at me.”

Doc took no chances. He called Ham and Long Tom, and they approached warily. Ham looked into the plane.

“He’s tied up,” Ham said.

Bondurant Fain sat in a seat, his ankles lashed together, and a rope around his wrists. He was working with the wrist rope. “Just a minute. I think I can get this one off. I about had it off.”

“You mean,” demanded Long Tom, “that they had you a prisoner?”

“Why do you think they tied me up? Sure.”

“Why?”

“Blessed if I know,” Fain said. “It’s the most cockeyed thing that ever happened to me.”

Doc Savage searched Joe for weapons, found no others. “Your name is Shiraz, is it?”

Joe said, “Count Carducci Capuana Giampietro Leopardi Josephini Marini Shiraz. Yes.”

“Mud!” said Bondurant Fain grimly. “Mud, that’s what your name’ll be when I get through with you!”

“*Veramente!*”

said Joe, giving the Italian word an insulting inflection.

“What’s that mean? I don’t spika,” Fain said.

Nobody answered him.

Doc said, “Fain, they held you prisoner?”

“Yes.”

“When did it happen?”

“Last night, in Cairo. We had separated. I had gone to my hotel. They appeared unexpectedly, with guns. They held me up. They had obtained this plane somewhere. They took me to it. This spaghetti-bender flew it, and I would feel safer with a goat for a pilot. We got here.”

“Did they seem to know where they were going?”

“Yes. But not exactly. I got the idea they hadn’t been here before.”

Joe said, "For you, that is a remarkably true story."

"You mean you kidnapped him?"

"I hope to tell you we did," Joe said.

He didn't seem sorry.

LONG TOM turned to Joe and the girl and said, "Well, I hope you have a more probable-sounding story than that to tell us."

Avis Wilson, Doc Savage decided, was extremely worried and trying to act as if none of this was any more important than buying a hat. Her nervousness—if it was nervousness; it could be downright terror—was showing in the way she kept holding to something with her hands. She would hold the fold of her slacks, her other hand, or fold her arms and grip her sweater sleeves. There was enough tension in her mind that her hands didn't feel right empty.

Joe asked, "You want our story? Or do we get hung without a trial?"

"Go ahead," Doc said.

Joe jerked his head at the plane. "In there, pinned to the chart-board. Better bring the chart with it."

"What you mean?" Ham demanded.

"Will you get the chart-board? It will explain better than words."

Ham fiddled around the plane, suspecting there was a mine in it or something, and finally reached inside with overdone caution, and snatched out the little drawing-board of soft wood to which the chart was pinned.

There was also a note pinned to the board. It read:

GRAB FAIN AND BRING HIM TO SPOT MARKED ON CHART AND HOTAH'S MURDERER WILL BE PLACED IN YOUR HANDS.—JAFFA.

"Where did this come from?" Doc asked.

Joe glanced at the girl. "You tell them, Avis. I don't think they believe a word I tell them."

She had to clear her throat twice.

"I found it—my apartment in Cairo," she said. "That was last night. Joe took me home. He and Fain had a quarrel over who would take me home, after Mr. Brooks and Mr. Roberts left us, and they matched piastres, and Mr. Fain lost. So Joe took me home. I left him at the door, and came inside."

She paused. She was having a little trouble making her lips shape the words.

"I found this pinned to a lamp shade," she continued. "I read it, then ran out and called Joe. He hadn't gone too far. We talked it over. Joe knew where we could hire a plane, and he could fly it. So we—we—well, we did what the note said."

Doc asked, "Why didn't you go directly to the police with this?"

The girl said instantly, "That was Joe's idea."

As hurriedly, Joe said, "Look, we were parties to a bargain. If the other guy didn't want to bold up his end, there was no way of making him do it, that we could see. If we made him mad, he might stall out on us, and not produce whoever or whatever killed Hotah. Telling the police might make him mad. Probably it would. If he had wanted the police in on it, he would have called them in the first place. That's the way I figured it."

"That's a glib explanation," Ham said.

Bondurant Fain sneered and said, "The spaghetti-twirler's tongue is tied in the middle and loose at both ends."

Joe pointed a dramatic finger at Fain.

"While you're making noises," he said, "tell us why you are so important Jaffa was willing to trade a murderer for you."

Fain looked blank. He eyed Doc Savage. "Do you believe a word of this goofus-bird story?"

"If we do," Doc said. "What would you say?"

"I have no idea on earth why this Jaffa should want me. I don't know Jaffa. I don't know anything about it, any of it." Fain spread his hands. "Nobody is going to believe that—if Joe is telling the truth."

Avis Wilson said, "Fain, I'm telling the same story. Don't you believe *me*?"

Bondurant Fain winced.

"Honey, you look at me with those big eyes, and I would believe the world was flat," he said. "Yes, I believe you."

THAT was where it stood two hours later. Their stories hadn't varied in the least. Doc Savage had examined the chart which Joe and Avis Wilson had been using as a guide for the flight, and found it the same chart which he had inspected in the hut on the desert the night before. The destination, however, was not figured quite as carefully.

The only added explanation which Fain and the girl had given was that they had seen Doc Savage's plane hidden beside the mud-lake and concluded this was their destination, so they had landed.

Doc found Ham and Long Tom in an argument.

Long Tom said, "This is what the guy meant when he coined the phrase, 'tissue of lies'."

"I'm not so sure," Ham told him. "Do you find any holes in her story?"

Long Tom snorted. "*Her* story! You're worse than Monk. You believe anything you're told, as long as you're told it by something pretty in skirts."

"Don't you believe it?"

"No."

“None of it?”

“Nuts,” Long Tom said. “It’ll soon be dark enough to start our possum-hunt.” He turned to Doc Savage, asking, “The plan is for us to fly the plane over that spot on the map where we figure the gang went, and some of us go out by parachute?”

“That seems to be the only thing to do,” Doc said.

“Use short-wave radio to keep contact with each other, eh?”

“Yes.”

Long Tom said, “I better check over the little trans-ceivers. And be sure the direction-finder can pick up that gadget I planted, too.”

“Your trick bomb, you mean?”

“Yes.”

“It has been more than four hours since you tossed that out. You said it would only work four hours—”

“Oh, I forgot to mention there’s a time gadget on it. You can set it to start operating any time up to twelve hours after the gadget is dropped. It should be working now.”

“Uh. Tricks everywhere you look,” Ham muttered.

Ham wandered over to talk to the girl. Bondurant Fain, jealous and irritated, hung around and butted into the conversation whenever he could, which in turn got Count Joe Shiraz aggravated.

Joe wandered over and joined Doc Savage and Long Tom. He sighed. “That Fain should have been a Latin,” he said. “Only a Latin should be able to fall hard enough in love to make that kind of a fool of himself.”

Long Tom complained, “Love is the least of my worries.”

“What is your principal worry?”

“The truth,” Long Tom said instantly.

Joe winced. “Let’s not fuss about that. I know our stories are thin. If we’d had time, we should have cooked up some nice convincing lies.”

