

THE DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND

A Doc Savage Adventure by Kenneth Robeson

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Chapter I. PIG-IRON

PIG-IRON HELLER had always considered himself a hot-shot salesman. He was trying his best now to prove it.

Pig-iron was trying to sell himself the idea that there was no such thing as the Indian drums of death. He didn't fool himself much. And he didn't fool anyone else in the North Woods at all. Outside in the darkening night, the drums sounded vaguely like the harmless muttering of the summer storm. Pig-iron Heller stalked up and down in his residence-office and glared out at the awesome night.

Great, brooding thunderheads massed in the sky, blacked out the moon and stars. The wind dropped to an ominous whisper. A grim tenseness covered the North Woods.

Pig-iron spat savagely at a brass cuspidor. Then the old iron hunter whirled, narrowed his gimlet eyes at the big bull of a man who stood in his office. Old Pig-iron, owner of Deep Cut mill and mines, had made and lost fortunes in this north country.

"Get out, damn you! Go on. Get out. You're paid off. Get off my property."

Pig-iron's voice dripped with contempt that seemed somehow forced. The big bull of a man who stood before him shuffled uncertainly on his feet. It took almost as much nerve to defy old Pig-iron Heller as it would have to defy the drums.

The bull of a man's name was Mattson Kovisti, a mine worker and ex-lumberjack. There was a silence in the office as both he and Pig-iron listened to the mutter of the distant drums—or thunder, if you believed that was what it really was. Pig-iron squalled suddenly in a voice that held more determination than belief.

"There ain't no such thing as the Devil's Tomahawks," the old man screamed. "It's just a damned Injun legend."

Mattson Kovisti shuddered. He knew that rumbling noise was not thunder. And he wanted to be a long way from there. A half-breed had translated that rumbling sound for him.

"Go away, paleface," the drums beat into the night. "You are not wanted here, paleface. Go, or the Tomahawks of the Lost Ones—the Devil's Tomahawks—will claim you."

Sweat dripped from Mattson's face as he thought of those awful words. Mattson Kovisti had seen one victim of the Devil's Tomahawks. He did not want to see another. Mattson had got his pay. Johnny Pinetree was waiting outside for Mattson Kovisti. The barrel-chested Finn had Johnny's pay also. The half-breed was afraid of old Pig-iron Heller. So he waited outside.

"Johnny Pinetree has an idea," Kovisti offered. "He thinks Doc Savage ought to know about the Devil's Tomahawks. He—"

Pig-iron Heller just about exploded. He ranted and he cursed. He didn't want any outsider prying into his affairs. Pig-iron was a dyed-in-the-wool individualist who had always fought his own battles. He was now trying to make a mistaken investment pay, through a rising price of finished steel for a war-born commerce.

Pig-iron's doctor had told him he was dying of a heart ailment. The old war horse didn't believe the medico. But he had sent for his daughter, Iris. And he had sent for Marquette Heller, his nephew by adoption.

Pig-iron's eyes narrowed slightly as he thought of Marquette. But he forgot him immediately to berate Kovisti, who was running away.

"I don't give a damn what Doc Sav—" Pig-iron began.

Then he stopped. The sound, not unlike thunder, became suddenly more distinct. It also assumed a steady, pounding tempo. Mattson Kovisti edged toward the door. His eyes were wide with terror.

Then came the smell. It was not the clean scent of ozone that comes with thunder and lightning. It was a dead smell of the grave. It carried the suggestion of freshly-turned earth, of the shrouds in which the dead are buried. There was something intangibly menacing about the odor. Mattson Kovisti screamed. He dived toward the door. Old Pig-iron staggered toward a couch that was partly made up as a bed. The excitement was bad for the old man's heart. He sank wearily down on the couch-bed. Idly, he picked up a newspaper. Then his eyes riveted queerly on one paragraph. Carefully, he tore it from the paper.

Mattson Kovisti ran. He fled with a terror unashamed.

"Johnny Pinetree!" he yelled. "Johnny! Where are you?"

There was no answer from the half-breed. Lightning flashed and showed great stretches of second-growth spruce and pine. The land was like a dead thing itself. The soul of the land was gone, had vanished with the great lumber companies. Broadax and crosscut saw had eaten up the soul of the North Woods. Fierce tongues of forest fire had blackened the ravished body that had held it. The soul was gone. And now, after peace for a hundred years, the Devil's Tomahawks had returned. Mattson Kovisti panted as he ran. He knew the legends of the Tomahawks, the avenging spirits of braves who had been tricked into death by the advancing white man. When the Tomahawks avenged, the spirits of the braves rested more easily in the happy hunting ground.

So it had been arranged by the great Michabou, the Manitou and maker of all things. Michabou, who created the world from a grain of sand brought him by the sturdy muskrat, had made it that way to protect his red-skinned descendants from invaders.

That was the legend told years ago in the skin tepees and birch-bark huts of the Ojibways, the Chippewas and the Tahquamenons. It was, of course, something no sensible person believed. It was impossible that such things could occur.

It was impossible, for example, that a man could die of a hundred brutal slashes from a hundred tomahawks in half a dozen seconds. It was impossible that such a thing could befall a man entirely surrounded by his friends; happen in a soft cranberry bog marsh without an unexplained footprint approaching the victim!

Of course that was impossible. But Mattson Kovisti had seen it happen.

"Johnny Pinetree!" Mattson called frantically, "I've got your pay. Where are you?"

"Here me, Mattson," the half-breed's voice called from the darkness ahead. "Come."

Just as Kovisti plunged ahead, the tempo of the drums increased to a staggering crescendo. There was a vivid flash of lightning. A moaning in the trees became a long-drawn wail of a war whoop. Then Kovisti heard the scream.

It was a scream of terror and of death. Kovisti recognized the half-breed's voice. The scream ended on a horrid gurgle of despair. Mattson Kovisti was drawn as if by a magnet. Lightning flashed again. He saw Johnny Pinetree—or what was left of him.

The half-breed was brutally slashed in death. Deep gashes covered his whole body. Suddenly Mattson Kovisti screamed in newborn terror. The cadence of the drums had not decreased.

Instead, the drums of death seemed beating to a new crescendo of terror. That meant their work was not yet done! New death must come to the North Woods before the Devil's Tomahawks could return to the happy hunting ground with the spirits of the braves!

A BUBBLING cry burst from Kovisti's lips. He felt pretty sure those drums were beating now for him. Mattson ran like an animal that knows it has to get away. He was like the lynx trapped in the spring freshet; like the deer fleeing the licking tongues of forest fire.

He pounded down the only road there was in the North Woods. It was a winding, two-rutted path that eventually reached Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, the city of the locks. He ran, crashing, like a frightened moose. Only one thought beat into his brain. That was to get far, far away from the terror that stalked the North Woods.

There was froth at the corners of Kovisti's mouth as he ran. His heart pounded so strongly within his chest, his pulses hammered so powerfully at his temples, that Kovisti did not at first hear the other sound in the air. It was a steady, droning roar that gradually became louder than the drums themselves. Finally, Mattson heard it, realized that a modern airplane was circling for a landing. Lightning flashed again, showed Kovisti a big, high-winged monoplane. The Finn's eyes flickered oddly. Fear was leaving those eyes now. A cold, hard determination replaced it for the moment. He watched the bright landing lights flash on. The plane came into a tiny landing field, maintained for Pig-iron Heller's planes.

Mattson Kovisti was suddenly smitten by the sort of impulse that makes a man fight for a cause in which he believes. It was the sudden strength that makes a fellow willing to sacrifice his own welfare to spread truth where that truth is sorely needed.

"If they leave that plane," Kovisti muttered, "I'll get to Doc Savage!"

The Finn's barrel chest filled out. His head came erect. Mattson had once been a mechanic at the Sault Ste. Marie airport. He'd once taken one of the ten-passenger Boeings used on that northern route for a trial hop. Mattson now determined that he would go to the one person who might really be able to help stop the Devil's Tomahawks!

Kovisti uttered a cry of hope as he plunged toward the tiny airfield. The thought of Doc Savage gave him newborn strength. Even in the fastness of the North Woods, the name of the man newspapers

termed a physical phenomenon and a mental marvel was one to strike hope in the heart of an honest man; terror to a crook. Mattson Kovisti knew more of the bronze giant than most woodsmen. The huge Finn had spent many long winters in northern lumber camps. In the winter nights the jack in the bunkhouse can either read or take part in the long-winded arguments that go on endlessly. The Finns are not a talkative race. They either sleep or read.

A bunkhouse in the spring will yield an amazing pile of dog-eared magazines. They are dog-eared because every page has been read and reread a dozen times or more. It was not at all strange that Mattson Kovisti knew a lot about Doc Savage.

His reading had informed him that Clark Savage, Jr., was a man of herculean strength and mental prowess that was a constant source of amazement to scientists. He knew that the man of bronze, as Doc was often called, had been trained from childhood to engage in one of the strangest careers that had ever befallen any man.

He knew that Doc Savage and his five aids had gone to the four corners of the earth to right the wrongs that evildoers perpetrated on innocent victims. He had read that the bronze man never accepted pay for these things; that he had a strange source of almost illimitable wealth which he used solely to benefit mankind.

And, Mattson Kovisti was certain that the thing from which he fled was evil enough to be worth the bronze man's time and trouble.

THE plane's motor spluttered jerkily as the pilot brought it down to a bumpy landing. The landing lights flared against high, whitewashed rocks that marked one edge of the landing field. The whitewashed rocks reflected the light, throwing a pale illumination over the whole field.

Three figures got out of the plane. The first one was a rotund, sleek-looking man. Mattson Kovisti didn't recognize him. In the dim light, he looked well dressed and prosperous. The second figure brought a gasp from Mattson Kovisti's lips. A pert hat scarcely concealed the bright blondness of the girl's hair. Her figure was trim in a neat business suit. Mattson did not need to strain his eyes in the dim light to examine her features.

The childlike beauty and sharp, mature wit of Iris Heller were not unknown to the workers employed by the old iron hunter. Iris was the daughter of old Pig-iron Heller, the daughter he said he did not want saddled with the responsibility of fighting the sinister force that was raging through the North Woods.

Mattson Kovisti's lips spread into a smile. To this girl, he was sure he could pour out the things he believed, the things he feared. The Finn saw the tall figure of a man in flying clothes clamber out behind Iris Heller. The three apparently were the only occupants of the plane.

Kovisti started impulsively toward the plane. Then two things happened to halt him. Iris spoke. Her voice was bitter, harsh. It was unlike the gay tones he had known when she visited the wilderness of Deep Cut Mine.

"I'll change his mind," Iris snapped sharply. "He'll not leave this thing to Mark. Mind my words, N. Nate, I'll get the right to take over."

"Now, now, Miss Heller," an oily voice purred from the fat man. "Perhaps your dad knows best. Perhaps—"

Iris Heller stamped a dainty foot.

"Perhaps nothing!" she said irritably. "Marquette Heller didn't even answer his summons. The Indians have got dad terrorized."

The girl's blue eyes flashed in the reflected brilliance of the landing lights.

"The Indians aren't going to frighten me, N. Nathan Nathanielson," she said grimly. "And nobody is going to stop me from fighting beside my dad."

Mattson Kovisti groaned. He was well out into the clearing. At the sound of the name of N. Nathan Nathanielson, the big Finn dived for a dark clump of cranberry bushes. Now he recognized the fat man. N. Nate was Pig-iron Heller's attorney.

On N. Nate's last trip to the North Woods, Kovisti had seen him in unexplained huddles with renegade Indians from the copper regions. He had seen furtive movements of the fat man as he emerged from sod-and-bark hovels that housed half-breeds addicted too much to moonshine whiskey.

Kovisti burrowed deep into the concealment of the bush. It was then that the second thing occurred which warned him not to make his presence known.

The beating of the drums rolled down from the sky. The motor of the plane was shut off. There was a second or so of silence. And then there were the drums, the Indian drums of death.

Their pulsing beat was now close to the ground. It had no direction. It engulfed the clearing in which the plane had stopped.

Chapter II. PIG-IRON'S MESSAGE

IRIS HELLER heard the drums. She whipped a small compact automatic from her handbag, strode quickly toward the edge of the clearing. It was undoubtedly chance that brought her within half a dozen yards of the copse in which Mattson Kovisti burrowed for concealment.

Behind her strode the gaunt pilot. Behind the pilot, fat N. Nathan Nathanielson puffed like an overworked locomotive.

"Slow down, Miss Heller," he complained. "I ain't the antelope I used to be."

Iris Heller slowed down. But N. Nate's plea apparently had little to do with it. The powerful

flashlight in her left hand flicked on. The girl was as tense as a young Indian on the hunt. The flashlight swept methodically over a copse twenty yards ahead of her. In its reflection her firm jaw showed grimly. Slowly, she brought up the automatic.

There was a scrambling noise ahead of them. The automatic blasted. But it had a short barrel, not made for shooting at any distance. Running like a young deer, a reddish figure leaped from the copse and tore into the thickening stand of scrub pine at the edge of the cranberry bog.

N. Nathan Nathanielson squalled like a child who had suddenly met up with an ogre. The pilot, who apparently had no part in the proceedings aside from being an air chauffeur, gasped aloud. The figure that tore through the underbrush was a tall, rangy Indian. The red man's face was daubed with the war paint of the Ojibways tribe. Brave's feathers decorated the sleek black hair. The fleeing redskin was barefoot, clad only in loincloth. An arrow quiver and a stone tomahawk hung from a thong over his heavy-muscled shoulders.

As the redskin disappeared he screamed a war whoop of defiance. As if in answer, the drums of death crashed forth in a new crescendo of wrath. Iris Heller and the gaunt pilot stood side by side, staring into the tangle of underbrush. Then the girl whirled.

The pilot froze in his tracks as if he had suddenly been turned into stone. Back behind them, toward the airfield, there came another awesome, chilling war whoop. It rose to a pitch of frenzy, then died slowly into the night.

The scream that followed brought a cry of horror from Iris Heller. It was a scream of agony and terror. A man's voice lifted in a piteous plea for mercy. The voice screamed, then died on a bubbling, gurgling note of despair. Iris Heller blasted into the darkness with her automatic. Iris' voice came again then. It was tense, tight with an unwillingness to believe.

"N. Nate!" the girl cried. "N. Nate! Where are you?"

There was silence for a moment. It was broken now only by the receding mutter of the drums. It was as if the things had now accomplished their awful purpose and were drifting off into the recesses of the other world where the long-dead braves of the Ojibway tribe dwelt with the master spirit of Michabou.

There was an odor in the air. Both Iris and the pilot noticed that. It was the earthlike smell of the grave that had made Kovisti scream before he had heard the plane.

Then the lightning flashed again. N. Nathan Nathanielson was nowhere to be seen. He had apparently vanished. The drumbeat in the sky rippled in a brief roll. It was like a hollow, awesome chuckle from the gods of evil. Iris Heller gasped.

"The Devil's Tomahawks!" she breathed. "Why, I hadn't really believed in—"

An oath from the pilot interrupted her. The flash of lightning had not shown N. Nate by the cranberry bush where he had halted, panting. But it had showed something else to the pilot. His plane was his first concern, which was quite natural. It was his livelihood.

The flash revealed an indistinct figure racing toward the plane. The pilot let out a roar of indignation and tore after the apparent thief. But the runner had too much of a start. The man plunged into the cabin and the growl of the inertia starter hummed into the air. The motor was still warm. It kicked over with a stuttering bark, that stepped up quickly into a powerful roar.

The prop bit into the night air, dragged the plane into the wind. The pilot was still waving his arms around in excited anger. He almost got hold of the rudder. His lunge for it landed him flat on his face on the ground. Meanwhile the plane took off and bored through the night toward the east. The pilot scrambled to his feet and made several remarks he was just as glad the girl didn't overhear. Her startled scream interrupted him. It also made him forget about such trivia as thieves who steal airplanes.

IRIS HELLER trembled as if a sudden attack of malaria had overcome her. The pilot, when he came up, sent a low breath of astonishment whistling through his teeth.

N. Nathan Nathanielson lay in a pool of blood. He was clearly defined in the light from the girl's flashlight. From head to foot he was gashed with wicked, ugly wounds. Each wound was shaped like a small crescent moon. All the wounds bled.

A faint moan came from the fat lawyer's lips. He opened his eyes and looked wildly into the flashlight. Iris moved swiftly then. She tore N. Nate's shirt into strips and began bandaging the wounds.

N. Nate was so terror-stricken his voice was little more than a thin scream of hysteria. The terror in his voice was not something nice to hear. It had all happened so fast that N. Nate could tell little about it.

The war whoop, he said, suddenly seemed to surround him. Then rough hands grabbed him. Sharp blades hacked at him, cut into his flesh. He had lost consciousness just as he heard Iris let loose with her automatic.

"That must have frightened them away," he moaned. "If it hadn't been for that, I'd be a goner."

Iris Heller made little comment as she bound up the majority of his wounds. There were more than fifty of them. The pilot donated his shirt for more bandages. He shook his head and muttered about the impossibility of the thing.

"It don't make sense," he offered. "It ain't possible."

Iris Heller finished the bandaging. She stood erect and answered quickly.

"Neither is it possible for a man to get that many wounds in the fraction of a minute," she observed. "And there hasn't been a soul in sight except that one Indian running off in another direction."

Swiftly, she flicked on her light. She examined every foot of the ground. There were a couple of fallen trees, three or four cranberry bushes. There wasn't a single footprint, let alone the footprints of two or three dozen tomahawk-swinging braves. The pilot cleared his throat.

"What in tophet is it?" he managed.

Iris Heller spoke in a restrained voice.

"The Devil's Tomahawks," she explained. "If you believe in the legends, it is a supernatural thing. I heard about it when I was a little girl. Father used to laugh about those stories. But now he is dying. He sent for me and—"

The next words came like an epithet. The girl snapped them through her teeth as if they were tainted, poisoned things.

"For me and for Marquette Heller!" Iris Heller ripped.

The pilot cocked his head questioningly. He had heard the girl tell N. Nate a few minutes before that she would not tolerate Marquette Heller's taking over the investigation of the trouble in the Deep Cut district.

"Who is he?" the pilot prompted. Iris Heller's blue eyes bored into the pilot suspiciously.

"I don't know why I should tell you," she said flatly. "But it might do me good to let off steam.

Marquette Heller is half Ojibway. He was adopted and educated by my father's brother, Luke Heller. He has a power over these Indians that is weird. Father is an antifeminist of the old school. Rather than let me take over while he is ill, he'd give Mark the run of the place."

Her voice grew bitter.

"Marquette is half Ojibway," she observed, "and it is the Ojibway Indians who are causing all this terror." She pulled out a yellow telegram, handed it to the pilot. "Here," she said. "Read that."

The telegram was addressed to Iris in Detroit. It was signed by Pig-iron Heller. It read:

CANNOT LOCATE MARK. HURRY. I MUST SEE YOU BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.

DAD.

Fat N. Nathan Nathanielson forced himself into a sitting position. His face was pasty-white.

"I think," he gasped weakly, "that with help I could walk. I'm afraid to stay here."

A new voice made N. Nate gasp. Iris and the pilot whirled around.

"The rotund jurisconsult," a cultured voice announced, "displays ineffable intransigence to suffering."

Iris swung the flashlight toward the voice. The figure she saw was so thin it might have been the little man who wasn't there. Only this one wasn't exactly little. He was tall, bony and unbelievably skinny. His suit fit him as if he had gotten it from a pawnshop. A tremendous, bulging forehead gleamed in the light. But the most incongruous thing about him for a man stalking in the North Woods was the monocle.

Of unusually thick lens, it was attached to his ill-fitting coat lapel by a black ribbon. He blinked casually, not at the girl, who was worth blinking at, but at N. Nathan Nathanielson.

"Wh-what did you say?" the girl blurted.

N. Nate struggled to his feet.

"He said that the fat lawyer refuses to let the pain get him," explained N. Nate, who knew some long words himself. "Now, who in hell is he?"

Iris Heller peered at the thin wearer of the monocle. Then she relaxed.

"Oh," she said. "It's Little Johnny. The boys at the mine call him that because he's so tall."

The skinny man bowed politely.

"Just a metallurgical adjunct to the recovery of hematite," he explained.

While they were figuring that one out, the man whom the woodsmen and miners had dubbed Little Johnny put his arms around the fat form of N. Nathan Nathanielson. Iris and the aviator gasped at what happened then. With as little effort as if he were heaving a sack of flour, the incredibly thin man swung the lawyer over his shoulders. He headed back along the road toward Deep Cut Mine, bearing his burden.

"Pedestrian activity would not be conducive to efficient recovery," he explained, trying now to keep his words short.

He did not need to explain that he had wandered into the North Woods a month before and been hired by Pig-iron Heller because of his remarkable knowledge of hematite, the principal type of iron ore found in the northern United States. That much was known. Pig-iron was an individualist who paid off on what workers could do, not who they were. He hadn't cared a whit what the skinny metallurgist's name might have been.

Iris explained that to the aviator and to N. Nate who was getting a free ride on a mount that didn't seem strong enough to carry half his weight.

But what Iris could not explain because she did not know, was that the gaunt man was really one of the five aids of Doc Savage! When the men had dubbed him Little Johnny, they had come closer than they realized to his real name.

William Harper Littlejohn was a geologist, archaeologist and biologist of renown wherever science was discussed by its top-flight exponents. Doc Savage had sent Johnny, as he was known to his friends, into the North Woods to find out what was causing the terror near Pig-iron Heller's Deep Cut Mine!

Doc had heard rumors of that, as he heard reports of most weird evil that went on in the world. Doc had wanted to know what might have been discovered in that area that gave new value to Heller's mine; perhaps value that Heller himself did not know.

Doc had told Johnny he wanted to find out if there was some unpredicted rich source of ore that previous investigations had not revealed. He told Johnny he wanted to know if that was the basic cause of the trouble, or if the Indians were really out of hand, for some reason of their own. Johnny relaxed the muscles of one eye, permitted the monocle to drop to the end of the ribbon. The monocle was in reality a powerful magnifying glass that he used in his profession.

"I am quite baffled," the geologist said half to himself. "The cause underlying this unseemly activity is incomprehensible to me."

Johnny started to say something else. But he was interrupted by a white-haired man mountain whose sheer size brought a gasp from the airplane pilot who was bringing up the rear.

"Igor!" Iris cried. "Thank goodness you have come."

As the newcomer came closer to the beam of the flashlight it could be seen that his hair was not white with age. It was merely an incredible blondness that would have made girls of the platinum-hair era green with several kinds of envy.

The man was clad in rough work-shoes and denim overalls. The only touch that gave any indication of authority was a necktie he wore in the collar of his blue denim shirt. He bowed stiffly from the waist.

"Your father expected you, mistress," he said. His voice was a hollow roar, like wind in the night. He turned to Johnny.

"I see you have been of assistance," he said stiffly. "You shall be rewarded." The mountain of a man stepped forward to relieve Johnny of his burden. Johnny staggered slightly, permitted the big man to take N. Nathan Nathanielson. It would not do to permit the people of this North Woods to suspect him of such unusual strength. It might cause questions he did not yet want to answer. Iris Heller performed the feat of introducing the man now on Igor's back to Igor. It seemed sort of silly.

"This is Igor Lakonnen, our foreman," she said to N. Nate. "I don't believe you've met him before, although he's been with dad for more than twenty-five years."

N. Nate grunted. "I've been on the legal end, not the mining end," he offered. "I don't get up to the mine very often."

Igor Lakonnen started to bow again in introduction. He decided that such a procedure would be bad for N. Nathan who would have thus been catapulted to the ground. So he gave it up.

"Your father awaits," Igor explained. "In the house-office."

Lakonnen spoke with the stiff precision of a man who has never become at ease with an adopted language. He never spoke at all except when it was absolutely necessary. But then, as has been pointed out, the Finns are really a silent race. Iris spoke then falteringly. It almost seemed that she was afraid of the answer she might get.

"Is . . . is he all right?" she asked.

Before Igor Lakonnen could reply, a whooping yell sounded from ahead. It seemed to come from the squat house now dimly discernible in the gloom of night. There was a crashing of glass. Then flames shot out from one window.

Igor put N. Nate gently down to the ground and began to run. Johnny was already racing toward the building. Iris and the plane pilot were close behind. Lakonnen stamped into the building, seized a fire extinguisher from a rack as he did. The flames were confined to one corner of the room. They yielded quickly to the stream of carbon tetrachloride from the extinguisher.

The room was dark. Iris found a light switch and snapped it. A cry of horror gurgled from her throat. The room was a shambles. Drawers of a big desk were ripped open. Chairs were overturned. Papers were strewn about the floor.

In one corner, beside the huge leather couch that had been made up as a bed was the body of Pig-iron Heller. The eyes were open, glazed. The strong lines of the iron-hunter's face were twisted in the pain of death. There was only a red blob where the silver hair had been.

The scalp was severed from the head. Beside the body was a bloodstained tomahawk of some flinty stone. Pig-iron Heller had been scalped in old frontier fashion!

With a strangled cry, Iris Heller raced to the still form of her father. One outstretched hand was clenched. A wisp of paper showed between the fingers. Her eyes wide with horror, the girl pried those fingers apart. It seemed to be the one thing that the killer perhaps had missed.

A single newspaper clipping came from the dead hand of the mine owner. It was a clipping that told something of the exploits of Clark Savage, Jr. It related that no mystery had yet been found that was too terrifying or too baffling for the bronze man to solve.

