

BEQUEST OF EVIL

A Doc Savage Adventure By Kenneth Robeson

- Chapter I. THE KIDNAPERS
- Chapter II. MENACE EXPLAINED
- Chapter III. THE EARL OF CHESTER
- Chapter IV. MONK WALKS OUT
- Chapter V. THE HOMELY ONE
- Chapter VI. DISAPPEARANCE
- Chapter VII. MURDER AT MAYFAIR
- Chapter VIII. NICKERSON LOCATES MONK
- Chapter IX. ANNABELLE
- Chapter X. DEATH ISLAND
- Chapter XI. THE SEARCH
- Chapter XII. CLUE TO DOC SAVAGE
- Chapter XIII. WITHOUT DIRECTION
- Chapter XIV. DOC MAKES A PLANT
- Chapter XV. CAVERN PRISON
- Chapter XVI. HOPELESS VIGIL
- Chapter XVII. THE DEVIL'S DEVICE
- Chapter XVIII. THE DEATH TEST

Chapter I. THE KIDNAPERS

THE car was long, low and built for speed. Its driver was not.

He was about as wide as he was tall—if he had been standing up—and he took up most of the front seat. The dapper, well-dressed man seated beside him was practically jammed against the right-hand door.

The car came out of a side street, swung left into Fifth Avenue, and almost took the fenders off a car parked near the corner.

Then a broad grin hit the face of the homely-looking driver. He was squinting ahead, down the wide avenue.

"Wow!" he said. "Fifth Avenue deserted. Watch this!"

It was true. The most traveled thoroughfare in Manhattan was empty of traffic. The street should have been crowded at this hour of the morning. It appeared like a phenomenon.

The driver stepped hard on the gas. The car shot ahead like a frightened hare, directly down the center of the street.

The machine was an open model, and the dapper man seated beside the driver had to hang on to his pearl-gray hat with one hand while he gripped a slender black cane with the other.

"Dunce!" he snapped. "Are you trying to break our necks?"

The homely fellow behind the wheel looked worried. "Blazes!" he exclaimed. "Maybe you're forgetting we were supposed to meet Doc."

He took his eyes off the road to glance at his watch. The car careened wildly. "We're ten minutes late already."

The man beside him gasped as they missed the curb by inches. Then the fast car straightened out and continued its dash. The driver grinned. His mouth threatened to join his ears.

"I can't figure it out," he commented. "But it's a break."

"There's somebody that's going to figure it for you," put in the passenger who was clinging to his expensive hat.

It was a traffic cop, standing in the roadway directly ahead. He was waving his hand warningly.

The driver slowed the car, but did not stop. He shot past the intersection.

The dapper-looking passenger yelled, "Hey! That cop wanted you to stop."

"Hell with him!" announced the driver. "The light was green. Why should I?"

There was a traffic officer at the next corner, too, and though the light was also green, he was waving his arm at the homely-faced driver.

But he did not stop. He kept going at a good clip down the street. Ahead, more lights were green.

At each corner there was a cop, and all tried to flag down the car.

THE man with the cane almost choked. He glared at the driver and said icily, "They want you to stop. There must be something wrong. Funny, there's no traffic at all."

"A break for us," said the squatly built driver. "Yippee! Imagine having a street all to yourself in New York!"

Then his homely face looked suddenly worried. The passenger looked worried, too.

He said, "Now, look!"

Ahead, at the intersection of Fifty-ninth Street, were a whole lot of traffic cops. They formed a blockading row directly across the street, from curb to curb.

It was necessary for the driver to come to a complete stop—or else run down an officer of the law.

One uniformed man—he was wearing gold stripes—stepped forward and looked menacingly at the car

driver.

"What the hell's the idea?" he demanded. "Can't you read?"

"Read what?" asked the man at the wheel.

"The signs, you dope!" said the officer. He waved an arm to indicate placards tied to street lamps along Fifth Avenue. The signs all read: "No Parking In This Block Today."

"Well?" rapped the cop.

"Well, what?" asked the driver.

He was given a sharp punch in the ribs by his companion, who whispered worriedly, "Quiet, you ape!"

"Get this damned crate off this street and stay off!" roared the traffic cop. "There's a parade coming. That's why Fifth Avenue has been cleared. Now get going!"

The driver put the car in gear and started to turn right, but the traffic officer ordered him left. The homely-faced fellow shrugged and obeyed instructions.

But when they had rolled on he swung on his dapper friend and said, "Now what're we gonna do? We're supposed to meet Doc in that office building on Fifth."

"Go down Madison and park near Forty-eighth. We'll probably have to walk."

"And be late," said the driver worriedly.

At each side street leading back toward Fifth there were cops, dozens of them.

"Every blasted cop in New York must be on duty for that parade," said the man at the wheel. "I wonder what it is?"

The well-dressed passenger said, "I remember now. Only, I thought it was going to be on Broadway. It's a parade for some guy who just flew around the world. It's practically a holiday for everybody who works around this section."

At each side street that was one way toward Fifth Avenue, the driver tried to turn. Immediately a small army of traffic cops waved him on. At Forty-eighth he managed to find a place to park.

"Come on," he said.

Both men piled out of the car.

They were an odd-looking pair.

ONE was tall, slender, wasp-waisted. Onlookers along the street turned and regarded his snappily dressed appearance. He wore the latest in morning attire, that must have come from one of New York's most exclusive men's shops. He carried the neat black cane.

His companion, the car driver, was squat and burly, and had the waddling stride of a gorilla. He could have easily scratched his knees without bending forward an inch. All exposed parts of him were covered with rusty-red hair the color of shingle nails that have stood too long in the rain.

The two men were arguing as they approached Fifth Avenue. Ahead, people jammed the sidewalks from curb to store windows. In fact, some of the windows of the exclusive shops had been boarded up as a precaution against the crush of people who were there to watch the parade. The overflow had even backed up into this side street.

Unperturbed, the hairy fellow elbowed his way into the crowd. He dug a hole large enough for his well-dressed companion to follow through.

But as they neared the curb the jam got worse. The two men were pushed around considerably.

"Ham," the homely-looking one said, turning, "would you be so kind as to get off my feet?"

The dapper man shrugged. "I'll try. But it's quite a walk."

This seemed to start more argument.

"Do you always tell such stupid jokes?" demanded the hairy fellow.

"No, Monk," said the taller man who had been addressed as Ham, "I just adapt myself to the company I'm in."

Hairy Monk tried to swing at his companion and almost bowled a bystander over. Down the avenue, not far away, there was the sound of bands playing and the tramp of marching feet. Obviously the long-awaited parade was drawing close.

The bystander made some surly remark and Monk gave him a shove. Ham tried to intercede. There was suddenly a lot of talking and cussing.

And immediately policemen arrived from various directions and grabbed the hairy fellow by the arm.

"Hey!" one cop yelled. "You'll have to stand back. You can't crowd out into the street."

Monk glared. "We've got to cross the street," he said in a piping, shrill voice. "We gotta meet somebody over there."

One of the cops looked astounded.

"You trying to be funny?" he said. "No one crosses the street!"

Monk started to push past the cop who had spoken. And then drew up, staring.

Up and down the curb were lined more cops, dozens of them, almost elbow to elbow. There wasn't a chance of getting past.

Monk groaned.

"Blazes!" he said. "We're late now! Doc's probably waiting."

But on the far side of Fifth Avenue the man in the brown suit was not waiting. He was proceeding directly to the twelfth floor of the large office building.

He gave the elevator operator somewhat of a start as he stepped into the waiting cage. He was tall, built along the symmetrical lines of a well-proportioned giant. A very capable giant.

Besides the somber brown suit, he had brown hair, brown eyes, and almost brown features. There was nothing exceptionally conspicuous about him except his size.

He emerged from the elevator at the twelfth floor, stepped quietly along the hallway until he came to a door marked:

JAMES ADDISON

Civil Engineer

The frosted glass was marked as simply as that. And yet James Addison was probably the biggest bridge builder in the country—in the world, for that matter. He was a millionaire.

It was he who had phoned and asked that Doc Savage drop in for a moment at his office at ten today.

Doc Savage was the man in brown. There was a reason for his simple disguise.

The parade on Fifth Avenue meant exceptionally large crowds. Someone would have been sure to recognize Doc Savage. And the Man of Bronze disliked undue publicity. In order to keep the appointment and to remain merely an unusually large-looking man whom no one would recognize, he had worn this outfit.

He opened the door and stepped into a large office outfitted with expensive, comfortable furniture and thick rugs. The place looked more like a hotel lobby than the entrance to an office. There was no one at the reception desk.

Doc Savage moved across the large office toward an open doorway to an adjoining room. He paused on the threshold. Inside were two or three desks, obviously used by stenographers in this anteroom that was the outer office of James Addison, the engineer. The room was deserted.

Just then, through open windows, came the martial tones of band music. A great shout went up from the thousands of people watching in the streets below.

A shout also came from somewhere out along the corridor that led past this office.

Doc Savage returned to the corridor, saw a number of clerks and stenographers gathered at the open windows far up the length of the hall. Peering over their shoulders were also two of the elevator operators.

It looked as though everybody was watching the parade. Even the elevator boys were sneaking in a few minutes. They figured, apparently, that there would be no calls for the next few moments.

Doc stepped toward the watching group, picked out a middle-aged woman he remembered as being private secretary to James Addison. She looked around as he approached, gave a slight start at sight of the giant figure behind her.

Drawing the woman to one side, Doc said: "You work for James Addison." It was a statement. Doc Savage never forgot a face once he had seen it.

The middle-aged woman nodded. She was well-dressed, intelligent-looking.

"Mr. Addison made an appointment with me by phone for exactly ten o'clock this morning."

The woman stared.

"That's impossible!" she exclaimed.

It was quite likely that Doc Savage had not yet been recognized. He said, "The appointment was with Clark Savage, Jr."

This time the woman gasped. Her eyes mirrored recognition.

She said quietly, "That's it! I thought there was something. You're Doc Savage!"

Doc nodded, waiting.

"But there must be some mistake," the woman continued swiftly. "Mr. Addison has been out of town for three days. He won't be back until tomorrow. I would have known if he had an appointment, too."

Doc said quietly, "Thank you," and disappeared down the hallway.

The woman stared after him a moment; then, attracted by the noise from the street, turned back to the window.

Doc returned to the office of James Addison. He passed through the reception room, the anteroom, and tried the knob of the inner private office. The door was unlocked. He stepped inside.

It was a soundproofed, modernistic ally furnished room. A massive desk stood across one corner of the office, but no one sat at the desk.

Suddenly Doc Savage tensed. There was something distinctly odd about there being no appointment. Could it be a trick?

The door slammed behind him.

Doc whirled. A big man with a gun in his fist stood directly behind him. There was whispering movement from across the room.

Doc spun back to face the desk.

Two men had straightened up from behind it. They, too, held guns.

Another man swiftly appeared from what was a closet doorway on one side of the room. He was covering Doc as carefully as the others.

For tense seconds there was strained, heavy silence. Closing the door behind Doc Savage had shut out all sound of the noisy parade. A clock ticked quietly somewhere in the room.

Then one of the men standing behind the desk spoke.

He snapped: "Perfect! We timed it almost to the minute."

He motioned toward a door across the room. It was evident to the bronze man that the door must lead to a side hallway.

"Get going!" the leader said. "Keep your hands over your head. And remember, a gunshot would never be heard along with that noise from the street."

Doc Savage was neatly trapped.

The four gunmen moved in on him from different angles, not too close, but at positions where a shot couldn't possibly miss.

He was ordered out into the corridor.

Directly across from the doorway, a large elevator door stood open. It was a freight elevator, shielded from the regular bank of passenger elevators by an angle in the hall. The racket from the parading bands was plain out here now. Doc, two gunmen at his back, two at his sides, moved into the elevator.

There was a fifth gunman waiting inside. He grinned as the bronze man stepped in.

The regular operator, bound and gagged, was lying on the floor of the large car.

Immediately, the sliding doors were closed and the fifth gunman worked the controls. The freight elevator started downward toward the basement.

Someone said, "We sure kidnapped something when we grabbed this guy!"

Chapter II. MENACE EXPLAINED

THE big enclosed cage moved slowly. The elevator was large enough for the five gunmen to stand clear of Doc Savage and yet cover him with their weapons at the same time.

"Getting this bronze guy here while the parade was passing was a swell idea," said one man.

Doc Savage stood with his hands above his head, motionless. He had made no attempt at an escape, which was unusual.

But there was a reason for this.

At the moment, neither Doc Savage nor any of his five aids was involved in a mystery or trouble of any sort. There had been no threats against the bronze man, especially anything that even hinted at a kidnapping.

The height of the elevator cage was perhaps eight feet or so. Doc's hands were still raised over his head.

Had anyone bothered to notice, they would have observed that the bronze man was slowly, imperceptibly growing taller. This was accomplished by stretching out every muscle in his remarkable body.

It was a trick that anyone can master, given time. In his daily course of rigid exercises, Doc Savage went through exercises that made his muscles supple. He stretched probably six inches as he stood there with hands raised straight above his head.

The overhead ceiling light of the car was directly above his hands. His fingers touched the globe.

And then there was a sharp pop and the descending car was plunged into darkness.

Violent action followed.

ONE moment the five men had been standing there carefully covering Doc Savage. Then two of them were on the floor of the cage. They let out frightened yelps.

The other three slammed forward. One gunman cracked into another. They realized—with a start—that there was danger of shooting one another.

While they were thinking about that, and under cover of the darkness, Doc grabbed two men, knocked the weapons from their fists and cracked their heads together.

They fell down, senseless.

Somebody yelled frantically, "Get a light! Grab Doc Savage!"

The idea was good. Two of the gunmen had flashlights in their pockets. But they never got a chance to use them.

They were knocked out with swift, blurred movement.

The fifth man, the one who had been standing near the elevator-control device, thought a cannon ball had come out of the darkness. His head bounced back and struck the heavy steel sides of the elevator cab. He sat down and went to sleep.

The elevator continued to the basement and came to an automatic stop. This had been its destination, anyway.

The bronze man swung open the doors and let in light.

Three more masked men were lined up there. They held guns. They had Doc Savage covered before he could make a move.

"I told you there was something wrong!" said one.

While Doc was kept covered, one of the trio stepped into the motionless car and started dragging the slugged men to their feet. He slapped their faces.

As they revived, he snarled, "Dopes! I told you this bronze guy is dynamite!"

The men located their guns and came out of the cab and stood glaring at Doc Savage. Their expressions said that, this time, they wouldn't be caught napping.

Doc was ordered to lie on the floor. They were in a wide passageway—a freight entrance, apparently—that led in from an areaway behind the office building. Near a doorway that led out to a truck parking space a watchman lay unconscious.

It was easy to see what had happened.

The gang had taken over while other building employees were out on Fifth Avenue, watching the parade. There was nothing to do at the moment, down here in the freight-receiving entrance, anyway. The side street had been temporarily blocked off. Trucks were not permitted to enter until after the parade was finished.

Doc's hands were tied securely behind him. His feet, ankles, and legs were wrapped with heavy rope. He was as helpless as a mummy.

He was lifted and carried through the hallway, thence out to the truck-parking space behind the temporarily deserted basement.

The vehicle parked there was all black, with a closed body that did not contain so much as a window.

It was the type of car used by undertakers to pick up dead bodies.

Doc Savage, still guarded, was loaded into the rear and the doors shut and locked. It was possible to enter the body of the truck from behind the driver's seat. While one man drove, the others all piled into the back, enclosed section with Doc Savage.

The truck moved out into the side street.

It stopped a moment. Someone spoke to the driver. It was a cop.

Words were exchanged.

"Got a dead man here, officer," the driver said quietly. "A guy dropped dead up in the Chalmers Building."

"You can't cross Fifth now," said the cop.

"Sure; I know. But if I can go back to Sixth—"

"All right. But take it easy. There's a lot of people in the street here."

"O. K., officer."

The truck moved on again.

THERE was hoarse breathing all around Doc Savage's prone figure. The gunmen were crouched near him, in the darkness of the dead wagon. No one talked. No one said a single thing that would give the vaguest idea why this kidnapping had taken place.

The darkness of the truck interior was an aid to the bronze man. His movements were silent.

Besides, had anyone seen, they would think the slight motion of the bronze man's shoulders was caused by the bouncing of the truck as it rolled along.

Doc Savage was half on his back, half on his side, his hands still tied behind him, his wrapped legs helpless.

He worked his left shoulder against the hard flooring of the dead wagon. He managed to get a certain point of his body against the floor.

The jouncing action of the truck slowly worked loose what was in the pocket of the special vest that Doc Savage wore beneath his coat.

The gunmen had been careless in seizing the bronze man. They had overlooked the special vest.

Within its various pockets were many tiny gadgets of the bronze man's own invention.

Tiny pellets dropped free of a small pocket near the shoulder of the vest. They spilled to the floor. Immediately Doc Savage rolled on them and they broke with tiny explosive sounds.

Instantly blinding, intense white light flooded the interior of the truck. The gunmen blinked with temporary blindness. They let out yells of warning to the driver.

But Doc Savage moved with flashing speed.

Each intense flare was caused by a tiny, burning spot of magnesium that was on the floor. Doc rolled, jammed his bound wrists into the tiny flames. The burning stuff ate quickly into the ropes that tied his hands.

His corded muscles applied pressure to the bindings. They snapped. Instantly he was working at the ropes that held his legs and ankles.

All this took place in a matter of fleeting seconds. Doc had been prepared for the blinding white light. His eyes, at its first onslaught, had been closed against it. Then, his lids half slitted, he had worked swiftly while the others were still blinded.

He was on his feet, moving, by the time the first man knew what it was all about.

The fellow started to let out a yell of warning, his gun raising in his fist.

Doc Savage caught him with a sizzling fist. The man was hurled back against three of his companions.

The others piled toward Doc. The driver of the truck, startled at the racket, turned and flung open the doorway that led into the truck interior.

The blinding light caught him unexpectedly. Blinking, he swung his gaze madly back to the thoroughfare ahead.

But he could not see.

Before the driver got his vision back, the truck bounced over a curb, careened across a sidewalk and crashed into a store front. Plate glass shattered and rained over the sidewalk and truck hood.

People screamed.

A cop's whistle blasted shrilly.

THUGS inside the truck slammed into the rear doors and burst them open. The men spilled like frightened rats out onto the sidewalk.

In a glance, Doc Savage saw that the truck had just been rolling through Times Square, headed west toward the North River. Hundreds of people were in the congested area.

Taking advantage of this fact, the gunmen spread in assorted directions and were fast swallowed up by the crowds. Doc had scooped up a discarded weapon. But there was no chance to use it. There was too much danger of hitting an innocent bystander.

He leaped down from the truck—in time to be blocked by three burly policemen who came running up to the spot.

"Hey, where do you think—" one of the cops started to yell. There was a gun in his hand.

Doc Savage worked rapidly. Moistening a fingertip on either hand, he applied them to his eyes.

The brown-shaded, small eye caps came free. His remarkable flake-gold eyes were revealed.

Next he pulled the brown wig from his head. The policemen saw that his unusual hair was only a shade darker than his eyes and skin, which was revealed in its true bronze color as he quickly rubbed his hands across his features.

One officer gasped, "Doc Savage!"

The other stared, as did pedestrians on the sidewalk.

Quickly, Doc explained. Two of the cops moved swiftly through the crowds. The third raced to a call box and notified headquarters. Soon squad cars would be converging upon the smash-up scene. Doc Savage said, "The driver—" and started toward the front of the truck.

But the man had escaped.

And a half-hour later it was evident that all the others had escaped, also. This was a comparatively simple matter in the Times Square area. There were subway entrances, movie houses, hotel lobbies, the sidewalk crowds—dozens of places where the men could have quickly taken cover. Doc Savage, during the excitement, managed to slip away. He stepped into a phone booth and called the license bureau. Identifying himself, he asked about the license plates, whose number he had noted.

And he was informed that the plates had been issued for a peddler's truck in Flatbush. It was just as the bronze man had figured. The plates had been stolen. There was no way to trace the vehicle.

Later Doc returned to his skyscraper headquarters.

Monk and Ham had returned. The two aids were still squabbling. They seldom did anything else.

Monk looked suddenly relieved.

"Doc!" he piped in his shrill voice. "We thought something might have happened to you. We waited there at that Chalmers Building for an hour."

Dapper-looking Ham pushed past his hairy partner.

"What he means," Ham explained quietly, "is that we inquired of the elevator operators there in the building. One remembered taking a man dressed like you up to the twelfth floor. But none recalled bringing you down. Was there anything wrong?"

Strangely, Doc Savage shook his head.

"There was nothing wrong," he said, starting toward a library that adjoined the reception room of the eighty-sixth floor headquarters. "I merely left by a rear way."

That was on Monday. The two strange fellows probably never stopped except to sleep, because on Friday morning they were still at it.

That was the morning Monk got the telegram.

Chapter III. THE EARL OF CHESTER

HAM BROOKS—whose full name was really Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks, and who was one of the country's leading lawyers, as well as a Doc Savage aid—was pacing the floor of the library of the bronze man's headquarters when hairy Monk returned from an early-morning walk.

The dapper lawyer held a yellow envelope in his hand.

Monk was holding something else.

It looked like a pig—a scrawny animal that appeared to be all ears, legs and snout. As a matter of fact, it was a pig, and its name, oddly, was Habeas Corpus. It was Monk's cherished pet, and a source of constant bickering between the two Doc Savage aids.

