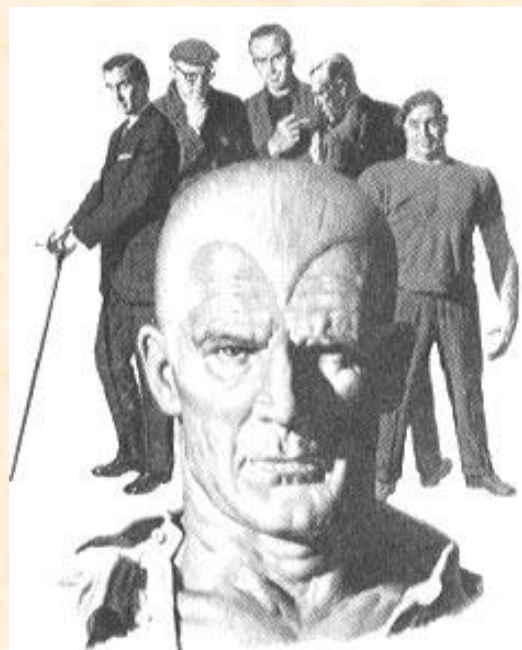
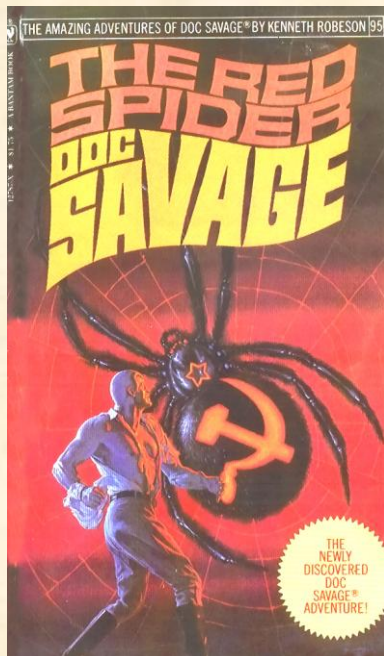


archived at http://www.stealthskater.com/DocSavage/DS182_The_Red_Spider.zip [DOC]
http://www.stealthskater.com/DocSavage/DS182_The_Red_Spider_pdf.zip [PDF]

to read more Doc Savage novels, go to <http://www.stealthskater.com/DocSavage.htm>

Doc Savage Magazine #182 - **"The Red Spider"** by Lester Dent - April/1948
{Bantam Cover by Bob Larkin}



*Doc smuggles himself into Moscow on his most daring mission yet.
The **Man of Bronze** tangles with a deadly military secret ... some sinister Soviets ...
and -- most dangerous of all -- a heroine of the Russian underground who is as
treacherous as she is beautiful.*




Originally printed and copyrighted circa 1933 by Street & Smith Publications, Inc. Copyright renewed circa 1963 by The Conde Nast Publications, Inc. Printed in paperback by Bantam Books. It doesn't appear that these will be reprinted in the near future. So the following out-of-print editions may be read only for your personal interest and may not be otherwise duplicated or published for profit.

The adventurers of Doc Savage originally appeared in magazine format in 1933-1949. Note that this timeframe was before jet planes and the semiconductor technology to which we are accustomed today. The fastest planes were 400-mph propeller jobs and vacuum tube technology still ruled radio. The most fantastic weapons encountered by Doc may have been based on of John Keely's *"vibrational"* and Nikola Tesla's *"scalar-wave"* theories [<http://www.stealthskater.com/Bearden.htm>] that were popular then.

At times, the writing style of the various Doc Savage "ghostwriters" was influenced by the prevailing sentiments of the Nation's reading audience of that era. As a result, a few portions might not be *"politically correct"* in today's society. Minor editing efforts have been made in these archives to "update" these. Finally -- as a rough estimate -- multiply all dollar(\$) amounts by 10 to convert to '2004' dollars (e.g., \$5 back then would be \$50 today).

#182 The Red Spider

by *Lester Dent* (July/1979)

the Adventures of Doc Savage	by 'Kenneth Robeson' (house name)	Bantam Cover Artists
refer to DS000.doc for a biography of all the Kenneth Robeson "ghostwriters"   	Lester Dent (creator and main author)	James Bama (created 72 covers)
	Harold A. Davis (wrote 13 adventures)	Bob Larkin (created 77 covers)
	Laurence Donovan (wrote 9 adventures)	Fred Pfeiffer (created 14 covers)
	Philip J. Farmer (wrote 1 adventure)	Boris Vallejo (created 6 covers)
	Will Murray (wrote 7 adventures)	Doug Rosa (created 2 covers)
	William G. Bogart (wrote 14 adventures)	Jim Aviati (created 1 cover)
	Ryerson Johnson (wrote 3 adventures)	Mort Kunstler (created 1 cover)
	Alan Hathway (wrote 4 adventures)	Peter Richardson (created 1 cover)
		Roger Kastel (created 4 covers)

{limited editing/embellishing and electronic formatting by '*StealthSkater*' - April/2005}

CONTENTS

to skip to a given chapter, [<click> on it from the list below](#)

Chapter I	1
Chapter II	4
Chapter III	12
Chapter IV	19
Chapter V	30
Chapter VI	39
Chapter VII	45
Chapter VIII	52
Chapter IX	57
Chapter X	65
Chapter XI	72
Chapter XII	78
Afterword by Will Murray	81

Chapter I

At 15 minutes past 6:00, a Colonel Renwick reached a village named Tyrolstadt in the American zone.

Lunging out of the staff car, he glanced at his wristwatch for the time (it was 1815 the way he read it) and he blurted: "Hoy cow!"

He began to run.

The ramp had been built on the *familien abfahrt* (and easy ski trail at the east edge of the village) and the Colonel reached the spot red-faced and panting.

A radar technician named Roberts grinned at the Colonel and said: "Made it!"

"Yeah," gasped Colonel Renwick. "I had a flat tire this side of Salzburg. After that, I had visions of the top brass snatching these 'chickens' off my shoulders."

"There's more than your 'chickens' at stake."

"That's right, too."

"Well, you got here," said Roberts. "1840 is 'Zero hour'."

The early darkness had a lacing of moonlight. There was no snow here in the valley. But enough snow smeared the adjacent mountains to make them look like great soiled goats.

The ramp was not a terrific thing as rocket-launching ramps came. But it was impressive standing there alone in the alien mountain beauty like a river bridge out of its element, somewhat.

About 30 men were around either looking or working. More in uniform than not.

"The Russians pushed their hard noses into it, I see," remarked the Colonel.

"Yes. Half-a-dozen of them," said Roberts.

"Are they full of bliss?"

"Ignorance bliss, you mean?"

"Exactly."

"I believe they're bliss up to there," said Roberts.

"I hope they stay that way."

Roberts said warningly: "Let's change the subject. No telling where you run into a lip-reader these days."

He pointed and added: "They're getting to ramp the rocket now."

The service party whipped the tarpaulin off the cart on which the rocket was resting and a loading crane arched up with gears whining. Floodlights came on and covered the scene with an unnecessary amount of **blinding light**.

The radar-tracker keyman in 'Position Zero' jumped out of his nest of apparatus and cursed the floodlight operators for a bunch of Kentucky baboons.

They ignored him.

The loaders began cursing. The Russians had rushed in and started taking pictures and measurements.

The Russian move was obviously planned, concerted, and surely intended to be as much obstructionist and irritating as fact-getting. As anyone knew, photographs of the outside of the rocket and the tape-measurements they insisted on taking wouldn't tell anybody much about the complicated guts of the thing.

But the Ivans went right ahead. Camera flashbulbs popped. Steel-tape rulers and notebooks waved. Russians shoved Yankees and the favor was returned.

Colonel Renwick waved his arms and screamed for order! He had a considerable **voice**. Peasant dogs began barking in alarm as far as 2 miles away!

With some order restored, Colonel Renwick made them a little speech in which he said he was clarifying the situation.

Radar, the Colonel said, wasn't a new thing. So he wouldn't bother to tell anybody what it was. He presumed that everyone knew it was a process of bouncing very short radio waves off an object and catching the reflections and showing them on a screen similar to that in a television tube.

Jamming a radar set so that it wouldn't function reliably, the Colonel said, was not a new endeavor either. It had been done with varying success with several methods beginning with releasing numerous ribbons of *metallic* paper in the sky during the last War.

But a new method of really messing up the atmosphere over a considerable area so that radar was really jammed, continued the Colonel, was another matter.

It was theoretically possible, though, if one ionized the atmospheric layers (preferably those below the Tropospheric zone) so that radar microwaves were refracted the same way that shortwave radio frequencies are affected by the ionization mystery of the Heaviside layer. This was the purpose of the experiment tonight.

Thanks to the electronic genius of Thomas J. "Long Tom" Roberts -- a well-known New York electrical engineer in his own right and associate of the super-eminent scientist and adventurer **Doc Savage** -- they were going to show that Yankee ingenuity had triumphed again and warm-minded nations might as well discard their radar for all the good it would do them.

The dignified Long Tom Roberts listened to the oration, mentally noting a few flaws in it. Except that the mention of **Doc Savage** wasn't exaggerated (in Long Tom's opinion, it was difficult to exaggerate Doc Savage), the speech was a bunch of mush.

The facts that were there were all true. So it wasn't much because of that.

It just happened that the Russians were understood to have a radar-jamming rocket similar to the one being shot off tonight. It also happened that the Americans had a considerably better one under wraps.

The omissions -- rather than the insertions -- flawed the Colonel's oratory.

The American ambassador sent a note of apology to Moscow. The American commanding general in the zone sent Moscow a note demanding return of the rocket remnants uninspected.

The Russians ignored both notes. A writer for *Izvestia* called the Americans imperialistic toads, boors, thieves, bloated monkeys; said that 2,000 people starved to death in New York City that day; and that Florida had declared war on California. Molotov vetoed.

In the privacy of the staff car, Colonel Renwick and Long Tom Roberts shook hands ceremoniously.

"I would say," remarked the Colonel, "that we suckered them."

"A perfect scald at this end," Long Tom Roberts agreed. "Or it would like it, anyway."

"You sure they won't be able to spot an aircraft following the path which that rocket took?"

"For about 3 hours," said Roberts, "Ivan's radar will be blind as a bat."

"How was the timing?"

"On the nose."

"Then the rest is up to Doc."

"The rest," said Long Tom Roberts, suddenly sober, "is really going to be something."

Colonel Renwick looked at him thoughtfully.

"You like *excitement*. Don't you kind of hate missing it?"

Roberts shuddered.

"I don't like it when it's tied up with sudden death the way this is going to be."

Chapter II

The pilot's voice had a faraway, cut-in-glass quality in the earplug receivers.

He said: "Altitude 34,000. 215 seconds from 'Check None'. Airspeed Mach 1-point-16. All **green**."

Doc Savage said: "All **green**. Right. All **green** here, too."

It was already hot in the ship. At slightly under a speed of 1,000 miles-per-hour, there was considerable friction-generated heat. The refrigeration mechanism was performing as usual. Which meant that it either kept things too hot or too cold.

Doc Savage was not riding in the most advantageous spot, either. He was in the "pop-up blister". They needed to do some more design work on it because the streamlining -- which had looked well enough in the wind tunnels -- was not perfect at this speed.

Or perhaps it was the altitude. 34,000 feet was pretty close to the Earth for speed over sound. The trouble, though, was that if they went higher (above 50,000) where the conditions were better, there was a chance that the Soviet radar might top the blackout path made by the runaway rocket (the runaway so carefully computed).

And so they were keeping at a comparatively low level. The speed was being kept down (not much over breakthrough). But it was still uncomfortably hot.

Doc Savage waited without much visible suspense on his rather pleasant **bronze** face. The moonlight that came in through the transparent stress plastic of the "blister" had a bluish quality that added to the metallic impression that his face gave and enhanced the slightly darker **bronze** of his hair and the remarkable **flake-gold** aspect of his eyes (which were probably his most striking characteristic).

He wasn't particularly comfortable in the pop-off blister. Each time he tried to shift position to let a little circulation move to another part of his body, he was reminded that the space had been designed for a man of average size.

He didn't qualify as "average". This was not the first time that it had not been an asset to be (as a newspaper had called it) a **Muscular Marvel**.

"Cloud floor?" Doc asked while laying a fingertip against the throat microphone.

"Cloud floor 21,000 below," the pilot responded instantly. "Position now 40 seconds past. 'Check 10'. Airspeed Mach 1-point-14. Reducing."

"Thanks."

"Heat bothering you, Sir?" asked the pilot.

"Not much. I'm wringing wet is all."

There was a moment of silence.

The *silence* -- considering everything -- was really remarkable because at that speed, they were flouting sound.

The *silence* of beyond-sound flight, Doc Savage reflected, was one thing that he would probably never become quite accustomed to. It was too much of a contrast to the thousands-of-hours he had flown before jet aircraft were developed.

He heard the pilot's voice: "I hope it doesn't give you cold, Sir. There will be what you might call quite a draft when you take to the parachute. And drafts are hell for colds."

In a moment, the pilot added: "What are you laughing at, Sir?"

"The idea of thinking about catching cold in a situation like this just struck me as funny," Doc told him. "Sorry. No offense. Where are we?"

"Position 8 seconds past 'Check 11'. 214 miles from Moscow. Altitude still 34,000 feet."

"Break through at 'Check 12'."

"I understand, Sir."

The pilot's voice had a sudden high edge of tension in it. He was experienced with rocket ships. So going through the wild and still unpredictable zone of compressibility surrounding the speed-of-sound was not new to him. But doing it had evidently given him nothing but respect.

The low altitude wasn't any asset, either.

"Deceleration."

"Right," Doc said.

"Barrel four off."

"Okay here."

"Speed now Mach 1-point-09. Cutting Barrel three."

"All **green**."

There was no sign that the ship was losing speed. She was pinned in that weird silence and only if one looked down and saw that the clouds were seemingly moving was there much impression of existence at all.

"Time Zero minus 14. Error minus 2. Airspeed Mach 1002 ... I mean, 1-point-02."

The pilot sounded flustered.

"Hell! We're going through, Sir. Cross your fingers and pray," he added.

Cracking the sonic wall from the topside was not the hair-raising adventure that it had been to the pioneers. But like knowledge about which end of a gun the bullets come from, it could be unnerving when faced.

Doc Savage started to take a deep breath. The breath was half indrawn when he knew already they were into it.

There wasn't much doubt. It was like going into the jaws of a gigantic machine operating at crazy speed. Like falling into such a machine if one were a tiny object and as fragile as a penny matchbox.

*It lasted ... Well, it was hard to know how long it lasted because **terror** was timeless (as it always is) ...*

... and then they were through and the controls were hard again and rocket ship all in one piece.

"You all right, Savage?" the pilot asked in a shaken voice.

Doc touched his nose and discovered it was bleeding a little.

"All **green** here," he said. "I think the next time I do that, I'd prefer it be at a higher altitude."

"Oh brother!" the pilot said. "You and me both! I'll go up to 40,000 before I try it on the return trip."

"Check point?" Doc asked.

"One minus 'Check 14', Sir. Altitude 31,000. Airspeed 580.

"Cut to 300 gradually."

"Right!"

"Scan for signal," the **Bronze Man** directed.

"Scanner on. Signal spotted. Bearing 22-7-3. Error 2-point-5."

"Set blow-sight," Doc said.

"Below-sight set. All **green**. Error 2-point-5 dialed."

The pilot apparently swallowed.

"Good luck, Sir. It's been a privilege if I may say so."

"Thanks. And good luck," Doc said.

He steeled himself and waited.

3-point-81 seconds later, the blow-off sight -- which was similar to an automatic bombsight -- functioned and the "blister" in which he was riding was hurled clear of the ship by an explosive charge.

When the "blister" had decelerated to the proper point, the automatic toss-out sent the parachutes aloft. The shock that followed was not bad.

After that, there was quite a lot of swinging during a long monotonous fall into the cloud floor.

In the cloud floor, there was anything but monotony. He went in at 18,000, the altimeter in the "blister" told him. And his eyes told him what he was going into ...

Cumulonimbus!

The great nodular stacks of clouds like the intestines out of a monster with the shipped-away anvil tops meant *cumulonimbus* -- thunderheads, wind, lightning, hail, rain, and **trouble!** Even big planes avoided such things.

He began to feel the darting and jolting of the nachelle. He watched the rate-of-climb uneasily. In this case, the instrument might properly be called a "rate-of-fall".

As he watched it, it stopped and actually began to climb again. The up-currents inside a thunderhead were frequently terrific. He began to tighten all his massive *muscles* ...

... then caught himself showing this nervousness and relaxed.

The thunderstorm was not entirely unexpected. Even the weather was supposed to be secret behind the Iron Curtain. But the meteorologists were no fools and they had computed a cold front lying across Moscow.

A "cold front" meant thunderstorms. He had hoped, though, that he wouldn't have to come down through the center of one!

The rate-of-climb needle showed descent again. He watched it, deciding both chutes were still intact and pulling. Losing a chute wouldn't be too bad. There was a reserve for the nachelle and he wore a pack-chute himself. Every precaution had been taken along that line.

The real danger -- the thing that bothered him most -- was that the storm might ruin the spot-drop. He was being pinpointed. **He had been dropped like a precision-aimed bomb!**

Down below on the Earth somewhere was a microwave-beam projector. The blow-off "blister" was self-directed automatically and would land somewhere near that. **[StealthSkater note: akin to modern guided munitions homing in on a target illuminated by a laser designator.]**

Or would it? The thunderstorm might ruin that.