Iris Heller stood erect. Her eyes were clear, determined.

"My father was an individualist," she said simply. "He believed in solving things in his own way."

If this thing was big enough for him to realize that he needed Doc Savage, it is certainly too big for us!"

Slowly, Iris Heller walked toward a telephone. She moved the hook up and down slowly. She became impatient. Then her face went suddenly white. Her lips parted in fear.

"The phone," she said. "It is dead."

Chapter III. FORTRESS OF SOLITUDE

IRIS HELLER could not have known it, but it would have been impossible for her to contact Doc Savage in any event. Another caller was finding that out even as Iris put down the disabled phone. Mattson Kovisti had a pretty fair working knowledge of airplane radio as well as sufficient ability to pilot the four-place cabin job he had appropriated.

As soon as he took off, the barrel-chested Finn made a complete search of the plane to be certain that he had no stowaways. That settled to his satisfaction, he headed the ship in the direction of Detroit and gave his attention to the radio transmitter in the plane. He consulted a log book that he found beside the pilot's seat and found the call letters that were established for persons who might need to contact the bronze man.

It seemed a long shot to Kovisti. The plane had a powerful transmitter for a private ship, and he knew that Doc's receiver would be a powerful unit. But Kovisti was uneasy. Three times he gave the call letters.

"Long Tom Roberts speaking," a voice finally came to him. "Doc Savage is not available at the moment. Can I be of assistance?"

Mattson Kovisti's voice bubbled over with excitement. He knew that Major Thomas J. Long Tom Roberts was one of the greatest electrical engineers in existence. He felt sure that Long Tom Roberts could help him get to Doc.

In a tense, breathless tone, Mattson Kovisti told Long Tom Roberts several things about the Devil's Tomahawks and about the terror stalking the Michigan North Woods.

"I don't know what it is," he finished. "But if you'll tell me how to get to Doc Savage, it'll help a lot."

The words that came from Long Tom made him gasp in newborn fear.

"Doc Savage is in his place of contemplation and reflection known as the Fortress of Solitude," Long Tom informed him. "There is no way at the moment that I can get in touch with him."

Mattson Kovisti's voice became frantic.

"W-what shall I do?" he queried. "Something must be done about this thing."

"Colonel John Renwick is speaking at the Northland Hotel in Detroit tonight," Long Tom told him.

"Doc would want you to communicate with him. You will be contacted at the Detroit city airport."

Mattson Kovisti breathed a sigh of mixed relief and anxiety. Some further aid could be expected from Renny Renwick, he felt certain. But the fact that Doc was in his Fortress of Solitude worried Kovisti. He had read snatches about that retreat.

When Doc was engaged in research that demanded utmost concentration, he often flew to the hidden estate tucked away in the far Northland. Not even his aids knew the location of the Fortress of Solitude. Only by prearrangement or under certain specified conditions were they to disturb Doc's operations there.

That fact worried Mattson Kovisti as he toiled his ship in toward Detroit's city airport. That and one other thing that had suddenly occurred to him.

Radio had been a simple way for him to communicate with Doc Savage's eighty-sixth floor office in New York. It had been quick and efficient. But it was also something else.

Ordinary radio is not a private method of communication. Anyone on the proper wave length can listen in. Mattson Kovisti was thinking about that as he flashed on his landing lights and started the long glide down to the concrete runway of the airport.

KOVISTI clambered out of the ship as the airport attendants rushed out. He wasn't sure whether the ship had taken off from that airport on its trip to Deep Cut Mine. But he took no chances. He mumbled an involved explanation about Iris Heller wanting some things in Detroit, but also wanting the other pilot to stay up there. Kovisti had gotten the other pilot's name from papers in the plane.

The airport attendants seemed to take whatever Iris Heller wanted to do for granted. She had something of a reputation as a madcap heiress who generally had her way whether it was in the book of rules or not.

The attendants took over the plane and taxied it to the hangar in which the Hellers kept it.

Kovisti went warily toward the administration building. A cop passed him and Kovisti flinched. He drew a sigh of relief that no one was trying to arrest him for stealing the plane.

It didn't occur to him that police activity might have been a very welcome thing. It was quite natural for Mattson to be concerned about breaking the law. It was also natural for him to grow impatient when there was no one at the airport to meet him. Long Tom had said he'd be contacted there.

Mattson looked at the clock in the administration building. It was after two in the morning.

"Hell!" he exclaimed. "I bet Renny Renwick went out to do the hot spots after his lecture."

Kovisti fidgeted for three or four more minutes. Then he hailed a cab.

"If a big mournful-looking guy is looking for me, tell him I've gone to his hotel," Kovisti said, and gave the starter his name. Mattson considered that remark sufficiently cryptic. That is, he did until the cab was halfway into the center of the city. Then he began to worry. Someone might try to follow him.

So Kovisti did a quite natural thing. He told the driver to go around Grand Circus a couple of times. Then he told him to drive to the Statler. There, Kovisti paid off his cab. He went in one set of swinging doors, crossed the lobby and went out into the other street.

Hugging the walls of buildings, Kovisti made his way to Michigan Avenue and finally to the Northland Hotel. He noticed vaguely that alternate street lights had been turned out. It was an ordinary procedure to save municipal electricity when bright lights are not needed. But what happened next was not ordinary. It was so unordinary that life insurance companies did a rushing business for several weeks.

Kovisti crossed the street toward the side entrance. It was a wide street. When the big Finn reached approximately the center, every light in that section of the city went out. The lights in the hotel itself were snuffed out like a giant candle.

Then came the steady pulsing of the drums. The Indian drums of death swooped down in the night upon the modern city! Into the stone and asphalt canyons made by modern man came the legendary death supposedly buried years ago with the master spirit of Michabou!

Mattson Kovisti screamed. He began to run. He could not see what direction he was taking in the blackness. Suddenly he stumbled. It was as if he had been tripped. The big Finn's scream turned to a scream of mortal pain, of anguish unbelievable. It ended in gurgling submission, and then there was silence.

Down the street a policeman's nightstick pounded on the sidewalk. Footsteps slapped down the street.

"Clancy! Oh, Clancy!" one cop bellowed. "What the devil is it? What's that awful smell?"

It was the smell that most people talked about afterward. Newspaper reporters tried to describe it. Then they gave it up and said it was undescribable. It was a horrid, gravelike stench that made one think of shrouds long beneath the ground. It was the suggestion of terror that came with it that could not be described. It was simply there.

Mattson Kovisti was very dead when lighting service was restored. The alternate street lights that had been cut out since midnight came on first. They were on a separate circuit. A police electrician found that a main fuse had been shorted to darken the rest of the lights.

All of that was understandable, quite within the conception of modern man.

The fifty tomahawk wounds that had spelled death for Mattson Kovisti, however, were something else entirely.

THE cop who had yelled for Clancy was mopping cold perspiration from his forehead as Renny leaped from a taxi. Renny had missed Kovisti at the airport by less than a dozen minutes. Had he found him there, he would have advised a quick take-off and a return to the North Woods.

Renny stood and looked at the torn thing that had been Mattson Kovisti. He balled one huge fist and smote his other palm. The fist seemed as big as a quart milk bucket.

The cop who stood beside Renny patted him gently on one arm. The cop thought Kovisti must be some close relative. He had never seen such a mournful look on any face. He didn't know that Renny's long, puritanical face always looked like that.

None the less, Renny was extremely perturbed. Death was horrible, and this was worse than most he had seen. Also, it posed another problem.

"Holy cow!" Renny rumbled in a voice like a bear in a cavern. "This is terrible."

Renny nodded as the cop suggested quick arrangements for an undertaker. Slowly, the big-fisted giant strode into the Northland Hotel. Renny had addressed a convention of marine engineers in that hotel in the evening. Later, he had inspected some of the intricate power plants of nearby automobile factories with his hosts. That was why he had been late in hearing from Long Tom in New York. Renny was one of the most important engineers in the profession. He paused as he turned the corridor toward his room. Idly, he beat his fist against the wall.

Plaster fell to the floor and a great dent appeared in the wall.

"Holy cow!" Renny growled. "I must be more upset than I realized."

It was one of Renny's few boasts that there wasn't an oak door made that he couldn't split with a single blow of either of his gigantic fists. Taking care not to swing his fist again, Renny let himself into his room. Idly, he scooped up his phone and called New York. Long Tom answered.

Renny spoke rapidly and in a loud, booming voice. He had no worries about anyone eavesdropping on the conversation. The big engineer spoke in Mayan, the ancient, almost extinct, tongue of Central America. There were probably not half a dozen white men in the so-called civilized world aside from Doc and his aids who understood that tongue.

Mayan was the language of the Republic of Hidalgo, deep in the hills of Central America. Hidalgo was also the secret source of the amazing wealth of the bronze man. At a certain time each week, a Mayan listened in on a certain wave length. If he heard the agreed-upon signal, a pack train of gold would start immediately for the coast.

Doc had a peculiar right to that gold. It covered a part of his adventurous background of which

he seldom spoke.

When Renny put down the phone, his long, puritanical face looked grimmer than ever. The grimness now was not of sorrow, but of anticipation of action. In his own way, Renny was beginning to enjoy the thought of coming to grips with the thing that was bringing terror and death to northern Michigan.

Long Tom had agreed with him that the incident which had occurred was of sufficient import to warrant intruding on Doc Savage's solitude. He agreed that such a possible occurrence was the reason Doc had equipped Renny with a means of communicating with him.

Renny had been instructed to remain in Detroit, close to northern Michigan until the bronze man returned or until something happened that warranted communication.

Renny turned toward a square box that was on the floor. He leaned over and adjusted several knobs. The device was an advanced television, far beyond the scope of any that had been introduced commercially. When control of television wave lengths had been decided, when the new device could be offered without jeopardizing the time and money rival experimenters had expended, Doc intended to release his new television impartially, and not for his own profit.

A crackling sound came from the cabinet. The glass top began to glow, at first faintly, and then more strongly. A completely new theory permitted it to operate without either antenna or coaxial cable connections.

A face began to materialize on the glass-paneled top. The glow of the television screen was not greenish or distorted, as in the ordinary machine. It conveyed natural colors with a clarity that was remarkable. It was as much without distortion in visual transmission as the new frequency-modulation radio is for voice.

Before the face materialized, Renny heard Doc Savage's voice. The tones were quiet, well modulated, but with a compelling force that was difficult to understand.

"I have been expecting you to communicate with me," Doc said simply. "Tell me what you have learned."

As Renny spoke, he watched the clear image of Doc Savage appear on the glass screen. It was a face no one could have forgotten. The complexion was of deep bronze. The jaw was strong and firm. Doc's hair, like a metallic cap, was just a slightly darker shade of bronze than his skin.

But it was the eyes that were the most arresting. They were like pools of flake-gold stirred constantly by tiny winds. They possessed a penetrating, almost hypnotic, quality which was quite disturbing to persons whose consciences were troubled.

Renny quickly told Doc what he had seen and what Mattson Kovisti had told Long Tom by plane radio. That consisted of Kovisti's account of the killing of Johnny Pinetree and of the illness of Pig-iron Heller. Kovisti did not know about his death. He knew about the arrival of Iris Heller and N. Nathan Nathanielson, and had told Long Tom of that.

Renny told the bronze man of the strange, terrible death that had overtaken Kovisti and of the horrible grave-like odor that had filled the air when the Devil's Tomahawks descended.

An eerie, weird trilling sound filled Renny's hotel room when he told about that. It didn't startle the big engineer. He knew that musical, tuneless sound was an unconscious reaction of the bronze man to a problem that aroused his interest, or to a circumstance that momentarily baffled him.

"I have been investigating certain reported manifestations of the returned power of the dead," Doc said. "I had hoped that they might have some bearing on the Devil's Tomahawks."

Doc was silent for a moment. Then he gave swift orders.

"Contact Monk and Ham," he directed. "Also find out from Johnny his latest information on the value of Heller's iron ore. I will communicate with you within two hours."

Chapter IV. DOUBLE DISASTER

IN all probability, the most unhappy man on the shores of Lake Superior that fine summer morning was Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks. To the world at large, Theodore Marley Brooks was one of the most astute lawyers that Harvard had unleashed upon an unsuspecting world.

To those who knew him well, or to persons who could outrun him, he was normally known as Ham.

Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Blodgett Monk Mayfair, one of the world's leading industrial chemists, referred to him as a fashion-plate shyster and a disgrace to mankind. It was true that the slender-waisted Ham was one of the world's best-dressed men. Ham heard Monk coming behind him across the campfire clearing. Ham groaned and shut his eyes. He didn't even want to look at the beautiful sunrise across Lake Superior.

Ham was resplendent, as usual, even in his fishing togs. The latest thing in waders incased his feet and legs. The waterproof extra-heavy broadcloth breeches were the last thing in style. The jacket, with smart pockets, was the nobbiest thing his tailor could devise. Bright trout flies were stuck in the band of his soft felt hat.

A high, piping voice shrilled a fisherman's song. Ham Brooks shuddered visibly, tossed his cigarette into the lake.

"Hiya, shyster," the high voice greeted. "You don't look so good this morning."

Ham groaned again. "Go 'way, you missing link," he moaned. "I don't want to look at you. Not ever."

Monk's voice took on a childlike tone. He sounded hurt.

"And after all I've done to become worthy of you?" Monk protested. "You just ain't grateful."

Ham groaned and opened his eyes. He shut them again quickly. He just couldn't do it. Two weeks of this had driven him to the point of violence.

Monk strode to the campfire and stirred the embers under the coffeepot. Monk lived up to his nickname. Furry hands dangled down to his knees. A small nubbin of a head was surmounted by reddish bristles, as was most of his entire body. Monk walked with a rolling gait that seemed to belong in the treetops. Ham often said it did.

Ham put one hand before his eyes. Cautiously, he squinted between two fingers. Then he groaned anew and fled into the woods.

Monk Mayfair on this trip looked like a huge anthropoid ape who was imitating a Royal Canadian Mountie, a dude cowboy and an electric welder. All at once. It was driving Ham crazy.

Monk's jacket was a flaming red. The pants, waterproof and tucked in waterproof boots of a bright-yellow hue, were shaggy and brilliant green. Ham's voice yelled at him from the woods.

"If you take that danged hat off," he shouted, "I might come back. There isn't a mosquito alive that could penetrate that hide of yours."

This was quite probably true. But Monk wore a hat that was a gadget to end all gadgets. It had a removable visor, a screen that tucked into the neck and could be made waterproof by application of a patented oil. A cocky orange-colored feather was fastened jauntily to one side.

"G'wan, get some wood, you ex-fashion plate," Monk grunted. "There's nothing wrong with my taste in clothes."

Monk was grinning broadly. He'd had Ham all to himself for two weeks. And the clothes Monk had decked himself with had brought the sartorially excellent Ham to a point of apoplexy. Monk chuckled softly and went about preparing breakfast.

PRESENTLY the lawyer came back with an armful of wood. There was a new gleam in his eyes. He told himself that the time had come to turn the tables on the hairy chemist. Monk had been having too good a time. Ham noticed out of the corner of his eye the figure in resplendent red jacket squatting at the edge of the lake. The dapper lawyer grinned. He didn't even fly into a rage when he saw Habeas Corpus stretched out on Ham's blanket roll. Habeas was an odd-looking pig with long legs and ears that were probably meant to fly with. Habeas was Monk's pet, a constant source of annoyance to the lawyer.

Stealthily, Ham crept upon the porker. A cold bath in the lake, he opined, would do the pig no harm. And it would make Monk mad enough to fight. The pig snored gently. Ham extended a hand. Then he swore.

"Just you dare lay a hand on me, you empty lawbook!" a shrill voice came from the pig. "Just you dare and I'll pin your ears flat against your head!"

Ham leaped erect. Monk's ventriloquism with the pig was the last straw.

"Dang you!" he screamed. "Here's where you get yours!"

The dapper lawyer flung himself toward the stooped figure at the shore. He plunged in a flying block, All-American style, caught the gaudily garbed figure squarely in the buttocks. There was a tremendous splash and a sudden barking of surprise and anger.

The figure that emerged looked enough like Monk to have been his twin. But it wasn't Monk. The hairy chemist was behind Ham and doubled up with mirth. Tears rolled down Monk's cheeks. His voice was weak from laughter.

"Dunked your own fool pet!" he panted in glee. "I always said you wasn't very smart."

The figure Monk had dressed in a spare outfit of his gaudy clothes was Chemistry, a what-is-it Ham had picked up in a South American jungle years before. He was some kind of a stunted ape or gorilla.

Ham straightened slowly. There was murder in his eye as he moved across the clearing.

"You hairy mistake!" he snapped, "I don't know why Doc ever sent me up to this jumping-off place with you. But I do know that I'm going to cut you down to your knees right now. You can walk on the stumps."

Ham reached for a slender cane which he was seldom without. It was in reality an efficient sword-cane.

Monk laughed gleefully and started for the woods. He knew he could outrun Ham. Then he stopped.

Ham Brooks dropped his cane. The perpetual quarrel was suddenly forgotten as if it had not existed at all.

A coughing sound came from a huge birch-bark canoe pulled up on the shore. Then a voice rumbled. It was a booming, bearlike voice.

"Renny calling," the voice roared. "Calling Monk and Ham. Monk and Ham, let me know you are contacted."

The two men rushed to the canoe. Ham got there first.

"O. K., Renny," he said into a microphone. "Monk and Ham reporting. What's up?"

"Go to the shore five miles from Deep Cut foundry. Wait by a small creek there for instructions from Doc. Meanwhile do not trust any strangers you may encounter."

Renny signed off. Monk turned excitedly toward Ham.

"Geewhilikers!" Monk grunted. "There must have been something to that Devil's Tomahawk stuff, after all."

"I hope the thing gets you," Ham observed sourly. "If it can, I'm all for it."

Monk grabbed his arm. "Listen," he said. "What's that?"

The sound was a high-powered motor running at top speed. Presently they saw the speedboat, hurling spray and solid water in a great V from its bow.

THE powerful motor slowed. The roar became a sputter. The boat dropped down off the step and idled in close to shore. The lake dropped off sharply here. There was almost no beach. The figure in the boat struggled with goggles, ripped off a leather helmet. Bright blond hair waved in the morning breeze.

"Jehoshaphat!" Monk blurted. "A pippin!"

Monk dived into the small tent at the edge of the clearing. When he emerged he was not wearing the red jacket or the queer-looking hat. Ham doubted out loud that he looked any better.

"Monk Mayfair and Ham Brooks," the girl called. "I'm Iris Heller. I've come to get you!"

Monk and Ham exchanged glances.

"Might be O. K.," Monk whispered. "She sure looks all right."

Monk's particular weakness was pretty girls. Ham surveyed the girl sourly. He spoke to Monk in Mayan.

"Renny told us not to trust anyone," he reminded.

"Word came through Doc Savage," the girl called. "It's about the Devil's Tomahawks."

Monk grabbed his blanket roll, hurled it into the big birch-bark canoe.

"Hell!" he said. "If that thing's after her, I'm goin' to stop it."

Ham was more cautious. He held Monk by one arm.

"We'll see you at the steel mill," he told the girl. "We have important things to do."

Iris Heller was plainly nettled. She was a girl who was accustomed to having her whims obeyed. Her pert nose tilted in the air.

"You'll be sorry," she said cryptically. The speedboat motor burst into life again. Spray sheeted from the bow. The boat headed eastward toward the rolling mill that fronted the lake, a mile or more from Deep Cut Mine.

Monk was mad.

"Every time I meet a good-looker," he grumbled, "you have to spoil it."

"A close look at you would spoil it, anyway," Ham observed. "Let's get going."

Few words were spoken as they broke camp. Soon everything was stored in the canoe. The two pets were placed in the center. Habeas nipped Chemistry in the rump and started a lively fight. That quieted, Doc's two aids shoved out into the lake.

"We'll paddle," Ham said shortly. "It's only five miles across."

Monk started to reply, but a droning noise interrupted him. At first he thought it was the speedboat coming back. Then he saw the plane. They didn't pay much attention to it at first. Suddenly the staccato rattle of a machine gun split the air. Slugs splashed into the water. Monk reached behind him, yanked at a lever. The canoe shot ahead with a speed that was unbelievable. The canoe was equipped with a chemical rocket propulsion of Monk's invention. It could travel at an incredible pace for miles.

The chemist steered a zigzag course, tried to shake the plane. But even with the rocket propulsion, the canoe was no match for the aircraft. The slugs came closer, then ripped through the birch-bark. There was a minor explosion within the gunwales of the canoe. Then it sank, disappeared from the surface of the cold lake. Lake Superior is only a few degrees above freezing even in the summer. There was small chance that a swimmer could live in those waters. Above the canoe only a few pieces of wreckage could be seen drifting.

The plane swung off, dipped one wing as it passed over a point on the nearby shore. Then the speedboat returned. Blond Iris Heller was not at the wheel this time. There was only a fat, thuglike man in the cockpit. The fat man puffed at a big, black cigar. He swung the speedboat back and forth, apparently looking for survivors.

Suddenly there was a detonation that shook the very trees on the shore. The speedboat became a solid sheet of flame. It literally disintegrated, blown to splinters by some terrible force of explosion.

The detonation echoed along the rocky shore. Then there was nothing but oil and wreckage floating on the calm surface of the lake.

Chapter V. A TRAP FOR DOC

IT was six thirty in the morning when three sharp, high notes emitted from the televisior cabinet in the corner of Renny's hotel room. They were signals calculated to awaken the big engineer if he should have fallen asleep.

Renny was not asleep. He was watching the televisior carefully. Renny turned the reception dials to maximum pitch and waited the few seconds that were necessary to warm up the machine. Then he spoke.

"Renny, Doc," he said. "I have some information."

Doc's voice came in Mayan. His features appeared in the glass screen on the top of the televisior.

He wore a flyer's helmet.

"Speak in Mayan," Doc advised in that language. "Tell me what you have learned."

"Iris Heller called," Renny informed the bronze man. "Long Tom relayed her call back from New York. Her father was murdered and she took a speedboat to Sault Ste. Marie to make the call. The mine phone wires were cut."

Doc's trilling exclamation of surprise came through the receiver in eerie tones. Renny anticipated his thoughts.

"Yeah," he rumbled, "cutting a phone wire is hardly the act of an Indian's ghost."

Doc's tones in guttural Mayan interrupted.

"We do not know enough about this thing yet to form any conclusions," the bronze man warned.

"Keep your mind open to any impressions that you may get. What did you tell the girl?"

"Nothing," Renny answered. "She said two men who looked like descriptions of Monk and Ham were fishing up the lake. I told her Monk and Ham hadn't told me where they were going when they left New York."

That much was true, though Renny had subsequently learned something of Doc's plans with those two aids. Renny told Doc he had contacted the two but that he had not heard from Johnny.

"Take the morning plane to Sault Ste. Marie," Doc instructed. "Get information there on the persons I mentioned to you before I left New York. Keep your portable short-wave receiver with you. And keep in position to contact me if you can."

Doc signed off. Renny dialed a local number and got the president of a big armored-car concern. The television cabinet would be intrusted to them until he or Doc returned to pick it up. While he waited for the arrival of the guards, he tried to form some idea of what they were going to face in the North Woods.

Renny knew Doc had been interested in the first reports of the return of the Devil's Tomahawks. The bronze man was always interested in apparent manifestations of spirit control and supernatural influences. Doc had exploded the claims of many fakes by his careful scientific investigations. But Renny also knew that there were many evidences of Yogi thought projection for which science had not provided an adequate explanation. He knew that there were incidents of control after death in the voodooism of the Haitians that had merely been denied, not explained. The Hindus and the Buddhist Lamas of Tibet have been known to perform feats that wise men have not been able to laugh away.

Renny knew it was easy to say that it just couldn't be. He also knew that such a simple formula was not an adequate explanation. Two things brought Renny out of his reverie. The first was a scratching noise behind one wall of his room. The second was the arrival of the armed guards to take custody of the television.

The second incident prevented Renny's investigation of the first. That interference undoubtedly altered several things that were to happen. Renny could not see that there was a man in the white coat and trousers of a doctor in the room next to his.

The "doctor" had the projections of a stethoscope in his ears. There was a "patient" on the bed. But the doctor was not using the stethoscope on the patient.

He held it tight against the wall of Renny's room!

THE man in the doctor's uniform had a peculiar-looking face. Close scrutiny showed it to be some sort of a plastic mask. Presently he ripped the stethoscope from his ears.

"No more conversation," he grated. "We might as well set things in motion."

The man on the bed nodded, but did not speak. Those had apparently been his instructions. The man in the plastic mask picked up the phone. He asked for a number in a small town on the banks of the St. Clair River, fifty miles away. When he got it he asked only one question.

"Did you get it? . . . Good."

The doctor wrote rapidly on a slip of paper. Then he called another number in Ecorse, famed rum-runner hangout of the prohibition days. He asked there the same question. His grunt of satisfaction indicated that the answer there was just as good.

Then the man in white whipped out a map of Canada. He did some fast figuring, drew a triangle between three points. Two of them were the locations he had called.

His third call was not to ask questions. It was local.

"Here it is, Dutch," he gritted into the phone. He reeled off a string of figures and directions. Then he concluded with: "Step on it, now. If you miss, you're through."

The doctor hung up the phone then. Quickly, he stripped off the white disguising clothes. He did not remove the mask.