A leash trailed from the pig's collar.

Ham demanded, "Where in the devil have you been—on a cross-country tour? You've been gone for hours."

Monk grinned, his homely features almost obscuring his small, bright eyes. He liked nothing better than getting his well-dressed partner's goat.

"Habeas had a lot of calls to make," the hairy fellow said.

"Well," Ham said frigidly, "they've been trying to get you for the past hour or so."

"Who?"

"I don't know"

Monk frowned. "Well, why in blazes didn't you ask them what they wanted?"

The slender lawyer's face flushed.

"Naturally, I asked them what they wanted, you dunce!" he flared. "But they would only speak to you in person. They would leave no message." He held out the yellow envelope. "But this just arrived. I suspect it might have something to do with it."

He handed the envelope to Monk.

It was a telegram.

Monk put down the pig and read the message carefully. His brow furrowed. His deep-set eyes were thoughtful.

For all his apelike appearance and constant tomfoolery, Monk was quite an intelligent fellow. He was one of the world's leading industrial chemists, a fact that his appearance belied. Monk always looked as though he slept in his clothes.

The chemist's full name was Andrew Blodgett Mayfair—but no one ever called him that if they wanted to remain conscious.

Once Monk looked up at Ham. Then his eyes shifted back to the telegram. He read it through again.

Finally he said, "I don't believe it!"

"You don't believe what?" demanded the lawyer.

"What it says here."

"Well, what does it say?"

"Imagine me being an earl," Monk commented.

"A what?"

"It appears," Monk finally explained, "that I've just inherited five million dollars."

Ham stared.

"And," the chemist added, "a lordship. I'm the Earl of Something-or-other."

Ham, stunned, sat down in a chair.

Later, however, Monk condescended to let Ham see the telegram.

Ham, his eyes sharp for flaws, read it over.

Monk said, "What does it mean, shyster?" The chemist's expression said that he was distrustful. Perhaps this was one of his clever partner's gags.

But Ham's face was deadly serious as he said, "Some cousin or something of yours has died in England. You are evidently an heir. You are now the Earl of Chester, of Essex and Cornwall. You are the owner of properties valued at five million dollars, and also lord of the Estate of Mayfair, located in Canada."

Ham mentioned a certain locality of the dominion. "It says you are to call at the offices of Mason, Smith & Mason, located at Wall Street and Broadway, immediately."

But Monk was still skeptical. He demanded, "Call Long Tom and Renny." He grabbed the telegram from his dapper partner and waved it in Ham's face. "I'm gonna danged well find out if this thing is a fake or not!"

The two mentioned were located in the laboratory. Renny was first to be handed the telegram.

Colonel John Renwick was a giant of a fellow with a gloomy, puritanical face and big-fisted hands the size of quart pails. He was a renowned engineer and another of the aids of Doc Savage.

He read the wire briefly, stared at Monk and said, with a gasp: "Holy cow!"

The words boomed around the room. Renny always spoke in a voice that resembled a roar, and the expression was one he frequently used to show surprise.

Long Tom—Major Thomas J. Roberts—was the electrical expert in Doc Savage's organization. Long Tom was a skinny fellow with sallow features that would have blended well with a mushroom. He appeared extremely unhealthy, whereas he had never known a sick day in his life. He could fight like a wild cat at the drop of a hat. He had a temper.

Big Renny passed the telegram to Long Tom and said in his crashing voice, "Take a look. Monk has become an earl." Renny let his glance veer to the hairy chemist. "Hiya, Right Honorable Earl of Chester!"

Monk growled, "Nuts!"

LONG TOM read the message and looked at the others.

"Bet you it's a racket," he announced. Long Tom was a naturally suspicious fellow. "It's one of those inheritance gags. Some company writes to you saying you have inherited some dough. Then they inform you that it will be necessary to put up a few dollars to handle the usual investigative details. And then—good-by dough. The thing blows up. Those outfits are always looking for suckers." Monk growled, "Who's a sucker?"

"You are," said Long Tom, "if you fall for this inheritance racket."

It was Ham who said quietly, "But the message is from Mason, Smith & Mason, probably one of the oldest law firms in the country. They are not involved in rackets."

"There must be a joker some place," insisted Long Tom.

Monk grabbed the telegram and started toward the laboratory.

"I'm gonna get Doc," he announced.

Shortly the bronze man returned with the chemist. Doc read the message. His usually bronze features were remarkably composed as he studied the telegram. If he found any flaw in the words, his expression gave no indication of that fact.

Doc finally said, "We might call Mason, Smith & Mason."

The bronze man himself made the call. Doc had had dealings with the well-known law firm. He spoke to the president of the company and discussed the wire received by Monk.

The others waited, hardly able to keep still as Doc Savage murmured an occasional "Yes" or "No" to the man on the other end of the line.

Finally Doc hung up. He looked at Monk.

"The inheritance," he announced quietly, "is absolutely real. Five thousand dollars has already been deposited in an account at the law firm's bank. You are to use it to journey to Canada at once. You are the owner of Mayfair, a vast estate up there."

MONK, however, remained skeptical.

It was Ham, who had studied law at Harvard and who handled all the legal work for the Doc Savage organization who finally persuaded the hairy chemist to accompany him to the law firm of Mason, Smith & Mason.

Ham had a little trouble convincing Monk that he shouldn't bring along the pig, Habeas.

The interview was with the man Doc Savage himself had spoken to—Jonathan Mason, the president of the firm. Jonathan Mason was a small, alert man with black, snapping eyes.

He spread documentary papers before Ham. He had various communications from Canada. Ham checked everything over carefully.

Jonathan Mason reached into a drawer of his desk, passed a photograph across the desk to Ham.

"This," he said, "was forwarded from England. Though the estate is in Canada, Mr. Mayfair's uncle—Chester Mayfair—died recently in England. This picture, taken of your friend at an early age, shows the marked resemblance."

As he handed the picture to Ham, his sharp eyes flickered. "I would say, from the photograph, that there can be no doubt left in our minds."

The picture was of a boy at the age of six or seven. It looked like nothing else but a young monkey dressed in velvet knee pants and a sailor blouse. Even at that age the homely face bore a marked resemblance to Monk's own.

Ham grinned. "That's him, all right. There couldn't be two people in the world with a face like that."

Monk had peered past his dapper partner's shoulder. He suddenly swung on Ham, exclaiming, "Listen, shyster, that sounded like a—"

Ham brought his foot down sharply on Monk's foot and gave him a frigid stare. He indicated the law-firm president.

Monk subsided.

Final details were arranged. A bank book was turned over to Ham. It was for the account in Monk's name, the money to be used for expense in reaching the Mayfair Estate in Canada.

As Mason explained, "You are to go there immediately, according to our instructions. There, all final details will be arranged. Mr. Mayfair, here, will have the various properties turned over to him."

Monk was all smiles now. He thanked the law-firm president, even turned to Ham and started to shake hands with him. Then he drew back his fist and glowered.

They started to take their departure.

But Mason spoke briefly to Ham, "Oh, Mr. Brooks, there's something I . . . er . . . that is—" Ham paused a moment, waiting.

Quietly, Jonathan Mason said, "I was thinking—" He briefly indicated Monk's \$19.98 checkered suit, the loud plaid vest and the bulldog-toed shoes. "The attire is hardly in keeping with . . . er . . . his lordship's position. That is—"

Ham nodded quickly.

"I understand, sir," he said. "That will be taken care of, immediately."

Outside, Ham led the way toward Fifth Avenue.

Monk frowned, protested, "Hey, wait a minute! This ain't the way to the bank. Thought we were gonna pick up that five thousand dollars?"

Ham was noncommittal.

"There's something," he said, "of more importance that must be attended to first."

THE first stop was at a shop that had no display window, no clerks who tried to sell you merchandise, and no blatant advertisements in the newspapers.

In fact, you usually had an appointment to be fitted for such a common thing as a shirt. But Ham needed no appointment. He was probably the shop's best customer.

And there was nothing common about the shirts.

The fitter said, "They shall contain his lordship's initials in blue satin. I can have a dozen ready by tomorrow. The price is only thirty-six dollars per shirt."

The hairy chemist looked like he had swallowed something green and unripe.

"Only!"

he bellowed. "Golly, I can buy two suits for that—"

Ham kicked him. The lawyer smiled politely at the fitter. "Make it two dozen," he ordered.

On the way out, Monk gave a relieved sigh.

"Well, that's that," he muttered. "I'm glad I ain't gotta be an earl every day in the week." Ham looked surprised.

"Listen, we're hardly started," he said. "You'll have to have suits, shoes, ties, formal attire." The chemist groaned.

"Just to be an earl?" Monk wanted to know.

"Naturally," said Ham. "Come on. We'll--"

They were passing a shop window. The lawyer's words trailed off as he glanced at a book stall located in the entranceway.

He said, "Wait just a minute."

Monk fumed as he waited. Finally his partner came out with a large package done up in paper.

"What's that?" Monk prodded.

"I'll show you later," Ham advised.

But as they continued down Fifth Avenue, Ham remarked, "Your manners are abominable. Something will have to be done about it."

Monk was suspicious. He said nothing, but he wondered what Ham was up to now.

Chapter IV. MONK WALKS OUT

THE noise coming out of the dressing room sounded as though someone had tied a tin can to a bulldog's tail. A chair was kicked over, there was arguing and a lot of words in the air that aren't found in dictionaries.

Monk came slamming out of the room, followed by well-dressed Ham, worried-looking Long Tom, and huge Renny.

Monk was wearing striped afternoon trousers, a cutaway coat, a pearl-colored vest, and there was a flower in his buttonhole.

He yanked the flower from his coat, threw it on the floor and stamped up and down on it.

"I'll be damned if I will!" he shouted. "I'll wear the monkey suit. I'll wear the shirts. But I'll be dang blasted if I'll wear that flower!"

Ham sighed wearily. He looked worn out. Then he shrugged.

"All right, then," he agreed.

He walked around Monk's burly, squat figure, examining it critically.

"Not bad, not bad," he murmured. "But if we could only do something about the face!"

He indicated the chemist's homely features.

Monk leaped toward him.

"Lookit here, you shyster," he squalled, "just because I'm an earl don't mean I can't flatten down your ears!"

Abruptly, Ham hurried toward the library of Doc Savage's skyscraper headquarters. Monk's words seemed to remind him of something.

Shortly he returned with the paper-wrapped package that he had purchased the afternoon before in the bookstore. He laid it on a table, quickly unwrapped it.

All observed that the object was a large, heavy volume labeled: "Ten Thousand Correct Sayings For Every Occasion."

Monk glanced at the title suspiciously, then glared at Ham.

"I ain't a-gonna read it!" he flared.

Ham slammed the volume down on the table, walked to a chair and sat down. Long Tom and Renny watched him.

"All right," the lawyer said with finality. "Let's forget the whole business. Let's forget there's five million dollars at stake." He glanced at Monk. "We were just trying to help you."

Ham jerked to his feet, stalked back to the table and pounded the volume with his fist. "Just what would you say if you were introduced to a lady up there in Canada, at your estate?"

"You mean," asked Monk worriedly, "there might be dames."

Ham winced.

"Ladies,

I said," he snapped. "Do you realize that if her husband had a title, you would have to address her as 'her ladyship'? And then you would have to add something nice, like a phrase you would find here in this book."

Abruptly, without saying a word, but looking somewhat somber, Monk picked up the large volume and disappeared from the room.

PREPARATIONS for the trip to the Canadian estate progressed fairly smoothly. By the following day, nearly all details had been attended to.

Ham, Renny and Long Tom were busy packing trunks when Monk strolled into the room.

The hairy chemist was carrying Habeas, the pig, beneath one arm, and held the book of familiar sayings in the other. It wasn't this that held everyone's gaze, however.

Monk was attired in baggy plus fours and knee-length golf hose. His muscular, short legs were very prominent. He was wearing a chocolate colored sports coat.

Long Tom's unhealthy-looking features convulsed. He bent over a large trunk in order to conceal his laughter.

Renny boomed, "Holy cow!"

The chemist walked up to Ham, bowed from the waist, said in his small piping voice, "I trust your ladyship will enjoy the serenity of Mayfair Manor." Monk gave a sigh as, starry eyed, he gazed past Ham, "From the patio, the break of dawn always makes me think of that oft-repeated line: 'Like a maiden's moist tears, the dewdrops cling to the fragile leaves of grass.'"

Long Tom straightened up from the trunk. He said:

"Oh, my goodness! Sir, I never thought—"

"Well, blast it!" roared Monk suddenly. "That's what it says here in Quotation No. 935 in the book!"

"Now, really!" big Renny started. "Did we have the next dance?"

With a snort of rage, hairy Monk flung the heavy book across the room and stalked toward the door. Habeas, the pig, came scampering out of an adjoining room and ran after him.

At the door, Monk turned and said, "Hell with all of you!"

Twenty-four hours later, everyone was convinced that Monk had disappeared.

ODDLY, Ham was the most worried of all.

At times, these two unusual fellows were hard to figure out. Ordinarily they were ready to cut each other's throats. But let one be threatened from any outside source—and the other would gladly lay down his life in an attempt to protect his pal.

Big Renny, the engineer, and Long Tom were with him. There were two other assistants in Doc Savage's small group of world-wide adventurers, but at the moment they were away from New York City. Ham said worriedly, "Something's happened to Monk!" That seemed to be the consensus.

They sought out the bronze man himself. Doc, for several days now, had been working by himself in his skyscraper laboratory. Doc Savage appeared to be absorbed in some research work.

This was not unusual. Besides being a remarkable physical giant, Doc Savage was a pioneer in the fields of medicine and scientific research. From early childhood, Doc Savage had been trained along rigid, scientific lines. Both in body and mind, he was more fully developed than any man living. He was somewhat of a mental phenomenon. When absorbed in a subject, he had been known to go for days without sleep.

Strangely, Doc Savage had not yet made any mention of the unexplained kidnap attempt upon himself. But he had shown an interest in the news of Monk's legacy.

Doc said quietly, "We might try a ruse in order to get him to come back."

"Ruse?" Ham asked.

Doc explained, "If Monk thought someone was trying to get his Canadian estate away from him, he might return."

In a moment he was on the phone. He spoke personally with the city editor of a leading newspaper. As a matter of fact, Doc Savage had a controlling interest in several papers. The message he gave to the first was relayed to others.

When Doc finally hung up, he announced, "The afternoon newspapers ought to be interesting."

Later, Renny and the others got copies of various papers that Doc Savage had contacted. The news items, without variation, were all on the first page. One of them read:

WELL-KNOWN CHEMIST

RECEIVES LEGACY

New York, August—: Andrew Blodgett Mayfair, renowned chemist and adventurer, has just been notified that he has been bequeathed an English earldom, along with an estate and properties located in Canada with a value well over five million dollars.

The article went on to tell about Monk Mayfair's fortunate inheritance. But farther down in the column there was a paragraph that read:

Already certain persons have come forward to protest against Mr. Mayfair's good fortune. As is the case in inheritances involving such large sums, there are always those who try to prove that they are relatives of the—

The other news items were practically the same.

A half-hour after the afternoon sheets had hit the newsstands, Monk came storming into the skyscraper headquarters.

THE first thing he said was, "We better get started for Canada!"

Ham gave a sigh of relief. All trunks were in readiness. A plane stood ready at Doc Savage's hangar on the Hudson River water front.

"You've decided to go, then?" Renny asked.

Monk's jaw stuck out. "You're damned right!" he said. "No blasted crook is gonna chisel me out of that estate!"

Doc Savage's little ruse had worked nicely.

Doc himself accompanied them to the hangar-warehouse.

Monk still had Habeas with him. His partner, Ham, also had a pet. It was a runt edition of a chimpanzee and, strangely, the animal looked like Monk. Many believed that the lawyer had obtained the chimp—called Chemistry—merely to get Monk's goat. Nevertheless, Ham thought a great deal of his pet, and it was a source of constant trouble between the two Doc Savage aids.

At the hangar they found two planes instead of one rolled out onto the river-front landing stage.

One ship was a fast-looking amphibian with a sizable cabin and silver-colored wings. The other was similar, only quite a bit larger. It was one of the bronze man's personal planes.

Monk queried: "Aren't you goin' with us, Doc?"

The bronze man shook his head.

"There is no need for me to accompany you," he announced. "But if there should be anything of importance, you can contact me at the Fortress of Solitude."

The others nodded, understanding.

The Fortress of Solitude was a retreat, a strange place located deep within the Arctic Circle. It was a place to which the bronze man went for absolute quiet and concentration when he was deep into some important problem.

All noted that the bronze man's ship was well provisioned and contained varied sorts of equipment. They watched him take off.

Long Tom, his unhealthy-looking features thoughtful, said, "That's funny. Doc hasn't mentioned that trip to the Fortress of Solitude. He must have made up his mind in a hurry."

That seemed to be the thought of all as, a few moments later, they took off for Canada.

AND if they had known the truth, they would have realized that there was something strange in the bronze man's actions.

Doc did not head north. He quickly climbed for altitude, was soon lost against the horizon. It was then that he headed in a long, easy circle back toward Manhattan.

Monk and the others had taken off by the time Doc Savage's plane was in sight of New York again.

In fact, the plane containing Monk, Long Tom, Renny and Ham was well on its way toward Canada.

But Doc picked up their ship. He was using a radio direction finder located in the cockpit of his own ship. It was an easy matter to trail the motor sound of the first plane. Doc Savage was perhaps ten miles behind his aids.

The course followed the Hudson River northward toward Albany. The sun went down in the west, and the bulks of small mountains a little distance past West Point cast their shadows upon the smooth river below.

It was about here that the radio direction-finder device in Doc Savage's plane sputtered and went dead. Then, slowly, the sound faded in again.

It was the drum of a plane motor, the thing Doc Savage had been following in trailing Monk, Ham and the others.

But there appeared to be something wrong with that motor now. It sputtered, picked up again, then faded completely. It was obvious that something was wrong.

Doc had been traveling at ordinary cruising speed. He opened the throttle and allowed the plane to whip speedily ahead. Within moments he had picked up the vague spot in the fading daylight—a plane far ahead. He closed in on it.

The first plane had swerved away from the river route and taken a course inland. Doc Savage soon saw the reason for this. Because the first plane was losing altitude fast, was shortly circling a cleared field surrounded by a lonely wooded area. There was what looked like an old farmhouse at one edge of the field.

If Monk and the others were having engine trouble, they would have naturally picked a landing spot on shore, even though their plane was capable of landing on the river. Here, on land, they would be better able to work on the engines. The bronze man allowed his ship to come down in a long glide. He started to circle the field. The first ship had landed.

It was dark enough now that visibility was poor. The bronze man used his wing landing lights as he brought his plane carefully down over the field. He needed plenty of runway on which to land because of the border of trees at either end of the field.

He came down.

A moment later he had cut the motors, climbed out of the ship and was running across the field toward the dark bulk of his aids' plane.

He had gone perhaps a hundred yards when men started springing up out of the darkness. They had been flattened against the ground, their dark clothing invisible against the descending night.

It was a trap.

Chapter V. THE HOMELY ONE

IN his dangerous career of righting wrongs and punishing evildoers throughout the world, Doc Savage had naturally made enemies. Any honest man is the potential enemy of a crook. There had been murder attempts made on the bronze man's life before.

But it soon developed, in the fight at the temporary plane landing field, that this was no attempt to kill Doc Savage.

No shots were fired. No weapons of any sort were used. The half a dozen assorted thugs merely closed in on the bronze giant and tried to take him by force.

That was their mistake.

Doc Savage moved with blurred speed. His great fists appeared to be everywhere at once. Jaws snapped back, arms flailed wildly, and men started falling down in the darkness.

One fellow was lucky enough to escape. He took out across the field as though a bolt of lightning was prodding his pants. He streaked toward the farmhouse.

His five companions, moaning, were on the ground.

So Doc Savage leaped after the one who had escaped. There was something about this attack upon himself that was very mysterious. It hinted of the kidnap attempt made within the past week. At that time also, no effort had been made to kill the bronze man. The men had merely seemed intent on seizing him, as was the case now. The question was: Why?

Noting his quarry's intention, Doc cut diagonally across the field, to try to intercept the man before he reached the apparently deserted farmhouse.

But the darkness was thick now. Keeping the man in sight was a problem. He disappeared beyond a fringe of trees that bordered the side of the old house.

The bronze man slowed, moved more cautiously forward. He suspected that the man might be hiding, waiting.

He reached a spot a few feet from the house. It could be seen that windows in the old structure were broken out. Shutters sagged against the scabby clapboards of the house.

Doc's quarry had completely disappeared.

Without sound, Doc reached the front porch of the house. The front door was open. Moving up beside it, standing there in the gloom, listening, Doc heard a faint sound within the house. It was the squeak of a floorboard, obviously from somewhere on the second floor.

For his remarkable size, Doc Savage could move with utter stealth. He slipped inside the house and maneuvered along the dark hallway. His feet moved with infinite caution. He made no sound. Again there came the slightest of squeaks from the second floor.

Doc started up the stairs, keeping close against the wall, his eyes sharp for movement above or ahead of him.

He gained the second floor, swung back toward the front of the house.

Doc Savage's hearing was as remarkable as the rest of his rigidly trained senses. It was said that he could hear a watch tick at fifty yards. And now he heard the man's breathing before he had even reached the front of the musty-smelling hallway.