Rain smeared the plastic "blister" shell. It made the World a void of grease. *Lightning* stood out intermittently about him in rods and shaking forks. He could hear the **thunder** as cannonading. Once there was the ugly chatter of *hail* against the transparent plastic.

A warning horn began twittering. It was set to operate at 3,000 feet above terrain. He consulted gauges quickly. Rate-of-fall was normal. All strain lights were **green**. He decided not to use the backpack chute.

He touched the guide-path check-control button. **Green.**

But the **orange** beside it flickered also. He was, then, not exactly on the scheduled descent path. But not too far off it.

He had now a short burst of seconds in which to be tormented by whatever was at hand in his mind to torment him. *In other words, he was waiting to hit the ground.*

His thoughts went -- automatically -- to the Project as a whole. Its magnitude and its significance. These still seemed impressive. They seemed worth the risk that he was taking. It was not a nice business. Quite likely he was now engaged in the most placid part of it. And he was fairly certain that this would be the least dangerous portion.

But he saw no regrets. And that was important.

He hit!

"Good God! I've landed in a river of some sort," he thought.

But then when there was no rolling and tumbling -- and after the first wild bouncing and splash a comparative stillness except for the **thunder** of the rain, he changed the conviction.

There was a sensation in his feet. He looked down and saw the faces of the instruments (luminous by radiance) disappear one-by-one. When he explored with a hand, the hand went into water.

He came out of his inactivity, startled to realize that he had just been sitting there enjoying the novelty of being earthbound again.

His hand located the **black-light** projector. He pointed it outward and <pressed> the control.

At the same time, he put on the scanner that went with the arrangement for seeing in the dark.

He was sitting like a rather elongated glass egg in a ditch about 10 feet deep and not much wider. The coursing water was about 2 feet deep. It was "raining pitchforks" and the it didn't help operation of the **black-light** scanner.

He remained where he was, perfectly attentive to a certain light. It was supposed to flash, controlled by the man who was to meet him here.

Presently it did glow. **Green.**

Throwing open the safety belts, he <touched> the exit trigger. With a jolt, the "blister" opened almost in 2 halves.

When he stood up, the naturalness of the rain was against his face.

A voice on the ditch edge above addressed him in very good Russian.

"*Kak vahse zdaarovye, tovarich?*"

Although it was the equivalent of a "How are you doing, pal?", he jumped violently ... then said:

"That's a fine greeting. Where is your sense of drama?"

It was Ham Brooks on the ditch edge. He knew that in spite of the darkness.

Ham was one of his group of Five(5) aides who had been associated with him almost from the beginning of his strange career.

"I take it you're all right," Ham said. "Well, I'm not. It's this damn mud! I never knew mud could be so thoroughly **mud**. Whenever I take a step, I keep expecting it to squirt out of my ears!."

Ham's handling of the English language was completely Harvard. It was an oddity about him that he spoke a number of foreign languages with completely native accenting. But his English was so affected as to be almost irritating.

He was a lawyer by trade. A superior lawyer. But he rarely took time out from the pursuit of *excitement* with Doc Savage to do any court work.

"Coast clear?" Doc Savage asked.

"As far as I can tell," said Theodore Marley "Ham" Brooks. "You missed the 'zero spot' by about 150 yards. I guess it was that thunderstorm. How was your trip in?"

"Fine," the *bronze giant* said. "Here, catch this line. I want you to haul up 2 equipment packs."

The apparatus was in 2 aluminum cases enclosed in sponge rubber and waterproof plastic film. Ham drew them out of the gully.

"Grab the end of the line."

Then when Doc stood beside him, the dapper lawyer asked: "What about the chariot you arrived in?"

"The dropping 'blister', you mean? It is auto-timed for demolition in 2 hours."

"Won't the explosion leave pieces and get attention?"

"No explosion," Doc said. "A *thermite* compound. Everything will simply burn up."

"In this rain?"

"All materials entering the structural composition of the 'blister' were impregnated during manufacture. They'll burn all right -- rain or no rain."

Ham suddenly laughed.

"Doc, you've no idea how good it is to hear you casually tossing off the incredible. I've been in this dopey country just long enough to forget that your kind of efficiency exists."

"What is the general picture?" Doc asked, interested.

"Not good," Ham said. "There's more brutality than efficiency. But don't get me wrong. On the side of brutality, there is plenty of efficiency."

"You're not just speaking as a capitalist?"

"No," Ham said. "I'm speaking as a guy who wishes the human race would come to its senses and stop letting cold-blooded tyrants cut its throat."

"What's your transportation?"

"I have a car," Ham explained. "It's parked in the brush down the way a bit."

"Car? How did you manage that?"

"Monk."

"Oh."

"That part's a long and painful story which I will skip at this point," the aristocratic attorney explained. But I think I should break the news to you -- hold your hat -- that out Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Blodgett 'Monk' Mayfair is now a commissar in the Russian Textile Workers' Union. I don't understand exactly what that is. But it can't be as important as he claims it is."

"Monk's status rates him a personal car, eh?"

"And a chauffeur."

"Oh? Where is the chauffeur?"

"It galls my soul to tell any man this," Ham said bitterly. "But the chauffeur stands right in front of you. **Me.**"

"You?!"

"Pray to God it may never happen to a dog -- yes."

Doc Savage had trouble suppressing a grin.

"Hard for you to take, eh?"

"Frankly," said Ham, "rather than put up with the indignity, I have seriously considered letting Civilization go right ahead to Hell."

Chapter III

The car was a Russakoff and seemed to be a very earnest imitation of one of the best-known American makes. Even to body line and radiator grilling.

It ran quite well, too. That was because it was a commissar's car, Ham Brooks explained.

They loaded in and drove through squirm-drifting sheets of cold rain over a road that was bumpy and full of abrupt twists and turns. It had also been paved with cobblestones of the general size of washtubs (probably during the reign of Ivan the Terrible).

"About 30 miles to Moscow," Ham said. "We will enter by the Nikos Kaja Ulitza, Ulitza Dershinskoge Spelenka. That's all one street, to give you an idea of how 'simple' things are around here."

"Do I need any briefing?" Doc asked.

"You'll have more need for the luck of a saint," Ham said.

He hesitated ... then added: "No, you'll just need to operate in your usual fashion. I tell you, this place runs people nuts! And I'm forgetting just how efficient you can be."

"Let's have some details," the **Bronze Man** said. "Less the around-the-bush technique."

"Nobody takes a straight line in Russia," Ham said. "It gets you to tomorrow too quick. Seriously, though, we've had some good luck and some bad."

"How bad?"

"The worst snag," Ham said, "is picking our apple now that we've found him. I'll skip a lot of the details -- some of which have been in your hands for some time and some of which we felt too vital to chance interception.

"But the general picture is that there is one official -- a 'central coordinator' or whatever you want to call him, one '**Spider**' who has hold of one end of all the threads that make up the Web -- who is our answer.

"If we can grab him; get truth serum and drugs into him; get the facts out of him; get them recorded; and get them back to the part of World where they know what daylight is ... well, we've done our job. His name is **Frunzoff**."

Doc Savage watched the spongy blobs of pale mile light that the headlamps were pushing over the road. He was impressed.

"Ham, that's a remarkable piece of work in itself," he said. "Nobody as far as I know -- and I've had access to the most confidential reports of several nations -- has been able to learn the identity or even the existence of such a '**Spider**' as you call him."

Ham Brooks was surprised.

"But hell! You told us that was what we were to look for when we started the job."

"I didn't have a single fact," Doc said. "But it is only logical that Stalin -- in view of his phobia about assassination and its not remote likelihood -- would have established a Master Control responsible only to him and completely unknown even to his associates in the Kremlin."

"He has. Frunzoff is it."

"Who is Frunzoff? What is his background?"

"That," said Ham, "is what I could be trite and call the '64-dollar question'. Frunzoff can be male, female, bird, beast, or catfish and we would be none-the-wiser. As well as not surprised, incidentally."

"You haven't put your finger on Frunzoff, then?"

"No."

"Any leads?"

"Monk claims he has some," Ham said. "But I'm not too sure. You know how the big ape is."

Doc Savage said fervently: "I hope his leads aren't female the way they've been known to be."

"So do I!" Ham said explosively.

"How about that?"

"Well, for Monk he's been remarkably nonpartial so far," the dapper lawyer admitted. "I think that this commissar job has let him see enough of the way they do things here to keep him thoroughly scared. He has warned me a dozen times that if there's one slip, we'll all disappear like drops of water on a hot stove."

"That doesn't sound too much like Monk."

"Wait until you see Commissar Michevitch. That's Monk, by the way," Ham said, chuckling. "When you've seen that, you've seen something."

Wind struck the car, repented rushing roaring blows. And the rain made great washings overhead and a sound of a continuous small waterfall under the wheels. There were no streetlights yet.

Doc Savage palmed some of the condensation from inside the window. He looked out and decided with astonishment that the number of ramshackle frame huts -- typical Russian village *izba* -- meant that they were in the outskirts of Moscow.

"Any chance of roadblocks and an inspection?" Doc asked.

"I was hoping you wouldn't think of that," Ham told him uneasily. "Sure there is. If it wasn't raining cats-and-dogs, I would guarantee it. How are you fixed for identification?"

"That's taken care of. I'm Ivar Golat -- a messenger for the GPU, the State Political Administration. You don't know me. So in case we're stopped, I'm just a *tovaarich* to whom you gave a lift. Where are you quartered?"

"With Monk. On Ulitza Ogarewa."

"That's near the Kremlin."

"A few blocks away."

"Monk will be there?"

"Supposed to be."

Ham suddenly slammed on the brakes ... changed his mind ... blew the horn angrily and stamped on the accelerator.

The performance had no effect on the bedraggled raincoated soldier who stood in their path. He simply pointed his rifle at them.

Ham said "*Damn!*" and slid the wheels to a stop.

"Road check," he told Doc. "Means nothing, probably."

The soldier -- a gaunt rough-looking specimen -- took his time and worked on their nerves a little. He aimed his rifle with great deliberation. First at Ham and then at Doc after ostensibly <cocking> the piece.

Then he strolled around to the side of the car and kicked the door.

"*Predooprezhdeneeye?*" he said.

"How-in-tophet do you expect us to see any warning signs in this rain?" Ham demanded in Russian, thrusting out his head. "And why don't you stay in shelter, you fool?"

The soldier sneered. He jerked open the car door and popped a flashlight beam inside.

He noted the labels on Doc Savage's equipment cases and the official seals (they were good counterfeits). He jumped back hastily.

"*Mne zhahl!*" he said uneasily.

He waved them on.

Ham put the car in motion. When they had rolled a ways, he said: "Decking you out as a messenger for the State Political Administration was a good idea. When he saw the phony seals, he figured you were working and it scared him into some courtesy."

"Is that a good sample of 'courtesy'?"

"It's the general idea," Ham said. "That guy was probably a security agent. You can generally spot the small-timers like him by their insolence."

There were streetlights now and a little automobile traffic. The Bronze Man could distinguish houses of the czarist era with their pillared porticoes. And here-and-there was a church, usually abutted in close proximity by some large and ugly barracks-like structure which had been built during the anti-religious era prior to the German invasion.

They were following Ulitza Dsershinskoge. It was one of the main thoroughfares which wheel-spoked from the Kremlin area on the Moskwareka. The street had a tramway and a busline. And both types of conveyances were incredibly crowded.

Ham made a turn ... got on Nikos Kaja Ulitza ... and presently said: "This is a little out of the way. But everybody drives past here once."

They were in **Red Square** -- the area along the Kremlin's somber wall between the Nikolski and Spaski gates where was located the Bratskye Mogili (the Brothers' Graves) where were buried the 500 revolutionists killed in the October Revolution and others added later (including the victims of the explosion of August 25, 1919).

Here was the shrine of Soviet. They could presently see the Lenin Mausoleum which stood out from the other graves. A somber **red** structure designed by an architect named Schuseff in 1924. It was first built of wood. Then made over in stone.

At the entrance -- spotlighted -- were the guards always to be seen there and the area on the roof where Joseph Stalin and high Soviet associates are so often newsreeled while reviewing displays of Soviet pageantry.

Ham saluted the Kremlin wall with a wry: "Behind there, presumably, good old Joe is hard at work. They tell me he functions at night. Like an owl."

"Let's hope he has no crystal ball in which he sees a couple of Americans with bad intentions in the neighborhood."

Ham chuckled.

"I second that with bowed head."

They turned on Red Square (which was approximately a kilometer long) and Ham drove west and across Bewojuzli Place.

They began to leave the neighborhood -- the old city which had been residential at one time but was now taken over by the offices of Soviet bureaucrats.

Ham Brooks saw Doc Savage's hand at the open window. He frowned and said: "You toss something out?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"Just some stuff. A powder."

Ham grinned uneasily.

"You've done it 3-or-4 times, haven't you? Think we're being followed?"

"It would be worth knowing if we were," the *Man of Bronze* said.

"If you want to see a man jump squarely out of a perfectly good skin, just let me find out that we're being followed," Ham promised.

The street where he and Monk Mayfair were living had a tired grimy age about it as if the dead years had been stacked there to wait out Eternity.

Ham turned the car into what had once been a coach entrance, first alighting to unlock large iron-strapped doors.

Doc waited until the lights were off and the engine dead. Then he removed his equipment cases and followed Ham up a succession of worn steps.

"Monk will sure be glad to see you," Ham said. "He has been putting up a big front about not worrying."

The dapper lawyer came to a door ... <winked> at Doc Savage ... then gave the door a kicking and said in a vicious voice completely unlike his own:

"Security Police! Come out with your hands up you son of a capitalist!"

Ham wore a considerable grin during the first 30 seconds of waiting ...

... then he lost the pleased expression slowly.

Doc said dryly: "You fellows are still pulling practical jokes on each other, I take it."

Ham grimaced.

"I wonder if I scared the big lug so bad that he jumped out of window?"

He inserted a key in the lock, turned it, and called prudently "Take it easy, you missing-link. Our visitor's here" before he pushed into the room.

Then he looked around and called: "Hey! Where are you, Monk?"

He ran into the kitchen and bedroom.

"He doesn't seem to be here," Ham said. Alarm made his voice a little higher.

"Would that be serious?" Doc asked sharply.

"If he's not getting back at me for that gag, it's serious," Ham said. "He was going to be here."

The worried attorney began a second tour of the apartment which was furnished with almost painful sparseness.

"I don't know what to do about this," he said.

"Let's check to see whether we were followed," Doc Savage said.

He opened one of the equipment cases ... took out a small vial ... glanced at Ham and asked:

"One of us will have to saunter out into the street. You belong in the neighborhood. So maybe you had better do it."

"What-in-blazes do I look for?"

"Got a cold?"

"No."

"All right. Take a sniff of this."

The **Bronze Man** uncorked the small glass vial and passed it to Ham.

"Quite a perfume," Ham said, puzzled. "A little different from anything I ever smelled before."

Doc told him: "Just go out in the street and cross it a couple of times. See if you detect the identical odor. It's distinctive enough that you won't make an error. But it will not be very strong."

Ham was gone from the apartment not quite 5 minutes when he came back wearing alarm.

"It's in the street, faintly," he said. "What-in-the-devil is it?"

Doc named the chemicals.

"You're not a chemist. So that may not mean much. But several times during the trip from where I landed, I tossed small quantities of 2 different chemical concoctions out on the road. One type at one point. And the other a couple of hundred feet farther on. The wheels of any machine following us would pick up one and then the other. The two when combined cause that odor."

"Good God!" Ham blurted. "Then we were followed!"

"It isn't positive," Doc warned. "It could have been another car accidentally following our course part of the way."

"Maybe. But the way I buy it, it scares me."

Ham yanked a suitcase out and began dumping clothing into it.

"Let's get out of here."

Chapter IV

Doc Savage slid over the edge of the windowsill and posed there a moment -- supported by the grip of his *bronze fingers* -- while he told Ham:

"I'll leave the cord in place in case you want to come out in a hurry by the same route. If it's an ambush, both front and back doors will be watched. They might watch this route too. So be careful."

Ham shuddered and said: "I remember climbing down that thick cord one time before. I'd about as soon jump. Be careful yourself."

The cord was silk and there were knots at 18-inch intervals. At every 3rd knot was a small attached loop which could be of use. To one end of the cord was affixed a small folding grapple hook.

The whole thing was a somewhat childish gimmick and certainly primitive except for the excellence of the workmanship. But Doc Savage was convinced that the thing had saved his life more than once in the past (and it had!). So he always carried it.

He descended to an alley court below. And although he did not seem to expend much effort (his *metallic grip* did not require the knots and loops that were in place for others), climbing or descending the cord was still -- as Ham had indicated -- not an easy feat.

He had made no perceptible noise. And now he moved quietly along a wall, beginning to feel a little silly about the precautions.

He shoved his head around a corner ...

... **almost against the back of a man** who was standing against the wall doing his best to make himself part of it.

A nice quick dividend for caution, Doc thought, wondering if he could start breathing again.

Considering that the man was all of 12 inches from Doc Savage's eyes, he seemed a remarkably vague figure.

Doc withdrew around the corner with all of the reckless haste of a snail in heavy going.

Then he tried to decide whether the man was really 9-feet tall and bristling with machine-guns.

Probably not. Thank God for the thickness of the night, though.

The important thing was that the fellow had been looking in the other direction.

Doc waited. He could hear the other taking the long halting breaths of a man doing a nerve-racking job that was going too slowly.

That lasted 2-or-3 minutes.

Then Doc heard footsteps. The watcher heard them too.

He promptly stepped back around the corner. Which put him where the **Bronze Man** had been standing an instant before.