"O. K., get up," he ordered the man on the bed. "You're through being a patient. I don't care who butts in now. Let's go."

The two left the hotel with light hand baggage. The recent doctor hailed a cab, told the driver to take them to the city airport. During the six-and-a-half-mile drive through early morning traffic, no word was spoken. They got out at the airport and strode into the administration building.

Instinctively, the "doctor" ducked behind a partition when he saw the big man buying tickets for Sault Ste. Marie. Then he laughed mirthlessly. He must be more careful not to react like that, he

told himself. After all, Renny hadn't seen him.

BIG-FISTED Renny was, in fact, watching the man in the mask. The engineer held a map before his face. But he was studying the plastic mask in the reflection of a highly polished platinum ring that was designed to act as a tiny mirror.

Renny had not seen the man before. But his sharp eyes detected the fact that the queer features were a mask. Any fellow traveler who was concealing his identity was of interest to Renny. But there was also another passenger concerning whom he had a considerable speculation.

The other man, who had just bought a ticket for the Soo, as Sault Ste. Marie is generally known, was young and straight of build. He was handsome in a dark sort of way. His eyes were coal-black, his cheekbones high and the nose thin and just slightly hooked. They were Indian features to one who knew the North Woods.

Renny had seen the man at the meeting he had addressed the night before. Marquette Heller was a name that was becoming known among mining engineers. The young half-white, half-Indian descendant of an Ojibway chieftain was becoming a metallurgist of considerable note for his tender years.

Renny had liked the man when they were introduced. Mark Heller had a friendly manner and the curious interest of a student. Renny had discounted the slight reticence in his manner as the nature of one in whose veins coursed the blood of proud chieftains. The primitive red man's own counsel had to guide him in the battle against the wilderness.

Renny thought of those things as he followed the others to the plane. The plane was full and there was little choice of seats. It just chanced that Renny was seated across from the man with the plastic mask. Marquette Heller was diagonally across and ahead of him.

The ten-passenger Boeing took the air like a graceful bird. Renny settled himself comfortably to forget his problems while they were in the air. That was until he saw the two big bombers without insignia. The big, two-motor ships cut across the path of the transport. Then they dipped their wings. Each ship dipped once, as if in salute. Then they headed north, motors wide open and roaring. Renny had a sudden sensation of having been slugged violently in the pit of the stomach.

The big-fisted engineer did not know the location of Doc Savage's Fortress of Solitude. He did know that it was somewhere in the Far North. And he knew that two bombers had no business being in the air without insignia.

The thing that most startled Renny was the presence of bombs in the racks of both of the big ships.

"Holy cow!" Renny rumbled in excitement. "Two unmarked bombers heading northeast! And they're loaded!"

Renny had been absorbed watching the two bombers. It was several seconds after he had seen that odd wing salute that he again examined the occupants of the plane. The masklike features of the man across from him told him nothing. Marquette Heller was watching the bombers. He turned, and Renny saw his face. With the inscrutability of the Indian, Marquette stared out of the other window, apparently seeing nothing.

Renny's gaze returned to the man in the plastic mask. Suddenly, Renny's heart jumped in his throat. A sheet of paper had slipped, unobserved, from the masked man's lap. Renny could see that it was a map. A penciled triangle could be seen on the map.

Doc's aid made out the name beside one corner of that triangle. It was Ecorse. A line ran from there up the St. Clair River. The other two sides of the triangle converged in far northern Canada. There was one word penciled there.

It was Savage. The masked man had drawn a line through the name!

Renny leaped to his feet with a roar. He understood the set up now. While Doc had been speaking from the Fortress of Solitude, radio triangulations had been taken from two widespread points with radio direction finders. The exact location of Doc's transmitting outfit was thus easy to locate. Big Renny growled in realization as he stamped up the aisle. The stewardess rose from a front seat to check his progress. Renny quickly showed her an identification card. He and other of Doc's aids held honorary posts in the Civil Aeronautics Authority of the Department of Commerce. The stewardess' attitude changed quickly. Without a word, she produced a key and opened the rear door of the pilot's compartment.

Renny charged in and began to yell at the startled pilot. In the same instant, he thrust his identification card before the flier.

"Go after those two bombers," Renny ordered. "And give me your radio. I'll have an army squadron on the way in a jiffy."

The pilot swung the Boeing around and headed north. His co-pilot handed Renny a microphone. In that instant, a booming roar blatted from behind Renny's ear. The microphone shattered and fell apart.

The masked man stood behind Renny with a big .45 automatic in his hand. A second shot bellowed out and the plane's radio transmitter split. The masked one spoke in a disguised voice, as if he had marbles in his mouth.

"You will head back on your regular course," he instructed. "You will make a forced landing in a field near Flint that I shall point out to you."

The man paused, chuckled harshly.

"Doc Savage will be disposed of," he gritted. "That much is essential to our plan." He glanced over his shoulder. The move had been so sudden that no other passengers had had any opportunity to interfere. The little man who had been a "patient" in the hotel room stood at the rear of the cabin. He menaced other passengers with a black automatic. "One move out of any of you," the man with the plastic mask rasped, "and I'll plug the pilot." His eyes glittered fiercely as he looked out of the window at the tiny specks that were loaded bombers heading for Doc Savage's Fortress of Solitude.

Chapter VI. A WORTHLESS GOAL

THE two unmarked bombers droned into the clear morning air of Canada. They roared over the low-lying Laurentian Mountains, into the subarctic area of Hudson Bay. A G-man with good memory would have recognized both of those pilots. The men looked not unlike. Their faces were hard and brutal. Scars crisscrossed their features.

In prohibition days both of them had become well known as aerial bootleggers. One of them had later become involved in an air kidnaping that spread across the front pages of the nation's newspapers. This one was the leader. His name was Dutch Scorvitch.

The map between his knees was marked in triangulation exactly as was the map that Renny had seen in the transport plane. Where Doc's name was penciled on the map was the location of his radio transmitter when he talked with Renny.

Dutch grunted in satisfaction. He spoke into a low-power transmitter. It was a transmitter designed to carry only far enough to keep in contact with the other plane.

"Hit twelve thousand," he rasped. "Get above the clouds. We'll be there in thirty minutes."

Dutch hung just below cloud level so he could keep visual contact with the ground. He frequently used a pair of extremely high-powered binoculars. After a few moments he began to grow excited.

"Boy!" he gloated into the mike. "Our names will go down in history. If we find the bronze guy now, we can't muff it."

Then he let out a yowl, grabbed up the binoculars again. He studied something through them. Then his voice dropped to an expectant whisper.

"It's Doc!" he breathed into the microphone. "There ain't another ship like it in the world. Follow orders to the letter."

Dutch knew his airplanes. Doc's custom-built superspeed two-motor transport was unlike any other ship in the world. Dutch had long hoped he would some day be able to finish the bronze man's career for him. He had closely studied every ship Doc Savage owned. In the air-kidnaping case, which Doc had helped unravel, Dutch had nearly gone to the chair.

Dutch began dropping altitude, still staring through the binoculars. At last he was entirely satisfied. He grunted into the mike.

"The bronze guy's at the stick," he croaked. "Here I go."

Dutch headed his plane straight toward Doc's big transport. The crook squeezed a control lever and two wing machine guns cut loose with a stuttering roar. Dutch used tracer bullets. White streaks of smoke shot past the bronze man's plane. Slugs ripped into the wings. Immediately Doc's ship began to zigzag. The powerful motors burst into full life, whipped the huge ship forward at far greater speed than the bomber possessed.

It appeared that the bronze man elected to fight, rather than use his superior speed to get away. The big plane maneuvered into a position to pour machine-gun slugs from fixed guns into Dutch's plane. Dutch barrel-rolled his ship, came back in from the side. The scarred crook forced the fight, dared the full power of Doc Savage's guns.

Then Dutch laughed out loud. It was a hard, sneering laugh. Doc's plane was maneuvered into such a position that the pilot could not possibly see the clouds above and behind the big transport. And out of those clouds there now dropped, like an avenging bullet, the other bomber that had been concealed. The bomber screamed through the air in a full power dive. Dutch had carried a fight to keep his enemy fully occupied. He chortled with glee as he saw the carefully planned maneuver work.

The other bomber screaming in the power dive was an attack bomber. Lead poured from twin wing machine guns. Then the pilot released light bombs. Slugs and bombs tore into the skin of Doc's heavy plane. The big transport staggered, burst into flames and plummeted to the pine forest below. It crashed in a clearing.

Dutch circled, watched carefully to be sure no living figure escaped from that pyre. Then the ex-kidnaper and rumrunner began to drop bombs systematically upon the wreckage. He flew as low as he dared, insuring the complete demolition of the bronze man's ship.

Dutch was not taking any chances. He desired to report that Doc Savage was, without any vestige of error, one very dead menace to the underworld.

"It's done," Dutch finally croaked. "The bronze man ain't goin' to be no more trouble to nobody." Dutch performed an outside loop with his bomber, just to show how good he felt.

BUT it happened that Dutch's mental attitude toward his health was based on illusion. If the scarred crook could have seen the inside of a speed plane a dozen or so miles away his self-confidence would have vanished.

The speed plane was nearly all motor. It bored through the air in the general direction of Lake

Huron. The plane had only one occupant. The man was bronze-skinned, bronze-haired and had eyes of flake-gold that stirred restlessly.

Doc Savage was so perfectly proportioned that he did not seem to be the giant that he was except when compared with other objects of known size. Doc lay flat on his back now in the cabin of his speed ship. The bronze man went through motions that would have brought a casual onlooker to entertain doubts concerning his sanity.

Doc was indulging in the two-hour routine of exercise which he never neglected. The exercise routine was probably one of the strangest in the world. No career imaginable, except the bronze man's, would have called for such complex training.

It included a series of muscular exertions performed so strenuously that they spread a sheen of perspiration over his great frame. Then Doc used an electric tuning scale to register a series of sound waves above and below those audible to a normal ear. Doc could hear—and could create—sounds that are normally known only to certain animals.

Doc tested a wide assortment of odors concentrated in tiny test tubes. This kept his olfactory organs at top notch. He then read pages of Braille printing, the raised dots through which the blind see the world in which they live. This kept Doc's sense of touch what it should be.

There were many other angles to the routine. All of the steps were highly scientific.

Doc sat up then and began to speak into a peculiar sort of a dictaphone. The device recorded magnetically on a highly sensitized steel tape instead of an ordinary wax cylinder. It was a system of recording Doc sometimes used when danger was sufficiently great. If anything should happen to the bronze man, there were certain things his aids would need to know to carry on.

"Flew five hundred miles from Fortress of Solitude for second contact with Renny," Doc dictated. "Contacted by radio-televisor from transport plane. Assumed triangulation would be made, so set transport on robot control to go into battle maneuvers when penetrated by bullets. Placed dummy figure at the stick."

Doc paused. Then: "Televisor in speed plane showed Dutch Scorvitch at stick of leading bomber. Trace Dutch immediately—"

An excited voice roared from a radio loud-speaker to interrupt Doc Savage. The voice was that of Renny.

"Long Tom. Long Tom at New York," Renny boomed. "I cannot receive. Using throat microphone. Long Tom, stand by and be ready to move instantly."

"Am in Boeing transport making forced landing near Flint. Gang leader has plastic mask. Has been apparently friendly with Mark Heller. Cannot tell whether it is genuine or not. Am calling from washroom to conceal conversation."

Doc's eyes whirled strangely as he listened to the report. Renny was talking on a wave length on which both Doc and Long Tom would be tuned in. Renny used what is known as a throat microphone. Tiny in size, the thing was concealed beneath the collar of his throat. It picked up voice vibrations through the skin. It is of a type used on some airlines. But Renny had no equipment with him to receive messages. Doc had earlier heard Renny comment on the two bombers saluting the transport plane.

"The gang leader got radio word that Doc is dead," Renny boomed. The strain in the big engineer's voice was plain. It was as if Renny didn't believe the report, but feared that it might be true.

"Monk and Ham are also reported killed in their canoe," Renny added.

Renny told Long Tom that they were circling an emergency airfield preparatory to landing. He described the field and gave its location.

Doc Savage leaped to the transmitter of the speed plane. He made no attempt to get Long Tom. Doc called the chief of police of Flint, Michigan. He spoke tersely for a few minutes. Then he shut off his transmitter.

If that chief lived up to his reputation as a law-enforcement officer, the man in the plastic mask would have a rendezvous he did not expect.

DOC shifted his course slightly then. He headed for a spot on the south shore of Lake Superior, many miles above Whitefish Point. Doc set the course and let the machine fly under automatic control as he studied a typewritten report.

A low, trilling sound filled the cabin of the plane as Doc read the typewritten words. It was an eerie manifestation of bafflement on the part of the bronze man.

After a moment, Doc turned on his transmitter again. This time he got Long Tom. He spoke in Mayan. A bleat of surprise and gloom came from Long Tom at the sound of Doc's voice. Doc Savage cautioned him quickly to let no one know he was still alive.

"I cannot contact Renny," Doc told Long Tom. "And I had been unable to raise Monk and Ham. Johnny may be under suspicion by now, so I want you to take his preliminary report."

"All right," Long Tom said. "Let her go."

"The quality of ore delivered to the blasting furnaces from Deep Cut Mine," Doc stated through the microphone, "is in my opinion of such inferior grade that even a war boom in steel will not make mining operations show a profit."

"As Clergue later discovered after promoting ore fields in the mid-country area of Canada, the pockets are scattered and the difficulties of mining so great that only an operation loss can

result."

Long Tom blurted into the radio, "What is all the trouble about if the ore's no good? Could Johnny be wrong?"

"I scarcely think so," Doc's quiet voice assured him. "It appears that there is something more sinister than a fight for control of iron-ore production."

Doc gave Long Tom a list of instructions. Then the bronze man's mouth tightened. He saw below him the locks that permit shipping to go from Lake Superior to the lower lakes. He saw the quiet, well-kept city of Sault Ste. Marie spread out beside the locks.

Doc cut a silencer in on his motor and began a long slow glide toward the west. He was at twenty thousand feet when he started to lose altitude.

The bronze man headed toward the chill shore of Lake Superior; the shore that made the northern border of what the Indians had once called the Devil's Playground.

Chapter VII. THE MISCHIEF MAKER

SOMEWHAT east of the city of Marquette and on the shore of Lake Superior, Doc Savage found a narrow sandspit between two great mounds of sandstone. The wind was wrong and the tiny beach a mere ribbon, but Doc brought his speed plane down to a fast, smooth landing.

He had cut his motor off at ten thousand feet. He had landed dead-stick to attract as little attention as possible. There was a soft crunch as the rubber-tired wheels cut into the sand. Then there was the sudden, startling silence that comes with the abrupt cessation of any mechanical activity.

The silence was broken by a faint grunting that came from the dense undergrowth that began at the edge of the sand. Swampy brush ran head-high for a quarter of a mile before the forest of scrub pine and spruce began.

Doc heard a scuffle in the underbrush. There was a slapping sound as if a fist had plowed into an unprotected jaw. A challenge was muttered in the Ojibway tongue, which Doc understood.

Without a sound, the bronze man wove his way into the tangle of swamp grass and underbrush.

Scarcely a branch moved, so skillfully did the bronze man select his path.

Ahead of Doc Savage, a painted, feathered apparition suddenly leaped into the air. It was the most peculiar-looking Indian Doc had ever seen. The warrior came down with a grunt on something that complained faintly. A voice behind the feathered warrior spoke in tones of considerable disgust.

"All right, you Neanderthal Hiawatha. Now that you've got him, what're you going to do with him?"

The "Neanderthal Hiawatha" ignored the question.

"I told you I could track down an Indian," Monk's shrill voice squalled. "Now, if you're any good at cross-examining, we'll find out something about these Devil's Tomahawks."

Doc moved into the small clearing. Monk, painted like an Ojibway brave, was sitting on a scrawny Indian about half his size. Ham looked at Monk with complete contempt.

"Just because you learned some Ojibway somewhere, you're trying to show off," Ham sneered. "I bet this guy doesn't know anything, anyway."

Monk declined to answer. He hauled his prisoner toward the bole of a big fir tree that had somehow missed the woodsman's ax. Monk leaned against the tree. Then he saw Doc Savage.

"Jehoshaphat, Doc!" he blurted. "You sure came in quietly. I didn't hear you at all."

"You never hear anything but yourself," Ham observed unkindly.

"What happened to you two?" Doc inquired. "I received word that you had both been killed."

Monk's little eyes glittered with triumph.

"If this shyster here'll let me talk about things he doesn't understand, I'll report on that electrolysis gadget," Monk said with quick enthusiasm.

"I'm glad it worked," Doc said simply, and turned to question the scrawny Indian in the Ojibway tongue.

Hairy Monk's face fell. He and Long Tom had developed a thin wire mesh that went over the birch-bark canoe like a kind of hood. It was practically invisible, but highly charged with electricity. The current separated the elements of water, hydrogen and oxygen, by electrolysis. The hydrogen was released and the oxygen fed to the occupants of the canoe by special inhalaters. When the plane machine-gunned the canoe, bullets had not sunk the craft. Monk had opened a valve that sunk it. The canoe—which was actually a highly complete floating chemical laboratory—became a tiny, efficient submarine.

Monk and Ham knew of the explosion of the speedboat. They had heard the explosion and had found some of the wreckage when they returned to the surface. Ham told Doc about it.

"Served the girl right," he snapped. "She must have tipped the plane off to machine-gun us. When her exhaust hit the released hydrogen, the boat blew up."

Monk glared at him.

"I bet she was just coming out to save us," he shrilled. "You haven't got any sense about women, anyway."

"Hah!" Ham snapped. Then he stopped. An arrow whizzed through the air, took Ham in the fleshy part of one arm. A second arrow whipped through Monk's trousers, pinned him to the fir tree like a beetle to a biology specimen card.

Then the air was full of arrows. Peculiarly, none of them were aimed to kill. The three men were

all pinned to the wood of the small clump of trees. The scrawny Indian Monk had captured crawled to his feet and leaped into the edge of the forest.

Then there came the sound of drums. There were several drums, of the signal type. Painted faces showed dimly in the underbrush. One big aborigine stepped into the little clearing. He was well over six foot and as straight as an arrow. His age was difficult to determine. His skin, under the daubs of war paint, seemed clear and young. The haughty arrogance of his eyes bespoke the wisdom of the ages. The big brave calmly folded his arms and surveyed the three men.

"I am Keewis," he said in perfect English. "You are not wanted here. So you will go, at once." It was a statement, not a question. Doc answered him in Ojibway as perfect as was Keewis' English.

"We cannot go," he said simply. "We have work to do."

The Indian's eyes narrowed.

"You will be tried by fire," he threatened.

As if in answer to his threat, a thick cloud of smoke whoomed into the clearing. The half-hidden braves in the underbrush yelled in astonishment, fled into the woods. Keewis hesitated for an instant. Then he stalked off, ignoring both the prisoners and the smoke and flame surrounding them.

"A FORTUNATE coincidence of explosive efflorescence," Johnny's cultured tones came from somewhere in the dense white cloud that surrounded them.

"Aw, cut it out and speak English," Monk complained. "You got me scared enough now."

"He says he was lucky to have a smoke bomb with him my little papoose," Ham translated for him.

"And what makes you think you understand English, anyway?"

Johnny, it seemed, had been instructed by Doc to meet him at the same spot on the shore as had been relayed to Ham and Monk by Renny. Johnny had a short-wave set hidden in the forest. The geologist freed the three men and they moved toward the lake into a large clearing from which they could discern movement in the brush more easily.

"I have your preliminary report," Doc informed Johnny. "Have you learned any more?"

Johnny nodded.

"I have examined every car of ore taken from Deep Cut Mine," he informed the bronze man. "And I have explored part of the mine shafts myself. All I have found is a grade of hematite that is commercially worthless. The transportation costs, either of the ore to the coal and limestone regions, or of the limestone and coal to the Superior regions, prevent the profitable mining of these ores," Johnny explained.

Doc nodded. "I have read other metallurgical reports on the ores found in these areas," he said.

"They agree with yours. But what have you learned of the Indians?"

Monk and Ham both turned toward Johnny then. There was something in the mystery of the Devil's Tomahawks that made them think it couldn't be true, but wish it was. Both Monk and Ham enjoyed a bang-up mystery.

"When I first arrived, the aborigines were extremely friendly," Johnny said. "Since then a strange atmosphere has come over the place. The Indians will not work. They for the most part refuse to talk to the white men. They seem afraid."

Doc described the big Indian who had led the attack on them, asked Johnny if he knew him.

"That's Keewis," Johnny said. "He was a straw boss of some kind in the mine. He got into a fight with Lakonnen, the foreman, and quit. It had something to do with the Devil's Tomahawks. Just what, I have not been able to learn."

Monk tramped around in a circle, muttering the name of Keewis.

"Ought to mean something to me," he grunted. "But I can't get my mind untracked."

"What mind and what track?" Ham asked him nastily.

Johnny told Doc he had two horses hidden in a ravine back in the scrub-pine forest. Doc decided that he and Johnny would go to the mine by land.

"You two take the canoe laboratory and go to the steel mill," he instructed Monk and Ham. "Hide the canoe some place where you can get it quickly. Then come to the mine office. I may need you." Pig-iron Heller had built his rolling mill about two miles from the shaft of Deep Cut Mine. The mine was back in the hills, but the mill was on the shore.

"Come on, you mental midget," Ham snapped. "See if you can trail me."

"Uhhh," Monk pondered. "That reminds me. I'll feed Habeas."

THE two had left their pets at the canoe hidden in the rushes of a small creek. They had come to the spot indicated in Renny's message by way of the shore. They decided to cut cross-country on the way back to save time.

Monk was still muttering about the name of Keewis as he followed Ham through the brush. Then he thought of Iris Heller.

"Dang you," he muttered. "It's all your fault. We should have gone with her to protect her."

"Aw," Ham protested, "she wasn't up to any good."

Monk grew highly indignant. The more he thought of it, the surer he was that the girl was meant to be the only one in his life.

"We might have had grandchildren," he complained.

"They'd probably have had tails and lived in the trees," a feminine voice cut in.

Monk gasped. Iris Heller was securely tied to a small birch tree a dozen feet from the path they were following. She seemed considerably amused at Monk's discomfiture. She was also considerably mad. Or seemed to be.

"As you see, I was not in the speedboat when it exploded," she said, somewhat unnecessarily. Monk gaped at her open-mouthed. Ham seemed to be trying to atone for some of his accusations by untying her. Monk swallowed a couple of times.

"Wh-who—" he began.

"Caspar Grisholm," she said flatly. "He is, or was, a no-good salesman of mining equipment." Ham looked at her judiciously. He could not make up his mind whether she was a good actress and lying, or telling the truth. Ham was notoriously inaccurate in his judgment of women. But Monk was worse.

"Aside from that, who is he?" Monk persisted.

Iris Heller's blue eyes sparkled with sudden hatred.

"Aside from that, he's the man who signaled the plane," she snapped. "He did it with a red flare. Then he slugged me as I beached the speedboat, and went out to have a look. Apparently he wanted to be sure you were done for."

Ham rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Whose side was he on?" he said suddenly. He thought that might take the girl by surprise. She seemed, however, to expect the question.

"The last time I saw him," she said with a deadly flatness of tone, "was six months ago. He was in conference with Marquette Heller, that half-Ojibway adopted cousin of mine."

The girl's voice was bitter with emotion. Her eyes hardened to glacial points of blue.

"That precious cousin of mine and Paul P. Keewis were both with him."

Monk let out a yowl and began to chant:

"With his right hand Hiawatha
Smote again the hollow oak tree,
But in vain for Pau-puk-kee-wis,
Once again in human figure,
Full in sight ran on before him—"

"Pau-puk-kee-wis was the villain of Hiawatha," Monk exploded. "I knew the name was familiar."

Iris Heller glowered at him.

"Yes," she reminded. "This is the land of Hiawatha. It is the land of the Devil's Tomahawks. And it is also the land of a devil named Pau-puk-kee-wis. Paul P. Keewis is reputedly his descendant."

Ham looked a bit incredulous. The girl spoke quickly.

"Do not pass off too lightly the legends of the Indians," she warned. "Particularly when two educated mystics like Marquette Heller and Paul P. Keewis are leading them. Plenty of trouble can arise."

She paused, then said, in a voice that sent shivers up and down Ham's spine, "The Devil's Tomahawks will be heard from again. Mark my word. Other white men will die when it does."

Chapter VIII. THE WAR DANCE

MONK found the hidden canoe without difficulty. He released Habeas Corpus and Chemistry. They had been tied inside the protective mesh of the electrolysis device.

Habeas grunted his pleasure at seeing Monk. Then he raced up to Iris. The porker was like a friendly dog who wanted his ears scratched. As a matter of fact, that was exactly what he did want. Chemistry stalked in brooding aloofness to Ham's side, where he glowered at both pig and girl.

"Hah," Ham whispered to Monk. "The ape has some sense. The hog is as brainless as its owner."

Monk snorted, but swallowed his reply. He didn't consider it the kind of language a young lady should overhear. They placed Iris in the center of the canoe with the pets. Ham crouched in front, Monk kicked over the lever that supplied the chemical rocket propulsion and the canoe shot out into the lake with a whoosh.

The day had worn on into evening by the time they shoved out into the lake. It was dusk by the time they reached the Heller steel mills. Great stacks towered above the open-hearth blast furnaces. Piles of slag were heaped at one end. A great crane rumbled back and forth, taking huge bites out of a rusty-looking ore pile with a clamshell bucket.