The breathing came from a room on the right. A rectangular, vague blur showed where a door stood open.

A wraith could not have moved with greater silence. Doc was inside the room and flattened against the wall, and there had not been a sound from his moving feet.

He located the source of the breathing. It came from a spot not more than half a dozen feet away from him, from a corner of the room. A window was located in the wall on that side of the room, and the tricky night light faintly revealed a form crouched near the floor in the corner.

Doc Savage leaped with swift, certain speed.

He crashed the form huddled there, whipped the figure to its feet, started to let drive a smashing right fist.

And stopped just as abruptly.

The man in his grasp sputtered wildly, "Hey! What the heck! What's the matter?"

Quickly, still holding his quarry with one hand, the bronze man located a small flashlight in his pocket and flashed the beam in his captive's face, over his tattered-looking form.

The one he had grabbed was a tramp, who must have sneaked into this deserted house for a night's sleep.

The blariness of the dirty-looking fellow's eyes indicated that he had been awakened from sound slumber.

Doc released the tramp, who stood there trembling and wide-eyed, and whipped back out of the room.

He heard the sound as he reached the stairs.

It was a plane motor, and it was being gunned fast. In the next moment it increased to a roar.

Doc Savage flung out of the house and leaped toward the nearby field. But he was too late.

The plane—the ship that had landed here ahead of him—was already in the air. It quickly disappeared against the somber background of night.

The explanation was obvious.

While the bronze man had been in the farmhouse, his quarry had returned to the field, helped his dazed partners, and escaped. Once again the would-be kidnapers had been scared off.

What was the explanation for these snatch threats? Who was behind them?

Doc intended to find out—by trailing the other plane.

He hurried back to his own ship and was soon in the air. He climbed swiftly for altitude, circling. The other plane had a good five minutes' start, but by using the radio direction finder the bronze man should be able to pick up its trail. He reached toward the control panel of the sensitive device.

And it was then that he saw the direction finder had been put temporarily out of commission. Its loop aerial had been smashed. It could be fixed, perhaps, in an hour.

But in that time—

Doc knew that trailing the other plane now was hopeless.

He swung north, his destination, temporarily, a point beyond the Canadian border. Obviously there had been nothing wrong with the plane carrying Monk and the others. A clever ruse had been worked by

the would-be kidnapers.

They had brought their own ship onto a course between Doc's plane and the one carrying his aids. That would explain the fading of the motor sound in Monk's plane and the subsequent cutting in of the second plane motor.

The crooks had intercepted Doc's course, then drawn him off the trail of his own aids.

Had there been a motive for this? Could Monk, Renny and the others be in trouble?

Doc's thoughtful bronze features were grim as he headed toward Canada.

BUT the only trouble Monk was in, later that same evening, was in having an argument with Ham.

For the past fifteen minutes they had been circling—Monk was at the controls of the plane—over a richly wooded area that was dotted with small lakes. It was a section of Quebec beyond the Laurentian Mountains.

Ham was seated beside the chemist, a map spread across his knees. He made marks on the map with a pencil as Monk handled the plane.

Ham was saying sharply, "That last town we just passed was the one." He pointed out the cockpit window, then indicated the map.

"And that's Lake St. Joseph, off to the left. Your estate is this wooded country directly beneath us." He indicated another lake on the map. "It lies between this Lake St. Joseph and that other lake five miles off to the right. So how do you expect to land there?"

Monk was losing altitude. The moon was up now, and below them the land was bathed in white brightness. For miles in every direction, between the two lakes, there was nothing save dense woodland.

"Oh, I'll find a spot to set her down some place!" Monk muttered.

Skinny Long Tom was in the doorway leading in from the cabin beyond.

"Don't be a fool!" he snapped. "You'll crack us up."

Monk was down to a thousand feet now as, tense, the others watched. Even big Renny said worriedly, "Holy cow! There isn't a place within two miles of that house to land this crate!"

It was true. All could see the house now, visible in the moonlight.

It was a tremendous structure with gabled roofs. It spread to right and left, almost directly beneath them. Moonglow touched the green tiles of the slanting roofs, and they gleamed in the night.

Monk threw the plane over at a sharp angle and took a better look.

"Gollywhoppus!" he piped shrilly. "Look at her, will you!"

Deep in the wooded area, the mansion and stables and various small buildings, looked like some small kingdom tucked away in the wilderness.

Abruptly Monk's eyes brightened hopefully.

"There's a road," he exclaimed. "We can land there." He came down until he barely was skimming the treetops.

And Ham gasped, "You hairy mistake—wait! That road is barely wide enough for an automobile. You haven't a chance!"

Trees grew up close to the roadway below. Monk didn't have a chance to set the plane down at such a spot.

But just as a matter of principle, he turned on Ham, swung a hairy fist at the lawyer's head.

"I think I'll hit you just for the fun of it!" he announced.

It was big Renny who put a temporary stop to the argument.

HE said, "Wait a minute. About two or three miles back, this road below intersected a highway. I think I saw a garage or something back there. Perhaps we could hire a car."

That seemed to be a good idea, for entrance to the isolated estate appeared to be only by way of the single narrow woods road.

Monk turned back.

In a moment or so he had located the garage that Renny had mentioned. It was situated at a point where the estate road came down out of the hills and joined a main highway that cut through the province.

The road was fairly wide, and beyond it was a half-mile stretch of clear field.

Monk said, "That land probably belongs to me, anyway!" and brought the plane down for a fast landing. He almost stood the streamlined ship on its nose.

Behind him, in the cabin, Habeas the pig and the runt chimpanzee tangled as they were thrown into a confused heap. The pig nipped the chimp's ear and a fight started.

When the plane had rolled to a stop, Ham gave a relieved sigh and jumped toward the cabin exit door.

At the doorway he paused a moment and said, "Imagine a half-wit like him coming into five million dollars!"

Monk piled out of the cockpit. He was still wearing the baggy plus fours and the golf hose. He looked comical.

"I don't like that remark, shyster!"

"Then come outside and fight!" Ham shouted, leaping to the ground.

But the one who looked as though he was going to do the fighting was the long young fellow who was just in the act of hurdling the fence separating field and highway. He came running toward them.

Apparently he was the garage-gas station owner. He was wearing a pair of faded coveralls that had been washed too often. They had shrunk considerably. They now only came to a point midway between his knees and ankles.

He yelled as he raced up to the Doc Savage men, "Hey! What the hell's the big idea of putting that crate down here? I got a mind to—"

Ham quickly stepped forward. He started talking. Being a lawyer, and a good one, Ham soon had the garage owner convinced that he—the young man—was distinctly honored by having such a notable person land on his property.

Ham swung around, bowed smartly, indicated hairy Monk and said, "His lordship, the Earl of Chester, of Essex and Cornwall, new master of Mayfair." Ham swung back to the man in coveralls. "Perhaps you've heard?"

Evidently the man had. He gave a soft, low whistle. Then he stiffened and his heels clicked together.

"It's an honor, I'm sure," he said.

If Monk heard, he paid no attention. He barged forward belligerently.

"I'm gonna blast somebody!" he said grimly.

THE garage man stared.

Ham put in quickly, "Just a little mannerism of his lordship, young man. Think nothing of it!" While Renny and Long Tom got Monk swiftly out of the way, Ham did the talking.

He explained about their inability to land the plane at the estate. Possibly they could hire a limousine, he suggested.

The man in the too-small coveralls nodded.

"Of course," he said obligingly. "I have one in the garage now. We seldom get a call for it, anyway. Anything to please the earl."

The car was rolled out. It was a vintage model of a Ford, with brass trimmings.

Ham stared from the car to the plane. "We had some luggage," he started. "In fact, quite a bit of—"

The garage man waved a hand. "I'll have it all sent up to Mayfair first thing in the morning," he said. "Don't worry about it."

Ham offered the man a bill, but he would not think of taking it.

"You can pay when you come back for your plane," he said.

Shortly Monk, Renny, Long Tom and the lawyer were piling into the old car. The garage owner stood beside the car, speaking to Ham, who was at the wheel. The two pets, momentarily quiet and curious, were crowded into the back seat with Renny and skinny Long Tom. Monk sat beside Ham, looking as though he was going to fight somebody.

"You swing left up this side road," the man explained. "It's three, four miles to the estate. There's no other route. You can't go wrong."

Ham waved his hand and they started off.

Behind them, the tall garage man in the too-tight-fitting coveralls stepped back into the garage. He moved through a doorway that led to an office in the rear. He switched on a light. Immediately he started pulling off the work suit.

"This damn grease monkey's suit!" he complained.

Men got up out of the chairs from where they had been seated in the darkness. There were at least seven or eight, and they had the kind of faces that don't appear in magazine ads.

One was a short, powerfully built man with homely features.

He asked, "Did it work?"

The tall man flung the coveralls toward a bound-and-gagged man who was lying helpless in a corner of the room. There was grease on the captive's hands and face.

"I'll say it did!" said the one who had discarded the coveralls. "There's enough gas in that car to take them Doc Savage guys just about a mile and a half up into the big woods. That oughta be perfect!"

"Let's get started, then," suggested the homely-faced one.

Oddly, the speaker could have passed for hairy Monk Mayfair himself!

Chapter VI. DISAPPEARANCE

THE tall man who had said the old flivver would run out of gas a mile and a half up the road through the big woods had been mistaken.

Ham ran out of gas within a mile.

They were climbing a steady grade and the motor sputtered, gasped, and then died completely. No amount of urging would get it started again.

Monk, grumbling, climbed out, located a stick and tried the gas tank.

He started swearing.

Everyone climbed out. The two pets were asleep.

The chemist said, "Looks like we walk, dang it!"

But Ham had different ideas. "Walk nothing!" he protested. "This old heap looks bad enough, but it is better than arriving at Mayfair on foot. One of us will have to walk back for gas."

They matched quarters and Long Tom lost, and he was the one elected to go back for a can of gas.

Grumbling, the skinny electrical expert stalked off back down the hill. The idea of walking back up the steep grade with a can full of gas was not appealing to him. He had proceeded perhaps a quarter of a mile when the men leaped out of the surrounding woods and took hold of him.

One man carried a light—and Long Tom recognized him as the tall fellow who had posed as the garage owner. He was apparently the leader of the four who were with him.

The leader said, "It's the skinny little runt! I'm damned glad they didn't send back that giant of a guy!" He referred to big Renny, the engineer.

But he made a mistake in calling Long Tom a skinny little runt. It made the electrical expert fight all the harder.

What the five men had thought would be an easy seizure turned out to be a situation like trying to hang onto a wild cat.

Long Tom whirled into violent action. Men were flung from him. Dust came up off the road and formed a cloud that made the flashlight useless. Everyone was battling within the dust screen.

There were cries of: "Hey, that's me!"

"Ouch!"

"Dammit, hang on to him!"

The five attackers learned that Long Tom was a tough fellow to hold.

His hard fists moved with furious speed. He was everywhere at once. But sooner or later he had to go down.

Someone had found a dead limb of a fallen tree. It was four feet long and several inches thick. It hit Long Tom on the back of the head and he sat down, dazed.

Quickly he was seized by hands that took firmer grips this time. His arms were pinioned. He was backed against a tree, his wrists drawn back and around the tree trunk, and he was tied securely.

"Now we'll find out a few things," the tall leader said grimly.

He stood before Long Tom.

"Who's that guy in your crowd who looks like a monkey?" the leader wanted to know.

Long Tom said nothing.

"Why's that bloke going to the Mayfair Estate?"

This time Long Tom blurted, "Because it's his, why do you think!"

"The hell it is!"

"The hell it ain't!"

One word led to another, and suddenly the leader's fist shot out and cracked the skinny electrical expert alongside the jaw. Long Tom's head snapped sideways. His eyes bleared. It had been a powerful blow.

But his jaw set grimly, and he merely stared at his captor.

The leader tried another line of questioning.

"Where's Doc Savage?"

"Even if I knew, I wouldn't tell you," Long Tom snapped.

He was telling the truth. He hardly believed that Doc Savage had been going to the Fortress of Solitude. The bronze man's whereabouts and what he was up to were completely unknown to him.

The leader hit him again.

"Talk, damn you!" he rapped.

But they were soon convinced that Long Tom could take as much punishment as they could hand out. They retired to the roadway and held a consultation.

While they were doing that, hairy Monk himself came down the road.

SOMEONE leaped back to the tree where Long Tom was tied and quickly slapped a heavy hand over his mouth, so that he could not yell. There was hasty whispering among the group of hard-looking thugs.

The Doc Savage aid caught swiftly whispered words that gave him a start.

"We found that equipment case in their plane," one man was saying to the leader. "It contained these funny little grenades. Let's try them. They say this other fellow is plenty tough."

"All right," directed the leader. "Hurry!"

Long Tom recognized the fistful of marble-size pellets that one man held. He went rigid.

The pellets were small gas bombs of the bronze man's own invention. They were filled with a quick-acting anesthetic gas that was very effective. It had the power to knock a person out within seconds.

And Long Tom heard Monk drawing close now. It was the chemist, all right.

Monk was grumbling and complaining to someone. "Habeas," the chemist was saying, "this being an earl is too danged much trouble."

Long Tom was suddenly struggling to get free. But he was held tightly.

Monk and the pig! They were walking, unknowingly, right into trouble!

One of the crooks threw the small handful of pellets out into the thick dust of the roadway. They were so light in weight that they made no sound.

But Habeas, the scrawny pig, must have seen something. He suddenly veered to one side of the road and avoided the spot where the tiny grenades had landed.

For the moment, Monk had not noticed the pig's actions. Then, too late, he drew up short and

looked at Habeas.

"What the blazes is wrong with you?" he demanded.

By that time the small puffs of white vapor had come up from the road and enveloped the chemist. He coughed once, and then he started getting down on his hands and knees as though he were looking for something on the road.

He rolled over and went to sleep.

The vaporish gas spread rapidly. Squealing, Habeas took out for the woods. The men holding Long Tom, and the others hidden nearby, leaped back into the woods also.

From his position, Long Tom had not seen Monk fall. He let out a cry of warning.

"Look out, Monk! They're using the gas bombs—"

That's about as far as the skinny electrical expert got. The gas hit him in the next moment.

His last thought was of hearing someone say: "This is a damned sight better than tryin' to grab all them Doc Savage guys at once!"

THE car was long, powerful-looking, and was full of passengers. It drew up fifty feet behind where two-fisted Renny and smartly dressed Ham were sitting on the running board of the anemic-looking flivver.

What the two aids had been saying about Monk and Long Tom wasn't pleasant. They were fuming at the delay.

Ham jumped up as he recognized burly Monk coming forward in the headlight glare of the other car. Monk yelled, "Hey, daggonit, come back here and give me a hand."

Ham and Renny started forward. They did not see the others seated in the big car, because the two aids were partially blinded by the lights.

Ham snapped, "What's been keeping you? Where's Long Tom? Why—"

He paused, taking in Monk's appearance.

Monk was no longer wearing the baggy plus fours and the loud golf socks. Instead, he was attired in a suit of English tweed.

Ham snorted.

"While we sit here waiting," he called out, "you take time to change your clothes! What's the idea?"

Monk was all apologies.

"Sorry," he said. "I didn't think it would take long."

The lawyer gulped. He shot a glance at towering Renny, beside him.

This wasn't like hairy Monk. The scrappy chemist had never apologized for anything in his life—especially to his partner Ham.

Puzzled, Ham started to say, "What the—"

Just then Habeas, the pig, came scrambling out of the woods. He started running toward his homely-faced apelike master.

Five feet from Monk, however, he came, to a skidding halt, backed up on his haunches and let out a terrified squeal. Then he streaked for the woods again.

Suddenly Ham grabbed Renny's arm. "Look out!" he yelled in warning. "That's not Monk!"

The man standing in the headlight glare unexpectedly looked grim and menacing. A gun appeared in his fist.

"Damned right it isn't!" he roared, and fired the gun.

BECAUSE of the dangerous experiences to which they were always subjected, Doc Savage's aids naturally took certain precautions. One of these was the steel-chain-mesh vest that each man wore beneath his clothing.

It was this bullet-proof vest that saved the lawyer's life now. He was knocked backward as the slug caught him in the chest. But he regained his balance and leaped beyond the old car, a temporary means of concealment.

Renny was beside him as the gun blasted again and a slug tore close over their heads.

With a wild chattering, Chemistry, the chimp, came awake and leaped out of the car, following Habeas Corpus into the woods.

Men were also piling out of the big car parked down the woods road, and they joined the man who looked like homely Monk.

Someone yelled, "All right, let 'em have it!"

More gun sound cut loose in the silence of the deep woods.

Renny had whipped something from beneath his coat. It looked like an oversized pistol, and the weapon contained what appeared to be a drum magazine.

It was one of the machine pistols used by the Doc Savage aids. The weapon fired, as well as real bullets, demolition slugs and also a type of "mercy" slug that merely brought temporary unconsciousness to its victims.

Renny used one of the demolition slugs. He fired a single blast.

The gunmen, in advancing, had taken to the edge of the woods. But big Renny did not aim that way. He took a bead on their car.

The front end of the car went up in the air, the tires blew out with loud, explosive sound, and the heavy machine landed on its side, half demolished.

Immediately a wild yell of terror came from the men in the woods. The advance stopped. There were wild scrambling sounds as the gunmen, scared, started getting away from there.

Just to add to their terror, Renny fired another of the demolition slugs. A small ditch appeared in the roadway and the racket was enough to be heard two miles away.

By the time the sound had died, so had the crackling footsteps of the men pounding through the deep woods. Silence dropped like a cloak over the wild spot again.

HAM stared at the powerful engineer.

"That guy, he looked like Monk—" the lawyer started.

Renny's gloomy features were more forlorn than ever. "Holy cow!" he rumbled. "That means—"

"That Monk and Long Tom are in trouble!" the lawyer finished.

They climbed back into the old car. Ham called the pets.

The two animals, still scared, came dashing out of the woods and leaped into the rear seat.

Renny pushed, sending the rattling flivver over rough ground that bordered the edge of the road.

He managed to scrape past the demolished, larger machine, and then they were batting down grade along the road. The grade was steep enough to permit coasting.

They had proceeded a quarter mile when Habeas set up an excited squealing.

Ham directed, "Hold on a minute. That pig is trying to tell us something."

Renny stopped the car. It sounded like the machine was going to fall apart.

Habeas jumped out of the car, started back up the road. He paused a moment, looking hopefully at the two aids, as though trying to tell them something.

Renny and Ham piled out behind the pig. Chemistry, however, refused to budge.

They came to the spot where the small gas grenades had exploded in the dusty roadway. Ham was

using a flashlight, and he recognized bits of curved glass that had formed the gas pellets.

He held them out in his palm, and the big engineer nodded grimly.

Next, Habeas was running around a tree trunk that stood nearby.

Renny stepped over to investigate, found parts of rope that had been cut. The rope had been around the tree trunk.

He said: "Either Monk or Long Tom was tied up here!" Ham nodded.

"What do you make of it?" he prompted.

"What do you mean?" Renny tried to keep his voice low, but it rumbled off into the woods.

"I mean," explained Ham, "that one who looks like Monk. That guy sure felt like killing somebody!"

They thought about that for a moment.

Then Ham said, "Perhaps Monk and Long Tom have learned the answer. It's damned mysterious."

But finding the two missing aids was still another problem. There was not a single clue as to where they might have been taken.

Chapter VII. MURDER AT MAYFAIR

IT had been three hours since dawn had broken over the Canadian hills. The sun shone down on the smooth waters of the large inland lake and seemed to hammer its surface as smooth as silver.

It also shone against Monk's eyes as he lay helpless in the bottom of the canoe—and two hours of the intense light had brought a red haze to his vision, even though he held his eyelids closed.

The two men at either end of the canoe had been paddling for hours, it seemed like. Monk tried to twist around. He said nastily, "I'm gonna sure twist somebody's neck if I ever get out of this dugout!"

One of the men laughed. He kept on paddling.

Somewhere close beside them were the sounds of other oars dipping into the smooth water. From words that had been passed back and forth from time to time between the two canoes, Monk knew that skinny Long Tom was a captive in the other boat.

Where were they being taken, and why?—Monk wondered.

All he could remember was passing out as the gas had enveloped him. Then, sometime around dawn, he had awakened as he was being loaded, well trussed, into one of the canoes. Just before they had shoved off from shore he remembered seeing a sign posted to a tree near the shore of the lake. The sign had read:

MAYFAIR

Private Property

KEEP OFF!

He had set up a howl when he had seen that sign. His own land—and he was a captive! He couldn't figure it out.

Monk was trying to think of some ruse to get himself untied when he heard the man in the bow of the boat let out a startled exclamation.

"Who's that coming?" the man wanted to know.

Monk, flat on his back in the bottom of the craft, naturally couldn't see a thing.

A second later the man in the stern—he must have followed his partner's gaze—spoke worriedly: "I dunno. But I don't like it. They got a motorboat!"

Suddenly one of the captors in the second canoe let out a yell.

"Head for shore!"

