

THE MAN WHO FELL UP

A Doc Savage Adventure by Kenneth Robeson

- Chapter I. THE ONE WHO FELL
- Chapter II. IN A GREEN FOG
- Chapter III. ANOTHER WHO FELL UP
- Chapter IV. FAINTING SPELL
- Chapter V. HAM'S NECK
- Chapter VI. MONK VS. MONK
- Chapter VII. PLOT LABYRINTH
- Chapter VIII. FEAR IS A GOATHERD
- Chapter IX. SYZYGY WAS NO GOOD
- Chapter X. THE MONK COMPOUND
- Chapter XI. THE UNDERCOVER AGENT
- Chapter XII. THE FLYING MAN
- Chapter XIII. DECEIT
- Chapter XIV. BATTLE STATIONS SUBMERGED
- Chapter XV. THE WARSHIP
- Chapter XVI. THE FRIEND

Chapter I. THE ONE WHO FELL

THE word "concerned," says the dictionary, means to be affected, disturbed, troubled or anxious. One of the men was concerned.

The other man was just grim. So grim that his cheek muscles stood out in hard knots in front of his ears, making him look like a large gopher with two walnuts in its mouth.

They stood on a street corner. The city was New York. There was nothing distinguished about the street, except that George Washington had once stayed in a house in the next block. The street looked as if nothing in the way of upkeep had been done to it since.

The green building had been built since the days of George Washington, of course, because it was a skyscraper of sorts. Sixteen stories and a water-tank high. It still had most of its windows, except for the first three floors above the ground. Three stories were about as high as the brats in the neighborhood could pitch a stone. They were not very strong brats in this neighborhood. A surprising percentage of them ended up in tuberculosis sanitariums, and some of the survivors graduated to the stone walls at Dannemora or Sing Sing. One had even gotten as far as the little island in San Francisco Bay. It was neither a healthy nor a wealthy neighborhood.

The concerned man and the grim man were gazing at the tall green building.

"You will go to your death!" said the concerned man.

The concerned man had lean strength and power and range. Timbre in his voice. Character in his face. Muscles on the backs of his hands and in his neck. His suit was blue and good, and his face was shaved, his hair cut.

There was, however, something hard and sharp about him. Not a criminal look. Just hard and sharp. Like a gleaming knife that had cut, and could cut again, and still be polished.

"I cannot help it, Strand," said the grim man. "There is nothing else to do. Nothing."

The grim man was small and compact with the look of a bull pup. And his attitude toward the other was somehow that of a well-trained bull pup toward its master. Master and servant, perhaps.

Certainly, at least, employer and servant.

"There may be some other way, Rod," said Strand.

"Name it."

Strand could not name it. He was silent, baffled, uncomfortable and worried.

"I'm going in there," Rod said.

Strand pulled a deep breath. "I order you not to," he said.

Rod looked at him strangely. Rod was thinking of something to say and wondering whether he should say it. Finally he did say it.

"You are not in the army now, Strand," he said.

Strand got very white, like a man who had taken a needle through his stomach in a way that would make a man very sick. He did not say anything.

"You will be going to your death," Strand repeated.

Rod swallowed. The trouble he had with his swallow showed he was scared as well as grim.

"It's the only thing left to do," he said. "Shake hands, Strand." He took Strand's hand and shook it gravely. "I'm going in. If it is to death that is the way it will have to be."

And with that, Rod walked into the green skyscraper, walked in to his death as he had been warned!

DEATH, however, came to Rod Bentley in a fashion which was not immediate but which was startling. Several things happened first, but one of these things was more important than the others, as is often the case with incidents.

The important thing was Tottingham Strand's inability to get into the green building. He tried.

He stood there for a few seconds, fighting his impulse to save his friend or at least share his friend's danger, until he lost the battle. Then he rushed forward to the door through which Rod had gone. The door was locked.

Strand wrenched savagely at the knob. He was incredulous; he stepped back, scowled. He leaped forward and kicked the door.

"Open up!" he bellowed.

Echoes of his kick on the door and his shout came back from inside the building with about the sound a pebble makes when dropped in a large cavern. He tried it again.

Strand's anxiety became a kind of frenzy. Sweat stood like hot grease on his forehead. He ran back from the door. He stood and stared up at the building, and the building was like an old green skeleton. Nothing moved. There was no life anywhere.

The sweat kept coming out on his forehead. He started trembling, the calves of his legs first, then his knees. And finally, when he tried to wipe the perspiration off his face, it was as if his hand were patting against the skin.

He stood there for minutes. Then he began running along the side of the building, leaping to get at the windows. There were boards nailed inside the windows. The glass was broken out almost everywhere. But the boards were too solid for him to burst inside.

He ran back in desperation to look again at the building, and it was then that he saw the man on the ledge.

The ledge was high up, one floor down from the roof. It was not wide, probably two or three feet. The man there was Rod Bentley. There was no doubt of that. He was backing away along the ledge. He had gone out on the ledge, fleeing from something.

There were shots, then! Two rapping reports. Then three more. Rod Bentley slumped down as if hit! In order to see better, Strand wheeled, raced back to the opposite side of the street, then stopped and stared upward.

Down the street, a couple had stepped out of a doorway to stare. A man and a wife, probably. They had heard the shots. The woman leveled an arm at the high ledge and began screaming. She screamed twice, with a quick intake of breath between. Then she stopped shrieking with her mouth roundly open, a cavity of surprise.

Strand became rigid, as if all his muscles were tight strings.

The figure above had fallen off the ledge. Possibly, the term "fallen" was not applicable, because the figure, although coming off the ledge, was going upward! It fell up! It fell up and up until it was small in the sky, finally a dot, eventually nothing that was visible. The form that had been on the window ledge became, in plain, unvarnished fact, if evidence of the eyes was to be believed—and there was no reason to disbelieve them—an upward-falling object that fell out into space.

This, of course, was not easy to believe, even if seeing is believing. The two people, the man and wife who had come out on their doorstep to see what the shooting was about, stood there gap-jawed for something like five minutes before they thought of anything to say to each other. Strand had started running and had run out of sight by that time.

Chapter II. IN A GREEN FOG

TOTTINGHAM STRAND did a hard job of thinking. He walked streets. He got in a subway and rode to the end of the line and back again. He stood at the stone wall near the Soldiers and Sailors Monument on Riverside Drive and looked at the placid Hudson. He stood there for a long time. While he stood there, Strand saw a man snatch a woman's purse. Actually, the man eased the purse off the bench where the woman had placed it at her side. The fellow zipped open the purse, made a scoop at the contents and put them in his pocket, then returned the purse to the bench. The man arose idly and strolled away from the bench, then stopped abruptly near Strand and stood looking out over the river.

The reason for the man halting, Strand saw, was the approach of a blue-coated policeman.

An impulse hit Strand. He thought it was a rather silly idea. But something impelled him to go through with it.

Strand arose, approached the man, spoke out of the corner of his mouth. "Savage is after you," Strand said.

"Huh?"

"Doc Savage," said Strand, wondering why he was doing a silly thing like this, "is on your trail."

The sneak thief turned completely white except for shades of green around his mouth. For a stark minute, he said nothing. Then he vaulted the stone wall, dropped a wild fifteen feet or so down the slope on the other side and lit running.

Strand watched him disappear. Then Strand climbed on a downtown bus, rode it to the midtown district, got off and entered the tallest building. He was calling on Doc Savage. The thing he had done on impulse to the sneak thief had decided him. He could not have explained exactly why, unless it was because there was suddenly no doubt in his mind but that Doc Savage was a nemesis of evil. He did not meet Doc Savage, however.

He met two other fellows, and they were in a fight when he found them. Or practically. One of them was a dapper man with splendid shoulders, was smartly dressed, and was holding an innocent-looking black cane. The other was a wide, short man with a coating of hair that resembled rusty shingle nails and a face that was something to stop clocks.

Tottingham Strand stepped forward. He cleared his throat to get attention.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "Could you tell me where I can find Doc Savage?"

Neither Monk nor Ham paid him any attention. The two had been having an argument. Monk stood glaring at Ham.

"Ham, where do the flies go in the winter?"

"Search me!" Ham snapped.

"Oh, I won't bother," Monk said smugly. "I was just wondering."

Ham glowered and lifted the black cane.

"Gentlemen!" Strand said sharply. "Please, may I have a minute?"

Monk turned his head. He saw the tight glacial expression on Strand's face, and forgot their quarrel.

"You can't see Doc," Monk said. "It is impossible!"

Strand wet his lips. "It is important. Very important."

Monk shrugged. "I can't help that," he said. "You can talk to us."

"Who are you?" Strand inquired.

"We help Doc," Monk explained. "I'm Monk Mayfair. This guy with the fancy clothes here is Ham Brooks."

Strand thought for a while. The desperation in his mind moved across his face like grim reflections in a mirror. "I . . . I would like to talk to you, then," he said.

MONK and Ham conducted Strand to an elevator. They had met in a small office in a lower floor of the building, an office which the elevator starter had informed Strand was used to interview persons who wished to see Doc Savage. They rode to the eighty-sixth floor. They crossed a corridor, opened a plain bronze door which bore the name "Clark Savage, Jr.," in small print.

Strand found himself in a reception room furnished with a few comfortable chairs, a safe big enough for a bank and an inlaid table that was really an unusual piece. He was shown a seat.

"What's got you looking like that?" Monk asked.

"I . . . looking like what?" asked Strand, surprised.

"As if the Indians were coming."

Strand tried to be nonchalant and lighted a cigarette. His first impression of Monk and Ham had been that they were a pair who had some bolts loose. But now he was not so sure. They were as direct, now, as two roosters after a worm.

Ham said, "What is worrying you? What is this trouble you want Doc Savage to help you out of?"

Strand, startled, said, "I have not mentioned any trouble."

"Sure," Ham said. "But you would not be coming in here with that look on your face unless that was it."

"I see," Strand said. "You are accustomed to this sort of thing?"

"Somewhat."

"I see."

Monk, who was no diplomat and had never yearned to be one, said, "What you had better see is that we haven't got all day to sit around and listen to you stall. Did you come up here with something to say?"

Strand frowned. "If you wish me to be blunt, I will be that," he said. "I want help. I want you to get something. It is very valuable."

"Does this thing," asked Monk, "belong to you?"

"It certainly does."

"Where is it?"

"Some men have it."

"Where are they?"

"I can show you where they are," said Strand.

"What is this thing?"

"I'll show you."

"What shape is it?"

"We can handle it all right, once we get our hands on it," Strand said.

Monk pointed a finger at him.

"Friend, you'd better be more definite than that," Monk said, "if you want us to show much interest."

Strand began talking then. His voice was deep and smooth, his delivery faultless, and his words seemed to have power and persuasiveness. Monk and Ham, who were skeptical fellows, found themselves listening and nodding thoughtfully. Monk, in particular, drank it in, while Ham was a little slower on the upbeat. Ham was a persuasive orator himself, but he was up against such a master in the person of Tottingham Strand that it did not occur to him that he was being talked into something.

Strand told them that he had a friend named Montgomery and that the friend had left a chest with him. Strand did not know what the chest contained, but it must be of valuable content, because Montgomery had been very concerned over its safety. Then—as Strand explained it—strange things had started happening: People watching him, an attempt to burglarize his house, and, finally, the chest had been stolen.

"It happened an hour ago," finished Strand, "and I came straight to you for help."

Ham nodded. He was to find out later that he had just listened to as smooth a cloth of lies as anyone had ever woven before his face. But he now thought every word that had been told him was the truth. He had been taken in!

Ham said, "Really, the thing to do is call the police. You can tell them the story, and they can do more than we can. Monk, telephone the police."

In alarm, Strand held up a hand.

"No," he said. "Unfortunately, my friend Montgomery said I must not, under any circumstances, involve the police with the box."

Ham frowned. "We want nothing to do with anything crooked," he said sharply.

Strand smiled grimly.

"Neither do I," he said. "Suppose we do it this way: You help me. I let you look at the contents of the chest, whatever they may be. If you think the police should be informed, we will do so, and they can arrest Montgomery."

"You would double-cross your friend?" Monk asked.

"That," said Strand, "would not be double-crossing. If the man involved me in something criminal in giving me the chest, he is no friend, and deserves none of the treatment of one."

That appealed to Ham.

"We'll help you," he declared. "Just a minute, until we get our equipment together."

BY equipment, Ham meant some of the gadgets which Doc Savage had developed. The bronze man's inventive genius had turned out numerous unusual—"unusual" was a mild word for some of them—devices for use in their profession. The gadgets were unorthodox. The bulletproof undergarments, made of a chain-mesh alloy that was not much heavier than a suit of long, winter red flannels, was an example, and probably the most commonplace of the devices they were in the habit of using.

Monk said, "You know something?"

"Where flies go in the wintertime?" Ham sneered.

"No. No, I'm not kidding," Monk insisted. "You know what? I think that guy talked us into something."

"He told a very convincing story."

"He sure did," Monk said strangely.

Ham scowled. "You mean he sucked me in? Ridiculous. Listen, I have heard experts put out a line of talk, and I've done it myself more than once."

"All right, smart boy," Monk said. "I bet you we find out, and don't say I didn't tell you so."

Strand looked at them anxiously when they came back out of the laboratory with their equipment.

He asked, "Are you sure you can handle this? It is dangerous."

"We're as sure we can handle it as we can be," said Monk, "without knowing what it is."

"Couldn't you get more help?"

"Not right away," Monk said.

"Why can't we get hold of Doc Savage?" Strand asked. "You have not explained that."

Monk and Ham saw no reason why they should not tell him the reason.

"Doc," Monk said, "is at an uptown hospital, performing an operation."

"We can stop for him," Strand suggested. "We will telephone ahead, and they can get someone else to perform the operation. I'll pay whatever fee Savage was to get for the operation, so he won't lose anything."

"They can't get anybody else for this operation," Monk told him bluntly, "because nobody else is able to do it. And you want some advice?"

"Advice?" said Strand, puzzled.

"Don't mention money around Doc," Monk advised. "I mean, don't give him the idea you think money can buy any of Doc's services."

"That seems rather strange advice."

"Doc doesn't work for money."

"I don't believe I understand," Strand said.

Monk said nothing, but he wished he hadn't brought up the subject. Doc Savage had as good an idea of the value of money as the next man. But Doc was fortunate in having a source of wealth which he could tap at will, a secret hoard in a lost Central American jungle valley, a place presided over by descendants of an ancient Mayan civilization. The source of wealth was a result of one of their earlier adventures. It was also a secret.

"Doc doesn't do anything in which he is not interested," Monk said, and let it go at that.

Which was not exactly true. What Monk meant was that Doc could not be hired. That the bronze man was sole judge of what needed doing, and that his payment for the job was that same knowledge that

it needed doing. Monk had heard Johnny Littlejohn explain it that way once, and the explanation had confused Monk until he thought about it. Johnny Littlejohn had a habit of expressing his statements in abstruse phrases, or of using words so big that no one could understand them. Thinking of Johnny Littlejohn led Monk to mention a fact.

"There are three more members of Doc's group," he said. "There is Renny Renwick, the engineer; Long Tom Roberts, the electrical expert, and Johnny Littlejohn, the archaeologist and geologist. All three of them are down in Washington at a defense-board meeting, so they are not available to help us."

Tottingham Strand nodded. "I wish we had more help," he said.

Monk's feeling that Strand was shystering them grew stronger and stronger.

THEIR distrust of Strand was actually responsible for what happened to them, which was embarrassing. Usually, distrust kept them out of trouble. This time, it got them into it. It happened in an involved way.

First, Strand took them into an old building on a side street in a squalid part of town. He climbed stairs. They followed, full of caution. They clambered out on the roof.

"Keep down," urged Strand in a tense voice.

He meant keep down behind the brick walls around the roof. They did so. They got roof tar on their knees, got skinned with gravel and collected dust.

Eventually, Strand indicated an old dilapidated hulk of an office building which was colored green.

"In there," he said.

"That green building?" asked Monk, surprised.

Strand nodded. "In there, somewhere. That is where the thieves took it."

"It's a big place," Monk pointed out suspiciously.

"It seems to be abandoned," Strand explained. "I think they may have rented it, or maybe they moved in without any authority to do so. Anyway, that is where they went."

"You sure they're there, now?"

"That," said Strand grimly, "I wouldn't swear to. They were there three hours ago. They may have left. We can move across this roof and get into one of the windows of the green building."

Three hours ago? This guy had said his chest had been stolen only an hour ago. Now, he said three hours. Monk glanced at Ham to see if the dapper lawyer had noticed the slip, and Ham had. They exchanged meaning looks.

"Strand," Monk said. "By the way, you said your name was Strand, didn't you?"

"Yes. Tottingham Strand."

"All right, Strand—what does this mysterious chest look like?"

"It is green," Strand said. "You'll know it when you see it. Green, and longer than a man, but not as wide. Thicker, though." He indicated the building. "Tell you what: I will crawl inside and make an investigation. If the coast is clear, I will come back and tip you fellows. If it isn't clear, use your own judgment."

He crawled away.

Monk and Ham proceeded to make their mistake. They did not have to hold a conference over it.

They just looked at each other, and Ham said, "It smells to me as if he was going in there to tip his friends to be ready for us, then plans to come back and get us."

Monk was silent,

They crawled forward after Tottingham Strand. They climbed in the same window through which Strand had eased himself. Then people began shooting at them!

THERE was not much shooting. Two bullets. Both were purposefully aimed to one side.

A voice, evidently belonging to the one who had caused the bullets, said, "Stand still, you two." Monk and Ham stood still.

The voice said, "That's fine. Now, listen. We haven't any great wish to drum up business for the undertakers. Suppose you two wandering Willies go away from here and have a forgetting spell."

Monk said, "Ham, I never heard that voice before."

"I, either," Ham said, precisely. When Ham became precise in speech, it meant he was very angry.

The voice said, "Did you come with Strand?"

Monk and Ham looked at each other.

"Who's Strand?" Monk asked.

The voice laughed grimly. "Humorists, eh? We saw you with him. Incidentally, we have him with us now."

Monk lifted his arms slowly to the level of his shoulders. Then he flexed them at the elbows and clasped his hands over his head.

"You don't need to put your hands up," the voice said. "We could shoot you dead before you could do anything."

Monk said nothing. He flexed his biceps. He made the muscle get very big, so that it pressed against a brittle container in his sleeve and broke it. When he felt it break, he winked at Ham, and

began holding his breath, Ham also held his breath.

Monk lowered his arms slowly so that the gas he had released could get out of his sleeve and spread through the room.

The voice said, "Maybe you would feel better if Strand told you to go away. Boys, get Strand. Tell him to advise his two pups to go away. We don't want any more trouble than—"

The man stopped.

There was a sound like a sack, loosely filled with potatoes, being dumped on the floor.

"What the hell!" said the voice.

The voice was speaking to them through a crack in the door on the other side of the room.

"Gas!" a voice screamed. It was a new voice. "They let loose some kinda gas!"

"SOME kinda gas" might have been one description for it. Explicitly, the stuff was an odorless and colorless anesthetic of great power and quick effect, one which became quite worthless, however, after it had mingled with atmosphere for from a minute to a minute and a half. Doc Savage and his associates used it as a regular weapon.

"Gas, gas!" the man kept bellowing.

Monk moved fast, got down, went to the right, out of range of the door. Ham also moved, dipped a hand into a pocket, brought out a small grenade, and put it hard against the door. It was the type that would explode on contact when the pin was out. It made splinters and flame out of the door. Monk roared. He liked to roar when he was fighting. He plunged into the debris that the door had become.

He saw a man picking himself off the floor twenty feet down a corridor. The man had been tumbled that distance by the blast, but not stunned. The fellow ran. Monk got another grenade, heaved it. It did not explode. Either the grenade was defective, or Monk had not released the firing pin properly. At least, the quarry got away up a stairs.

There were two men spread out on the floor, and neither of them was Tottingham Strand. There was only the runner, the one who had escaped up the stairs. Monk chased him.

"Be careful!" Ham yelled warningly.

Care was something Monk never knew in a fight. He hit the door. Someone was trying to hold it on the other side long enough for someone else to fasten a lock. Monk yanked. There was a short struggle of muscles. Monk could straighten horseshoes with his unaided hands. He got the door open, got a man by the neck and another man by the arm.

The stairway was narrow enough to make it a little complicated as they went around and around and over and over in a cloud of dust and profanity. Monk was entirely happy for twenty or thirty seconds, which was as long as the two foes lasted. During the fracas, Ham tried to join in, and Monk managed to put an accidental foot in Ham's face and shove. The latter incident made the brief fray a luscious success.

Monk got up and knocked dust off his hands.

"Where's some more?" he asked.

Ham held his aching nose and demanded, "Was that an accident?" He added a threat, "If I thought you kicked me on purpose—"

Tottingham Strand called to them from above.

"Get help!" he shouted. "There are too many of them! And they've got that green fog coming—"

Judging from the sounds, Strand was either kicked in the throat or slugged with a blackjack.

Monk and Ham went up to see. They expected to be shot at, and to discourage that they tossed up a smoke grenade and two thin-walled containers holding the powerful anesthetic gas.

They got their lungs full of good air, held their breaths, and climbed the stairs silently. They could hear footsteps running away, climbing higher into the green building. They came out on a floor and found another stairway and went up that into a hall like the other two, where they paused to consult each other concerning a rather strange phenomenon which had come to their attention.

"Ham," Monk said.

"Yes?"