Doc said, “You did have time.”

“Eh?”

“In the plane, after it landed, and after the propeller was smashed with the rock, you had time.”

Joe grimaced. “Not a word to say. I see your side of it.”

THERE sounded the loud bark of a shot. Just one shot, with its echoes chasing themselves around in the desert hills afterward.

Then a voice, in Arabic, “*Idkhol! Hush!*”

Arabic was not the language of the speaker.

There was a silence.

The same voice, in bad English, "Come to us. Come."

Another silence.

Ham yelled suddenly, "Doc! Doc! Watch out! We're surrounded!"

Immediately came more shots, which with their echoes made a loud roaring. Doc Savage, looking around at the flashes, concluded that they were indeed surrounded.

Avis Wilson screamed in the middle of the uproar, wordlessly.

"Help!" howled Bondurant Fain. "They've got us! They're tying us—"

Something—it could have been blows—shut him up.

Doc Savage had to restrain Count Joe Shiraz. Joe heaved up at the girl's cry, but went down when Doc clamped on to his ankle.

Ham yelled, "Doc! Doc! Watch—" And something shut him up, too.

There was general shooting, the hair-raising noise of bullets getting themselves mixed up with the rocks and sand, and the sounds of quite a few feet running here and there.

Finally the Count said in Italian, "*Come seccante!*" He added in English, "Unless somebody restrains me, I am going to run, and run far and fast. I am scared."

Long Tom said, "With this many bullets around, who wouldn't be scared."

"You wish to go with me?"

"No. Ham is—"

Doc said, "Go with him. Go straight north. You can see the North Star. Pace off two thousand yards, as nearly as you can, then hide in the handiest spot and wait."

Joe said, "On second thought, I'll not be coward enough to run off—"

Long Tom gripped his arm. "Come on. Don't argue."

They went away into the darkness.

DOC SAVAGE had his shoes off, so that he could move more silently in the sand. There was a moon, but it was very low, and there was evidently some considerable amount of haze, because there wasn't much reflected light. The shadows were blue-black, and the moonlit patches silver-gray. It was hot. Probably it never cooled off entirely here in the desert.

The bronze man moved carefully, trailing the shadows as if they were stepping stones, keeping in them as if they were foxholes.

He soon realized there were many men about—more than fifty anyway, probably more—and after that

he gave up any idea of starting a fight, because any kind of a commotion would draw too much trouble down on his head.

Of Ham, Avis Wilson, Bondurant Fain, there was no sound, no trace. They had disappeared as if gobbled by the strange blue-black shadows.

Later, Doc stood close, nearly within hand-reach, of a man.

The man was tall and brown—not a black man, but a light-skinned one who was tanned brown by the desert sun—and firm-looking, with a roundish face that had firmly moulded lips that were noticeable without being large or repulsive, and a nose that was prominent but not hooked or flare-nostriled.

The man stood there, a statue of deep copper in the moonlight, listening, using his eyes.

He did not wear the usual desert burnoose, or *k'sa*, of volumes of cloth. He did not wear a turban, either. The headgear was a tall affair somewhat like an army officer's cap with a taller crown, no visor, and with more oomph to the upsweep of the crown. It was made of some form of tightly woven reed, ornamented with silver and, unless looks were misleading, a band of gold, either gold-plate on metal or gold.

His clothing was not European, nor was it Arab. It consisted of a skirt of about kilt length, a shirt which had no sleeves—both these garments made of heavy linen-like cloth, ornamented with elaborate designs which consisted entirely of straight lines, angles and circles—and a wide belt which obviously was the larger over-the-shoulder cape of a garment that was worn during the daytime to keep off the sun, and at night to combat the desert chill, if any.

The man listened intently for a while.

He called sharply, using a language with some Arabic words, but not many. The Arabic words were old base ones, most of them Demotic words traceable back as far as the vulgar speech of the Saite period, but which vanished from usage about the time of the fall of paganism, or about the fourth century after Christ.

Doc Savage, astonished at hearing such a tongue, was a little pop-eyed.

More men came out of the darkness. Alarmed, Doc moved a few yards away.

The first man gave some orders. Doc got a vague idea of the text of the commands.

He eased away into the darkness, headed for the spot where he had told Long Tom and Joe to wait. Two thousand yards, toward the North. He found them without much trouble.

“You find out who those guys were?” Long Tom demanded.

“These Sunhara, we have been hearing about, apparently,” Doc told him.

## Chapter XII

DOC got moving at once. They headed back, not directly south, but toward the east. “No noise,” Doc said. “Be very careful about getting in the moonlight.”

“What are we going to do?” Long Tom demanded.

“Follow the Sunhara back home.”

“Oh.”

Doc added, “This seemed to be a scouting party of the Sunhara. Jaffa's men arriving by plane caused them to send out scouting parties in different directions, just on the chance that something might be different than they had been told it was.”

“That sounds as if they don't trust Jaffa's outfit.”

“So I gathered.”

“What about Ham, Fain and Miss Wilson?”

“No trace of them,” Doc said.

“But did the Sunhara, whoever they are, capture them?”

“Apparently not.”

Joe said, “Good, good, then they escaped!”

Doc said, “What happened to Ham, Joe and Avis Wilson is a mystery. As soon as you fellows get on the trail of the Sunhara, I am going back and try to find them.”

Joe, sounding more alarmed, said, “Then you think something might have gone wrong with them? Maybe they were caught after all?”

“They could have been,” Doc said, but he sounded unsure.

They had been moving as rapidly as possible, running when they could, losing no time anywhere. Shortly Doc Savage halted them, said, “Listen.”

Through the night came a considerable body of men. They were marching in close order. Doc and Ham and Count Joe Shiraz fell in behind them, and the men they were following soon came to a spot where camels were being held. There was some confusion as they mounted.

Ham muttered, “Left their camels here and sneaked up on that mud lake. That means they knew we were there.”

Doc whispered, “Or the mud lake is the only satisfactory landing-place for a plane in the vicinity, so they sneaked up on it on the chance one might be there.”

The Sunhara talked for a while. Somebody was issuing orders.

Doc said, “They are going back home. Apparently it is not far.”

Long Tom muttered, “This whole thing looks kind of queer. Why are they scrambling out of here when they know darned well that we must be around here somewhere?”

Doc didn't answer that directly. “Better be careful when you follow them,” he said.

“Yeah, don't think I won't,” Long Tom muttered. “You going back to hunt Ham and the other two?”

“Yes.”

“Right now?”

“Right now,” Doc whispered, and moved away into the night.

THE Sunhara did not have enough camels for everyone, which relieved Long Tom. He muttered something about the dubious pleasure of chasing a bunch of camels across the desert at night with no water to speak of—they had each managed to snatch up a small canteen of water when the excitement broke, but that would not last long.

The Sunhara got moving. Long Tom and Joe followed them.

After some debate, the trailing was done about two hundred yards back, and off to the side. That way, they could follow by sound, and not be in as much danger of stumbling over some member of the Sunhara caravan in case a fellow stopped to take a breather, intending to catch up later.