It was very **dark**. The rain had stopped falling. But water still dripped from eaves. *Everyone and everything seemed to be listening and straining.*

"Seryi!"

The footsteps stopped.

"Pssst! Seryi!"

This from the watcher who had all-but-backed into Doc Savage bodily.

"*F chom d'la?*" asked a woman's pleasant voice. "What is the matter, Mahli?"

"It is you, Seryi?"

"Of course."

"Ah, good. No one has left by this route. How long do I have to stand here in this infernal rain?"

"It has stopped raining, Mahli."

"It will start again. How long do I have to stay here?"

"No longer. You may go now, Mahli."

The word *mahli* was Russian for "little" or "small". The girl Seryi was using it in a manner that indicated a dry humor, Doc Savage concluded.

The fellow Mahli was only slightly smaller than a tank, Doc reflected, watching him stalk off without another word.

He waited for some sign from the woman.

There was none. Apparently she was standing perfectly still.

Then a long ruffianly gobble of **thunder** came from the dark bowels of the sky and a sudden shotting of rain fell.

Feet *clicked* lightly and Doc Savage recoiled. The woman Seryi had chosen the same shelter as the **Bronze Man**.

She stood almost against him!

Having weighed everything, Doc put out a hand all cupped to go over the girl's mouth.

Seryi was somewhat taller than he thought. And so he got hold of her throat at first.

Finally he had to tighten down on the columnar softness of her neck to preserve some silence.

A few things -- the smoothness of her skin, her activity, the swiftness of her reactions -- indicated a young woman.

He was also kicked, scratched, and had some hair loosened.

He said (in Russian, fortunately): "*Teekha!*" He said it twice.

Then she stopped kicking, scratching, and hair-yanking. She was very still in his grip.

He repeated the word for quite again. "*Teekha!*"

Then he asked: "Will you scream if I release you?"

She shook her vigorously 'No'.

"Will you give sensible answers?" he asked.

Her head moved to indicate 'yes'.

He removed his hands warily.

"All right. Who are you?"

"Seryi," she said.

"I don't mean your name," he said.

She turned around and gave him the jackpot.

"Mr. Savage, you and Mr. Brooks must get out of here in a hurry," she said. "It's very important. You are in definite **danger** here."

Doc took a moment to recover.

"Who do you think I am?" he asked cautiously.

"Stand here and play guessing games!"

She stamped a foot.

"Let the Secret Police show up. Then have guessing games!"

She reached out and gripped his arm.

"Oh, I'm doing this all wrong. Monk Mayfair sent me."

"Who?"

"I was in a car waiting near the Minin and Pozharski monument on Red Square," she said. "I was supposed to spot your car. But I didn't; I missed it. I drove into this street and turned and drove back again and waited at the corner awhile. I didn't see your car; concluded you had arrived; and came around to tell Mahli I would take over ..."

"Who is Mahli?" Doc asked. "Besides being the human tank who just left here."

"Mahli? My cousin. I asked him to help me."

She was speaking a low excited voice.

Suddenly, Doc turned his flashlight beam on her face for a moment. It was a very sweet face and surprisingly composed.

She gasped at the light and said: "I hope you're satisfied."

"I'm satisfied that you're very good-looking," he said. "Unfortunately, that's about the size of it. Who is this 'Monk Mayfair'?"

"Your caginess is a little childish," she said bitterly. "Mr. Savage, Monk Mayfair discovered that the Secret Police suspected something. Monk couldn't come here; he would be seized. He sent me to intercept you and take you to him. What could be simpler than that?"

"Almost anything would be simpler," Doc said. "Come inside."

They reentered the house via the back door.

Ham Brooks listened with astonishment to the pretty Russian girl's story.

"You can take us to Monk?" he asked suspiciously.

"Not tomorrow or next month!" Seryi said angrily. "I might if you accompany at once."

Ham looked at Doc Savage unhappily.

"You know Monk and his reaction to a pretty face. I thought he was cured. But maybe he wasn't."

"I think," said Seryi, "I should resent that very bitterly."

The **Bronze Man** asked her: "You actually saw Monk recently? Is that your story?"

"Yes," she said. "Of course."

"When?"

"Tonight."

"By any chance, did Monk shake hands with you?" Doc asked speculatively.

"I don't recall him shaking my hand," Seryi said.

Then she flushed.

"But I do think he held both of them for awhile.

Ham laughed bitterly.

"I believe she knows Monk all right."

"Let's see your hands," Doc said.

He did nothing but hold the girl's hands for a moment. Then he released them.

But Ham Brooks broke out a relieved expression.

Puzzled, Seryi asked: "What is that perfume? It's quite distinctive, isn't it? We don't have much contact with perfume here in Russia. But I like it."

The car to which Seryi led them was quite old and parked some distance down the street. Eyeing the machine, Doc Savage doubted very much that it would run.

They did have trouble starting it, the battery being down. Doc used the crank that Seryi pushed into his hands. He gathered from the way she gave instructions that she was quite familiar with the wreck.

"To rate a car --- even a clunker like this one -- you must be someone rather important," Ham said suspiciously.

"I am a secretary in the Supreme Council of National Economy," Seryi said curtly. "And it is a very dependable car. It is much superior to walking."

The machine began to shake all of its loose parts. Doc tossed the crank in the back and got in.

"What has happened to Monk?"

"I told you, Mr. Savage. He suspects they have become suspicious of him."

"What I probably meant," Doc said, "is how did he happened to send a girl -- a strange girl at that -- with such an important message?"

"I would say it was very logical. He had to send a messenger who would not be suspected.

"And you wouldn't be suspected?"

She nodded. "Not by the Secret Police."

She glanced wryly at the *bronze giant*.

"But by you, I think I am very suspect."

"You blame me?"

Seryi drove the old car at a sedate pace. It held together although it seemed to gather itself and leap with a great clatter over some of the rougher places in the street.

"I think I'd better tell you 2 things," she said. "First is about my brother Ancil. He is supposed to have left his life when a Soviet plane crashed in Nazi territory near the end of the War. But actually, he walked away from the crash quite alive and made his way by means of a great effort to New York City where he is now married, at peace with the U.S. Immigration Bureau, and very happy in his work as a dance instructor in the theater. That is the first thing.

"The second thing is that my brother Ancil met Mr. Monk Mayfair in New York in the course of some interest which Mr. Mayfair showed in the theater."

"In the chorus girls, probably," Doc said.

"Well, I would say so too," Seryi said, smiling slightly. "Anyway, my brother asked Mr. Mayfair to look me up if he ever traveled through Moscow. And Mr. Mayfair did so. That is how I met Mr. Mayfair."

"Is that why you're doing this?"

"It is one reason," she said. "I am most grateful to know my brother is alive and well. And quite glad also that the Secret Police don't know about it. If they did -- poof! Off to Siberia I would go."

"And the other reason?"

"I will be frank about that too," Seryi said. "I would like to make a friend who could whisk me away to America."

"That would interest Monk also," Ham said sourly.

"There is one more thing," Seryi explained.

"What's that?"

"I am to tell you that Frunzoff has one gold tooth and lives at 7 Botsch Bronnaja Ulitza. That means nothing to me. But Monk asked me to tell you."

Doc Savage had the impression that he had been hit squarely between the eyes with a hammer. He was surprised that his head began aching. He heard Ham -- beside him -- resume breathing with an effort.

"My God!" Ham gasped. "Monk must have been busier than a clamdigger!"

"The name means something to you?" Seryi asked.

"What name was that?" Ham asked warily.

"Frunzoff."

Ham hesitated only a moment ... then lied glibly.

"Not a thing, I'm sorry to say. And I'm surprised Monk would ask you to pass along something like that. Let's see ... Could it be code? But I can't imagine what kind of code."

"Mr. Mayfair was very excited," Seryi said. "So it could be some kind of code, perhaps."

"What excited Monk?"

"Danger, I imagine. As a matter-of-fact, Mr. Mayfair was dreadfully upset."

On a rising alarm, Ham said: "That doesn't sound good. Normally Monk wouldn't be upset with a wildcat in each hip pocket."

"He was particularly emphatic that I should tell you of Frunzoff," the girl said.

"What address was that again?" Doc inquired.

"On the Botsch Bronnaja Ulitza. Number 7."

"I see."

"Do you know where that is?"

"It's a little beyond Twerskoj Boulevard," the **Bronze Man** said. "That right?"

"Yes."

Doc Savage became silent. He was inclined to mentally damn Monk for giving this girl the Frunzoff name.

Frunzoff -- the way Ham had explained it -- was the key to whole elaborate plot. Frunzoff was the man they wanted. Therefore it was vitally important that nobody know that they wanted Frunzoff.

Their scheme was intricate and included getting the information they wished out of Frunzoff without even the latter knowing it had happened.

Doc glanced at Ham when they passed a streetlight. The dapper lawyer's face was a mask of alarm. Monk Mayfair was in desperate straits, Ham believed.

Doc leaned forward and tapped the girl's shoulder.

"Where are you taking us?"

"To Mr. Mayfair," she said.

"Be more specific."

She hesitated. Her shoulders rose and fell.

"It's my apartment as a matter-of-fact."

Ham whistled softly. And got his face slapped!

The girl's hand flew out. The whack of her palm against the sophisticated attorney's cheek was a sharp sound.

"Hey!" Ham blurted. "You little tramp!"

The girl began to sob and the car swerved.

Doc Savage reached over and grasped the wheel.

"Easy on the temperament" he said.

"Damn you! I'm not -- what do you call it? -- a 'tramp,'" Seryi sobbed angrily.

Then she looked up.

Her face became much more distorted and she screamed:

"Watch out! The Secret Police!"

Doc Savage had already seen the car. An old-fashioned job with a squarish body, a sedan. It had come up beside and moved out to pass them.

Now it made a lunge at their front wheels. Doc had a moment when he felt sure that the old car was beefed up with armor plate around the fenders.

It was too late for the notion to be of any help because **the police car promptly hit them!**

There was no siren, no shooting. The machine just hit them.

Their front wheels held together. But a tie rod snapped.

The car went out-of-control ... took a crazy lunge to the left, then to the right ... and smashed into the rear of the assailant machine. The latter car -- knocked crosswise on its side -- skidded a few yards and rolled over on its side. Men spilled out as their own car came to a crazy stop.

Doc gripped Seryi's shoulder and he asked: "Know which way is south?"

"Yes! But they're armed! We haven't a chance..."

"Run south," he said. "Don't argue. 2 blocks, then turn on Glinischt Street. We'll overtake you there."

To Ham, he said: "I'm gong to use **smoke** on them."

The street winked **redly** twice with flame from a gun muzzle.

Doc fumbled for a moment in his clothing seeking the gadget he wanted. Then he found it and let it fly.

It was a **smoke grenade**, cylindrical, not much more than an oversized Fourth-of-July firecracker in size.

It landed in the street and made very little sound go (hardly any sound at all) but produced a great deal of astonishingly **black smoke**.

The stuff started as a dark melon. Then became -- progressively -- a sheep ... a calf ... a horse ... and a small house in size!

There was another **shot** in what was not complete blackness.

"*Nyet! Nyet! Nyet!*" an excited Russian voice said. "*Smaatreete!*"

There was no more shooting after the warning.

Doc Savage -- very loudly in Russian also -- said: "There is a fire!"

There was no fire in the sense he hoped that they would think. But they might believe for a moment that the **smoke** was coming from a burning car.

He began retreating and came out of the **smoke**.

In a moment, another figure stumbled out of the blackness.

Ham Brooks.

They ran away from the spot as quietly as possible.

Doc Savage looked ahead and saw no sign of Seryi. Evidently Ham was doing the same thing because he whispered: "Good Lord! She's fast on her feet to get out-of-sight."

They lengthened their stride now.

They came to Glinischt Street and turned into it.

They stopped.

"She isn't here. She didn't run for it," Doc said grimly. "She wasn't harmed. I told her exactly what to do."

"I heard you," Ham said. "I can't understand what could have gone wrong."

*He turned and stepped back into the street where the **smoke** was.*

His dive for cover was phenomenal, accompanied by a crashing of pistol fire.

"Don't be a fool," Doc said.

Ham shuddered.

"Now you tell me! But I think they're running away themselves, though."

"What?!"

"Take a look. I don't mean stick your head into the street. For God's sake, don't do that! But you've got that mirror gimmick, haven't you?"

The "mirror gimmick" was more-or-less conventional. A mirror attached with a swivel to a telescoping rod affair. Not the best sort of periscope, but compact.

Examining the street by thrusting the thing around the corner, Doc Savage felt that it left a great deal to be desired. But it nevertheless showed him a great deal to be puzzled with.

"They've got the girl?" Ham asked, carefully getting nowhere near the corner.

"Yes, I think so ... You're right about their flight, too. They're leaving. In a hurry. And not coming in this direction."

"That's odd," Ham muttered. "For Secret Police, that's a mighty odd move."

The **Bronze Man** asked dryly: "You think they are Secret Police?"

"No more than you do," Ham said bitterly. "Doc, we're being foxed. This was arranged. That girl didn't flee because she didn't want to."

"It wasn't an assassination attempt," Doc said. "It went through the motions of one. But there was no steam behind it."

"Could the whole object have been to give the girl a chance to leave us?"

"Maybe. A trifle elaborate though, wouldn't you say?"

"It has me stumped."

"No, I think you got the essential points," Doc said thoughtfully. "The girl made contact with us; gave us Frunzoff's address; and with her job done, she was removed from our clutches -- so to speak -- in a way that might let her be useful to them again later."

"In other words, we're supposed to think she's what she said she was: a girl very grateful because she has a brother happily in New York?"

"I'm guessing about that," Doc confessed. "I don't like the guess too well. She seemed a decent sort."

"They always do. What about Frunzoff?"

"Did you bring one of the equipment cases?"

Ham said: "Yes."

He went to a niche and produced the case.

"You've got the other, I see. Does this mean we go that address and try for Frunzoff?"

"We've got to," the *Man of Bronze* said. "There's too much a stake to be cautious now."

Chapter V

No. 7 on Botsch Bronnaja Ulitza was one of those low aristocratic mansion houses with pillar-porticoes against a background of church cupolas and a few modernistic boxes of buildings turned shockingly ugly by city grime.

They reached it to the accompaniment of an appropriate display by the weather. **Thunder** run thumping through the narrow street and rain began falling bucketfuls.

"What-the-devil do we do now?" Ham asked gloomily. "Walk in? That's crazy, isn't it? I wish we knew what happened to Monk."

Doc found a niche which afforded some shelter from the downpour.

"Let's use our heads a little before we get in any deeper," he said. "First, about Monk. Either they've got him. Or he's alarmed and hiding out. The girl said that he was hiding out in her apartment."

Ham blew rainwater off his lips.

"I don't believe a word she said."

"Does Monk have his two-way radio?"

"Yes, but that's not going to help. We found out one thing: the Communists have electronic monitors that scan every wavelength automatically. The moment an unauthorized signal goes on, a receiver is thrown on that frequency. We haven't dared use radio."

"What about alternative hideouts?" Doc asked.

"We have two(2). But Monk won't be ... Or would he?"

Ham swore gently.

"Damn! Do you suppose I've overlooked the obvious answer to his whereabouts?"

"How far are these hideouts?"

"No so very far. We bunched them, figuring that we might want to get from one to another in a hurry. One is on Nastass. The other is farther out."

"Go check them," Doc said.

"Now?" Ham gasped.

"Yes."

Ham hesitated ... then said gloomily: "Who do you think you're fooling? You're trying to get me out of here in case it's a trap."

"I'm not trying to fool you," the **Bronze Man** said quickly. "But I do want you away from here in case it's an ambush. And why not? If they get all of us, the whole Project is shot. Plus I'm also worried about Monk and want to locate him if he's free."

"Is that an order?" Ham asked bitterly. "If not, the devil with it!"

"Consider it an order, Ham."

"You can guess what I think of it," the ruffled lawyer said. "But all right. Where will you meet me?"

He gave the address of Nastass Ulitza and another farther out in the suburbs on a street called Corski.

"They're just rooms we rented. Will you try them?"

Doc Savage indicated the house where Seryi had said the man known as Frunzoff lived.

"My work in there will take at least 2 hours."

Ham shivered. "You think you can it single-handed?"

"I can try."

"I've argued with you before," Ham said. "I'll be back here, then, provided I have a potful of luck."

When Ham Brooks had sidled warily away and was lost in the blinding rain, Doc Savage unscrewed the mirror from the small telescoping rod which had held it. He had now about 18 inches of hollow tubing.

The diameter of this at the small end was not much more than a darning needle. To the large end, he attached a small rubber bulb which he first filled with colorless liquid from a small flask which he kept unsealed no longer than was absolutely necessary.

During this operation -- and particularly while the flask was open -- he held his breath. And after that, he was careful to carry the tube with the filled bulb attached well to the lee so that the lunging wind would whip the fumes away from him.

Now he moved brazenly on the sidewalk, walking openly and directly to the house. 3 stone steps led up to the garish portico. He mounted them quickly.

He stood beside the door ... felt for the lock and located the keyhole ... inserted the end of his hollow-tube gadget and gave the bulb a long slow squeeze. He held his breath during this operation and did not resume normal breathing until he stepped away from the vicinity.

A passageway (carriage-width) separated this home from the adjacent one. He walked into that, reloading the syringe affair as he went.

There was a door at the back. But it had no lock or keyhole that he could find. Evidently it was secured by a bar inside.

He knelt down and tried the point of the tube under the door. It would pass. He promptly emptied the bulb again.

If there had been a sound in the house, the whooping of **thunder** and the beating *rush* of rain had blanketed it. Even from his extraordinary hearing.