"Do things look kind of green to you?" Monk asked.

"They do," Ham admitted.

"Kind of as if there was a green fog in the air?"

"Kind of," Ham said.

Chapter III. ANOTHER WHO FELL UP

THE remarkable aspects of encountering a green fog held them there for a short time. They did not say anything immediately, but they gave the thing considerable thought.

"Gas," Monk suggested.

"I don't think so," Ham said. "I don't feel anything."

Nevertheless, both hastily dug out their gas protection, which consisted of a hood apiece, made of a material resembling cellophane in its transparency. Elastic held the hoods snugly around their necks. The things had no oxygen attachments, but they would be effective for a short time. They went up more stairs. There was no one, nothing but the fog, and that was more green. It

reminded Monk of the color of a pond frog's back.

They came to a metal door. It was locked. Ham touched Monk's arm and made signs with his fingers. This was next to the top floor, Ham signaled. He had kept track. Monk was nodding agreement when they heard Strand scream.

Strand's yelling came from above, but from outside. They ran to the windows, threw them up. Monk, always reckless, took a chance and thrust his head out and looked up.

Strand was lying across the ledge. His head, his arms, were visible. Judging from his actions, someone was holding his legs. He yelled something.

Monk wrenched off his gas hood to listen. He was badly in need of air, anyway.

Strand shouted, "Get out of the place! Get help! It's hopeless!"

Hands grasped Strand's head. They struck him. One of the hands had a gun. Strand was hauled back. A moment later the gun exploded!

The gun report had a dull, mushy quality, as if the muzzle was against the man's body when the blast came. A thin stream of red appeared, began to trickle off the ledge. The greenish fog was so thick that Monk did not see the red string until it began to spatter, blown by the breeze, over the sill of the window from which he leaned.

"They shot him!" Monk said.

Ham said, "Here, let me there. I'll fix them."

Ham had a machine pistol in his hand. The little weapon, no larger than a heavy army automatic, could discharge an enormous number of bullets per second. The bullets were very small in caliber, and of infinite variety—either "mercy" slugs which would produce unconsciousness, or explosive, or smoke pellets.

He leaned out of the window, but he did not shoot.

"Monk!" he squalled suddenly. "Look!"

Monk thrust his head out of the window. "Blazes!"

"He just fell off the ledge," Ham said.

Monk gaped unbelievably. "But—he's falling up!"

The figure, hard to distinguish in the green fog, but nevertheless a figure with Strand's clothing and with the shape of a man, was falling upward and upward until it was becoming lost in the olive haze.

Monk said, "You sure that's him?"

Ham had to clear his throat before he could speak. "Positive!"

They stood there in iced astonishment until the figure was no longer visible in the sky.

The iron door blocking the stairs that led on up to the higher floor was strong. But it came to pieces under one of the small explosive grenades. They went up cautiously and found nothing.

"Blast this pea-soup fog!" Monk complained while they were looking cautiously around. "I couldn't see a rabbit twenty feet away."

"Ten feet away would be more like it," Ham said.

Their earnest and wary search disclosed no one, which was no end baffling.

"Wonder where they went," Monk muttered. "Think they could all have floated off into the sky? We didn't watch."

Ham said something violent and skeptical. "You really think we saw a man float up into the sky?"

"All I know is what I saw," Monk said. "What would you say?"

"It couldn't happen, regardless of what we saw."

"All right," Monk told him. "But you called my attention to it yourself."

Monk went to the window. There was wet redness in which he put his finger. "See?" he said.

"Blood! This is where they shot Strand."

Ham pointed at the sky. "And there's where he went," he said. "Don't tell me we aren't crazy."

Monk grimaced. "I hope nothing unexpected or violent happens, like a mouse squeaking, or something. I'm in the frame of mind to jump fifty feet straight up."

They prowled around in the green fog. Monk discovered he had several small cuts on his legs. Ham found his own legs bore similar wounds. They concluded one of the men they had fought downstairs had been using a small penknife that they hadn't noticed.

Suddenly their minds were relieved.

They found a fire escape.

"That's the way the others got out of here!" Monk exploded in relief. "While we were busting down the door, they just went down the fire escape."

Ham nodded soberly.

"Fine," he said. "Now you just find the invisible strings that pulled that man up in the sky and we can go home and say we know everything."

"How about the green chest?"

"You mean the one Strand had stolen from—" Ham went silent. "Green," he muttered after a moment.

"Green! This fog is green."

"Kind of significant, huh?" Monk suggested.

"I don't know what it is," Ham snapped. "Let's go downstairs and collect our prisoners."

They made the descent of stairways without relaxing caution and found that there were no

prisoners. They had left at least four unconscious men behind them, and now there were none. "Collected," Ham said.

"Yeah, the guys went down the fire escape, picked them up, then took to their heels," Monk agreed.

"You think there's any use of hunting for the green chest?"

"If there was a green chest," Monk said, "we might as well look for it."

They looked and did not find it. Later they stood on the street, disgusted.

"The fog is down here, too," Monk pointed out.

"Thicker," Ham agreed. "It seems to have covered the whole city. It is almost as green as grass." The little man with the big hat met them on the corner. He was standing there wringing his hands. "Gentlemen, please," he said. He put a hand on Ham's arm. "Excuse me, but have you noticed anything strange for the last half-hour?"

"Strange?" Ham prompted.

"I-er-green," said the little man.

Ham snorted. "Strange is the word for it. You mean this fog, don't you?"

"Yes, yes," said the little man eagerly. "Yes, indeed. I'm so glad you see it, too. I thought I was going slightly off."

Ham looked up at the sky. "We can understand your feelings," he said.

"I'm so glad," said the little man. "I'll run and tell my wife that we're all right after all."

Ham said, "By the way, you haven't noticed things going up, have you?"

"Up?" said the little man vacantly.

"Never mind," Ham said.

PAT SAVAGE met them at headquarters. Pat was sitting in the reception room applying adhesive tape to an extremely well-molded ankle.

"I'm sure glad to see you," she said. "What is this stuff? This green stuff?"

"Fog," Monk suggested.

"Don't be funny. Fog is gray."

"All right, you can do what I was doing—guess what it is," Monk told her.

Patricia Savage had many of the physical characteristics of her cousin Doc. She had his flake-gold eyes and his remarkably bronze hair, a little of the tanned bronze of his skin.

"Doc has been hurt," she said.

"Hurt?" Ham yelled. "Where? How badly?"

Patricia Savage operated an exclusive beauty establishment on Park Avenue and spent her odd moments trying to chisel in on the excitement that usually surrounded Doc and his associates. Pat liked excitement. The difficulty was that Doc did not appreciate the presence of Pat in his organization; it was his belief that the work was too dangerous. He had never been able to convince Pat on the point.

"Pull your eyes back in," Pat suggested. "He isn't hurt badly. Two fellows got in a street fight, and one of them had a knife. One man knocked the knife out of the other's hand and it hit Doc. Cut him a little, that's all."

"Where is he?" Monk demanded anxiously.

"He will be here before long."

Monk relaxed and eyed Pat's ankle approvingly. "What happened to your running gear?"

Pat finished applying the adhesive tape. "You know as much about it as I do. Something skinned my shin. A man on the street—clumsy oaf."

Ham went out and threw up a window, looked out. "I can't tell about this fog," he said. "It may be thicker in other parts of the city, but I can't be sure."

Pat asked, "What time did you first notice it?"

"About an hour ago, I imagine it was," Ham said.

Pat said, "I only noticed it about half an hour ago."

"Probably it took some time to spread to your part of town."

Pat stared at him. "You mean you know where it started?"

"No, I don't!" Ham snapped. "I don't know anything about it, except that it is the color of grass and danged mysterious."

"What is wrong with Ham?" Pat stared at Ham. "He doesn't look right to me."

Monk chuckled a trifle horribly. "Ham is on edge. He saw a man fall up, and it upset him."

"Up?" Pat frowned. "You mean up?"

Ham whirled on Monk and yelled, "You shouldn't have told that, you silly goon! Nobody will believe us!"

Pat became completely blank. "You mean to stand there in your skin and bones and tell me you saw a man fall up?"

"'S a fact," Monk said gloomily.

"How far up did he fall?"

"Out of sight, and no telling how much farther."

Pat contemplated them for a while in silence. "Somebody," she said, "has been dropped on his

head."

Chapter IV. FAINTING SPELL

DOC SAVAGE said, "Pat, when did you first notice this green-fog effect?"

"Forty-five minutes ago," Pat said.

"And you, Monk?"

"An hour and fifteen minutes ago, about."

Ham said, "Doc, that isn't all, either." He rubbed his jaw sourly. "A guy came in here with a story about a green chest that had been stolen from him. His name was Tottingham Strand, he said. You want to hear that story now? It ended when he fell up into the sky."

Doc Savage studied Ham thoughtfully. "Go ahead with the story," he said.

Ham went ahead.

Doc Savage was as big a man physically as his reputation. This was not apparent until one stood close to him, so well proportioned was his big body. There was nothing, in fact, about him that looked ordinary. His eyes were like pools of flake gold, always stirred with tiny winds, full of magnetic power. A single glance at him did not leave the slightest doubt about his muscular strength and vitality.

He looked what he was—a scientific product. Literally a product of science. Because he had been placed in the hands of physical culturists, psychologists, educators, chemists, and a raft of other scientists at childhood. He never had a normal youth. The scientists might have considered they were making it as normal as they could under the circumstances, but they were wrong most of the time. The strange upbringing of Doc Savage had been the idea of his father, who had had a fixation of bringing up a son who would be a kind of modern knight and Sir Galahad, with test tubes and scientific gadgets for his sword and horse. The fixation of the elder Savage, long since gone beyond, was the result of some terrible thing that had happened to him; but the son had never learned exactly what it was.

Ham finished his recital.

"He fell up, as sure as I'm sitting here," he said. "I know how it sounds, and Monk knows how it sounds. But we saw what we saw."

"The green fog came up on you shortly after you had your first fight in the building?" Doc asked. Ham nodded. "The building was green," he said. "The chest was green, Strand said. The fog is green."

Pat said, "There seems to be a green tinge to the thing."

Suddenly Doc Savage startled the others. The big bronze man made a small trilling sound, an exotic note that seemed to come from everywhere in the room rather than from a definite point. It was very low, hardly audible. Pat and the others knew it meant that Doc Savage was concerned. The sound was a small unconscious thing he made in moments of mental stress.

"Pat," he said, "suppose you get on the telephone and check with some friend in another part of the city on the fog."

Pat nodded, picked up a telephone and dialed a number. "Hello," she said. "Is Susan there? . . . Oh, she isn't. Who is this, the maid? . . . I see. By the way, is it foggy up there? . . . It is green, eh? . . . Thank you. Tell Susan I called, will you? But tell her it wasn't important."

Pat hung up. "The green fog is up in Westchester, where Susan Glaspell lives. That was her maid on the telephone."

Monk grunted, said, "I know a guy down in Jersey. I think I'll call and ask him."

He got on the telephone but did not succeed in getting his friend. He did get a friend of the friend who was at the friend's office, and who said the fog was there in Jersey, as green as peas and as thick as soup.

Monk hung up. "More than passing strange," he said.

Then Doc fainted.

SIX little devils with hammers walked around on Doc Savage's head in dignified circles, testing the ringing qualities of his skull. When Doc finally managed to awaken, he grabbed at the devils with both hands but got fistfuls of his hair.

"You all right, Doc?" demanded a voice.

The face that belonged to the voice seemed to belong to Monk.

Doc was silent until he had collected enough of himself to sit erect. He asked, "Did you fellows see what made me pass out?"

"No," said Monk's face and voice.

"How long have I been out?"

"Two or three minutes."

Doc distinguished a dapper figure that should belong to Ham. It was hard to see the lawyer's features through the thick green haze.

"The fog getting worse?" Doc asked.

"Much worse."

"Where is Pat?"

"She went out," said a voice that seemed to emanate from Ham. "She went home."

"Why?"

"We persuaded her that this thing might be too dangerous for her."

Doc Savage frowned. His head seemed unusually thick. It was incredible that Pat could have been persuaded anything was too dangerous for her. "What was wrong with Pat?" he asked. "Was she ill or something?"

"I don't know," Ham said.

"Do you fellows feel all right?"

"Our heads seem kind of thick," Ham confessed. "Your voice sounds different, too, Doc. Kind of thick."

The bronze man had been about to remark on the difference in the voices of Monk and Ham also. He nodded.

"Can you fellows find that green office building?" he asked.

"Sure," Monk said. "But what is the sense of going there?"

"To get on the trail of this mystery," the bronze man said. "That seems to be the only point of attack we have."

"All right," Monk said, "if you think that's the thing to do." He gave his trousers a hitch. "I'm going to get some equipment together."

He walked through a door into a library equipped with thousands of volumes which, as indicated by the titles, were all of scientific nature. He closed the door behind him. Crossing the impressive library, he entered a laboratory of vast proportions. He closed that door, too. Then he listened to be sure he was not being followed.

Having satisfied himself with these precautions, Monk said, "All right, Stinky."

Stinky was a long blade of a man who was hidden behind some chemical cases. He showed himself.

"The rest of you come out, too," Monk said.

Four other men appeared. They were not badly dressed, but they did not look like gentlemen who would put things in Christmas stockings.

Monk said, "Boys, we will have to pull it. He insists on going hunting for Strand."

Stinky grunted. He did not look happy.

"We go through the motions of a fight with you, then escape?" he asked.

"That's right."

The others looked as unhappy as Stinky. "You sure this will go off all right?" one demanded. "If this would fall through and he caught us, I don't like to think of what will happen."

Monk moved over and indicated a rope ladder hanging out of the window. "You go down this. You'll have plenty of time. What more could you want?"

"All right," the man agreed reluctantly. "Let's start dropping our eggs."

Monk then slapped the man, and the man yelled and slapped back. None of the blows that followed was hard, but all the noise was vigorous.

DOC SAVAGE wheeled around in the reception room at the first fight sounds.

"It's Monk!" Ham yelled. "He's in trouble!"

Doc hit the library door. It was locked, and it was also of metal stout enough that breaking it down barehanded was out of the question. He drew back, produced an explosive grenade.

"That door cost plenty!" Ham wailed.

Doc put the grenade against the door. It made flame and noise and changed the shape of the door. He went through. The other door, the one into the laboratory, was not locked.

Monk was walking erratic circles in the laboratory and holding his head.

"Out of the window!" he croaked.

"You hurt, Monk?"

"Not bad. One of them knocked the wits out of me for a minute."

Doc Savage went to the window. The greenish fog was an impenetrable mass so thick that, a dozen feet from his face, it was like a solid thing. He started to swing out on the rope ladder which he found there.

Monk suddenly had hold of his shoulder. "Don't, Doc!" Monk gasped. "That's just what they're figuring on."

Doc hesitated. "What do you mean?"

"I sneaked up on them and heard them talking," Monk explained. "The idea of the attack was not to damage me. It was to create a diversion to draw all of us, and you in particular, Doc, out of the building."

The bronze man was grimly silent for a moment. He made briefly the strange, low, exotic trilling which was his unconscious mannerism in moments of stress.

"You sure of that?" he asked.

"Positive!" Monk said. "For some reason they don't want us in the building."

Ham said, "That sounds silly, Monk."

"It's what they said."

"Seems kind of opposite to me," Ham grumbled. "Lots of times people have tried to get us to stay

in here and not stick our noses into things. But this time they want us to leave."

Monk said, "That's why I say stay here."

Doc Savage had one leg over the window sill. He withdrew it. "That might be wise," he said. But five minutes later, when they were alone—Doc and Monk—in the laboratory, Doc Savage casually took hold of Monk's necktie and asked, "What was the purpose of the attack you had faked on yourself, Monk?"

Blank astonishment made creases in Monk's face for a while. "Gosh, Doc—you didn't get fooled?" "Friends of yours, were they not?" Doc inquired quietly. It was one of the bronze man's strongest characteristics that he did not lift his voice or show excitement even under extraordinary circumstances.

"Yeah," Monk said. "Or not exactly, that is. Just some guys who were willing to make a buck and not ask too many questions. Honest guys, of course," he added hastily.

"What were you trying to do?"

Monk groaned. "Gosh, I hate getting caught like that."

"What was your idea?"

Monk gripped the bronze man's arm. "Doc, you know I have been with you a long time."

"Yes?"

"Well, I thought it entitled me to try to keep you out of danger," Monk said.

"And what was the nature of this danger?"

Monk groaned again, with earnestness.

"Ham and I saw that man fall up, and we saw the beginning of that green fog. This green fog, because it's still with us," said the homely man "We're worried. You know we don't get worried easily, Doc."

"What makes you think I will be safer here?"

Monk said evasively, "I knew that if I gave you the idea there was an enemy who wanted you to leave here, the thing you would do would be to stay."

"Why would I be safer here?"

"Look, Doc. We don't know what this is, do we?"

"Nor are we likely to find out, sitting here."

"Yes, but we better know what we're doing before we start barging around," Monk said. "I tell you, Doc—this thing is so queer it scares me."

The bronze man made no comment for at least a minute.

"Is that the way your mind works?" he asked finally.

"Uh—yes."

Doc said, "Get your equipment."

"You mean we're going to that green building?"

"That guess," Doc told him, "is much better than the idea you had."

The bronze man then closed his eyes, doubled his knees slowly until he was down on the floor, and fell forward on his side! His breathing was regular, measured, as if he slept.

Chapter V. HAM'S NECK

HAM said, "It has been about ten minutes. You fainted again, Doc."

"Where are we now?" Doc asked.

"Down in the street outside headquarters," Ham explained. He pointed. "See, there's the street sign. Can you read it through the green fog?"

Doc looked at the sign. It was readable, although barely so.

Monk said, "We thought there must be something upstairs that was making you faint. Maybe being cooped up in the place. So we came down here for air."

Doc said, "Drive to that green building."

"But listen!" Monk exploded. "Do you feel able—"

"Drive to the green building!"

Monk said nothing more. He put the car in motion and drove slowly, keeping close to the curb, blatting his horn warningly. There was not much traffic, and it moved slowly, the drivers leaning out of windows and staring.

Monk's manner was sullen, and when finally he stopped the car he said, "This isn't my idea." He got out of the machine. "Doc, I'm going back and watch headquarters."

"You think that necessary?" the bronze man inquired.

"I sure do."

Monk walked away, was speedily lost in the green void that the world had become.

Ham coughed uncomfortably. "Doc, I think he is scared."

The bronze man was silent.

"Something is sure wrong with Monk," Ham insisted. "He acted queer back there in headquarters. You know what? Could that attack on him have been fake? I sort of got the idea it was."

Doc said, "It was a fake."

Ham slapped his knee. "Then I'll bet he was responsible for you fainting!"

"You think so?"

Ham said meaningly, "You feel fine as soon as you regain consciousness, don't you? Doesn't that make you think of something?"

"Our anesthetic gas, you mean?"

"That's it. The odorless and colorless anesthetic gas we've been using for a long time. I'll bet Monk used some of that on you on the sly. All he would have to do would be to bust a capsule when you weren't looking, then pretend you were having some kind of queer spells. It wouldn't affect him if he held his breath for a minute, and he can do that. I've seen him hold it a lot longer." Doc Savage's metallic features were composed, but his voice showed interest. "That might be a logical explanation."

"I bet it's as logical as cats liking milk."

"You have a theory about his motives?"

"He's scared," Ham said. "He's worried about you. He wants to scare you into not having anything to do with this mystery about a man who came to see you about a green chest, and who fell up into the sky, and a green fog that came. Doc, all Monk is trying to do is protect you. I believe his heart is in the right place."

"And you think Monk just left us because he is scared?"

"As much as I'm ashamed to say it—yes."

THE green building was tall and gaunt and empty, full of nothing but stillness and the odors of disuse. There were the sounds their feet made, of course. And there was the green fog and the air mixed with the dust their feet churned up. The temperature was low and the humidity heavy enough to be depressing.

Ham pointed to tracks in the dust, and they climbed stairways slowly, stopping often to listen.

Doc said, "You chased them all the way to the roof?"

Ham replied, "Right. Top-floor ledge was where Strand took off from."

"You searched the place?"

"After a fashion."

Doc began to hunt casually. "Where do you think Strand was seized?"

"Downstairs. First or second floor, probably. We don't know; they might have got him right after he entered the building. But whatever they did to him was done on the top floor."

"What suggests that assumption?"

"Time," said Ham. "They didn't have time to do anything to him on the lower floors. We didn't give them time. They took him to the top floor and did what they did there."

"We will go to the top floor," Doc said.

The vest was lying on a roof below. Doc Savage did not find it for half an hour, which was long after he had gone over the top floor painstakingly, making no comment except to point out that an old gunny sack had been mopped over every foot of floor space to spoil all tracks, and had been swabbed over the ledge outside.

The vest came later, after Doc had noted a freshly broken window. He had asked Ham if he or Monk had broken it, receiving the answer that they had not.

It was not a whole vest. It was half, or a little less. Actually, there was only the left side of a vest from the armhole down. Its two pockets contained four matches, a five-cent stamp, a broken cigarette, a receipt from a florist, and a cube of sugar of the paper-wrapped type with the paper wrapper bearing the name "Southern Susan," but no address or other information.

Ham said, "Southern Susan. I wonder what that is."

Doc Savage was more interested in the receipt from the florist.

He went to a telephone and talked to the florist.

He got an address, also a name. The name was Erica Ambler-Hotts.