Iris explained how her father, prospecting about the time that Clergue sold the idea of the steel mills at the Canadian Soo, got a similar idea. He had tried to split the distance between the Mesabi Range of Minnesota and the limestone and coal of Ohio and Pennsylvania by developing the ore pockets in the midway area.

The girl's story was interrupted by the sudden racketing of a speedboat. It was too dark to see the boat. But Monk had had enough of speedboats, anyway. He whipped out a weapon resembling a slightly oversized automatic pistol. It was fitted with a drum magazine and looked somewhat intricate. Monk attached a new magazine.

It was one of Doc's superfiring machine pistols. The rate of fire was so rapid that the roar was like the hoarse song of a gigantic bull fiddle.

Monk left the bull-fiddle roar loose upon the night without waiting for so much as a challenge.

Two things happened. The engine of the motorboat quit with one dying gasp. And a whitish fog sprang

up around the motorboat. Monk chuckled gleefully. The slugs were of a new composition. They were intended to silence any gasoline motor within shooting range and create a whitish smoke screen at the same time.

The canoe had been heading toward the motorboat at a rapid rate of speed. The chemical rockets were almost noiseless. Suddenly, the two hulls scraped together. Monk leaped aboard the motorboat, prepared for anything.

Except what he found.

He wrapped his hairy arms around the first figure he encountered. He swung one fist back to slug with.

"Holy cow!" the voice rumbled at him. "You might at least offer a calling card."

Monk's mouth dropped open and he stood back sheepishly.

"Renny!" he gasped. "For the love of Pete, what—"

"If the motorboat's got a chauffeur, pay him off and get in with us," Ham suggested. "This canoe is bigger than it looks."

The motorboat had a chauffeur. Monk explained to him that the effects of the gas bullets would wear off shortly and the engine would be as good as new. Renny joined the group in the big birch-bark canoe.

THE big-fisted engineer explained that about fifty cops had pounced on the plane he was riding when the man in the mask forced it down in the field outside of Flint.

A lot of unimportant gangsters were killed, Renny said, but the man in the mask got away. He also said that Marquette Heller disappeared at the Flint airport but had come on later to Sault Ste. Marie in a private plane.

Renny came on in the same plane to Sault St. Marie, where he did some investigating Doc had instructed him to do. Renny looked questioningly at the girl. Monk grunted.

"I think she knows all the answers you could find in Salt Ste. Marie, anyway," Monk opined. "And in addition to that we're goin' to keep her in sight until this thing's cleaned up."

The girl started to object. Then she glanced at Renny. Apparently she figured he would shut her up if she raised a fuss. So she didn't.

Renny said he had learned that a man named Caspar Grisholm was somehow tied up with both N. Nathan Nathanielson and Marquette Heller. Ham looked sourly at the girl.

"If this blond menace is telling the truth," Ham growled, "Caspar Grisholm is the guy who tried to have us killed this morning. He's dead."

Iris Heller flushed. Monk decided it was a good idea to make her mad. She was prettier when she was. But Monk also thought it was a good idea to have someone else the one who got her steamed. She whirled on Ham.

"Of course I'm telling you the truth, you empty-headed clotheshorse," she snapped. "What have I got to hide?"

Iris' head went up in the air, and Monk doubled up in mirth. For once he had so thoroughly queered Ham with a girl that the dapper lawyer wasn't even in the competition. Renny brought Monk up short. The engineer had sized things up pretty well.

"Perhaps," his deep voice rumbled to Iris, "you have already admitted that you were engaged to marry Marquette Heller? And that you arrived in a private plane with N. Nathan Nathanielson!"

Monk's mouth dropped open so wide his head almost disappeared from the front view. Iris' indignation left her as if she had been deluged with cold water. She stammered explanations.

"M-Mark and I broke that up," she moaned. "I hate him now. I swear I do."

"How about N. Nathan Nathanielson?" Ham snapped.

Iris' eyes flashed. Her chin seemed to grow determined.

"He was father's attorney," she said quickly. "Father was supposed to be dying, and it was natural for N. Nathan to come up with me in the plane."

"Yeah," Ham observed. "And it was also natural for G. Gordon Grisholm, a pal of both your ex-fiancé and of the lawyer, to have us bumped off!"

IRIS drew her lips back over fine white teeth. She seemed almost about to bite dapper Ham. Her voice was a low breath of new-found hatred.

"You're being absurd," she snapped. Then to Renny: "Well, what else did you find out?"

Renny's voice seemed to come from his shoe tops.

"Those things I told you are commented on in the evening paper at the Soo," Renny rumbled.

"That's why I told you. Whatever else I've learned will have to wait for Doc. Those were my instructions."

Iris Heller was white. Two burning bright spots of anger showed on her ashen cheeks. She fairly screamed her accusations then.

"All right, then. I'll tell you what you found. If you are any good at all you found that old Luke Heller was the man who caused the death of Marquette's grandfather. Old Luke had a lot of scores against him among the Indians. And then he reformed. He tried to repay a lot of things by adopting Mark and making him his heir.

"But Indians don't forget that easily.

"Are those the things you found out?"

Iris was leaning close to big Renny. Her eyes glowed with a strange intensity. Renny scarcely moved a muscle.

"Something like that," he answered. "And perhaps some more."

Iris seemed somewhat hysterical now. Ham again wondered whether she was putting on an act. He couldn't tell. But if she was, the lawyer decided she belonged on Broadway.

"Yes," Iris gritted, her breasts heaving with emotion. "You would have also found out that Paul P. Keewis and Marquette Heller are mystics who have great power over the Indians throughout this section of the country."

She whirled then on Renny, beat her small fists against his chest.

"Marquette didn't do it!" she screamed. "I tell you he didn't! He couldn't have!"

Just what it was that Marquette didn't do, Iris Heller did not explain. She swooned in the bottom of the canoe. When Monk brought her back to consciousness with smelling salts, she refused to say anything more.

"I guess I got excited," she said calmly. "Let's forget about it."

HAM shook his head as they piled out of the canoe. He got Monk to one side.

"Even you can see she's entirely unreliable," he said to Monk. "I think she's a pretty accomplished actress taking us for a perfect sleigh ride."

Monk grunted. He was almost ready to agree. Her sudden defense of Mark Heller and her refusal to say what it was he hadn't done, perplexed the hairy chemist.

Monk stood by the canoe while the others went up a path leading to the forest in the background.

He was not attempting to conceal anything from Ham and Renny. But he had certain instructions from Doc. Monk did not know himself why they had been given.

First, he stripped the fine wire mesh that constituted the electrolysis hood from the craft. Then he used a waterproof zipper to open a slot along one entire side of the canoe. A pressed lever brought a thin, almost-invisible cellophanelike globe around the canoe. The stuff, a chemical combination known only to Doc, was a sort of glassite that had unbelievable strength for its weight and thinness.

The glassite globe became a superstructure over the canoe, both watertight and transparent, with the strength of so much steel. Monk sunk the canoe then, and hurried after the others.

A grunting sound behind him told him that Habeas had waited for him. Iris Heller was speaking when Monk hastened up.

"I do not know what really caused the return of the Devil's Tomahawks," she insisted. "But I do know they are pretty terrible."

As if her mention of it aroused the evil spirit that commanded the tomahawks of the lost ones, there came a preliminary rumble from the sky. There was no lightning that night. But heavy clouds were banked above.

The rumble became a steady beat. Monk's nostrils dilated.

"Jeepers!" he grunted. "That's an awful smell. Just like an old grave!"

It was pitch-black in the woods. Renny, who was leading, had not used his flashlight any more than necessary. He feared it would attract attention. He flicked it on now. A war whoop burst from Monk's wide mouth. It was not a war whoop in Ojibway. It was plain Anglo-Saxon, with a slight Dixie-rebel touch.

"YEEEEEEOUGH!" Monk yelled, and plunged past Renny.

There were Indians all over the place. A dozen or more were revealed when Renny flicked on his light. They looked to Monk like the same ones who had grabbed them in the morning. Monk sounded more Comanche than Ojibway in that fight. Monk fought best when he fought loudest. He didn't stint himself in either direction this time.

But there were more and still more Indians. It soon became evident that the fight was distinctly a losing one. There was one thing that Monk wanted to be sure of before they tied him up. If these were real, all-wool-and-a-yard-wide Indians, the mystery might be on the level. If they weren't, it was a racket. Monk decided to find out.

Monk was sitting on three Indians when the last reinforcements arrived. He whipped out a small vial and rubbed on the cheeks of the Indians nearest his head. The Indians yelled louder than Monk had ever heard an Indian yell.

Monk didn't blame him much. But it did prove to his satisfaction that it was a real Indian. If that chemical wouldn't take the pigment out, it belonged there.

THEY bound Monk then, along with the others. Three painted braves carried Monk. They were not gentle about it. Monk squalled in protest. The flat side of a stone tomahawk slammed against his head. When he regained his senses, he was standing upright.

There were four stakes driven into the ground. Iris, Ham, Monk and Renny were tied to the stakes. Monk looked quickly around and breathed a sigh of relief. Habeas and Chemistry had apparently taken to the woods. At any rate, they weren't in sight.

Monk surveyed the clearing. Four campfires burned. Painted Indians slunk around those fires.

Moccasined feet beat silent time to the drumbeat that seemed to come from the lowering sky. Monk knew that pulsing beat was supposed to accompany the Devil's Tomahawks, was reputed to be the beating of the drums of death.

The hairy chemist surveyed the huge clearing. The trees at the edges of the clearing were larger than most of the stunted evergreens of the Northland. The Indian camp itself consisted of a huddled group of birch-bark huts. There was one tepee at one end of the clearing.

The braves moved mechanically around the four campfires. There was a sullenness about their faces, a tenseness about their movements. Monk was a considerable student of Indian customs and traditions. He felt the bristles at the back of his neck stiffen as the pulsing beat of the Indian drums increased in tempo.

Ham's face was inscrutable. The dapper lawyer sensed that things were probably going to happen. He was apparently steeling himself against it. Big Renny merely glowered into the campfire nearest him. Iris Heller's blue eyes were wide.

Suddenly a chant broke out among the Indians squatting around the clearing. Monk saw bottles surreptitiously passed back and forth. Sweat broke out on Monk's forehead. He knew that fire water had started many a massacre that could have otherwise been avoided in the early days of the white man's conquest of America's wilderness.

Ugly, guttural sounds came from many of the red men. Then Paul P. Keewis came into the circle of the firelight. He shot a look of contempt and hatred toward Iris Heller. Then he surveyed Monk and Ham. Renny he ignored for the moment.

"You two were warned to leave the North Woods," he said in English. "Trial by fire was the alternative given you. You have chosen."

A huge Indian broke from the line of dancers shuffling about the nearest fire. The big Indian spoke in the Ojibway tongue. Then he repeated in Chippewa and Tahquamenon.

"The White Men at Deep Cut Mine are the ones who must leave," he harangued the Indians. "We must go to them now and demand that they leave. They are the ones the drums have talked about!"

The big Indian paused, danced a war step of his own. It apparently was a tribal ceremonial dance. It brought sudden interest from the watchers.

"We the descendants of the three tribes must throw out the white invaders," the speaker intoned.

"If we do not, the vengeance of the Devil's Tomahawks will fall upon us as well!"

Cries of agreement and fear came from the tribesmen. Monk looked closely at all of those painted faces. He caught words here and there in the Ojibway tongue. The hairy chemist instantly realized that these aborigines were not simulating fear.

They were scared to death of the Devil's Tomahawks! They feared that the tomahawks of the lost ones would descend upon them in spectral vengeance.

It sent a queer feeling up and down Monk's spine. Up to now, the Devil's Tomahawks had been something he thought he'd be able to cope with. Something earthly and strictly temporal, Monk had believed.

Now, he looked at those frightened Indian faces. Monk didn't know. He also did not know that events that were moving swiftly down upon him would make him doubt even less the spirit power of the Devil's Tomahawks.

Gaunt braves rushed to Iris Heller. They untied her brusquely, hauled her along behind them. The big Indian who had delivered the harangue and Paul P. Keewis led the procession toward Deep Cut Mine. Only a small guard was left to watch Monk, Ham and Renny.

"Criminy!" Monk bleated. "This thing is beginning to get me now. Ow, you heathen! Leggo me!"

Monk's last remark was inspired by a rough jostling of one elbow. A painted Ojibway began to untie him.

"You come," the red man grunted. "You what is call hostage."

Monk gave him a large piece of his mind in the Ojibway tongue that made the Indian's mouth drop open. Apparently it was stronger language than he was accustomed to at his own campfire. Then he grinned mirthlessly, gabbled Ojibway back at Monk. He pointed at Ham, who was tied nearest Monk. Monk grinned. "He says that if I act up they'll put you in the stew pot," he told Ham genially.

"Or maybe part your hair with a tomahawk."

The last remark seemed to have slipped out. Monk shuddered involuntarily. He was immediately contrite.

"Aw," he said, "I didn't mean that. I'll do just what these guys tell me."

"Don't worry about me," Ham snapped. "Take care of yourself. They probably think apes are good fresh meat."

Monk was shoved into the underbrush toward the column stalking toward Deep Cut Mine. In the distance, with the sky itself for a sounding board, came the steady, deadly beat of an Indian drum.

Chapter IX. THE GENTLE GHOST

THE combination residence and office of the mine was ablaze with light. A conference seemed to be going on.

Mark Heller sat in the chair behind Pig-iron Heller's big desk. His good-looking, dark face was lined with some great strain. N. Nathan Nathanielson was sitting on the couch. Pig-iron's body had been removed, and the floor was freshly scrubbed.

Most of N. Nathan that showed outside of his clothing was swathed in bandages. He didn't seem in great pain. Apparently the wounds of the Devil's Tomahawks had for once been thwarted before they could cut deep. Or perhaps the ghosts were gentle, just for a change.

Monk wondered as he watched the fat attorney through the window from the porch. There was something else about the lawyer that bothered him. For a man who had just been through a narrow scrape with an awful death, N. Nate seemed quite pleased with himself. He lighted a cigarette with calm deliberation, studied the end of it for a moment.

Huge, platinum-haired Igor Lakonnen strode back and forth in the big room. His hands, which were only somewhat smaller than a fielder's mitt, clenched and unclenched in agitation. His hollow roar of a voice made the windows rattle. He was engaged in some sort of a plea to Marquette Heller when Paul P. Keewis quietly opened the door from outside.

"You are part the Indian," Lakonnen said in his stiff foreign-sounding diction. "You know what they do. Stop them, Marquette Heller. Stop them or they kill us all."

Marquette Heller bit his lips. Great indecision seemed to tear him inside. He looked at the floor, seemed to hesitate to meet the big Finnish foreman's eyes. When he spoke, it was in slow, uncertain denial.

"I do not know what they do, Igor," he said. "I do not know about—"

The slam of the door interrupted him. Paul P. Keewis sprang into the room. The big Indian who had harangued the tribe in the camp clearing was at his side. Iris Heller forced her way between them. The instinctive desire to defend Marquette Heller left her with suddenness when she faced the half-breed in the room. Her eyes blazed icily.

"You lie, Marquette Heller," she rapped. "You do know about the Devil's Tomahawks. It was you who first told me about them. You said you thought they existed. You know—"

Paul P. Keewis lunged toward the girl. With one arm he swung her back into the clutching hands of the braves he had brought with him. Keewis' eyes burned darkly. There was both fear and anger in his face.

"The white daughter will not speak of the Devil's Tomahawks!" Keewis thundered. "Do not tempt the lost ones!"

Iris struggled and Keewis shoved her roughly. That nearly precipitated the end of part of Doc Savage's closely knit organization. Monk let out a howl that could have been heard nearly to Sault Ste. Marie without a telephone.

He leaped upon Keewis and began slugging with both fists.

"I'll pluck out your feathers, you animated guinea hen!" Monk bellowed. "I'll flatten that big beak! I'll—"

Monk tried to do all the things he threatened. Six Indians sat on him and made it difficult. One of them drew a flint tomahawk from a thong belt. The big Indian who had suggested the visit spoke to them sharply in Ojibway.

APPARENTLY, the big Indian's words dissuaded the one with the tomahawk. The big Indian swept the gathering with agate-black eyes that seemed to penetrate their thoughts. Then he addressed Igor, N. Nate and Marquette Heller. Occasionally he nodded toward the girl, feeling that her decision might also matter.

"You already know there is little in this mine of value," he said in perfect English. "Why tempt the Devil's Tomahawks to protect something with so little chance of profit?"

Marquette Heller compressed his lips. He looked stubborn. "I won't leave," he said flatly. "I'll stay."

The big Indian grew suave. "Does your white and greedy half tell you there is something here worth-while?"

"I'll stay," Mark Heller repeated doggedly.

The big Indian shrugged, faded into the background. The others reacted in varying manner. N.

Nathan Nathanielson merely puffed his cigarette. He seemed vaguely pleased. Igor Lakonnen shrugged. He looked with distaste at Heller.

"Whatever the mistress instructs me to do, I shall," he said stiffly. "I do not wish to stay. But I owe her father much. For many years he had been good to me."

Paul P. Keewis put the finishing touch to the conversation. The big Indian apparently didn't pay much attention to it. He wandered around the room, stopped at a chart of the mine. Keewis' voice was low with emotion. It sounded as if he were a little bit enraged, but greatly frightened.

"You must all leave," he said throatily. "The Devil's Tomahawks will get you if you stay. They will also get many of my tribesmen if we let you stay."

He whirled on Iris Heller. "It is your kind who have brought them back. It is the deeds of old Luke Heller not yet atoned for!"

The girl shrank back in sudden fear.

"It is true!" she gasped. "Mark! Mark, what shall I—"

But Marquette Heller was not looking at her. Nor was he listening. A dawning consciousness seemed to have suddenly come over the half-Ojibway descendant of a chieftain. Marquette was staring with queer intentness at the big Indian who was examining the mine chart on the wall.

Marquette let loose a yell that sounded like a war whoop and lunged. He swept up a water bucket and hurled the contents at the big Indian. The big Indian suddenly ceased being an Indian at all. The color ran.

In fact, the big Indian became Doc Savage!

IT was perhaps a peculiar thing that the only man in the room who didn't get into the fight that followed was N. Nathan Nathanielson. The fat lawyer dropped the cigarette from fingers that suddenly shook. An expression of extreme anguish crossed his face.

The others might not all have been motivated by the same desires. But they were all in the scrap. Monk's bellowing battle cry welled up like the challenge of a pack of wild cats. The hairy chemist was knocking Indians around like tenpins.

Paul P. Keewis and Igor Lakonnen seemed to be competing for Doc. Marquette Heller picked up a wooden pump handle from a corner and waded in. Stone tomahawks swished through the air. Suddenly Doc barked orders in a tongue that made the Indians start. It probably sounded somehow strangely familiar to them. It was an Indian tongue—Mayan. It might as well have been Chinese as far as the Ojibways were concerned.

Then the battle took on a weird, unwordly atmosphere. It seemed as if time had gotten somehow out of kilter. A painted brave swung a heavy tomahawk at Doc Savage's head. It struck Doc, but didn't seem to do any damage.

The entire action took on the appearance of a movie film shot in slow motion. Doc Savage reached down and pulled three Indians off Monk's prone form. There was nothing slow motion about Monk's squalling. Nor about the manner in which he raced out of the room into the cold night air. Doc Savage followed him. He paused, once, at the door. Over his shoulder he saw N. Nathan Nathanielson. The fat lawyer's mouth still hung open. He looked like a man who had seen the ghost of someone he had murdered.

Outside, Monk expelled air from his lungs and gulped fresh breaths from the night. Doc tarried a moment and used a suction cup to remove opaque disks from his gold-flaked eyes. The disks, something like the contact lenses used by opticians, had made him appear black-eyed. But they did impair his vision somewhat.

"Whoeee!" Monk wheezed. "That slow-motion gas is sure something."

Doc did not reply. He had dropped a tiny globule of a new gas he had invented inside the room. The gas, instantly effective, slowed up all motor processes of those who breathed it. He and Monk had held their breath.

"It will only be effective for a few moments," Doc advised. "We had better get out of sight."

Doc explained as they walked that he had caused Monk to be taken along, using his guise of the big Indian as authority.

"How'd you get away with it, Doc?" Monk demanded. "Why didn't they know you weren't one of their own gang?"

"They are frightened," Doc explained. "They fear that a new Indian to them may be one of the lost ones returned."

Monk shuddered.

"Jehoshaphat, Doc! There ain't any truth in that."

Doc did not answer.

"What's it all about, Doc?" Monk asked. "Is there really anything valuable in the mine?"

"Not that I have been able to discover," the bronze man said slowly.

Monk shook his head. Then he began to mop perspiration from his brow. The muttering of drums, which had receded into the cloud-blackened sky, came again to his ears. It was a menacing boom, not unlike a distant surf.

"Geewhillikers, Doc! What are them danged drums?"

"I do not know," the bronze man said simply. "But the Indians are afraid of them. They are not putting on an act."

Doc began to move through the brush. He gave Monk quick instructions. He told him to watch everything that went on in the mine office after the effects of the gas wore off.

"Then go back and free Ham and Renny," Doc instructed. "I released you so you could go back and untie them. Their lives are in danger."

With those instructions, Doc Savage disappeared into the blackness of the scrub-pine forest. Monk crept back to the clearing and toward the residence-office of the mine.

He did not need to take great pains to cover the sound of his approach. The deepening mutter of the drums did that for him.

MONK discovered as he crouched under one window that he had been with Doc longer than he realized. The effects of the slow-motion gas had dissipated. The Indians, hardier due to their outdoor life, had apparently been the first to recover.

The Indians were gone. Igor Lakonnen, the girl, Marquette Heller and the fat, pasty lawyer were in the room.

N. Nathan Nathanielson presented a picture that would have given an Indian complete justification in the term of paleface. N. Nate's face was a sickly white, somewhat tinged with green. He kept muttering two phrases through lips slack with fear.

"Doc Savage . . . the Devil's Tomahawks."

Iris Heller glared at the lawyer. Then she glared at Marquette Heller. She seemed both scared and mad.

"I knew you couldn't have done one thing, Mark," she snapped. "You couldn't have killed my

father. You were in Detroit."

Monk scratched his nubbin of a head. At last he had found out what it was the girl thought Mark Heller could not have done. And that knowledge got him exactly nowhere.

"You couldn't have done that," the girl continued. "But you could be behind these Devil's Tomahawks. I think you are."

N. Nathan Nathanielson struggled off the couch on which he had been sitting.

"Doc Savage . . . the Devil's Tomahawks . . . I'm scared."

A heavy rumble of the drums came into the window. Summer heat lightning flickered in the distance. There was a growl from the sky. It might have been thunder that time. Another flash of heat lightning glared.

Then the lights in the residence-office went out. Iris Heller screamed. Monk forgot his instructions. He went through the window.

At first he couldn't see anything. Then there was a smell of smoke. A red flame flickered in one corner of the room. It was a spot near an open window. The age-dried pine of the floor began to blaze. Red tongues of flame raced along the floor, up the walls.

N. Nathan Nathanielson was blubbering in fear. He headed toward the door. Iris Heller had fainted. Marquette Heller was trying to help her up. Igor Lakonnen was prone on the floor. He struggled to a sitting position, began to rub his head. He looked around him with apparent lack of comprehension. Mark Heller was unconscious on the floor.

"Come on!" Monk squalled. "Get out of here before you're cooked."

Lakonnen scrambled to his feet, looked wildly about him. He lunged toward the prone figure of Iris Heller. Mark Heller sat up and looked around.

"Mistress Iris!" Igor muttered thickly. "I must save her."

Fat N. Nathan Nathanielson uttered a choked cry of terror. He stumbled out of the door and into the night. Then a sudden crescendo from the sky made Monk whirl. It made him think of Doc's instructions to free Ham and Renny.

The girl was safe. Igor was stumbling with her toward the door. But Ham and Renny were in danger. Doc had told Monk that much. The hairy chemist tore along as if he had been catapulted.

THE night was as black as the bottom of a coal mine. There were no stars to guide Monk. He whipped a small flashlightlike object from his pocket, flicked a switch. No illumination came from the thing. But the tips of branches on some of the stunted pines glowed faintly.

Monk had blazed his trail after he had been untied and hauled along with the party bound to order the white men out. He had daubed branch tips with a fluorescent chemical. The flashlight, which cast invisible infrared rays, made the fluorescent chemicals glow.

Monk went slowly, almost soundlessly. Too much noise might bring forces upon him that would end any hope he had of freeing Ham and Renny. Monk found himself sweating freely. He was beginning to believe things that all his scientific training told him could not be true.

Once again the beating of the drums seemed to spread out over the entire sky. And once more that sky seemed to come right down to earth, seemed to fill the atmosphere on all sides with the throbbing beat that was like an awesome, giant heart.

Monk hastened as much as he dared. He stepped quietly, but swiftly. Then his nostrils dilated. Once more there came that smell from the grave.

In the next instant Monk began to run. The wailing in the treetops began to increase. It was enough to cover the sound of running footsteps. It became a frenzied war whoop.

The scream that followed, Monk recognized. It was a blubbering, frantic plea for mercy. The voice was unquestionably that of N. Nathan Nathanielson. It ended in gurgling submission.