Back at the door again, he used a lock pick for a few moments. That got the door open about 6 inches ...

... as far as a chain inside would let it swing.

He tinkered with the chain for awhile and got nowhere.

He used a **thermite**-like compound on the chain, a bead of it which he quickly embedded in a sticky pellet that would ignite presently by chemical reaction and would also serve as an adhesive to hold the **thermite** to the steel chain.

He closed the door and waited.

The stuff burned through the chain briefly. He could see traces of the glare around the edge of the closed door. Inside the house, the display must have been **blinding**. But it was quicker than fooling around with a hacksaw. The stuff was, in effect, a chemical substitute for a cutting torch.

He opened the door and stepped inside. In chairs on each side of the door sat men with thick bodies and heavy faces. They were uniformed and had submachine guns on their laps.

Doc Savage looked thoughtfully at the 2 guards.

Presently he said in a voice of normal loudness: "*Slyshyte lee vy menyah?*"

When they did not stir, he repeated the same thing amiably in English. "Do you hear me?"

No response.

He reached out and put a finger against one of the heavy narrow foreheads and shoved lightly.

The guard toppled and would have fallen had Doc not caught him quickly and righted him.

"Nice nap, boys," he said cheerfully and proceeded quickly to the rear of the house.

There were 2 more guards at a back door. There was also one at a window. All were in chairs. And all slept from the effects of the anesthetic gas which he had introduced with the syringe gadget.

The house had 3 floors and the downstairs area had been severely plain. He found a staircase and began climbing.

At the top, he found another guard. This one was lying on the floor and breathing heavily through his nose.

Now the furnishings changed suddenly from drab to utter *luxury*. He was walking on a carpet that seemed to brush his ankles. He passed mirrors in great gilt frames and oil paintings which were museum pieces.

The paintings startled him. He saw a Veronese, two Van der Weydens, a Michelangelo, a Rubens, and a Gainsborough which he suspected was a copy but which might not be.

He began to wear a frown and back of it was an *excitement* rising and tightening. At a rough guess, there was a round 2 million dollars' worth of paintings here in the hall. That did not seem the stuff that a trap would be made of.

Frunzoff, as they understood it, was the faceless nonentity who -- if anything happened to Stalin - would suddenly become the Number One man.

Frunzoff, then, would be the one man that Stalin had decided to trust. He was the receptacle for all the centralized knowledge to which Stalin and no one else had access.

Such a man would be important. He would be likely to have a couple of million in old masters hanging in his hall.

He began using the syringe gadget on doors.

There were 3 doors opening off the hall, all closed. He went to each in turn, working rapidly.

The anesthetic gas (colorless and odorless) was one that he had developed a long time ago. It produced quick unconsciousness. The period of stupor could be varied by changing the ingredients.

The formula which he was using now ensured about 3 hours of coma. The effect occurred entirely within the first minute of release. After that, it went through an oxidizing process with the oxygen in the air and became harmless. That was why he was holding his breath.

He tried the doors. Two were unlocked.

The first of these let him into a conference room. He leaped to a desk here and noticed that his hands were made a little unsteady by excitement as he searched.

The name was Frunzoff all right. But 'Frunzoff' was the first name.

The second was Nosh. Frunzoff Nosh. "Nosh" meant "knife" in the Russian language. *Which might be significant.*

He used his lock pick device on the 3rd door and stepped inside. The sitting room was enormous. There was a Gobelin on the wall. The rug was a priceless Oriental that dated back to Crusade days.

He passed through a door.

For a moment, he looked down at the man who slept on a great silly bed that was all of 12 feet square and placed in the center of the room on a raised dais.

The man wore silk. Everything in the room that could be silk was silk. And it was all one shade of bird's-egg **blue**.

The man himself would have fitted better in monk's cloth. But not in a monastery. He was a frame of great bones with dark leathery hide that good living had softened and diseases had pocked and stained slightly.

The one homely touch was his false teeth. They rested in a glass of water beside the bed like anybody's false teeth.

Doc placed his equipment case on a table. In a moment, he went to the bed and gave the man (if there was a Frunzoff Nosh here, this was he) the first administration of truth serum.

This part of the plan was direct enough.

Frunzoff was unconscious from the anesthetic. But the bridge-over into twilight coma could be secured with a stimulant administered simultaneously with the sodium amytal formula he intended to use. It should not take long.

Waiting for the medicinal reaction, he set up the small portable wire recorder. He gave it a test run and adjusted the audio gain.

He said into the microphone: "This is Clark Savage speaking from Number 7 Botsch Bronnaja Ultiza in Moscow."

He consulted his watch, then gave the hour, minute, and date.

He added: "I have gained admission to the house -- which I have reason to believe is occupied by a Russian official named Frunzoff Nosh -- for the purpose of questioning the man while he is under the effects of truth serum."

He gave a brief description of the house and means of gaining entrance. Not because the information was of much record value but rather he was waiting for Frunzoff to respond to the chemicals and the recording might authenticity.

He shut off the recorder suddenly.

*There had been a **sound** downstairs.*

He whipped to the door and listened. He heard nothing.

Then for a moment, he made a low **trilling** sound that had once been a rather peculiar habit. A thing he did in moments of intense excitement but which he had finally broken himself of making.

It was done deliberately now as a means of identification.

"Doc!" Ham Brooks' voice came sharply from below.

"Yes?" the **Bronze Man** said. "What is it? What about Monk?"

Monk Mayfair's own voice -- a small raspy affair -- answered that.

"That the devil kind of joint is this?" Monk demanded.

"Monk, are you all right?"

"I'm more confused than I've been in some time," Monk said.

He and Ham came leaping up the stairs.

They saw the paintings and Monk said: "For crying out loud! Are those daubings real?"

Doc asked: "What happened to you?"

"I got a telephone call earlier tonight," Monk explained wryly. "I was advised to get the heck out of the place where I was waiting for you and Ham. I figured it was good advice. Particularly since it scared the devil out of me. The voice on the telephone seemed to know too much."

"Who called?" Doc demanded.

"Search me."

"A woman?"

"No. Man's voice. I never heard it before that I recall."

Doc Savage concentrated for a moment, recalling the man named Mahli who had waited for the girl Seryi in the rear of the house where they had first gone.

He spoke a few words imitating Mahli's voice with remarkable fidelity.

"That sound anything like it?"

"That's the guy," Monk said, amazed. "Who is he?"

"A girl named Seryi said that he was her cousin."

"Who is this Seryi?"

"Don't you know?"

"Never heard of her," Monk said.

Then he added with the air of a man misunderstood: "I haven't made a pass at a babe since I've been here. I've turned over a new leaf."

Ham Brooks snorted!

"I'd call that a whole book."

"I went to the other hideout and Ham showed up," Monk explained. "Now what goes on? I thought this whole thing was supposed to be the biggest secret since Pearl Harbor."

Ham laughed.

Monk Mayfair was not built to register confusion in any but a comical way. His height was a little over 5 feet; his width not much less; and his homeliness was almost preposterous. His forehead was about a single finger width and he bore in no respect any resemblance to an eminent chemist. Which he was.

"Fan out your ears and I'll tell you what happened," Ham advised him. "Then you're really going to be bewildered."

Doc Savage did not use hypodermics for the drug but a mechanical means of administration which resembled (in a dwarf form) the setup for delivering intravenous saline dosage. His equipment had been prepared in advance.

The whole theme had been aimed at what was happening now. To get hold of the man who would know what they wanted to know; drug him; and extract the information.

Frunzoff suddenly heaved ... moaned ... then gave an explosion of Russian words.

He was cursing. Delirium. He was reliving some particularly tight moment in his past.

"Hold him down," Doc said. "He's in the middle stage now. We'll be ready to work on him in a few seconds."

Monk and Ham listened to the man's babbling.

Ham said in amazement: "You hear that? He has killed someone and he's reporting to a superior that he did it. Someone name Uritsky. I seemed to have heard that name before."

Doc Savage frowned.

"Uritsky was a terrorist leader killed during the early days of the Soviet. He was supposedly murdered by the opposition. But the opposition didn't win. If this fellow killed Uritsky, it was part of a plot to stir up trouble and to get Uritsky out of the way. That sort of thing has been done before."

"Nice guys," Monk sarcastically quipped.

"The recorder on?" Ham asked.

"Yes. Ham, you've got the general picture now. And you have some experience at cross-examination. Suppose you start the ball rolling."

The confident attorney nodded. "Fine by me."

He leaned over Frunzoff and began the casual questioning that they had found best to employ to lead into more important matters. Even the drug was not completely effective on a mind suddenly jabbed with a vital question.

"What is your name?" Ham asked.

The man mumbled that it was Frunzoff Nosh. He gave his age when Ham asked for it. 57.

Was he a Party member? He was.

For how long? Since 1916.

Had he known Lenin? Yes.

Did he know Stalin? Yes. *How well?* Quite well.

What was his present connection with Stalin? He was Stalin's coordinator.

Doc Savage said: "Develop that coordinator thing a bit farther with questions. It will help background what we are after."

Ham asked half-a-dozen questions.

Then he added a comment which summed up Frunzoff's general job.

"Hatchet boy for the Head guy," Ham said.

"I'll take it now," Doc said.

He replaced Ham beside Frunzoff and asked quietly:

"Frunzoff, you have general information concerning all Soviet preparations for war?"

"Da," the man mumbled.

Because the phrase "truth serum" as applied to the chemical they were using was a misnomer (there was no chemical magic which would make anyone speak the truth and nothing but the truth), it was necessary to keep a continuous barrage of questions going.

The man was literally without consciousness. He could not reason, would not remember what had happened afterward in any coherent fashion. But since he was without the capacity to reason, skillful guiding through the dug-induced delirium would produce remarkable results.

"Have you the atomic bomb?" Doc asked.

45 minutes later, Doc Savage turned to the microphone and gave the chemical composition of the drugs that had been used.

He finished with: "This concludes the interview with Frunzoff. All that remains now is to get back to Washington with it."

He switched 'off' the recorder ... removed the spool ... and put it in a chamois-lined case.

Then he looked up at Monk's and Ham's pale drawn faces.

"Rather shocking to find it out, wasn't it?" Doc suggested grimly.

"Blazes!" Monk moistened dry lips. "I don't think I ever spent 45 minutes that scared me worse."

Ham cleared his throat.

"That plant near Kazan where they're processing the Polish uranium. I wish we'd gotten a better description of its location and the method they're using."

"I don't think he man has the technical knowledge to help much there," Doc explained. "As for the location, that's definite. General Staff in Washington knows about that plant. But, I'm quite alarmed to say, they don't have any notion at all that about three-quarters of the others exist."

Monk stared.

"The hell! I always suspected the top brass in our Army of having same stuff in their heads that's on their shoulders. But you'd think with all the espionage they've been doing, they'd have more than a child's portion of information."

The **Bronze Man** shook his head.

"It has been to well covered. I'll make you a bet that no one outside of Stalin and this fellow here has the information on the Soviet's atomic-warfare status that we just recorded."

Ham looked at the unconscious Frunzoff, scowling.

"You know, it's too bad we're partly civilized. A little overdose of the drug would stop that devil's heart and close the lid on a lot of scheming."

"It's an idea," Monk said.

Doc Savage finished recasing his equipment.

"I imagine that will take care of itself once this recording unwinds through a loudspeaker at a United Nations session. Which is what I hope will ultimately happen. And I believe it will."

"First," Ham reminded dryly, **"we've got to get out of Russia with that thing."**

Chapter VI

Doc Savage produced half-a-dozen small glass ampuls and divided them among Monk and Ham, keeping one for himself.

"Break one of these in your handkerchief and hold it to the nostrils of each guard," he instructed. "In other words, give it about the same way you would chloroform. A minute-and-a-half to two minutes of administration should be sufficient.

"They're knocked out already," Doc explained. "The information is important. But covering up the fact that we have is just as essential. Because of the way the anesthetic sneaks up on you and the complete lack of after-effects, nobody here is going to realize what happened. If we're lucky, of course.

"The anesthetic gas is almost unknown. I'm sure that no one here in the house realizes the stuff exists. The guards and Frunzoff will simply wake up -- perhaps feel a little puzzled -- then think no more of it. Frunzoff, of course, was asleep and will never know what happened. The guards will conclude they dropped off to sleep. And the penalty that a Russian guard gets for sleeping on duty is going to keep them quiet."

Ham Brooks indicated Frunzoff.

"Yeah. But you used a needle on his arm 3 times. You can see the bumps that were raised. A guy who took all the precautions he took is going to ask a doctor what-the-devil happened to his arm.

But Doc shook his head.

"I've prepared for that, I hope."

"How?"

The Bronze Man got a small container (ventilated) from the equipment case.

"I'm a little self-conscious about the childishness of this one," he admitted.

He opened the container and released about 3 dozen ordinary fleas of Frunzoff's person.

Ham laughed heartily.

Monk looked startled and asked: "What did you do? Take a vacuum cleaner to a dog?"

"To that pig Habeas Corpus that you keep as a pet in New York if you must know," Doc revealed.

"If they're fleas off that ghastly hog," Ham Brooks said, "they'll have Frunzoff half-eaten by morning. He'll never notice a few little things like hypodermic-needle punctures."

Monk snorted at Ham's opinion of his pet. The homely chemist had long held a similar view of the dapper lawyer's pet runt ape Chemistry.

"Check over everything to make there is no sign that we were here," Doc directed.

"When are you going to release the stuff that will revive them?" Monk asked.

"On the way out. Which will be in a couple of minutes, I guess."

Doc Savage looked up-and-down the street.

Then he stepped through the door and moved aside to let Monk and Ham pass. He closed the door and made sure that the spring lock <clicked>.

He stood there a moment, mentally checking to be sure that things inside were as they had found them. No furniture displaced; the same lights on that had been on; etc. There was a multitude of small things that could go amiss. And any one of them was important if it aroused suspicion.

He moved down the steps. The rain had changed suddenly to *sleet* and it was a great deal *colder* than it had been. The cold front had passed. But before morning, there was likely to be quite a lot of sleet and perhaps some snow according to the predictions of the meteorologists in the American zone.

Monk Mayfair and Ham Brooks had gone to a small sedan of a make that was popular in Germany prior to the War.

"Stolen car?" Doc asked dubiously.

"No. It's one I chiseled off the Trans-Caucasian Soviet Federation and cached for an emergency," Monk explained. "I figured that this was an emergency."

"It's not one that the police will be looking for, then?"

Monk hesitated.

"I don't see why they would be. I hate to run my neck out too far, though. This Seryi babe and her pal Mahli bobbing up in the picture sort of makes an unbeliever out of me."

"Has anyone the least idea who Seryi and Mahli are?" the **Bronze Man** asked.

No one did have.

Monk put the little car into motion and immediately began to have trouble with the *icy* street.

Doc Savage was silent, thinking about the situation. The first leg of the Project (i.e., getting into Moscow and extracting the atomic-warfare status information from the one man in Russia who probably came nearest to having it all) had gone off -- everything considered -- not too badly. He felt some satisfaction about that.

Back of tonight's operation lay several months of careful preparation. Monk Mayfair had been in Russia since early last summer. And Ham Brooks almost as long.

The fact that all the facilities of the United States Government -- and those of most of the other nations allied against World chaos -- had been available did not mean that it had been easily done. Monk could probably attest to that. And Ham as well.

The information on the record wire was fabulously important. It was, Doc thought, as vital to the future of World security as anything could be. Certainly it was data that would definitely weigh the balance of peace or war. That made it a matter affecting many lives. Not a few hundred or a few thousand lives but millions.

All of the millions who would be drafted into the next conflict.

Specifically, the wire held (he could feel its slight weight in his pocket, a presence almost intangible for such weird importance) the full facts of Soviet atomic work. The locations of all plants; the parts being manufactured in specific places; the whereabouts of the storage depots; and the master plan of Communist operations. All of that was on the wire.

There wasn't the slightest doubt in the *Man of Bronze's* mind but that within a week or 10 days after the wire was unspooled through a reproducer before the United Nations security organizations, the whole disease of totalitarian aggression -- which the previous world conflict had failed so piteously to end -- would be a dead duck.

Viewed from another point, he had the life and future of every Communist dictator and satellite in his pocket. The minute he got out of Russia with the recording, life and future for totalitarianism would have its throat cut. But quick! There would be no delay. As everyone now realized, there had been too much patience already.

"Monk," Doc said.

The homely chemist jumped nervously.

"Yeah?"

"You're working according to plan, aren't you?" Doc asked. "In other words, you're headed for a spot where you have a shortwave radio transmitter concealed?"

"That's right."

"I'm uneasy about that," the *Bronze Man* said frankly. "There has been a leak somewhere. The way that girl Seryi stepped into the picture. Mahli's phone call to get you away from the meeting place so that the girl could contact us. And the way she was taken out of our hands later. All that had a quality about it of being rigged."

"I don't see where-the-hell the leak could have been," Monk muttered. "God knows that Ham and I have been so careful that we fooled ourselves."

"How do you explain this Seryi?"

"The same way you do. A counterplot of some kind."

The apish chemist squirmed uncomfortably.

"But what kind? "What's the rig?"

"Apparently we aren't being followed. We weren't molested at Frunzoff's place although the girl herself gave us the address.

"Blazes! If they knew as much as they did, they could know about the radio. Doc, we've got to get to a radio transmitter. Otherwise we're behind the 8-ball. Touching off the rest of our plan depends on that."

"Turn north at the next corner," Doc said abruptly.

"We're going to raid a Soviet shortwave station and use that."

On the Kashira road a few miles south of the Moscow city environs, they turned off the main thoroughfare and parked at the foot of a hill on which stood a group of radio towers.