"I'll drive the car," Ham said. "Damn this uncanny green fog!"

He directed the car uptown, then across town in the traffic. There was more traffic than there had been, but very few of the cars were moving. Now and then one was traveling slowly. But the others were standing still. Taxicabs, trucks, passenger cars, all motionless. But the drivers and passengers were in them, just sitting there and staring, so that the effect was somewhat weird. They stopped finally at a building which had a doorman who was togged up like a Civil War admiral.

"Miss Erica Ambler-Hotts' apartment," Doc Savage said.

The doorman acted as if he had been hit. Then he made a dash and came back with a gentleman who was wearing an afternoon suit and perspiration.

"Who are you?" demanded this gentleman. "I am the manager. I must insist that you answer me, or I assure you that I shall call the police."

Doc Savage made his identity known.

"Oh! Oh!" said the manager. "I have heard of you. What can I do for you?"

"Miss Ambler-Hotts," Doc said.

The manager turned the palms of his hands up sadly. "We don't know. The boy was found dead on her floor. She is not in her apartment. The door was standing open. One of the porters saw her leaving with several men, and the impression was that she was a prisoner."

"Boy?" Doc Savage said.

"The elevator operator. He was found dead in the cage on her floor. A very hideous thing. An ice pick in the back of his skull!"

"She is English?"

"Miss Ambler-Hotts? Yes, indeed. Very English. Works for one of these societies to save England, I understand, I cannot tell you the exact name of the organization."

"Did she have a visitor this afternoon?"

The manager nodded. "Yes, indeed. Gentleman."

"Description?"

"A very good one," said the manager. "Our doorman has an excellent memory, fortunately."

He described a gentleman who was not unhandsome and who had some quality about him that was arresting in a strange way. "'He was as fascinating as a razor blade,' was the way our doorman put it," the manager advised. "Our doorman is very good at descriptives."

Ham emitted an exclamation.

"The visitor," he said, "was Tottingham Strand!"

DOC SAVAGE went through the girl's apartment. Miss Amble-Hotts was, as the manager had said, very English. Particularly her clothes, her knotty-thorn walking stick, the severe pictures of herself. Judging from what written stuff they were able to find, she was an energetic, but not an important, employee of one of the British groups now working in the United States in behalf of England. A telephone call to the British group verified this. No one at the place could think of any enemies of Miss Ambler-Hotts, or any suspicious acts committed by her recently, or anything else that would lift the lid on the mystery.

There was a book with a legend in it that said:

To Erica, in appreciation of a faith as pure as the perfume of roses and as sure as gravity.

Tot Strand

"Poetic fellow," Ham remarked.

Doc Savage continued his search. Ham seemed to think the hunt had been thorough enough, and that further effort was a waste of energy. The manager of the apartment house seemed to share the conviction, because he excused himself politely and left them alone.

Ham rubbed his jaw thoughtfully, remarked, "Monk kind of worries me," he said. "We've been together a long time, Doc, haven't we?"

"A good while," the bronze man admitted.

"And Monk has worked on a lot of experiments with you," Ham continued. "He's a great chemist, Monk is. I wouldn't admit it to his face, but he is good. About the best, next to you, I imagine."

Doc made no comment.

Ham seemed lost in thought for a while. "I remember a lot of the experiments you and Monk worked on. You remember your work on that stuff called 'Compound Monk,' the chemical element combination which was so touchy and cranky that it was like Monk?"

"Monk had very little to do with developing that," Doc said. "In fact, as I recall, he took no part in the experiments."

"Gosh, I thought he did. What did you ever do about that compound? I think I remember the description you gave of it as being so sensitive to motion radiation that the absorption of such radiation by its atoms leads to the ejection of three electrons, or something like that."

Doc made no comment.

"Wasn't that what Compound Monk was?" Ham asked.

"Generally speaking."

"What did you ever do with it?"

Doc Savage seemed not to hear the query.

"Do you still have the formula for it?" Ham asked.

Without making an answer, Doc Savage went downstairs, with Ham following, and got in his car and drove four blocks to a deserted road, where he pulled to the curb and stopped the machine. He switched off the engine.

He took Ham by the throat with both hands!

"You are going to be fortunate if I do not kill you!" he told Ham.

There was something horrible in his voice which showed that he meant it.

Chapter VI. MONK VS. MONK

WHEN Monk Mayfair had left the vicinity of the green building he had proceeded to do some telephoning.

"Stinky," he said into the telephone, "it didn't work. He is smarter than we supposed. He got wise."

In an agitated voice, Stinky said, "I hope not wise enough to know who we are. If so, I am going to hurriedly see about plane reservations to South America and points beyond."

"I got out of it," Monk said. "I told him enough of the truth to satisfy him."

"How much was that?"

"Oh, that I had hired you to fake an attack on me so that he would think somebody wanted him to leave, which I told him I figured would make him stay."

"Hm-m-m!"

"Don't sound so skeptical," Monk said. "I've got a job for you."

"I don't think I'm going to like the job," said Stinky.

Monk explained the details of the plot with great explicitness, and the worst fears of Stinky seemed fulfilled.

"Why don't you just ask me to cut off my head and be done with it?" Stinky demanded.

"You going to follow orders?" Monk demanded grimly.

"Sure. What else can I do?" asked Stinky. "But I don't have to like it."

Monk hung up violently and carried a scowl out of the telephone booth. The scowl lasted until he was out on the street and in a taxicab.

He rode uptown to a hotel room, where a young man in a tweed suit gave him a wrist-popping salute.

"Washington waiting with a report, sir," said the young man.

"Get them."

Soon a man in Washington was saying, "The series of conferences ended an hour and a half ago. Colonel John Renwick, William Harper Littlejohn and Major Thomas J. Roberts went to their hotel, telephoned the new airport for their plane to be refueled, went to their rooms and began packing." Monk snapped, "Wasn't their plane disabled? You had orders to do so."

"Sorry, sir. If you would let me finish," the man said. "They received a telephone report that their plane had been damaged. They are now on their way to the airport to investigate."

"You sure the damage was thorough?"

"Very thorough."

"Cancel the three reservations you made on the Washington-to-New York plane. Time it so they will be able to pick up the three reservations when they apply for airline tickets to New York."

"I have just done so, sir. I think the timing was right, although I have not yet had a report."

"Report at once if they leave on the plane, giving the flight number of the ship."

"Yes, sir."

Monk hung up with a satisfied expression.

He lighted a cigar and snapped his fingers and ordered a cold long drink. He sat at a window with these, enjoying the cool flow from the air-conditioning vent at his side and smirking out at the city.

He spoke only once, when he said, "Renny, Johnny and Long Tom will take that plane and fall right into my hands. I will get rid of them without a hitch."

He had spoken boastfully. After that he did nothing but smoke and rattle the ice against the sides of the glass.

Eventually the telephone rang.

The man in Washington said, "Just leaving. Flight 29."

"What is the German word for 'good'?" Monk said.

"Gut,"

said the man at the other end of the wire.

"That's what it is," said Monk, "in every sense of the word."

He put the telephone down and gave orders with violence and haste. The orders got him in a car, with five other men in it, in very short order. They drove to the vicinity of LaGuardia Field, but did not enter the airport. Instead, they turned off on an overpass and parked behind a large moving van. There were four more men with the van.

"One of you go to the airport," ordered Monk. "Give us the signal when Flight 29 from Washington starts to land."

The man saluted and departed.

Monk climbed into the van and made sure that the interior was lined with railroad rails carefully bolted in place. The steel rails seemed to raise some doubt.

"You sure these things will turn a .30-06 bullet?"

"They will stop a bullet from a tank gun," a man told him. "There are not likely to be any tank guns around the airport."

The truck had an additional piece of ingenious mechanism. An extra control position. Wheel and brakes, throttle and clutch, and a rod extending to the gear shift, all mounted back in the steel-protected body. The truck could be driven from that point.

"Got the dummy?" Monk asked.

A man shoved him a stuffed, manlike figure. "Fits right behind the wheel in the cab. We fixed clips to hold it there."

Monk grinned. "Probably not necessary. But it will keep anyone from getting excited over an apparently driverless truck careening through the streets. And we can't take a chance of a man sitting out front driving. He might get shot."

They settled down to consume cigarettes, look innocent, and wait. After a time they drove the truck to the big airport trucking yard and waited.

A BIG passenger plane swung in over Flushing Bay, leveled out, lowered its tail and settled on the runway.

A man stepped out of the big operations office, lighted a firecracker, a big one, and tossed it out on the gravel, where it let loose with a loud report.

"Put her in gear," Monk said.

The big engine of the armored truck began rumbling. The vehicle backed away casually and went toward the steel-wire fence. It was going rather fast when it hit the fence, and it went through the fence with about the same ease that a fist would go through a cobweb.

It went on and hit the tail of the plane, caving it in.

The men who got out of the armored truck had short automatic rifles, steel helmets, bulletproof vests, gas masks and a mad determination to do a fantastically bold job in a hurry.

The plane door was open and people were spilling out. The pilot leaned out of the control cabin with a blue revolver in his hand, and was promptly and thoroughly made dead by a bullet above his left eye.

"Get out, everybody," ordered the man who had shot the pilot. "Renny Renwick, Long Tom Roberts and Johnny Littlejohn—you three stand to one side."

A man with big fists—he was an enormous man, but his fists were still greater—came out of the plane headfirst and rushed forward until a gun muzzle practically speared him in the eye. He had a long, funeral-going face.

"Renny Renwick, I believe," said the man with the gun. "Get in the truck!"

"Holy cow!" said the big-fisted Renny.

"Get in the truck!"

He got in the truck.

Johnny Littlejohn was a man of extreme tallness and startling thinness. His clothing fitted him like a sack on a fishing pole, and a monocle dangled from his lapel by a ribbon.

He had one remark, which was, "I'll be superamalgamated!"

Long Tom Roberts was a man distinguished for nothing in particular, as far as appearances went, except his mushroom-cellar complexion, a completely unhealthy aspect.

He had nothing whatever to say, which was typical of him.

Not one of the three men really looked what he was. Renny Renwick was an engineer, one of the greatest. Johnny Littlejohn was known to scientists all over the world for his work in archaeology and geology. Long Tom Roberts was an electrical expert whose name would be in the books a hundred years hence.

They were not three men who looked, acted, or thought alike. They had one strong bond, wherein all three were associated with Doc Savage.

"Load in," said the man who had killed the pilot. "Don't try anything. Don't waste our time, either."

Renny said, "They sure caught us flat-footed." Renny's voice was a rumbling like something deep in a cave.

They climbed in the truck. It developed that there were chains and padlocks with which they were to be lashed to the truck floor.

The truck began moving.

By now there was a little desultory shooting. The dead pilot's head had leaked a plume of bright scarlet down the silver metal side of the plane, a wet red banner that had spread alarm and conviction that this was no theatrical stunt.

The truck withdrew from the mangled tail parts of the plane, wheeled slowly, and left the airport the same way it had come, by plunging headlong through the steel wire fence. Wire strands snapped like fiddle strings. The truck sideswiped a roadster, took the highway, chipping a slab off a concrete post and bending a sign double.

"You fool!" said the killer. "You aren't driving a tank!"

"I can't see too good," said the driver. "If I was out on the front seat behind the other wheel—"

"If you were out there, you would be dead," the other assured him.

Monk took charge again. He had been crouched beside the driver, watching the road. He got up and went back to the prisoners.

MONK kicked Renny Renwick in the ribs. "For a long time I've wanted to do that," Monk said.

The kick and the remark got a howl of laughter. Pleased, Monk kicked Renny again.

Renny said through his teeth, "Have you gone crazy, Monk?"

That got another bellow of mirth from the onlookers. Grinning widely, Monk proceeded to boot Long Tom in the ribs, then gave Johnny the same treatment.

"I'll be superamalgamated," said Johnny, distressed.

"He just knows that one word, eh, Stinky?" said Monk.

Long Tom said, "Who is your pal Stinky, Monk? What is this, anyway?"

Monk assumed an air of imparting a great confidence.

"Things have come up," he said, "that make it necessary to get rid of you three fellows."

"Where's Doc and Ham?" Long Tom demanded.

Monk said, "Doc himself would be surprised to know." And that also got a burst of glee.

Long Tom scowled. "What's the matter with you apes? What is so funny?"

Stinky shouted suddenly, "Hey, there's a State police car trailing us."

They fell suddenly silent, and their faces got white. Two men crawled back to the rear with long rifles fitted with telescopic sights and crouched there for a while. One of them cursed his telescopic sight loudly. The other fired. The one who had cursed released a bullet. Both of them shot again.

"They're dropping back," said one of the riflemen.

Monk said, "Slow up when we hit the first bridge. Dump three or four grenades on the bridge."

They did this, then went on. They drove for half an hour, turning off into a road that was almost nothing, and ending finally on a small bluff beside the gray-blue corduroy surface of Long Island Sound.

Monk got out and signaled to a cabin cruiser which lay offshore. The boat immediately headed in.

Renny, Long Tom and Johnny were tossed out of the truck, after being unlocked from the chains.

Renny bellowed, "What're you trying to do? What is this, anyhow?"

Monk eyed them and said, "You remember some experiments Doc was working on some time back—a compound he called 'the Monk mixture,' or something like that?"

"I don't remember," Renny said.

Long and bony Johnny said, "Say, I recall something about some such experiments."

Monk looked at Johnny as if he were very glad to hear that. "We'll go into it later, my friend."

His statement had an ominous tinge, the same tone a dentist would use in saying, "My friend, we'll have to pull all your teeth."

Stinky said, "Good idea to park your revolvers and pistols in the truck and leave them. Also the two rifles you shot at the State police with. Taking chances never pays dividends."

At this point, only Monk was standing outside the truck, with Long Tom, Renny and Johnny.

The others were inside the truck, getting rid of their weapons.

This was the situation when a second Monk came around the nearest clump of bushes.

"Holy cow!" gasped Renny. "Two Monks!"

"Yes," said the second Monk. "And very strange it is, too."

THE second Monk took hold of the first Monk in the way a knife would meet butter, the second Monk being the knife.

"Start shutting off their water!" he yelled at Renny, Long Tom and Johnny.

They began taking hold of the first Monk as if they meant to denude him of arms and legs.

"Get that truck closed!" yelled Renny.

He sprang to do it himself. He got his big hands on the truck doors and forced the ponderous things shut, but not before two men had managed to pile through to the ground.

One of the two who had gotten out—it was Stinky—had a revolver. He scrambled and rolled clear, sat up and began taking a deliberate aim at the newly arrived Monk.

From the nearby bush came Ham with his sword cane. He held the blade for throwing the way a spear is thrown, let fly, and suddenly eighteen inches or so of the blade was protruding from the other side of Stinky's arm.

Stinky made strange noises and finally became still on the ground, the tip of Ham's sword cane being coated with a chemical which produced quick unconsciousness.

Monk said to Ham, "It's about time you got into action, you fashion plate!"

The other man had dropped his gun and was trying to get to his feet and snatch up the weapon at the same time. Renny made a rush at the fellow and created much the effect of a locomotive hitting a cow.

Then men began to crawl out of the front of the truck with guns and plenty of rage.

Ham said, "Don't you think we'd better run?"

It was obviously the thing to do. The second Monk—the genuine one, it was by now apparent—gave the first, and fake, Monk one last punch. It was terrific! Monk took it off the ground somewhere near his heels. He made it whistle. It gave the fake Monk's jaw the shape of a wet pretzel and made teeth fly like gravel.

The five hit the brush then, traveled a few yards, changed direction, and went down the slope.

Bullets began hunting them, glancing off branches and riddling foliage. Renny rumbled, "This way!"

They turned again.

Johnny said, "Susurrations might be perspicacious."

They ran for a while.

"I'm in no mood for those words," Monk said. "What did you say?"

Ham translated, "He said a little less noise might be wise."

Monk's eyes came out somewhat as a bullet cut a limb from in front of his face. "He's got something there," he gasped. He got down on all fours, changed his course at right angles, and crawled. The others followed the same tactics.

Back of them was shooting and shouting, running around—but not too recklessly—in the undergrowth.

From the beach came angry inquiring yells. The men from the boat wanted to know what in the name of little fish was happening, as one of them expressed it in a scream.

Monk and the others sat down to see what would happen now.

RENNY punched Monk in the ribs. "How come there's two of you?"

"Search me," Monk said.

"Strange, don't you think?"

"The deeper I get into this thing," Monk said, "the less I get amazed,"

"You can't explain it?" Renny asked him.

"I'm not going to try," Monk assured him.

"How did you happen to rescue us?"

"Oh, that was as simple as falling off a log," Monk explained. "I telephoned Washington and found out what plane you had taken and—"

"I was the one who telephoned Washington," Ham reminded him.

"Well, we telephoned and found what plane you were on," Monk continued, pretending not to hear the interruption. "So we came down to meet you."

"You saw what happened at the airport?"

"Yes. And we saw we couldn't stop it single-handedly."

"What did you do?"

"Got around on the other side of the plane during the uproar," Monk said, "and laid down on the front bumper. Or Ham laid on the bumper. I took the running board on the off side from the driver."

"It's a wonder they didn't see you there!" Renny exclaimed.

Long Tom was puzzled. "How come you rushed out to the airport to meet us?"

"Trouble," Monk said.

"What kind?"

"Green fog, green chests, and men falling up instead of down," Monk said. "And if that isn't enough to make you think you're crazy—Doc has disappeared."

Long Tom started to exclaim something shocked about that, but Ham hissed and grabbed his arm. Ham pointed with his sword cane, which he had recovered from the man he had speared. He indicated the beach.

"Those fellows from the boat are confused," he said. "They're rushing up the hill to help their friends. Does that give anybody an idea?"

"The boat," Long Tom said. "Let's try to take it. We might collect a prisoner, and make him talk later."

"Supermalagorgeous," Johnny agreed.

FIVE minutes later Renny clubbed down a man with a big fist, and he fell in the mud a few feet from the bow of the cabin cruiser, which had been gently beached. They gathered up the man, threw him on the deck of the cruiser, and climbed aboard themselves after shoving the boat off. Renny dashed below and started the engine.

"That," boomed the big-fisted engineer, "was what you would call almost too easy."

The cruiser—it was about forty-two feet long with a two-hundred-horsepower engine—churned backward in a quarter circle, then dug its stern down and surged forward. It took a bone in its teeth and traveled.

A few bullets began coming from shore and there was a rush to get below and behind the engine.

The cabin cruiser was essentially a lightly constructed yacht and offered only slightly more obstruction to a bullet from an army rifle than a tomato can.

Monk and the others hauled the prisoner below with them as if he were precious.

Monk admired the captive.

"Nice and plump," he remarked. "Looks like he might be a talkative fellow."

"I hope so," Ham muttered.

"So do I," Monk said. "I think I begin to put this mystery together. There's a fake Monk and a fake Ham. The two fakes are part of a scheme of some kind. There is a trap, I believe. Doc may have fallen into it. I'm even beginning to suspect that green fog."

"What do you suspect about the green fog?" Ham demanded.

"I don't know for sure," Monk said. "I'm going to make this fellow tell about that."

"Suppose he doesn't know anything."

"That," said Monk, "isn't likely."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Intelligent face. A guy like that would be sure to know what everything was about."

While Monk was thinking of something that would fit to query the captive, the bow came off the boat! It was a case, at least, of dynamite. Or a bomb of some kind, or a box of hand grenades. The Doc Savage aids never did decide exactly what. But a rifle bullet from shore probably hit something and started the blast. The air inside the boat seemed suddenly to turn to water and smoke.

DOC SAVAGE had given up choking "Ham" and had belted the man senseless with his fist. Then Doc had seized the wheel of the car and had driven away rapidly, with the horn blowing a steady moan. He traveled in that fashion until he reached the nearest police precinct station—two blocks away—where he crashed the car over the sidewalk and against the precinct steps. He got a sudden flow of cops out of the place, which was what he wanted.

"Grab anyone who looks as if he might be following me," he called loudly. "Particularly in a car!"

One of the officers recognized the bronze man and relayed the order. There was some running, two shots. Finally, the police returned.

Doc had remained in his car, by now almost blinded by the green fog.

"There was someone following me?" he asked.

"I don't understand this darned thing," one of the officers said.

"Was there?"

"Following you!" the policeman exploded. "They were all around you."

"In cars?"

"In big machines marked with red signs," the policeman explained. "The signs read: 'Danger!' They also read: 'Beware the car carrying dangerous high explosive!'" The officer came closer. "What is this, anyway?"

Doc Savage was silent for a moment.

He asked, "Did the signs on the cars also warn all traffic to stop, or go slowly, while the car they were escorting passed?"

"Sure," the cop said. "You were supposed to be the car carrying the explosive. Is there any in there?"

Doc Savage was silent again. Then he said, "That explains how they made the traffic go slowly."

"It sure went slow," said the cop. "Reports of this cavalcade have been coming in as it crossed town. It went to that old green building downtown, then went up to the apartment-house district. That right?"

"And traffic stopped all the way?"

The policeman approached. "That's right."

"Why, hello, Lieutenant Evers," Doc said.

Evers dropped his jaw. "Great grief, did you just recognize me?"

"You just came close enough for me to see you."

Lieutenant Evers was concerned. "Something happened to your eyes?" He looked into the car. "What have you got there? That is your aid, Ham Brooks, isn't it?"

"An excellent imitation only," the bronze man said. He did not elaborate on the remark, although Evers was puzzled. "Lieutenant, will you drive me to my headquarters?"