Monk was racing full tilt. He stubbed his toe and fell flat on his face. He rolled, whipped out his superfiring machine pistol and let loose into the night. When the bull-fiddle roar died down, there was only silence. The beating drums receded, died out in a final mutter. There was nothing then but the gentle sighing of the night breeze in the treetops.

Monk fished out an ordinary flashlight and snapped it on. He discovered that he had fallen over N. Nathan Nathanielson.

The hairy chemist made several low remarks as he examined N. Nathan. The ghosts may have been somewhat gentle with N. Nate when they had swooped down upon him before. They had not been gentle this time. The tomahawks had cut deep. They had carved all of the life out of N. Nathan Nathanielson. The fat lawyer had died a horrible death.

"Jeepers!" Monk muttered. "I'd begun to think the fat guy was working with the thing."

Monk stood up. He flicked off his light and started off through the night.

"This'll be interesting to Doc," he told himself.

In that instant the flat side of a tomahawk slammed against Monk's skull. As consciousness slipped away from him, the chemist heard scattered words in Ojibway.

"Tie the ugly one to the stake," a guttural voice instructed. "His fate will be decided soon." Then Monk's mind went entirely blank.

Chapter X. MICHABOU WARNS DOC

IGOR LAKONNEN carried Iris Heller to a small office at the head of the main mine shaft. The place was little more than a shack with a desk, a phone into the mine and books for keeping operation

records.

Marquette Heller came in with them. Apparently he had been slugged a hard blow on the head. He seemed just beginning to understand what had happened in the house-office. The big building had burned quickly, was now a mere smoldering pile of embers.

Lakonnen got the girl some water, forced it down her throat. Iris opened her eyes and began to moan. Fear leaped into her eyes as memory returned.

Lakonnen was the first to speak. "The Tomahawks," he said stiffly. "They come again. I heard." Mark Heller turned slowly to look at him.

"Who—" he began.

Lakonnen brooded.

"The fat lawyer," he said slowly. "His voice I heard. I am surprised."

Iris looked at him quickly. Her eyes narrowed.

"Why?"

Lakonnen looked uncomfortable.

"He is embezzle," Igor said. "I know your father suspect. I think N. Nate behind the Tomahawks until they kill him."

Mark Heller coughed.

"He's right, Iris," he stated. "I wanted to watch him before I said anything. But your dad wrote me about his suspicions when he sent for me to come up here."

Iris Heller bit her lip. "No one ever tells me things like that," she complained bitterly. "I suppose now you know who is behind this thing and think I'm too young to know."

Mark shook his head. "No," he said. "I haven't any idea. I can't think of any reason for the thing."

Iris eyed him for a moment. Then she came to a sudden decision.

"Either it is the Indians," she began. "Either there is some mysterious reason for the return of the ghosts of long dead Indians . . . either that, or Doc Savage has something to do with it!"

Mark gulped. He looked hopeful.

"Why do you say that?"

"I hate to think he'd be involved in a thing like this," Iris said. "But he's the only white man alive with enough resources to simulate the supernatural like that."

There was pain in the girl's voice. It was as if someone she had always respected had been convicted of a terrible crime. Lakonnen looked broodingly out of a window.

"It is a terrible thing to think," he observed.

A motorcycle roared up the road at that moment. Conversation halted as the rider leaped from the bike and raced to the shack. He pounded on the door. Igor let him in. The rider handed Lakonnen a telegram. The big Finn ripped it open. The message read:

PLEASE TURN ON LANDING LIGHTS. AM ARRIVING BEFORE MIDNIGHT.

LONG TOM ROBERTS.

The motorcycle rider accepted a tip and roared away on his bike. As the sound of his machine died in the distance, the trio in the mine shaft office heard the beat of a propeller in the air. A plane was nearing Deep Cut.

THE muscles of Iris Heller's pretty jaw tightened. Some of the decision that had made old Pig-iron Heller famous in the North Woods seemed to have been inherited by his daughter.

Iris strode toward the door. Her shoulders were straight and her step determined.

"Until we find out what this is about," she announced, "we will take Doc Savage's gang into custody. If they are innocent, they will have to prove it."

Mark indicated quick approval. Lakonnen just grunted in indecision. Apparently things were moving too fast for him. He followed Marquette and the girl out, pausing only to pick up a large oversized flashlight.

The backwoods landing field was several minutes' walk. Iris and her regular pilot had not asked for landing lights because they knew the terrain well and had landed at the tiny field many times. The plane's landing lights had been sufficient. Iris commented on that while they walked toward the field.

"Doc's men are accustomed to landing under unusual circumstances," she observed. "But I guess this North Woods is a pretty tough place to find your way in. Even from the air at night."

The landing lights were fastened to trees on all four sides of the airfield. An insulated box at the base of one tree held the switch. Iris Heller pulled it, and the field was bathed in a pale brilliance. Lights on the plane itself showed its outline now. Iris Heller gasped.

It was one of the strangest planes she had ever seen. In the dimness it looked like a giant dragonfly. It was Doc's autogyro, one of the few true gyros in existence. The thing could land and take off almost vertically.

The giant blades beat slowly in the air as the gyro settled. It rolled only a few feet on the landing wheels before it stopped. The man who stepped out brought a gasp from Iris Heller. The womanly instinct to mother a helpless being rose within her.

The man obviously should have been in a hospital. He was slim, and of scarcely average height. His complexion suggested that he had been raised in darkness, or had spent most of his life in a

sickbed. Long Tom Roberts always impressed people that way on first introduction. He looked like a walking example of successful pernicious anaemia.

It was a matter of record, however, that several husky gents who had fallen into that error of reasoning had been the ones who wound up in the hospital cots. Long Tom could hold his own very nicely in a scrap.

"Hullo," Long Tom said, apparently surprised. "Quite a reception committee."

He took two steps forward. Then the drums of death came back. They didn't take the time of preliminary rumblings. The pulsing beat burst full-blown into the air. In the same instant the landing lights went out. The weird, wailing war whoop welled up into the air with terrifying volume. Long Tom's scream followed the whoop of death. The drums crashed in crescendo.

Igor Lakonnen gasped, whipped up his flashlight. A mighty hand reached out and slugged him. Igor fell to the ground. He rolled, fumbled around in the dark for his flash. Finally he found it. The rumble of drums receded then. Igor flicked on his light. Iris Heller screamed. Then she fought for composure. There was terror in her voice. It was strangely mixed with relief and awe.

"It can't be Doc Savage," she said in a voice husky with emotion. "His own men—"

Long Tom lay in the center of the airfield. His body was twisted grotesquely. Scores of red gashes showed on his features. His clothing was ripped and torn where other blades had slashed at his body. Iris gave a little cry and ran to the motionless form.

"I've had nursing experience," she gasped. "Maybe—"

She leaned over the newest victim of the North Woods terror. Then she shook her head.

"He is dead," she stated. "There isn't any possible question of that."

IGOR LAKONNEN'S face was whiter than his platinum-blond hair. His hands shook as he looked at the motionless form of Long Tom Roberts. His huge Adam's apple bobbed up and down as he gulped in terror. Igor's eyes were pale circles of honor.

Igor Lakonnen was scared. He was terrified. It was minutes before he could speak. The big Finn was obviously not putting on an act. He stumbled slightly as he moved toward the autogyro.

"L-l-l-let's talk this thing over," he mumbled.

Igor, Mark and Iris climbed into the snug cabin of the gyro. The lights of the instrument panel, the modern equipment, seemed to sweep them out of the eerie terror that stalked the woods. Dance music came faintly through a radio receiver Long Tom had left turned on.

Marquette Heller's black eyes stared unseeingly at the instrument panel. Again, indecision seemed to overcome him. Perspiration dripped from his chin. Slowly he shook his head. The determination to stay at the mine that he had displayed earlier seemed to have left him.

"I . . . I do not understand it," Mark stammered. "I am afraid that it may really be what it seems."

Iris looked at him sharply.

"Maybe you've wanted us to think that right along," she snapped.

Lakonnen looked vaguely from Mark to the girl. Then he looked back at Mark. The half-Indian kin of chieftains shuddered visibly. His lips tightened grimly.

"There are certain things that I know to be true that must be considered," Mark said. His voice was low, seemed to cause him pain when he spoke. He counted on his fingers as he listed points in his reasoning.

"The iron ore of Deep Cut Mine is worthless commercially," Mark said. "It would benefit no one to control it.

"I have known for many weeks that most of my people really believe the Tomahawks of the Lost Ones have returned.

"And we must remember that Luke Heller confessed that he was responsible for my grandfather's death. That only became known recently. And my grandfather was a chieftain of the Ojibways."

Mark burrowed his head in his hands. Then he looked up. Marquette Heller was either a master of histrionics, or he was a badly scared man.

"I know it sounds mad," he said miserably. "But I feel that we should leave. I am half white. The Tomahawks would not spare me if this is really the legend come true."

Iris Heller did not agree. Her eyes flashed with stubbornness.

"As long as Doc Savage is here to help us," she said flatly. "I will not leave. I'm sorry that I misjudged him."

Lakonnen nodded in agreement. He was scared. Definitely. But he seemed ready to agree to anything the girl insisted upon doing.

"If mistress say we shall stay," he said, "I stay with her."

Iris got up. She picked up a blanket that was rolled in one corner of the cabin.

"We cannot leave him uncovered like that," she said, nodding toward the spot where the Tomahawks had caught up with Long Tom.

Iris climbed out of the gyro. The others followed. Lakonnen snapped on his flashlight again.

It was then that they discovered Long Tom's body had disappeared!

MARK HELLER seemed staggered. His black eyes were wide.

"Let's get back to the office," he snapped. "I'll send word through the Indians that we want to see Savage. If he is in the forest, the Indians can find him."

The two men and the girl ran across the field. They raced up the road toward the tiny mine-shaft office. The beat of drums came again into the air. It was not the steady pulsing of the drums of death. There was a break in the rhythm, a sharpness to the roll.

It was the primeval telegraph of the wilderness, the signal drum of the savage. This was not the prelude to the descent of the Devil's Tomahawks. It was a particular message.

Mark Heller stopped as if he had run into a stone wall. His face drained of what color it had. Slowly, Mark repeated what the beat of the drums pounded into his ears.

"Doc Savage must die. The bronze giant has been a friend of the red men of other areas. But the bronze man should not have interfered with the will of the great Michabou.

"It is unfortunate, but Michabou must snuff out the life of the bronze one. The Devil's Tomahawks will not take him. He has done good deeds in his life. For that he shall be honored. His death will not be that of revenge--"

The drums stopped. Then the irregular beat came again. The message was being repeated. Mark Heller looked at Lakonnen and Iris.

"I'm going to find him," Marquette said flatly. "Wait for me at the shaft office."

With that, Mark Heller disappeared. He snaked into the woods through the tangle of underbrush as silently as a brave on the hunt.

Chapter XI. A TOMB FOR DOC

SHORTLY before the drums pounded the warning of Michabou into the night air, Doc Savage stood not many feet from the mine-shaft office. Doc had watched the sudden exodus of Iris Heller, Marquette and Lakonnen caused by the telegram.

The bronze man had considered that a fitting time to carry on part of his investigations. But another figure flitted through the night. It was a tall, well-built figure. And the man glided through tangled underbrush with a silence that compared with the movements of the bronze man. Doc paused, watched through one of the tiny windows. Electric lights burned within the shack. Doc saw the painted features of Paul P. Keewis. The tall Indian searched quickly through a desk of records. His features were inscrutable as he thumbed through a ledger. He shrugged, looked nervously around him.

Then Keewis moved quietly out of the door. As silently as he had appeared, he vanished into the woodland. Doc made no effort to follow him. Instead, the bronze man slipped into the shacklike office and did some investigating of his own.

Doc's examination was more thorough than that of Keewis. The bronze man opened a special equipment vest he always wore. He took out chemicals. And he found an infrared flashlight similar to the one Monk had used.

Doc examined tally books showing cars of ore sent over the narrow-gauge railroad tracks to the mill. He examined time sheets and ledgers. He daubed chemicals over them, subjected them to the infrared rays. When Doc had finished, he knew that there was no secret writing on any of those mining records. Apparently they were just what they purported to be, and no more.

Then Doc found another book. It appeared to have been carelessly tossed onto one corner of the floor. It was much like the others; merely showed time worked by night-shift workers. It is no darker in a deep shaft mine at night than in the daytime. Doc applied chemicals and infrared light to this book, also. It showed no more than the rest.

Doc put the book back where he had found it. He glided out into the night.

His actions indicated that he was as baffled about the mystery as anyone else at the mine. Doc spoke, half aloud.

"Whatever it is," he said, "the stakes are very great."

Then Doc Savage listened. In the distance he heard the drum. It was the thumping message that Marquette Heller had translated; the warning of Michabou that Doc Savage must die. Doc Savage could read the message of the drums. He had spent many hours studying the lore of the Indians of North America.

Doc's features displayed no emotion whatever as he loped along through the night, listening to the drumbeats of warning to him. Then he heard human voices. He halted, as motionless as a pine tree. Lakonnen and the girl were coming up the road.

"Mistress, I am afraid," the big Finn rumbled in his hollow roar of a voice. "I fear this thing is too big for us."

Iris Heller was weeping openly. One of the things Doc Savage regretted was the manner in which women too often reacted to him. The bronze man's life was one so adventure-packed that he had long ago decided that women could have no place in it. The dangers were too great.

"D-D-Doc Savage came to help us," Iris wept. "I could never rest if I ran out while he was in danger."

Lakonnen bowed. "It shall be as you wish, mistress," he rumbled. "I shall stay to guard you." The two passed on, and Doc strode on through the bush. He was headed toward a more remote part of the mine. There were many shafts in Deep Cut Mine. Some were in active use. Others had been abandoned. Some were mere pits half filled with water. Johnny had given Doc a pretty accurate description. In addition to that, Doc had examined the mine chart in the residence-office that had burned down. The bronze man's memory was remarkable. Every shaft and tunnel was clearly etched in

his mind.

Doc was mentally examining every section of that mine layout when a guttural voice interrupted him.

"Him Doc Savage. Get him!"

Yelling like Comanches on the warpath, more than a dozen buckskin-clad figures flung themselves on the bronze man.

DOC SAVAGE twisted, smashed out with a fist. A jaw cracked, and two other adversaries dodged. The bronze man's reputation was well known, even in the North Woods. Doc twisted, began to run like a halfback through a broken field.

Quick fingers explored Doc's equipment vest, flung out small globules that shattered on impact with tree trunks. Red flame leaped into the night. Dense smoke whoomed above it. A miniature forest fire immediately surrounded the racing bronze giant.

Inarticulate cries of fear and rage welled up from his attackers. There was a small brook nearby. One of the men found a discarded bucket, began to hurl water on the flames.

Instantly there was a minor explosion. Doc Savage whirled, retraced his steps. He ran directly into the mob of fighting Indians. Doc had taken a chance on using the chemical he did. It was one that created much smoke and a lurid red flame. Otherwise it was comparatively harmless.

Unless it came in contact with water. Like calcium carbide and many other chemicals, contact with water made a really raging, dangerous substance of it.

A high wind had sprung up during the night. Doc knew the property and lives that would be endangered by the thing he had started. Always unwilling to take the life, even of a criminal, Doc returned to protect those who were innocent. A forest fire in the dry summer, and with a high wind, might well devastate miles of woodland.

The bronze man dodged his foes as he hurled a counteracting chemical into the place where the crooks had poured the water. Doc was successful in extinguishing the raging flames. But in doing that, he gave the attackers the opportunity they wanted.

Doc was tackled from behind. Modern leg irons were quickly clamped upon his legs. Other assailants leaped upon his back, slugged him with very modern blackjacks. Doc was quickly trussed. The blackjacks had failed to knock him out. But he was groggy.

"Dis guy ain't so tough," one of the "Indians" remarked. "Hell, he's just a pushover!"

"Ugh!" one of his companions observed. "Great White Father now just paleface jackass."

MOST of the "Indians," it quickly developed, came from the tougher sections of New York City.

They crowded around the bronze man and entertained themselves with various remarks about his change in fortunes.

"We done better than Dutch," bragged one "Indian" with a flattened nose and cauliflower ears.

"An' rubbin' dis guy out is soertainly goin' to be a pleasure."

"Unnh," another said. "We ought to give him the tomahawk rubout."

Broken-nose sneered at him.

"Don't be a moroon," he said. "How could we blame it on de bronze guy when it's all over if we done that?"

The other agreed reluctantly. While he was doing it, the harsh tones of Dutch Scorvitch rasped through the night.

"Don't talk so damned much," the aviator and ex-kidnaper growled. "Thing's ain't goin' right, anyway."

The men stopped talking. They looked nervously at each other. Three of them immediately sat on the bronze man. They knew by reputation that things usually went haywire when Doc Savage was involved. Dutch Scorvitch read their thoughts. He knew crooks and the yellow streaks they usually show in the pinches.

"It ain't that," he grumbled. "Somebody must've made a mistake. The thing's got one of Doc's men.

The guy called Long Tom. Now we'll have a hell of a time blaming it on him."

The men seemed relieved that there was nothing more wrong than that. All except Broken-nose, who suddenly found something else to worry him.

"Hell!" he exclaimed. "The thing ain't out of hand, is it? It might get us, if it is."

Dutch Scorvitch didn't answer right away. It seemed that such a thought had occurred to him. But apparently Dutch's stake in the proceedings was enough to make him bolder than the rest.

"Naw," he muttered. "The boss says he can control it."

"Just what is the thing, Dutch?" Broken-nose demanded. "I think we ought to know."

Dutch glared at him. "I don't know what in hell it is," he growled. "And it ain't any of your damned business! Now let's go. You got your orders."

DOC SAVAGE was trussed up in the fashion that natives carry a tiger shot on the veldt. A long pole was run between the handcuffs at his wrists and the leg irons at his ankles. Two men shouldered each end of the pole and the procession moved through the northern night.

It just happened that the "porters" packed their burden in the exact direction Doc had been traveling in when he was seized. Trees and brush had been cut away in that area. There were great mounds of black and reddish dirt. It was a place of complete desolation. Mine shafts showed as black and ugly holes at irregular intervals. Dutch made a pale pathway of light so that none of his men

fell into any of them.

Finally they came to one black excavation that seemed to be their goal.

"Set him down," Dutch grunted. "I'm goin' to frisk him before we toss him in. We can't take no chances with dis guy."

The job of searching was very thorough. Dutch stripped off the equipment vest. He removed the bronze man's shoes. Then he examined every seam and pocket in Doc's clothing.

"Get me a pail o' water, Nosy," he said to the thug with the broken proboscis. "I'll do this thing right."

"Why don't you just bump him?" one of the phony Indians demanded. "Then you wouldn't have to do all this."

Dutch Scorvitch sneered. His scarred face was twisted with cruelty and hatred. Dutch was known to have tortured more than one enemy to a slow and painful death. He had spent time and trouble to send his enemies out of the world the painful way, even when it was more dangerous for him to do it.

"Dere was a kidnapin' case I was mixed up in," he rasped. "Dis bronze guy nearly had me nailed for it. An' no one can fool me the way he did in Canada without payin' plenty for it."

The killer sneered as Broken-nose handed him a pail of water from the brook. Dutch sloshed part of it over Doc's clothing. Then he examined the results. There was no chemical reaction worth noting. So Dutch washed Doc's hair. He had read somewhere that Doc had once carried chemicals in his hair that had enabled him to free himself.

He removed all of Doc's clothing except his shorts. Then he doused those well with water.

"O. K.," Dutch grated. "Toss him. He ain't got a thing on him could do him any good."

The gangsters acted quickly. They literally did "toss him." They tossed the bronze man, carrying-pole and all, into the black mine shaft. Doc hurtled thirty feet or more into blackness. The pole caught with a splintering crash. Doc hung there like a pig ready for roasting at a barbecue.

"Good," Dutch growled. "Now the works."

There was a rumbling explosion from above. Dirt and stone lifted into the air; tons of it. Then it settled with a rumbling crash.

The mine shaft was not vertical. It went into the hillside on a slant, then turned downward. The mass of earth and stone filled the entrance. Large chunks of it hurtled directly down toward the bronze man. The rest of it sealed that shaft as completely as a major cave-in.

There were great chunks wedged crosswise. No one man could have broken through that mass. Not even a man who had his hands and feet to work with.

Dutch stood for a moment surveying his handiwork. His eyes flickered with evil pleasure. With slow deliberation he spat upon the pile of ore and rock.

"Scatter," he grated finally. "Get back to the spots where you belong."

Some of the gangsters drifted off into the night. Broken-nose and a few others trudged along with Dutch. They headed in the direction of Lake Superior. Before they had gone far, the slow, regular beating of a distant drum pulsed through the air. It was the regular, slowly increasing tempo that had come many times with the Devil's Tomahawks.

Broken-nose shuddered. He looked around him, huddled closer to Dutch Scorvitch.

"I wish I knew what that thing was. It gives me de creeps," he muttered.

Dutch spat out an oath. His voice was loud. It was as if he tried to reassure himself by making as much noise as possible.

"It's O. K., it's O. K.," he defended. "The thing's workin' with us, ain't it?"

Broken-nose didn't seem to be absolutely sure of that. He said, "I don't mind throwin' a shiv. I'll take my chances against an automatic. Or even a Tommy-gun. But dis thing- hell, it's comin' nearer!"

The rumbling drums had indeed reached a new crescendo. Once again they seemed everywhere. Dutch and Broken-nose stopped stock-still. Half a dozen other thugs huddled with them. Then the drums began to recede slowly. Dutch heaved a sigh of relief.

"Aw, we needn't have stopped," he grunted. "It ain't goin' to do us any harm."

But Dutch was suddenly glad that they had stopped. If they hadn't, they would have missed seeing the figure that clambered from a nearby mine shaft. As it was, they did see the figure. And they stood motionless, almost invisible in the gloom.

The other figure climbed noisily over loose rocks and pieces of iron ore. The figure seemed in a hurry. Sudden words burst from his lips.

"An ascertainment of profound appurtenance to solution," Johnny's well-modulated voice exclaimed.

Broken-nose whispered quickly to Dutch. "What's he mean?" the thug hissed.

"I dunno," Dutch gritted. "He must of found something out. Get him."

Broken-nose and the others leaped at the order. Compared with the ominous threat of the drums of death, any mere man seemed an easy gamble. Even one of Doc Savage's aids. Or, as they had just demonstrated, Doc himself.

They got Johnny in double-quick order. The tall, bony geologist was not expecting trouble so close at hand. He was taken quite by surprise. One thug swung the butt of a heavy automatic with all the strength he had. It crunched against Johnny's skull with a sound of sickening destruction.

"You don't need to kill him," Dutch muttered. "We ought to find out what he knows."
Johnny lay on the ground. Blood trickled from his head.

Chapter XII. DEATH FOR ALL

"PICK him up," Dutch ordered. "Take him to the camp. We'll soon find out what he knows."
Broken-nose and three of the other Brooklyn Indians picked up the unconscious form of the bony geologist. They packed him through a thicket and down a narrow path that wound through the woods. The four were panting from their exertion when they came to a small clearing. A campfire burned brightly there. Behind the fire was an ancient lumber-camp bunkhouse. It apparently had lain disused for years. The crooks had repaired it in places. There were new shingles on the roof. The windowpanes looked new.

Dutch gave quick orders, and the crooks propped Johnny up in a canvas-backed camp chair. Broken-nose rummaged in a first-aid kit and pulled out a bottle of ammonia. He shoved this under Johnny's nose. At first it didn't have any effect at all.

Dutch came out of the tent with a dictionary. He frowned as he thumbed through it. Obviously philology was not a hobby with him. Finally he sighed in relief.

"Yep," Dutch snorted. "That's what he meant. He'd found something out. We gotta know what it was."

By that time the smelling salts were beginning to have some effect. Faint moans came from Johnny's lips. He didn't regain consciousness immediately. And when he did, Dutch was not there to question him.

The train of events rather upset the kidnaper and ex-bootlegger. It upset quite a few persons in those North Woods. There was a terrific racket as a stocky figure tore into the clearing. Sweat was pouring from his face. A lot of the grease paint he had depended upon to make him look like an Indian was dripping away with it.

The man's mouth drooled with terror. He rushed up to Dutch Scorvitch and whispered rapidly into his ear. Every vestige of color drained from Dutch's face. Beads of perspiration broke out on his forehead. He hesitated for a moment. His bravado and assurance dropped off his shoulders like some piece of wearing apparel. His shoulders sagged.

"Hell," he moaned. "The damned thing got Slug Merner."

Broken-nose gulped.

"The Tomahawks got Slug?" he yelled.

Scorvitch nodded. Without a word he went into the bunkhouse and came out with a packsack.

"So long, mugs," he muttered. "If that thing's against us, there ain't no dough that could keep me around."

Broken-nose looked at Dutch for a minute. He seemed too stupefied to move. Then there was a faint distant rumble of the drums. Broken-nose began to move very rapidly. So did every one else in the camp. The exodus was really alarming. It looked like the California gold rush days when a new strike had been reported.

In practically no time at all, Johnny was the only man in the camp. The big geologist seemed struggling for consciousness. Finally he opened his eyes. They seemed blank, without comprehension. At that instant Marquette Heller slipped out of a thick clump of stunted spruce at one side of the camp. Marquette looked carefully around him. His black eyes glittered strangely in the red light of the fire.

Slowly, he crept toward Johnny. He leaned over him.

"Little Johnny, what did you learn?" he asked.