Apparently it was a good idea—but the instructions had come too late. Monk himself heard the steady put-put-put of the approaching boat. It abruptly changed to a roar. Monk gave a start. The new sound was the roar of a machine gun! Chattering! A shadow fell across Monk. It was the man in the back of the canoe, standing up. The man let out a terrified yell. "Come on!" he screamed. "Swim for it!" He went overboard. The canoe swayed crazily, but kept its balance. Monk's heart stood still in his chest. He gave a sigh of relief when the boat righted. He thought about Long Tom, in the same predicament. There was the sound of wild splashing as the other captors leaped overboard. The motorboat, from the noise, seemed to be circling. Then there was the command: "All right, give it to them!" The machine gun chattered again. Somewhere off to Monk's left, a man gave an awful scream of agony. A gurgling, choking sound followed. There were other cries—the sounds men make when they're facing violent death. Monk winced. Finally they stopped. The steady put-put-put of the motorboat faded, was soon a faraway murmur on the big lake. Silence, dismal and tense, fell over the spot. MONK called out: "Long Tom! You all right?" For seconds there was no reply. Monk felt sick. And then he heard the answer, faint, as though Long Tom's canoe were some distance away. "Monk!" The chemist let out a roar. "What happened to those guys?" he called. "They're dead! Consider yourself lucky. Guess those others didn't know we were in the bottom of the boats!" "Goshamighty!" Monk breathed thankfully. Long Tom's words came again. "Have you noticed it?" "Noticed what?" Monk yelled back. "We're drifting—too blamed fast to suit me. There's a hell of a current here, for some reason!" Monk thought that over for a moment. Suddenly the idea hit him. Perhaps they were drifting toward a dam! He let out a whoop. "How we gonna get outa these blasted things?" he called. "Maybe you can figure it out?" the electrical expert called back. "You'd better start praying!" Monk felt the drift of the canoe now. Its speed had sharply increased. If they were out in the center of the lake, they would never have been drifting this fast. There was something—Though half blinded by the red blur of the sun, Monk abruptly gave a start. "Hey, Long Tom!" he yelled. He just about caught his partner's reply. "Look up there, will ya!" Monk instructed. "See it?" He couldn't hear Long Tom's answer this time. But Monk's pulse leaped. The tiny spot high in the sky above swiftly grew larger. It seemed to be dropping like a comet. It took on a color—silver—and continued its downward plunge. It was a plane! Monk started yelling excitedly as he watched the plane come down and flatten out five hundred feet above the surface of the lake. It zoomed overhead, its motors a high, shrill whine. It came back, lower this time. And then, like a graceful bird, it settled on the surface of the big lake. It was the big silver amphibian of Doc Savage. IN another moment Monk could see the bulk of the sleek-looking plane looming nearby. He heard a weight hit the water. Doc was dropping an anchor to keep the ship from drifting. Almost instantly the bronze man was plunging into the water and swimming with remarkable speed toward Monk's canoe. Something gleamed in the bronze man's mouth. Corded, bronze hands touched the side of the canoe. It tipped somewhat. Then Doc was reaching inside the boat with the sharp-bladed knife and saying, "The moment you're untied, dive out and swim-toward the plane." The sharp knife severed Monk's bindings. He pulled himself up and went overboard. His legs and arms were stiff from being so long in a helpless position. Monk floundered around wildly. But the cool water soon brought back circulation and he set out for the plane, some distance away now. He looked over his shoulder, and his small eyes bulged. Not more than a quarter of a mile away, directly in the path of the drifting canoes, was the narrow outlet of the lake. Monk could see water knocking up into the air where it struck the boulders at the start of a rapids at the end of the lake. If the canoes had ever reached that spot,

he and Long Tom would have been pounded to death!

His gaze swerved. Some distance to his right, skinny Long Tom was just piling out of his canoe. The chemist saw the flash of the bronze giant's arm as he swung clear of the boat. Doc Savage had released Long Tom.

Monk felt the current pull at his arms and his legs as he plowed toward the anchored plane. If the canoes had drifted a few hundred yards nearer the start of the rapids, he doubted that they would have been able to swim back.

Monk was first to reach the amphibian and pull himself up on a wing. Doc Savage was next, with Long Tom following.

The bronze man said: "Where's Ham and Renny?"

Monk explained, "We left them in an old car we rented from a garage man in order to get up to the estate. But we ran out of gas. I was going back for some when-wham!—somebody used gas grenades!" Long Tom put in, "It was that phony garage owner. It was a trick, loaning us that car, and he grabbed Monk and me!"

The skinny electrical wizard looked even thinner standing on the plane wing in his soaked clothing.

Monk's plus fours dragged down around his ankles.

Both aids stared at the giant bronze man.

"How did you find us?" Long Tom prodded.

Doc Savage said quietly, "Your plane left near the garage was an indication where you had gone.

But there were two cars up the road leading into Mayfair. One was smashed. And both were deserted."

"Two

cars!" Monk exclaimed. "Then they must 'a' got Ham and Renny, too!" He looked more worried about something else, added: "And Habeas!"

"We might try to locate them," suggested Doc.

MONK yanked up the anchor while the bronze man swung into the cockpit of the plane. Shortly they were in the air, circling the widely wooded area that surrounded the lake. Once Doc flew back over the lake, after Monk had mentioned the motorboat with the machine gun.

But they saw no trace of any kind of boat on the wide lake.

Doc said somewhat grimly, "The sound detector picked up the noise of shots. Otherwise I might not have located you."

"But those four guys who held us captives—" Long Tom started.

Doc Savage indicated the lake beneath them. "Dead," he stated quietly. "They were floating toward the rapids just before I landed."

Monk's homely features were puzzled.

"What the blazes, Doc," he started. "I don't get this. First some guys grab me and Long Tom—and then somebody else kills them! What's the connection?"

Doc Savage's unusual flake-gold eyes were thoughtful. Finally he said, "There is an angle to this mystery that is not clear."

Monk looked at Long Tom. He wondered what the bronze man meant.

In the next moment Doc partially explained. He told about the kidnap attempt on himself in New York, of later being lured off his course when he had been following Monk toward Canada.

"Then you weren't going to the Fortress of Solitude, after all?" Monk asked.

Doc shook his head. "Not yet."

"But why did they try to kill you?" Long Tom prodded.

The bronze man's reply surprised both of his aids.

"They didn't!" said Doc. "It was merely a kidnap attempt. So far it has no explanation."

"But who—" Monk started.

"That is also a mystery," said Doc Savage.

"And now," Monk continued, "some crooks tried to get us out of the way and, in turn, those crooks—at least some of them—were killed."

"That appears to be the case," admitted Doc.

He fell silent, and shortly they were circling the field where the other plane had been left. Doc came down for a landing, rolled the plane up close to the first one.

CLIMBING out, the bronze man explained, "The garage has been closed up. Evidently the real owner has been scared off. It's the only place within miles on this deserted stretch of provincial highway."

He indicated the plane that Monk and the others had left in the field the night before.

"You should have taken better precautions before leaving the plane," he said. "One equipment case and a suitcase are missing."

Monk blinked. "Blazes!" he cried. "I never thought of that. Maybe we'd better lock it now."

"It has been taken care of," the bronze man said.

He started toward the roadway that Monk and the others had traveled in the car the night before.

The bronze man was now carrying a supersensitive electroscope. He looked at Long Tom.

"Renny was instructed to wear the special inner soles before leaving New York," Doc said. "Has he still got on the same shoes?"

The electric expert nodded, understanding Doc's purpose.

For the unnoticeable inner soles were of a metal which, while not radioactive enough to give them radio poisoning, were active enough that the supersensitive electroscope would register at a considerable distance.

Thus the electroscope would indicate the presence of Renny in the vicinity.

And it did.

A sensitive needle pointed northward, in the very direction of the woods road that led toward Mayfair Estate.

Excited, Long Tom mentioned the tree where he had been held a captive the night before. He led the way.

At that point, along the big woods road, the needle veered sharply right.

"This way," Doc Savage said. He went on ahead. The vast silence of the forest dropped over them as they moved quietly beneath the trees.

But all noted that the needle swung back to a northerly direction and remained there.

It showed that Renny and Ham had been here, and then had returned in the direction of the Mayfair Estate again. Were they captives—or were they trailing someone?

A half-hour later they found out.

For they suddenly emerged onto a roadway that curved through the vast estate. Following it, they soon came to a two-story stone building located at the end of the road. There was a string of garage doorways located in the front of the structure, at least a dozen of them.

Monk whistled. "Wow!" he piped. "Is that a garage—or a house?"

"Just the garage," Long Tom said.

One of the garage doors stood open, and voices came from within the building. One was a great booming voice that carried on the still morning air.

"Renny!" Monk cried.

They hurried forward—and soon saw big Renny, Ham and another man standing around something inside the long garage. Ham had just straightened up after picking up something, which he now held in his fingers. It appeared like a piece of white paper.

Monk frowned. He glowered at his dapper partner.

"Blazes!" he muttered. "And I thought you was in trouble! Where did Habeas—"

The chemist stopped, his apelike form going rigid. His gaze followed that of Doc Savage.

The man on the floor had been brutally murdered. He had been beaten to death. And he was an elderly man.

Ham passed the slip of paper to the bronze man and said tensely, "We found this in his hand."

The note read:

THERE IS ONLY DEATH FOR
THOSE WHO LIVE AT MAYFAIR.

Chapter VIII. NICKERSON LOCATES MONK

NO one could explain the threatening message found in the dead man's hand—not even the stranger with Renny and Monk.

The others learned that the man was Charlie Nickerson, newly appointed manager of vast Mayfair Estate.

Charlie Nickerson was a Canadian, short and solid in stature, good-looking, with dark hair and eyes and a lot of jaw.

Doc Savage drew Ham to one side.

"What about Charlie Nickerson?" the bronze man asked. "Is there any way of checking on him?"

"I already have," the lawyer announced. "Called Montreal from the house when Nickerson wasn't around. He's O. K., Doc. He was sent out here recently by the English representatives of this estate. They have an office in Montreal. That's where I called."

Doc nodded.

"And the old man"—he motioned to where the dead man lay—"who was he?"

Nickerson himself approached them at that moment. He was able to explain.

"His name was Sandy," the estate manager said. Nickerson knocked an under slung pipe out on his shoe, stowed it in the pocket of his coat and looked grim. His jaw stuck out another quarter of an inch. "He was a caretaker on the grounds here for years. His murder is about the most fiendish thing I've ever heard of."

"You have any idea why he was killed?" Doc queried.

Nickerson's dark, sharp eyes flashed.

"There could be only one explanation," he said.

"And that?"

"He must have known something that someone was afraid he might reveal."

Doc Savage made no comment.

Charlie Nickerson suggested that they go up to the house. It was visible through the trees.

The "house" looked like a castle set down in the Canadian wilds. Gigantic was the word for it.

Wherever you looked, it seemed that one of the many gables was sticking up through the trees. Here and there, between wings of the mansion, were smooth, well-kept stretches of green lawn. They passed

a swimming pool and rich gardens.

Monk's chest swelled.

"And this is all mine!" he said with pride.

Nickerson nodded. "That's right, your lordship."

Doc and Long Tom learned that Ham had already presented the affidavits from the New York law firm. Nickerson had been expecting Monk—the Earl of Mayfair.

Ham spoke under his breath to Long Tom. "That hairy misfit looks more like a tramp than an earl!" he commented coolly.

Monk swung around.

"I heard that, shyster!" he muttered. "See here, have your ancestors ever been traced?"

Ham grinned.

"Yes," he admitted. "But they were so smart, nobody could catch them!"

Monk growled in disgust.

HE was a funny sight. His baggy plus fours had dried now, but they were still hung down around his ankles. His golf socks had fallen down. He looked like a squat, thick-set golfer who had stood too long in the rain. Bristly, thick red hair was visible on his knotty legs.

Renny had been talking to Doc Savage. He joined the others now, said to Ham, "Holy cow! Did you tell them about those crooks who escaped from us last night?"

The lawyer briefly repeated about the incident. He mentioned how the gunmen had been scared off through the woods. His suspicious gaze swung to Monk, who was listening.

"And that reminds me," Ham snapped, "there must be two of you. If I ever get my hands on that other homely ape—"

Monk drew himself up proudly.

"Listen here, you legal leper," he piped, "don't call me an ape!"

After the argument had continued for several moments, Monk suddenly seemed to recall Ham's earlier remark. His voice quieted somewhat and he demanded, "What did you mean, there must be two of me?"

Ham shook his head, puzzled as he studied Monk's homely features.

"He looked like you, he talked like you," the lawyer said musingly, "and yet he wasn't you! But where in the universe there could be any poor devil who ever resembled you is beyond me! I can't figure it out."

Doc had been listening, his bronze features a thoughtful mask. His unusual flake-gold eyes caught something that everyone else had missed.

It was an expression that came into the eyes of the Canadian, Charlie Nickerson, as Ham mentioned the one who had looked like Monk Mayfair.

They had reached the main entrance to the mansion.

INSIDE, Monk drew up short, astounded.

They were in a great circular room of high-beamed ceilings, and that contained at least half a dozen huge arched doorways that led to various wings of the house.

Ahead of them was a wide circular staircase that led up to another floor.

The furnishings in the entrance hall were covered. It was obvious that the house had been shut up for some time.

Charlie Nickerson said, "Welcome to Mayfair Manor, your lordship. You must excuse the condition of the house. There has been no time to put things in order."

Monk nodded. He was suddenly very condescending.

"My man," he piped, "don't let it worry you. Kings have lived in squalor. This little chateau will suffice for the time being." The chemist strode out into the center of the great entrance hall and stared around.

Ham almost choked. "Why did I ever buy that book?" he said beneath his breath.

But Monk had suddenly forgotten that he was an earl. He spoke in a loud voice, head raised toward the great domed center of the room.

"How are you?" Monk said.

The words came crashing back at him from the corners of the vast room.

"How are you?"

"I'm fine!" the chemist said gleefully. He was like a kid with a new toy.

Ham snorted, "Leave him alone; he's happy."

He followed the others as they were conducted by Charlie Nickerson through the mansion. The kitchens would have done justice to a chain restaurant.

Habeas and Chemistry, the two pets, were seated on chairs before a long table that would have accommodated a dozen servants. They were eating.

Nickerson indicated several people working in the kitchen. He said, "I was able to get a few servants hired yesterday. More will arrive today. In about a week, things will be running smoothly." They continued the tour of the house. It took them about an hour.

When they returned to where they had left Monk, the chemist was missing.

It was dapper Ham who found the slip of paper lying on a table. The note read:

THERE IS A CURSE ON

MAYFAIR MANOR.

Ham, surprisingly, was the one who paled.

"Monk!" he exclaimed. "Something's happened to him!"

Immediately a search was started. Every room in the huge mansion was covered. An hour later the impression was general: Something had happened to Monk.

The few servants who were already at the estate were called upon to help with the search. Every corner of the grounds except the vast surrounding wilderness was covered.

But Monk was not found by nightfall.

DOC SAVAGE himself was gone most of the night. Shortly after daybreak he met the others in the mansion.

Doc announced, "There is a possibility that Monk has been kidnapped."

"Why?" someone wanted to know.

"The reason, as yet, is not obvious," Doc Savage said. The others had the feeling that the bronze man was not telling everything he knew. But this was a trait of Doc's. He never made full explanations until he had a mystery completely solved—and this one was getting more involved.

Charlie Nickerson, the Canadian manager of the estate, joined them shortly. He had been out.

He said excitedly, "I have a lead to His Lordship's whereabouts! If some of you could come with me—"

Doc Savage ordered, "Ham, you and Long Tom go with Nickerson. Renny can stay here at the house."

"A plane would be quicker," Charlie Nickerson went on swiftly. "If the information has reached me correctly, his lordship is well over a hundred miles west of here!"

Ham and Long Tom stared.

"You're sure of that?" Ham demanded.

"Positive," Nickerson said. His alert eyes snapped.

Ham looked at Doc Savage.

The bronze man nodded. "Use the smaller plane," he said.

Doc made no mention of what he was going to do himself, but Ham had an idea that the bronze man had some plan of his own.

Shortly, Nickerson had a car up from the garage. They set out through the big woods for the field where the planes had been left. They found the planes intact.

Some time later, with Nickerson in the cockpit and giving directions, Ham circled the area indicated by the estate manager.

It was a particularly lonely stretch of coast line, at a point where the St. Lawrence River widened to enter the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Miles of water stretched ahead. It was almost as though they were out over the Atlantic itself.

Nickerson indicated a tiny coastal fishing village five thousand feet beneath them. "Set a course directly northeast by east of that village," he said. "Ten miles out in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is the island. Well have to watch sharply or we might miss it!"

Ham checked the air-speed instruments closely while skinny Long Tom watched the water far below. Finally the electrical wizard let out a yell.

"There it is—dead ahead."

The small island moved up like a green dot in the sea. Ham lost altitude fast, kept dropping down in long circles until they were skirting treetops of the island in the gulf.

There were tiny inlets along the otherwise rocky shore line of the island. The entire length of the thing couldn't have been more than half a dozen miles. Here and there was a short stretch of sandy beach.

Ham asked, "How did you find out about Monk?"

Nickerson explained quickly.

"The garage man—the chap who really owns the place back near Mayfair—overheard some men talking in a restaurant at our nearest town. They were discussing his lordship—and also this small fishing island in the gulf. It was something about his lordship being taken here to an old fishing wharf. The place has been in disuse for years."

Ham soon picked out the wharf and the old gray-boarded buildings. There was no evidence that anyone lived on the island now at all.

Soon he had the amphibian set down on the water and was taxiing toward shore. The beach was sandy, and they were able to climb out finally in ankle-deep water.

They saw one large frame building that had been the main fishing plant in years gone past. It was half sagging on its foundations. There was also an old boathouse.

Long Tom grumbled. "Hell! There isn't anybody here."

"We'll investigate," suggested Ham.

There were double swinging doors on the big old building, and hasps made to hold padlocks had long since rusted in the wood. The doors were half open.

Ham, worried about his hairy partner, was first to swing inside the building, Long Tom close behind him.

And instantly the lawyer yelled, "Look out! Trap!"

Men shouted. There was a terrific bedlam.

BOTH Ham and Long Tom started to reach for their machine pistols. But something fell down over them and their arms got entangled in what felt like strong cords, and they kicked about helplessly. As soon as their eyes grew accustomed to the gloom within the windowless building, they saw how they had been trapped. Dozens of yards of large fish net had been dropped down over them. Somewhere beyond the outside of the layers of strong net, men were batting at Long Tom and Ham with clubs. They were trying to subdue the Doc Savage aids! But Long Tom was yelling wildly, using assorted kinds of languages and still striving to get his powerful machine pistol free. Ham cursed the luck that had made him leave his sword cane in the plane. With it he could have slashed the netting loose. Suddenly a terrific clamor filled the old building. Long Tom's machine pistol blasted. The racket was enough to smash eardrums. There were wild shouts, men scrambling for the doorway. Ham, still entangled, managed to get out his machine pistol also. Its racket added to the din within the building. Both he and Long Tom were using the "mercy" slugs with which the weapons had been previously loaded. After a while, Long Tom stopped firing. So did Ham. Long Tom muttered tightly, "Damn!" His voice echoed hollowly through the old structure. What had happened became evident to both the Doc Savage aids. The thugs had pulled a fadeout. The two aids were left alone, enmeshed in the fish nets. Somewhere beyond the building, a plane motor coughed, sputtered, then settled into a steady drone. Ham listened carefully. The motor sound was not the same as their own ship. He exclaimed, "That boathouse! They had a plane hidden in there!" The thought didn't help any. They were still far from being free of the clever trap. When they were, a good fifteen minutes had passed. They raced outside the building. Both stared. Their own plane had been set adrift. It was already well offshore. The other plane was gone! And so was Charlie Nickerson. A quick search convinced both men of this fact. Long Tom, for all his unhealthy-looking paleness, appeared to be ready to tie knots in somebody. He flared, "We took it hook, line and sinker!" Ham nodded grimly. "And I thought he looked honest," the lawyer said glumly. They both referred to Charlie Nickerson. It was apparent both aids had fallen for a neat trick. And Monk must have been a captive on the plane that had now completely disappeared.

Chapter IX. ANNABELLE

THE plane was drifting half a mile offshore by the time Ham and Long Tom found the rowboat. They located the boat drawn up on shore some distance away from the fish factory. Sun and air had dried out the boat's seams, and it leaked water badly. But at least it floated, and that was something. Using an old tin can that he had located ashore, Ham bailed while Skinny Long Tom rowed. The electrical expert was tough. His knotty, hard arms were like steel. Each pull of those arms threatened to snap the old oars. Ham was ankle-deep in water that had filled the bottom of the rowboat. It slowed their progress, for the craft kept settling lower and lower in the water. As he bailed, Ham looked at Long Tom's sweat-streaked features and asked, "Do you think Charlie Nickerson was responsible for the death of that old caretaker—Sandy—back at Monk's estate?" Long Tom's face was thoughtful for a moment as he continued to pull steadily at the oars. Finally he said slowly, "I don't think so." "Why not?" Ham prodded. "It's obvious that Nickerson led us into a trap here at the island. He's working with that gang, and I'll bet anything they've got Monk. They were using him for bait in order to trap us!" Long Tom's eyes were puzzled. "You know," he continued, "I think there's an angle to this mystery that we've overlooked." "I don't get you," Ham said. "Well," Long Tom said, "take those guys that grabbed Monk and me last night. They weren't Canadians. Two of them talked with an accent. I think the others were hired New York thugs." "So what?" Ham asked. "Nickerson didn't look like any crook to me. Canadians are square shooters—and that was my impression of him." "And yet Nickerson knows something," Ham insisted. "There was something about his actions, now that I think of it." "I'll admit that," Long Tom agreed. "But look at it this way. Monk and I were grabbed by some guys. And then, while we were captives in the canoes, those guys were murdered by someone else. Why?"