The trailing was without incident for about an hour.

“You got a gun?” Joe asked unexpectedly.

“Sh-h-h!” Long Tom blurted. “Not so loud!”

“Well, have you got a gun?”

“Yes, I—” Long Tom reached instinctively to reassure himself that the weapon, a revolver, was still in his coat pocket. “Good Lord!”

“What's the matter?”

“I've lost my gun!”

“You mean you only had one?”

“Yes.”

Count Joe Shiraz said, “That's fine. I've got it!”

“What's the—”

“*Ta'ala hena!*”

Joe yelled in Egyptian.

Alarmed, Long Tom blurted, “You fool! What—” He got the idea. “You're doublecrossing me!”

Joe said, “You try to run and I'll shoot both legs out from under you so quick it won't be funny!”

“What're you doing?”

“*Ta'ala hena!*”

Joe bellowed. “*Imshi, imshi!*”

Suddenly the Sunhara were around them. They came silently, popping up like ghosts. Not many of them had guns, and the others carried short curved swords, which were obviously some sort of ceremonial weapon.

Joe began talking rapidly in Egyptian. He was excited, and Long Tom could tell that he was getting his Egyptian tangled up with Italian.

One of the Sunhara, the only one who wore a queer-looking cap affair, tall, made of woven reed, with silver and gold ornamentation, made an impatient noise.

“I am Sali,” he said in nearly perfect English. “I suggest you speak English.”

“Whew!” Long Tom gasped. “I’m glad you can speak English—”

“Shut up!” said Sali. “You are not the one who called us. Keep your words in your chest.”

He turned to Joe Shiraz.

Joe pointed dramatically at Long Tom.

“This,” Joe said, “is another of the men responsible for the looting of the tomb of Pharaoh Jubbah Ned.”

“Me?” blurted Long Tom in amazement.

Joe grinned sweetly at everybody.

“I brought him all the way into the desert to surrender him to you,” he said. “I want to bring justice to the despoilers of Jubbah Ned’s tomb.”

Long Tom yelled, “I didn’t have anything to do with it!”

“He lies, of course.” Joe shrugged.

LONG TOM was seized, stripped of every stitch of clothing, smeared with streaks of yellow and red and green grease, put on in spirals so that he resembled a barber pole, and tied to a camel. His howled objections should have been heard in Cairo.

Of all the animals on earth, Long Tom thought the least of a camel. The feeling was mutual. To the best of his knowledge, he had never approached a camel without the thing managing to vomit on him. He had seen camels do it to other men—spitting, you could call it for politeness, but when it happened to Long Tom it became vomit—but never did it seem to happen so often to anyone else. Sure enough, in the middle of binding proceedings, the camel lived up to tradition. The only consolation was that the Sunhara engaged in tying him at the moment weren’t happy, either.

They marched about three hours, and Long Tom saw that what he had thought was a bush was really a cultivated fig tree. Then he saw more of them.

They descended into a valley, and suddenly many large, weird-looking cones appeared. These were what they had seen from the air earlier in the day. What had he called them earlier? ‘Formations peculiar to the desert down there.’

Peculiar? They were peculiar, that was no mistake. The cones were not the same size. Some a man could vault over, if he was a good vaulter and had a long-enough pole. Others you couldn’t knock a tennis ball over. Some of them were fully four hundred feet in height, Long Tom was convinced.

All right, all right, don’t get excited, he kept telling himself. Cones and spires were common formations in desert country where ages of wind and sand had eroded rock formation. One instinctively thought of Monument Valley in Arizona as an example.

Then too, Long Tom remembered, there was the Cappadocian troglodyte section of Asia Minor, almost

in the shadow of Mount Argaeus, or Erjias Dagh, as the Turks called the mountain. Here there was an area of many thousand peculiar cones.

But, when he discovered lighted windows in some of the cones, Long Tom's hair stirred a little. The things were inhabited!

He was untied from the camel a moment later. Staring at the unusual habitations, he forgot to dodge, and the camel unloaded on him a second time. That time, the Sunhara thought it was funny.

He was hauled into one of the cones. Someone guided him with a very modern flashlight.

The cone, Long Tom saw, was a form of soapstone—he was geologist enough to know that—which was probably very soft, and hence easily carved out.

He was taken through a large room, and up a flight of steps, then through another room, followed by more steps. In all, five flights of steps were traversed.

Long Tom was shoved into a dark room, given a boot from behind to help him along, and a heavy door slammed. Long Tom stood very still, wondering where he was.

“What'd they shove in here, something to eat?” a voice asked.

“Monk!” Long Tom howled.

MONK MAYFAIR yelled, “Blazes! Long Tom!” He came over and began pounding Long Tom's back. “I'm glad to see you! Ham said he thought maybe—”

“Is Ham here too?”

“Sure.”

“What about the girl?”

Avis Wilson's voice said in the darkness, “Yes, include me.”

“Fain?”

Ham said grimly, “Bondurant Fain is not here, the blankety-blank so-and-so.”

“What do you mean?”

“You remember back at that mud lake, when we were jumped near our plane? You remember me yelling?”

“Yes, I heard you.”

“I was trying to yell and warn Doc to watch Fain. Fain was trying to bang me over the head with a rock. I was fighting him at the time. Before I could yell what I wanted to yell, he banged me. When I woke up, these funny-looking people had me.”

Long Tom asked, “When did they get you, Miss Wilson?”

“At the same time. Fain hit me also.”

“The polecat!”

“I guess Joe the Count was right about him,” Ham said. “Joe claimed Fain was a wrong guy.”

Long Tom snorted. “Joe the Count has got a lot of room to talk. He turned me over to these birds.”

“He what!”

Long Tom explained what had happened. Because someone might be listening outside, he neglected any and all mention of Doc Savage, until Ham whispered, “What happened to Doc?”

“He went back to look for you,” Long Tom told Ham in a low voice. “I have no idea where he is now.”

“I hope he has better luck than we had,” Ham muttered. “He's the only one of our crowd is loose. That means he's our chance to escape.”

“What you figure these Sunhara guys figure on doing with us?”

“I don't know. I can't savvy their language.”

“A number of them speak English.”

“Not to me, they haven't,” Ham said. “English, eh? They must be considerably less prehistoric than I thought they were.”

Long Tom asked, “Who are they, anyway?”

“Search me.”

This seemed to about exhaust the possibilities of conversation, except that Long Tom asked curiously, “Any sign of the guys we followed out here?”

“Jaffa's men?”

“Yes.”

“No.”

“Or Johnny Littlejohn?”

“Not a word of him, either.”

THE sun was coming up—they discovered they had one small window, high up in the wall, for light and ventilation—when a fight entered the hall.

The fight really came up the stairs, progressing by stages, but it was behind one or more closed doors in the beginning, and approached slowly. When it got into the top floor, on the landing outside the prison room, however, it was no secret.

Monk, who was a specialist on rough-house fights, listened in admiration.