"Why, sure," said Lieutenant Evers. He moved in behind the wheel as Doc Savage climbed into the back. "Fast or slow?" he asked.

"Fast," Doc said grimly. He had not mentioned the green fog.

"I'll have a squad car pace us," the officer said.

The pacing was somewhat, but not much, under seventy miles an hour. They took the long wide sweep of Eighth Avenue, then turned left and stopped at the stone skyscraper which housed the bronze man's establishment.

Lieutenant Evers pointed at "Ham." "You need any help getting him upstairs?"

Doc shook his head slightly. "No, thanks, Evers. But you might tell me something."

"Sure! Anything you want to know."

"Do you see anything that looks like a green fog?"

Evers swung slowly, staring everywhere.

"No. No green fog," he said. "That's a strange question."

PAT SAVAGE ran across the eighty-sixth-floor reception room to greet Doc.

"Doc, you're safe!" she gasped. Then she saw the man Doc was carrying. "Ham! What has happened to him?"

Doc carried his burden into the laboratory, placed the man on a table. He asked, "You remember that knife scar on Ham's back?" Pat nodded. Doc then stripped open the man's shirt and exhibited an expanse of unmarred skin. There was no scar.

"It isn't Ham!" Pat exclaimed.

"No," Doc Savage said grimly. "It is a very good imitation, though."

Pat said, "Doc, those fainting spells we had—they did something to us. Gas or something."

Doc nodded. "Something of the kind. They knocked all of us out, then took me away." He eyed Pat.

"Did they harm you or Monk or Ham?"

"No." Pat shook her head. "We just woke up. And you were gone."

"That was when they sprang the trap," Doc said.

Puzzled, Pat said, "How do you mean?"

"Seized me," the bronze man explained, "and took me away. They had a fake Monk and Ham all ready for me, I think. At least, here is the fake Ham." The bronze man frowned. "They were unbelievably

clever about it. They had an escort of cars, marked with signs that kept everyone away from my car. That was so I would think the green fog was all over the city and that no one was out driving. The signs caused motorists to pull over to the curb and stop. The signs labeled me as carrying dangerous explosives."

Doc began strapping the false Ham to a table that was narrow enough for the purpose.

"Where are Monk and Ham?" he asked.

Color went out of Pat's face in a quick rush. "They went to the airport to meet Renny, Johnny and Long Tom," she said. She waited, and, when Doc Savage made no comment, she asked, "Haven't you heard what happened at the airport?"

Doc straightened suddenly. "What?"

"A big truck and a bunch of heavily armed men smashed into the plane carrying Renny, Long Tom and Johnny," Pat said. "The pilot of the plane was shot dead when he resisted. Renny, Long Tom and Johnny were seized and carried off in the truck."

"Monk and Ham?"

"Not a word from them since," Pat said.

Doc was silent a moment. "Will you check the telephone," he said.

Pat reached for the instrument.

"Outside, I mean," Doc said. "Go to the drugstore in the lobby, or the restaurant, and telephone me here."

Pat nodded and left.

Several minutes later, she returned with a surprised expression. "Telephone operator told me the telephone was out of order," she said.

"Remember when you called your friend Susan Glaspell, to ask if the green fog was present in Westchester County?" he asked.

"Yes, of course I recall," Pat said. "I got Susan's maid."

"Notice any resemblance between this telephone operator's voice you just heard and that of Susan Glaspell's maid?"

Pat nibbled a lower lip, and a frown began crowding her eyebrows together. "Come to think of it, the voices were very much alike."

Suddenly, Pat sprang to the telephone, dialed a number at random, and said, "Give me Mr. Jonathan Doe." She listened to a voice, put the instrument down, and stamped a foot. "I was assured Mr. Doe was out of the building," she said. "That was my own telephone number I dialed, and there is certainly no Doe working for me."

Without comment, Doc returned to work on the fake Ham.

Pat snapped, "I get it! They've got our telephone line tapped, with a girl riding it and telling us that the people we want to talk to aren't there. What's the idea of that?"

"A trick."

"But why? They're pulling a fast one on us for some reason. But why?"

"The green fog."

"I don't," said Pat, "get it."

"There is no green fog!"

Pat jumped. "Wait a minute! They say, seeing is believing. I see a fog." When Doc did not answer, she demanded, "Don't you see one?"

He nodded slightly.

"But it does not exist," he said.

THE man who had masqueraded as Ham was wearing a woman's tight, old-fashioned corset to give himself the rather waspish midriff which was Ham's proud possession. A chemical test showed that his hair was dyed, that his skin was shaded, that he wore a metal arrangement inside his nostrils to shape them. Doc glanced at the labels in his clothes. The name was the same tailor which Ham patronized.

Pat had been thinking about the fog.

"Doesn't exist," she said. "But I see it!"

Doc said, "Step into the chemical storeroom, will you, and get No. 22800."

"That's the truth serum, isn't it?" Pat remarked. She went to the cubicle where they stored the chemicals. The storeroom was a cubicle only in relation to the general size of the rest of the laboratory. Actually, the place was larger than most living rooms.

The fake Ham opened his eyes. He had been hit very hard. The man did not say anything.

Doc said, "You did a commendable job of acting."

The man wet his lips. His first effort to speak was a croaking noise which embarrassed him.

"Thank you," he managed to say. "It should have been good. I have studied day and night for the part for over a month."

"It was very good," Doc agreed.

The man expanded. "Naturally, as I say, it was not bad. Matter of fact, I memorized everything about Ham Brooks which ten detectives were able to unearth. You should hear me spout legal terminology. I bet I could pass a bar examination."

"No doubt."

"Kept you fooled, didn't I?" said the man proudly.

"For about thirty seconds."

"You mean"--the man's eyes popped--"you got wise to us right away?"

"Almost."

"I don't believe it. Hell, we thought of everything. Every possible means of making you think we were Monk and Ham, and that there was a green fog--we used them all. We didn't overlook anything." Doc Savage said, "You recall when you told me Pat was not there because she had gone home?"

"Yes. What was wrong with that?"

"You said she had gone because you had persuaded her there might be danger for her."

"Yes."

"That," said Doc, "was an impossibility. No one could persuade Pat anything was too dangerous." Pat had come back in time to hear the last. "Thank you kindly," she said cheerfully. "You should know, Doc. You've tried often enough."

The bronze man slapped the fake Ham on the chest. Not hard, but with enough force to remove some air. He said, "What we want out of you is conversation."

The man's eyes became stony.

"Hell of a bit you'll get," he said.

Doc Savage contemplated the man for a while, said abruptly, "We will not waste time with you." He picked up a hypo needle and used it, and the man barked once, more in anger than pain. Then Doc stepped back.

"Watch him," he told Pat. "The stuff will take about fifteen minutes to work."

"What's that junk you gimme?" snarled the man.

Pat said ominously, "You won't care."

The chemical the bronze man had used was a type of truth serum which he had developed after considerable research. It was violent in its effect on the victim, so dangerous that Doc rarely used it except in extreme emergencies.

THE bronze man proceeded to change clothes, apply a light coloring to his face, put dark optical caps over his eyeballs to change the distinct coloration of his eyes, and pull on a coat with a built-in back deformity. He whitened his hair and took a cane.

He made a tour of the neighborhood, moving casually, stooping to conceal his extraordinary height, and wearing gloves. He did not have to pretend to be nearsighted. He was unable to see more than twenty or thirty feet because of the greenish haze in his eyes. The fog.

He studied the taxicabs at the stand on the corner. Taxicab drivers in the city frequent the same stands day after day. There was only one strange cab in the line. Doc approached the machine, opened the rear door.

"Sorry, mister," the driver said sharply. "This cab is engaged."

Doc got into the cab. "Never mind that," he said. "When do they move in on Savage?"

The driver jumped, turned his head, stared. "What you talking about, brother?"

Doc said, "Didn't you turn in the word Savage had come back here?"

The man seemed to consider the point. "Elmer send you?"

"What makes you think anybody sent me?"

The man was suspicious. "Brother, you better identify yourself."

Doc put an angry note in his voice. "You better not waste my time, fellow. The man who was playing the part of Ham is in serious trouble. Not that anybody gives a hoot about him, but Savage may have ways of making him talk."

"Oh!" The driver settled back in his seat. "So it's that way. The boys are meeting down the street. That side street on the left. Didn't they tell you?"

"No. What's the plan?"

"Straight raid. They will go into Savage's garage in the basement and take the private elevator."

"How will they manage that?" Doc was genuinely surprised. Existence of the basement garage was supposed to be more or less of a secret, and certainly no one could gain admission who did not understand the operation of a number of secret devices.

"The mechanic who worked on the place will lead the way," said the taxicab driver.

Doc made no immediate comment. A mechanic had made some repairs on the private elevator recently. The fellow had been highly recommended. But someone evidently had made a mistake.

The bronze man got out of the cab. "Keep your eyes open," he said.

HE took the fast elevator to the eighty-sixth floor, swung into the laboratory, picked up a knife and slashed the lines with which he had secured the fake Ham to the table.

"Come on," he told Pat. "They are on the verge of raiding the place."

Pat said, "Why can't we stay and fight?"

The bronze man shook his head slightly. He carried the false Ham to the elevator, went down a dozen floors and stopped at the private apartment which he had maintained in the place for some time.

Pat was surprised. "I didn't know you had this apartment."

"Keep him here." Doc put the fake Ham on a bed. The man was going under the effects of the truth serum, acting as if he was completely drunk. "If he begins to have spasmodic attacks, break some of these vials under his nostrils." He gave Pat several thin-walled, gauze-wrapped vials of the type sometimes used for smelling salts.

"Where you going?" Pat asked, concerned.

The bronze man seemed not to hear the question. He went to the door.

"If I should be delayed," he said, "you proceed with questioning the man."

Pat nodded. "Pry out of him what this green fog is, what is in the green chest and what made men fall up. That the idea?"

"We want the reason for this mystery."

"Sure. I'll get it."

Doc went to the elevator and dropped down to the garage. For convenience, he kept a store of gadgets in the garage. He selected a pair of large hand grenades and took a position near the elevator.

He watched the relays and motors which controlled the big outer door. That the foe might gain admission through the garage was surprising. They would have to operate a radio control, and the device had a combination which was changed regularly. It functioned after the fashion of relay office calls on telegraph lines. For instance, this week only a combination of dot-dot-dash-dot-dash-dash-space-dot-dot would make the device function. Next week, the combination would be changed. If they got in, they would be ingenious.

They were ingenious enough, for suddenly relays clicked and motors whined and the big door moved up.

Men started to come in. A dozen of them at the least.

Doc tossed the grenade so that it hopped across the floor and blew up in their faces. The blast was not close enough to kill anyone, but it brushed them back out of the opening as if a great hand had slapped them. The second grenade was a combination of tear gas and smoke, and he threw that one directly in their midst.

They broke and ran.

Doc wheeled, raced up a stairway, pounded across the lobby floor and dived out on the sidewalk.

With great commotion and haste—still wearing his makeshift disguise—he piled into the taxicab run by the driver to whom he had talked.

"It went wrong," he said excitedly. "Clear out of here. Quick!"

The driver was not excitable. "They put out orders to get back to the meeting place in case this went wrong," he said.

Doc settled back on the seat. "The meeting place, eh? By all means."

Chapter VIII. FEAR IS A GOATHERD

THE taxi driver took him forty miles out on Long Island and turned left on a deserted road and stopped.

The man pointed. "Up there on the hill."

Doc Savage surveyed the place in the increasing darkness of early evening. It was not yet night. Red color mixed with gold splashed over the foliage as the sun rode just out of sight below the horizon. A single spike of sunlight came through a split cleft in the trees and made a long thing, like a steel broadsword blade, across the deep-blue surface of Long Island Sound.

"Deserted spot," Doc said.

"What do you want? The middle of a sidewalk?" The driver started his car again, pulled over to a wall of brush, worked his way through it, and there was suddenly a ramshackle shed with two other cars and a truck. The truck was a huge thing, marked by bullets.

Since it was undoubtedly the truck which had seized Renny, Long Tom and Johnny at the airport, Doc Savage made his small trilling noise briefly and unconsciously.

"What's that noise?" the driver grunted.

Doc silenced himself. He never knew that he was making the sound until he made it. It was something that, when the circumstances were right, was as natural as breathing.

"The wind, probably," Doc said.

"There ain't no wind to speak of."

A man came out of the shadows with a rifle. "What went wrong?"

"I guess plenty," said the taxi driver. "The attack on Savage's place to rescue that guy who was playing Ham Brooks blew up like a skyrocket."

The man looked into the back seat. "Who's your pal?"

"One of the boys."

"Which one?"

"I dunno."

The taxi driver turned around. "What's your name?" he asked Doc.

The other sniffed and said, "Mean to tell me you never even asked who he was? Hell, why not just pick up anybody and bring him out here?"

The taxi driver did not like that. He and the man seemed to have quarreled before. The driver got out.

"He knows all the answers," he said, indicating Doc. Then he reached for the other's collar.

"Pal, I've told you before about getting tough with me. I don't take it, see!"

Doc Savage alighted from the cab, doing his best to look as if he was interested in nothing but the fight that was about to develop.

The man with the rifle hastily backed away from the taxi driver. "Now wait a minute, Freddy," he said. "This ain't no time to get each other skinned up."

"It looks like a good time to me," said the taxi driver, Freddy.

"Nix, nix, you sap! We've got trouble here of our own."

Freddy scowled. "Whatcha mean?"

"We got all five of Doc Savage's aids cornered," the man explained. "And it's a hell of a job grabbing them."

Freddy was incredulous. "All five? I thought only three were coming in on the plane."

The man shrugged. "Monk and Ham—the genuine ones—showed up, took their three friends away from us, got on our boat. We had a box of hand grenades in the boat. Stinky's brother put a bullet in them and the boat sank."

"What became of Savage's men?"

"They got on a pile of rocks that is exposed at low tide. There's cover for them. They're holding us off."

"If you can't get them off the rocks," Freddy said, "why not get the blazes out of here and leave them? Suppose a coast-guard boat shows up."

"We'll get 'em." The man laughed grimly. "The tide is coming in. And fast."

There was automobile noise that approached from the direction of the highway.

Freddy said, "That will be the rest of the men who were going to raid Doc Savage's place."

The other man scowled at Doc. "Who is this bird? I still want to know."

Doc said quietly, "I can prove that." He walked over to the man and held out a sheet of paper that was blank—although this was not important—and when the man started to look at it, he hit the fellow neatly on the jaw.

Freddy was somewhat more difficult. He was quick. He went back like a skater, twisted with serpentine speed, lifting his hands as if he was surrendering, but coming out with a short, blunt black pistol that had been under his tightly fitting uniform cap. Doc got his hands on the gun, and they went to the ground, fighting to see whether the safety of the automatic would be on or off. Off it was.

Freddy croaked, "Don't hit me!" just as Doc Savage hit him on the jaw. Freddy was evidently thinking of a set of false teeth, parts of which flew out of his mouth. He rolled over on his side, spat out the rest of the teeth and was silent, motionless.

Doc left the shed. He heard four quick shots from toward the sea. He made for the Sound.

THE rock pile in the sea seemed to consist of four large boulders and enough smaller ones to make a rampart. The tide had come in until no more than two feet of the stone bulwarks projected, and waves were breaking over this.

A long, lean and fast-looking boat cruised slowly across the blade of sunlight that was fading from the water. The craft was painted as a pleasure vessel, but it was larger and slimmer, seemed charged with power. Doc Savage studied the vessel, decided it was no pleasure craft at all.

The boat nosed slowly toward the cluster of rocks. There was a report, not loud, then an enormously louder blast and a geyser of water ahead of the craft. That would be one of the supermachine pistols, the compact little weapons which Monk and Ham no doubt had brought with them. An explosive pellet. The boat was keeping out of range, for it now sheered off.

Doc Savage studied the scene as best he could, handicapped by the greenish haze in his eyes. The powerful prisms of the monocular which he carried was a help. Even with its strong magnification, he was not positive of the situation.

He moved downward through the brush, attracted by a man who was standing in view of the boat, but out of sight of the rocks. The man had two shirts tied to sticks.

Doc came close to the man with the wigwag equipment.

"All right, all right!" the man called impatiently to someone. "On the boat, they want to know what to do. What shall I tell them?"

A voice cursed the gathering night. "Give us an hour, and the tide will drown them out."

"We won't have an hour."

The other swore again. "Tell them to wait. Hold that torpedo."

Doc Savage moved away hastily, and used his strong monocular on the long slim boat again. He saw now what had made the craft look queer. A rather bulky build-up on the forward deck, giving that part of a boat a homemade appearance that did not fit the rest of the craft.

There was a housing that covered a pair of torpedo tubes, he suddenly decided. A so-called "mosquito boat," not American either, he decided.

He went back to the flagman, cautiously skirted the fellow, and found that the man who had been

giving the orders had gone away for the moment.

Doc took a long chance.

He imitated the voice of the man who had been giving orders to the flagman, and said, "Tell them to lay a smoke screen around that rock."

The flagman jumped. "Are you crazy?" He scowled toward the bush where Doc was concealed. "What's the matter with your voice?"

Under other conditions Doc would have been embarrassed. He had studied voice imitation under a master. Usually, he was more successful.

He said sharply, "Signal them, you fool! The smoke screen!"

The flagman jumped at the tone, saluted. He began an expert wagging with the sticks to which the shirts were tied.

"Tell them," Doc ordered, "to lay the smoke screen, then stand by on the other side. They are to capture anyone they see. But there is to be no shooting."

"Right, sir," said the flagman.

"Be sure they wait on the other side of the smoke screen."

"Right, sir!"

DOC worked down to a point where, close inshore, the water was deep. He watched the long torpedo boat lift its nose and charge around the rock at a respectful distance, trailing a great worm of smoke that flattened.

The fact that they had smokescreen equipment aboard checked his conviction that the craft was a naval one.

The breeze drifted the smoke toward shore. As soon as it reached the beach, Doc scrambled down and entered the water.

Behind him, there was suddenly profane excitement. The flagman was assuring someone he had done nothing but follow orders.

Doc swam strongly. He would not have much time. As fully equipped as they were, they would have radio apparatus. The boat waiting on the other side of the smoke could not see the wigwag signals, but a single radio contact could tip them off that something was wrong.

Nearing the rocks, Doc called, "Monk!"

Monk's small voice squawked astonishment, and Renny rumbled, "Holy cow!"

Doc reached the stony refuge. Waves were breaking over his men. He demanded, "All of you safe?"

"I wouldn't call it safe," Long Tom said dryly. "We're all here, though."

Doc said, "Wait five minutes. Then swim out of the smoke." He pointed. "Head in that direction."

"Their boat is out there. We heard the motors."

"Your job," Doc said, "is to divert their attention while I climb aboard by the stern."

"All right," Long Tom said. "But this won't be easy. Those guys have a regular navy here. I never saw such efficiency."

Doc asked, "Is there a loose rock around here about the size of a man's head?"

"Plenty of them."

The bronze man put on one of the transparent hoods of Cellophanelike material which, pulled over his head, was held tightly about his neck with elastic. Inside this, clamped between his teeth, he placed a compact breath-purifier of the artificial-lung type. It was not, of course, as efficient. But it would keep him supplied with oxygen for possibly ten minutes. He got his bearings, took the rock and went under.

LOCATING the boat was more a matter of patience than superhuman ability. The water was not deep.

He merely spotted the dark hulk of the craft outlined on the water above, let go the stone, and swam up cautiously to the stern. The propellers were motionless, two big dark blades.

He ran a hand over the hull. Rough with barnacles. The boat had been in the water a long time.

With extreme care, hanging to the rudder, he got his head above the surface. No one above. He reached upward. The rail was too far away.

He unlimbered the collapsible grapple, attached to a silken cord of great strength. He always carried the thing. He tossed the grapple, hooked it over the rail, waited to see that no one had been alarmed. Then he went down into the water again and waited.

There was a shout. Sudden rush from the propellers nearly threw him out of the water. He fought the cord, managed to get hold of the rail.

They were crowded on the forward deck, except for two men who were at the wheel and controls. The last pair were amidships.

Forward, a man bellowed, "Get your hands up!"

Monk's voice answered. "Come and get us. We're surrendering! The darn tide covered those rocks."

The man who had bellowed said, "Careful, men. This smells like a trick."

Doc was on deck by that time. He went forward. The boat was traveling fast now, making a wide circle around the swimming figures of Monk and the others.

The bronze man hit the pair at the controls. He struck hard with a shoulder, sent one man overboard. The other whirled, gasped, dodged the fist Doc sent at him. He stepped backward, got out

of reach.

Doc knocked the engine throttles wide open. He put the port engine into reverse, the starboard one full speed ahead. He put the wheel hard to port. The result was a hairpin turn by the boat. Narrow beam of the craft had never been designed for such turns. It went over, not completely capsizing, but tipping fully half over, the starboard rail and half the cabin under. This happened at near forty miles an hour, and the result was like an avalanche of stone as water came over the bows. Everyone on deck was washed overboard, with the exception of one man, who got hold of a cleat. Doc picked a cover off the binnacle and hurled it at that man, and the fellow slid over the side. It was then no trouble to go back and pick up Monk, Ham, Long Tom, Renny and Johnny. The latter immediately piled below decks to see if there was anyone left there. There was a commotion. Excited voices. Doc listened to them.