Ham saw what Long Tom was driving at.

"You mean," he exclaimed, "there's two crowds, one working against the other?"

The electrical wizard nodded. He peered over his shoulder. Slowly but surely they were gaining on the drifting plane.

He continued: "There was the kidnap attempt on Doc in New York before Monk even heard about this legacy. What connection has that with Monk's disappearance now? Don't you see? There's two sides to this thing!"

"Three," the lawyer corrected.

He went on to explain. "There's a fellow who looks like Monk himself. Who's he? What's he got to do with it?" Ham paused a moment in his steady bailing. "And where's he disappeared to?"

Long Tom said, "Maybe Doc has figured out some of those answers."

They were close to the amphibian now. But the boat was rapidly sinking beneath them. The water had leaked in faster than Ham could bail it out with the small tin can.

He said, "I think we'd better swim for it."

They dived overboard and struck out for the plane. The water was not cold.

Aboard again, Ham frowned at sight of his mussed, soaked clothes. If there was anything the dapper lawyer hated, it was a disheveled appearance. But at the moment there was nothing he could do about it.

They set out once again for the estate, Long Tom at the controls this time, pushing the plane to its utmost speed limit.

An hour later or so they landed at the field near the garage on the lonely stretch of provincial highway.

The other plane, the one belonging to Doc Savage himself, was gone.

THE garage owner met them as they climbed out of their plane. He was of medium height, slender, with the same stubborn jaw that the two Doc Savage aids had noted in Nickerson, also a Canadian. The fellow was carrying an envelope, and he handed it to Long Tom.

"Doc Savage left this for you," he said.

Ham, meanwhile, indicated the garage, open for business again.

"You've had no more trouble from those thugs who tied you up the other night?" Ham queried.

The garage owner shook his head. "And there isn't going to be any, if I know anything about it!" he announced. "There's a Canadian Mounty working on it. He's trying to trace them. The Mounty talked to Doc Savage just before he left."

Ham turned to Long Tom. "What is Doc's note about?" he asked.

Long Tom said nothing, but instead passed the lawyer the message. Ham read:

Keep one of the portable short-wave sets tuned in—on the usual wave length. Pets are with me.

"Wonder where Doc's gone?" Long Tom asked.

"Only thing we can do is wait," Ham offered. "We'd better get back to the estate."

But before climbing into the car that Nickerson had used in bringing them down from the estate, they removed one of the equipment cases from the plane. Then they set and locked a special alarm device on the plane before leaving the field.

If anyone tampered with the plane, they could pick up the trouble on the special short-wave sets which all the Doc Savage aids used in their mobile equipment.

The short-wave receivers were tuned to a certain wave length. If Doc Savage broadcast a message, it would immediately be picked up.

In the car, Ham and Long Tom returned to Mayfair Estate.

Big, two-fisted Renny met them the moment they entered the massive entrance hall of the mansion.

Behind the giant engineer were four men wearing the uniforms of the Canadian Mounted.

Renny said in his rumbling voice, "Trouble!"

He looked as sad as an undertaker.

"Trouble?" Ham demanded.

"We're all pinched!" Renny said.

THE jail was nothing to brag about. There was only one cell, located in a corner of a larger room that formed part of a barracks about ten miles from Mayfair Estate.

The sergeant in charge was a big fellow with heavy shoulders and large hands. He stood outside the cell where Ham, Long Tom and Renny were locked up, his hands on his hips.

He said coolly, "We don't get customers very often up around here, but it looks like you guys are going to stay a while!"

Ham moved forward to the heavy bars and said, "And what is the charge?"

"Up here," the husky-looking sergeant said, "we call crooks like you fakers. Or maybe sharpshooters. But you don't get away with it in Canada!"

"Away with what?" Ham demanded.

As a lawyer, he wanted to find out what this was all about. The sergeant, he thought, was being somewhat evasive.

"Away with trying to steal Mayfair!" the sergeant snapped. "The man who really owns that place has ordered the whole bunch of you arrested."

Ham and the others stared.

Ham cried, "Listen here! We've got papers and everything to prove that one of our own associates is the owner of Mayfair. Why, we even have—"

"Where are they?" their jailer asked.

"There—" Ham paused, giving a start. He just remembered. He had turned over all the affidavits to Monk when they had arrived up here. And now—Monk was missing!

Shrewdly, Ham said, "You bring on this person who says we stole that estate. Let me talk to him!" The big sergeant gave a bored sigh.

"That's just why you guys are going to be here for quite a while," he remarked.

"What do you mean?"

"The owner of Mayfair—the real owner—has disappeared. Until we locate him, you birds stay put!" Ham groaned.

Naturally they had not been permitted to bring any belongings into the cell with them. Ham was thinking of the equipment case that was in the car, of the portable short-wave set. They were supposed to keep in touch with Doc Savage.

They spent the rest of the day and that night trying to think up some means of escape. And finally decided that there was none.

Trying to convince their jailer that they were a part of the Doc Savage organization only brought one answer.

"You bring Doc Savage here," their guard said, "and we'll talk to him."

"But we don't know where he is!" Ham complained.

"It's just like we figured," the man retorted. "You're too damn smooth!"

That was as far as Ham could get.

But at eight the next morning, when the girl arrived, his hopes soared.

APPROACHING their cell, Ham heard the girl say, "One is named Ham Brooks." Then she mentioned the names of Renny and Long Tom.

"That's them, all right," said the jailer.

Ham immediately liked the sound of the girl's voice. But when he got a good look at the girl herself he liked that much better.

She was really something to look at.

She wasn't very big, but what there was of her looked trim and dainty in close-fitting knickers and polished leather boots. The girl also wore a light suede jacket, and her hair—it was dark—was covered by a bright-colored scarf. She had about the darkest brown eyes Ham had ever seen.

The thought struck him: she was either dressed for riding—or flying.

There was something about her fine features, her determined chin. In the moment before she introduced herself, Ham suspected who she might be.

"I'm Annabelle Nickerson," the girl announced.

"I figured you were a Nickerson," Ham said, smiling. "You're Charlie Nickerson's sister?"

The girl nodded.

Renny and Long Tom had been dozing on a cot within the cell. They came to their feet, skinny Long Tom looking particularly angry.

"What I'll do to that guy Nickerson when I catch up with him!" he grated.

Ham said sharply, "Wait a minute, Long Tom! The girl has something to tell us."

He looked at Annabelle Nickerson.

"What is it?" Ham wanted to know.

Briefly, the girl explained.

She mentioned how she had learned from the servants at Mayfair that they—Ham, Long Tom and Renny—had been arrested. "And there was a note from my brother," Annabelle Nickerson added. "He left it with one of the servants."

"Note?" Ham asked.

"Yes. In it, Charlie said something about going with some of you to look for a person named Monk. He also said that if he did not return, I was to get in touch with Doc Savage or some of you immediately."

Ham exclaimed, "But we can't find Doc Savage ourselves!"

The girl nodded.

"I understand that," she said. "But I happen to know where he went."

"YOU know?" Ham was astounded at how the girl knew so much about the bronze man's movements.

"Yes," admitted Annabelle Nickerson. "You see, I talked to Doc Savage before he left. He told me he didn't want to leave too much information in that note. He was afraid it might not reach you. So I was to give you the rest of his message."

Ham caught the glance that Renny gave him. At least, the Doc Savage aids knew, the girl was telling the truth in a part of her statement—the part about the note left by Doc Savage. Otherwise, how could she have known about the message left with the garage owner?

Ham asked, "Then where is Doc?"

"He's headed for the arctic!" the girl said, and it gave them all a start. "He has a lead to the whereabouts of that one named Monk."

The three aids thought that over. It was mystifying, to say the least.

Annabelle Nickerson's frank brown eyes looked abruptly worried.

"And my brother, Charlie," she raced on, "is in trouble, too. I'll go with you. I saw your plane back there at the field. I can fly, and I've knocked all around the northern parts of Canada. I even went on a prospecting trip with Charlie once. I know the country."

Ham smiled wryly, spread his hands in a hopeless gesture. He liked this girl. He thought she was telling the truth. And she was game enough to go with them!

He said, "It looks like we're not going any place. They're holding us here because they think we're crooks, too!"

Annabelle gave Ham Brooks a brief, warm smile. She murmured, "Wait a minute. I spoke to the lieutenant on the way in. I happen to know about your friend's claim to Mayfair Estate. I explained to the lieutenant how you all have been duped."

She moved off toward a doorway that led to some sort of office.

Renny said in his crashing voice, "Holy cow! If she can really get us out of this jug!"

Skinny Long Tom snorted in disgust. "Ham always falls for a pretty dame!" he said. "I'd like to know just what she's up to."

Ham said quietly, "I believe that girl was telling the truth."

When Annabelle Nickerson returned with the guard, they all had to admit one thing. At least she had influence with the officials here.

Because the cell door was unlocked, swung open, and the guard said, "You guys are sure getting a break."

Chapter X. DEATH ISLAND

APPROXIMATELY six hours later, the plane carrying the girl—Annabelle Nickerson—and Ham, Renny and Long Tom, was hundreds of miles north of Monk's Quebec estate. The coast of Labrador lay behind them now. They had barely touched the most eastward end of Hudson Strait. The plane was flying at ten thousand feet over Lower Davis Strait, nearing the Arctic Circle, and it was doing well over two hundred miles an hour.

Renny, at the moment, was at the controls. The girl was seated beside him. She had taken turns relieving him at the controls. Even the big two-fisted engineer of Doc Savage's organization had been favorably impressed by the girl's knowledge of isolated northern Canada.

She reminded him, in a way, of the bronze man's own cousin—Pat Savage. The courage of the two girls was similar.

But back in the cabin of the amphibian, Long Tom was still arguing with the dapper lawyer, Ham. Long Tom was complaining, "I still don't trust her. You've just fallen for her good looks. You and Monk! Dames are always taking you over!"

Ham frowned.

"This one is different," he insisted. "She got us out of jail, didn't she? She's trying to help us."

"She's probably got a good motive!" Long Tom snapped. He stabbed a finger at the cabin windows. Below them, as far as they could see to right and left, was endless water.

Somewhere, approximately two hundred miles to the east, lay the southern part of Greenland; an almost equal distance to the right, Baffin Island.

"What would Doc be doing up here?" the unhealthy-looking electrical expert demanded.

"That's what we plan to find out!" Ham snapped.

"Yeah." Long Tom looked disgusted. "But why haven't we heard from Doc? He said in that note that he would keep in touch with us by radio."

At the remark, Ham looked worried. It was the one thing that puzzled him—this lack of word from the bronze man.

For two hours past now, they had been calling Doc Savage at regular intervals on the plane's short-wave transmitter.

But as yet there had been no reply.

Ham said, "But I still say the girl is honest. Take that notation which she gave us after we got started—the directions from Doc. It gave the exact longitude and latitude of that island near the Arctic Circle—the one we're to look for."

"It could be a fake," Long Tom said.

"But it was in Doc's handwriting," Ham countered. "That proves he met the girl." He sighed wearily. "You're about the toughest guy to convince I ever saw."

Long Tom shrugged. "Well, I still don't like it," he finished.

Ham didn't admit it, but he, too, was worried somewhat about the directions supposedly given to Annabelle Nickerson by Doc Savage.

In the first place, Ham wondered, how had Doc learned about the desolate inland somewhere in Davis Strait, miles off the coast of Greenland? And why was he going there?

Furthermore, why hadn't Doc tried to contact them?

It was all quite a mystery.

But a part of that mystery might have been explained to the lawyer if he had known about the passenger that Doc Savage carried in his own plane.

THE passenger was a captive. He sat in a cockpit seat beside the bronze man, his hands and ankles

handcuffed. He was tied into the seat. The two pets, Habeas and Chemistry, were in the cockpit also. Behind them, the cabin of the plane showed where there had been a fight. Equipment cases and piles of luggage had been scattered about. And for good reason.

The man seated beside Doc Savage was well over six feet tall. He had a mean jaw and a long, ridged scar on one cheek which showed that at some time in the past he had been slashed by a knife. Doc Savage had found the man hiding in the plane at the field near Monk's estate. There had been a terrific fight. With the fellow finally subdued, Doc had used his peculiar truth serum on the man. The truth serum was a product of the bronze man's chemical genius. It had the magical effect of removing the conversational brakes from the consciousness of the person to whom it was administered. It numbed the patient's ability to consciously resist.

The captive—who appeared to have the name of Waldo—had unwillingly told about the isolated island location in Davis Strait, somewhere off the coast of Greenland.

The man had tried desperately to withhold the information. He had been strong-willed enough to reveal nothing further—at the time Doc Savage had found him in the plane and given him the truth serum.

But along with mention of the strange island, Waldo had let something slip about Monk. Not much. But enough to let Doc Savage know that Monk must be a captive on the island well over a thousand miles northward.

Doc had used more of the serum—and the captive had lost consciousness. It was shortly after this that the bronze man had met Annabelle Nickerson before he himself set out to fly to the island near the Arctic Circle.

For hours now, Doc Savage had been at the controls. It had been just a few moments ago that Waldo, the captive, had regained consciousness.

From the vacant stare in his lidded eyes, it was evident that he was still partially under the effects of the serum.

Doc said, "You were telling about the island in Davis Strait. Why was Monk taken there?"

For a moment the captive was astounded to find himself tied in the cockpit seat. His worried gaze went to the window, and he stared.

"Where are we?" he demanded. His grating, harsh voice was not pleasant.

Doc consulted his wrist watch. "In a few moments," he pointed out, "we should be over Death Island. That happens to be the place you mentioned when you were under the effects of the drug."

"Drug?"

Doc Savage told about the truth serum. "You did a little talking," he explained.

Waldo, for all his size and belligerent appearance—looked scared.

"What did I tell you?" he asked, suspicious.

"That one of my assistants named Monk is being held a captive at Death Island," Doc said quietly. There was an effort on the part of Waldo to hold his tongue still, but the effects of the serum were still upon him.

He blurted, "Well, he is!"

"Why was he taken there?" Doc prodded again.

"They're gonna make him help—" Waldo caught himself, tried to cover up. It was plain that he was fighting the last effects of the drug. Perspiration was on his brow.

"I won't talk!" he snapped finally.

No further amount of questioning would make the man reveal what it was he had been going to say about the hairy chemist.

Darkness—it was close to ten in the evening—was half an hour away when Doc Savage picked out the island separated by hundreds of miles of water from the mainland.

DEATH ISLAND was a good name for the spot below. Even from the height at which the bronze man was flying, he could see that the island was composed mainly of a tremendous ice sheet. The size of the island was astounding.

Doc Savage estimated that it must be close to a hundred miles long and half as wide. The ice sheet, in the form of mountainous ridges, extended from the center of the island outward.

Doc lost altitude, dropped toward one shore line of the island. The coastal area itself—it was at much lower altitude than the interior—showed stretches of green. Not trees, but scrubby stuff that grew like brush along the ground.

The air was not cold.

This island, Doc had estimated, would be somewhat similar to Greenland, lying a couple of hundred miles eastward. In the summer months—it was August now—the climate here was fairly mild. Even in Greenland they raised things like lettuce and turnips during midsummer.

There was only one difference here below. There seemed to be no sign of habitation.

Doc dropped the plane lower and flew southward along the western shore line. He noted fjords that started as mere crevices at the sea, then extended inland until they became towering walls of ice-coated rock. The ice was everywhere a few miles inland.

Doc looked at his captive.

"Monk is being held a prisoner down there?"

Waldo nodded. "There's only a couple of guys on the place," he admitted reluctantly. "And there's

some Eskimos."

"What part of the island?" Doc wanted to know.

"You keep heading south and we'll pick it up in a moment."

It was fast growing dusk. There was little time left if they were going to find the place Waldo was talking about.

But shortly the captive leaned closer to the window and said, "There it is! That little inlet just ahead."

Doc looked.

The place would have been easy to pass up. But flying low now, he saw the thatch-roofed huts, the kayak boats drawn up on a stretch of beach. Figures were soon visible below—men.

Waldo said: "That's just them dumb Eskimos. They don't know that aid of yours is a captive up here. They don't know what it's all about."

The bronze man made no comment. Under the effect of the truth serum, the man naturally had given away some details. But how much had he held back?

What lay ahead was a question.

Doc flew over the desolate-looking spot twice, then came down until he barely cleared the water offshore. Dozens of kayaks were in the water now, pushing out to investigate the mystery of the great flying bird. Dark-skinned Eskimos were in the boats.

Eskimos were a harmless people. Perhaps Doc could enlist them in the search for Monk. There were at least twenty-five men in the boats. They appeared anxious to see whoever was in the plane.

Doc brought the plane down on the water, taxied toward the approaching kayaks, then cut his motors. Dropping an anchor, he stepped out onto the wing. They had arrived just in time, for it was almost dark.

The Eskimos were drawing close in the small boats.

Doc returned to the cockpit and released the captive. He said, "It would be better not to try to escape."

Waldo stared at the giant bronze man, nodded. The expression on his scarred features said that he understood the capabilities of Doc Savage. They returned to the wing.

Doc called a greeting in the Eskimo language.

There was an answering reply.

It was in English, and the speaker rapped: "Hold still right where you are, Savage, or we'll blast you right off that plane!"

IMMEDIATELY, other voices added to a regular bedlam of sound. There were wild shouts of excitement.

Someone yelled, "Doc Savage walked right into the trap!"

The kayaks were close now. What the bronze man had thought were dark-skinned Eskimos were hard-looking thugs with features that had been stained a dark-brown. Guns appeared.

Doc whirled to the big fellow who had been his captive. Something about the bronze man's tense, giant figure gave the fellow warning.

He screamed in fear, "Watch him! Watch Doc Savage!"

A gun roared. The slug tore close over the bronze man's head. Someone ordered, "No tricks, Savage!"

But Doc Savage went off the wing of the plane in a fast, smooth dive and cut through the surface of the water with scarcely a ripple. He went down—down—

The water was cold, ice-cold, but the condition of the bronze giant's scientifically trained body made him able to withstand the cold.

He had taken a deep breath as he dived from the plane. He was capable of holding his breath for several moments.

With powerful, swift strokes, Doc Savage swam beneath the surface. The distance he could cover underwater would be deceptive to those watching from the boats above.

Finally he came up—fifty yards away. He broke the surface without a sound, took one brief look, went under again.

The men in the boats had been yelling wildly. On shore, more men were lined up, watching, and torches were being lighted.

Doc took a course parallel to the rocky shore. He came up twice more. Because it was now dark, this probably accounted for his life being saved. The men could not see him.

But they realized one thing. Sooner or later the bronze man had to touch shore. The third time Doc came to the surface he saw the men with flares spreading out, covering the cove.

It was only a matter of moments until they would be at the spot that lay directly ahead of Doc Savage.

He made one more last dive, swam furiously until his feet touched bottom. Then, silently, he pushed out of the water and gained the rocky shore. The men were drawing close.

But Doc Savage, with uncanny speed, climbed up over the rocks. His figure blended with the darkness of the night. He made a hasty retreat away from the shore line.

Behind him, men were shouting wildly. More flares were being lighted. The search was on.

The question was: Could he find a place to hide, even to survive in this barren land?

Chapter XI. THE SEARCH

AT midnight, the bronze man was still being sought on Death Island. There was no moon, and the night was now black. The searchers used improvised flares that cast long, weird shadows over the rocky terrain.

At first the chase after Doc Savage had been a wild, disorganized sort of thing. But now the searchers were using a system.

Working from a base near where Doc's plane had landed, the men had been divided into small groups. Each group was assigned a certain area to cover. They reported back every hour. There was also another reason for this.

The night was getting cold—intensely cold, as nights did up here. A huge fire had been built near the shore, and the various searching parties returned in order that the men could get warm.

The men had found Habeas and Chemistry hiding in the plane cabin. The two pets had been brought ashore. Big Waldo himself had explained about the pets, and everyone had thought it quite a joke when they were unloaded from a kayak.

But the joke was short lived. The instant the two pets were on shore they made a break for freedom.

Habeas nipped the man carrying him, was instantly dropped in fright, and the pig went streaking off into the darkness as he gave forth frightened squeals. He traveled with remarkable speed.

Chemistry did likewise—after almost twisting off his captor's ear.

Someone swiftly raised a gun and sent a stream of lead after the two pets. The slugs ricocheted off rocks some distance in from the shore.

But in the dark shadows that lay beyond the reach of the flares it was impossible to tell whether the bullets had taken effect or not.

Someone yelled an order.

"You better lay off the shooting," he called out. "The boss wants that bronze guy alive, you dopes!"

High on a rocky cliff a half mile back from shore, Doc Savage heard the command. His remarkable hearing caught every word.

Usually crooks and villains sought the death of the bronze giant. For he had too often thwarted their evil purposes. But these men wanted him alive. There must be some strange reason for this. The flares grew closer.

Doc Savage retreated farther into the barrens that formed the major part of Death Island.

Some time during the night the two pets found him.

HABEAS was breathing hoarsely. The pig was not built for climbing the steep, rocky embankments that rose sharply from the sea.

Chemistry had done better—though he was shivering with the chill of the night air.