“That's either Doc Savage, or ten other guys,” he said.

He was wrong.

A long bag of bones was finally thrown bodily into the cell with them, and the door slammed in great haste.

"I'll be superamalgamated!" said the new arrival. "An ultrainvidiously pyrotic, envemoned, disenchanting exacerbation!" He continued with some more words out of the same drawer.

There wasn't the slightest doubt in anyone's mind about who the new man was. Nobody else used such words. No one they had ever met even knew them.

Monk let it out.

"Johnny!" Monk yelled. "Johnny Littlejohn!"

Johnny Littlejohn was stunned into silence. He was very still for a while. Then he spoke English.

"Monk! How on earth did you get here? I thought you were in New York."

"How I got here is quite a story," Monk told him. "I don't want to make myself unhappy now by telling it. Are you all right?"

"Very indignant, somewhat bruised, and scared stiff," Johnny said. "Where is Doc Savage?"

"We don't know."

"We? We?"

"Ham and Long Tom are in here with me."

"Oh, damn!" Littlejohn said. "What about Renny Renwick?"

"Oh, he wasn't in New York at the time, so he didn't come along with us."

"Is Doc—"

"Not very far from here," Monk explained. "We have some more people here. There is a girl named Avis Wilson, and a man named Count Joe Shiraz, and another man named Bondurant Fain. Count Joe is with the Sunhara here. Fain is around somewhere, but we don't know where."

Johnny thought for a moment, "Am I supposed to have heard of those people?"

"Haven't you?"

"No."

"That's going to be a big help."

JOHNNY LITTLEJOHN proceeded to tell them his story. He had been, as everyone knew, enroute from Russia to New York via Cairo, and in Cairo he had gotten wind of a fantastic story about the ghost of an ancient Pharaoh Jubbah Ned, who was currently in existence and bringing horrible and mysterious death to individuals who were responsible for looting his tomb.

"The thing interested me," Johnny explained. "First, Pharaoh Jubbah Ned is almost unknown among the Pharaohs, as far as actual records are concerned. Being an archaeologist, I was intrigued. There was about three days lay-over in Cairo waiting for plane connections, and I spent the three days investigating.

By that time, I had learned enough to cause me to cancel the New York return temporarily—I thought—and begin investigating seriously.”

He explained how he had happened to hear that a man named Hamamah might know considerable about the mystery, and so he had hired Hamamah as a guide.

“I kept hinting to this Hamamah that it would be worth several thousand dollars to me if I got any actual dope on this spirit of Jubbah Ned,” Johnny explained. “I could see the idea of the money fascinated him almost beyond bearing. Finally, one night, he broke down and talked.”

Johnny paused and eyed them.

“Here's something surprising,” he said.

He eyed them some more, building a dramatic effect.

“This spirit of Jubbah Ned has only been killing members of Jaffa's gang,” he said. “And the theory is that the spirit—ghost, spook, or whatever-the-heck you call it—is only killing those who had a hand in breaking into the tomb.”

Ham said, “So—presto! Jaffa's men rifled the tomb.”

“Well, that would follow.”

Ham said anxiously, “Why do you sound so funny?”

Johnny said grimly, “Wait, let me tell you how they got me. It was so simple I blush. This Hamamah got scared after he told me what little he did. He must have run to Jaffa, for whom he was working I'm now sure, for advice. And the advice was: Grab me. So they did. They banged me over the head, hauled me out of Cairo on a truck, loaded me on a camel, and I spent the next three weeks getting to this godforsaken place.”

He stopped.

Ham said impatiently, “All right, why did you sound so funny a while ago?”

Johnny grunted unpleasantly.

“You know why I was grabbed and turned over to these Sunhara?”

“Of course not!”

“The Sunhara are very indignant about the rifling of the tomb of Pharaoh Jubbah Ned. This Jubbah guy was their ancestor, and according to their legends, he was really Thutmose II, who left Egypt to found a new race in what was called a land of magic—which happened to be this district of peculiar pyramids, or rather, cones. The cones are called pyramids in the old hieroglyphic writing, which has led to confusion among archaeologists as to the authenticity of—”

“I'll take your word for it,” Monk Mayfair said. “This is the race old Jubbah Ned, or Thutmose II founded. So what?”

“So they're indignant about the tomb being rifled.”

“And—”

“They're determined as the devil to sacrifice the thieves.”

“Sacrifice? How?”

“The old Egyptian system,” Johnny explained. “I don't think I had better go into detail. It might make you sick.”

Monk snorted. “Why should it make me sick?”

“Because we are the ones who are going to get the works. This Jaffa has them believing we are the guys who rifled the tomb.”

Alarmed, Monk yelled, “But we never knew anything about any tomb?”

“Try telling them that,” Johnny muttered.

### Chapter XIII

ABOUT two hours later, another fight came up the stairs. Monk and the others listened to it with alarm, thinking it might mean that Doc Savage had been captured.

“No, it's not Doc,” Monk decided. “It lacks the more violent aspects of an earthquake.”

By the time the fight got to the top of the stairs it had deteriorated to grunting and cussing, and the door was hurled open.

On general principles, Monk, Ham, Johnny and Long Tom all tried to make a break. The Sunhara were expecting something of the kind, and were armed with camel-hide whips which would—and did—lay open the skin of anybody they flailed. The break had a short end.

Monk and the others retreated inside, and the new guest was thrown in with them.

Monk examined the new member. He rolled up his sleeves. “Give me room. I'm going to bounce him off the walls.”

Joe Shiraz looked at them in alarm.

Ham said, “It's the Count!”

“Is he a genuine Count?” Johnny demanded.

“Supposedly.”

Avis Wilson said, “He is very genuine.”

Monk, still rolling up his sleeves, asked politely, “Do you mind if I mangle him a little?”

Long Tom yelled, “If any mangling is done, I'm going to do it. After all, I'm the one he got in this mess.”

Avis Wilson shrugged. “Go ahead. He got me in it, too.”

Count Joe Shiraz showed enormous alarm, as well as pained surprise. “Avis, my sweet, you can't believe I—”

The girl said, "I suppose I'm deaf and blind. I suppose I didn't hear you call the Sunhara and turn Mr. Roberts and myself over to them!"

Long Tom shoved Monk. "Get out of the way. I'll tear you off an arm or a leg, and you can play with that!"

Monk got out of the way hastily. Long Tom Roberts was a thin, emaciated looking character, apparently so near collapse that he was a constant encouragement to undertakers. But his looks were deceptive. He was a man with possibilities. Monk and the others didn't know exactly how many possibilities. They had never seen them sounded to the fullest.

The truth was that the cadaverous looking Long Tom was about as feeble as half a dozen wildcats fresh off a diet of raw meat and rattlesnakes. Aroused, he was something to look out for. He sounded aroused now.

"With pleasure," Monk said, and stepped back.

"Wait!" shouted Joe desperately. "I was trying to help you!"

LONG TOM looked him over, apparently deciding where to take hold first. "Sure, you helped us. You helped us right into this room."