"We've got to do this quick and clean," Doc Savage warned. "We'll try it the same way we got to Frunzoff."

"Wonder how many engineers will be on duty?" ham asked uneasily.

"Two(2) according to the information I have."

Ham glanced at the **big bronze man** in surprise.

"You mean you dug up information like that ahead of time?"

Doc shrugged. "It wasn't hard to get. The consulate obtained it. Remember the fuss that was kicked up recently about Soviet radio jamming our own propaganda broadcasts? The Communists denied it, of course, and made a big show of naming and identifying all their radio stations. Actually revealing about half of them, probably. Anyway, we got enough information from that."

They worked through the darkness, *sleet* making walking difficult. The steepness of the path did not help.

They came presently to a drab block of a concrete building with lighted windows with a big *Octopozhol* warning sign about high voltages.

Doc Savage wheeled suddenly and said: "Listen!"

Started, Monk stiffened so abruptly that his feet slipped on the ice and he fell.

But he did not fall heavily and remained as he landed, supported on his braced hands.

In the night, there was nothing that seemed abnormal. Only the *humming* of a transformer inside the building and the glassy *creaking* of sleet on tree twigs.

"I believe I heard a car stop down there on the road," the **Bronze Man** said uneasily. "I'm not sure, however. But we can't take a chance. Monk, you had better check on it. And be careful."

"Nobody could have followed us," the homely chemist muttered. "And nobody knew we were coming here. We didn't know it ourselves an hour ago."

"Be careful anyway," Doc warned.

Monk grunted. "You want me to wait at our car if it's a false alarm?"

He turned and began retracing the route downhill. He went with care, keeping in the very darkest places and listening frequently. He had barked the knuckles of his left hand when he fell a moment ago. And he twisted bits of **ice** off a branch that whacked him in the face and held the **ice** against the raw areas.

Having heard nothing and seen nothing alarming, Monk reached the vicinity of their car.

Now he went with great care a step-a-a-time although he was convinced that Doc Savage had made one of his rare errors.

A car had stopped on the road. Hell, what if it had? Anybody driving a night like this would be stopping often to whittle ice off his windshield. It was inconceivable that anyone had trailed them.

Monk suddenly grew colder than even the **chilly** night warranted. His mouth felt very dry.

Still, he had heard and seen nothing. *But he didn't like the idea that had just hit him.*

He moved forward slowly, now with a gun in his hand. The car had become something to be feared and avoided. But he had to learn whether he was right.

He found the right-hand door ... opened it warily ... felt inside and located the tiny portable two-way radio which he had kept in his possession on the chance that its necessity would outweigh the almost certain fact that the fancy Soviet monitoring system would spot any bootleg transmitter a couple-of-moments after it went on the air.

Monk turned 'on' the receiver. He could check what he wanted to with the receiver alone. He advanced the gain only enough to register the tube hiss. Then he began running the tuning mechanism through all the frequencies that it would tune.

When he got into the Very High Frequency (VHF) end of the spectrum, it began to "block".

His blood chilled. Receivers would "block" in this fashion only when a transmitter was so very close that its immediate field paralyzed the vacuum tubes.

He tried to swallow. *"Monk you fool! You've been suckered with a trick that you've used yourself a dozen times!"*

There was a shortwave transmitter attached somewhere to the car. It needn't be large. A case the size of a couple of cigarette packages might contain it. And it could be traced easily with almost any sort of loop or beam directional antenna.

Doc Savage had been right then. There had been a car on the road. And it had been following them through the medium of radio.

My God! Where can that transmitter be hidden? How long has it been there? Who put it there?

That line of thought iced up completely when he felt **metal against the back of his neck.**

"*Khto tam?*" a voice said unpleasantly. Then reworded the inquiry in English. "Who is this?"

"Use that gun on him," another voice said sharply.

Monk had the absurd and ghastly feeling that he had gone far out somewhere in a black endless pace that was flecked faintly with **crimson.**

There was no impression of falling or even of motion. But everything was perfectly static and as restful as Death.

There was the added disagreeable fact that he didn't seem to have his head with him.

Chapter VII

Inside the radio-transmitter room, Doc Savage stood frowning down at a turntable on which a record was being broadcast.

It was a propaganda piece optimistically beamed at the United States in English and so unbelievable that it wouldn't be convincing. The same thing had happened to the Nazis when they stated believing the sound of their own voices.

Ham Brooks said: "We won't have to change the beam setting for direction. The indicator says approximately due north. And there's enough spread to hit the monitors which will be listening for us."

Doc crossed over and swung out the transmitter rack cover and examined the oscillator section where the frequency was first created which would later go out on the ether in the form of radio transmission. It was here that he would have to change the wavelength of the transmitted signal so that the monitor stations in America would get it immediately.

The transmitter, he knew, was a copy of an American rig. Even to the shape of the crystal holder. The crystal of course controlled the wavelength.

"You mean you came prepared with a spare crystal cut to our American monitoring frequency?" Ham exploded.

"It seemed like a good idea," Doc said. "Here we go.. That telephone is going to ring the minute we go off the air. Answer and tell them that it's transmitter trouble."

He pulled switches ... got the outfit off the air ... yanked the crystal, substituted his own, and did a quick job of re-tuning ... and then picked up a microphone and adjusted the gain on it.

Ham's jaw fell when he heard the coded message that the **Bronze Man** spoke into the mike.

It was spoken in Russian, cleverly done, consisting of a berating tirade directed against the engineer in the station. It would pass as an argument which 2 engineers were having over an electrical difficulty with the equipment. Something that a live microphone might have just happened to pick up.

Doc finished. He jerked the station off the air ... changed the crystals back the way they were ... and began re-tuning again.

The telephone rang.

Ham picked up the instrument ... listened ... and said angrily in Russian: "*Eta ochen grossna!*"

He was evidently shout at because he shouted back, this time without an apology.

He ended with a tirade, tore the phone loose from its wires, and said: "I hope these engineers had a reputation for bad tempers."

"The station is back on the air," Doc said.

He went over and broke a restorative ampul under the nostrils of each of the 2 Russian station engineers, ensuring their awakening within a few moments.

"Let's get out of here."

"How long have we got to wait?" Ham asked.

"4-or-5 hours," Doc guessed. "That is based on the weather, though. If everything is grounded, it might be more difficult."

"These sleet storms usually break up a little after daylight, don't they?"

"Let's hope this one does."

The girl Seryi stood in the darkness. A tall cold figure in a sheath of a black raincoat on which the ice clung.

She spoke two English words and one Russian one.

"You understand *roozhyo*?"

She also moved her hand a little make sure they saw the dark gun there.

Doc Savage stared at her blankly, thinking how silly it was that she would ask them if they understood a gun, phrasing it that way.

Then he realized that she was probably very terrified -- even if more determined than terrified -- and to be dealt with cautiously.

"I waited here in your car," she said. "It would hold three, will it not? I wish to ride back to the city with you."

Ham Brooks said "Oh brother!" softly and then on a wild note demanded "Where's Monk ..."

He hurriedly changed that to: "Where's that monkey-faced commissar?"

"That is why I wish to ride with you."

Seryi's voice was as loose a leaf in the darkness.

"Huh?"

"I am instructed to tell you," she said, "that the commissar -- shouldn't we call him Mr. Monk Mayfair, eminent chemist, adventurer, and Doc Savage associate -- has exactly 2 hours to live unless you rescue him."

"How come?"

"Hold it a minute," Doc Savage said.

He had been trying to figure out how they had been trailed her. He now got the same thought that Monk had investigated.

The *bronze giant* switched on the shortwave radio ... tuned the higher frequencies ... and got the telltale receiver "blocking".

He investigated.

The transmitter was in a cardboard box that was properly marked *Vnootrennyaya troopka* (inner tube).

Doc tore it open and stopped transmission. He went back and confronted the girl.

"All right," he said. "We have been outsmarted. your outfit trailed us here and grabbed Monk. Now what?"

"2 hours isn't much," Seryi said nervously. "You'd better get moving."

Without a word, Doc Savage put the car in motion.

He backed and turned carefully. On the *ice*-glazed highway, he headed toward Moscow. The wheel chains made a monotonous whining. But the sleet did not seem to be falling as heavily.

The girl's voice began to come. A thin sound of fright driven through defiance from the darkness within the rear seat.

"Here it is," she said. "Wherever there is an organization with people in it -- and some have power and some haven't -- there is continual scheming and maneuvering by those who are not at the top and want to climb there."

Doc said: "Is she holding that gun on you, Ham?"

"She's holding it on you," the shaken lawyer said. "She's keeping it pointed at the middle of your back."

"All right. I just wanted to know. Go ahead, Miss Seryi. If that's your name."

"It's Seryi Mitroff," she said bitterly. "As I started to say, where there is power there is invariably hunger for that power ..."

"Skip that part about human greed," Doc said. "What you're saying is that in politics, there are 2 groups. Thos in. And the outs. Which are you?"

She hesitated ... then said curtly: "I'm an 'out'."

"And you're working with a group of outs?"

"Yes."

"And you want 'in'?"

"Naturally," she said.

Doc Savage swung the car abruptly, turning into a side road which (according the maps he had memorized before starting the Project) circled through a village named Tormas.

Then he entered Moscow by a route that would put them on Twerskaja Street when they approached Red Square which was the heart of the city.

"You aren't being followed!" Seryi said.

"Not if we can help it," Doc agreed. "You don't mind our taking a less obvious route into the city? After all, we've made one fool move tonight."

"You weren't so foolish."

Seryi paused ...

... and then added with a little pride: "We have in our group about ten(10) men who are as skilled espionage agent as any in the Soviet. Which I imagine makes them the best in the World. Those ten have been working on this with all their wiles. But they haven't found out too much."

"They certainly learned too much to suit us," Doc told her wryly.

"No. We're quite puzzled."

"You learned that Monk and Ham were my associates."

"Not until tonight. All we had been able to ascertain was that they were up to something and were looking for the mystery man of the Soviet -- Frunzoff."

"How did you know it was Frunzoff?"

"Who else could it be? Or was it Frunzoff? That's what we want to find out for one thing."

Her voice had become sharply eager in the backseat.

Doc noted the excitement ... speculated about it a moment ... and then said: "It was a clever idea, Miss Mitroff. You didn't exaggerate when you said that your associates were experts at espionage."

Ham demanded explosively: "Doc! Doc, I don't think they knew that Frunzoff was the '**Spider**' who held all the webs!"

"That's what I mean. They're trying to use us to confirm that fact. That's why they furnished us with Frunzoff's address."

"Damn! We haven't been half-smart."

Seryi Mitroff remarked wryly: "You think not? You might ask Mahli. He is one of the greatest undercover agents who ever lived. Just to show you how great he is, I'll tell you this. He has been personally decorated 5 times."

She hesitated when Ham Brooks laughed ...

... then demanded angrily: "What is funny?"

Ham told her: "You sound like the people with the swastikas on their arms sounded a few years ago when they spoke of the paper-hanger. Remember Adolph? He handed out a few decorations in his time. But looking back now, they didn't mean much did they?"

"Go ahead and insult me," Seryi snapped. "I was paying you a compliment. Mahli knows skill and he was vastly impressed by your performance. Of course, he didn't know that you were associates of the fabulous **Doc Savage**. He only knew you were clever espionage men on a job and that you were seeking Frunzoff."

"You mean," Ham asked in astonishment, "that you didn't know Frunzoff was the All-Important One until you saw we were trying to find him?"

"That's about it," she confessed. "You can see why we were impressed. You had come into Russia -- 2 foreigners -- and dug up something we had only suspected was true. Moreover, you learned the man's identity."

"You're impressed?" Ham asked dryly.

"Certainly."

"I'm not," the deflated attorney said. "Right now, I can't think of a job where Monk and I made more fool moves and got in a worse mess."

Doc Savage asked: "What is your proposition, young lady?"

"Tell us what you found out from Frunzoff. And give us the proof you took -- the kind of information you got from Frunzoff would be so startling that you would have to prove its authenticity -- and that is all we want."

"And the price you offer?"

"The return of your man Monk Mayfair alive."

"And an unhindered escape from Russia, I presume?"

"Naturally. We could help you escape if you wish. But presumably, you have a better plan for flight than we could concoct."

"Just what," Doc asked, "do you intend to do with this information which you seem to imagine we got from Frunzoff?"

"You got it all right," she said.

"How do you know?"

"You went to his house, didn't you? And then you headed for a radio station. Oh, you got what you came after all right."

"What," said the **Bronze Man**, "do you think you would do with this plum that you feel we picked?"

She laughed grimly.

"How long," do you think Frunzoff would last if the Central Committee knew that 3 foreign agents had calmly walked in and milked him of all they wanted to know."

"My impression, Doc replied, "is that the Central Committee doesn't know Frunzoff exists as anyone of importance."

The girl started to say something ... *stammered ... and fell silent.*

"To put it more correctly," Doc suggested, "if the Central Committee can be shown that Stalin has prepared such a secret ace as Frunzoff, Stalin's hold will be weakened. The idea is to tear down Stalin. Right?"

"I don't see why you should object to that!" she snapped.

Doc said in a conversational tone: "I can't think of a very sound reason either. Ham, is she still holding the gun on me?"

"She keeps the gun pointed right at your back," Ham answered.

"At the middle of my back?"

"Yes. The bullets would go through the seat, of course."

"Take the gun away from her," Doc ordered.

Ham must have worked very fast.

Doc Savage was set for the shock of the bullet. Not that he quite lacked confidence in the bulletproof chain-mesh undergarment he was wearing. But the idea of stopping a bullet wasn't reassuring.

When the gun exploded -- **which it did, twice!** -- the slugs drove through the side of the car. He heard the gun fall to the floor. But that didn't settle it.

A series of violent motion followed. Then a long, painful yodel-like expression of *pain* from Ham Brooks.

Doc stopped the car which was not moving fast. He turned in the seat and as nearly as he could determine in the darkness, Ham was getting the worse of it.

Amazed, the **Bronze Man** joined the struggle with some caution.

The caution was justified because the forefinger of his right hand got a quick disjointsing. He narrowly missed losing an eye and his neck got a painful wrench.

All of that in about 2.5 seconds before he subdued the girl.

There was a period of silence in the little car.

"Whew!" Ham said weakly. "Don't ever -- whatever you do -- let Monk hear that a slip of a girl practically took me apart and threw the pieces away."

"Are you badly hurt?" Doc demanded.

"Of course I'm hurt!" Ham yelled. "I'm hurt all over. My God, this babe knows *judo* tricks I never heard of!"

"If you'll hold her," Doc said, "I'll get the truth serum ready."

"Do I have to?" the bruised attorney asked gingerly. "All right. I'll try to hold her. But be ready to rescue me if she as much as gets one finger loose."

The **Man of Bronze** found the gun and tossed it out of the car. Then he gripped his disjointsing finger ... wrenched it back into normalcy ... and felt gingerly of his aching neck.

He got out the equipment case that held the truth serum and its necessary apparatus.

"Let me have her wrist," he said.

Seryi Mitroff made a completely cold-blooded comment.

"So that is how you got to Frunzoff."

Chapter VIII

Mahli -- the great oaf of a man -- finished explaining the situation to Monk Mayfair.

He spoke English more naturally that Monk could have imagined (had he not been too frightened to imagine anything) he was listening to a salesman trying to sell him an insurance policy in New York.

Mahli was clearly one of the very few men whom Monk Mayfair had met whose looks were more deceiving than his own.

He had the build and appearance of a hooligan of the most stupid type. By now, though, there wasn't any doubt in the apish chemist's mind about his captor being educated, clever, and probably a "warmhearted" as a blackjack.

"You understand?" Mahli asked.

"I guess so," Monk muttered. "I'm your 'down payment' on the information you think we got from Frunzoff."

"Exactly."

"It's all right if I don't feel happy about it, isn't it?" Monk asked bitterly.

"You're physically intact. You should feel somewhat fortunate about that."

"And about this know on my head, I suppose. Presumably this lightning that keeps striking me is coming from sort of protuberance. Do you mind if I feel and find out."

"Sit still."

"Okay."

"Sit very still," Mahli warned. "It has finally dawned on us that you are a **Doc Savage** associate. That -- if you don't mind my saying so -- will persuade us to shoot you instantly if you as much as sneeze."

"Okay. I gathered that."

"Good."

"Where are we?" Monk asked.

"No answer to that," Mahli said.

Monk glanced around, being careful not even to move his eyes too abruptly because he didn't doubt in the least that he would be shot if his captors became alarmed. Not that they weren't alarmed already. They just weren't at the point of disposing of him

Monk felt that they wished to do so. He had never seen a group of men who were more convinced they had caught a Tartar. The *Man of Bronze*'s reputation, Monk reflected, could be quite a liability.

He saw a grimy cavern of a room furnished with 3 iron cots; some bedclothing; a coal stove; a table; 2 chairs; and not much else if one omitted the *odor* of too much unwashed occupancy. Someone's living quarters, presumably.

"There are 7 men guarding you," Mahli warned suddenly and hoarsely. "You haven't a chance to escape."

"Take it easy," Monk said. "You're so nervous that you're getting me upset."

"No chance for in flight, understand! There is my myself and 7 very good men. There is the Russian Security Police, the OGPU, the NKVD, the VSNK ..."

"We have a little of that alphabet soup back home ourselves," Monk interrupted. "Is here where it started?"

"You mustn't try to escape."

"Oh mustn't I?"

Mahli scowled ... then muttered: "It would be a relief if you would promise not to try. Would you give your word?"

Monk laughed in his face.