Doc Savage removed his coat and wrapped it around the chimp. His own clothes were practically dry again, since he had been moving at remarkable speed, and the heat of his body had dried them.

There was so much scrubby stuff growing among the rocks that he could have built a fire. But this was too dangerous. With the two pets at his side, he kept working his way inland. He dared not even use a flashlight, and he had one in his clothing—one of the spring-generated type of his own devising.

The route that Doc Savage had chosen constantly grew steeper. He was continually moving into higher altitude. The scraggly stuff that passed for vegetation slowly thinned out, finally disappeared completely. The air was colder.

Doc Savage recalled the ice sheet he had observed from the plane—the great section of glacier that formed the major part of this barren land. He must be drawing closer to it at each moment.

But it was the only means he had of temporary safety. To return to the coast line would mean being found by the searching parties. Doc Savage was not ready for that—yet.

For he carried little means of self-defense. Departure from the plane had been too sudden for that—though he was still wearing his special-equipment vest, and in the many pockets of the vest were small gadgets that the bronze man used often.

But—would they be enough in this desolate land of ice and waste?

Also, the route was hazardous. The bronze man had to depend upon his remarkably trained senses to guide him. He had noted that the particular ridge he was climbing skirted the beginning of a fjord. The sheer rock walls of the fjord were constantly growing higher. Death lay below if Doc Savage took a wrong trail and plunged over the edge.

An hour after midnight the northern lights appeared and lighted the bronze man's way.

The northern lights—the aurora borealis—appeared as a brilliant tapestry of bright reds and greens and yellows in the northern heavens. Great rays and streamers of light shot intermittently into the sky. Doc Savage could find his way well now.

But always, behind him, the flares followed like faraway stars. Searchers were still on the bronze man's trail. Relentlessly the men followed.

Some time during the night Doc Savage heard the far-off, faint hum of a plane motor thousands of feet overhead. He immediately thought of Renny and the others.

A part of the small equipment that Doc carried in his vest was a midget-sized radio receiver. It

was small enough to fit in a vest pocket. Of special construction, however, it was strong enough to pick up short-wave broadcasts at considerable distances.

Doc used the receiver now, pressing it close against his sensitive ears. He listened sharply. If Renny and the others were in that moving plane, surely they would be sending out a call, trying to contact Doc Savage.

But only silence came from the tiny radio device. Silence, that is, except for a continual crackling that disrupted all chance of picking up any sort of clear reception.

It was odd. The device should have picked up something, if only faraway radio signals of ships far at sea. But instead, there was nothing.

The cold grew more intense.

SHORTLY after dawn, the second plane flew over Death Island.

Only this one was flying much lower than the one that had passed at a high altitude during the cold night. It barely skimmed the rocky ledges.

Doc Savage emerged from the cave that was in a rocky cliff high above sea level—a cave that was located very close to the ice sheet itself. His clothing blended with the drab rock on which he was standing. He stood motionless. He had ordered the two pets—Habeas and the chimp—back into the opening behind him.

He stood there watching the plane.

It passed, continued on a circular, searching course. Shortly another motor droned in the distance. Soon the second plane was passing not far off.

The bronze man's flake-gold eyes were sharp and intense. He stared upward.

It was his own amphibian.

Seeing the two planes, Doc Savage realized that crooks on Death Island must have a ship of their own. They were using both planes in the search for himself—a search, it appeared, that was going to continue night and day until the bronze giant had been found.

To venture forth in the daylight meant the almost certain possibility of being seen by the men in the planes.

Doc Savage, if necessary, could go for days without food. But already the two pets were getting restless. They had been rooting around inside the small hide-out, looking for something to eat. The search for something to eat would have to be made at night—and much nearer sea level. There some vegetation grew. It would mean going back toward those who sought Doc Savage.

The searchers must have realized this. They kept up the steady hunt with the planes throughout the day.

And that night, when the darkness came, they dropped flares!

Bright flares that burned brilliantly for at least an hour. When one started to dim, another was dropped. Great chunks of barren land were sharply illuminated.

The search continued all that night. And the following day. Three days passed.

On the morning of the fourth day, at the base from which the searching parties were operating, the bent, ageless-looking old Eskimo arrived.

On his broad, strong back was a pack of furs that he must have trapped somewhere on the island. Though in the daytime it was fairly warm, he wore a fur cap and old fur clothes that added to his size. For an elderly man, he looked rugged and capable. His brown-skinned features were lined with the effects of bright sunlight and time.

Speaking in Eskimo, he asked to confer with the leader of the men.

Few understood him. Those who did only knew a few of the Eskimo words. But one of their number was sent for.

Someone said, "Talk to him, Lou. You can speak his lingo."

Lou had picked up the language. He asked the old Eskimo what he wanted.

The old man said, "You are looking for someone?"

Lou's eyes narrowed. He was a little wiry man with sharp, suspicious eyes. He had the kind of face that wouldn't be pleasant to meet in dark alleyways.

In the old fellow's native tongue, Lou demanded, "What are you getting at, grandpop?"

The old man's eyes were wise. He nodded his head knowingly.

He said, "You are seeking the one with skin the color of the sun at dusk—the man who is very big. Is that not right?"

Lou gave a start. He turned to those with him, said excitedly, "I think this old coot has a line on Doc Savage."

"You know where that man is?" Lou demanded, speaking in Eskimo again.

The old fellow nodded.

"I know the trail," he said. "I can lead you there." His eyes looked hopeful. "Perhaps you will buy some of my furs?"

Lou laughed. He said, "We'll buy anything you got if you know where we can locate that bronze guy. Come on! You'd better talk to the boss himself!"

He led the way toward one of the crudely made thatch huts. They entered the structure.

And passed right on through it.

For at its rear, where it was built up against a steep embankment, the old Eskimo found himself

in the natural cavern that formed a huge, vaulted room within the earth.

Chapter XIII. CLUE TO DOC SAVAGE

INSIDE the cavern, hard-eyed little Lou turned to the aged Eskimo and asked, "And what do you think of this, grandpop?"

The old man stared.

Crooks grouped around him and grinned and shook their heads. One man voiced the opinion that was running through many minds.

"Too bad the old guy can't appreciate it, eh?" he said.

"It's sure got him bamboozled!" commented another.

The cavern was like something out of the imaginings of Jules Verne.

First, it appeared to be some sort of extensive laboratory. There were retorts and test tubes and chemical equipment everywhere. The whole place was electrically lighted, and somewhere in the depths of the huge cavern a turbine hummed with a steady, shrill whine. Apparently it was the source of power for the hidden laboratory.

All sorts of apparatus were stored on shelves along the high walls of the place. There were drums of chemicals, carboys of acids, electrical equipment that had not yet even been put in use.

But the most spectacular sight was the row of men in laboratory aprons who were working at the many tables. They did not have the kind of faces of those with the Eskimo trapper. They did not look like hired hoodlums at all.

Intelligence was stamped on the faces of all those who were working in various parts of the strange laboratory. Intelligence—and something else.

Despair!

The workmen's faces were strained and lined. Gaunt, it was easy to see why. They were captives here, being forced to work in the weird laboratory.

Because each man was chained, by one foot, to a heavy steel stake that was embedded in the floor!

Perhaps the old Eskimo understood a part of this. He stared, unspeaking, at the strange sight.

Hard-faced thugs with guns in holsters at their hips moved about the huge cavern room. From time to time a guard spoke to one of the workers, snarled something in a harsh voice.

A man passed through the room and stopped at various tables and workbenches, and here and there gathered up papers that looked like some sort of reports. Or perhaps they were new developments of formulas. There were assortments of queer-looking letters and figures on the papers that were picked up.

Lou was still grinning at sight of the old man's amazement. He urged the Eskimo on.

"This ain't nothin', grandpop!" Lou said in the old man's tongue. "Come along. We'll find Lucky Napoleon in one of the other shops."

They continued on through the cavern, came to another underground room. It was similar to the first strange laboratory. They passed on to still another.

The way it was arranged, the caverns were all a series of naturally formed rooms that followed a rocky cliff along the shore line of the mountainous island. At some distance from the point where they had entered by means of the innocent-looking thatch huts, an inlet cut in from the sea. The inlet was really the beginning of one of the many high-walled fjords that sliced the island at various points.

And in this one, where the sheer rock walls rose steeply skyward, an arched entranceway was formed that led to a sea-level cave. The opening to the natural underground waterway was tremendous in size.

There was a large cabin plane anchored just inside the domed entranceway!

A walk was built from one of the strange laboratories right down to the water's edge. There appeared to be quite a current, as though water coming through here originated in some subterranean river farther back in the series of underground caves. It was from farther back in this last cave that sound of the powerful turbine came.

A man came striding along a pathway that led from one of the cavern rooms.

Lou said quickly, "Well, here we are, grandpop. Here's the boss. Meet Lucky Napoleon!"

THERE was one thing about Lucky Napoleon that suited his name. He was a short, plump man with the stance of a cocky little army general. But that was about all.

On his hard features was stamped an expression that was sinisterly evil. His own henchmen did not meet his cold, unblinking eyes for more than a second or two at a time.

Lucky Napoleon wore the uniform of an army officer—but it was not the uniform of any particular country. Rather, it must have been something created at the man's own orders. It contained gold braid, fancy trimmings that would have been sufficient for a dozen ordinary uniforms. Lucky Napoleon appeared to be a man with a fixation that he was a great power.

In a way, he was.

Lucky Napoleon was about the worst rogue who had ever been run out of Europe. His schemes, from time to time, had involved millions. He was somewhat of a devil.

Lucky Napoleon looked at his men, at small, hard-looking Lou, and at the fur-clad Eskimo.

"Well?" the crime leader demanded.

There was something in the way he said the single word that brought every man alert. Each man was

expectant—and a little afraid.

Lou quickly explained about the arrival of the Eskimo, of the clue to Doc Savage's whereabouts.

"He knows where that bronze guy is!" Lou said excitedly.

"Then what you waiting for?" Lucky Napoleon snapped. "Get busy! Go with him and grab Doc Savage!"

"O. K., chief," said Lou quickly. "But we just wanted you to know—"

He broke off as the racket came from an opening at one end of the cavern room. Faces turned, and everyone listened. It sounded abruptly as though a bear had been turned loose.

"Dang blast your yellow hides!" came the roaring, excited voice. "I ain't a-gonna do it!"

It was the squalling voice of the chemist, Monk Mayfair!

Blows followed. And then, swiftly—silence.

An evil grin touched the harsh features of Lucky Napoleon. He looked at small, wiry Lou and commented, "Ten gets you five that he follows orders by tomorrow." And then, as an afterthought, he added: "See that he gets nothing to eat for another twenty-four hours. I'll cool that bozo off!"

Lou motioned to one of his assistants, and the man moved toward the adjoining cavern room from which the noise had come.

"All right," Lucky Napoleon rapped. "Get started with this old geezer!"

Lucky Napoleon had been idly flipping a coin in his hand as he gave brief orders. The coin had landed once again in his right fist, and now his fingers were closed over it. He held out his closed fist and looked at Lou.

It must have been a game they played often, for little Lou's brow furrowed and he looked thoughtful a moment.

Then he said hopefully, "Tails!"

Lucky Napoleon said confidently, "Fifty says its heads."

"O. K.," said Lou.

The crime leader opened his fist. The coin was "heads" up. Lucky Napoleon grinned briefly.

"That's two hundred and fifty you owe me," he said, and walked off.

"That guy!" complained Lou. "He always wins!"

The search for Doc Savage started within a half-hour.

THE small cave high up on the mountainous ledge showed signs of habitation. There were scraps of food. Fish that must have been caught, somehow, down at sea level. Remains of various types of wild berry bushes. There had also been a small fire.

But there was no one in the cave.

Lou—he was accompanied by a dozen of his hard-faced assistants—looked at the aged Eskimo.

"Well," he said, "you were right, grandpop. Doc Savage was here. But where is he now?"

The fur-clad, bent old man led the way outside the rocky hide-out. He carefully moved along a narrow ledge that bordered the cliff wall. He pointed ahead.

A section of the narrow ledge—it was barely a foot wide—had broken loose from the main rock wall and crumpled. A sheer drop of two thousand feet lay below the spot. At the base of the fjordlike precipice shimmered the smooth, deep water of the inlet from the sea.

Lou and the others stared. "You think," Lou started, "that the bronze guy fell when that ledge gave way?"

The Eskimo nodded. He pointed to a tiny outcropping of rock a dozen feet below where the narrow ledge had crumpled.

Red fluid was clear on the point below.

Lou suddenly understood. The men with him did also.

One exclaimed, "Wow! Doc Savage must have struck that point of rock as he fell!"

That appeared to be the general idea.

They spent some time searching for the two strange animals—the scrawny pig and the small ape. But they did not locate them. It was decided that the animals must have plunged two thousand feet to their death, also.

Later they returned and reported the news to Lucky Napoleon. In their estimation, the old Eskimo trapper was somewhat of a hero. If it hadn't been for him, they would not have known about Doc Savage.

Lucky Napoleon cursed wildly when he heard the report.

"Now were stuck!" he said grimly.

Lou pointed out, "But we still got the other one. And if we locate those guys in the plane—" Strangely, Lucky Napoleon's manner quickly changed. He looked sharply at Lou and some of the others.

"I've got a job for grandpop, here," he said. "We'll give him a job as a guard over these punks." He indicated the chained men—the prisoners who were busy with experiments in the weird laboratory.

Lou was given the task of explaining to the elderly Eskimo. The old trapper was assigned to guard duty.

Then Lucky Napoleon called his aids to one side. They disappeared toward an adjoining cavern room. The Eskimo was left with one or two of the other guards.

A door had been fashioned for the adjoining small room. The moment Lucky Napoleon was inside with

the others, he swung on them and said:

"Now get this, you chumps. We'll use the one who looks like that Monk for bait."

All eyes were questioning.

It was Lou who asked, puzzled, "I don't get it, chief."

"Fools!" Lucky Napoleon roared. "We've got to set a trap for that bronze guy!"

Everyone stared.

"What the hell!" Lou started. "Doc Savage is dead! We saw where--"

Lucky Napoleon's harsh features were twisted in fury.

"Dead, hell!" he snarled. "The Eskimo himself is Doc Savage!"

Chapter XIII. WITHOUT DIRECTION

THROUGHOUT the remainder of that day, Doc Savage, his eyes missing no single detail of the cavern layout, made mental notes of the strange experiments that were taking place on this unusual place that was Death Island.

For Doc Savage, as Lucky Napoleon had informed his henchmen, was the aged-appearing Eskimo.

The night before, Doc had come across the deserted trapper's hut far up the coast line of the island. He had located the old clothing that some past Eskimo had worn. He had thus quickly thought of the disguise that would enable him to learn more about the mystery of Death Island.

The pets he had left in a safe retreat, far from the base camp from which the searching parties worked. A special type of skin dye and the careful use of collodion had changed the bronzed man's features into that of a weathered-looking old Eskimo. The stoop of his shoulders and tiny glass eye caps had done the rest.

And now, unmolested, he moved about as a guard in the weird laboratories controlled by Lucky Napoleon. It did not take the bronze man long to realize that the captives held here were all chemists and scientists. The experiments upon which they were working revealed that.

And the captives were being forced to work. Once a day, he observed, they were fed. If the work they had done for that particular day was not satisfactory, they went hungry. It was a devilish scheme that was being used in order to force brilliant minds to perfect the formulas of a fiend! As he was shown about by another of the guards, Doc realized that a part of the experiments dealt with some new type of small airplane bomb. The names of the chemicals and the construction of the weapon itself told the bronze man this.

There were other things, and all of them, Doc saw, were the deadly devices of war.

Doc Savage had the feeling that he was under suspicion. There had been something about Lucky Napoleon's actions that had tipped him off. But as yet no move had been made to capture him. But that, in a way, could be explained.

Doc recalled the attempted kidnapping in New York City. These crooks did not want to harm him.

They needed him for something. Perhaps they were even scheming now on some method of capturing him, making him a prisoner without a fight or bloodshed.

But the question still remained: Where did they have Monk?

Doc Savage had not been shown into any workroom where the hairy chemist might be a captive. He recalled the struggle that had taken place earlier--when Monk had fought with someone--but even though on his rounds of the laboratories the bronze man had been taken through that adjoining room, the chemist had not been a captive therein.

There were huge underground storerooms containing hundreds of large drums of gasoline and oil.

The dynamo plant itself was a clever installation.

Located well up the underground seaway in which a plane was stored, water power from a subterranean river was utilized. The water power, passing through the large turbine, was used to generate electricity for lighting and machinery.

The place was a veritable devil's workshop!

Some time that same evening, the second plane returned to the cavern hangar. It was the bronze man's own!

Doc Savage had to use infinite care not to show that he had recognized his own amphibian. Posing as the Eskimo who only knew airplanes as some sort of strange flying birds, he acted scared and amazed as the second plane was floated into the large cave that led off the ocean inlet.

It was later that same night that Monk escaped.

DOC SAVAGE, along with two of the guards--the bronze man had a strong suspicion that they never left him alone because he was suspected--had gone out to the strip of narrow beach to help with some task.

It was while they were out there that the shout came from the first cavern that lay beyond the thatched hut. Almost immediately a short-legged, fast-moving figure shot out of the hut, whirled left and took out down the shore.

It was the powerful, apelike form of Monk Mayfair.

With a wild yell, Monk started going away from there as though thirteen devils were after him.

Men piled out of the hut behind him, exiting from the cavern laboratory that lay behind the concealing shack. They chased after the escaping chemist, yelling excited orders.

The two guards with Doc Savage tensed. One fellow grabbed the bronze man by the arm.

"Come on, grandpop!" he ordered. "We'll have to help."

In his pose as the stoop-shouldered, elderly Eskimo, Doc Savage did not give himself away as he ran down the shore. He could have easily outdistanced any of these thugs. But now he ran slowly, apparently wheezing with exertion.

He fell somewhat behind the running figures.

And the moment that they were well ahead of him, Doc Savage jerked to a halt, turned around and started back toward the old hut.

This time his powerful legs took him along with swift speed. For Doc had noted that all of the guards, including Lou and Lucky Napoleon, had joined the chase down the shore.

Doc whipped in through the hut, gained the main underground cavern, leaped toward a small opening off one side of the room. Beyond the opening lay a heavy steel door. It was locked.

Quickly, Doc Savage raised the latch—it could only be worked from one side—and moved inside the place. He had noted this one particular entranceway to the room several times during the day. It was the one place they had not shown him.

Monk Mayfair was chained to the floor of the room. A heavy padlock held fast a steel band that passed around the chemist's ankle.

DOC said, "Be ready to run. They'll be back any moment. The plane is located in a cave opening at the far end of the outer room."

Monk showed no astonishment at sight of the bronze man disguised as the old Eskimo.

He said quickly, "Doc, you didn't fool that Lucky Napoleon! I heard them talking about you. They were gonna let that guy who looks like me lead you to some place where they want to trap you. It was a trick!"

"I suspected something like that," Doc Savage murmured.

His fingers were working swiftly. Doc had a bunch of keys in his hand that he had removed from a hidden pocket of his special-equipment vest. He had already tried a dozen of the assorted types of keys.

And then, suddenly, one worked. The padlock opened and the ankle band dropped from Monk's hairy leg.

He was on his feet in a moment.

"Careful!" warned the bronze man.

He led the way through the short passage into the large cavern laboratory. Hard, narrow bunks lined one wall of the cavern. On these rested the captives who had worked during the day. One leg of each man was fastened to a short length of chain that was hooked to each bunk.

Eyes stared as Doc and Monk raced through the long room.

Doc and the chemist reached the passage that joined with the next cavern. They hurried through.

Momentarily, there was no one in the great cave that led out to the sea inlet. Doc's own plane still was berthed in the improvised hangar. It was drawn up close to the narrow pathway that led down to the water.

Monk leaped aboard, half tumbled into the cockpit and immediately started checking various gauges as the bronze man whipped inside behind him.

"She's all gassed up!" the chemist piped in his squeaky voice.

"Good," murmured Doc, quietly. For all the tenseness of the moment, the bronze man was perfectly calm. Each of his swift movements was certain, deliberate.

Automatic starters were quickly turning over the motors. They caught, sputtered a moment, then settled into a tremendous roar. The nose of the amphibian was already pointed toward the exit of the high-domed cave.

Doc opened the throttle and they taxied swiftly toward the opening.

And at the same time a gun blasted out behind them. Others added to the din as the roar reverberated through the cavern.

But the crooks were not shooting at Doc and his aid within the plane cockpit. They aimed at the plane motors and wings. They were trying to disable the ship so that it could not take off. However, the special alloy metal of which the wings were constructed withstood the barrage. Slugs ricocheted, went screaming off the rock walls of the big cave.

The plane shot out into the inlet. Doc pointed its nose seaward and opened the motors wide. Seconds later they were in the air.

The bronze man sent the plane in a steep climb. The stretch of dreary-looking coast line was quickly vague in the darkness. What a perfect hide-out that island was for a man like Lucky Napoleon; none would ever suspect that this barren-looking land contained such a fiendish laboratory of death.

Doc Savage, at the controls, said quietly, "We'll try to contact Renny and the others. They are probably still searching for us."

BUT trying to raise Renny, Ham and Long Tom on the short-wave transmitter was something else again. For half an hour, Doc Savage kept calling the other plane. Even if the ship was not in the air, there should have been some answering report.

For Renny and the others certainly would be trying to contact Doc Savage. They had been given orders to do so.