Joe said, "I had to. Really! I'm a secret agent of the British government."

"You're a secret agent of what?"

"C.I.D. That's Scotland Yard. And don't start telling me Scotland Yard works only in London, and in an advisory capacity elsewhere. I belong to the Associate Extension Service, in other words, the A.E.S. of the C.I.D."

Long Tom snorted. "Sounds like a new-dealer."

"I had to find out who Jaffa was!"

"Eh?"

"Jaffa. The mysterious unknown behind all this. My job was to identify him. I figured the Sunhara must know who he is. I took a chance, gave you up to them, told them I was one of Jaffa's men. They believed me. Pretty soon I found out who Jaffa is."

"You *what?*"

"I know who Jaffa is!"

"Who?"

"Jaffa showed up. He identified me as an imposter. So here I am."

"Who is Jaffa?"

Joe said wildly, "You know what they're going to do with all of us? Sacrifice us. Execute us. Use an old Egyptian ceremonial system. They start out by preparing you for embalming, when a kind of priest called a para—para something or other—"

Monk said, "Go to work on him, Long Tom. I think he's lying."

Johnny Littlejohn, the archaeologist, said angrily, "Hold on, you nitwits!" To Joe, he said, "Is that word *paraschistes*?"

"That's it, or about it," Joe said eagerly. "The *paraschistes* fellow makes an incision in your abdomen with a sacred stone, then runs away like the devil while other stones are thrown at him. Then your entrails are removed while the ceremony proceeds."

Johnny said, "Bless my soul! Why, that ceremony dates back to the Middle Kingdom. Herodotus had such a story of the ceremonial methods in his documentary history. I would certainly like to see it."

"You would *what*?" Monk yelled. "*You want to see it*? Why, you heartless hieroglyphic-reader! You want to watch while they cut *my* guts out with a sharp rock—"

"Oh, stop screaming!" Johnny said. "I merely meant the ceremony would be of enormous interest to any archaeologist."

"I feel like screaming," Monk bellowed. "I don't like this! I don't like any part of it!"

Avis Wilson, in a voice which shook, asked, "You think they will really do this?"

Johnny Littlejohn said, "Of course they will. They consider it a just punishment for our rifling the tomb of their chief ancestor, their founder. Why, it is just the same as if we had—well, it's bad in their eyes. I don't blame them."

"They're going to do it to us," Joe insisted.

Long Tom Roberts grabbed Joe by the neck.

"Look, Count," Long Tom said. "I asked you earlier—who is this Jaffa? Didn't you hear me?"

"Yes, I heard—"

"Who is he?"

"Bonny," Joe said. "Bondurant Fain."

## Chapter XIV

BONDURANT FAIN had lain concealed in a bare gully all day. He was without water, and without peace of mind, and the thermometer had remained around a hundred and ten during most of the afternoon. It split Fain's lips, and gave his skin a dry, old paper appearance, but otherwise did not damage him. The lying very still was the hardest. He had trouble doing that, because he was by nature a nervous man, and nothing that had happened had tended to make him placid.

Late in the afternoon, there was a little thumping thunder in the distance, and some closer clouds. But it was just a promise of rain, a promise that became a mockery when darkness came and the sky filled with heat lightning. Regardless of what authorities said, it *did* rain here in the Rub El Khali, but this wasn't going to be one of those times.

With the night, Bondurant Fain began stretching himself, and moving toward the plane. He went to the plane with great care, because he thought it might be watched during the day—in fact, he was fairly sure

it was.

Actually, he would not have dared to go to the plane. But that was not necessary. His destination was about a hundred yards from the craft—a spot on the floor of a gully. He had some trouble finding it.

What he had hidden there had been hidden during the previous night, when the shadows were blue black and enveloping. He had explored the spot by touch, and finally, in order to find it now, he had to shut his eyes and feel about. In that way, and by using his imagination, he located the place.

Kneeling, digging with his hands, he uncovered a large flat metal case. This was light. He brushed it off, and set it aside, and brought out another case, a smaller one, made of leather, and equipped with a shoulder-strap. The large case had a suitcase handle.

He showed considerable concern about the contents of the larger case, shaking it slightly, moving it about, listening.

Satisfied, he set off across the desert. He went with great care for a while, then more boldly, and faster.

Shortly before midnight, he began to see high cones around him. And vegetation appeared. The things that grew were all cultivated, and typical of the desert and Egypt itself—mulberry trees, date-palms, oranges, lemons and pomegranates. Here and there were occasional thorn bushes.

Once he stumbled over a kind of stone trough which was carrying water. The trough was covered with flat stones, and the water gurgled through rapidly, flowing to irrigate the date-palms and other vegetation.

Fain carefully uncovered the trough, buried his face in the water, and drank thirstily.

He went on. It was obvious that he knew where he was going.

He began to crawl forward, taking care that the cases he was carrying did not hit anything and make sound.

THE cone where he finally stopped was not as massive as the others. But this one was not of soapstone. It was of a harder stone, one that had withstood the erosion of desert ages almost perfectly—because it was no natural cone at all, but one that had been built by hand thousands of years before. About five thousand years ago, Bondurant Fain had heard. He was not sure. He was no archaeologist.

He crouched down beside a small cone, not much higher than himself, and watched the bigger cone thoughtfully.

He could see the entrance, which was rather like a thing made of dominoes, but very large. The slabs of stone were a dozen feet thick, thirty or forty feet long.

Finally, a guard appeared under the arch. He stood there motionless for a while, a Sunhara man wearing the reed crown with the gold band which Fain knew was the insignia of the chiefs, or Zates, as they were called. Fain had also heard that the word Zates was of very ancient origin, in use in Egypt as far back as the pre-dynastic periods.

The majesty of the place impressed Fain, made him almost breathless. He felt the same way whenever he visited the Pyramids. Many times he had spent hours sitting on some hotel verandah and doing nothing but stare at the relics of the might and majesty of a lost age, pondering and wordless. He had the same sensation now.

He could, in the moonlight, distinguish the hieroglyphics over the entrance of the tomb—for this was Pharaoh Jubbah Ned's tomb.

The hieroglyphics were cut deeply into the stone, perhaps not as deep now as they had been five thousand years ago, but quite plainly none the less.

My spirit will enwrap and burn,

You, who may these bones turn.

That, roughly, was the translation. Fain couldn't read hieroglyphics, but he had been told that was what they translated.

He smiled grimly, looking at the hieroglyphic inscription. His thoughts piled up in him, squirming and unpleasant, as he wondered how much different his life recently would have been if he had never heard the translation.

That translation was important. It was responsible for much that he had done—and which now he wished he hadn't done.

Fain knew that he was frightened of what he had been doing. Frightened probably more of himself, because he had been able to do such things. He hadn't supposed himself that kind of a man—that heartless, ruthless, grim.