"Sure. I'll promise. That it won't be a 'try' -- it'll be a success, brother! You won't what's happened until it's *sleeshkam pozna*, comrade. Too late."

Monk hesitated ... eyed the **big man** ... and added: "Why the outsized tizzy, large *tovarich*? I don't make you out as a guy who gets that scared of me."

"Much is at stake," Mahli said frankly.

"Yeah?"

"I will speak straight words, ugly one. It has long been suspected that Stalin has groomed a faceless one to step into his shoes. It would be a relief to many if that one were eliminated."

"A relief to the other candidates," Monk said. "I see what you mean."

"If Stalin has prepared this faceless one, it will make him no friends."

Monk nodded.

"Among the other candidates. I can see that, too."

"Is Frunzoff such a faceless one? And did you get proof tonight?"

Monk grinned. "What was it you said awhile ago? 'No answer to that'? That's me all over, *tovarich*. You're speaking to a fencepost."

Beside the grimy window, a man cursed impatiently.

They listened and there was the sound of a man singing in the distance, loudly and happily. The aria was a Tchaikovsky bit and singer applied Russian words, then switched over into tongue that was certainly not Russian. There were but a few words of this. Then he swung back into Russian.

"A noisy fool for so early in the morning," muttered the man who had sworn.

Monk leaned back, trying to look relaxed.

It was Doc Savage out there! And the language that was not Russian was ancient *Mayan*, understood by very few in the so-called Civilized World outside of the **Bronze Man** and his aides.

The information that Doc had inserted in the song was a little upsetting.

There were out of anesthetic gas. So any help that Monk got would be the "hard way".

Monk Mayfair placed his feet on the floor so that he could get a quick start. He made a mental notation that he would like very much to be safe in New York ... then waited.

That was about all he could do. That and hope it wouldn't be too long.

Which it wasn't.

The **fire** began in an alley-like court at the rear. Because he was expecting something, Monk saw the **smoke** first and had difficulty keeping from pointing it out.

Then a man yelled, pointed. As might be expected, there was a rush for the window.

They never found out what was burning down in the alley.

And it was the least of their what happened anyway.

The window went first. Sash, glass, everything -- it came to pieces, letting in a sheet of **bluish** flame, a gulp of driven air, and an incredible amount of **noise!**

Monk fully understood that it was a small explosive grenade applied to the window for a distraction.

He was surprised, though, when Doc Savage came in through the window after it.

The burly chemist was on his feet and after the guard at the door by now. The latter -- the only man at the door -- had been bounced back against the panel by the explosion (by the surprise of it rather than the force) and had half-turned and was fending off with one arm and fumbling for a gun with the other.

Monk did his best to put his right fist entirely through the man's middle. And when the fellow doubled, the apish chemist used his left fist to change the shape of the man's jaw considerably.

He knew by now that Doc must be in the room. There was quite a bit of smoke. But enough was added to activity to indicate the Bronze Man. The building was an old-fashioned stone affair with ledges outside the window. So he figured that Doc had stepped in from next door.

He turned ... picked up a chair ... and made for Mahli. The latter was on his knees fumbling for a gun that he must have dropped in the excitement.

Doc Savage said in *Mayan*: "*Get going, Monk! Never mind cracking heads.*"

Monk hesitated. He thought of the beating he had taken in the night near the radio station.

He threw the chair at Mahli. It didn't damage him much.

Monk started for the big Russian ...

But Doc said more sharply: "Cut it out! Get going!!"

Ham Brooks was outside the door.

He said: "You took long enough getting out of there!" to Monk as they ran down a passage, then downstairs.

The night outside was turning into a shiny ugly dawn that made their faces look a little more red and harried than they were.

"Where is this good-looking Seryi babe I've been hearing about?" Monk asked. He was not puffing noticeably.

"Tied up in the back of the car," Ham said.

They came to the little Russian copy of a German motorcar.

Monk piled into the rear, then asked: "In the back of what car?"

Doc Savage -- on an impressive note of disgust -- said: "She's gone, you mean?"

"Then so will the car keys be. And probably the ignition wiring too," Ham predicted.

He was wrong, though.

They drove hard and devious for about one(1) verst (the Russian equivalent of 2/3 of a mile), then traveled decorously.

Reaching the wide Tweskoj Boulevard, Doc reached down to tinker with the radio receiver and get it on the Moscow police frequency. Mostly he tuned in electrical interference from the tramway cars which -- even at this ungodly hour -- were packed with work-bound people.

"And you left her tied up in the backseat?" Monk inquired of Ham.

"Why not? By all normal standards, she would have been woozy from the truth serum for an hour longer."

"Who tied her up?" Monk asked.

"I did," Doc said uncomfortably. "And let's not go into that."

Monk noted the swollen finger which Seryi had unjointed for the **Bronze Man** earlier.

"That's a bad-looking finger you've got there. What happened to it?"

Doc Savage drove intently and said nothing.

The apish Chemist turned to Ham and asked: "You blacked your eye, shyster? Or did you know you've got a very outstanding shiner?"

The dapper Lawyer <winced>.

"There was a little fight a minute ago. Or didn't you happen to notice?"

"I thought it took half-an-hour or so for an eye to get black after the punch," Monk said dryly. "What have you developed? A quick color change?"

Harm hastily changed his explanation to: "I guess I got an eye bruised when I slipped on the ice back at the radio station. Sure! I recall it now."

Monk expressed his disbelief with a snort!

"You boys are tearing down my yen to meet this Seryi," he said.

"I do hope you meet her!" Ham snapped.

"Yeah?"

"Nothing would give me quite as much satisfaction," the embarrassed Attorney assured him disagreeably.

Chapter IX

Beyond the picturesque iron bridge over the Moskwa River near the southeast Kremlin wall, they turned into a side-street ... parked ... left the car and walked 4 blocks over the glazed pavement to a small private garage where Monk and Ham had a change of cars waiting.

This one was a light U.S. Army command car which had been converted with a coat of paint and a brand plate giving the false impression that it was Soviet-made.

"The airport now?" Ham asked.

Doc Savage consulted his watch, then nodded.

"Yes. About the right amount of time has elapsed."

"Provided," Ham said, "the American monitors picked up our radio message."

Monk shuddered.

"Don't be pessimistic. Smile at Fate and keep *her* happy."

Ham was tuning the radio to the Soviet police wavelength again.

"You been listening to the local cops?" he demanded. "If not, just fan out your ears. They're not passing up that mess we just made of Mahli and his friends."

The worried lawyer pointed at the radio.

"Go ahead. Listen. Then be an optimist."

What they were hearing was the Moscow police spreading a dragnet. There was a grim efficiency about it.

And to complicate matters, the police had a general description of themselves. They were pictured as 3 men -- one a giant, one an apish fellow, and one *kraseevyl*.

Monk grimaced when he heard the Russian word describing Ham Brooks. The latter chuckled.

"That's me. Handsome," He said.

The radio was an all-wave model and Doc indicated it impatiently, saying: "Never mind amusing yourselves listening to the police uproar. Tune in on the Soviet Air Traffic Control frequency and let's see if we're going to stand a chance of getting out of this."

The SATC wavelength was disturbingly quiet when they got the radio set up on it. *They drove in silence, listening.*

Doc's face began to get a *metallic* angularity that meant strain. Ham and Monk stared at their watches uneasily.

They had driven about 10 *verstahs*. Outside, the *sleet* no longer fell, the windshield being clear except for the condensation on the inner surface which Doc Savage kept scrubbing away with a palm. There was a *cold wind* that blew hard and tumbled dark sheep-like clouds and occasionally nudged the car insolently.

Suddenly, the Soviet Air Traffic Control came to life, spluttering and astonished.

An American transport plane was scheduled for early arrival at the Moscow airport. There was some confusion about clearance for the ship.

Soviet Army Air Force Interceptor broke into the communications channel with the pointed information that the plane was going to be shot down. That added quite a lot to the uproar.

Air Force Interception was informed that the plane had special diplomatic clearance.

Interception wish to know -- in about these words -- how the blue hell that had happened?

They were informed that the answer was simple enough for even Interception to get through its thick head.

A very important American was on the plane. An American that had enough weight Internationally that instantaneous clearance had been arranged.

Who would that Imperialistic [so-and-so] be? Interception wished to know.

Doc Savage was flying to Moscow to personally demand the return of his radar-blocking gadget that had strayed. With him were two of his associates -- Monk Mayfair and Ham Brooks.

Monk grinned at Ham.

"So you're twins," he remarked. "As the fellow says: 'What a revolting development that is'."

With the Moscow airport hangars building on their left, Doc Savage swung the car around to the rear of the Comrade Soldiers' Club. It was a large drab wooden building with the single word *Eentendahnstva* across the front.

There were other cars there and a couple of trucks.

"You fellows are familiar with the procedure we hope to follow?" Doc asked.

Monk nodded. "I should be. I've repeated it to myself every night since I've been in Russia. Sort of a part of my nightly prayer.

He glanced at Ham.

"Cripes! Have you gone back to carrying that cane?"

For as long as the homely chemist had known Ham Brooks, the latter had invariably carried a slender **black sword-cane**. It had rarely been out of the dapper lawyer's hand. It was almost a part of him and certainly a part of his character. During the time they had been in Soviet territory, Ham had naturally forsaken his trademark.

Monk pointed at the cane that Ham had extracted from the car trunk.

"That's not yours. It's not even the type you would carry. Where'd you swipe it?"

"Come on, stupid," Ham said.

The cane was a heavy knurled article of ironwood with inlaid bands of *gold* and *silver* (rather platinum, Monk decided, taking a closer look and revising his opinion) and it bore no resemblance whatever to Ham Brooks' neat dark sword-cane.

It looked valuable, though. And useful in a skull-breaking contest.

They crossed a cobbled road ... passed between 2 buildings ... and Doc stopped at a narrow door.

He <tapped> on the door.

3 raps ... a pause ... 2 ... a pause ... then 3 more rappings.

They waited.

The building eaves were heavy with icicles. One of these broke loose and fell, causing Monk to jump (literally!) out of one shoe.

He bent over -- grumbling and embarrassed -- and was stamping his foot into the shoe when the door opened.

A man came out of the door. A sullen-faced man in workman's clothing.

He muttered the Russian good morning ("*Dobraye ootra*") without any visible pleasure whatever and stalked past them. If they meant anything to him, it certainly wasn't evident.

"I remember that chap!" Ham said with pleasure. "The last time I saw him, he was a prince of the Imperial Japanese family in Tokyo about a year after Pearl Harbor."

Doc said: "We're to wait inside. It seems to be going according to schedule."

The room which they entered was a naked place without furniture but with 3 nails driven into one wall. From these were suspended clothes hangers with 3 suits, shirts, and neckties to fit them. Socks and shoes were ready on the floor.

Monk's necktie was a terrific *yellow*. He eyed it with pleasure!

Moscow zone Traffic Control kept the American transport plane circling the airport for half-an-hour by claiming that there was a stack of air traffic in the overcast. Which was a lie.

The object of the discourtesy -- uniquely enough -- was not characteristic nastiness but an effort to delay the ship's arrival until a Russian dignitary named Zardnov reached the field.

Zardnov (his full name was Oldenny Zardnov) was currently an acting delegate to the United Nations. This meant that he functioned at Lake Success when Molotov and Gromyko were absent.

It also indicated that Zardnov was currently in political favor. That made him an important man. Regardless of the Russian obstruction attitude in the U.N., they had certainly assigned their top men to the sessions.

So Zardnov was prominent. He was currently in Moscow for instructions.

Zardnov reached the airport with his face still puffed from sleep and his temper bad. He was a stocky man of about Molotov's built but with thicker lips and large damp eyes. Indicative of his status, he was accompanied by 4 bodyguards and 2 secretaries in 2 other cars.

It was inevitable that Zardnov would be called to deal with Doc Savage's descent on Moscow. He stared upward angrily although the plane was too high in the overcast to be heard.

He had made a violent speech at Lake Success concerning the *Man of Bronze*, branding the latter a charlatan and a troublemaker. He was laughed off the floor for his pains.

"Let the ship land," Zardnov said grimly. "I will make this Doc Savage a speech before we send him back without his silly rocket. It will be a satisfaction."

He turned to a secretary.

"Has the rocket been found?"

"There is a great search underway and it will be found," said the lackey cautiously.

The plane broke through the overcast at 1400 feet. It made an impressive sight approaching the field.

It was a 6-jet ship with V-wings and a probable airspeed top of well beyond 500.

It came in "hot", gear down. It touched the runway and presently taxied along the strip to a tired brick building that was a former Administration building, now unused since the construction of the new terminal in which Zardnov waited.

"Tell them come here. **Here!**" Zardnov yelled.

The Control Tower conveyed the information to the Yank pilot who informed the Tower that an American embassy attaché was waiting at the old terminal to greet Doc Savage and that was where they were going. The hell with Mr. Zardnov.

Zardnov got the point. He raised his cane on high and shook it!

The cane was quite a hefty one of ironwood with *gold* and *platinum* inlay. Carrying it was not an affectation with him. Rather, he needed it.

During the early days of Red Terror, 2 days following August 30, 1918 when a girl named Kaplan shot Lenin as he left a workers' meeting in Moscow, Zardnov had himself received a bullet in the knee which had left a permanent disablement.

The knee was inclined at the most unexpected moments to fold and deposit him on the floor if he didn't have the cane for quick support. Consequently he was never without it.

The car whisked Zardnov to the old terminal and he saw (with some satisfaction) that political police had surrounded Doc Savage, Monk Mayfair, and Ham Brooks the instant they stepped from the plane.

Zardnov saw with a touch of disgust that American embassy attaché Clyde Warper had forced his way through and joined the plane arrivals.

The disgust wasn't for Clyde Warper personally. It was just that diplomats had an understanding -- a gentleman's agreement -- that each fellow's country wouldn't abuse the other's diplomats.

The diplomatic gentlemen might plot wars and casually arrange the slaughter of a few million civilians. *But they mustn't have their hair mussed.*

That was the deal from Time immemorial and Zardnov certainly wasn't going to break up the play, being a fellow who needed diplomatic immunity more than anyone else.

Clyde Warper had whisked the arrivals into a room in the old terminal before Zardnov could join them. But that was all right. The political police were on the job.

Warper and Zardnov were as polite as 2 cats climbing out of a cream jar. Clyde Warper introduced Doc Savage, Monk Mayfair, and Ham Brooks.

Zardnov leaned on his cane and scowled. He had not personally Doc Savage or his aides previously. He was interested in the group.

The **big bronze man** was carrying a metal equipment case. And as he began telling Zardnov the purpose of his visit to Moscow (it concerned the incident of the runaway rocket last night, the way he told it), he gestured with emphasis with the hand holding the case.

The case lid flew open (apparently by accident) and a number of objects fell out.

One of these burst with about the commotion of a ripe egg. An incredible quantity of **black smoke** exuded from it. In a couple of seconds, the inside of the room was as **black** as the interior of a goat.

"It's harmless! It's harmless!" Doc Savage was shouting. "It's merely a smoke grenade. Quite harmless. Stand where you are, everyone. Somebody open the window."

But nobody seemed to be doing much standing still. Feet were whetting the floor excitedly!

The cane which was supporting Zardnov was jerked from under him and he sat down heavily on the floor. The cane left his fingers somehow.

The room rang with Russian profanity!

Someone opened the window. **Smoke** came out.

In the American plane, the crewmembers saw the smoke and heard the excitement. They left the ship and bolted in a body for the Administration building to learn what was happening and offer whatever assistance seemed appropriate.

The smoke exuded from the window rapidly. The air in the room cleared. And so did the excitement.

Zardnov discovered a uniformed Russian policeman standing beside him holding his (Zardnov's) prized cane.

"Did you jerk that from under me, you fool?" Zardnov snarled.

The Soviet cop became as white as a Siberian winter. And probably not without reason.

"Oh no, Sir! It was pushed into my hand. Someone thrust it upon me in the blackness!" he blurted.

The crewmen of the American ship returned to their craft at the pointed suggestion of the police. It seemed that they didn't have clearance to leave their plane. A technicality newly-devised for the embarrassment of individuals that the Communists wished to harass.

Not unnaturally considering the excitement, no one happened to notice that **3 more men returned to the plane than had left it to investigate the uproar.**

Three. A large man, a short wide one, and a slender one.

Other than this physical similarity, however, they bore no great resemblance to Doc Savage and his 2 aides.

In the old terminal, Doc Savage was apologizing for his carelessness.

From apologies, Doc shifted to a stiff demand that he be given custody of the remains of the radar-blocking rocket which had strayed.

He intimated that there was great likelihood that the Soviets had found the lost rocket by now. Hadn't they had representatives at the scene of the rocket firing in the American zone last night?

There was an insinuation that the **Bronze Man** thought the Soviets weren't above tampering with the rocket to cause the accident.

Zardnov's argument took the line that this was a petty matter and under the jurisdiction of another department anyway. He Zardnov was powerless, as a matter-of-fact.

This of course was a colossal lie. But Zardnov enjoyed telling it.

The argument grew heated. This didn't mean that the language was profane although the meanings inherent in the words were more blistering than a mule skinner's vocabulary.

Zardnov said he would do Doc Savage a great favor and telephone the "Central Executive in Charge of Finding Lost Rockets".

He did go to a telephone and called his wife to learn whether she was still being unreasonable about the Kronstadt girl with whom Zardnov was living part-time.

She was.

Not bothered much, Zardnov returned to Doc Savage.

"I am informed that there will be a full investigation concerning the rocket and a decision reached. That will take about 10 days. You will be informed," Zardnov said without batting an eye. "I am very sorry."