Long-bodied, big-worded Johnny put his head out of a companion and said, "A syzygy, emphatically."

Monk also came up from below. Monk's face was blank with astonishment.

"A syzygy," Monk said, "is probably the word for it."

Johnny seemed surprised that Monk should know what such a word meant. "You know what it means?" he asked suspiciously.

"Syzygy," Monk said, "is when one planet meets another, or something like that. Isn't that it?" Johnny nodded.

Doc Savage said. "What are you two talking about?"

"A meeting of planets," Monk explained. "The way that fellow Totttingham Strand fell up into the sky, we supposed he would be floating around among the stars, by now. But he's back to earth!"

"You mean he is on board?"

"He is tied to a bunk down below," Monk said.

Chapter IX. SYZYGY WAS NO GOOD

JOHNNY made another statement. He used small words, so he was very impressed.

"There is also a girl," he said.

"A princess," Monk corrected him. "Such a regal creature as to make your heart go flop-flop."

"Her name is Erica, she says," Johnny added. "Erica Ambler-Hotts, she says."

Doc Savage changed the subject by pointing upward. "That plane," he said, "is coming down as if it had a purpose."

The plane was a yellow craft with two flat, fish-shaped floats and a lean shark snout of a water-cooled motor. It came down in a long falling dive, not steep enough to strip off the wings. The wing slots were set, after the fashion of a dive bomber.

Monk said, "I don't like the way that thing acts."

Doc Savage—he had turned the boat back to pick up the crew members who had been dumped overboard—suddenly knocked the throttles wide open again and spun the wheel. He began to make snaky S curves over the surface.

The plane changed course two or three times, pulled out of its dive. There was a whistling, then commotion and water and smoke climbing into the air, and deep underwater noise.

"A little closer," Monk said, "and there would really have been a syzygy."

"Bombs!" Johnny muttered. "I'll be superamalgamated! A regular dive bomber."

"Navy type," Doc said.

"What navy?"

"That would be hard to tell," the bronze man said.

Johnny rubbed his jaw thoughtfully.

"Nice mixture of events, wouldn't you say?" he remarked. "A man comes, Monk tells me, about a green chest which was stolen from him. He doesn't know what is in the chest because it belonged to a friend named Montgomery, for whom he was keeping it. Then the man falls up into the sky. Then a green fog affects Doc, Monk, Ham and Pat—"

"Wait a minute!" Monk yelled. "Aren't you seeing the green fog?"

"Certainly not!" Johnny replied. "And now, a naval plane is dive-bombing us. It's a little mixed up, if you ask me. Some explanations would help clear part of it."

Monk collared the gaunt geologist and archaeologist. "Are you seeing any fog?"

"No!"

Monk looked blank. "That's funny. I see a fog."

Doc Savage had been watching the plane as it arched up and came back again. Machine-gun bullets began boiling the water as guns on its wings—two on each wing, two through the propeller—hung out red tongues. Doc changed the course of the boat rapidly.

"Get below," he said sharply. "The decks are probably armored."

Monk and Johnny dived for the hatch. Doc yanked at a projection which proved to be what he thought it was—a steel shell which hinged up over the steersman's post, and would turn machine-gun slugs and possibly the light-cannon shells with which modern planes are equipped.

Ham shouted, "Doc, you want to put out a smoke screen?"

"Good idea," the bronze man said. His voice was composed, in contrast to the gnashing rip and

tear of machine-gun slugs, the shotgun-loud smash of a cannon shell that suddenly tore away deck planking and exposed the silver shine of armor plate below. The boat put out smoke, and they moved around under it. After a while, the night was dark enough to escape. The bronze man noted that the gas tanks were well filled. He sent the boat toward the city.

MONK watched the lights of the Triborough Bridge move overhead like a great monocolored rainbow on which moved the luminous patches of automobile headlights. The boat motors were a rumble like a subway train underfoot, and two white ram horns of spray stood out from the bows and, now and then grew, longer or shorter.

Long Tom came on deck. "You want to talk to the State police on the radio, Doc?"

The bronze man asked, "Did you give them the story?"

"All but the silly parts," Long Tom said. "I didn't mention green chests, men falling up, or green fogs. I told them there were some foreign agents or something stirring up a mess."

"Were they caught?"

"Every one of them was gone by the time the police got there."

"No clues?"

"Not yet. They are checking on the plane, have the roads blocked, and the coast guard is starting to search all boats. Ham and Monk furnished descriptions of all those we had seen."

Monk came on deck in time to say, "The best description I gave was of that fake Monk. That sure gets me. You wouldn't believe anyone could look so much like me."

"You sure said something there," Ham told him.

"What you mean?"

"Looking like you is a feat I didn't think anyone could do."

"Look," Monk said bitterly, "I'm in no mood for that stuff you call wit."

Renny put his head out to look at the breathless spectacle which was New York seen at night from the river. They swung past the Sutton Place and Tudor City districts, high apartment houses with many lighted windows.

"They won't talk," Renny reported.

"Which one?"

"Both of them," said Renny. "The girl claims she doesn't know anything. Tottingham Strand says he can't imagine what it is all about."

Doc Savage inquired quietly, "Is he sticking to the story about a mysterious green chest which a friend gave him to keep?"

"That's his story, and he's stuck with it, if you ask me," Renny rumbled. "Personally, I don't believe it any more than I believe storks bring little babies."

Doc turned the boat in to a pier.

Surprised, Long Tom asked, "Aren't we going around to the warehouse?"

The "warehouse" was an innocent lump of a building on the Hudson side of Manhattan Island, a structure that bore the legend "Hidalgo Trading Company." The interior had been converted into a seaplane hangar and boathouse. A pneumatic man-carrying tube of Doc's design—one gadget which would never become popular with the public; a ride in the tube was about as soothing as a trip through a forest on a skyrocket—led directly to headquarters.

"No, we shall stay away from there," Doc said. "It is probably being watched."

"Not many people know about it."

Doc was silent a moment. "These men we are fighting, whoever they are, know an incredible amount about us. They knew enough to substitute two impostors for Monk and Ham, to gain access to our headquarters at will."

Long Tom's mouth jerked open, then closed. "Doc, isn't Pat at headquarters with the fake Ham? Doesn't that mean she may be in danger?"

"Pat," the bronze man explained, "is in the same building, but on a different floor. In my apartment."

"Apartment?" Long Tom said. "I didn't know you had one there."

"Nor did anyone else," Doc said. "So Pat probably is safe."

PAT SAVAGE looked anything but safe when they walked in on her. She was ghost-pale. "Have you got smelling salts or something?" she asked.

The idea of Pat needing smelling salts was startling.

"What happened?" Monk demanded. "Did the fake Ham fall up, too?"

Pat shuddered. "He went down, if anything—the part of him that left."

"What—" Monk stared blankly.

"A button off his vest, I think it was," Pat explained. She sank in a chair. "It was awful. I thought I was tough. I was the one who ate up excitement. Whew!"

"Button?" Monk asked.

Pat said, "He ate it, before the truth serum got him. That is, he began to feel the effects of the serum, and he ate the button. It was a hollow shell, and there was some powder—chemical of some

kind—in it. The man—the false Ham—bragged about it. He said it would keep him unconscious for days, so we could not get anything out of him. You know, like spies do, and like we have done on occasion. It's an old trick."

"Poison?" Doc Savage put in.

Pat nodded. "I don't think—I'm sure he did not know it. That was horrible, wasn't it? Whoever he was working for knew he would be in very desperate straits before he ever used that chemical-filled button. It was murder!"

Doc Savage glanced at Erica Ambler-Hotts. She was as cool as cream in a refrigerator.

"I would like you to look at the body," Doc told her.

She did not flinch. "I don't mind," she said.

She went into the other room and glanced at the body on the floor. The man had gone through motions in dying that had clawed up the rug and upset things. Erica Ambler-Hotts was not all cold stone. She lost color.

"I never saw him before," she said. She turned quickly and walked out.

Doc brought in Totttingham Strand. The man was composed, but it was the composure of a steel spring tightened to its last turn. More than ever, the man was like a tempered blade, a fine cutting instrument, impersonal, always on his feet, like a cat. He went to the body and turned the face into different positions.

"I have seen him." He straightened, looked at his hands distastefully, took out a handkerchief and wiped them. "This man tried to kill me a few days ago. He was in a car that sought to run me down."

Doc asked, "Did you go to the police about that?"

Strand shrugged. "I have explained to your associates why I did not go to the police with any of this. My friend Montgomery—he left me the green chest—requested me not to go to the police."

"You must have been willing to do a great deal for your friend Montgomery." Doc's metallic eyes were suddenly as still as hardened gold.

Strand spread his hands. "I did not know what I was getting into."

"And what did you get into?" Doc asked.

"That," said Strand quickly, "is something I wish you would tell me."

"What part do you want me to tell you?"

"Why men fall up," Strand said.

Doc was silent.

Strand, after smiling wryly, added, "And why Miss Ambler-Hotts was seized. They were going to kill her. But first they were going to torture her to make her tell what she knew about my actions and what I knew and what I had done."

Doc said, "You know, then, why they seized you?"

"No."

Doc Savage's face was usually expressionless, but that did not mean he could not show emotion. He displayed feeling now. The feeling was profound skepticism. It was so plain that Strand could not miss it. Strand flushed.

"My friend Montgomery got me into something," Strand said grimly. "I wish you would tell me what it is."

WHILE Doc Savage was answering Strand's last statement with silence, Monk and Ham came into the room. Monk gestured skyward with a thumb, said, "Ham and I are going up to headquarters."

"Be careful," was all Doc Savage had to say.

It was a rare occasion when Doc gave a warning, so Monk and Ham were impressed when they walked out.

Doc Savage watched Strand for a while. Doc's face was now expressionless. Then he made the low trilling which was his peculiarity. The sound was almost inaudible.

"Strand," he said, "there is a place for everything."

Strand half-closed one eye. "So I've heard."

"This is the place," Doc said, "for the truth."

The Englishman's face jerked into a mask, telling nothing except that he was on guard.

"Sorry," he said.

"You have not told the truth."

Strand wheeled stiffly. "Sorry," he said. He walked out.

A moment later, there was a rumble from the outer room. Doc went to the door. Strand was trying to leave, and Renny had his way barred, with big fists cocked. "Holy cow!" Renny told him. "You're not just walking out!"

"Get out of my way," Strand said coldly.

Renny looked at the steel expression of the man and said, "You don't make me shake in my boots, friend. Go back and sit down."

Strand did something that was hard to do. He went back and took a chair and made it seem that he had not been bluffed in the least.

Later, Renny got Doc aside. "That fellow," Renny muttered, "is not someone I would want to find

in a dark alley, if he didn't like me."

Doc Savage made no comment. He went to the telephone and dialed his headquarters upstairs, using the unlisted number which would get a quick response.

Monk answered and said, "They have been in here, Doc. But they're gone. We've got the photographs from the concealed camera that takes pictures of intruders. You want us to develop the film?"

"Bring the film and developing chemicals downstairs," Doc directed. "And there are some other chemicals you can also bring. Better get a paper and pencil and make a list."

The list of chemicals which Doc Savage named was long and complicated. He added a few pieces of equipment.

"It's a good thing you told me to write them down," Monk said.

He and Ham soon appeared, heavily burdened. Ham patted his pocket. "Here're the films. Want us to use the bathroom or the kitchen?"

"Bathroom." Doc Savage picked up the chemicals and carried them into the kitchen. He worked for some time, mixing and testing.

Monk came in with a print which he had made. "This is the best one," he said. "Look here; we've seen these guys. Some of them were in the gang that we fought out on Long Island—part of the crew that cornered us on that rock."

Doc examined the print.

Then he looked at Monk and asked, "How is the green fog, Monk?"

"Still see it," Monk said. "Renny and the others say it doesn't exist. But Pat and Ham and I sure see it. We see a fog, and it's green."

Ham had come to lean against the door. "Doc, I've noticed a queer thing about this fog."

"You mean that it seems to turn red at times?" Doc asked.

Ham stared. "How did you know?"

"Ever hear of santonin?" Doc asked.

Monk popped his palms together. "Blazes! For the love of little fishes!"

"You know what it is?" Ham demanded.

"Sure!" Monk explained. "Great grief! Doc, how did they administer it to us? Santonin. They couldn't have done that!"

Doc Savage said, "The fact that we saw only green indicates they used either a developed form of santonin, or a similar compound. It may have been a gas. It probably was."

"I'm going back upstairs to see how they gave it to us!" Monk yelled.

The homely chemist burst out of the room.

Ham shook his head. "I still don't know what this santonin stuff is."

"A chemical," Doc Savage explained. "It makes things appear all green or all red to its victims for several days. It is a drug."

Ham gave that deep thought. "Why," he asked, "did they do that?"

MONK came bursting back into the apartment with triumph all over his clock-stopping face. "It was easy when I knew what to look for."

"You found how they gave us that chemical?" Ham demanded.

"Did I!" Monk grinned. "How do you think?"

"Don't be cute, you lummoX," Ham advised.

"You remember one of the very first things that happened to Doc when this thing began?" Monk demanded.

"The green fog—"

"No, no! Before that."

"Doc was up at a hospital performing an operation nobody else could perform—"

"Right after that," Monk said.

"Why, Doc had an accident. There was a fight. Some stranger with a knife. The knife was knocked out of the fellow's hand and struck Doc, cutting him slightly. But Doc wasn't even involved in that."

Monk grinned. "Remember what Pat was doing when we found her at headquarters?"

"Bandaging her ankle."

"Why?"

"Oh, some fellow on the street had kicked her shin or something and skinned—" Ham went silent. His eyes narrowed. "Wait a minute! That's a kind of a coincidence."

Monk said, "Remember what you and I did just before we began seeing the green fog?"

"We were in a fight."

"Exactly," Monk said. "And no doubt that was when we got jabbed with a hypodermic needle containing this advanced form of santonin."

Ham looked disgruntled. "You mean to tell me the santonin was administered with the knife that cut Doc, with a needle in the toe of somebody's shoe that skinned Pat's ankle, and to us during that fight?"

"That," Monk said, "is how we got it."

"How did you find it out?"

Monk tapped his forehead. "By using what's in here."

Ham snorted. "What's in there will never trouble Einstein."

Ham sat down in a chair, rubbed his jaw and began to realize just how puzzled he was. He scowled at Monk. He did not like to discuss serious matters with Monk, because the impulse to insult Monk was overwhelming. Rather, it was a necessary act of self-preservation, for Monk would do plenty of insulting himself if not held at bay in some fashion. Ham strained his hair with his fingers.

"Doc," he said. "Why did they give us that stuff—that santolin?"

"To make us think there was a green fog."

"For what purpose?"

The bronze man's features were inscrutable. "It was part of an astoundingly clear and elaborate plot."

Ham's eyes flew wide. When Doc referred to a thing as astounding and elaborate, it meant a great deal. One of the bronze man's habits were understatement. Ham had heard him call an earthquake a minor tremor when the quake was strong enough to shake the hat off a man's head.

"Plot," Ham said. "Plot, eh?" He was puzzled. "They gave us santolin. That made us see a greenish film, because of what it did to our eyes. They made us think it was a fog. I remember when Monk and I were around that building—we met a fellow who asked us if there wasn't a green fog. That fellow was one of their men. He was helping to make us think there was a fog."

"But why?" Monk asked.

"To make it easier to deceive me," Doc explained, rather loudly. At least, there was perceptibly greater volume in his voice, although for no apparent reason.

Ham nodded. "I think I get it. They wanted to hamper your vision so you wouldn't recognize the fake Ham and the fake Monk. But they gave us the stuff, too, so that, when we were first with you, it would be common. You'd think the fog was over-all."

Doc said, "Yes, and they did not want me to realize I was in a fake headquarters."

Ham stared. "There was a phony headquarters, then?"

"An exact duplicate."

Monk muttered, "That's a hard one to believe. I don't see how they duplicated it."

"There have been weeks of patient effort behind this," Doc Savage advised him.

THE bronze man's voice was becoming louder by degrees. The gradual increase in volume had not gone unnoticed by Monk and Ham, but they were more or less excited over the fantastic evidence that someone had gone to the enormous pains of duplicating their headquarters exactly. They were now doing as people will do when another lifts his voice—they were speaking with more volume, themselves.

Ham paused to rub his jaw reflectively.

"What," he asked, "was the idea of the fooling us with the fake headquarters?"

"A psychological trick."

Ham frowned. "I don't see the psychology in it."

"The idea," Doc explained, "was to make me think I was safe in headquarters among friends—the fake Monk and Ham were to be the friends for that occasion—and get me talking."

Monk got into the conversation with a grunt.

"I can see how it might have worked," Monk declared. "We always talk freely to each other. If Doc thought he was with me, or if I thought I was with Doc, or with Ham—in other words, if we thought we were together and nobody else around, we might let something slip. Sure, it'd work."

Ham put in a skeptical snort. "If," he said, "we knew anything to let slip."

Monk forgot himself and nodded agreement with Ham.

"That's right," he said. "We don't have anything they would want."

Doc Savage said quietly, "But we have."

They stared at him. "Huh?" Monk said.

"Compound Monk," Doc said.

Ham Brooks chuckled heartily. "Monk is a compound, all right," he said. He glanced at Monk. "A compound of a missing link and nobody could figure what else."

Then Ham stopped speaking. His jaw fell. He had remembered something.

"Say!" he exploded. "You mean that stuff—that chemical stuff—you developed a long time ago? I remember hearing somebody say something about some new discovery you had named 'Compound Monk'; but nothing more was ever said about it, and it slipped my mind."

Monk said, "I remember that stuff. It was very sensitive to motion radiation. The absorption of such radiation by its atoms led to the ejection of three electrons, as against two-electron ejection by so-called photoelectric substances sensitive to light radiation."

"Greek!" Ham said.

"It's not Greek, either," Monk snapped. "It's a perfectly simple thing. You've seen light meters? Photographers use them to measure light."

"What," asked Ham, "has a light meter got to do with this affair?"

"Nothing." Monk looked exasperated. "But I can take the perfectly simple principle of the light meter and explain it to you, and use that to illustrate Compound Monk—"

Doc Savage interrupted. There was even more volume in his voice now.

"The formula for Compound Monk is in the big safe upstairs," he said. "We might get it, look it over, and see if it would explain what the mystery is about."

A moment later, Tottingham Strand appeared in the door.

"I can explain what it is all about," he said.

RENNY, Long Tom, Johnny, Pat and Erica Ambler-Hotts had evidently been listening, because they appeared behind Strand. Strand stepped aside, and they entered. Strand remained in the doorway. Noting that, and realizing there was now no one between Strand and the outer door, Monk arose and sauntered past the man, then stood where he could shut off an escape attempt.

"It was because they were fools," Strand said.

Doc made a slight negative gesture. "On the contrary, they were clever."

Strand showed his teeth with no humor. "They were trying to deceive me—and failed."

Doc said, after a moment, "You are not making yourself very clear."

"They were going to let me escape and go to you for help."

Doc Savage spoke quietly in Mayan, the tongue which he and his associates used for consultation when they did not wish to be understood by others. He spoke to Monk. He told Monk to come back out of the other room and leave the way free for Strand to take flight.

"What did you say?" Strand demanded.

Monk swallowed his surprise, though fast, and said, "All right, Doc. I'll go into the kitchen and mix more of that stuff to clear the green fog out of our eyes."

The homely chemist walked past Strand into the kitchen.

Strand was relieved. "The explanation of all that elaborate deceit was this, Mr. Savage. First, they wanted you in a fake headquarters, where you were virtually a prisoner guarded by two of their men. By two men guarding you, I, of course, mean the false Monk and Ham."

Strand stared at them.

He said, "I was permitted to escape—or so they planned. I would go to you, they knew. And they knew I would talk to you; tell you everything. The fake Monk and Ham would be present and overhear all I told you."

"Then," Doc said, "our guess at the purpose of the green fog and the fake headquarters was correct?"

"Yes. It was to get information out of you and me."

Doc asked, "They had reason for thinking you would try to reach me?"

"Excellent reason."

"What was it?"

Strand drew himself up.

"I came to America from England to see you," he said. "They knew that."

Monk's curiosity got so strong that he put his head out of the kitchen and demanded, "What did they expect to learn?"

"They wished to hear what I would tell you when I came to see you," said Tottingham Strand. "They had the fake Monk and Ham planted for that purpose. But"—his face darkened, and his hands closed—"I was too experienced for that gag. I saw through it at once. I told them so."

Monk rather derisively, said, "You're clever, huh?"

Strand smiled again, and it was like a knife blade showing its steel.

"I was not fool enough for Savage to deceive me," he said.

Monk looked as if he had been slapped. "Hey, what do you mean?"

"I mean," snapped Strand, "that I do not think Savage could have been deceived by those men even for a moment. Therefore, he was not deceived. Hence, he is working with them."

"Brother," said Monk coldly, "words like those may lose you your teeth."

"Savage has you duped," Strand said coldly. "He did not want you to know he had sold out; so he pulled that elaborate and impossible yarn about a fake headquarters to deceive you. He did not want me coming here. He wanted me away from you, but he knew I would expect to find some of his associates with him. You and Ham Brooks are the most prominent. Therefore, Savage prepared a fake Monk and a fake Ham for me."

Monk shook his head slowly.

"Man, you're as crazy as a box full of loons," he said.

Strand showed most of his teeth.

"I'll just leave you with that thought," he said.

Then Strand leaped back, slammed the door and locked it. Sound of his feet went away from the door fast.