He was too deep in it now to back out. And he did not intend to quit. His plans were to follow it through to the nasty end. And then, if his plans went well, he would go away somewhere and try to live with himself. Then, if he couldn't be reasonably placid, if the thoughts left rotting in his mind were too much, he would probably have to get himself run over by a car, or something, and killed. He had a horror of suicide. But an arranged accident didn't hold as much revulsion for him.

He was thinking that when hands came out of the darkness and took him.

It was Doc Savage, and the struggle was short. The two men lay quietly after it ended, Doc Savage rigid with the muscular power he was applying, Fain still and helpless.

Doc said finally, "I think we can whisper."

Fain, when his mouth was uncovered, whispered, "If the guard should hear us—this tomb is strictly out of bounds for everybody. They'd kill us in a minute."

"All right." Doc touched the metal case. "So this is what got Hamamah and Hotah and the others."

Fain said nothing. He was, now that he was caught, bathed in cold sweat from head to foot.

When he could finally speak, he breathed, "You followed me all the way here?"

"Yes."

"Then you must have been watching at the plane all day, too?"

"All day," Doc agreed. "I was watching you, however, not the plane."

"When did you pick up my trail?"

“Last night.”

“Oh.”

Fain was silent again. His sweating nervousness was turning into a chill like malaria, although he knew enough about himself, and how he felt when he was afraid, to know that it was nerves and fear.

He said, “I got tied up with Jaffa over five years ago.”

Doc waited, finally said, “Yes?”

“Well, I thought it was great at first. I come from the middle-western states, and when I was a kid, I used to read all about medieval history and kings and kingdoms and that stuff. I thought it would be great to have a hand in making kings and kingdoms. . . . Or did you know that is what Jaffa is trying to do?”

Doc admitted, “I knew it. So does the British and American and Russian Intelligence. They have known it for quite a while.”

“Oh, sure. But they aren't smart enough to stop Jaffa.”

“Maybe.”

“You think they are?”

“Is this an argument, or a story?”

Fain did nothing but breathe regularly and deeply for a while. He was fighting for control. His bodily stillness, such calmness as he managed to get into his voice, was all costing him intense effort.

“It was the killing that got the best of me,” he continued finally. “I'm a coward where blood is concerned. It was the damned war, maybe. I couldn't stand it. I used to see the wounded streaming into Cairo by the thousands when Rommel was so close. It just—well—I lost what guts I had. Or maybe I went crazy. However, I told myself I had come to my senses, which helped.”

Now they were very still for a while, because the tomb guard had appeared again. Fain whispered that the man would go back into the tomb, and give an ancient gesture of respect consisting of a gesture that was more like a modern salute than anything else—the guard would give this gesture three hundred and sixty-five times, one for each day of the year, before he would appear again.

The guard disappeared again.

“King-making takes money,” Fain continued. “Jaffa got the idea of looting that tomb. There was some gold in it, and some other stuff, dating back to Jubbah Ned's dynasty, that would re-finance Jaffa for at least another year. Jaffa knew about the Sunhara—”

Doc put in, “Their existence is not such a secret. They are merely troglodyte dwellers. There is quite a colony, the Troglodytes of Cappadocia, who received publicity in American magazines as far back as 1919, and even before. It just happens that they are not particularly well-known to the public.”

“The tomb wasn't known—I meant.”

“Yes?”

“Well, Jaffa and some of his men looted it. I was one of them.”

Fain paused and pointed. "Can you read that hieroglyphic from here?"

Doc studied it for a while. "My spirit will enwrap and burn you who may these bones turn.' That it?"

Fain sighed. "So that is really what it says. I don't know why that should relieve me, but it does. It is kind of like finding out there is really a Santa Claus. You see, that inscription gave me my idea."

He moved the metal case a little.

"It caused me to think of using this," he added.

BONDURANT FAIN went on talking, going back unexpectedly to his boyhood in Iowa, then in Oklahoma, and telling how he had never been able to go hunting because he couldn't bear killing things. The point he was trying to put across was that, at the time of the rifling of the tomb here, he had been desperate about the whole thing.

"I could not go to the Cairo police, or to any other police, because I was in too deep. I was guilty of too much. Jaffa would squirm out, and get me hung or shot. I didn't even have faith in the authorities being able to prove anything on Jaffa if I turned him in. Jaffa is slick, very slick, at hiding his identity."

He fell silent, hit by a sudden thought.

"I wish it had occurred to me to call on you for help. I didn't once think of that."

Doc touched the metal case. "What about this—would you call it an atmospheric coelenterata?"

Fain jumped. He jumped violently. "You—you know what it is?"

"Yes."

"How—how in God's name did you find out? Nobody but me is supposed to know that!"

Doc said, "I was able to spend hours examining Hamamah's body after the thing killed him. From what happened, there was just the one conclusion—although it was distinctly on the fantastic side, hence hard to accept at first. That was why I kept quiet about it—because it was enough on the fantastic side that I thought I might be wrong. "

"Really, it is not the least fantastic."

"Try to tell a policeman that."

"Uh—well, you're right."

Doc said, "The commonly known species of coelenterata are those living in the sea, and feeding on, in the case of the more transparent or semi-transparent species, the many small planktonic organisms they are able to absorb."

"This isn't a sea jellyfish."

"Naturally not. But it has some of the characteristics. As anyone who has done much swimming in the ocean knows, there are jellyfish which are almost transparent when floating in the water, and which will sting like the very devil when touched. The physiological problem of the explosion of the stinging capsules of the *cnidae* has always been a baffling one, but that is for scientists to worry about. Everyone, almost,

has seen a jellyfish.”

“In the water,” Fain muttered. “But this is—well—it is similar, at that. The conventional jellyfish floats in the sea. This one floats in the air.”

“Did you develop it, or discover it?”

“Both. Did you ever hear of Olesee Valley, down in the Congo?”

“No.”

“Well, it's one of those places where gas is supposed to seep out of the ground in some spots and kill people. You've got such places in the States. There's one in Colorado, where sheep are killed. I heard about this Olesee place, and went down there. It wasn't gas. It was these aërial coelenterates, or in other words, jellyfish, only buoyant. I got some, and worked with them over a period of years. I kept it to myself—probably because I'm a crook at heart. Only not a killing crook.”

“What about propulsion?”

“About the same as the common sea jellyfish. By a rhythmic or sporadic convulsion of its body. It simply swims through the air.”

“How fast?”

“Very slowly. A very, very slow walking pace is about right.”

“What type of poison does it secrete?”

“Similar to the sea-type Charybdaeidae.”

“It must be more potent. The stinging of the Charybdaeidae is not always fatal by any means.”

“It's a similar poison, though, as nearly as I can tell.”

Doc asked thoughtfully, “What about the yellow stuff?”

“That? Simply the food it likes best. A liquid.”

“How did you propel it?”

Bondurant Fain touched the second case, the leather one. “Oh, I have an air pistol in here which shoots a capsule of the stuff. A small capsule, of thin glass. It shatters.”

“The yellow food has odor?”

“Apparently, yes, that is what attracts the jellyfish.”

“How far will it go to the food?”

“Not over twenty feet, I would say.”