Doc finally said worriedly, "Something is wrong."

He explained briefly about the plane that had passed high over the island when he had taken refuge in the cave with the two pets.

"It must have been them," said Doc.

Monk agreed, after he had explained that the plane belonging to Lucky Napoleon had not been out of its cave hangar that night.

The bronze man's flake-gold eyes were thoughtful as he manipulated various dials of the radio. He had switched the set to the receiver now, and he was trying various wave bands.

"Funny," he mused.

"What's wrong, Doc?" Monk wanted to know.

"There's no reception at all," announced Doc Savage. "We should at least be able to pick up broadcasting stations back in Canada—Montreal or Toronto, for instance."

"An' you can't get them?" Monk asked.

Doc shook his head.

Finally he said, "Recently, between Europe and the United States, there have been sun spots that have been affecting radio transmission. Perhaps that explains it."

Monk had been watching the instrument panel. Abruptly he stiffened, let out an exclamation.

"Blazes!" he piped. "Lookit that, will ya!"

But the bronze man's gaze, shifting regularly to the plane compass as he held to a certain course, had already seen.

The compass was whirling around madly, spinning first one way, then another. It was completely useless!

Monk exclaimed, "Doc, there must be some sorta electrical disturbance. Golly! How're we gonna know where we're going?"

Doc kept watching the whirling compass, and finally he said grimly, "We aren't. We'll have to turn back."

Luckily, the island was still a small dot in the dark night. Doc swung the plane, set a course for the distant spot of land once again.

To do anything different would have been suicide. For only miles of water surrounded them, and without a compass they might have headed directly into the arctic without knowing it.

All sense of direction was lost.

Some time during the night they again landed close to the shore of Death Island.

Chapter XIV. DOC MAKES A PLANT

MONK'S first concern was for his pet, Habeas the pig.

But Doc Savage had been thinking of the two pets before he even set the plane down. Cutting the motors, he had glided down for a landing a number of miles from the headquarters of Lucky Napoleon. He had to take a chance and use the plane's landing lights, for Doc knew that there might be reefs close to the shore line.

But they landed safely. The lights were quickly switched off. Doc Savage led the trail inland to the rocky retreat where he had left Habeas and Chemistry.

He explained, "They should not be hungry." Doc told Monk how he had left the animals some dried fish, found in the deserted trapper's cabin. And there had been scraps of old furs, enough to keep the animals warm.

Not long before dawn they located the pets. They were huddled inside a small cave—scared, but safe!

Habeas leaped into the hairy chemist's arms gleefully. Doc Savage took charge of the chimp.

He said, "We haven't much time."

Monk looked at the bronze giant. Doc's metallic features were grim.

"You mean—we're gonna go back to that blasted laboratory?"

Doc nodded.

"There are too many things that still remain a mystery," he said as they hurried back toward the seacoast. "And then, there's the prisoners to be rescued."

Monk shook his head worriedly. "But, Doc," he protested, "we ain't got a chance. There's thirty—forty of them crooks working for that guy Lucky Napoleon!"

"But there is one man who might be able to help us," said Doc Savage.

"Don't get you—" Monk said.

"I was referring," continued the bronze giant, "to the one who looks like yourself."

The hairy chemist's fists knotted. He said sharply, "What I'm gonna do to that guy! He's posing as the Earl of Mayfair, Doc! What his connection is with Lucky Napoleon, I don't know, but just wait'll I get my hands on him and—"

Doc Savage put in quietly, "Has it occurred to you that the one who looks like yourself might not be working for Lucky Napoleon?"

Monk stared.

"What—" he started.

"It is possible," finished Doc, "that he is playing along with Lucky Napoleon for some certain purpose. What that purpose is, is not entirely clear."

Monk was puzzled by the bronze man's statement.

When they got back to the plane, Renny's booming voice was coming from the loud-speaker. DOC immediately hurried to grasp a microphone that was part of the short-wave equipment. "Renny?" he asked.

The two-fisted engineer's voice crashed through the plane.

"Holy cow, Doc!" Renny said excitedly. "We've been trying to get you for hours! We've been trying to find that damned island, but there must be something wrong with our longitudinal directions. We located one place several nights ago, but it was deserted. We—"

"What was the location?" Doc asked quickly.

Renny told him. It was the exact location of Death Island!

Doc checked with Renny about the figures that had been left for him, learned that they had made a mistake in figuring. Quickly he gave their location now.

The bronze man asked: "Ham and Long Tom are with you?"

Renny said they were, added: "And Annabelle Nickerson, that estate manager's sister."

Briefly, Doc started to tell about Lucky Napoleon. He explained, partially, the situation of the prisoners being held at Death island, then outlined sketchily a plan that he had in mind.

Again he had Renny repeat the exact location of the isolated island. Then Doc started to say,

"You will proceed directly to the location near the southern tip of Death Island. At a point about—"

Abruptly, Doc paused, said, "Hello? Hello, Renny?"

There was no reply from the loud-speaker.

Doc tried various dials and adjustments. He worked steadily for ten minutes. And he picked up absolutely nothing.

Monk commented, "Them blasted sun spots again. They're cutting out reception."

Doc Savage's eyes were thoughtful as he spoke. "I wonder if it is the sun spots," he remarked.

"Huh?" Monk exclaimed.

But the bronze man lapsed into silence. He made no further explanation of his comment.

Furthermore, there was a different sort of interference in the next moment. The cabin door slammed open behind them. While Monk and Doc Savage had been busy talking to Renny and Ham, men had silently boarded the plane.

They were the crooks who worked for Lucky Napoleon, and with them was the man who looked like the hairy chemist himself!

THE fight that followed was something to talk about.

Monk, with a howl, plunged into the close-packed wall of advancing thugs. In their midst was the apish-looking individual who looked like himself. He was even dressed the same as the chemist.

The chemist had heard of this person who had been seen at Mayfair Estate. Monk had ideas that the fellow was an impostor.

And so, squalling, he went after this one first.

Figures piled swiftly on the scrappy chemist's back. Monk threw them off like a duck shedding water. Fists cracked. Heads slapped against the metal cabin walls. There was assorted cursing and shouting and confusion.

The pets, terrified, took refuge back in the cockpit.

The bronze man was handling half a dozen assailants all at once. His hands, his remarkable body, moved with swift, flashing speed. He was everywhere at once.

Men went down and got up again and went down. But more arrived. They seemed to flow into the crowded plane like a veritable tidal wave.

It was only natural that the terrific battle would have to sooner or later spill outside, where there was more room. Men tumbled into the hip-deep water in which the plane was anchored. They spluttered and choked.

Monk, letting out satisfied yells, kept ducking heads and walloping faces as they popped up again. He was in rare form, for he hadn't had a good scrap in days.

In the darkness there was much confusion. Crooks grabbed their own partners by mistake.

Doc Savage grabbed hairy Monk. A peculiar thing followed.

It was as though the bronze man had made some unusual outcry. A jumbled mess of sound.

But Monk tensed.

For the bronze man was speaking in ancient Mayan, a dead language that Doc Savage and all his men used when they wished to speak to one another without being understood by others.

The assailants misunderstood the cry for some outburst that Doc Savage had made when slugged by one of the attackers. They did not know that a short, terse message had been conveyed to Monk.

THE fight continued, moving slowly toward the rocky shore. It spread to a strip of beach.

A torch suddenly sprang into life. Its weird red glare illuminated the mass of struggling figures. Someone let out a startled yell.

"Wait a minute!"

Men stared around.

Doc Savage and hairy Monk Mayfair had disappeared.

The one who looked like Monk exclaimed, "Those bloomin' blighters have escaped!"

Later—the length of beach had been carefully searched for a full hour—the attackers decided that Monk and Doc Savage must have faded into thin air. They returned to the headquarters of Lucky

Napoleon.

They reported the escape.

Strangely, evil-looking Lucky Napoleon did not seem greatly incensed at the news. He strutted up and down for a moment before his assistants. He looked well satisfied with himself. He was wearing a different uniform.

"We've got something that will bring them back," he announced finally.

Small, hard-looking Lou was one of those in the group.

"What do you mean, chief?" he demanded.

"The rest of the Doc Savage men—and the girl—have landed on Death Island," Lucky Napoleon announced. "Waldo arranged the trap. They have been captured!"

One person in the circle of listening men tensed. He had all he could do to control an outburst of rage.

It was the apelike-appearing fellow who looked like Monk himself. As a matter of fact, it was Monk!

Doc Savage had manipulated the substitution. Monk's double was the one who had "escaped" with the bronze giant.

Chapter XV. CAVERN PRISON

ONE main factor accounted for the capture of Renny, Long Tom, Ham and Annabelle Nickerson.

Renny had listened to Doc Savage describe a particular location on Death Island. The bronze man had started to instruct the two-fisted engineer to proceed to that point.

Then the radio reception had suffered some sort of interference.

Doc had not planned to have his aids land immediately. He had wanted to tell them of the trickery of Lucky Napoleon and his hired crooks. Doc had been planning a specific moment for those aboard the plane to land.

But with Doc's words strangely cut off the air, Renny had misunderstood.

Thus they had proceeded to the southern end of the island—and thus it was that they saw the man in the small boat offshore.

The fellow appeared to be in trouble. As Renny brought the plane down closer to the water it was skinny Long Tom who exclaimed, "That guy hasn't any oars. He's waving at us!"

The others watched.

Suddenly Annabelle Nickerson clutched the dapper lawyer's arm. Her great brown eyes were filled with horror.

"Look!" she cried. "It's . . . it's my brother! It's Charlie!"

Renny skimmed over the water. Everyone's gaze was fastened to the man in the small boat. And they saw that there was no doubt about the girl's frantic cry.

The man in the boat was Charlie Nickerson.

The Canadian was still waving at them frantically. Renny circled, came back, put the amphibian down on the "step" and finally idled the motors. The small boat containing Charlie Nickerson was some distance ahead of them.

Renny taxied slowly toward the wildly waving man.

They had to approach cautiously, because they were near shore and a slight miscalculation might pile them up on the rocks.

Ham was in the cabin with the girl and Long Tom. It was he who saw the small, fast kayaks putting out from shore. He squinted against the morning sunlight.

"Eskimos!" the lawyer exclaimed. "They're putting out to help your brother. He'll be all right now." He squeezed the girl's firm arm.

Annabelle Nickerson gave Ham a grateful smile. The lawyer had grown to know her well in the past few days. He admired her courage. She had probably had less sleep than any of them.

But yet she looked fresh and alive. She looked nice in the trim-fitting flying clothes that molded her small figure.

Long Tom said, "Doc didn't say anything about the Eskimos."

That was like the skinny electrical wizard, always seeing something wrong.

Ham said coolly, "Doc didn't have time to say much of anything before his radio went dead!"

"I still don't like it!" Long Tom insisted.

Renny had brought the plane about as close as he dared to the man in the boat now. He cut the engines, came into the cabin and said, "Come on."

He looked at the girl. "Your brother's sure kicking up a fuss," the rumbling-voiced engineer added. "We'd better get outside and help him."

All started climbing out on the metal wings of the plane.

Charlie Nickerson was close now; and so were the brown-skinned men in the small, fast kayaks.

They practically swarmed around Nickerson's craft. And around the plane also as, apparently curious, they came on to investigate.

Charlie Nickerson was yelling something at Renny and the others, but the excited racket the other arrivals were making drowned out his voice.

And then abruptly Ham and the others understood. The boats were close enough now that they could see the men's faces distinctly. They saw more than brown-skinned features. They saw that those

features had been disguised.

For the first time, all realized that Charlie Nickerson's wild arm waving had really been a warning. The Canadian had been trying to urge them to stay away!

His voice finally rose above the misleading din that the men in the kayaks were making in order to muffle his wild shouts.

"Look out!" Charlie Nickerson yelled. "It's a trap!"

But the warning came too late.

ASSAILANTS swarmed up over the metal wings of the plane. Three men crashed into big Renny. Others seized Long Tom, Ham and the girl.

Renny's pail-sized fists pumped destruction. He knocked one man clear, smashed him back into the water. The fellow's jaw must have been broken.

Renny's puritanical features were more gloomy than ever. He yanked a second thug off his back, hit him once, dropped him overboard as though he might have been a pesky fly.

But sheer numbers forced the big engineer to slowly retreat toward the plane cabin. One assailant slipped behind Renny, ducked into the cabin, appeared a moment later with a heavy wrench in his upraised hand. He swung before the giant engineer saw his movement.

The wrench connected with the back of Renny's skull. He collapsed.

Ham and Long Tom were madly clinging to the plane wing as they struggled to fight off a horde of attackers. The girl was behind them, stamping on crooks' fingers with her feet, or clutching at a head of hair with strong fingers and pulling an attacker loose from the Doc Savage aids.

But it was a hopeless defense. Force of numbers finally swamped Ham, Long Tom and the girl. Her brother, in the boat, had been seized also. It was clear now that he had been set adrift as a trick to lure on the Doc Savage plane.

And the assailants had more help coming out from shore. A motorboat was headed toward the plane. It carried another half a dozen men.

Fifteen minutes later the Doc Savage aids, the girl and Charlie Nickerson were dumped, helplessly tied hand and foot, into the small motorboat. The craft was run back to shore.

On the island, they were carried up the beach, into and through one of the innocent-looking shacks, several of which lined the shore.

Quickly, Charlie Nickerson said to the others, "Don't be appalled by anything you see."

He referred to the strange laboratories that lay beyond, through which they were carried. From one strange cavern room to the next, the captives were conveyed. Long Tom stared. He recognized apparatus that was familiar to him as an electrical expert second to none.

The entourage came to one end of a cavern room that was lined with work tables loaded with jars of chemicals, retorts and test tubes. Men with sunken eyes, with weariness written into their lined faces, worked at the various benches. Each man had a leg chained to a stake in the floor. They stared as the new captives were brought in.

The captors stopped before a heavy steel door built just beyond one experiment table. Some sort of signal was given as the leader of the captors knocked on the door.

The leader was a big fellow with an old razor scar that made a diagonal slash in one cheek. He was the man known as Waldo.

THE door swung open. More hard-looking individuals were inside. They gave satisfied, harsh smiles as the captives were brought into the room.

Two men were in that room, talking. One was Lucky Napoleon, the evil-faced leader of crime.

The short, powerfully built man with him had a face made to scare old ladies. He was utterly homely, and all visible parts of him were covered with bristly hair the color of rusted nails.

Ham stared, then yelled, "Monk!"

The homely looking fellow merely gave the lawyer a frigid regard. He said coolly, "Well, my gracious! Are these some more of those Doc Savage blighters?"

Ham almost choked. He had been placed on his feet, still hopelessly tied, and crooks held him erect.

The lawyer yelled, "What's the crazy idea, you hairy misfit? Since when have you been hobnobbing with crooks?"

The hairy fellow merely continued to stare harshly at Ham and the others. He turned to cold-eyed Lucky Napoleon, shrugged and commented, "Who is this obnoxious person, Lucky?"

Oddly, the uniformed leader of crime did not seem to hear the question.

He had stepped forward, his unblinking eyes on dapper Ham.

He ordered, "Untie him."

Ham was quickly set free. There were so many men surrounding him that an attempt at escape would have been suicidal.

Lucky Napoleon kept staring quietly at Ham and asked, "You seem to be pretty damn certain about this guy, don't you?"

Ham was mad enough now that he couldn't control himself. He snorted, "You're damned right! And I can prove it! There's an old bullet scar on his shoulder—"

Suddenly he stopped. He saw the expression that had come into Napoleon's cold eyes. A triumphant look, it was.

Lucky Napoleon motioned to several of his aids, ordered, "Check up on that!" Instantly hands seized the homely-looking fellow. His shirt was yanked down in one swift movement. The scar—it was big enough to be seen by all—was plain on his right shoulder. It was easy to see that it was an old bullet wound.

Lucky Napoleon's eyes were deadly now.

"So!" he snarled.

Monk let out a squall of rage as he glared at dapper Ham.

"You blasted chump!" he roared. "An' I had this guy completely fooled!"

Half a dozen thugs carried the hairy chemist to the floor in the moment he swung on them. He, too, was taken captive.

FOR moments a strained silence had hung over the underground room. Somewhere in the caverns there was a steady humming sound like the sound a great supply of electrical energy makes when unleashed. But it came from a point beyond this enclosed room. Shortly before, the heavy steel door had been closed and locked.

No one was in the room for the moment except the captives. They were lying on the floor tied hand and foot. Renny had not spoken; the others knew he had been knocked out.

Finally the big engineer stirred, groaned, then after a moment asked:

"Ham?"

"What?" Ham said.

"What happened to Long Tom?"

"They took him some place," explained the lawyer.

"Holy cow!" Renny boomed. "Why?"

"I don't know."

Charlie Nickerson, lying in another part of the darkened room, spoke up.

"I have an idea why," he offered.

"Charlie!" Annabelle Nickerson gasped. "Are you all right? You aren't hurt?"

Charlie Nickerson, the Canadian, gave a brief, tired sigh.

"No, not hurt," he said. "Banged up a little, is all."

"Tell us—" the girl started. "What happened, Charlie?"

"You remember I had that lead to Monk?" Charlie Nickerson said.

Ham said, "At first I thought you were working with those devils."

Nickerson grunted.

"I don't wonder," he said. "But when they tricked you and Long Tom there at that old fish factory, they captured me. They brought me here along with Monk. But they've been keeping me a prisoner in a separate place. For the time being, apparently, it wasn't me they needed. They wanted you Doc Savage men."

"Why?" the lawyer prompted.

"I don't know. It's something big. They've already got prisoners here whom they are forcing to work. They starve them until they have to work—or die! But this Lucky Napoleon is stumped by something. He thought Monk could help him. Either that, or they used Monk in order to lure Doc Savage himself here. That might be it."

There was groaning somewhere in the dark room. A figure stirred.

Then there was assorted cursing and abruptly the scrappy chemist piped shrilly:

"Where are they? Where's them doggone tramps? I'm gonna bust a few skulls!"

Ham said, "Relax, Galento. Your fighting days are all over for a while."

Monk, in that moment, must have discovered that he was helpless, as were the others. He swore some more, until Ham said sharply, "There's a lady present, you dope. Shut up!"

THEY all heard Monk's intake of breath. Then, surprisingly, his words came in a subdued, almost cultured voice.

"I beg your pardon, Annabelle," Monk murmured contritely. "I didn't know you were here. I've heard what a charming person you are. May I present myself—the Earl of Mayfair and—"

Ham interjected, "Listen to that hairy misfit! Don't listen to him, Annabelle! He doesn't even know you. Besides, he's the shiftless father of thirteen half-witted children."

Monk let out a howl. The remark—it was erroneous, of course—was one that Monk usually applied to the lawyer himself when he wanted to belittle his partner in the presence of an attractive girl. But for all their predicament, Annabelle Nickerson gave a soft laugh.

"I think Monk is charming," she said, and Ham groaned.

Oddly, for all his homely, belligerent appearance, Monk Mayfair had some down-to-earth quality about him that always made old ladies and pretty young girls attracted to him. Much to dapper Ham's disgust. He could never quite understand his hairy partner's appeal for the ladies.

Monk, suddenly remembering how his partner had unwittingly exposed him to Lucky Napoleon, let out a roar.

"Listen, shyster!" he exploded. "What was the bright idea of letting Napoleon know I wasn't that homely goofus he thought I was?"

"Well," Ham said menacingly, "at least you admit you're a—"

Renny's thunderous voice put a temporary stop to the argument.

The engineer demanded, "What's that other guy doing with Doc? Where are they?"

Monk temporarily forgot about Ham. He explained about the fight some distance up the island.

"Doc worked a fast one," the chemist said. "He switched the guy they thought was me. That gave me a chance to get here with Lucky Napoleon and try to arrange a trap so that Doc could take over this place."

Monk suddenly swore, added: "But now that blasted Ham has jimmied the works!"

Renny was still worried.

"But that fellow with Doc is one of Lucky Napoleon's men, apparently!" the engineer exclaimed.

"How's that going to help Doc crash this place?"

No one seemed to have an answer for that.

Chapter XVI. HOPELESS VIGIL

DOC SAVAGE was saying, "And so that is why you strung along with Lucky Napoleon, to try and learn just what he was up to?"

The man with him nodded.

It was the homely-looking man who looked like Monk Mayfair, the double who had been switched for Monk when the bronze giant had escaped from the plane fight.

Doc and the man were concealed not far from shore, at a point where they could watch the bronze man's plane. Most of Lucky Napoleon's men had departed, obviously going back to headquarters, but three men had been left to guard the plane.

"You see," the bronze man's companion continued, "I met Lucky Napoleon once in Europe. I myself have knocked around just about every part of the globe. I like excitement. I like to be doing things. I was all ready, once, to join Lucky Napoleon on some deal—when I learned he was a crook. I managed to get out of the mess."

"And you really are the Earl of Chester?" Doc said.

Doc's companion nodded.

"I have already given you some of the facts," he said. "Naturally, I can't prove the rest until we get back to Canada. But by checking with the London and Montreal offices of my attorneys, you can find out for yourself. The way I figure it, this is what happened:

"Lucky Napoleon knew I was returning from South America to take over Mayfair Estate. I had met him not long ago down there in Brazil. At the same time, he must have been planning this other thing—this mysterious thing that he is experimenting with here at Death Island. But he was stumped. He needed the sort of aid that wasn't to be found in the underworld."