Doc protested vociferously. He noted Monk and Ham watching him impatiently.

The switch with the 3 ringers from the plane had been managed deftly during the experience with the smoke grenade. Through the window, Doc had seen the ringers board the ship. They were safe. The ship's documents numbered them among the crew in case there was any doubt in Russian minds.

Nothing remained, then, but to wait to be ordered out of Russia. Which Doc imagined would be long in coming.

The switch at the airport (quite an elaborate bit of chicanery) had 2 objectives.

- (1) To make it seem that Doc, Monk, and Ham had been on the plane and could not have been in Moscow that night.
- (2) To draw attention to the matter so that when it was publicized later, it would be believable.

The first was a temporary blindfold for the Russians. The second would be a headache for them later if things went well.

Zardnov was grinning.

"I have also other news for you," he said in his poor English. "Your permission to visit Russia has been canceled. You will, unfortunately, have to leave immediately."

That was what Doc Savage had been awaiting.

But he made a loud objection nonetheless.

"You will have to leave," Zardnov insisted.

Doc glanced at Monk and Ham and (to their relief!) shrugged.

"There'll be plenty of hell raised about this," he assured Zardnov.

They prepared to leave. The man from the consulate -- Clyde Warper -- registered his formal opinion.

Outside, the plane skipper signaled and the crew began getting into position.

A Russian arrived with a wild look and grabbed Zardnov's shoulder.

Zardnov, the man said, was wanted on the telephone.

Looking surprised and uneasy, Zardnov turned and hurried toward a booth.

"I don't like the looks of this," Doc said grimly. "Let's get out of here."

They had almost reached the door when Zardnov **screamed!** The high piping sound of the man's voice went running through the building like raw little animals.

"Seize them!" he shrieked. **"They mustn't escape! They have ..."**

He apparently realized that he didn't know what they had done.

"That was the Kremlin itself on the telephone!" he croaked.

Lunging through the door, Doc Savage found himself looking down the muzzles of half-a-dozen guns. And more weapons were joining the battery.

"Hold them!" Zardnov was bellowing excitedly. **"The Kremlin wants them."**

Chapter X

They could see beyond the window with its lacing of steel bars the pale pink brick wall of the Kremlin with its battlements and citadel-like towers.

It was very **cold**. The *sleet* gave the outer world a shiny effect. A few thick hard snow pellets were traveling in the air like frightened gnats.

The room where they waited was of stone and bare, hard, ancient dark wood and as naked as they were.

Their clothing had been taken. They were still dripping from the violent shower bath that they had been forced to take.

Somewhere in the ineffectual daylight outside, a peal of bells began. The sound came from the tower above the Spasskiye Vorota (the "Gate of Salvation") that an Englishman had built in the 15th century.

The bells pealed the "Internationale". Which meant that it was Noon.

The "Internationale" was played at 12:00 and 6:00. And at 3:00 and 9:00, the Russian Revolutionary Funeral March was on the repertoire.

"12:00 o'clock," Doc remarked.

"Damn I'm cold!" Monk complained.

"Think about the firing squad," Ham advised him. "That should warm you up."

"You believe they'll do that to us?" Monk asked in alarm.

"Why not?" Ham said bitterly. "After all, we ..."

"... are perfectly innocent," Doc Savage interjected warningly.

He added in *Mayan*: "There seems to be no hidden microphone. Which probably means there is one."

He continued in English.

"This is an outrage. Our diplomatic immunity as military emissaries has been violated. Such a thing is unheard of. Even here."

The door opened and armed guards entered. They were told harshly "Syoodah!"

The march carried them down a corridor past an almost continuous array of armed men who eyed their nakedness with ugly pleasure.

The destination proved to be the X-ray room of the Kremlin hospital where they were X-rayed in rapid succession from head-to-toe.

"What's the idea of this shenanigan?" Monk pondered angrily. "They trying to identify us by our dental work or by my flat feet?"

"A further search for secret weapons, probably," Doc guessed.

Ham contributed: "Or maybe they think we swallowed the keys to the city."

The X-raying completed, their skin was subjected to inspection with infrared and ultraviolet light. It was clearly a search for secret writing. Their fingernails were examined and scraped. Their hair was combed and the combings passed on to a laboratory.

"This is getting preposterous," Monk muttered.

Their next session was held in a larger room that had a few leather chairs and an enormous mahogany table at which were seated 5 men. Two of these -- Frunzoff and Zardnov -- were not strangers.

Doc Savage and his 2 aides pretended not to know Zardnov. The other 3 men at the table -- it was not hard to guess -- were Security Police executives.

"Silence!" bellowed an SP man when Doc began a vociferous objection. "You will answer questions. That is all."

Doc Savage frowned.

The Security Police officer whipped open a briefcase at his elbow. He extracted a spool of recording wire (it resembled the spools on which adhesive tape is sold in the States) and slapped it on the table.

"This was found in your plane," the man said angrily. "It is an odd thing to be in a plane. How do you account for it?"

Doc pretended a slight surprise and said: "I shall account for nothing, naturally. This whole thing is an outrage perpetuated against an American scientist who came to Moscow to recover a strayed rocket."

"This spool was found in the plane."

"Was it?"

"It is recording wire."

"Indeed?"

The interrogator glared, shouted, and a nervous-looking Russian was pushed inside.

In response to bellowed questions, he explained that in searching the plane, he had found this spool of recording wire on the ship's radio-transmitter box where it had evidently been placed for concealment.

The Security Police officer swung on Doc Savage. He pointed at the spool and demanded: "How does it happen that **there is nothing on it?**"

"Isn't there?"

A Russian electronics engineer brought in a recorder (obviously an American machine). The spool was placed and the apparatus set in operation.

The result that came from the loudspeaker was not encouraging. It consisted of garbled and indecipherable quackings and whisperings.

"Merely cross-talk," Doc remarked. "The same sort of stuff is found on most recording wire when it has not been too efficiently wiped of the previous recording.

The engineer leaned over and whispered.

The police official swore ... turned to the man who had found the spool ... and demanded:

"You say this was lying on the radio-transmitter case in the plane?"

"Da."

"Was the radio transmitter turned 'on'?"

"Yes."

"Around the radio transmitter," explained the electronics expert, "there might be enough of a high-frequency field to demagnetize the wire. Since the sound is planted on the wire magnetically, the demagnetizing would naturally wipe off the wire to a greater-or-lesser extent, depending on how strong the field ..."

Zardnov interrupted.

"Never mind the lesson in electricity. Someone in the American crew saw the ship was going to be searched; placed that spool of wire on the radio where it would be demagnetized; and wiped out the information on the wire. Is that it?"

"That could be it."

Frunzoff looked relieved.

Zardnov waved a hand triumphantly.

"At least we stopped the information they had gotten."

Frunzoff said: "There was no information! There couldn't have been. I would know it if they had questioned me, wouldn't I?"

Zardnov shrugged.

"What happens to you when you are dealing with Doc Savage, who can say?"

He gave the guards an order.

"Take them away."

This time, they were given clothes. Coverall suit of coarse cloth and unlovely cut.

Then they were taken across Communist Street (the one street inside the Kremlin) to a building beyond the tall green building called the Poteszny Dvortez (the "Pleasure Palace").

They were passed through a steel door ... entered officially in a record book ... and then urged forward again.

The place was a prison. *There wasn't the slightest doubt of that.*

To their surprise, they were shoved into an enormous room in which there were at least a dozen other prisoners. The door was locked behind them.

Abruptly, in *Mayan*, Doc said: "*Pretend you do not recognize here and stick to it.*"

"Don't worry," Monk said. "*We've been tossed in with Mahli and his bruisers. Is that babe yonder the inimitable Seryi?*"

"*You don't know her!*" Doc warned.

"*Who said I did? That's the truth, too!*"

Monk eyed Seryi admiringly and added in English: "You know, that's a real dishy female. I wonder if she would like to a gentleman and a scholar?"

He sauntered toward Seryi ...

The huge Mahli (he showed considerable battering at the hands of the police) came over to Doc Savage and said bitterly: "So they got you?"

"I don't believe I understand," Doc said blankly.

"Don't give me that I-don't-know-you look," Mahli growled.

"Am I supposed to know you?"

Mahli considered the answer ... rubbed his bruised jaw ... and finally shrugged.

"I don't know who is the fool. Me, probably."

He grinned with no humor and fell in with Doc's pretense, explaining: "You see, 3 gentlemen who I had reasons for presuming were Doc Savage and 2 associates extracted information of value from a man named Frunzoff. I tried to recover that information. I failed and in a rage, I informed the police of the truth. They threw me and my friends in jail."

"That is interesting," the **Bronze Man** admitted.

In a louder voice and for effect, Mahli added: "I had the interests of the Party at heart. The Party has made a mistake. But I am sure they will find it out and release me. There is no man in Russia stronger for the Party than I."

Ham Brooks grinned.

"Do you think that little speech coming in over the microphones will boost your stock?"

Wryly and with his lips only, Mahli replied: "It doesn't hurt to try."

"What will happen to us next?" Doc asked curiously.

Mahli shrugged.

"Usually men in this room at Noon are shot at sundown," he answered.

It was **cold** in the room. They had been given no shoes and the stone floor was a numbing **chill** against their bare feet. They sat -- as some of the other prisoners were doing -- cross-legged for warmth. *There was not much conversation.*

Monk Mayfair had managed some sort of conversation with Seryi and seemed to get some satisfaction from the scowls that Ham Brooks sent in his direction. Presently the apish chemist rejoined them.

"She seems to be a very sweet girl," he said.

In English, Ham said: "I'm sure she is."

Then in *Mayan* with his face as straight, he added: *"I want to be around when you make your first pass at her. 5 will get you 20 that they'll have to hunt for the parts."*

Monk grinned. "Sour grapes."

About 3:00, their friend from the U.S. consulate -- Clyde Warper -- came to see them. He was upset and harried.

"Are you all right?" he asked anxiously.

"I wouldn't call it 'all right,'" Doc said. "But we are still physically intact."

"I had a hell-of-a-time getting in to see you," Warper explained. "Things are in a mess. I'm having trouble getting word of this affair out to Washington so that pressure can be put on. I've been informed the sleet storm destroyed all communication. A likely excuse!"

"It is a hornet's nest," Doc agreed. "But don't get to feeling that you are responsible. It was our doing and except for an accident, we would have left Russia safely."

Clyde Warper hesitated ... then said: "You've got good nerves, I hear."

"What do you mean?"

"I would hate to pass this information to a weak sister," Warper said. "But you can take it. Here it is. **You are scheduled to be shot.** The word has come straight from Stalin himself."

"That seems rather definite," Doc said.

"It's more than that. It's final!"

Warper moistened his lips.

"There'll be plenty of hell to pay later. But I guess they're willing to risk that."

"They not noted for being afraid to take risks."

"They're not noted for a lot of things," Clyde Warper said. "I'm going to leave you and see how many fires I can build under swivel chairs. I don't think the fools realize the International consequences that will come from shooting you fellows."

"Do what you can," Doc said.

"I will."

When Clyde Warper had gone, Ham Brooks said, shivering: "That was an openhanded way of discussing the end of our trail. My God! I'm just beginning to realize that they will shoot us. I think I knew it all along. But somehow it didn't register."

Monk Mayfair shuddered and sat down.

"Find a more cheerful subject, won't you!"

With a startling *clanging*, the steel door slammed open again and blank-faced soldiers with rifles in hand marched inside. Orders were shouted and the prisoners lined up.

Doc Savage found himself beside Mahli in the lineup and the big Russian looked up at him wryly.

"The visit of your friend from the embassy was unfortunate," Mahli remarked.

"In what way?"

"In the most direct way," Mahli replied.

"They're going to shoot us now. Immediately."

Chapter XI

Doc Savage's *flake-gold eyes* whipped over the faces of the prisoners. And it came to him that he was probably the only one who hadn't realized what the influx of armed soldiers meant.

Not that there was quailing before Death. Most of the men had Mahli's erect cold acceptance of Fate. Two or three were very pale. No face in the big stone room was wearing its natural color, probably.

Seryi stood straight without trembling. Her face had a restraint that was complete. Madonna-like, lovely and distant.

Doc looked at her wonderingly. For a fullness of steel-wrapped nerve without outward strain, he had never seen better man-or-woman.

Madonna-like was indeed the description. A young woman of extreme and unusual capabilities facing with acceptance and resignation the hell that this room would become when the rifles began smashing.

"Monk", Doc Savage said using the *Mayan* tongue, *"this is going to be rough, even with all the breaks. We'll need what numbers we can get. So I'm going to team up with the other prisoners."*

"All right by me."

"Get the information to Mahli. Have him pass it to the others."

"How-the-hell will I do that?" Monk blurted.

"I don't know. But try."

The *Man of Bronze* stepped out of the line. He held up a hand and approached the execution-squad leader.

He told the man: "Get Zardnov here. Or Frunzoff. One of the other. You understand?"

The Russian had been expecting something like that, Doc surmised, although the man took his time scowling, then demanding: "For what purpose?"

"Tell them I have something to offer," Doc said. "Tell them the bargain will not repeated. It is now or never."

The Russian laughed.

"Now or never. I would say so too."

However, he swung ... snapped a command at a junior to take over ... and left the execution room with the door being carefully unlocked, then locked behind him again.

Zardnov had been waiting nearby, obviously.

He appeared in brisk order, but said coldly: "I happened to be passing. They were lucky to catch me. What is this nonsense?"

"There was a spool containing wire," Doc said.

"You admit that then?"

Doc shrugged.

"I wish to make a deal."

"What deal?"

"The obvious one. For my life and those of my friends."

"And so?"

"Don't be coy with me, Zardnov," Doc said coldly. "This is of quite an importance to you. Stalin is involved and a great deal of ill feeling throughout the Council. I imagine the gossip is already around and it isn't going to do the regime any good."

The *bronze giant* eyed the man intently and added: "You, I imagine, are not uninterested in the existence of Frunzoff as a prepared successor to ..."

"Shut up!" Zardnov blurted.

He came close to Doc Savage, adding: "Lower your voice, you fool. If you knew the bitter feeling among the Central Committee members ..."

The *Man of Bronze* reached out and seized the man. He jerked him close and slapped a hand against the anesthetic-gas grenade which he had planted in the show handkerchief in Zardnov's breast coat pocket during the mysterious goings-on at the airport when the smoke grenade had been "accidentally" detonated by Doc's double.

The *Bronze Man* held his breath ...

He turned his head.

He saw Mahli wheel wildly and whisper to the man next to him in the line of prisoners. An order, he knew, to hold his breath as long as possible and to pass the instruction down the line.

The trained reaction was wonderful to watch.

Doc recalled how earlier in the night, Seryi had said that Mahli was a top agent and that his men were superior. She had not exaggerated.

No questions were asked. Obedience was instant and complete. The word to hold breaths went down the line faster than a gossip rumor.

It held even when a guard shot 2 prisoners in cold blood with his rifle. That happened after the guards and execution-squad began to fold won on the floor.

Zardnov was already loose in Doc Savage's arms. The **Bronze Man** frisked him hurriedly, taking what documents he could find. Particularly Zardnov's diplomatic papers and local police passes. They might come in handy.

Counting seconds mentally until they reached a minute, Doc released his breath and said in Russian: "Let's go! Get into Communist Street, turn left, and there will be 2 cars parked near the Potesny Dvortez. The keys will be in them. Leave no one behind. The cars are armored. Make for the Tanitzkiye Gate."

Mahli blurted incredulously: "This was arranged?"

Mahli grinned an ugly grin.

"You are not disappointing me after all, Mr. Savage."

He wheeled and bellowed at his men to be sure to grab ammunition for the rifles that they were taking off the gassed guards.

Going down a hall, Seryi Mitroff ranged alongside Doc Savage and asked wonderingly: "How did you plant the gas grenade on Zardnov? It was a gas grenade, was it not?"

"Yes. It was put there earlier. At the airport.":

"But you asked the executioner for Frunzoff. Suppose he had come instead of Zardnov?"

"There was a plant in every suit of clothes Frunzoff had," Doc confessed. "We arranged that last night while we were working on him"

"I'm beginning to think that you are infallible."

"Only every other hour," he said. "Or I wouldn't be here. "We're still not out of it, you know."

In the ancient thoroughfare that was the only street in the Kremlin, they ran in a compact group.

Doc Savage noted that Mahli snapped an order and his men moved to positions which ringed Doc, Monk, Ham, and Seryi.

Mahli said wryly: "We're not ungrateful. This is a protective measure. Not a device to surround you."

"Never mind the gratitude," Doc said rapidly. "Before we get out of this, yonder are the cars. I hope that they hold everybody."

"They will under the circumstances," Mahli promised.

The shooting began now. Sporadic at first ... 3-or-4 spaced reports then a flurry or two.

Then it stopped.

They jammed into the cars. Doc, Monk, Ham, Seryi, and some others took one machine. Mahli and the rest wedged into the other car.

The huge Russian shouted: "After we are past the gate, let me lead. You may know Moscow. But not the way I know it, I assure you."

The shooting started anew. 2 bullets came into car smashing windows. A man threw his body back in an arching bend and made ghastly mewling sounds.

"Keep down," Doc said. "The car bodies are armor steel. Or were supposed to be."

He slid down himself. He was driving.

The plan (originally it had envisaged nothing as elaborate as this break) was for them to leave through the Tunitzkiye Gate where only one guard was stationed. There was even an arrangement for an American secret agent who had operated a fruit concession nearby for several weeks to shoot down the guard if necessary.

It didn't prove needed, however. One of Mahli's men shot him expertly long before they reached the gate.