“Then you were within twenty feet of Hamamah and Hotah when you killed them?”

“Even closer. I simply used an open door, lurking outside. I fired the air-gun when someone was talking, which will cover the sound. And of course, the excitement when the yellow splotch appears on the victim's face diverts everybody.”

“Then you turn the thing loose?”

“Yes. It goes for the food, and in the course of absorbing it, stings the victim to death.”

“And you recover it how?”

“Oh, that's simple. Just squirt some of the yellow stuff into its box. It will come back. Then close up the box.”

Doc looked at Bondurant Fain, thoughtfully, and said, “Simple, eh?”

“I sound crazy, don't I?” Fain demanded. He seemed frightened.

NOW Doc Savage took Fain by the shoulder again, a hard-fisted grip that propelled the man forward.

“Wait! Wait!” Fain gasped. “What are you going to do?”

“You say that tomb guard is one of their higher men?”

“Yes, a leader. A Zate.”

“Then he can speak English?”

“Oh, yes. All of their headmen speak Arabic, English and French, and some of them Italian.”

“Come on.”

“What—”

“We are going to talk to them,” Doc said.

“They'll kill us! They're not bad guys when they're left alone, but when that tomb was ransacked, they stopped fooling—”

Doc interrupted, “What about the tomb contents? The stuff still all together?”

“Except for the solid gold stuff. Jaffa managed to move that right away. The other stuff is in a warehouse in Alexandria, I understand.”

“Come on. They might be interested in that.”

“They won't believe you!”

“We can find out.”

Fain thought of something else, “You haven't asked me who Jaffa is! Aren't you interested?”

“I know that already,” Doc said.

## Chapter XV

THE passing of a day and most of a night had not done any good for the nerves of Monk, Ham, Johnny and the other prisoners. They had been well-fed, or at least offered plenty of food. But one of the

Sunhara guards in presenting the victuals had made a remark which ruined appetites. Ham asked, "What did he say?" after listening to the fellow mutter. Johnny Littlejohn translated roughly, explaining the guard had said that it was much nicer if their guts would be fat with food when they were removed during the ceremony.

Avis Wilson gave a little cry.

"Break your callused bones!" Monk told Johnny. "That's too plain talk for a lady."

Johnny said he was sorry; he was a little excited and forgot himself.

"That's all right," Avis Wilson said.

But that—or something—preyed on her mind thereafter, they could see. She kept to herself, white-faced, trembling sometimes, and replied with monosyllables, or not at all, when she was spoken to.

Along toward dawn, she broke over.

She leaped up, went to the door, which had a small ventilating opening, and she screamed through this hole: "Jaffa! Jaffa! You can't let them kill me! I've followed all your orders!"

Dumfounded, Monk yelled, "What are you saying? What do you mean?"

The girl burst into tears. "I'm one of them."

"Of who?"

"Jaffa's crew."

The story came out, salted with misery and tears. She had no money, because she had spent what she had inherited a little too freely. Frightened, accustomed to money and terrified by suddenly being without it, she had been an easily persuaded recruit.

Her work for Jaffa had been simple espionage, frequenting the better circles of Cairo, the Turkish capital of Ankara, and other cities, picking up what she could. Small fry.

Count Joe Shiraz said, "Avis, Avis, darling—I never dreamed—"

"Oh, shut up!" Avis Wilson said. "It was you who got me into it in the first place. You came to me and said Jaffa would pay well for simple work, work I could do without changing my way of living."

Monk emitted a howl. "This guy Joe is one, too?"

"Yes," Avis said.

Monk and Long Tom both approached Joe ominously. "So you've been lying to us," Long Tom said.

Joe was genuinely terrified.

"Please! Please don't hurt me!" he pleaded. "When they threw me in here—"

"Why *did* the Sunhara toss you in here?"

"Because Jaffa doesn't trust me any more," Joe said gloomily. "And when they threw me in with you, I was afraid you would tear me to pieces if you knew I was one of the gang."

Johnny said, "I'll be superamalgamated!"

"What's the matter?"

"Coming up the stairs. Listen!"

The Sunhara, enough of them to fill the corridor outside, arrived and threw open the door. The leader, one of the men with a woven, gold-banded hat, made a brief speech, which Johnny translated.

"They are going to sacrifice us as the sun comes up," he said.

"When will the sun be up?"

"In about fifteen minutes."

"Oh, my God!" Ham muttered.

THE tomb-cone of Pharaoh Jubbah Ned was impressive in the pre-dawn light. It was situated in the middle of a number of symmetrical cones, none of which were excavated, and many of which still bore the cap-rocks which had been responsible for the strange formations. Millions of years ago, of course, there had been a surface strata of stone, which was freckled with very hard rock in many spots. The soft rock had worn away, leaving the hard stuff, and erosion had continued downward, wearing away all but the soapstone that was covered with the hard rocks, the result being the formation of the unusual cones.

The Sunhara, somewhat more than a thousand of them—men only; the women and children were evidently not permitted to witness at close range—were gathered about the tomb-cone.

The women and children, however, were present, but standing farther away. Many of them occupied windows in cones which gave a view of the tomb-cone. Any spot that would serve as a grandstand seat was in demand.

Arrayed prominently in front of the tomb-cone entrance, practically under the arch, were the members of Jaffa's party who had come by plane earlier.

The fat man, Theodolphus Cooissus, was prominent, and apparently in charge.

Monk, looking around and distinguishing no sign of Doc Savage or Bondurant Fain, heaved a grunt of relief.

"That fat guy!" Monk exclaimed. "Is *he* this fellow Jaffa, maybe?"

Joe said, "I tell you, Jaffa is Bondurant Fain."

Monk asked Avis Wilson, "How about that?"

"I doubt it," the girl said. "I think Fain is a nice man at heart. I mean—he isn't the bloodthirsty kind of a devil that this Jaffa must be."

"Fain can fool women!" Joe muttered.

Monk said, "Avis, you don't know who Jaffa is, then?"

She said she didn't.

Joe was looking around and licking his lips.

“Where is your notable Doc Savage?” he demanded nervously.

“How would I know?” Monk was uneasy.

“He better be showing up quick, if he expects to help us.”

Monk grunted. “What could Doc do against a gang like this?”

“Don't you think he'll try to help us?”

“Of course!” Monk said. “And that's a hell of a question.”

NOW they were lined up before the entrance to the tomb. Monk and the others were in a tight group, and nearby were the Jaffa crew, the latter not ostensibly armed, but with suspicious bulges here and there under their clothing.

A Sunhara man, a tall straight-backed Zate, stood with widespread arms, waiting. A silence fell. The Zate had a voice like a public address system with a 20-watt output.

He spoke in Sunhara, which was quite unintelligible to Monk, but barely understandable to Johnny, who had studied ancient Egyptian tongues intensively.

Johnny did some ragged translating.

“He's giving a rough history of Pharaoh Jubbah Ned,” Johnny explained. “It's about as we had heard it.”

The speaker became more solemn. He was telling, Johnny explained, about the solemn value the Sunhara had always placed on their tomb. It was sacred ground.