Monk bounced forward, bellowing, "He scammed! I knew he was fixing to!"

Erica Ambler-Hotts stood with her hands pressed to her cheeks and made an extremely coherent statement.

"Poor Tot Strand is so terrified by the magnitude of this thing," she said, "that he has made a frightful mistake."

Chapter X. THE MONK COMPOUND

THE eighty-sixth floor of the midtown building had been Doc Savage's headquarters since the beginning of his rather strange career of righting wrongs and punishing evil-doers.

From time to time, he had made changes in the place, added gadgets and trick devices, until it was a remarkable labyrinth of the unexpected.

There was, for example, the wall passages by which they could move from one room to another and watch through disguised loopholes. It was possible to move from these to a lower floor, thence out of the building by the regular elevator service.

Doc Savage watched Tot Strand crouch before the big safe in the reception room and go through the contents. Doc stood in a narrow passage and looked on through the glass eye of a large stuffed fish which hung on the wall.

Strand had found the safe open. He had located a file marked: "Confidential Formulae." There were envelopes in this file, fat ones, each of which contained a notebook—a record of the experiments in developing the formula—and a package which contained samples of the formula itself, whenever the stuff was not perishable.

Strand found a package, grunted loudly.

He put his find in his pocket and fled the place. He was so nervous that he was perspiring.

Down in the lobby, he took a great deal of care to make sure no one was waiting for him.

This information was relayed to Doc Savage by Renny Renwick, who said, "He got off on the mezzanine floor. He's looking over the railing, scouting to see if the coast is clear."

Renny was sitting in the lobby barber shop, which had huge glass windows that offered a full view of the lobby. Renny had seated himself in a chair, lathered his face, and leaned back. The barber, who knew what was expected, had handed Renny a telephone when the latter gestured.

Doc said, "Tell me when he leaves and what route he takes."

"He's doing it, now," Renny said. "The south door. He is going west."

Doc directed, "Go back upstairs. Keep an eye on that girl, Erica Ambler-Hotts. She knows more about this than she has told us."

"That will be a pleasure," Renny said.

"Is Bob following Strand?" Doc asked.

"Yes."

Bob was Bob Gaston. He operated the newsstand in the south lobby of the building. Bob Gaston was also a product of the institution which Doc Savage and his associates referred to as the "college." The "college" was located in a remote section of upstate New York, and its purpose and even its existence were unknown to the general public. The purpose of the "college" was the renovating of criminals by unusual methods. When Doc caught a chronic crook, he committed the fellow to the place, where the patient underwent a delicate brain operation at the hands of specialists trained by Doc himself. As a result of the operation, all memory of past was wiped out. The patient was then trained to hate crime and taught a trade, after which he was "graduated" as a useful citizen. Bob Gaston was such a graduate. Once a criminal, he now bore no traces of it, no more trace than he had recollection.

BOB watched Tottingham Strand enter a small apartment house in the Jackson Heights section. He calmly walked into the lobby, and entered the elevator with Strand. The place did not have a doorman, and the front door was left carelessly unlocked during the day.

Strand got out at the fifth floor. So did Bob. Strand entered Apartment 5C.

Bob went back downstairs, hurried to a drugstore, and telephoned Doc Savage. He told Doc where Strand would be found.

"Watch the place and wait for me," Doc said.

The bronze man's voice was pleased, and Bob Gaston felt very good about the matter as he left the drugstore and walked back toward the apartment house. Bob understood vaguely that, in some way, he owed a great debt to Doc Savage, although he did not know exactly what it was. Something to do with his earlier life, he suspected. His past was a blank, largely. It did not bother him, except that, once or twice, he had met men who seemed to know him, but whom he did not recognize. Such memories as he had were only very vague stirrings, nothing tangible enough to shape into an actual recollection.

Bob was perfectly satisfied. He operated the newsstand and cigar counter in the great skyscraper which contained Doc Savage's headquarters, and he made a good living. He knew that he owed his prosperity to Doc, so he was particularly anxious to please.

He now noticed a taxicab in front of the apartment house. It had been there earlier, not exactly in front of the place, but at a parking spot designated as set aside for cabs.

Hit by an idea, Bob approached the cab. "Care to rent this heap for a couple of hours, buddy?" he asked. "Let me drive it, I mean."

The taxi driver stared in astonishment. "Huh?"

"I would like to take over your cab for a while," Bob explained.

The driver had a round pumpkin of a head and small eyes as gray as pencil erasers. "G'wan somewhere else," he growled. "I got no time for stews."

"I am not drunk," Bob explained carefully. "I wish to hire your cab. I will pay you for it."

"You think I'm crazy?" countered the driver. "Hell, I don't know you. I own this cab myself.

Think I'm going to turn it over to a stranger?"

This was a logical argument. Bob chuckled. "Look," he said, "would it make any difference if you knew I was working for Doc Savage?"

The taxi driver seemed to jump an inch off his seat. "Savage?"

"Doc Savage," Bob explained innocently. "I'm on a job for him, so your cab will be safe enough."

The driver had trouble getting his chin up off his chest.

"You work for Doc Savage?" he asked.

Bob Gaston nodded.

"What you doing?" asked the driver.

"I'm shadowing a man," Bob said. "I want to use your cab to keep track of him. So, driver, you can see it is perfectly all right. Here, I'll give you ten dollars for the rental of your cab the next hour."

"Ten dollars!" The cab driver sounded utterly amazed. "Sure, pal. Here, let me get out." He alighted from the cab. He removed his cap. "Here, take my cap."

Bob reached for the cap and the driver used the blackjack he had managed to slip unobserved out of his pocket; used it so hard that the leather split and small shot flew and bounced and scampered over the sidewalk long after Bob Gaston was lying motionless on his face.

With uncanny abruptness, two more men were beside the driver. "What happened, Joey?" one demanded.

"This guy followed Strand to the place," said the driver. "He came up and tried to hire my cab to trail Strand, the fool. He even told me he was working for Savage."

"Hell, if Strand left Savage, that means he's got what he came after!" exploded the other.

"We better see about that," said Joey.

There were more than the three of them. The others were concealed in the adjacent darkness. Joey made a series of gestures with his arms—semaphore signals—standing under the light in front of the apartment house.

"I told 'em to stand by for trouble," he said.

THEY went upstairs, using the stairway instead of the elevator, and climbed warily. They did not knock on Strand's door. Two of them simply hit it together, and the third stood back with a gun. It was not a well-made apartment house, and the door split, letting them inside. The man who had stood back was instantly inside with his gun.

Tottingham Strand dropped a suitcase. Another suitcase stood on a chair, partially packed.

Joey said, "Getting ready to leave us, Tot?"

Strand stood very stiff with hands splayed against his legs. He trembled slightly. When he spoke, it was to make low, guttural remarks that went into great detail about the debased nature of Joey's ancestry.

Joey whitened and said, "Shut up!"

Then Joey went looking around the room. He located on a table a packet and noted its markings:

Compound Monk

"You got it!" he yelled. He bounced over in front of Strand, so excited that he drooled. "You got it! You got what you came all the way from England to get!"

Strand, who had composed himself coldly, said nothing.

Joey saw the expression. He chilled. "What you looking so smug about?"

Strand indicated the package. "No good."

"What?"

"A plant. A fake. Just something Savage put in his safe for me to find."

Joey glared. "I don't believe it!"

Strand shrugged. "Oh, he sucked me in properly. I fell for an old trick—one of the oldest. He let me escape and get this, that package. He even let a clue drop to where it was."

Joey, suddenly frenzied, ripped open the package. He examined the contents, stuff which looked somewhat like quicksilver in a small glass bottle. It was heavy.

When Joey noticed how heavy the stuff was, he began getting pale. He dug a silver coin, a quarter, out of his pocket, and uncorked the bottle, put some of the contents on the coin. He rubbed. The coin got a wet silver sheen.

"Mercury!" Joey bellowed. "Ordinary mercury!"

Strand shrugged. "I told you it was just a bait."

Joey's eyebrows pulled together. "Yeah, I guess that explains why Savage's man was following you." He wheeled. "Get out of here," he told his men.

"What about me?" Strand asked.

"You go with us," Joey advised him. "And this time, we'll see if we can't do a better job of holding you."

THEY got down on the street with scared haste. Joey had rolled unfortunate Bob Gaston into the

cab. He rolled him out again. Bob was still unconscious. Joey got behind the wheel. His two men and Strand climbed in the rear. Joey made semaphore signals with his arms, and they left. They drove fast and cautiously, and in silence for a time. Then Strand spoke. "Got some new helpers, haven't you, Joey?" he asked. Joey only grunted. Then he demanded, "What do you mean?" "Earlier today. The two boats. The plane. All those men going around giving each other snappy salutes." "What about 'em?" "Rather an augmented organization, I would say," Strand remarked grimly. "They work for me," Joey snapped. "What of it?" "You and Stinky and the other two didn't have money enough to hire such a collection." "You're nuts," Joey said. "I got more money than you think." Strand showed his teeth unpleasantly, in the strange knife-blade way he could manage. "You have an excess of brains," he added. "An impossible excess."

JOEY drove into a stretch of deserted road, and watched the rearview mirror carefully. Only one car followed. He blinked his headlights. The other car blinked its lights three times quickly, in response, and Joey breathed easily again. They were his men following. "What's excessive about my brains?" he demanded. "You didn't have the sense, Joey, to think up that rather fantastic, but shrewd, scheme to get Doc Savage to a fake headquarters with a false Monk and Ham, so that I would escape and go to them and reveal—you hoped—to your false Monk and Ham all I knew. And Doc Savage would, in turn, reveal all he knew—you hoped." Joey grunted disgustedly. Strand said, "You did not think that up, Joey." "I don't see why it didn't work," Joey said. "You could not put a thing like that over on Doc Savage," Strand advised him. "Hell, it was fantastic enough to have worked," Joey snapped. "They told me Savage wouldn't fall for anything ordinary, but this would be so wild he would—" Joey then caught himself and swallowed uncomfortably. Strand gave a laugh with an edge. "So you do have a boss, now, Joey. Someone with brains." Joey said, "You're nuts!" unconvincingly. Strand leaned back and sighed. "Joey," he said, "you have no imagination. You could have sold this thing for an empire. And I actually mean an empire, a kingdom. You could have been king of any one of a dozen countries you could have named." Strand laughed. "What did you get? A hundred thousand dollars?" "I got half a mil—" Joey began indignantly, then caught himself again. There was genuine mirth of a cold, desperate kind in Strand's laugh. "A kingdom, you could have gotten, Joey," he said. "You could have been king of England, perhaps. How would you like that, you miserable gutter rat?" Joey did not say anything. He was white. Joey went to a deserted woodland section, and got a portable radio out of a tree. He also produced a code book and began rather painfully a coded transmission that was supposed to sound like an airplane pilot attempting to contact a control airport. He got an answer, also ostensibly from an airport, and worked frantically with a pencil, paper and a flashlight. Finally, he came back to the car. He was triumphant. "We got a plan to get hold of Savage," he said. "This time, it will work!" "Is Savage supposed to fall for this one because it is so fantastic?" Strand asked witheringly. Joey snorted. "This one is so simple anybody would be taken in. We're gonna work through somebody that Savage won't suspect in a million years." Strand said, "You do function well when you connect up with someone who has brains, don't you, Joey?" Joey snarled, "Pop that guy if he don't close his mouth!" One of the men slapped Strand. Undisturbed, Strand said, "You sold too cheap, Joey. A kingdom. Think of it, you miserable dupe." Joey got in the car and drove on, but he had become pale again.

Chapter XI. THE UNDERCOVER AGENT

DOC SAVAGE was quietly undisturbed with Bob Gaston. "It could happen to anyone, Bob," he said. Bob Gaston was miserable over his failure. "To anyone who has no sense whatever," he declared. "Myself, for example." "Forget it." "It's nice of you to say that," Bob muttered. "But I made a mistake in blabbing too much to that fellow I thought was a taxi driver. I guess being a detective isn't my line of work."

"How is the newsstand going?" Doc inquired.

"Oh, fine," Bob said. "I owe you so much. That's what makes me feel particularly bad about lousing up the job you gave me."

Doc Savage left Bob Gaston at the newsstand in the lobby of the building. It was now late night, long past closing time, and the lobby was deserted except for scrubwomen and janitors. Doc rode an elevator up to his apartment.

Monk and Pat and the others, including Erica Ambler-Hotts, met him. The bronze man explained quietly that the enemy had knocked Bob Gaston senseless and had apparently made off with Tottingham Strand.

"There was nothing in Strand's apartment to shed light on the mystery," he finished, "except that Strand rented the place only two weeks ago. There were stickers on his luggage when he arrived, indicating he had come by steamship to South America, thence to New York by plane. The stickers had been steamed off his luggage, indicating he did not want anyone to know about his recent arrival. The information about the stickers came from the superintendent of the apartment house, who is a travel bug."

Big-fisted Renny spoke in Mayan, saying that he wanted to speak with Doc privately. The bronze man moved into the bedroom. Someone had covered the body of the fake Ham with a sheet.

"Strand showed us one thing," Renny said. "They are after the Compound Monk, as we call it."

"Was that what you wanted to discuss?"

"No, not exactly." Renny blocked out his big fists thoughtfully. "It's this Erica Ambler-Hotts."

"What about her?"

"I don't place her in this," Renny said. "She says she doesn't know a thing. But when Strand cleared out, she said something about his being so terrified by the magnitude of the affair that he was making a terrible mistake. I ask you this: Doesn't that sound as if she knew something?"

Doc Savage nodded slowly. "Did you question her about that?"

Renny snorted. "Yes," he said. "And you can guess about how much she told me. What the little boy shot at. Nothing."

The bronze man said, "We might hear her story again."

He returned to the outer room. He took his time opening a conversation with Erica Ambler-Hotts, as if he had no particular motive.

"By the way," he said, "how did you become acquainted with Strand?"

Erica smiled wryly. "With Tot? Oh, I've known the fellow for ages. His father was gametender on my father's estate when I was so high." She indicated something an inch or two long with thumb and forefinger. "We've plowed into each other at intervals ever since. Really nothing close between us. Just a gabbing acquaintance, you might say--"

"Can you tell us anything about Strand?" Doc asked idly.

"Nothing, I'm afraid."

"Nothing at all?"

"Nothing."

Doc Savage picked up the telephone. "I want the transatlantic operator," he said. "I am placing a call to Scotland Yard, in London."

Erica Ambler-Hotts jerked up straight. "Just a minute. You calling about Tot?"

"Yes."

"In that case," Erica said, "I had better tell you about him myself. Rather you get the information from a sympathetic source."

Doc told the telephone operator, "Never mind, cancel the call," and hung up.

Erica Ambler-Hotts took a deep breath.

"Poor Tot Strand is wanted in England for murder!" she said.

MONK dropped an apple he was peeling. Habeas Corpus, Monk's runt hog, stooped up the apple and scuttled into the kitchen, pursued by Ham's pet chimp, Chemistry.

Blank astonishment was all over Monk's homely face. He said, "That's hard to believe. Strand is a tough guy—I could see that. But it seemed to me that it was a clean kind of toughness."

Erica half nodded.

"He is also wanted for treason!" she said.

Monk muttered, "Blazes!"

"Both of those crimes," Erica announced grimly, "are punishable by the death penalty."

Monk shook his head. "I still can't see him as that kind of a man."

"Tot would like to hear you say that," Erica said.

Monk eyed her thoughtfully. "You seem to believe he is not guilty."

"That's right."

"What makes you think he isn't guilty?"

"I know Tot. That's jolly well enough for me."

Doc Savage entered the discussion again with a completely emotionless request. "Suppose you give us the details about the murder and treason charge against Tottingham Strand," he said. There was something about the flat emotionlessness of his voice that compelled an answer more than a show of

agitated interest would have.

"Really, I can't give you the exact details," Erica told him. "But the way I understand it, Tot was doing a spot of service for the war department. He was working with a man named Coxwell."

"What kind of work was Strand doing for the war ministry?" Doc asked.

Too quickly, Erica said, "I do not know. Coxwell, the man who was working with Strand, went to his superior officers and told them that he suspected Strand of selling out the English government. Coxwell had no proof. He just suspected. He was a rather sleazy sort, this Coxwell chap was, and I fancy the chaps in the war ministry rather doubted his word."

She paused to give dramatic effect to her next statement.

"Coxwell was found killed in Strand's apartment off Kensington," she said. "Strand disappeared."

"When was that?"

"Not quite six months ago."

Doc Savage said, "Had you been in constant contact with him since?"

"Oh, certainly not. I had not seen him for months. Not until a few days ago, in fact, when he gave me a ring on the telephone."

"Any particular reason for his calling you?"

"Not that I was able to learn."

"Any reason," Doc asked, "for you to go out with a murderer?"

She tightened visibly. "Really, I don't believe you think I've told you the truth."

Doc reached for the telephone.

Into the telephone, the bronze man said, "Transatlantic operator, please."

TO the operator, Doc said, "I want to talk to Carl Morenta, of the International Game Association, Longacre Road, London, England."

He listened for a few moments.

"That is too bad," he said. "Put the call through immediately after the wire is made available."

He hung up, and explained, "The wire is being used for military matters. It will be turned back to civilian use again in half an hour. There is nothing to do but wait."

Erica Ambler-Hotts leaned back in her chair. She took out a cigarette and lighted it. They had not seen her smoke before.

"Cigarette?" she asked Pat, and Pat shook her head.

Doc Savage spoke to Monk. He used the Mayan tongue, which only his associates understood.

"Give this girl a chance to escape," Doc said. "Answer me in Mayan, as if we were holding a conversation."

"So you think she's been lying to us!" Monk said in an astonished voice, using the Mayan lingo.

"That's good," Doc told him. "Now you will receive orders to leave and perform certain duties.

Ignore the orders. Instead, follow this girl if she leaves. We do not want any slips. She is our one chance to get back in contact with the mystery."

Pat Savage was not supposed to understand the Mayan lingo.

She said in Mayan, "What am I to do, Doc?"

A flicker of astonishment crossed the bronze man's usually emotionless face. "Where did you learn the language, Pat?"

"Oh, I talked Monk into teaching it to me," she said.

Monk looked embarrassed.

Doc said, "Monk, take Ham and Johnny and visit your laboratory downtown. Get together equipment that we might need. Take it to the water-front hangar. Pat, you and Renny and Long Tom had better get out and talk to the British consular officials. I want to know whether they have any inkling about this mystery. Better talk to them personally, to get results."

Pat nodded. "If we started talking to them over the telephone about men falling up," she said, "fat lot of information we would get."

They departed, leaving Doc Savage alone with Erica Ambler-Hotts,

Doc told Erica, "I am waiting for the telephone call to England to go through. The half-hour delay will have elapsed shortly."

She nodded. "Can I do anything to help?"

"You are not scared, are you?"

"I imagine so," she said. "I have no impulse to wring my hands and moan, however."

Doc asked, "Would you be afraid to go downstairs and get something for my associates to eat when they get back? There is a delicatessen in the next block. You take the south side entrance and turn right."

The girl was expressionless, as enigmatic as the bronze man. "I would like to help," she said.

"Of course I will go."

"Thank you."

Erica Ambler-Hotts arose. "By the way, Mr. Savage, why do you think Tot Strand fled the way he did? You recall he said he had come all the way from England to see you, and it sounded as if he was telling the truth."

Doc faced the young woman.

"Tottenham Strand got into our safe and seized a package marked 'Compound Monk'," the bronze man said.

Erica was shocked. She lowered her head, did things with her hands calculated to make it seem she was not concerned. She moved to the door.

"I will get the food," she said.

She went out.

Five minutes passed. And ten. An hour finally, and a bit more. Then the telephone rang. It was Renny, with his big bull-in-a-box voice.

"She's scrambling," Renny said. "Holy cow, Doc! She met three very smooth-looking guys who probably live on nails and sandpaper, and they're out at a private airport on Long Island. They're warming up a plane."

Doc asked, "Have you a portable radio?"

"Yes."

"Keep in touch with me," the bronze man said. "And give me the location of the airport."

The telephone began ringing as soon as the bronze man put it down, and the operator said, "This is the transatlantic operator. I am ready with your call to London."

Chapter XII. THE FLYING MAN

ANDREW BLODGETT MONK MAYFAIR and Theodore Marley Ham Brooks had been good-natured enemies since they had known each other. The brand of good nature was hard to recognize. Strangers often yelled for the police upon hearing them engaging in what was a minor bit of persiflage, comparatively speaking.

An hour before dawn the following morning, they were crawling through brush with their two pets, Habeas Corpus and Chemistry.

They were discussing a small matter about which Monk was feeling injured.

"This Compound Monk they're talking about," Monk said grimly. "How come I didn't know the stuff was named after me?"

"I wouldn't know," Ham said. "There are probably two or three things since the beginning of creation that you don't know. Or did that ever occur to you?"

"Don't try to be nasty," Monk advised. "I'm asking you a simple question."

"Simple" describes most of your questions."

"Why'd they name that stuff Compound Monk?"

Ham began grinning, but the grin was lost on Monk because of the darkness. However, when Ham burst into smothered laughter, Monk realized the state of the dapper lawyer's feelings.

"You shyster!" Monk sounded bitter. "There's some gag connected to them naming that chemical, or whatever it is, after me!"

"And how!" Ham chortled.

Monk thought of several bitter things he wished to say, and said none of them, because they were crawling through the runt bushes which fringed a beach. The sand was hard and gritty under their hands.