The gaunt geologist turned his head slowly toward Mark Heller. Then he shook his head.

"I . . . I don't know w-w-who I am," Johnny said slowly. There was no inflection to his words. There was no feeling whatever in his voice. Marquette Heller stood suddenly back.

"You are Doc Savage's aid," he prompted. "You have learned something. It is important."

Johnny shook his head. "I don't know," he said mournfully.

The crushing blow on Johnny's head had robbed him of his memory. Whatever he had learned was completely sealed until that amnesia left him. That could be days, months or even years.

Marquette Heller acted swiftly. He put one arm around Johnny, hauled him to his feet.

"We must go," he said. "Other people would like to talk to you."

Johnny made no effort to protest. He moved like an automaton. There was no ability to resist any suggestion Marquette Heller made to him.

Marquette made only one more effort to jog Johnny's memory before they got back to the shacklike office of the mine shaft. Marquette was thinking of the threat of Michabou.

Perhaps he was merely interested in knowing what Johnny knew of the whereabouts of the bronze man.

"Where is Doc Savage?" Mark Heller asked. "What has he learned?"

Johnny looked at him blankly. "Doc Savage?" he asked plaintively. "Who is Doc Savage?"

Johnny's features worked queerly. A great mental strain seemed to seize the gaunt geologist. But nothing came of it. Not even the name of the man Johnny thought more of than his own life could bring a flicker of memory to him.

DOC SAVAGE, it happened, was in the most complete darkness known to man. Not the moonless night;

nor the deepest forest; not even the depths of an ocean knows the utter blackness of a filled-in mine shaft.

Column after column of newspaper space has been written about the abyss that is the mine shaft or tunnel after a cave-in. There is nothing known to man that is worse than the utter futility, the suffocating blackness of a walled-in subterranean passageway.

Miners have gone mad with despair in such conditions. And those miners knew that efforts were being made from above to rescue them. They had their two hands and their feet to use to extricate themselves. Often they had picks and, many times, explosives that they knew how to handle. But they died, miserable creatures, often mere bloated bodies found floating in the black waters that fill in the pits of deep shaft mines.

It is doubtful that Doc Savage thought of those things as the tremendous blast of TNT cascaded tons of earth, rock and ore into the mouth of the tunnel. Doc was not given to such speculation. All his life the bronze man had been trained to think, not of the situation into which he had been thrown, but of the possible means to extricate himself from the situation.

Rocks hurtled down, upon and past him. Dutch Scorvitch had thought that the casting of the bronze man into such a pit still trussed like a sacrificial animal had been the final touch to the situation. Dutch did not realize that he probably saved the bronze man's life by doing that.

Doc hung downward from the stout carrying-pole. One huge piece of rock clipped his right hip as it hurtled past. The bronze man swung away from the impact. Small pieces rained upon him. The next big chunk, a piece of hematite weighing half a hundred pounds, struck the wooden pole squarely. The pole cracked and splintered like a wooden target beneath a high-powered demolition bomb.

Doc plunged downward, released from the pole that had held him. The bronze man had been conscious during the time he had been carried. He knew what mine shaft he had been imprisoned in. From his memory of the chart back in that now-destroyed office, he was certain just how far he would fall. Doc hunched himself, turned in the dark air. Then he straightened. He hit the surface of the black water in that flooded shaft feet first. He submerged many feet. Then the buoyancy of the body brought him to the surface.

Doc had spent many hours swimming with hands and feet manacled. Just as skillfully as the tadpole swims before it gets its legs and becomes a frog, and just as effortlessly, Doc Savage circled the black pool. Finally he found a ledge. It was a tiny one, jutting just enough to hook his chin upon. He rested there for a moment, then worked his way around the pit.

As in many mine shafts, he discovered one ledge wide enough to rest his entire body upon.

Wriggling like some aquatic animal, he forced his big body up on it.

Then Doc Savage did a peculiar thing. He sat erect upon his ledge and sneezed. The first sneeze did not suit him. He sneezed again and louder. As he did, he kept his hands cupped before him.

Doc had expected that he might be seized and thoroughly searched. His enemies had discovered many hiding places he had found for chemicals that would aid him. He had even had false teeth incasing his own perfect ones that contained explosives powerful enough to blast solid walls of masonry that stood between him and freedom. Dutch Scorvitch had not examined the bronze man's teeth. But even if he had, he would not have found anything of value.

Doc's right nostril held a tiny capsule of tremendous value to him at that moment. He caught it skillfully in his cupped hands. Clutching it between a forefinger and a thumb, he broke it, let the contents drip over the chain links of the handcuffs. In half a dozen moments, they parted. The stuff was a highly powerful solvent that worked on any metal.

His hands free, Doc leaned down, removed a false toenail from one of his toes. It became a tiny steel tool that he used to pick the lock of the leg irons.

Then the bronze man was free-free fifty feet below the ground with many tons of ore, rock and earth sealing the passageway above him.

Doc grinned in the darkness. No one could see that grin. But could Dutch Scorvitch or any of his other enemies have seen it, they would have removed themselves from the immediate vicinity with some haste.

Doc had closely examined the chart of the mine. He knew the layout of this passageway to the minutest detail. He stood on the ledge, took a breath of the damp subterranean air deep into his lungs. Then Doc dived deep into the black, forbidding water.

Twenty feet or more below that surface, Doc's hands found the horizontal passageway he had expected. According to the chart of the mine, it led to another shaft a hundred feet away which was an active mining pit. Doc swam toward that. Each time his hands came back in a powerful stroke, he touched the wall. That helped him keep track of the distance he had traveled. Pieces of loose rock came off in his hands.

Fifty feet into the hollow shaft, Doc felt a sudden movement of the water. The narrow tunnel suddenly became an aqueduct. The water began to rush backward in the direction from which Doc had come. The bronze man knew something of the geological structure that is beneath the bodies known as the Great Lakes.

He knew there are underground passages between the lakes themselves. They probably were caused by the tremendous pressure of the great glacier as it crept back to the Arctic regions where it has been ever since. The spring-fed lakes are connected by tremendous natural aqueducts far below their

bottom levels.

Doc Savage knew when that sudden torrent started that some subtle change in Lake Superior had undoubtedly caused it. And he knew that if he went with it, he was finished.

The bronze man hung onto a tiny rock projection. The flurry of water was fairly brief. Even so, Doc Savage, who could remain under water much longer than the average professional South Sea skin diver, was bursting for air before it stopped.

As soon as the current lessened, Doc shot ahead, swept up the next vertical shaft. He broke the surface beside a horizontal section of the adjoining shaft. There were narrow-gauge tracks, picks and the many signs of recent work.

Doc pulled himself up onto the lip of the horizontal section. He climbed to his feet and, stooping to avoid overhead obstructions, clambered to the lip of the shaft.

As he emerged into the starless night, Doc heard a familiar drumbeat. It was not the steady beat of the drums of death. It was the same drum in which the North Woods had been warned that Doc Savage must die.

This time the drum told a slightly different story. The climax of it was that many in the North Woods would die. It said that all who were present might fall under the rage of Michabou!

Chapter XIII. JOHNNY IS KIDNAPED

WILLIAM HARPER LITTLEJOHN permitted himself to be led to the shacklike office of the main mine-shaft head without any resistance whatever. It was obvious that Johnny's mind was entirely blank.

Marquette Heller shoved Johnny in ahead of him. Igor Lakonnen and Iris Heller were there. Lakonnen was pacing up and down. He stopped now and then to plead with Iris.

"Little mistress," he said, "do not endanger yourself. You should flee before this thing takes us all. For me, Igor, it does not matter. But I promised your father I would protect you."

Iris Heller was scared. Little twitching muscles at the corners of her eyes told that. But the stern jaw of Pig-iron Heller had a gentle feminine counterpart in hers. The girl was determined.

"I will not leave while Doc Savage is in danger," she repeated.

There was a body on the floor. The man was motionless, without pulse or breath. Four dozen ugly scars were on his body. The face had been painted like that of an Indian. The chilling body was not that of an aborigine. Iris did not know who he was. But she knew the Tomahawks had caught up with him in the darkness of the night.

Igor looked at the remains of the victim. He shuddered. Real fear gleamed in the Finn's pale eyes. He licked his lips with a tongue that seemed dry and feverish.

"It is horrible," he muttered. "I cannot stand much more."

At that instant Johnny stumbled in, followed by Marquette Heller. Johnny walked loosely to a chair and sat down. His vacant eyes stared about the room without recognition.

"Little Johnny!" Iris cried. "What has happened to you?"

Johnny stared uncomprehendingly.

"Hello," he said flatly.

Marquette Heller burst out in a torrent of words. He told of stumbling onto the ancient lumber camp bunkhouse while Dutch Scorvitch and his mob were trying to revive Johnny and question him.

"Dutch said Johnny had 'learned something about this thing,'" Marquette said, quoting the kidnaper. "I don't know what it is. But it might be plenty important."

Igor Lakonnen's eyes went wide. He leaped to Johnny's side. He leaned over, looked into the geologist's staring eyes.

"What is it, Little Johnny?" he demanded. "Tell us what you know."

Johnny looked at him for a moment. He seemed to be trying to understand. His face contorted with the mental struggle that was going on within his brain. He reached out a tentative hand, touched the sweating face of the huge, white-haired Finn. Then he smiled faintly, as if he thought something was expected of him, but could not quite put his finger on it.

"Who are you?" he asked simply. "What is it that I should know?"

Igor Lakonnen burst out in a hollow roar of bafflement. He turned to Marquette Heller to ask him further questions. But Marquette had discovered the grisly body upon the floor.

"Who is he?" Marquette demanded. "What happened to him?"

Lakonnen shuddered.

"I thought at first he was an Indian," he said. "But obviously he is not. No Indian ever had features such as those."

"What happened to him is obvious. It is the Devil's Tomahawks."

Lakonnen strode to a water bucket kept for fire prevention. He dashed water onto his face. The big Finn was scared and showed it. His huge frame trembled violently. He started to say something more, but was interrupted by a banging on the door. Marquette Heller opened it.

The tall, ramrod-straight form of Paul P. Keewis was outlined in the glare of the unprotected electric globe in the tiny office. Keewis still wore the war paint of an Ojibway brave. His face was grim and set, gave little indication of any emotion.

He stepped quickly into the room, surveyed its occupants with open animosity.

AS the light cast its glare more closely on the features of the brave, it seemed that his tanned,

naturally-pigmented skin was pale. His eyes did not flinch or falter, but there was a tensivity of attitude that was inescapable. Keewis' diction was as smooth and perfect as it always was. A white man's university had given Keewis all the outward attributes of civilization.

But those who knew him realized that Paul P. Keewis was as close to nature as the otter, the muskrat—or perhaps the lynx that prowls, a predatory stalker, through the northern wilderness. Keewis spoke with a flat lack of intonation. There was a threat in every smooth syllable of his diction. His black eyes glittered strangely as he surveyed the people who were listening to him. "I did not believe my people were involved in the return of the Devil's Tomahawks," he said slowly. "But now I am not so sure. There is something here that I do not understand. And I know my people well!"

He glared particularly at Iris Heller and Mark. His thin lips drew back slightly over his stark white teeth. Marquette drew forward menacingly. His black eyes flashed with quick emotion. The all-Indian mystic Keewis, and the half-white Mark glared at each other in a sudden realization of hatred.

"You are behind this, Pau-puk-kee-wis," snarled Mark. "You have been inciting a peaceful people to do things for which they will die ashamed!"

Keewis drew himself up to his full six-foot-four of height. It was almost as if he wrapped the blanket of a chieftain around him.

"And what do you do here, son of a white man?" he rasped. "What do you do but cause trouble in the North Woods?"

Marquette Heller's shoulders hunched over slightly. Mark was six inches shorter than Paul P. Keewis. He was slighter of build. But there was a fire in his eyes right then that boded to make up for almost any deficiency in stature.

"I came to find out what it was the thin white man had learned," Marquette husked in a voice that was little more than a whisper. "I came to keep my people from the massacre that they will earn if they persist in the murder they say comes from the skies."

The two men were all Indian now. Marquette dropped the white man's instinct for civilization. He, with Keewis, became a man of learning but steeped only in the mysticism of the savages who had been his forebears; the secrets of the quiet, subtle red men of the North who had been honorable, but ruthless in their opposition to unfair force.

A knife flashed in Marquette's hand. Paul P. Keewis' hand swept up from a doeskin thong about his waist. Keewis held a flint tomahawk.

Probably the drums prevented murder in that tense moment. It was the drumbeat that Doc Savage had heard as he emerged from the mine shaft; the drum that said that many in the North Woods would die. Paul P. Keewis scarcely blinked an eyelash as he listened to the drum. Marquette Heller paled. And it was Marquette who was the aggressor in the fight, the maker of the accusations. When Marquette faltered, the electric spark that would have meant a killing died a-borning. Marquette's lips parted. As if in a trance he repeated the full warning of the drums.

"Michabou is angry with the people of the woodland," the drums boomed out. "Michabou had said that Doc Savage would die. Now Michabou has learned that interlopers have taken it upon themselves to destroy the bronze man.

"Michabou is displeased. The bronze man once defended Western tribes of the red men. He interfered and prevented our people from being defrauded of their oil lands. He should not have been slain in vengeance.

"Now that vengeance must go out to all. If the bronze man has been slain, the Tomahawks of the Lost Ones, the Devil's Tomahawks, will fall in anger upon all who have permitted this. Doc Savage belonged to Michabou, the maker of all things—"

There was more. But that was the bulk of it. The drums repeated the name of the bronze man several times. As Marquette Heller listened, he repeated with lips that seemed unwilling to give the message. Two things were probably responsible for what occurred. One was the repetition of the name of Doc Savage.

Johnny struggled to his feet. His mouth worked strangely. Something seemed to be telling him that he should act, should do something. Unseeingly, Johnny walked into a chair. He stumbled over it, fell headlong into the wall.

When he sat up, he rubbed his head. His eyes came suddenly into focus.

"An ascertainment of profound appurtenance to solution," he said. "Golly, I think I've got it." Igor Lakonnen let out a roar of amazement. A wide grin spread over his face. Marquette Heller brightened quickly, forgot his quarrel with Keewis. The blow on the head when Johnny plunged into the wall had restored his memory.

Iris Heller uttered a cry of relief, rushed toward Johnny.

In that instant the light in the little shack went out. There was a sudden sound of struggle. When the light came on again, William Harper Littlejohn had disappeared. He had been kidnaped within half a dozen feet of four able-bodied persons!

JOHNNY was as mad as he was capable of being. And that was plenty angry. The skinny geologist vaguely realized that a lot of things had happened to him that should not have happened. As in most amnesia cases, he did not remember what had gone on while he had been without his memory.

But to be snatched bodily from a lighted room when that memory returned made Johnny mad. One split second after the lights went out in that room a hand of iron seized Johnny. Another rough hand clamped over his mouth. As if he had been a small child, the geologist felt himself swept out of that room and out into the night. He was carried on a giant shoulder as easily as if he had been a bag of grain.

When he was put down, five or six hundred yards away, Johnny's temper was in no way improved.

"Of all the magniloquent malapertness—" Johnny spluttered. "Why—"

Johnny suddenly gasped. "Doc!" he blurted. "How in the world did you get here?"

Johnny was so amazed he used small words. Doc merely said, "It was necessary to get you out of there. We must try to save Monk, Ham and Renny."

Doc moved silently through the trees. Johnny followed, suddenly full of things he wanted to say.

"Doc, I've stumbled onto a big discovery," he blurted.

"The woods have ears," Doc advised. "And discoveries can wait until we free our friends. I have learned Monk was recaptured when he went back to release Ham and Renny. We must travel fast."

Johnny discovered that he had no breath for conversation while keeping up with the bronze man.

THE stakes to which Monk and Ham were tied were less than six feet apart. For more than an hour, not one word had passed between the two. It was the first time that had happened in a good many years.

It was also the first time they had been certain that one of their number had been slain.

Big-fisted Renny, tied to another big stake, shook his head from time to time. There was more than a suspicion of moisture on his leathery cheeks.

"Holy cow!" the big engineer rumbled. "Long Tom dead! It doesn't seem possible."

Monk looked particularly unhappy. He told himself that if he hadn't come back the others wouldn't know of Long Tom's death under the Devil's Tomahawks. Monk was the only one of the three who understood the Ojibway tongue. The Indians who recaptured Monk after the Tomahawks got N. Nathan Nathanielson the second time had brought him back to the camp of the birch-bark huts.

Shortly after he had been returned, an Indian runner tore breathlessly into camp with news that the Tomahawks had gotten Long Tom.

The camp itself was an eerie, fear-ridden place in the black night. Three campfires blazed redly.

Around those fires, gaunt braves shuffled in the ceremonial war dance of the Ojibways. Indians who had never touched their faces with the paint of war now displayed hideous masks instead of their normal features.

Red-skinned workmen who had never worn anything but the denim overalls of summer or the lumberjack's Mackinaw in winter, were garbed in the buckskin and feathers of their forebears. A low mutter came from the tribesmen as they shuffled around the campfire. It took fear to drive every vestige of the white man's civilization from these ordinarily peaceful aborigines. Fear shone starkly from their faces now as they went methodically through the routine of the war dance. Monk cocked his head on one side, listening to the muttered words of the dancers.

"Johoshaphat!" the hairy chemist exclaimed. "These babies sure are scared of their own bad medicine. They say the thing's out of hand and nobody can control it."

"You got me," Renny told him. "And when I left Doc Savage he didn't know. He told me so."

"Well, if Doc can't figure it out, I'm not going to try," Ham observed. "It would be better—"

A shout among the Indians interrupted Ham.

It seemed that the Indians were not only scared. They were also hungry. The tempo of the dance changed.

"That's the dance of the feast," Monk told them. "They're goin' to put on the feed bag."

There was a small commotion at one edge of the clearing. Monk looked at it. Then he went berserk.

Monk screamed. He shouted. He said words he had once promised his mother he would never use again.

Four Indians came into the clearing. Tied and trussed on a long pole, they had Habeas Corpus, Monk's pet pig.

"You guys put that pig down!" Monk yelled in English.

He followed that with a similar demand in Ojibway. He shouted in Mayan. Then he switched to a saltier selection of English.

THE biggest of the campfires was in the center of the clearing. It was also the closest to Monk and Ham. It seemed that Monk was going to have a front-row seat to the cooking of Habeas.

The Indians stirred up the fire. They pounded two vertical pronged stakes into the ground to lay the roasting pole across. Then they picked up the pole on which the pig was trussed and moved toward the fire. Monk jumped up and down as far as his bonds would permit him. He screamed what sounded like gibberish to the Indians. Actually, it was Mayan. Then Monk quieted.

Habeas rolled slightly. The porker was trying to swing away from the scorching flames. Suddenly one Indian gasped in astonishment. He leaned over closer to the pig. Then he straightened up with a snap.

"You danged fool!" the pig seemed to be saying. "Don't you know you ought to scald me and scrape off the bristles before roasting?"

The four Indians holding the pole looked at each other with newborn horror. First the Devil's Tomahawks. Now this.

"You're a hell of a bunch of cooks!" Habeas commented.

The Indians held an immediate powwow. They didn't know anything about ventriloquism. But they decided Monk was crazy. The gibberish that was really Mayan convinced them of that. No Indian will molest a crazy man. The insane are invested with the spirits of the gods. Any Indian knows that. But the powwow was to decide if the animal belonging to a batty person was also to be protected. They decided that it wasn't. But the vote was close. If they hadn't been pretty hungry they would have immediately abandoned the talking pig.

While the powwow was going on, Monk spoke a few low words to Ham. Immediately, the dapper lawyer began to yell at the top of his voice in Mayan. That surprised the Indians a little. Two men going nuts in such a short space of time seemed a bit unusual.

They thought it was more unusual a few seconds later, when Chemistry burst into camp. The big monkey had been hiding outside the clearing. Ham had taught Chemistry to take commands in Mayan as well as in English. He told Chemistry to walk straight toward Habeas Corpus.

Chemistry lumbered across the clearing.

"Put that pig down!" Chemistry squalled. "Put that pig down before I tear the whole lot of you apart!"

The voice sounded a whole lot like Monk's. It still did when the big monkey repeated his demand in Ojibway.

A talking pig had been enough to startle the hungry Ojibways. But a bi-linguistic ape was far too much. With dark mutterings about the evil spirits and the terror of the Devil's Tomahawks, the braves put Habeas down out of danger from the fire.

Chemistry picked up the pig, fondled him in his arms. "Go on," the ape commanded in Ojibway. "Get out. I don't want you around."

The Indians almost fell over themselves getting out of the clearing. Monk laughed so hard he almost strangled on the rope that was tied around his neck.

Ham commanded Chemistry to come over and untie his bonds. The ape had been taught to tie and untie knots. In fact, both animals had been taught a great many tricks that had come in handy in tight pinches with their enemies.

While Chemistry was struggling with the ropes that held Ham, Doc and Johnny arrived in the camp.

"DOC!" Monk squalled. "This Tomahawk business has got out of hand. I was afraid that it might have got you."

While Monk knew the Ojibway tongue and knew their tribal dances, he had never learned the language of the signal drums. So he did not know of the two drum messages concerning the bronze man. Doc and Johnny untied Renny and Monk. Chemistry completed the job of untying Ham.

"What's this all about, Doc?" Ham asked. "Who's behind it?"

"I do not know who the culprit is," Doc replied. "And I do not know what the Devil's Tomahawk really is."

Ham grunted. "I'll bet that Marquette Heller is behind it," he snapped.

Doc moved over toward Renny.

"What did you learn in Sault Ste. Marie?" the bronze man asked.

Renny repeated what he had told Monk and Ham about Marquette Heller and Paul P. Keewis. The information that old Luke Heller had killed Marquette's Indian chieftain grandfather had come to light quite recently, Renny stated. Luke's confession was contained in an old letter, written many years before, which had turned up in the estate of an old timber scout who had died recently. Both Heller and Keewis, Renny repeated, were well-versed in Indian lore, were considered mystics and had great power over the Indians.

Of Lakonnen, Renny had learned little more than the huge Finn had told himself. He had come from Finland in 1922, had moved around the North Woods for about two-and-a-half years. Ever since, he had worked for old Pig-iron Heller.

"He's an uncommunicative guy, according to reports," Renny said. "But so are most Finns."

Renny looked at tall, skinny Johnny.

"What did you find out about the ore?" the big engineer inquired. "Is it any good?"

"Commercially worthless," Johnny said. "But I found something else last night."

Johnny's eyes sparkled.

"There are subterranean passageways from some of those mine shafts to the lake. I think they're part of the key to this. It must be important. They slugged me when they found out I had learned about it."

Doc Savage shook his head.

"I don't believe that was what they thought you had learned," Doc said quietly.

They all turned to look at the bronze man. They didn't question him. Long experience had taught Doc's aids that if he had any information he was certain of, he would divulge it to them unless there was good reason for him to keep it to himself.

Doc never voiced his beliefs until he was sure of his ground. He also knew that possession of information was often dangerous.

"Johnny is partly right," the bronze man said. "If my reasoning is correct, subterranean passageways will have some bearing on this thing. But that is not their major secret."

Doc turned toward the woods.

"Come," he said. "We must get Monk's canoe. Then we will go to the steel mill. Part of our answer should lie there."

Chapter XIV. MICHABOU RETURNS

MONK led the way through the tangled underbrush to the shore of Lake Superior. The hairy chemist rummaged in a hole beneath a stump. He hauled a small compact electric coil out of the hole. Pressing a lever on the coil set up an induction field which actuated a switch in Monk's canoe-laboratory. That switch turned on an electric pump which brought the canoe to the surface. With its glasslike hood, the canoe looked somewhat similar to the cockpit part of the fuselage of a racing plane.

"Why'd you want the glassite hood instead of the electrolysis mesh?" Monk inquired.

"I did not want the hydrogen escaping to the surface," Doc explained. "It might prove dangerous." Monk scratched his head. He couldn't figure out how escaping hydrogen could be dangerous to them if they were below the surface. He snorted.

"I'm gettin' tired of coddling these crooks," he complained. "If they get in the way of any escaping hydrogen it's their own fault. Let 'em stay out of our way."

Doc Savage did not answer.

"Give me the keys to the chemical lockers," he instructed Monk. "Then we had better head for the mill. Leave the canoe some place there where it is hidden, but where we can get it quickly."

Doc instructed that Chemistry and Habeas should be left in the woods. Then, while the canoe was propelled swiftly and silently over the water by its rocket motor, Doc worked with various chemicals in the laboratory that constituted most of the inside of the canoe.

Doc was still clad only in the shorts Dutch Scorvitch had left him when he encountered Johnny. He found spare clothing in another locker of the canoe. Included was a spare inner vest with many secret pockets. The bronze man loaded this with chemicals and various bits of equipment. He finished his operations just about the time Monk toolled the canoe into the concrete dock of the steel mill. There was one point where two sections of the concrete pier were connected by a wooden platform. Beneath the platform there was sufficient space to hide the canoe. Monk let the others out, then took the canoe underneath the platform. He clambered up on the wooden shoring between two piles and looked around.

Pig-iron Heller's steel mill looked like a ghost town. The gaunt, dark stacks, the tall, round-bellied open-hearth furnaces loomed like giant skeletons in the dark.

"THEM Indians sure high-tailed out of here when the Devil's Tomahawks came around," Monk observed.