Suddenly the speaker flew into a windmilling rage, and his bellowing echoed from the surrounding cones.

“Got around to the ransacking of the tomb, eh?” Monk surmised.

“That's it.”

From excitement, the speaker's manner shifted to grimness. Johnny listened intently, finally said, “I'll be superamalgamated!”

“Eh? What's he saying?”

Johnny grunted uneasily. “I thought these guys were pretty sensible, but he's gone goofy on us. He is saying that, before the sacrifice is made, he is giving the spirit of Jubbah Ned a chance to appear and strike the guilty ones—strike the one responsible for thinking up the rifling of the tomb.”

“Then he's just a superstitious nut?”

“I don't know,” Johnny said. “The other part of his speech was quite sensible. Nothing in it about ghosts and spirits of any Pharaoh—and when he said we were going to be killed, he called it punishment, not sacrifice. But this stuff about a spirit getting a chance—”

He went silent.

The Zate had thrown up his arms, was standing rigid. The other Zates—there were about six of them—had done likewise. Slowly the arms of all the Sunhara went up. There was a silence, then a small *chung!*

Count Joe Shiraz screamed.

Monk jumped practically a yard and whirled.

Joe had a yellow splotch on his face. The same kind of a yellow splotch which had appeared on the faces of Hamamah and Hotah and the other victims of the “spirit” of the old Pharaoh.

Joe rubbed some of the yellow stuff off on his hands and looked at it.

His character changed completely.

He jumped out of the prisoner lineup, ran toward the Jaffa group.

He yelled, “They're wise to us! It's a setup, a frame-up! Shoot your way out of here!”

The Jaffa men took Joe's orders instantly.

“Oh, Lord, Joe is Jaffa!” Monk croaked.

THE rest didn't take long. Jaffa's men started going for guns, mostly revolvers and pistols concealed under their clothing. But there were a few short rifles and one sawed-off automatic shotgun.

Up out of the surrounding sand came Sunhara men. Literally out of the sand, because they had been artfully concealed in scooped holes and covered over, and probably breathing through hollow reeds. They threw hoods away from their eyes, and went to work on Jaffa's men with blades and firearms.

Monk stood gap-mouthed until it dawned on him that he was about to miss what would probably be the final fight. He said, “Blazes! Save one for me!” and dashed forward.

Long Tom was already moving. He made for Joe, or Jaffa, for now there was no doubt but that Joe was Jaffa.

Doc Savage and Bondurant Fain, together with more Sunhara, came out of the tomb interior. They piled into the fight.

Dust arose and enveloped the fray scene. There was as much gagging and hacking from the dust as there was swearing and grunting from blows. Monk waded into this mess, disappeared, shortly came backing out dragging, by error, a Sunhara. He let the Sunhara go, and went back in to try his luck again.

Joe dashed out of the fight.

Avis Wilson saw him, screamed, “Watch Joe! Watch Jaffa! There he goes!”

Joe had collected, in some fashion, three pistols and a rifle. He fired once at the girl, missing by yards, then went on.

Joe popped into the tomb, the only handy refuge.

The dust blew away within a minute or two, disclosing Jaffa's men spread out in various stages of death

and injury.

A Zate yelled, pointed at the tomb entrance. He and about five Sunhara dashed into the tomb.

Gunfire inside the tomb made a sporadic coughing noise. Only three of the Sunhara came back out, the Zate not among them. Two of the survivors were wounded.

Doc talked to them for a while.

“Jaffa, or Joe, is barricaded inside the tomb,” Doc explained.

Monk, skinned and begrimed and more cautious, said, “Let's see what we can do about that.”

With Doc and Fain and Long Tom, Monk crept into the tomb entrance. There was a passage, gloomy at the other end, then a sharp turn.

Monk hung his shirt on a stick, said loudly, “All right, charge!” and pushed the shirt around the corner. Bullets knocked it off the stick.

“That guy can shoot,” he muttered.

Long Tom had stumbled over a metal case. “What's this?”

While they stood there, trying to figure a way of getting at Jaffa, Fain explained about the case. He described his jellyfish, then spent some time insisting to the skeptical Monk that it was really a jellyfish, even if it was buoyant enough to float around in the air. The buoyancy, Fain explained, was a simple gas similar to hydrogen which the thing generated within its body cells. It could float in the air, rise, fall, through buoyancy, but the propulsion was entirely a matter of contraction and movement of the mass.

Doc said, “We will go outside and talk with the Sunhara. We might smoke Jaffa out, if they do not object to having the tomb interior smoked up.”

“Or we can hold him penned up until we can bring in some tear gas,” Long Tom said.

Long Tom and Fain went outside with Doc to consult with the Sunhara. Monk and Ham remained behind, on guard.

Fain asked uneasily, “What will you fellows do with Miss Wilson?”

“Do you recommend anything?”

“Could I absorb her share of the punishment?”

Long Tom said, “You are in love with her, aren't you?”

“Uh—sure,” Fain said, embarrassed. “But do me a favor and don't tell her, will you. I mean—I've told her myself lots of time, but now that she is going to find out about that air-jellyfish thing, I'd just as soon she didn't hear any more about my feelings.”

THERE came, unexpectedly, an uproar from back in the tomb. It sounded like a kitten mewling horribly. Doc and the others wheeled, ran back. The mewings became louder and took on a quality that somehow made them all feel ill.

They reached Monk and Ham and Monk yelled, “Wait! Don't go in there!”

“Why?”

Monk pointed at the metal case. “That thing that was in the box must be in the tomb now!”

Doc demanded, “Isn't it in the box?”

“Apparently not.”

“It is supposed to be!”

“Is it?” Monk asked innocently.

LATER, Doc Savage warned Bondurant Fain, “You will have to take your medicine from the American and British authorities for this.”

“Sure. I know. That's all right.” Fain looked at the bronze man hopefully. “Could—could Miss Wilson be spared any of it?”

“No. She is guilty of complicity.”

Long Tom said, “They'll probably give you both a medal.”

Fain grimaced. “A medal, and twenty years in the penitentiary, probably.”

He was one-quarter right, it later developed. He got five years, not twenty, but it was a suspended sentence, so that he didn't have to go to jail as long as he behaved himself. Monk Mayfair and Ham Brooks both tried to convince the authorities that he wouldn't be behaving himself if he went on a honeymoon, but they got nowhere with that. Fain and Avis Wilson were married. Monk and Ham were both disgusted, because their theory was that pretty girls shouldn't get married. Not to other guys, anyway.

MONK got an alarmed Ham in a corner and said, “You fork-tongued shyster! If you ever tell Doc that I let that jellyfish thing out of the box and shooed it back into the tomb after Jaffa—”

“Listen,” Ham said. “You know that wife and twelve half-wit children story?”

“Huh?”

“Promise you'll never tell that lie on me again, and I'll keep my mouth shut,” Ham said.

“Sure,” Monk said.

He looked to make sure his fingers were crossed.

THE END