"Imitate a loon," Ham said.

"You do it," Monk snarled. "It should come more natural to you."

Ham gave a passable imitation of a loon's cry, got an answer, and they headed for the sound.

Shortly they came upon the others.

Big-fisted Renny said, "We began to think you two fellows were never going to join us. All the others were here an hour ago."

"Aw, Ham had to go past his club and get the proper clothes for the occasion," Monk growled.

"Does he figure he knows what the proper occasion will be?" asked Renny.

"From the size of his suitcase, I guess he prepared for an assortment of occasions," Monk said.

Doc Savage was soundlessly beside them. He had come from the night somewhere.

Doc said, "The plane is preparing to take off. Erica Ambler-Hotts and her three companions apparently have been waiting for daylight."

Renny rumbled, "I'll wake up Pat. She could sleep through the end of the world."

He went over and tickled Pat's nose with a grass blade. She promptly slapped him, then tried to go back to sleep.

"Wake up," Renny advised. "We're about to start cutting oats around here."

"They must be pretty wild," Pat complained, "if you have to sneak up on them in the dark this way."

DOC SAVAGE'S plane was the large experimental job which he had developed in transparent plastic. Not that it was an invisible ship. Nothing of the kind. But the skin fabric was almost as transparent as glass, and some of the control cables were made of the same stuff, which was almost as tough as duralumin. The motor and the other solid parts were painted a dark color above to blend with the earth, a light color below to merge with the sky.

Riding along in the experimental craft was somewhat eerie, and did not please Monk. He picked his way through the cabin with a ghastly expression.

"If there was a hole in the floor of this thing, you couldn't see it!" he complained. Pat watched the ground. "At least it makes sightseeing easy." That was true. At first, they had felt no need whatever for windows. This was one of the great military values of the transparent plastic; it would enable the occupants to watch for attacking planes from any direction. But as the flight had progressed, the inevitable oil vapor from the motors had stained the plastic hull, hampering vision. Renny pointed at the ground, rumbled, "Nice country for a giant to walk over." "He would sure stub his toe," Pat agreed. It was the rugged coast above Maine, a snaggle-toothed coast line that was noted for its high tides and brittle weather. The rocks were like black teeth, and, back inland, the earth had been clawed by the weather into great ravines that stretched for miles. Long Tom Roberts lowered a telescope almost as long as his arm. He rubbed his eye. "They're about five thousand feet above us," he said. "Just went through that rift in the clouds. They seem to know where they're going." "Ineluctable dialecticism," Johnny remarked. "My, my," Pat said. "Two very nice words. What do they mean?" "I think he means it's obvious," Long Tom said. "What's obvious? Where Erica Ambler-Hotts and her three friends are going?" "That's the idea." "What makes it so obvious, if I may ask?" "They've flown a straight line ever since they left Long Island," Long Tom pointed out. "That shows they know where they're going." Monk grabbed a seat, felt of the transparent cushions to make sure they were solid, and sank on them. "Doc," he said. "Yes?" called the bronze man. Doc was at the controls. "You ever get that call to London through?" Monk asked. "Yes." "That Carl Morenta you asked for—isn't that a name you call to get hold of the head office of the British army intelligence service?" Monk inquired. "Yes." "I was just wondering," Monk continued, "why you went to such pains to let Erica Ambler-Hotts know you were calling Carl Morenta—" Long Tom burst out in a howl of astonishment. "Down there!" he bellowed. He jabbed with his telescope. "Right north of that big ravine that runs down into the sea." Monk stared. "What the heck is it? You've got the telescope." "It's a man," Long Tom shouted. Monk snorted. "What's so remarkable about a man?" "This one," Long Tom said, "is falling up into the sky! If we keep going the way we are, we'll pass right by him. Or he'll pass by us." Doc Savage said, "Get on your parachutes. Quick!" There was a rippling grimness in the bronze man's tone that was like cold ice against their backs.

GETTING into a parachute is not something to be done in a hurry. There are two straps over the shoulders that snap together across the chest, and two more that snap, one around each leg. But haste makes an inexplicable snarl out of the webbing straps. Renny started it off nicely by getting the wrong 'chute. There was only one on the plane that would fit him. "Holy cow!" he rumbled. It did not help that they all tried to watch the man falling up. By now, they could see the man falling up with their unaided eyes. Also, they could see the plane ahead. The craft had turned suddenly, it appeared, and was coming back. It became more prominent in the morning sky. Monk said, "Looks as if they've seen the man falling up, and are coming back to investigate." He was wrong. How wrong, it was suddenly obvious when the other ship banked wildly. "Gosh, looks as if they saw the man falling up, and are fleeing from him," Monk said. Long Tom used his telescope. "The man is falling toward them," he yelled. Ham said, "You're crazy. A man falls up. He Doesn't fall toward airplanes." "Don't call me crazy!" Long Tom snapped. "You get in the habit of that, talking to Monk. It'll get you new skin on your nose if you aren't careful. And a man does not fall up!" Ham shrugged. "Well, yonder is one falling somewhere." Doc Savage asked, "Can you distinguish the features of the man who is falling up?" Long Tom puckered an eye against the small end of the telescope. "Too far away," he said. "He's got his arms and legs spread out, stifflike." The next development they could all see with naked eyes. "I'll be superamalgamated!" said big-worded Johnny. The occupants of the distant plane were jumping. Four figures in quick succession. Black forms that fell down through the sky.

"At least, they aren't falling up," Monk said.

They tumbled for a long way, almost to the earth, before the parachutes opened. As a result, they landed close together, coming down in a small clearing, the only one in miles, apparently. The plane which they had deserted lifted its nose into a stall, fell off in a left spin and went down and down after them.

"Blazes!" Renny rumbled. He was pop-eyed. "The man who was falling up is now falling down." The figure did not fall downward for long. It seemed to follow the spinning plane a while. Then it began dropping behind. It floated around idly. It started to fall up again. Then it changed direction.

"Holy cow!" Renny boomed. "Now, it's after us!"

Doc Savage spoke again, and there was more crashing concern in his voice than had been there when he had ordered them to put on the parachutes.

"Jump!" he said.

Stupefied, they watched the figure coming toward them. It was traveling, they began to realize, with surprising speed.

"Jump!" Doc Savage rapped. "Take to the parachutes. Do like the others did—fall to within a few hundred feet of the ground before you pull your ripcords."

DOC boosted open the door, began shoving the others out into space. Pat was pale when she went out. She did not care much for parachute jumping. Not that the others were enthusiastic about it, either. Monk and Ham carried their pets. Each animal had a collar, and they had snapped these inside the chest rings of their parachutes.

They fell for a long distance, closely packed, only a few score of yards between them. Then they cracked open the 'chutes, had a few moments to tug at shrouds to stop swaying and to direct their descent slightly. Then they were busy getting out of the harness, ready to free themselves the moment they hit ground, so that they would not be dragged.

Doc ran in search of the others. He found Monk first. Monk was sitting on the ground, as pale as anyone had ever seen him.

"What happened?" Doc asked.

"I aged fifty years in that jump," Monk said weakly. "My hog got to kicking around and got a leg through the ripcord ring so that I couldn't grab hold of it. I thought I was never going to crack that 'chute."

Ham came up in time to hear that and snort. "Your 'chute opened ahead of anyone else's."

Monk was too shaken to answer.

Doc Savage was watching the sky.

The others looked upward also. Suddenly, there was an explosion, a sharp blast, although not a terrific one. Distance took away some of its force.

What had happened was plain to the eye, but hard for a brain to accept. It was manifestly impossible. A man falling up was impossible, to begin with. And the fact that a man falling up could overtake a plane, plunge directly into the plane, and blow it to more or less small pieces—at least, into such a condition that it fell helplessly toward earth—was even harder to accept rationally. All of them watched, with breath corked tightly in their lungs, for the same thing—a glimpse of the man who had fallen up.

They did not see him.

They watched with eyes out and lips getting dry and arms and legs beginning to ache from being held stiff, until parts of the plane, heavier parts such as motor assembly, began striking the ground.

But no man!

"It was the man that blew up!" Monk breathed.

Ham's expression became strange. Suddenly, he emitted a blurt of laughter. "Blurt" was the word; the laughter came out of him without his consciously authoring it. It had a silly sound, so asinine that he caught his lips involuntarily.

Monk stared and asked, "What's the matter with you?"

Ham shook his head wordlessly. He was pale. The horrible jackass laugh he had made had given him a start. He was wondering if his mind had suddenly snapped, so that he was crazy.

Pat said, "I know how it feels. I could make a noise like that, too."

Big-fisted Renny Renwick nodded soberly. "It was the man blowing up. That's what does it for me."

"Does what?" Long Tom asked him.

"Makes me sure I'm crazy," Renny said.

Doc Savage said, "Do not let it worry you. There is a perfectly logical, if somewhat unusual, explanation."

Renny rumbled, "The only thing that would sound logical to me is that a man did not fall up."

A brisk twist of an emotion that probably was humor appeared in the bronze man's eyes.

"You can rest assured," he said, "that a man did not fall up."

ERICA AMBLER-HOTTS called: "Mr. Savage! Please don't answer me. Don't let them know where you are!" She was to the right, some distance away.

Her voice had a kind of vibrating terror.

"Get away if you can!" she added loudly. "Get plenty of help! Call on the American government. Telephone the naval intelligence department and tell them Morenta 72 told you to get help. Don't forget that—Morenta 72." Her tone got louder. "Repeat that name to be sure— No, no, don't! They might hear your voice and locate you. Please go!"

Monk said, "That girl sure sounds as if somebody was trying to make her eat a snake."

The bronze man made no audible comment. But he gestured emphatically, indicating that he and his men were to take cover and make no noise.

They crawled several yards. A wing fragment of their plane, the last to fall, hit the rocky ridge to the south.

Ham caught Doc's eye and used the deaf-and-dumb finger language to say, "I'm going to use Chemistry to spot them."

Doc nodded.

Ham collared his pet, and proceeded to give several hand signals. The chimp—or runt ape, for there was some scientific doubt about Chemistry's ancestry—seemed to understand.

Monk watched with no pleasure. He prided himself on the intelligence of his pet hog, Habeas Corpus. But it had not occurred to him to teach Habeas to understand hand signals which could be given silently.

Obedying Ham's gestures, Chemistry took to the trees.

"Humph!" Monk said.

They waited. The undergrowth, thick about them, was drawn tight with a kind of uneasy stillness. Not stillness, either. The sea was close by. The sound it made was a sobbing one, rising and falling, but it was always loud enough to cover small noises around them.

Finally, Chemistry dropped silently out of a tree near them. The chimp went to Ham, danced up and down, turned and took off the way he had come. He looked back with an almost human appeal for them to follow.

"Probably found a bird nest," Monk muttered. "He sucks eggs, doesn't he?"

Doc Savage asked, "Ham, will Chemistry guide me alone?"

"Probably," Ham admitted. "If you want to try it alone. But wouldn't it be safer if all of us—"

"You stay here," Doc said. "Do not move, and do not make any noise."

The bronze man moved after the chimp. He went quietly, so silently that it was uncanny. The chief of the Mok native tribe in the Amazon jungles who had taught him woodcraft would have been proud of the way he merged with the undergrowth and shadows.

Chemistry discovered that Doc alone was following, and showed a spell of indecision over the matter that would have embarrassed Ham. Doc repeated the gestures Ham had used. After he did it the second time, Chemistry surrendered and went ahead.

ERICA AMBLER-HOTTS was talking to the man called Stinky and the one who had played the part of Monk in the green-fog-and-fake-headquarters trick. There were other men. There was Freddy, the taxi driver who had been duped by Doc Savage into taking the bronze man from headquarters to the spot where Monk and the others were besieged on Long Island. Freddy wore a white bandage around his jaw, evidently part of repairs made necessary by the blow Doc Savage had struck.

Erica's three companions were there. Renny Renwick had described them as three very smooth-looking gentlemen who probably lived on sandpaper and nails. That was right. They looked exactly like that.

The three stood there, holding their hands in the air and looking like men who knew they were the same as dead.

Erica was smiling. She talked animatedly with Stinky and the fake Monk and the others.

It was clear that Erica was engaged in some kind of a double cross.

Doc Savage got the small telescope out of his clothing and began to watch the girl's lips. He was an excellent lip-reader. Her English accent, in so far as it changed her lip movements, bothered him slightly. But he was able to make out what she said.

His face got grim as he listened. One of the three smooth-looking men spoke angrily to Erica. She slapped the man. The fake Monk then knocked the fellow down. Erica showed her teeth in a kind of she-wolf smile that was utterly convincing—if one wanted to be convinced that she was a very capable thing which headed for a goal about the same as a bullet after it leaves an army rifle.

WHEN Doc Savage rejoined Monk and the others, Ham jumped and dropped his sword cane, which he had managed somehow to retain. The bronze man's reappearance was abrupt and silent. Chemistry dropped out of a tree beside the bronze man.

Ham pointed at Chemistry. "He find them for you?"

"Very efficiently," Doc replied. "How much equipment have we on hand?"

Monk and the others immediately dug into their clothing. They brought to life what was, in total, a startling assortment. It ranged from grenades—explosive, smoke, gas, flashers for producing

momentary blindness—to several drums of cartridges for the supermachine pistols, gas equipment—masks, suits—and various other gadgets.
Doc selected certain items that surprised the others. Then he went away, silently as before.

IT was almost an hour later when Doc Savage appeared unexpectedly in front of Erica Ambler-Hotts.
"Oh!" exclaimed the English girl.

She was alone.

Doc asked, "Where are your companions?"

"They were captured," she said, without hesitating at all. "Why didn't you flee after I called to you?"

The bronze man shrugged. "It seemed senseless to get so close, then flee."

"You think you are close?"

He said, "This is one of the most deserted sections of the country. A very good place for a foreign power to land its agents and for them to headquarter."

She seemed startled. "You seem to know a great deal about this affair."

"It is clearing up, bit by bit." He gestured. "Suppose we join my men and Pat."

Erica nodded. Again her response was without hesitation. Doc indicated the direction they were to take. They walked through the undergrowth, using care in moving bushes, looking for the quiet places to put their feet. Monk and Renny were suddenly in front of them with machine pistols.

"Holy cow!" Renny said. "You were making so much noise we thought it must be someone else."

Erica showed surprise. "I thought we were being very quiet." She looked around. "You are all safe?"

Renny nodded.

Pat frowned at Erica. "How are you, Morenta 72?" she asked.

Erica stared at them. "You already knew I was a British agent, didn't you?"

Pat said, "Doc seemed to know it. He was going to call somebody named Morenta in England. What is Morenta? A password?"

Erica shook her head.

"Morenta isn't exactly a password," she said. "It is headquarters of a branch of English espionage service. There are various branches. The Morentas are engaged primarily in developing or securing war inventions. Each Morenta is a number rather than an individual. I happen to be Morenta 72."

Doc Savage said, "Tottingham Strand was once Morenta 7, was he not?"

Erica started. "How did you find that out?"

"I talked to Morenta 1 on the telephone after you fled," Doc explained.

"I fled because I knew you were getting too close to the truth," Erica frankly admitted. "Our orders are not to allow our identity or our missions to become known to outsiders, under any conditions. You were beginning to discover the truth. I had no choice but to clear out."

Doc said, "Morenta headquarters made that fairly clear. At least, they surmised that must be your motive."

Ham put in, "Miss Ambler-Hotts, you say Tottingham Strand used to be one of these Morenta agents?"

"Yes."

"I told you what happened," the girl said sharply. "A man named Coxwell was found murdered in Strand's apartment. And Strand disappeared."

"Who was Coxwell?"

"Another Morenta," Erica said.

Doc Savage put in, "What was behind the murder?"

"Didn't Morenta 1 tell you?"

"No."

"It's a long and bally involved story," Erica said. "We can't stay here. They are all through the woods. I think we can reach the spot where they keep their boat. I know where it is. Come on, and we'll straighten this out later."

Doc Savage said, "Good, We will travel in single file. You and I and Long Tom and Monk will lead. The others will follow."

The girl seemed dissatisfied. "How will they follow us? By keeping us in sight?"

Doc opened a small case. It contained a chemical and a pair of rather bulky goggles.

"The chemical is not noticeable to the unaided eye," he said. "But seen through these glasses, it is a brilliant yellow. We will blaze the trail with the chemical. The others will have the spectacles and can follow."

(The gadgets and chemical mixtures which Doc Savage employs may seem unusual to the point of being fantastic, but scientific investigation will show any reader that the bronze man is ahead of other scientists only in degree of development. Rarely does the bronze man use anything which has not already had laboratory treatment. Because unscrupulous individuals have been known to make criminal use of such information, specific details and chemical formulae are purposely omitted.)
Erica swallowed. "You fellows have the darnedest gadgets," she said.

Doc Savage, Monk, Long Tom and Erica moved forward. The girl led the way. From time to time, Doc Savage made brief marks with the swab contained in the bottle of chemical. Erica was confident, moving straight ahead, as if her destination was definitely in mind. And it was.

THE destination was several men with rifles. One of them was the fake Monk. The cab driver called Freddy was another.

Freddy cocked his rifle, said, "One of you want to make a noise?"

Erica stamped a foot. "Quiet, you fool! His aids are following us. Be still. They will appear in a minute."

"Good," Freddy said.

They waited. Waited a long time. And no one came. Ham, Pat, Renny and Johnny did not put in their appearance.

Freddy growled, "He must have got wise."

Erica snapped. "He couldn't have. He did not speak a word to the others, except to tell them to follow. He did not even use that strange language in which they occasionally converse."

"Nevertheless," said Freddy, "something just must have come uncorked."

Doc Savage, Monk and Long Tom were led forward. There was no path, exactly. But men had gone that way before, frequently, always taking a slightly different route so that there would not be a trail.

Chapter XIV. BATTLE STATIONS SUBMERGED

THE trail led down to the sea, to a cove that was a cup in which green water churned and made sobbing noises among the rocks.

The boat in the cove was a sailing yacht, schooner rigged, not more than forty feet over all, slightly less at the waterline. A fat old woman of a hull, patched sails.

SEAGRID,

NEW YORK

That was what lettering on the stern of the old boat said. But it was tied out there in the cove with lines that were too heavy.

They got into an old twelve-foot dinghy. The dinghy ferried them out to the schooner.

Freddy ordered: "Take them below,"

A man shoved Monk. The homely chemist took a couple of steps, stopped, started to swing on the man who had pushed him. Then Monk became more interested in the construction of the boat. He stamped a foot.

"Doc, there's something phony about this hooker," he said. "It's made of steel."

He leaned forward suddenly to ogle the sails.

"Heck, these aren't sails!" he exploded. "They are made of steel and painted. Imitations. That's what they are!"

He got shoved again and was menaced with a rifle muzzle. They were pushed to a hatchway and started down a ladder. The ladder had wooden rungs for six feet, where there was an opening in the floor, then the rungs turned to steel, carrying them on down into the interior of the submarine.

DOC, Monk and Long Tom were locked in a steel compartment that was evidently the skipper's cabin.

Monk expressed his feelings by kicking the door.

"It looks like we're mixed up in an international incident," he complained.

"If you ask me," Long Tom said, "we fell for a woman's story."

Doc said, "Do not be too concerned about it."

They gaped at him. "Doc, you don't mean you expected this to happen?"

"Something like it," the bronze man said. He was without expression.

That was all they got out of Doc Savage, because he began to comment on the cleverness of the submarine disguise. The imitation boat which had been constructed around the conning tower. The bronze man seemed to have an extensive knowledge of the craft, because he mentioned the way it was jointed, how it was fastened to the conning-tower structure so that, in an emergency, it could be jettisoned by mechanical means. The entire craft was of steel, so cleverly fashioned that they had not realized it was not a genuine yacht until after they were aboard it.

"The periscope," Doc explained, "is actually inside the mast. Presumably, it is an accessory periscope and can be cast off when the false structure is released.

"The disguise is particularly effective," he added, "because it gives the submarine a means of working along the coast and enabling it to enter almost any harbor which it would care to enter. The underwater surface of the submarine is painted so that only a close observer from an airplane would notice anything peculiar. Then, from an airplane, it would only appear that the schooner was under way, leaving a wake. The boat structure is on the forward portion of the submarine, and the after portion is painted white, mottled so that from a height it would look like a wake being trailed by the schooner."

Monk was suspicious by now.

"Doc, you seem to know a lot about this sub," he said.

Doc Savage dropped the subject of the submarine without making an answer. He selected a chair, looked over the reading matter the cabin offered, and selected a copy of the "Atlantic Pilot," the government volume of information for masters of small coastwise vessels.

WHEN Pat, Ham and Long Tom were brought aboard, not more than half an hour had gone by. The three prisoners were marched past and crowded into a steel niche that passed for a cabin across the corridor.

"How did you get caught?" Monk asked.

"Your blasted hog," Ham said. "They trailed him to us." Then, after Monk had felt the shock, Ham corrected: "They just had a piece of luck and caught us."

"Where is Johnny?"

"They're hunting him," Ham explained.

"This gets no better fast," Monk muttered.

Another forty-five minutes brought Erica Ambler-Hotts to the small steel network which ventilated the steel door. She was sobbing.

"They will not let him go," she said.

Doc asked, "Let who go?"

"Poor Tot," she said stiffly. "Tot Strand. They promised to free him if I would trick you into a trap."

From across the steel hall, Pat said, "I like that bargain, sister. I hope I get my hands on you."