Monk's statement was quite correct. Pig-iron Heller's mine and mill workers had almost all been Indians or breeds. The drums of death warned the aborigines not to work in mill or mine. And the Indians preferred even a hungry idleness to death by the Tomahawks.

A few Finnish workmen had kept on working. And some of them had been found mysteriously hacked to death by the Tomahawks that came with the drums.

Doc Savage put on a pair of glasses that seemed opaque pieces of black glass. He handed a similar pair to each of his aids. Then Doc picked up a piece of apparatus that looked something like a magic lantern.

The bronze man and his aids had long used this device when they wished to perform some examination in a darkness through which only they could see. The special glasses made objects visible in the infrared rays of the projector Doc Savage carried. The mill took on a weird, monotone appearance, not unlike the merging of colors to one who is color-blind.

Doc led the way. He walked slowly, throwing the infrared rays to right and left. Without the special glasses, no one could see those rays at all. The use of the projector would attract no attention from the ordinary eye of man.

The bronze man halted near one open-hearth furnace that was separated from the rest. The other open hearths had been cleaned out before the fires had been extinguished. But this one had been practically dismantled. Doc examined the interior closely.

The firebrick on the inside had been chipped and hacked, as if someone had gone through it with a mighty sledge hammer. Doc made no comment as he climbed out of the now-cold furnace. He strode from it in the general direction of the woods. He paused frequently, flashing the infrared projector about.

Suddenly Doc's eerie, trilling sound told his aids that he had encountered something of importance. Monk raced up, panting and puffing. When he saw what Doc was looking at, he slowed down in visible disappointment.

There was nothing there except a huge iron triangle with the longest, equilateral sides about twenty feet in length. There was a notch at their apex.

Doc swung the beam from the triangle to one side. There he stooped to examine the end of a half-inch steel cable which apparently ran into the woods.

"This is the key to their transportation problem," Doc observed. "Not the subterranean passages from the mine."

"What is it, Doc?" Monk wanted to know.

Doc explained that it was a dismantled overhead cable monorail system.

"Yeah," Monk agreed. "But what's the danged thing for?"

Doc was silent for a moment.

"I think," he finally said, "that we will soon be ready for a showdown."

THE bronze man forestalled further questions by asking several of Johnny. The gaunt geologist had been instructed to make a complete survey of the physical properties of Pig-iron Heller's corporations. Doc asked him about them now.

"One hematite mine, one open-hearth furnace mill, a small foundry in Sault Ste. Marie and a stove factory on the upper river," Johnny informed him.

Doc asked about shipments to the foundry in Sault Ste. Marie and to the stove factory on the upper river. Johnny said that he had checked every shipment of pig iron to both foundry and stove factory against the output of these two ventures.

"They tally, Doc," Johnny said.

The bronze man did not comment on Johnny's report for a moment. He merely stood contemplating the partly dismantled blast furnace. Then he turned again to Johnny.

"Where do they send their stoves? Who are the purchasers?"

Johnny reddened. It embarrassed him deeply to think that Doc should ask him a question relative to his investigations that he could not answer. He was so embarrassed he used one-syllable words.

"Gosh, Doc, I don't know. They get paid in cash. So I didn't carry it any further."

"There was no reason you should have," Doc said. "But I think now that it may be of importance."

Doc turned. "Right now we must return to the mine. I am surer than I was that we are nearing a showdown."

A harsh voice cut into the night. "You hit it right on the nose, bronze guy. Your showdown is right behind you with more than a dozen rifles lookin' at you."

MONK whirled.

"I'll take ten of 'em," he squalled. "Rifles or no rifles. We can see them better than they can see us."

Monk was right. It was a strategy they had used before. If they spread out, using their infrared projector, they had a chance of taking their enemies with the superfirers. Doc Savage vetoed it.

"Put up your hands," he instructed. "The rifles are already trained on us."

Doc switched off the infrared projector and discarded it. All of them removed their goggles.

"We are your prisoners," Doc said. "Direct us."

A triumphant curse came from behind them. There was also a note of awe in it. Dutch Scorvitch stepped forward.

"You have more lives than a cat," he gritted at Doc. "How in hell did you get out of that mine?"

"I swam out," Doc replied quite truthfully.

"Yeah," Dutch said sourly. "An' I suppose you used those handcuffs and leg irons for paddles."

He walked up and prodded a rifle into Doc's midriff.

"Come on, now," he rasped. "Spill it. Who dug you out, and how'd they find you?"

Doc parried with another question. He had heard Marquette Heller tell how Dutch and the mob ran after the thug had told them of the phony Indian who had been hit by the Devil's Tomahawks.

"How did you happen to come back?" Doc asked. "I thought you were on your way back to New York."

Dutch got red. "It's none of your business," he growled. "But the boss has that thing under control now. He said so."

Dutch paused. Then: "An' my bronze baby, are we goin' to feed you to it? Just ask me. Are we?" The answer to that one was too obvious to require any comment.

"Let's go," Doc said. "You seem to be in control of the situation."

"Hey, Nosy," Dutch yelled. "You take half the gang and keep the guns on these four guys." He

motioned toward Monk, Ham, Johnny and Renny. "I'll take the other half of the gang and keep the drop on Doc Savage. He ain't goin' to get away from me this time."

Nosy, who was the broken-nosed thug who slugged Johnny in the skull, grunted in agreement. Nosy was quite willing that anyone else should have Doc Savage in custody. In fact, Nosy had not been quite sold on the idea of coming back with the gang at all.

"I hope the boss was leveling when he said he had control of them damned Tomahawks," the broken-nosed thug muttered. "That's something I don't want no part of."

Nosy had a secret suspicion that when the mobsters had exhausted their value to the boss criminal he might turn the thing on them anyway. But the double-cross was a chance all crooks took—or gave.

Dutch and six of the armed killers separated Doc from his companions and marched him through the woods toward the mine.

MONK was walking directly behind Nosy. He had been searched and his superfirer taken away from him. Monk was mad. He had wanted to fight it out. For that matter, he still wanted to.

He reached out one foot and tripped Nosy. The thug fell on his face. He scrambled to his feet, screaming with rage.

"Go ahead," Ham advised. "Mow him down. He's useless anyway."

Nosy started to take Ham's advice. He had to turn sidewise to Ham to do it. Ham struck him like a projectile. Nosy went down again. The things he said were not nice to hear.

"Cut it out, you guys!" Renny boomed. "Doc's orders were to go along peacefully." That advice mollified Nosy somewhat. Apparently he had orders to bring Doc's aids in alive. "I don't want to bump you here," the thug snarled. "We're savin' you guys for the tomahawks." "Listen," Johnny cut in. "The rancorous sound of vengeance." The entire party stopped. Faintly at first, the dull rumble of the drums sounded from the sky. Then the tempo increased, became louder. Nosy breathed deep with excitement and fear. His voice choked. "The smell!" he screamed. "The boss has started that damned thing. We gotta get to the mine." Nosy drove them through the tangled brush. No other words were spoken. The dead, dank smell of freshly-turned earth, the smell of the grave, was again in the air. Nosy broke into a run. He and the other gunmen prodded Doc's aids ahead. Soon they came to the clearing by the mine. There was a light in the shaft office. Lakonnen stepped out. The big Finn looked wildly about him. "It's loose!" he screamed. "I can't control it!" Suddenly a weird light began to glow in the clearing. It seemed to come from no particular direction. It was as if the air itself glowed with an eerie phosphorescence. Then there was an awesome chanting. Indians appeared on all sides of the gang. Dutch Scovitch, with Doc, was a little ahead. Dutch stopped in his tracks. A moan of fear came from his lips. The beating of the drums began to press down from above, seemed to surround the whole gang of phony Indians. The redskins who were closing in from the woodland were not phonies. They were hideously-painted warriors. Now they began to chant and dance slowly to the beat of the drums. A medicine man in a ghastly mask led them. He whirled and dipped as he chanted tales of the power of the great Michabou. The master spirit who made all things, the power that could equally destroy them. Two other figures burst out of the shaft office. They were Iris and Marquette Heller. The girl's face was pale with terror. Marquette Heller began to repeat the chants of the medicine man in English. The entire tableau was one to strike terror to the heart of any man. Suddenly Paul P. Keewis appeared in the midst of the chanting warriors.

"The time has come for vengeance," Keewis intoned. "Michabou has spoken. The Devil's Tomahawks will avenge the red man!" A whitish wisp of smoke spiraled from a barren piece of ground near the ashes of what had been Pig-iron Heller's residence and office. With a whoosh, the wisp of smoke became a cloud. It glowed with a greenish phosphorescence. The beating of the drums seemed to emanate from that cloud. Then the cloud took life. In its center there crouched a figure of awesome hideousness that made even stout-hearted Monk shudder. The mask was one of hate and ferocity. Gigantic lips moved in a grimace that carried the suggestion of destruction. The body was warped, misshapen. Skinny arms weaved about to the time of the pulsing drums of death. The Indians bowed down to the ground. Even Paul P. Keewis prostrated himself before the awesome figure. A murmur went up around the edge of the clearing.

"Michabou! Michabou, the Manitou! Michabou, the master spirit of all things!"

The scent of death grew stronger in the clearing.

Chapter XV. BENEATH THE LAKE

THE creature spoke then. The voice was hollow, unreal in tone. It was a menacing thing that seemed beyond the reach of man.

"White devils have usurped the powers of the Devil's Tomahawks," the eerie voice intoned.

"Michabou cannot permit such a thing. The white men have desecrated the Devil's Playground. For that they must pay in the terms set by Michabou."

The Indians flattened themselves on the ground. They took up a chant of compliance. Whatever Michabou demanded would be done. There was respect and fear in the voices of the red men. Then Michabou spoke once more.

"The Devil's Tomahawks belong to the red men for just vengeance. Now it shall be vengeance against those who have wrongly used it."

While the wispy, wavering figure in the smoke was speaking, Igor Lakonnen backed slowly into the shaft office. No one paid much attention to him. The wavering figure in the smoke turned, pointed a taloned finger toward Iris Heller. Instantly Paul P. Keewis seized her, began to bind her hands with buckskin thongs. Marquette Heller tried to stop him. But other hands seized Mark.

Ham let out a yell of rage and plunged across the clearing. He might berate the girl himself, but Ham would not stand by and see her murdered.

There was a sudden crescendo of the drums, and the queer unworldly light in the clearing dimmed. Then there was a scream. The light flickered dimly, then glowed again.

Dapper Ham lay on the ground. His immaculate clothing was torn to shreds. Ugly red welts showed on his flesh. There was a red pool beside him.

Monk Mayfair let out a roar of insane rage. He went as berserk as a mad bull. He rushed at Paul P. Keewis, felled him with a single blow. Then he leaned over the still form of Ham. He felt the pulse, put his hand over the heart. There was neither pulse nor heartbeat. Tears of rage and anguish glistened in the hairy chemist's eyes. With a low growl, he turned and started for the Indians.

Ten or more of them jumped him. Monk squalled for help then. That was something he rarely did. But avenging Ham was enough to make him yell for assistance.

"Doc!" Monk squalled. "Doc! Help me."

It was then that he noticed that Doc Savage had disappeared.

THE wavering voice from the smoke pillar spoke again.

"It is useless to oppose the will of Michabou. All who have tried to trick him must suffer."

An angry snarl came from the direction of the mine-shaft office. The huge form of Igor Lakonnen loomed in the doorway. His platinum hair glistened in the phosphorescent light. Igor held a submachine gun in his hands. His face was contorted in a frenzy of fear and panic.

"It's not going to get me!" he screamed. "I can lick Michabou!"

Igor reached behind him, pulled a lever. Instantly a detonation crashed into the air that broke every window in the shack. Men were hurled to the ground by the force of the explosion. Rumbling blasts came from deep in the earth. Great sections of ground fell in as mine shafts and tunnels were blasted into dust from below.

Only the wavering figure in the smoke seemed unaffected. Lakonnen cursed, pressed the trigger release of the Tommy-gun. The racketing of the gun was scarcely heard above the rumbling of the explosions in the mine. The Tommy-gun spat flame and lead.

The leaden slugs passed entirely through the wavering figure in the smoke without affecting it in the least!

Renny and Johnny gasped. Thugs had been holding them with rifles in their backs. Now the thugs tried to flee. But they were preceded by Igor Lakonnen.

With a scream of defiance, the towering Finn raced through the night toward the steel mill on the shore. Some of the phony Indians tried to stop him with rifles. Lakonnen's reply was a burst from the machine gun. The thugs fell, dying, to the ground.

Lakonnen yelled once more and disappeared into the woods. The big man could run like a deer. Some of the genuine Indians tried to catch him. But even they were not fast enough.

As Lakonnen disappeared, Doc's voice came from the edge of the clearing.

"Monk! Renny! Johnny! Get to the steel mill as fast as you can. We have work to do there right away."

It would never occur to any of Doc's aids to question an order, no matter what it was. Monk obeyed reluctantly. He squirmed away from the Indians, who had been distracted by Lakonnen's sudden departure.

Then he discovered that Ham's body was gone! The red pool of blood was still there. To be sure it was blood, Monk dipped a finger in it and smelled it. He shuddered. That was no trick. He knew for sure now, that Ham had really succumbed to the mysterious death ordained by Michabou!

MONK raced after Renny and Johnny. The hairy chemist's brain was in a whirl. It was true that they had all had many narrow escapes in the course of their adventures. But, also, they had always pulled through.

The three men knew they were up against something bigger than they had encountered before. Doc was not one to leave the scene of something like what had happened to Ham.

The venture was almost ended for them at the edge of the steel-mill property. There was a tremendous explosion. Huge chunks of steel, firebrick and iron ore whoomed up into the sky. Renny, Monk and Johnny were hurled to the ground. Débris rained all about them. Three big open-hearth furnaces split as if they had been made of papier-mâché.

They stumbled to their feet and pressed on. A pile of ore ahead of them began to move. Doc struggled out of it. He had been buried in the explosion.

"Monk," Doc clipped, "get the canoe. Hold it ready beside the wooden platform."

Doc made quick inspection of the steel plant. Other explosions followed the first. Plants of dynamite or TNT had been buried all over the property. Terrific detonations rocked the earth. Great clouds of black smoke billowed into the air.

Doc Savage was carrying the black-light projector. He used it now. He didn't need the special glasses. He explained that he had spread a fluorescent powder on the floor of the mineshaft office. Lakonnen's feet, as well as the feet of the girl and Marquette Heller, had become coated with it. The footsteps that fluoresced under the infrared rays were huge. They could have belonged to neither Marquette nor the girl. They had to be Lakonnen's. Monk snorted in anticipation.

"He couldn't have gone far," the chemist said.

Doc Savage said nothing. He followed the footsteps to the edge of the dock. A new explosion ripped the concrete pier in two great pieces. A second one demolished part of it. The whole structure trembled beneath their feet.

Lakonnen's footsteps ended at a round hole in the concrete pier. The hole had been covered by a pile of slag. The slag pile, they found, was on a movable platform. Lakonnen apparently had moved it to get into the hole.

"Geewhlikers, Doc!" Monk grunted. "Do we go down there after him?"

Before the bronze man could reply, the question was answered. A blast of dynamite burst from the hole. The force knocked Doc and his three aids back. Another explosion sealed the hole effectively. Wherever Lakonnen had been going, he had either achieved it or he was entombed beneath the ground.

"Quick, the canoe," Doc rapped.

Tardily, Monk sprang for what was left of the wooden platform. The canoe-laboratory was still there. Monk untied it, hauled it into view. He slid back the glasslike hood, and the other three leaped into the craft.

"Close the hood," Doc directed. "Then submerge."

The glassite hood slid closed. There was a hissing sound as water poured into special tanks fore and aft. A compressor beat thumpingly, condensed the water far beyond its normal weight. A comparatively small amount of water became heavy enough to bring about submersion.

Like a tiny, glass-topped submarine, the canoe moved ahead under water. Doc crouched at the controls in the bow. A luminescent beam of light spread out ahead of the craft like wide feelers of light.

The bronze man guided the craft to a spot beside and below the hole into which Lakonnen's footsteps had disappeared.

"Submerge twenty feet farther," Doc ordered.

Again the compressors thumped. Presently, the luminescent beam picked up a peculiar object. It seemed to extend downward at a forty-five-degree angle from the bottom of the dock. It was like a giant sewer pipe extending into the very bowels of the earth.

"This should take us to Lakonnen," Doc said simply. "And to the solution of the reasons for the return of the Devil's Tomahawks."

Chapter XVI. THE BEARDED MEN

THE big pipe followed a water-worn tunnel forty feet or more in diameter. The action of the water had apparently cut the tunnel through solid rock.

Doc Savage explained that the tremendous pressure of a receding glacier had probably caused the subterranean passageways that connected the Great Lakes.

"I have reason to believe that this one goes no farther than Heller's stove factory," the bronze man said.

"Jeepers, Doc!" Monk complained. "What's this thing all about? First we have a lot of stuff dug up out of a dead past. Then we get a lot of modern stuff."

Doc was silent for a moment, concentrating on his piloting. Water swirled past them in a gushing torrent. Doc cut out the rocket motor and let the current take the little craft down deep into the earth. Presently the tunnel leveled off. The current carried the canoe along the level. Occasionally it would scrape the sides slightly. But the rock was so smooth no damage ensued.

"The explosions in the mill and mine bring me to believe a foreign power is involved," Doc stated.

"What could they want?" Monk demanded. "That iron ore isn't any good."

"I am not certain," Doc explained. "But we should get our answer in the stove factory, if we get there."

They got there, or at least to something with great rapidity. The tunnel began an upward climb. It narrowed at that point, and the speed of the current nearly doubled. The boat almost turned end for end, despite the bronze man's attempts to steer it.

Suddenly the canoe broke the surface of what seemed to be a subterranean lake. There was a small dock at one side. A tiny submarine was tied to cleats on the dock. The roof of the place was vaulted rock. There was nothing in it except the dock and the little sub. Doc steered the canoe to the dock and slid back the glassite hood.

The bronze man spoke in sign language then, instructed his aids to make no sound. Hammering noises came through a wide archway leading to some room beyond the cavern that contained the lake. Doc climbed to the dock and started through the archway. Monk, Renny and Johnny followed him. The room beyond was apparently some sort of a storage place. It was piled high with stoves. There were small two-burner plates, big, old-fashioned coal ranges, camp stoves, pot-bellied base burners. All were painted black, and apparently all were cast iron.

Renny moved toward a small camp stove. Idly he hefted it. It didn't budge.

"Holy cow!" he rumbled. "This thing is as heavy as if it was made of lead!"

Doc did not have time to answer that one. Electric lights flashed on in the big storeroom. Half a dozen men crowded into the room.

"Wow!" Monk yelled. "Lamp the beavers."

The beards the men wore would have done credit to Sampson before his locks were shorn. None of the men was above average height.

The men wore short smocklike garments. They gabbled excitedly among themselves. One of them pulled a switch on the wall. Then the six small men started for Doc and his aids.

Monk lunged at one. But he didn't get anywhere. He could move, but it was with a tremendous effort. He looked at Doc. The bronze man was pulling objects out of his pocket and dropping them on the floor.

"The floor is one tremendous magnet," Doc shouted. "Every piece of attractable metal in your clothing holds you down. It's a perfect defense. Shed your shoes and clean out your pockets."

The three aids began doing just that. But it took a little time. The six bearded men wore moccasins without any nails. And obviously they had no metal in their clothing. They moved ahead

with quick precision. They drew knives that were made of copper and not attracted by the magnet. Monk got out of his shoes first. He had dropped his superfirer and a big jackknife. With a yell he dived for the nearest of the bearded men. The bearded one ducked. But not quite enough. Monk's hairy fist caught him right on the button. He went down with a groan.

Then Monk had the copper knife. Yelling a whooping challenge, he sprang forward. Then he began to waver. The bearded men began to draw back rapidly. Suddenly they darted through a narrow door. Monk turned back toward the others. They had all divested themselves of their metal belongings. But the attackers had flown.

"Look!" Monk blurted. "The big archway is gone."

A panel had slid down, closing the archway that led to the chamber of the lake.

Monk passed a hand over his brow.

"I'm tired," he said. "I dunno what it is."

The gas had scarcely any odor at all. But it got them. Even Doc had no antidote for it with him. Soon the bronze man was prone with his aids on the stone floor. Little bearded men, wearing strange masks to protect themselves against the gas, slipped into the storeroom. They carried lengths of stout rope. Soon Doc and his aids were tied securely.

Then, one by one, the four captives were hauled into another room beyond the storage chamber. DOC and this three aids regained consciousness in the main stove foundry. There was a small blast furnace of intricate design. There were molds for the various parts of stoves that were cast in single units.

There were the six bearded men in smocks and moccasins.

And there was Igor Lakonnen.

Lakonnen had donned a smock of his own. He, too, now wore the moccasins without nails or other metal fittings. The big mine superintendent, who had worked for Pig-iron Heller for twenty-five years or more, strode back and forth before the tightly-bound prisoners. The little bearded men huddled in the background. They seemed to treat Lakonnen as something above them in rank.

The bearded men gabbled in a tongue Doc's aids did not understand. Lakonnen answered them. Some sort of a conference seemed to be under way.

"That ain't Finnish," Monk grunted. "I can understand Finland talk, This is something else."

Igor Lakonnen's pale eyes flickered. The expression on his lips was not pleasant to see.

Particularly for someone who was his prisoner.

"The bronze busybody can probably tell you what I am," Igor sneered. "He seems to know everything—that is, almost everything."

Doc eyed the swaggering giant calmly. The bronze man spoke with deliberation. Doc did not seem to hesitate. But anyone who knew him would have realized that he was taking plenty of time.

"You were born a Finn, Lakonnen," Doc challenged.

Lakonnen bowed, with a smirk.

"Your deductions so far are sound, bronze interloper," he sneered. "Now tell me the rest. Then tell me what is going to happen to you."

Doc's flake-gold eyes seemed tiny whirlpools of life. His features showed neither concern with his plight nor doubt of his conclusions.

"Your records show that you fled Finland in 1922," Doc said flatly. "That was the year of the Mannerheim purge, the year the Finns and White Russians chased the Bolsheviks out of the country. I would guess that your citizenship and your language since then have been Russian."

Lakonnen laughed.

"That is true," he grated. "And it is also true, as you must know now, that the balance of my mission is one of destruction. What we cannot have no one else shall gain."

There was a bitter note of hatred in Lakonnen's last remarks. He strutted around the room. His actions were those of a man who has been thwarted in one thing he had wanted to do but now had a situation in hand very much to his liking. Big Renny followed him around the huge room with his eyes. Lakonnen stopped now and then to survey wrought-iron work that was in the foundry.

"Holy cow!" Renny barked. "They got everything here except an iron stag for a hitching post."

Renny's remark brought closer attention from Monk and Johnny. Doc had already minutely surveyed every object in the room. There was a queer selection of iron art work. Some of it was painted a conventional black. Some of it was red-leaded preparatory to the finished painting and other objects were not yet finished at all.

There were queer pillars of wrought iron in the shape of tree trunks. There were cast-iron boulders, painted with water marks and cracks to look like any huge stone that might be found in a field. Long fallen logs, rotting and with green moss fringing them, were disclosed to be works of wrought iron.

The effect of seeing them all together was extremely queer. Lakonnen surveyed them. Then he laughed.

"Hah!" he sneered. "The Devil's Tomahawks. The bronze man and his other aids shall now know the Tomahawks of the Lost Ones."

As if in answer to Lakonnen's threat, the distant sound of drums beat into the air. The drums were faint. But they were insistent. Monk shuddered, thought of Ham. He looked at Lakonnen,

expecting to see a sneer of triumph on the Russian Finn's face. The drumbeat increased in tempo. But Lakonnen's satisfaction did not.

"The drums," he croaked. "It is not possible!"

One of the bearded men gabbled at him in Russian. Lakonnen nodded.

"Yes," he said. "They are down-river. I can hear them. It is that devil, Michabou."

Lakonnen shuddered, listened intently. The steady tempo of the drums beat into his ears like a threat from which he could not escape. Igor Lakonnen proved to be a man whose nerves had sustained about all they were capable of withstanding. Sweat dripped from his face. His jaws worked strangely. And then a string of epithets burst from his lips that needed no understanding of any language to interpret.

"They come closer," Igor spat. "We will flee. At once."

One of the bearded men spoke in English, suggested piling into the tiny sub. The big arched doors were open now. The cavern of the subterranean lake could be seen from the foundry room. Igor Lakonnen shook his head.

"No," he decided. "We might be trapped. We will take the speedboat to Sault Ste. Marie. There we can charter a plane."

Igor led the way. He started out a side door in the foundry room. It was on the river side. But he never reached the door. As the beat of the drums sounding from the east increased, that side door slammed open. A wild war whoop welled from it. Two painted, feathered forms sprang into the foundry room.

One of the new attackers paused, raised a bow and arrow. There was the sharp twang of the bowstring and an arrow whizzed past Lakonnen's ear. The big Finn screamed in panic. He turned toward the archway leading to the cavern of the lake.

"The sub!" he yelled. "We've got to make it. It is our only chance."

Lakonnen ran. As he did, he pulled a small bomb from his pocket. He hurled the missile at Monk's laboratory canoe. There was a flash of light and a sharp explosion. The canoe sank beneath the surface, wrecked beyond repair. Then Lakonnen piled into the tiny sub. The six bearded men followed him.