"You refer to the prisoners he has there at the laboratories," Doc stated.

"Exactly. Every prisoner is a scientist, chemist, or engineer of some sort. They were kidnapped and brought here recently. But still, Lucky Napoleon did not have the sort of brains he sought. He's been carrying on some gigantic experiment, and he needed experts in their fields in order to get the thing perfected."

"That," put in Doc Savage, "explains the kidnapping of Monk."

"In a way, it does," admitted the earl. "Lucky thought Monk was an electrical genius instead of a chemist. He made that one error. But that was only secondary. His real reason for kidnapping Monk was to lure on the rest of your organization—to get you here, too."

Doc's eyes were thoughtful. From time to time his gaze had moved to the plane, which he could see from their hiding place, and he watched for any unusual activity that might be taking place there. The bronze man said, "The scheme for getting Monk up into a wilderness part of Canada was clever. After the kidnap attempt on myself failed, they figured it would be better to get Monk—and thus draw in the remainder of our organization."

"Exactly."

The earl's homely features were grim as he continued, "Lucky Napoleon had heard about you fellows. He must have discovered that Monk was a double for myself. The inheritance scheme followed. Naturally, it cost them a bit of money to put it over—but several thousand is nothing to Lucky Napoleon when he has millions at stake."

"You mean," Doc prompted, "certain people were bribed?"

The earl nodded.

"A law firm in England, for instance. They forwarded all faked papers and cash to a reputable firm in New York. Naturally, your New York company suspected nothing wrong. They merely acted as agents for the other organization."

ONE question remained in the bronze man's mind.

He asked: "How was it that you yourself were fooled by Lucky Napoleon?"

The earl smiled briefly.

"At first," he admitted, "I wasn't. But I'd heard about an imposter coming to Mayfair Estate. Naturally, I was furious. I'm really a Canadian, you know, and none of us Canadians like crooks!"

"I've seen examples of that," Doc said, smiling.

"Well," the earl continued, "I hired some men and decided to run out this impostor myself. It was then that I met up with Lucky Napoleon's men and discovered that he was after the same fellow—Monk. He pretended he was trying to help me; imagine!"

"The man is exceedingly shrewd," Doc Savage admitted.

"Quite. But when that old caretaker, Sandy, was murdered, I decided to see this thing through. It was mysterious enough to intrigue me. You see, Sandy knew me. I had met him once on a trip home. That was before Mayfair was bequeathed to me. And Charlie Nickerson knew something about that visit. Charlie suspected something when Monk showed up there with papers stating he was the owner of Mayfair, also. But Charlie was shrewd enough to string along, as I did, to try and learn what it was all about."

Doc kept watching his plane as he listened to his companion's story. He made a brief comment from time to time.

"That murder at the estate," put in Doc, "and those warning notes were merely a plant. It would make Monk's disappearance appear fantastic. It would tend to confuse everyone as to why he had disappeared."

The earl nodded. "It was a devilish scheme, and all planned by Lucky Napoleon's warped brain." Suddenly, from aboard the plane, came a chattering, wild racket.

The bronze man tensed. He raised up slightly higher from their concealing place and got a better view of beach and water that lay just below them. The plane touched the shore now, drawn up to a safe point.

The racket continued, and added to it was the shrill squealing of Habeas, the pig, also aboard the plane.

As Doc and his companion watched they saw three men swing out of the plane cabin. Apparently they had given up the vigil of waiting for Doc Savage's return and were now going back to report to Lucky Napoleon. The men were dragging the two frightened pets along with them.

Habeas, however, had different ideas.

Abruptly one of his captors leaped back as he gave a yelp of pain. The pig dropped from his clutch, scrambled across the plane wing, jumped to the shore. It started along the beach.

Habeas had only gone a dozen yards when he swerved abruptly, his long snout close to the ground as though he were seeking gopher holes.

His scrawny legs increased their speed. He headed directly toward the hiding place where Doc Savage and the other man were concealed!

DOC SAVAGE said swiftly, "Habeas has discovered our scent. There is going to be a little trouble."

The trouble appeared in the form of three husky, grim faced guards who were chasing the pig. They were headed straight for the spot where the two men were hidden.

But, strangely, the earl looked delighted with the thought. His homely features spread in a grin. He said briefly: "This is the sort of thing I like. I've been waiting to clean up on a few of these blighters!"

He and Doc Savage dived from behind the hiding spot.

The three men chasing after the pig tried to skid to a fast halt. They clawed for guns. But they were seconds too late.

Doc Savage hit the first one, and the man kept on traveling another dozen feet—on his face. Doc grabbed another man.

The earl himself was no slouch. He slammed into the third powerful guard, threw him neatly to the ground, dragged him to his feet again and went to work on the man's features with his fast-moving fists.

Several moments later, Doc and his friend had all three men stretched out on the ground, unconscious.

"Wish there were some more!" exclaimed the earl.

"This thing has just started now," advised Doc. "We've got to rescue the others."

They were dragging the captives back toward the plane.

"You figure the rest of your men have been captured?" asked the earl.

"No doubt of it," said Doc Savage.

He explained about talking to Renny over the short-wave radio; of how the conversation had been ended abruptly by some sort of interference.

"Renny had just been given directions to land at a point near Lucky Napoleon's headquarters," Doc said. "But he was cut off before he could be informed of the exact moment he was to land. I also have an idea that Lucky Napoleon knows all about that conversation Renny and myself had."

They piled the captives aboard the plane, tied them up firmly.

Habeas, jubilant, had scrambled along behind the bronze man. The chimp, Chemistry, was already aboard. He was excited, also.

"But just to check up," Doc finished, "we will try once more to contact Renny's plane."

They moved forward into the plane cockpit. Doc Savage reached for dials that controlled the short-wave receiver. He turned a knob.

There was a slight popping sound. Vaporish, gray gas spouted from an aperture in the control panel.

Doc cried warningly, "Look out. They've set a trap with one of our own anesthetic gas grenades!"

But the warning came too late. If Doc had been able to hold his breath in that first moment, he might have escaped breathing the gas. But he had only the thought for his friend; and now, too late,

they both had received whiffs of the stuff.

Both slumped forward in the seats in which they'd been seated.

Chapter XVII. THE DEVIL'S DEVICE

IN the darkness of the cavern room, Monk said, "Hey, shyster!"

Though Ham hated to answer to the term, he asked, "Now what do you want?"

The two aids, along with the girl and her brother, Charlie Nickerson, and Renny, were stiff captives in the stone-walled room. None of the captors had returned with skinny Long Tom. What they were doing with the electrical wizard was a question.

For hours, it seemed, they had been here in the darkness. Everyone, possibly thinking of the fate that was in store for him, had lapsed into silence.

"I've got my hands loose," Monk announced.

Immediately Ham and the others gave exclamations.

Annabelle Nickerson cried excitedly, "Monk! You darling!"

That made the hairy chemist almost tear his nails off getting the knotted ropes from his legs and ankles.

Finally he was on his feet, groping around the room in a search for the others.

He fell over someone. Ham grumbled an oath.

"You clumsy oaf!" he snapped. "Hurry up and get me untied!"

Monk piped in his squeaky voice, which he was keeping as subdued as possible, "Blazes with you, shyster. You can wait!"

He located the others—the girl first and released them.

Big Renny had one of the spring-generated flashlights in his clothing. In a moment he had light, and they were able to see.

Monk stared at the girl. His homely features, though showing the strain of the ordeal he must have been through as a prisoner here at the island, spread in a grin that threatened to join his ears.

"Boy, howdy!" the chemist said. "Ain't you a vision, though!"

Ham commented acidly, "That's the Earl of Mayfair talking. He sounds like Third Avenue! Come on, dunce, get me untied!"

Monk must have suddenly remembered that he was an earl—or so he still thought. His face reddened at sight of his tattered plus fours that still dragged down around his hairy, knotty-looking legs. His former chocolate-colored sports coat looked like something used for storing old rags.

Monk made a careless gesture toward his clothes, grinned at Annabelle Nickerson and said, "My gracious lady, you see a prince in pauper's clothes. But when we return to Mayfair Estate you shall see me as a knightly gentleman."

Ham groaned, "Listen to him! He sounds like that book! I'll never buy him anything to read again in my life!"

Renny had been helping the girl's brother, Charlie Nickerson. The square-jawed Canadian hurried over to put arms around his attractive sister's shoulders.

"Honey, you're sure that you are all right?"

She squeezed his arm. "Don't worry about me," she smiled. Her eyes looked tired now. There was a little touch of hopelessness in their deep-brown depths.

Monk said, "Don't you worry, Annabelle. We'll get you out of here. And wait'll you see me again when I'm all dolled up. Bet that'll make you happy."

Ham put in sourly, "Well, she'll always have something to laugh at!"

Monk, glaring, swung on his dapper partner. But Renny put a stop to the impending argument.

"Will you two half-wits shut up!" he said in a whisper that was terribly loud in the room. "I think I hear someone coming."

THAT silenced everyone. They stood very still as big Renny whipped to a position near the single steel door of the room. The door was bolted from the outside, and thus there had been no chance to get out of their prison.

But now all heard the sounds of footsteps. Apparently guards were returning to enter the room.

Monk was swiftly beside Renny. He made motions with his powerful hands. The signs said that they would leap the guards the moment the door was opened.

They did, with assorted yells, and a tangled, struggling mass of humanity swayed in the doorway for taut moments, then spilled into the larger cavern space that was beyond this room.

Monk bawled out, "Hurry! We can make a break for it!"

The larger room into which everyone escaped was one of the well-equipped, underground laboratories.

Ham, Charlie Nickerson and the girl piled out behind Monk and Renny. Two guards lay unconscious just outside the steel doorway. Another man was leaping toward them.

Monk's fist cracked the fellow's jaw and he went down in a tangled heap. Another guard came racing up.

Renny took the big fellow off his feet with an easy blow. Monk caught him again as he swayed past the giant engineer. Monk was not quite so gentle.

His smashing drive to the man's jaw echoed up and down the rock walls of the room. The man

collapsed with a groan.

More guards appeared up the long length of the room. Monk let out a shout.

"Grab 'em!" he squalled.

Monk, Renny, Ham and Charlie Nickerson started a wedge-formed drive down the laboratory room.

From the far end of the room came a shout.

"Wait! Stop right there—or Doc Savage dies!"

The Doc Savage aids stared as they drew up sharply. At first glance they had not noted others who had followed into the cavern room behind the first advance of Lucky Napoleon's men.

It was those who were carrying the giant bronze figure and the homely fellow who was a double for the hairy chemist. Both captives were unconscious.

Evil-faced Lucky Napoleon himself was walking at the head of the bronze man's limply carried form. It was he who called out the order.

"You will all return to the room behind you!"

Monk and the others stared, spellbound. They started backing slowly toward the prison from which they'd just escaped. They watched Lucky Napoleon closely.

Lucky Napoleon said, "I don't think there will be any trouble with these punks now!"

He was holding a gun against the temple of Doc Savage!

THE room was a unit that had been built within the series of caverns. Some type of special insulation covered the walls. The flooring was of a rubber composition.

The remainder of the room was practically filled with apparatus that might be found in a radio broadcasting station. There were transmitters, coils, control panels that stood higher than a tall man's hands could reach upward.

Surrounded by a selected half a dozen of Lucky Napoleon's hardest thugs, Doc Savage and skinny Long Tom Roberts studied the wiring, the construction of the complicated units of the radio system.

No words had been spoken by any of the heavily armed gunmen who closely watched the bronze giant and his unhealthy-looking aid.

Even Lucky Napoleon was silent, but his deadly eyes watched every slightest movement of the two captives.

Explanations had been made to the bronze man. He was informed that his own aid, Long Tom, had practically perfected the special transmitter which, it appeared, was the one thing that the crime leader was trying to perfect.

Doc Savage's remarkable, corded fingers worked swiftly. It was hard to follow their almost magical movements as he checked over a maze of wiring on one of the control panels.

The armed observers thought they observed every single motion of the bronze man's metallic hands. But in that they were mistaken.

None saw the one lightning-quick movement that Doc Savage made toward his clothing. Something flipped into his palm. The object, no larger than a small marble, was seen by no one. The bronze man might have been a trained magician, so agile were his fingers.

The tiny marble of a thing disappeared somewhere in the intricate workings of the radio apparatus.

Finally Doc turned, said, "It is understandable now why any attempt at radio communication was disrupted while we were in the plane."

Lucky Napoleon smiled grimly.

"So you've figured that out, too?" he demanded.

Doc nodded.

"YOU have here," he said, indicating the room, all the complicated devices, "a clever set-up that permits you to broadcast—and receive—on a short wave that is different than any known, radio communications that are clear of interference."

Lucky Napoleon said, "Right. And I suppose you've figured out the rest?"

Doc nodded again. "Let's call the device a scrambler," he said. "It causes static that kills every other radio wave on the air. It completely disrupts all other forms of radio communication. In a way, it has the same effects as the sun spots that recently caused trouble with all major broadcasting stations both in the United States and abroad."

Lucky Napoleon rubbed his hands with satisfaction.

"I've got to hand it to you, Savage," he admitted. "I figured it would take you days to figure this thing out. I suppose you've also discovered the one thing that is wrong with my device?" Again the bronze man nodded.

"The scrambler equipment that disrupts all other radio communications also affects your own broadcasts. You've got to correct that, and then—" The bronze man's eyes flickered.

Doc looked at Lucky Napoleon, asked quietly, "Just what do you intend to do with this device when it's ready?"

Lucky Napoleon drew himself up like a cocky general who has won a war. His evil features were almost repulsive.

"Collect a million dollars!" he announced. "The buyer is waiting." He named a European dictator whose country was already at war in Europe.

"With this form of radio transmission," Lucky Napoleon said, "only the country possessing it

would be able to use the air waves. They could communicate with their own armies and navies—and disrupt communications of every country they were fighting! They would have a world control of that most vital thing necessary in war—communication. While other countries would be cut off the air completely."

Doc Savage was silent. His bronze features were an expressionless mask.

Lucky Napoleon said sharply, "Well?"

Every guard in the room was tense. Guns were held steadily on Doc Savage and Long Tom. The skinny electrical expert was watching Doc.

"It can be perfected," Doc Savage finally announced. "Everyone who has worked on this device has overlooked a very simple change that must be made in the wiring."

Lucky Napoleon's features showed triumph.

"All right," he snapped. "Then you will fix it!"

"There is one condition," said the bronze man quietly. "The change can be made in a matter of moments, but—"

"But what?" snarled the crime leader.

"Every prisoner will first be released!" finished Doc

Chapter XVIII. THE DEATH TEST

COLD fury made a repulsive thing of Lucky Napoleon's features. But in the end he had to agree to the request. Perhaps he knew the bronze man's reputation too well.

They could have starved Doc Savage; they could have tortured him. But they would never be able to control his remarkable brain. And this was what the crime leader needed—Doc Savage's knowledge!

"All right," Lucky Napoleon snapped finally. "Everyone will be released."

"Now!" said Doc.

Lucky Napoleon shrugged. He turned and barked an order to one of the men guarding the bronze man and skinny Long Tom.

The fellow left. Doc suggested that the heavy door leading out into the larger cavern chamber be left open, so that he could see for himself that all the prisoners were released.

Quickly, chains were removed from the captives. They were herded out to the stretch of beach.

Doc said, "Long Tom, under guard, of course, will go with your men to see that our own associates are set free."

Lucky Napoleon glared at the giant bronze man—but he knew he was checkmated. He had to agree to the request in order to get Doc Savage's co-operation.

Long Tom, under close guard, was taken out. From where he stood, Doc Savage could see them proceed to the room where Monk, the girl and the others were being held prisoners. Soon everyone was being led outside.

Long Tom was brought back. Doc gave him a questioning look.

The electrical expert nodded. "They've all been set free," he said. "They're outside on the beach."

Lucky Napoleon looked at one of his own aids, who had returned with Long Tom. "You've covered the entranceway?" he asked.

The gunman nodded. "We informed those Doc Savage guys that if any attempt was made to get back in here, Doc Savage himself dies!"

The crime leader grinned. He swung on the bronze man.

"And now—" he started, indicating the control boards.

Doc said, "We'll need all the power you can generate. The current will have to be stepped up. Can you manage that with your dynamo plant?"

Lucky Napoleon was thoughtful a moment. "I think so."

He jerked a thumb at Long Tom. "He knows more about that damned juice than our men. He can handle it."

Long Tom was taken out again, with the instructions that he be taken back into the underground caverns where the powerful dynamo equipment was located.

Silently, Lucky Napoleon, Doc Savage and those guarding him waited. Doc had stepped forward, made a brief change in certain wires.

Shortly they heard the increased hum of electricity passing through the control panel boards. In fact, the entire underground headquarters of Lucky Napoleon was filled with the vibrant throbbing. It steadily increased.

Such was the drain on the electrical circuits that even the electric lights dimmed somewhat in the radio control room. And then—they went out!

Doc Savage moved with blurred speed. He whipped toward the open doorway.

In the smashing darkness, Lucky Napoleon screamed, "Lock that door. Don't let Doc Savage out of this room!"

The heavy steel door slammed. A bolt shot into position.

But in the concealing darkness, Doc Savage was already beyond the doorway, into the large laboratory room beyond. Perhaps none knew that his remarkable speed had taken him already from the first room. He was believed to still be a captive in there.

The explosion followed. It came from the radio control room itself. But the concussion of that

blast, its tremendous force, was felt even in the larger, outside room. Equipment toppled over. Chemicals and acids in their special containers were smashed. The guards who had been also waiting out here let out terrified yelps of terror and started piling out to the stretch of beach.

And back in the radio control room, partially muffled by the locked steel door, screams also came. They were the cries of men dying.

Lucky Napoleon had locked himself in that room of sudden death!

AS Monk said later, "When them daggoned guards come tearing out of the laboratory, there was only one thing to do. We went tearing after them. Those guys were so blasted scared that all we had to do was pick up the guns that they dropped!"

The thugs who had been outside the radio room had all been captured by the Doc Savage aids. The first load of prisoners were already aboard one of Doc's planes. They would be taken back and placed in the bronze man's "college," in upstate New York, a special institution where crooks had delicate operations performed on their brains by the bronze man himself. Later—with all knowledge of their questionable pasts wiped out—they would be fitted for useful places in society.

There were no prisoners taken from the radio room itself. Doc Savage only permitted his own aids to accompany him in there. Everyone who had been in the room was dead.

Doc explained, "The tiny container of high explosive was placed where it would be set off when the lights shorted. It was adjacent to the fuse that blew out."

Skinny Long Tom looked at Doc.

"I saw you place that explosive there," he offered. "And when you told Lucky Napoleon that we needed more power, I understood what you meant. You wanted enough strain thrown on the lines that the lights would be shorted—thus blowing the fuse and setting off that gadget."

In the debris that had been the room they found Lucky Napoleon.

One of the crime leader's hands was closed in a tight ball around something that he had been clutching in his fist. Doc forced the dead fingers open.

A coin was within that dead hand. One side of the coin was against Lucky Napoleon's palm. The side that faced up was visible to all.

It was "tails"!

GETTING the prisoners back to Canada and the States meant that relay trips had to be made with the planes. It meant that Monk and Ham had more time to see lovely Annabelle Nickerson.

Each time a new trip was started there was a fight as to who was to have the girl in his plane—for Annabelle, who could fly herself, had offered to help with the job.

It was the morning of the last trip from Death Island, and there was a battle between the two scrappy aids as to who was going to have Annabelle Nickerson for the last time.

It was the real Earl of Mayfair—Monk's double—who settled the argument.

The earl said, "I have a suggestion. Why don't all of you proceed to Mayfair Estate? Be my guests there for a few weeks. It's a shame that the place otherwise must remain vacant."

Charlie Nickerson and Doc Savage were with the earl.

Nickerson looked at his brown-eyed sister, grinned and commented, "You'd better talk them into it, Annabelle, or there's liable to be murder committed on this last trip back!"

Monk stared at the earl. "Aren't you taking over Mayfair Estate yourself?" he wanted to know.

The earl shrugged. "Later, perhaps," he said. "Frankly, I don't give a hoot about living there.

It's more fun knocking about the world. Of course, I didn't want anyone else stealing the place from me." He smiled at hairy Monk. "That's why I was after you—at first!"

The speaker looked at Doc Savage, added: "Besides, there's something I've got to do before I can return to Mayfair. I guess it's all right to tell them, Doc."

Everyone looked questioningly at the bronze man.

Doc said, "The earl is also a British secret agent. This island here, because of its location, would make a perfect base for the dictator who planned to buy Lucky Napoleon's radio device. The island, if taken over, would seriously affect Canada. As a base for a foreign power, it would threaten the security of both Canada and the United States."

Doc looked back at the earl. "And so, the earl has certain reports to make—in England."

Later, on the last trip back to Canada, Monk flipped a coin to see who would get the girl. Monk drew "heads"—and won. But his dapper partner commented meaningly, "Lucky Napoleon used to always get heads, too. But there came a day—"

Monk got the implication, and looked worried.

Ham drew the task of loading equipment. He also had charge of the two pets. They had been located hiding up the shore.

He overheard Monk bragging about a week end they had once spent at a Long Island estate. He was talking to Annabelle.

"Was it a fashionable place?" the girl asked.

Monk said, "I'll say! They put on riding pants in order to pitch horseshoes!"

THE END