The cars piled ahead wildly, reeling through the small landscaped park, winging in sharp turns. Mahli led and he -- and he had said -- knew the streets.

He chose with an uncanny facility those which were least slotted with traffic. It was not a mean accomplishment at this hour of the day.

In the western business area, Mahli's car swerved to the right and dived into an arched areaway. Men were leaning out, beckoning Doc's party to follow.

They did so.

Unloading from the cars in haste, they sprinted through doors and hallways. Mahli finally turned through a door which proved to be the rear entrance to a tailor shop presided over by a very fat and startled tailor.

The proprietor barked anxiously at Mahli.

Mahli told Doc: "The are Security Police uniforms here to fit everyone. In a tailor shop? Why not!"

He slapped the fat tailor on the back.

"Ivan is a resourceful fellow."

The **Bronze Man** said: "You keep a few aces in you sleeve too, I see."

Mahli nodded.

"In Russia today, who can tell when it will be very convenient to look like a soldier? You will find credentials in each, incidentally."

The tailor seized Doc Savage's arm excitedly! He was not, he yelled, certain that he had a uniform large enough for the *bronze giant*.

A uniform for a large man -- yes. But a large man with a great belly if he did possibly have one.

He had one uniform long enough and -- as the tailor said -- it had an excess of midriff.

Mahli came over to Doc.

"There is another car near here which you can use," he said. "It is an army vehicle. It will fit well with the uniforms."

"Fine."

"I would like to suggest," Mahli added, "in view of the hell that all of Russia is going to be for you in an hour-or-two, that you try the bold way."

"The airport?"

Mahli nodded. "The crew of your plane are being held there."

He described the spot, explaining the information had come from his tailor friend.

"I'm confident -- having seen you function -- that you can free them, get to your plane, and take off."

"Thanks."

"It is a favor," Mahli said. "You could return it, you know."

"How?"

"I am an ambitious man," Mahli said. "The present regime will not last forever. And after that, who can say? It would be a help to me if I knew whether Frunzoff is the man prepared for the 'Number One' spot."

"He is," Doc said.

"Thank you!" Mahli was deeply grateful. "The information makes Frunzoff a very poor insurance risk, I can assure you."

Doc frowned.

"That sort of violence is never going to establish security for Russia."

Thee was a thin fierceness behind Mahli's grin.

"We shall see. Perhaps I could become a tame man."

"It would be worth considering."

Seryi stood beside Doc Savage.

"Mahli is quite a man," she said softly. "He has qualities you have not observed."

Doc looked at her, his admiration suddenly frank.

"So have you if I may say so. A new one -- a little more titanic than the predecessors -- develops each time I meet you, it seems."

Mahli laughed.

"I imagine my lovely cousin has a wish that this thing of meetings and developments continues."

Seryi **reddened** and said bitingly: "Tact is something you should acquire, you big lout."

Mahli roared!

"What is the thing that loses a man a woman the quickest? Why ... tact!"

The tailor now came bustling up.

"The army car is ready," he said. "I would not advise a full day of gossip."

Chapter XII

Doc Savage left his *Headquarters* on the 86th floor of a midtown New York skyscraper.

He rode a taxi to the rather snobbish club on upper Fifth Avenue where Ham Brooks lived and found the dapper lawyer arguing the merits of a recent Supreme Court case with another attorney.

"We'll pick up Monk."

Doc consulted his watch.

"We've got too much time. The conference at Lake Success is at 3:00."

"Monk will be at the Corona Theater on 47th Street," Ham said.

"I'll drive by."

"Monk," said a grinning Ham, "has staged the damnedest recovery in the 10 days since we got out of Moscow. he's convinced some guy that he is considering angeling a show. And that lets him hang around rehearsals. Imagine that! Monk Mayfair couldn't bankroll a decent suit of clothes right now. But you can guess his angle. It's a musical they're rehearsing. Babes!"

"Maybe he'd rather miss this."

Ham shook his head quickly.

"No. Not this. Monk has great feeling for our old 'pal' Zardnov."

When they found Monk, he expressed the same sentiment.

"I hear our old pal Zardnov hit town last night," he said. "When are we going to see our buddy?"

"Right now," Doc explained. "There has been a United Nations committee all set up and waiting."

The room at Lake Success was small and pleasant except for a reek of cigar smoke that was just a trifle too thin to saw up in blocks.

Zardnov jumped to his feet flaring when Doc Savage arrived.

The committee had been giving Zardnov a hard time of it, evidently. The latter whacked a desk with his cane!

"I demand," Zardnov shouted at the *Man of Bronze*, "That you here and now admit as lies all that you have told this committee pertaining ..."

"Sit down," Doc said curtly. "You're talking about the incident 10 days ago in Moscow, presumably?"

"There was no incident!" Zardnov bellowed.

Monk asked: "What do you guys call an 'incident' over there?"

Doc addressed Zardnov.

"I presume that you expect me to make a denial that there exists a man named Frunzoff who has been prepared for heading the Russian government in an emergency and accordingly has more complete knowledge of Russian affairs -- particularly the atomic bomb situation -- than any other man in Russia other than you-know-who?"

"A lie!" said Zardnov. "I categorically and specifically deny ..."

"Let's shorten this," the **Bronze Man** said. "We have a wire recording of an interview with Frunzoff given under the influence of some very fine truth serum. The information in the recording -- I can assure you -- is going to be very disastrous to Russia."

"That also is untrue ..."

"Remember at the airport in Moscow when the smoke grenade off by accident?" Doc asked.

"Accident!" Zardnov exploded. "The purpose of that was to conceal your silly gas bomb in my clothing!"

Doc Savage shook his head.

"It had 2 purposes. Get his cane, Monk."

Monk Mayfair walked over.

Zardnov raised the cane to strike at the homely chemist.

Monk made a quick feint and got it. Zardnov swore.

Monk laughed and retreated with the cane.

"Such hoodlum acts," Zardnov screamed, "are below the dignity of an International body of this type! I demand the arrest of these men!"

Monk was inspecting the cane.

He gripped it in his powerful hands ... twisted ... and began to unscrew the top section.

Zardnov's eyes protruded.

"That cane is supposed to be solid ironwood ..."

"It's not your original cane, Zardnov," Doc told him wearily. "This one -- an exact imitation, and I do mean exact -- was made several weeks ago when you were in the hospital with a bad cold. The cane was accessible to us for periods of time."

Zardnov looked sick. Wordless.

"The recorder wire is inside the cane," Doc assured him. "You brought it from Moscow yourself."

Zardnov sat down very slowly and carefully ...

... seeming not to notice that there was no chair!

**[StealthSkater note: Seryi Mitroff and her cousin Mahli join the Man of Bronze again in
"The Frightened Fish (#186)"]**

Afterword

by Will Murray

Doc Savage fans have already realized that **"The Red Spider"** is unusual. This grim, suspenseful tale of Cold War espionage is a quantum jump ahead anything that Lester Dent wrote under the name 'Kenneth Robeson'.

"The Red Spider" is the one Doc Savage adventure which Mr. Dent thought would never see print. He undoubtedly considered it one of the finest DS stories he ever wrote. And so did his editors.

Although this novel was purchased for *Doc Savage magazine* in 1948, it never appeared there. This was the only DS story killed by editorial decision. Not because it was an unacceptable story but because it was too good a story.

One has the sense upon reading **The Red Spider** that many years have passed in the careers of Doc Savage and his men. This is an older, more brittle Doc -- not the noble *Man of Bronze* of the Depression era.

He still possesses the same *bronze* coloring, *flake-gold eyes*, great *strength*, and gadgets. But he has changed. He has broken himself of his habit of *trilling*. And he is now an International troubleshooter for the American government

Even his men have changed. They are attached to the military.

The familiar characters are recognizable. But they exist in a world that is technologically and politically closer to our own present one. This is a world of rockets, radar, atomic weapons, and the Iron Curtain. Gone are the fantastic adventures, stratosphere dirigibles, and evil supercriminals. In their place is realism and Doc and his men are necessarily depicted in more realistic terms themselves.

The Doc Savage milieu has matured.

[StealthSkater note: the "maturing" of DS occurred well before "The Red Spider". Indeed, Lester Dent seemed to write his adventures based on what was happening -- and capturing the public's interest -- in the World at any given time. When WWII came along, the adventures shifted from the fantastic to political intrigue.

Mr. Murray calls it "maturing". Frankly, I call it "boring". I'm too used to the original DS. More realistic, certainly. But many of us want an escape from Reality and that's why we turn to tales of the fantastic to begin with. Indeed, if I had the time and talent, I would re-edit all those latter adventures (including this one) and make Doc the way he was in the very first one. One could argue that DS's popularity declined as his "maturity" increased.]

Dent's familiar offbeat humor has given way to suspense. And his characters are now allowed rare emotional dimension. This maturing had been going on in the pages of Doc Savage since 1943. But Lester Dent never quite achieved the perfect balance between realism and larger-than-life characterization until **"The Red Spider"**. This is the ultimate Doc Savage adventure.

Lester Dent alone is not responsible for the combined elements which make this such an exemplary story. Actually, this novel is a fusion of his ideas and those of the various editors whose attitudes changed and shaped the adventures over the years.

There was only one editor during the first decade of Doc Savage. He was John L. Nanovic. And he planned every adventure with Lester Dent and approved all of the latter's story outlines.

Nanovic was also responsible for maintaining the consistency of Doc's superhuman characterization. This is the Doc Savage -- the invincible *Man of Bronze* -- who is familiar to most readers.

In 1943, Charles Moran -- the first of several short-term editors -- replaced Nanovic. Moran did not like Dent's fantastic plots or his portrayal of Doc Savage as a superman of sorts.

He instructed Dent to play down those elements (including Doc's gadgets) and to play up suspense and realism instead. These changes became the foundation for all subsequent DS stories. Moran's editorial legacy is evident in **"The Red Spider"**.

William de Grouchy -- who replaced Moran -- did not alter this policy greatly. During his term, however, Lester Dent developed a new type of Doc story line (perhaps at de Grouchy's suggestion). These involved Doc in World War II espionage assignments in which he and his men infiltrated enemy territory.

These missions were highly suspenseful because their completion was only half the story. The other half (often the more difficult) was to get back to Allied territory without being captured and shot as spies.

When the War ended, so did this story line. But Dent revived it in **"The Red Spider"**.

For Lester Dent who claimed that he wrote Doc Savage best *"when I gallop through it as if on a picnic -- a mood which often makes it hard to get fearsome but makes swell entertainment,"* this emphasis on suspense was a difficult transition to make. Many of these war-time stories *"came hard"* he claimed. But his extra effort resulted in some excellent adventures.

The next *Doc Savage* editor was a woman named Babette Rosmond. Her interests were in detective fiction and sophisticated writing. She retitled the magazine as *Doc Savage, Science Detective* and Dent accordingly recast the *Man of Bronze* as a sort of private investigator of the unusual.

Dent's style changed dramatically in the novels he wrote for Rosmond. The stories show polish, humor, mature characterization, and a willingness to experiment. **"The Red Spider"** is written in this style. **[StealthSkater note: IMHO, baloney! "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!" It seems that the editors had DS written for them and not for the average fan who was (as Lester Dent once said) "a scroungy looking pimpleface little kid about 10 years old".]**

Though Doc and his aides became free-lance investigators, they continued to undertake missions for the Government. Twice in 1947, they became in political intrigue. They quelled a Middle Eastern holy war in **"Danger Lies East"** and headed off WWII in **"Terror Wears No Shoes"**. The latter story hinted that Russia was behind the trouble. Doc Savage was slowly emerging as the archenemy of world Communism.

Doc Savage, Science Detective was not selling well in 1948 and William de Grouchy was brought back to salvage the dying magazine. He decided that it was time for a return to the original larger-than-

life Doc Savage with gadgets and all. He asked Lester Dent for a story that did this without sacrificing realism or good writing.

In April 1948, Dent wrote a story that he called "**In Hell, Madonna**". The plot used the historical backdrop of that brief period when America was the sole atomic power. As he described in a now-ironic note attached to his outline for the story:

"This one is laid against a background of International trouble that should be even more in the public eye about the time it is published -- i.e., the question of whether-or-not the Soviet Union has the atomic bomb.

"It isn't a bomb story because the bomb doesn't appear. And for the sake of the few specks of International courtesy still floating around, I suppose it would do no harm not to name Soviet Russia definitely as the locale.

"Anyway, Doc and his aides have simply been assigned the job of finding the answer to the question that is on a few minds over here. Have they got the bomb over there?"

This story is, of course, The Red Spider. Evidently de Grouchy thought that there was no point in "beating around the bush" where the Russian locale was concerned. He seems to have liked everything about "In Hell, Madonna" except the title which is a phrase out of Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night".

De Grouchy asked Dent for a better title and the latter offered 6 alternatives: "Kill in Moscow", "Mr. Calamity", "One Man Screaming", "Moscow Maneuver", "The Red Night", and "The Prince in Red".

Which of these titles de Grouchy would have used remains an unanswered question because before he could schedule the story for *Doc Savage, Science Detective*, he was replaced by a new editor -- Daisy Bacon.

She killed the story. She was an old-line pulp editor who -- like de Grouchy -- wanted to see Doc Savage return to its former glory. But she wanted nothing of sophisticated writing (as she instructed Lester Dent) Cold War tales:

"The firm wishes to give the European situation a miss. I would rule it out myself anyway because the public is thoroughly fed up with politics and propaganda in fiction.

"I don't know where the idea of Doc Savage saving the World came from. But I suppose it is a hangover from the 'One World' idea."

And that was that. Daisy Bacon put the story on the proverbial shelf. As *Doc Savage* was just shifting from a bi-monthly to a quarterly publication, she simply skipped the issue for which it was intended and Doc readers never suspected a thing!

Whether Daisy Bacon ever intended to publish "The Red Spider" is unknown. Probably not because -- its political theme aside -- the novel was simply too sophisticated for her vision of *Doc Savage*.

The question is a moot one as the magazine only lasted another 3 issues, effectively ending any hope that Lester Dent had for its publication. With his death in 1959, the very existence of the manuscript was forgotten.

Forgotten, that is, until 1975 when I went looking the Street&Smith files (now held by Conde Nast) in the course of researching an article on the Doc Savage authors titled "The Secret Kenneth Robeson".

In those dusty files, I found records of what appeared to be a hitherto unknown Doc Savage novel. With the kind permission of Conde Nast's Paul H. Bonner, I undertook a search for the manuscript.

It took 2 years until the only surviving copy (a carbon!) was located among Lester Dent's papers. Finally in 1978, I closed an agreement between Conde Nast, Bantam Books, and Mrs. Norma Dent that permitted the manuscript to be published.

And here it is under a new title. **"The Red Spider"** -- the ultimate Doc Savage adventure. It stands as the high-water mark in the series in which DS is realized as a realistic superman in one of his most dramatic exploits. [StealthSkater note: I didn't see anything "superman" about Doc in it. What is his definition of the term?]

Because this is one of the last Doc Savage adventures, "The Red Spider" is remarkable in a number of other ways.

This is the *Man of Bronze's* only adventure set in Russia. [SS: there was another adventure in which Doc & co. were temporarily jailed in Russia en route to someplace else.]

It is also his first open confrontation with the Communist threat. It indicates a direction in which Lester Dent intended to take Doc's crusade against injustice had it not been for the editorial injunction against Cold War stories.

In the beautiful and *eerie* second chapter, Doc makes his first recorded supersonic flight.

Except for Monk and Ham, most of Doc's aides rarely appeared in the final years. This adventure is Renny Renwick's and Long Tom Roberts' final exploit with the **Bronze Man**.

As for the **madonna** of Dent's original title -- the intriguing Seryi Mitroff -- she is a rare example of the kind of capable woman who actually attracts the otherwise woman-proof Doc Savage.

It is an interesting and little known insight into Doc's personality that the only other women who interested him (Princess Monja in "**The Man of Bronze**" and Rhoda Haven in "**The Freckled Shark**") are both described as the madonna-like type. One can only wonder if Lester Dent ever planned another encounter between Seryi Mitroff and Doc Savage. [SS note: if Mr. Dent didn't, then certainly Mr. Murray had it in mind. read "**The Frightened Fish (186)**".]

It is unfortunate that no more Doc stories of the caliber and distinction of "The Red Spider" were written. Nevertheless, Doc Savage fans everywhere can be thankful that this lost adventure has been rescued from obscurity for it is one of Lester Dent's finest.

It is fitting, too, that the first new Doc Savage story to be published -- exactly 30 years since the last one -- should appear under the imprint of Bantam Books who have resurrected the *Man of Bronze* for a new generation of reader.

A brilliant supervillain has dreamed up the ultimate secret weapon.

A desperate masterstroke that will assure victory for the Kaiser. Or obliterate mankind from the face of the Earth!

*Young Clark Savage, Jr. and his team come together for the first time in this action-packed saga of World War I. Though only 16, he's the real "Doc" -- hard-fisted, cerebral, the compassionate **Man of Bronze**.*

Shot down behind enemy lines. Captured by a German baron and his exotic mistress.

Escaped.

Recaptured.

Finally imprisoned in escape-proof salt mines where the baron's experiments on human guinea pigs could result in a sinister weapon of total destruction.

It's Doc's young mind against Evil's keenest intellect. And unless he wins, the War could end for the Allies in a blaze of genocidal fury!

read "[Escape from Loki \(#183\)](#)"

if on the Internet, Press <BACK> on your browser to return to the previous page (or go to www.stealthskater.com)

else if accessing these files from the CD in a MS-Word session, simply <CLOSE> this file's window-session; the previous window-session should still remain 'active'