The two Indians followed with a whoop. They also were equipped with small, compact bombs. They hurled these onto the deck of the sinking submarine. But the sub was made of stronger stuff than the bombs could crack. It sank beneath the surface and its motors could be heard to beat rhythmically. DOC SAVAGE yelled to the two Indians. He told him to haul up the sunken canoe, take certain equipment from it and give chase. Then Doc concentrated on his bonds. He instructed his three aids to do the same.

Monk struggled methodically with his bonds. A couple of things were bothering the hairy chemist. He saw the two Indians grapple for the sunken canoe with silk-thread grapplers that he thought he had seen before. He saw them get the canoe and take thin, glassite diving helmets from it. They donned these and plunged into the water. Just before they did, one of them looked at Monk and winked.

"Say," Monk said suddenly. "How come the sound of those drums quit when they sunk my canoe?"

Doc Savage replied briefly.

"The drumbeat was recorded," he informed Monk. "A direction sounding board threw it downstream.

It scared Lakonnen into thinking the Devil's Tomahawks were after him."

Monk struggled out of his bonds. He was wobbly on his feet, leaned against one of the newly-cast stoves.

"There was something danged familiar about them Indians that were just here," he remarked. "The one that winked."

Monk gave it up for the moment, and idly inspected the stove. He remembered Renny's remark about the extreme weight of the things. He scratched the surface with a thumbnail. Then he examined it more closely.

"Say," he said. "These things ain't iron. They're solid nickel!"

"That is correct," Doc informed him. "These men wanted nickel. They were shipping it out of the country secretly. If they couldn't get it, they wanted to destroy all evidence that it existed. If they are keeping up to their usual performance, we will find a time bomb some place in this foundry."

Igor Lakonnen was talking about that time bomb even as Doc Savage mentioned the probability of its existence. Igor was tooling the sub upward in the water-worn passageway. Just before they had submerged the underwater craft, Igor had dropped a water gate that shut off the lower exit of the passageway.

That act not only stopped the current in the great natural tunnel. It created a backwash that temporarily reversed the current. The sub shot ahead with rapidity. Igor chuckled.

"Their canoe is ruined," he gloated. "They will investigate the foundry. That is only natural." He looked at his watch.

"In five more minutes the blast will occur," he sneered. "Then the evidence and Doc Savage will both disappear."

One of the bearded men wagged his hirsute appendage.

"Iss so," he hissed. "Iss a measure of success. But, shall we escape?"

He did not seem overly concerned about it. But Igor was made of different stuff. His personal welfare was not far from his mind.

"We will get out at the mill," he decided. "We will then go to the airfield. It is but a short way. There we will appropriate the Savage autogyro. I, Igor, can operate the machine."

The bearded one waggled the beard again.

"Yess," he husked. "But what of the Savage friends?"

Igor laughed.

"Doc and three go up with the foundry. Two are already dead."

Igor shuddered when he said that. He had seen the bodies of Long Tom and Ham. And evidently he didn't understand it.

"That damned Michabou!" Igor muttered. "That is the sort of thing we are taught not to believe." He wiped perspiration from his brow and forced himself to think of more pleasant things. He looked again at his watch.

"That explosion, now," he said happily. "In two minutes it will all be over. That, I, Igor, like to think of."

Chapter XVII. AN EX-MOURNER

IGOR was not the only person who was displaying a vital interest in the planted time bomb. Renny, Monk and Johnny had started an immediate search for it when Doc mentioned the probability that it existed.

Monk was opening and closing the doors of stoves piled about the place. He didn't find anything there, so he started examining all of the queer pieces of wrought-iron art. These were really made of iron, Monk decided. He kicked some of them and found that they were hollow. Monk got so interested that he almost forgot about the time bomb for which he was hunting.

It was Doc who found the thing. A compact, electrically wired thing with a precision clock, it was cleverly hidden under a pile of un-smelted ore in the small blast furnace. When Doc found it, the clock was fifty-one seconds ahead of the explosion.

The bronze man snipped the wiring off and removed the clock. Then he submerged the whole thing in water. Monk heard Johnny exclaim that Doc had found the thing. The chemist didn't even try to translate the words that Johnny used. He merely assumed that the gaunt geologist meant that from his tone of voice.

Monk was busy. He was sure these things had to have some purpose. He picked up a cold chisel and a hammer from a bench. A great tree trunk of wrought iron painted to resemble the moss-covered bark of an oak tree engaged his attention. There was an irregular crack running down one side. Monk whanged away at that with the cold chisel. Suddenly, the thing swung open. Monk leaped back, his mouth open as wide as it would go. And that was pretty wide.

"Crimminy!" he gulped. "The old Iron Lady is back again!"

Johnny and Renny came running. They knew of medieval torture systems and they knew of the Iron Lady. That fearsome object was a torture death meted out to those who most severely offended the ruthless desires of Spanish inquisitors. Pirates had used it to force victims to tell where their wealth was hidden.

The original Iron Lady was a cast-iron torture chamber built in the form of a stout woman with flowing skirts. It was hollow and hinged. It opened outward from the front. When it closed again, it was presumed to have a victim inside of it. The inside was studded with long, cruel spikes that almost met when the thing was entirely closed.

The torture experts of medieval days closed it slowly, so that the victim might linger long in awful pain. That was in the days of piracy and the Spanish Main.

The treelike duplicate Monk was looking at was born of a different day. Instead of spikes, the sharp internal projections were crescent shaped, each designed to leave a characteristic shape like the wound of a tomahawk.

And Monk knew then that the machine was designed to give a swift death—a swift one, but one just as horrible as the Iron Lady had ever administered.

Monk knew he was looking at the Devil's Tomahawks!

The hairy chemist shuddered and thought of Ham. He looked at Renny and Johnny. None spoke for a moment.

"This must be it," Monk said finally. "That could kill a guy in one second. Then when it was closed up again empty it would look just like a fallen log that had been there all the time. Or like a rock you'd been sitting on. Or this here tree."

Doc Savage had come up quietly behind them. Monk turned to him for support. Doc nodded.

"This is Lakonnen's tomahawk death," he agreed. "Lakonnen forged a letter of confession by old Luke Heller to murdering Marquette's grandfather. That gave the apparent excuse that the Indians were on the warpath."

Monk scratched his head.

"How'd he miss the first time on N. Nathan Nathanielson?"

"He got him by accident," Doc said. "He was after Kovisti. It was dark, and he got N. Nate, who was in with him. When the fat lawyer later got so scared Igor feared he would talk, he killed him."

"Holy cow!" Renny boomed. "Look at that one. That's the kind that must have gotten Kovisti." Renny had forced open a huge Iron Lady that was the exact duplicate of a Detroit sanitation department box.

Monk scratched his head thoughtfully. Another idea came to him.

"Say, Doc, did the Indians get sore and steal some of these gadgets to get even? Did they get Long Tom and—"

Doc Savage did not get a chance to reply. Apparently Igor Lakonnen was smarter than he had been given credit for. Igor had left two time bombs, separated in detonation time by several minutes. The second one let go while Monk was talking.

It must have been a thermite combination bomb. The blast shook the building. But it was accompanied by a searing heat that spread rapidly over the entire structure.

Doc Savage began to run.

"Get to the wreckage of the canoe," Doc rapped. "Put on glassite helmets and go into the underground river."

Monk led the scramble to the chamber of the lake. The hairy chemist had packed the canoe. He knew where everything ought to be. While the canoe was wrecked beyond any use itself, the explosion of the small bombs had not damaged the lockers much. They were made of stout metal alloy and were waterproof themselves.

Monk took out four thin diving helmets. The things were made of a material much like the glasslike hood of the canoe. They had no hose connections or other breathing apparatus. In each was a small package of odd-looking pills. These were Doc Savage's oxygen tablets. There were enough of them in each package to keep a diver alive for more than two hours.

Monk silently handed a helmet and a package of pills to Renny and Johnny. Doc picked up one himself. The bronze man had been examining the water of the lake.

"There is still some backwash from closing the lower gates," he said. "It should not take us long to reach the lake."

Doc took a jar of greenish paste from one of the lockers in Monk's canoe. He smeared the stuff on his arms and shoulders. Nothing happened then. He handed the jar to the others.

"Rub it on as I have," Doc advised. "When the stuff comes in contact with water, it will glow and make enough light to see where you are going. When you leave the water, it will lose its luminescent quality."

Doc put on his helmet and plunged into the lake. His three aids followed. Ahead of them they could see the greenish blob of light that was Doc Savage. Monk was the last one to leave the chamber of the lake. Just before he plunged into the icy water, he turned to take one last look at the stove foundry. The place was a blazing mass of flames. The heat scorched the face of the hairy chemist as he took his last look. Then Monk plunged into the water.

He could vaguely see the three blobs of luminescence ahead of him in the water tunnel. Monk swam along like some gigantic crab with red bristles on its claws.

It was a well-known fact that Monk Mayfair was a garrulous individual. He was seldom silent for any length of time unless he was confronted with an emergency that took up all of his energies in other things than conversation.

This was not such an occasion. This underwater swimming was just so much exercise as far as Monk was concerned. The glassite helmets were not equipped with short-wave radio or any other means of speech or thought transmission. These helmets were merely emergency units for situations such as this one.

In other words, Monk was entirely alone with his thoughts. Sudden turns in the situation that had confronted them had prevented him from asking Doc Savage questions that were on his mind. The explosions in the mill and in the foundry had halted Doc from making some explanations that Monk was sure were needed to clear up the muddle of the mess.

Then Monk remembered the two Indians who had so fortunately arrived at the stove foundry. He remembered, in particular, the one who had winked at him just before donning a glassite helmet. That Indian had worn a pretty supercilious smile.

Monk suddenly yelled in rage and amazement. His bellowing protest confined within the small glassite Helz helmet nearly burst his eardrums.

"Jobbed! I've been jobbed by that danged shyster!" Monk shouted. "Just wait until I get my hands on that imitation Indian!"

Monk's beetle brow wrinkled up in concentration. He couldn't understand what had happened. But now that he was sure Ham was the Indian who had winked at him, his first reaction was to get even with Ham for the anguish he had been caused.

Long ago Monk and Ham had carried on spectacularly successful experiments in telepathy. Monk didn't know whether they would work at the distance probably between them now. Nor if being under water would have any effect. But it was worth a try.

"You danged fourflushing shyster!" Monk thought at Ham. "The next time I go into mourning for you, I'll make doggoned certain you deserve it."

Monk swam on, glowering. Then he bellowed in renewed rage.

"Tssssk, such a pity," a thought wave came back to him. "You look so charming in black."

THE four men finally struck the turn in the tunnel leading upward at a forty-five-degree angle. Their own buoyancy took them upward rapidly then. They broke the surface of cold Lake Superior right beside the remains of Pig-iron Heller's concrete pier.

The small sub was docked beside it. Stalking up and down on the pier was a slender, red-skinned figure with the streaks of war paint on his face. It watched Monk closely as the chemist clambered up on the dock and removed his helmet.

"Hello, you missing link," Ham said dryly. "Do you know what the spirits said about you while I was in the other world?"

Monk let out a bellow of rage. He lunged at Ham.

"Fool me, will you, you process server! I'll--"

Doc Savage's quiet voice stopped the mêlée.

"We have no time to quarrel. Such deception was necessary. It was important that no one but the parties involved know of it. Without the certainty that Ham and Long Tom had died, we could not have forced Lakonnen's hand through fear."

Doc turned to Ham. "Where is Long Tom?" he asked.

"Gone on ahead," Ham told him. "These guys got here and scrambled before we broke the surface. We thought they were probably heading for the autogyro, so Long Tom's gone ahead to disable it before they get there."

"Good," Doc said. "We must hurry if we are to take our prisoners alive."

A muttering thunder of drums interrupted the bronze man. The drums burst out in an angry roll, then beat out the tempo of death.

Monk snorted, looked at Ham.

"Hell with it," he snapped. "Now I know it is a phony."

Doc Savage stood still, listening. Then he began to move.

"Not this time," he said quietly. "Those drums are beating for death!"

As the bronze man spoke, the staccato roar of a machine gun cut loose in the forest. Doc sprang after it.

"We may be able to avert a massacre," he said.

"Yeeough!" Monk yelled, suddenly remembering. "And Iris Heller's in those woods."

He plunged after Doc. The others raced behind him.

Chapter XVIII. ALMOST A ROMANCE

THE woods were dark, and it was every man for himself in the race through the woods. Monk got separated from the rest before he had gone a hundred yards. Privately, he thought that was a very good idea. If he got a chance to save the girl, he wanted to do it when Ham was not around. The dapper lawyer had queered Monk's chances with more than one luscious eyeful.

Monk didn't encounter the girl. Not right away, that is. The first person he saw was a short individual who was strolling through the woods as if it had been Central Park in New York. Monk flicked on a flashlight and looked him over.

The man was dressed in nondescript clothes. His face was obviously not a face at all. It was some sort of a plastic mask. That was apparent even in the dim light of the flash. He seemed to think some sort of an explanation was in order.

"I am a botanist," he stated. "I have lost my way."

He spoke the words as if it were not natural to speak in such a manner. He sounded like a small boy reciting McGuffey's Reader. Monk remembered Renny's description of the man in the mask who had escaped from the plane at Flint, the man who had held the map showing Doc Savage's Fortress of Solitude.

The man in the mask started to walk on.

"No, you don't," Monk yelled, and lunged at him.

The man twisted, tried to get away. He had about as much chance as a fly trying to get off a fresh piece of flypaper. So he squalled. He sounded more natural this time.

"Leggo me, Monkeyface. Leggo me, or dis time I'll soitanly bump you!"

Monk ripped off the mask and found the broken nose and cauliflower ears of Nosy under it.

"Unnh!" Monk grunted and swung one hairy fist.

Then he tied up the unconscious Nosy with some rawhide he had in his pocket and tucked him away under a stump. When they came back for Nosy, he would be shipped to a place known as the "college" in upstate New York. It was a place maintained by Doc where delicate operations were performed on the brains of criminals captured by Doc and his aids. The operation removed all memory of the past and all tendency toward crime. The "graduates" became respectable citizens.

Monk realized he had tarried somewhat. He raced through the night and finally caught up with Ham.

Monk was dying to ask Ham how the tomahawk death had been simulated. The chemist had examined Ham's body. And Monk would have sworn he knew a dead man when he saw one. But he was too mad at Ham to ask any questions about it. He would just have to wait until Doc had time to tell him.

Ahead of the two, a series of screams welled up into the night. More staccato shots roared out.

Monk and Ham began to run. They ran right into a mob of redskins who were quite ready for them. They quickly discovered that these were the Indians with the Brooklyn accents.

One of them had a Tommy-gun pressed into Doc Savage's midriff. Renny and Johnny stood nearby. But

as long as that hair trigger held the life of the bronze man in the balance, neither of them would move.

Dutch Scorvitch was in charge of the gang. His scarred face was twisted in rage. He was beating with a club the six bearded little men who had been in the stove foundry.

"Where did he go?" Dutch demanded. "Tell me where that double-crossing rat ran to?"

The little bearded men gabbled in their own tongue. They shuddered and cringed beneath the blow of the clubs. Suddenly there was a yell from deep in the woods.

"I got the rat!" a voice shouted.

Then there was the sound of the drums. The awful stench of the grave that came with the Devil's Tomahawks. Dutch Scorvitch snarled with ugly satisfaction. He knocked the bearded men to the ground, instructed his henchmen to tie them.

"Six of you come with me," he rapped. "The rest of you keep an eye on Savage and his gang."

Dutch swung off into the night. As he did, there came a scream of agony, a bubbling, gurgling cry of pain and horror.

Monk nudged Ham. "That's Lakonnen's voice," he grunted. "And I can't say as I'm much upset."

THE excitement caused the man holding the Tommy-gun at Doc's midriff to waver just a little. It wasn't much. But it was enough. Doc moved one hand out as if he were going to brush a bit of dirt from the killer's face. His fingers barely touched the skin. A very peculiar thing occurred. Lids closed over the man's baleful eyes. His jaw sagged. The Tommy-gun waved around. His fingers were slack on the trigger release. He seemed to go to sleep on his feet. He fell over slowly and crashed to the ground.

That brought action from the other phony Indians. It also brought action from Monk, Ham, Renny and Johnny. The mêlée that followed was really something in the way of free-for-all. There were four times as many crooks as there were of Doc and his aids. The crooks all had guns. But in such close quarters they were afraid to use them except as clubs. They slammed with the butts of heavy automatics. One man swung a rifle like a huge club. He just missed Monk's head.

Doc Savage fought a peculiar battle. His fingertips seemed to drift out and merely graze the cheeks of his adversaries. Each time he did it, a killer went to sleep. The eerie exhibition drained the confidence of the rest of the gang. Soon they were all either unconscious on the ground or securely tied.

Doc plunged through the night in the direction of Igor Lakonnen's scream. The big Finn wailed again as Doc tore through the tangled underbrush, followed by his aids. Apparently Dutch Scorvitch was not in such a hurry to inflict the death of the tomahawks on Igor. Dutch lived up to his reputation and showed a preference for slower torture.

There were eight figures watching the death agonies of Igor Lakonnen. Dutch and his six henchmen were accounted for. There was also another "Indian" stoutly tied to a tree. This Indian had a mushroom complexion under his hideous war paint. Monk gasped when he saw the prisoner.

"Long Tom!" he blurted.

The pale Indian nodded.

"I tried to stop them," Long Tom Roberts said. "But there were too many of them for me."

The arrival of Doc and his aids was so sudden that Dutch and his six pals were taken by surprise. Doc plunged at the six phony Indians. One of them whipped out an automatic and cut loose. His aim was bad, and he missed Doc Savage.

But it just happened that the bronze man was between the killer and Dutch Scorvitch at the moment. He didn't miss Dutch.

Doc moved quickly among the men. Monk and Renny were slugging with fists that brought lethal results. The bronze man merely flicked his hands to the cheeks of the crooks. One by one they went to sleep. Then Doc turned. From his fingertips he stripped tiny bronze caps. These were thimblelike, and so cleverly constructed that only closest scrutiny would reveal their presence.

The thimbles held tiny hypodermic needles containing a drug which induced instant unconsciousness. These devices held the secret of Doc's magic touch.

Doc strode over to the death device that held Igor Lakonnen in its grip.

THIS one was designed to resemble a huge pine stump. Cleverly concealed wires led from it to the trees nearby. Doc knew that those wires were connected with a series of loudspeakers hidden in the trees which synchronized the crescendo of the drums with the war whoop of death.

The victim furnished the scream of agony. That much was entirely genuine.

Igor Lakonnen moaned in pain and agony as Doc spread the death machine open. Dutch had been torturing the big Finn. Lakonnen was not yet dead. But Doc could see that he would not be long among the living. Lakonnen rolled his eyes and looked at Doc. There was a wild light of fanatical triumph in them. His lips were twisted in pain. But he managed a snarling grin. Igor's mind was partly numbed with the delirium of pain.

"Nickel . . . nickel for armaments," he babbled. "No one knew it was there but Igor. If we cannot have it, no one can."

The huge man shuddered. Then his body relaxed. His pale eyes glazed. Igor Lakonnen was dead, a ghastly victim of his own death device.

There was silence for a moment. Monk stood it as long as he could. Then he burst out with

questions.

"What's it all about, Doc?" he blurted. "I gotta know. This thing's beginning to get me down."

"Igor discovered rich nickel deposits deep in the mine shafts," Doc explained. "He kept those parts of the mine flooded so that no one else would know about them. The nickel ore was transported only at night and then by way of the overhead monorail cable. From there it was sent down the big tube Igor destroyed to the stove foundry. The regular bars of pig iron shipped to the foundry were either made into death machines or dumped into the lake."

"Yeah," Monk complained. "But why all this fuss about nickel ore? Why try to destroy evidence that it existed?"

"Nickel is needed to toughen steel for armaments," Doc said. "Canada furnishes most of the world's supply. New Caledonia most of the rest of it. We had none that was known of. Lakonnen knew that his country needed it and could not get it from the British Empire. Also, he thought our country and his might sometime be enemies. If he could not smuggle it abroad, he did not want us to know we possessed any of the metal. In a world at war, possession of nickel is vital."

Monk grunted, scratched his head. Then he whirled as a new commotion sounded behind him. Iris Heller rushed into the little clearing. Her skirts were torn. Her eyes were wide. It was a moment before she got her breath.

"The Indians are going to kill Marquette and Keewis!" she stammered. "The real Indians. Not the fake ones. They say that Keewis has been tampering with their spirits."

Doc moved swiftly.

"I feared this might happen," he said. "But it was a chance we had to take. Come."

DOC led the way to the big clearing near the mine shaft. Keewis and Marquette Heller were lashed to stakes. The Indians were not engaging in any tribal dance now. They stood in a sullen crowd around the two. The mutterings were ugly, filled with suspicion.

Doc Savage strode to a big rock at one edge of the clearing, climbed up upon it. Then he spoke to the assembled braves. He talked in the Ojibway tongue, then translated it into Chipewya and Tahquamenon so that all would understand. Doc held one hand out before him in the gesture of peace to the aborigines.

"Be at peace," Doc advised them. "Your leaders have done no wrong. They have saved your tribesmen from a disgrace they did not deserve. Keewis told you that was why he beat the drums of Michabou. Keewis spoke the truth. Even Michabou would have wanted it that way."

A grumble of dissent came from the Indians. They were not yet convinced. Then Keewis spoke from his stake.

"The bronze man is one highly honored by our brethren in the West," Keewis intoned. "The bronze man is modest. He does not admit that he is privileged to speak for Michabou."

Keewis looked quickly at Doc. The bronze man took the cue These superstitious Indians had performed for Keewis up to a point. But now they were afraid of what they had done. Some demonstration would be needed to swing them from that idea.

Doc stepped down from the rock. He went into a little war dance of his own. Then a puff of smoke spiraled from the ground behind him. Doc reached the edge of the clearing. Then he disappeared. Instantly, the weird, eerie mask of the figure Keewis had identified as the master spirit, Michabou, gleamed ethereally in the smoke. The voice came from it in Ojibway.

"Marquette Heller knew now of the things that have gone on," the weird figure intoned. "Paul P. Keewis worked with the bronze man to drive the Devil's Tomahawks from your land. Do not scorn Pau-puk-kee-wis. Honor him."

A wail of contrition went up at the mention of Keewis in the name of the ancient mischief-maker of Hiawatha. The Indians fell on their faces. They were indeed impressed.

They did not know, as Monk and Doc's other aids had suddenly realized, that Michabou was a moving picture cast onto the white smoke to reflect it in eerie fashion. They did not know that the voice of the master spirit was Doc's thrown by ventriloquism.

That had fooled not only the Indians. It had driven Lakonnen to give himself away.

The smoke vanished then, and Doc reappeared. The Indians were busy untying Marquette Heller and Keewis. Monk sidled up to Doc. There was one more thing he had to know.

"How'd you fake that death, Doc?" he asked in a whisper.

Doc looked at him for a moment and smiled.

"Did you ever see a stage hypnotist draw a needle entirely through the arm of a subject without pain or damage?" Doc inquired. Monk nodded. Doc explained that welts were raised on the body without breaking the skin. A collodionlike substance was then added.

"That, plus suspended animation of the bodily tissues and functions through hypnosis is the basis of it," the bronze man told him. The gravelike smell, Doc told him, was made by chemicals in all cases.

Monk breathed a sigh of relief and turned to find Iris Heller. He found her with Ham.

"Don't believe a word he tells you," Monk grunted.

Monk expected a rise out of Ham on that one. But the dapper lawyer fooled him.

"My esteemed associate jests," Ham drawled. He put one arm around Monk's shoulder. "Let us discuss this in a friendly fashion."

Monk was stymied. Those weren't the tactics he was accustomed to meeting. The three of them strolled slowly toward the edge of the clearing. A few feet behind them, Marquette Heller trailed. At the edge of the clearing Monk let out a roar of anger. He left Iris and Ham and raced into the underbrush.

"I'll cut his ears off!" Monk roared. "I'll draw and quarter the unpleasant beast! I'll tear him apart!"

Ham took one look, and instantly Iris Heller found herself alone.

A dozen yards in the woods there was a small fire left by some of the Indians. Two figures were crouched around the fire. One of them was Chemistry. The big monkey's tendency toward imitation had nearly gotten him in trouble before.

This time it was worse than usual. Chemistry had seen the Indians about to roast Habeas when Ham had called him into the other clearing.

Monk bellowed in rage as he tore through the brush. He was afraid he wouldn't get there in time. Chemistry had carefully tied the porker's feet to a long pole. He was trying to maneuver the pole now over the fire. The expression on the monkey's face was neither one of anger or hunger. He had the attitude of a man whose sole thought is the advancement of science.

Monk and Ham reached the fire almost simultaneously. The pig was saved. But the scrap that ensued between Monk and Ham had other repercussions. Iris Heller, standing in amazement at the edge of the larger clearing, wrinkled her nose in disgust. She turned abruptly. Marquette Heller stood half a dozen feet from her. In an instant they were in each other's arms.

Monk saw that. He quit fighting.

"Crimminy!" he complained. "Even when I'm goin' good you can queer me with a dame."

Doc Savage's voice was soft behind him.

"They have been in love for years," he told them. "Marquette was too proud to ask her to marry him until he had earned the right. That made her angry."

Monk grunted. "Yeah," he said. "Women are like that. I'm off them for life."

THE END