Erica tightened. "Oh, it was dirty! But I thought you could take care of yourselves. And I wanted poor Tot out of it."

Pat snapped, "Why should you think they would keep their word?"

"Why not?" Erica sounded baffled. "They have all of Tot's notes, his apparatus, his working models. They even have the Compound Monk that Tot came to America to get."

Doc Savage put in, "They do not have the Compound Monk. We misled Strand into thinking he had taken it."

"Then they lied to me," Erica said miserably. "They told me they wanted merely to seize you and hold you prisoner so that you would not molest them until they got back to Europe. But that wasn't it; they wanted to force you to give up the Compound Monk."

A man came down the corridor hurriedly, a sailor in the uniform of one of the warring nations.

"Ruhig!"

he yelled. "Quiet! What is this?"

Erica Ambler-Hotts whirled, said, "Get away from me, you lying pig!" She had a wrench under her arm, and she suddenly tried to lay it against the sailor's head. He dodged, clutched the girl. She crowded the sailor against the door of Doc's cell. Doc managed to get two fingers through the steel grille, and clamped them on the sailor's arm. It was not much of a grip. The sailor began to scream. More sailors came, struggled and got the sailor loose.

"Meine mutter!"

he croaked. "He tore the flesh out of my arm!"

A sailor shoved a pistol through the grille and fired five times. It was for effect. The effect was impressive. The bullets moved around like hornets, splashing lead that was like driving red-hot needles.

The group spent the next fifteen minutes hunting in their hides for particles of lead.

"That looked impressive," Monk said. "What kind of an act do you suppose it was?"

"No trick," Doc said.

"Huh?"

"She told too much of the truth that time," Doc said.

Long Tom complained, "I like this less and less. These cookies are nail-eaters from way back. When they go to work on us for information, it will not be any taffy pull."

THE door of their cubicle had no inner lock, so that when sailors came for them, there was not much they could do about it. They were led to the control room below the conning tower. Another group arrived shortly with Pat, Ham and Long Tom.

The hatch was open above their heads. They could look straight up through it and see two or three stars, motionless in an inky night. The night wind was like a perfume after the oil stench.

A tall, dark, handsome man faced them. He said, "I want information, bitte," with a heavy accent.

"You will tell me where is the other member of your party. The one called Johnny."

Monk said, "You want in on a little secret, brother?"

The man bowed politely. "Yes, of course."

"We will tell you nothing," Monk said. "Not even the time of day."

A half inch of red appeared above the handsome man's collar. "You misunderstood us," he said. "We wish no trouble with you." His face was wooden. "Where is Johnny?"

"Mister, trouble is what I'd like to have with you," Monk told him.

The half inch of red became an inch, and the man suddenly popped his palms together, as if he was summoning a waiter.

"Bring Strand," he ordered.

He did not look irritated, but he must have been in a bad humor, from the way the sailors jumped. Four of them double-quickened out. While they were gone, no one said anything. They came back with Strand.

Tottingham Strand had not been improved by handling. One eye resembled an apple that had been in the hot sun too long. Skin was missing from his knuckles. Among other missing things was a smile, more skin, a shirt sleeve, and possibly a handful of hair, although it was hard to be positive about the latter.

Monk told him, "You look as if you and our friends here have had a conference."

Strand said five words which expressed fully his opinion of his captors. Some of the captors got red necks. Pat smiled.

"Beg pardon," Strand told Pat.

"It's all right," Pat told him. "I was trying to think of something like that to say."

Strand bowed slightly. "Thank you."

He was calm enough. His surface was ice. His eyes and his muscles were like edged steel.

Doc Savage asked in a conversational tone, "They have everything but the Compound Monk, have they not?"

Strand returned the bronze man's look with no visible emotion. "Yes," he said. "They have. But then, they have had it for weeks. I was not aware of it until two days ago."

"How did you make the discovery?" Doc asked.

The man called Freddy put in, "Shut up, you two—"

"Let them talk, please!" snapped the handsome man. His tone left no doubt about who was boss here.

"My friend Rod Bentley—the only real friend I had in the world—found it out for me," Strand told Doc Savage. "He discovered they were conducting experiments in that green building in New York City. We went there to investigate. I was cautious, and Rod was reckless. I would not go into the building. He went in instead. They caught and killed him. And when they killed him, they demonstrated that they had my invention."

Doc asked, "There was no green chest?"

Strand shook his head. "There was never one."

"You told us a man named Montgomery gave you a green chest to keep," Doc reminded.

"I told you several things that were not quite true," Strand said.

MONK put in disgustedly, "No green chest, no green fog, no sense to anything. What is this, anyway? Did a man fall up or didn't he?"

Strand showed his teeth briefly. "A man did not fall up. Not at any time."

Monk started to say something else, but caught Doc's eye. Monk went silent.

Doc asked, "Strand, you came to America to get the formula for Compound Monk?"

"Correct."

"It is essential for the operation of your device?"

"Correct again."

"How did you expect to get the Compound Monk?"

Strand's smile was steel. "By stealth or by force. Any way I could."

Doc said, "You did not think of trying a frank approach on the subject?"

Strand shrugged. "I thought that out. It was no good. To get the formula, I would have to explain things. You are too smooth to be fooled. I tried to concoct some jim-crack invention that I could use to make you think I needed the formula for some innocent purpose. It was what you Americans call 'no dice.' I knew I couldn't deceive you. So I wasn't trying."

Doc said, "But others—these fellows we are mixed up with—went ahead and tried a trick."

Strand nodded. "I guess you know what they did. They used that fake-headquarters gag, and the phony Monk and Ham. They thought you could be taken in, particularly after they used the stuff that made the green fog effect in your eyes. They were after the formula, which they didn't have. They were in the same position as I myself; they had my invention, but it was useless without the key secret, which you had developed, and which no one but yourself knew. Of course, I didn't know at first that they had my invention."

"You first found out your device was in their hands when?" Doc inquired.

"Two days ago," Strand said.

"How?"

"My friend Rod Bentley told me."

"That was the first time you realized?"

"Yes."

Doc Savage was silent a moment. During the interval, he made the small trilling which was his peculiarity when disturbed. Monk and the others stared at him, puzzled.

Doc inquired, "What were you going to do with the device in the end, Strand?"

Strand became strangely white. "What do you think?"

"I do not believe," Doc told him, "that you were going to sell it."

The whiteness went slowly out of Strand's face. He smiled, and it was the first genuine smile any of them had seen on his face.

"Thank you," he said. "But you are wrong, in a way. I wanted the device to make a trade."

"Trade?"

Strand asked stiffly, "You know my record in England?"

"You mean the murder and treason charges?"

Strand displayed his eyeteeth. "I see you do know. Yes, that is it. I was going to try to trade this gadget for freedom from the charge."

"Trade it to the English government?"

Strand drew himself erect. "Exactly."

Quick and warm lights of approval appeared briefly in the bronze man's strangely flake-gold eyes.

"Did you receive offers from others?" Doc indicated their captors. "From these gentlemen, for instance?"

Strand stared at the dark handsome man, at Freddy, with contempt. "You would not believe how much they offered me," he said.

Doc Savage said nothing.

After a while, Strand lowered his eyes. "This may not matter," he said. "But if I get out of this, there will be no trade. I will give the thing to America and England jointly."

Doc said, "You mean that?"

Something in the bronze man's voice startled the darkly handsome man. The fellow's hand made a flashing gesture, and held a gun. He held the weapon with muzzle on the floor, said, "You had better lift your hands, Mr. Savage."

Doc did not move.

"Schnell!"

the man snapped. "Quickly! Your hands!"

Doc put up his arms, and his hands touched an I-beam which comprised one of the submarine ribs.

Only Ham was watching the bronze man closely, and he saw what none of the others had noticed—a small globule, not larger than a pigeon egg, fastened to the side of the beam with a strip of adhesive tape. Ham saw Doc pluck the object loose.

Observing the bronze man get hold of the gadget in such a fashion, Ham understood something.

He became positive that Doc had been aboard the submarine earlier in the day.

Ham shut his eyes tightly. He knew what was coming, was prepared for it. Even then, with his eyes shut and his nerves steeled, he got a shock.

The object was a flash grenade. Tiny as the thing was, it gave off a completely blinding light.

Actually, what it emanated was more than light. The chemical contents burned in such a fashion that they emitted rays of a wave length extremely shocking to the optic nerves. The effect was something like looking at an arc-welding flame for a period of time, except that it was created in a fraction of a minute.

Following the flash, a man screamed and a pistol exploded. Feet pounded up the steel companionway. They got the hatch closed.

"Crash dive!" shouted the dark, good-looking man. He repeated the order in his native tongue.

There was fighting. Monk was one of the battlers. Monk's warfare was always noisy. A pair of fists were making big noises, which was probably Renny. The place began to fill with sailors who were not blinded.

The submarine began sinking under their feet, rumbling a little, water displacing air in the tanks.

Doc said loudly, "Monk, Renny—stop fighting! We have no chance of breaking out of here!"

"Holy cow!" Renny complained.

But they stopped.

Chapter XV. THE WARSHIP

THE bronze man's next statement made Renny feel better.

Doc said, "Commander, you will surrender to us immediately."

The dark man jumped. He said several things which were not complimentary and which expressed his personal feelings thoroughly.

Doc said, "Very well."

"Was nun?"

the man snapped. "What do you mean—very well?"

"You might," Doc said, "put a man on your underwater sonic apparatus."

The dark man swore and yelled at a sailor. The underwater sonic equipment was part of all warship equipment. In the present modern form, it was a most efficient device for locating a ship by sound of its engines and propellers.

The sailor made an excited report. "A vessel," he said. "Very near, sir."

"What type?"

The listener-operator seemed puzzled.

An expert trained for the job could identify craft—tell destroyer from cruiser, freighter from battleship—by the difference in sound.

"Rather difficult to identify, sir," he reported.

"What is it?" yelled the commander.

Suddenly nervous, the listener said, "It is a strange type of vessel, sir."

Doc Savage spoke again. His voice had volume enough to cut through the excitement and a calm power that was convincing.

"Tune your radio to the navy band," he directed.

The commander stared, whirled and gave an order to that effect. The radio room, for convenience, adjoined the control compartment. The operator cut in a loud-speaker, from which a brisk voice came, saying, "Crew 7, how are you coming with those mines across the cove entrance?"

The radio clicked off, came on again, and another voice, very muffled, said, "We are on the fourth row, lieutenant. A fish could hardly get out of that cove now, much less a submarine."

"Good," said the first voice. "Send one of the light boats into the cove and put down a small depth charge."

There was a short wait. Then the listener reported, "A boat seems to be coming closer, sir. I do not identify its motor. It has a strange sound."

He hardly finished when there was a thumping jar. The submarine rolled violently, tumbling people off their feet. Monk took occasion to land a hard blow on a sailor's square jaw. Another sailor instantly menaced the homely chemist with a pistol.

Ham, suddenly pale, warned, "They'll shoot you, Monk!"

The radio said, "Hello, the submarine. Wie geht es Ihnen? How are you?"

There was deathly stillness. Somewhere, a thin stream of water was snarling through a sprung seam.

"Hello, the submarine," said the radio voice. "You better answer us if you know what is good for you."

There was another silence, and it was pretty bad.

Doc Savage said, "I suggest you answer. At this close range, your radio will function."

The commander swore. He sounded as if something had hold of his throat.

The radio said, "Light boat, put down another small depth charge."

They were prepared for the blast that came, but it was bad anyway. The submarine rolled, jarred. The backrush of water into the vacuum created by the blast made a suction that lifted the conning-tower hatch, and a sheet of spray knifed in and drenched them. It shut off in an instant, but everyone dodged wildly.

The radio said remorselessly, "Hello, submarine!"

More silence. And a sailor made the sounds of a small duck as he breathed.

From the radio: "All right. We won't fool with them any more. Boats 5 and 9. Get in there with heavy depth charges. Blow all the water out of that cove."

With a face completely drained of everything including expression, the submarine commander stepped to the radio-room door.

"Tell them we surrender," he said.

The radio operator relayed the information, having difficulty with his English.

The radio, in great relief, said, "I'll be superamalgamated!"

DOC SAVAGE hit the control panel as Renny got a sailor by the neck and bellowed, "Holy cow! He gave it away!" Monk, for once was a little slow getting into a fight. The homely chemist had known it was Johnny up there somewhere, but he had not expected Johnny in his excitement to use a big word and give away the deception. He was caught by surprise. Johnny usually did not make mistakes in a crisis.

The others—Ham and Long Tom and Pat—joined the fight. Renny slammed his victim against a bulkhead. He went on in a rush for the engine room. Distances were short inside the submarine. He got to the engine room. Being an engineer, Renny knew the intricacies of a submarine. He knew that, if they could blow the air supply out of the tanks, the submarine would not dare submerge again. Because, without compressed air, it could not expel water from the tanks to rise again. He worked valves, at the same time shouting at astonished engineers that they were prisoners.

At the control-room valves and levers, Doc Savage did the same thing Renny was attempting—blew the tanks and brought the submarine to the surface like a cork.

They could hear the rush and roar as the sub broke surface.

"It is a trick!" screamed the commander. "Down again! Quickly!"

But there was no trick about the sudden rending blast from the bow section. Nothing false about the stream of water that flooded through a gaping aperture.

Johnny had put a high-explosive grenade against the bow of the submarine as soon as it came out of the water.

Doc said loudly, "Get overboard. The boat is going to sink." He repeated it in the language the sailors spoke, for effect.

The fighting broke up in an anxious rush for the conning-tower hatch. Monk and Doc fought side by side, with fists.

"Strand, can you swim?" Doc demanded.

"Excellently," Strand said. He was cool again. "So can Miss Ambler-Hotts."

"The north shore of the inlet," Doc said.

"Right-o." Strand took Erica's arm, started her up the companion stairs. He followed.

There was no actual fighting now, only struggle to get out. Water coming in the rent bow was like roaring thunder. Doc Savage backed his men to the ladder. They climbed, Pat first, then Ham and Renny and Monk and Long Tom. Doc followed them, kicking off clutching hands.

"The north shore," he said.

As they swam away they could hear the commander bellowing to his men to head for the south shore. Johnny was standing in the shallow water, holding a long paddle affair and a notched stick with which he had been imitating the underwater sound of a boat.

Monk scrambled out beside him and said, "Those big words of yours danged near upset the cart."

"I'll be superamalgamated!" Johnny gasped. "What happened? What went wrong? I imitated boats, used the radio and threw hand grenades into the water near the submarine, just as Doc had planned. What went wrong?"

Monk said, "A word."

"Eh?"

"That 'superamalgamated.'"

"I do not," said Johnny, "comprehend."

"You were imitating a navy in first-class style," Monk told him. "In fact, you were a regular warship all by yourself. Then you got excited and used that word."

"I—" Johnny groaned. "I did, didn't I? It slipped out. I'll be superamalgamated!"

"The word," Monk assured him, "expresses what danged near happened to us."

Someone took a shot at them with a sidearm. They crawled away. Rocks shoved up around them, heavy cover. They took shelter.

Doc tasked, "Did you contact the coast guard by radio, Johnny?"

Johnny was gloomy. "Yes, they will be here shortly."

Erica Ambler-Hotts put a hand on Doc's arm. "It looks as if you pulled a trick of your own."

Ham told her, "Doc saw you getting the ultimatum to turn him in to save Strand's life. He can read lips. He knew you agreed. So he hatched a scheme."

Erica was silent a moment. "The submarine was mentioned in that conversation. The fact that the supposed sailing craft in the cove was really the sub."

"Right," Monk told her. "So Doc went aboard."

Erica gasped. "I do not see how he could do that," She turned to Doc. "How did you manage?"

Doc said, "It was luck, largely. The guard on the forward deck mistook my voice for that of the man they called Freddy. I went below and made a tour of the vessel, managing to plant various gadgets."

"You put the flash grenade—I guess you call it that—on the control-room ceiling, then?"

"Yes," Doc admitted. "However, there were other gadgets concealed at various vantage points. We had the submarine well prepared for a fight when we permitted ourselves to be seized and taken aboard."

Ham added something else. "The submarine couldn't have left the cove, anyway."

Astonished, Erica demanded, "Why not?"

"Doc jammed the steering mechanism when he was aboard."

The beam of a searchlight appeared like a white needle out of the sea, and Ham said, "That must be the coast guard."

Which was a good guess.

Chapter XVI. THE FRIEND

SUNLIGHT slanted against the panes of Doc Savage's skyscraper laboratory and was cut into thin bright sheets by the Venetian blinds. Rooftops were a forest below the windows, and out beyond, the vista was lost in a blue haze of incipient fog.

Doc Savage watched Tottingham Strand without emotion. "You are sure, Strand, that you wish to give this thing to the American and British governments jointly."

"Right," Strand said. Much of the steel was gone from Strand's manner, as if something bitter had been taken out of his existence.

"You understand this is no trade. It will not affect the murder and treason charges which are against you."

Strand nodded. "I understand that fully."

Pat came into the room. She was looking pleased with herself and, in the frock she was wearing, she was something to make men walk into lamp-posts.

Pat indicated the roof. "Those generals and other officers are ready for the demonstration," she said.

Doc Savage nodded.

Erica Ambler-Hotts jumped to her feet. She took Strand's hand. "Tot, I'm glad you did this," she said.

Strand's eyes fell. "I'm not proud," he muttered. "I should have done it in the first place. It makes me no happier, because I know exactly why I didn't. I was looking out for myself. I wanted to trade the thing for my freedom."

Erica said, "You were always an efficient fellow, Tot."

"Sure," Strand agreed wryly. "And see what it got me?"

Erica smiled. "It is getting America and England an amazing war weapon. You are giving it to them voluntarily, Tot. Nothing can take that from you. You have not only a great inventive mind, Tot. You have a heart."

She kissed Strand then, and nobody was surprised. Her tone had said that was exactly what she was going to do.

Strand's reaction was a little more surprising. He seemed to tighten from head to toes, then give way. His arms went about Erica, and he buried his face against her hair. They saw that there were tears in his eyes.

Ham looked on, utterly disgusted. He knew love when he saw it. What disgusted him was the fact that he had been giving Erica some admiring attention himself.

Monk shoved open the reception-room door without knocking, looked at the embraced couple, grimaced, said, "Anybody want to look at what the coast guard caught?"

Strand and Erica came apart, wheeled.

Monk said, "I only brought one. The coast guard caught most of them. But this was the really interesting specimen."

Monk shoved a man into the room, a man who somehow resembled a whipped bull pup.

"Rod Bentley!" gasped Strand.

Rod Bentley said nothing. There seemed to be nothing he could say. The handcuffs on his wrists were explanation enough of his present status.

Strand said finally, "I looked on you as the best friend I ever had." He laughed. It was not pleasant. "You made a fool of me in the greatest way."

Rod Bentley stared at space.

Strand said, "Rod, you were an enemy agent?"

Bentley curled his lips slightly. "I am not English. I am proud of it."

Monk said, "Bentley was kind enough to explain why he disappeared so that you would think he was dead. He had the idea Miss Ambler-Hotts had gotten wise to the fact that he was not what he seemed."

"I did suspect," Erica said. "I never told Tot, because no one could have made him believe. That, incidentally, is why I was seized by the agents here in the city after Tot called on me."

Strand seemed beyond words.

Doc Savage produced a packet of papers bound with a rubber band. "This seems to be an appropriate time for these." He tossed the packet on the table. "Your pardon, Strand."

Strand nodded slowly. "Pardon?"

Doc nodded at the documents. "The orders Rod Bentley received over a period of two years. He kept them. They were on the submarine. I found them when I went over the craft before we faked the capture and were brought aboard."

Strand looked at the papers as if they were gold. "What do you mean by the word 'Pardon'?"

Doc said, "Rod Bentley rigged the murder of which you are accused. His orders there will show that. He planted the suspicion of Coxwell, the man you killed. He planted suspicion of you also. Then he told Coxwell you were framing him, and egged Coxwell into attacking you. He warned you, and you killed Coxwell when he came."

Strand shut his eyes tightly. "So that is how it happened."

Doc added, "They wanted you to be an outlaw. It would give them a chance to buy your contraption."

Strand's nod was slow. "Yes, I can see, now,"

Pat said, "They're about ready on the roof."

THE thing was about seven feet high and fatter than a man because it was full of gas. It looked somewhat like a man, too, because there were four distended limbs that somewhat resembled arms and legs. On the ends of these projections were the devices that made the thing so uncanny.

The assembled army officers, United States and British, watched with interest.

Tottingham Strand told them, "The device really has two vital parts. First is the gas, which is lighter than air and highly explosive. Thus, I get both lift and explosive violence in one operation."

"What," asked an officer, "makes it go fast enough to overtake a plane?"

"The rocket principle," Strand said.

"A thing as light as that could not carry enough rocket fuel to push it around over the sky until it found a plane," said the officer.

Strand nodded agreement. "The rocket fuel will drive it only a mile or two. As a matter of fact, it cannot overtake a fast plane. But it can meet one."

He stepped over and slashed a cord which held the unusual manlike gadget to the roof. The thing immediately began rising.

"A man falling up," Renny rumbled. "Holy cow!"

Strand said, "Watch. It will rise slowly to five thousand feet, when the built-in altimeter will automatically arm the detonator device. The thing thereafter will be explosive upon contact.

Somewhat like an ordinary mine."

The army man said, "It hits a plane and explodes. We understand that."

"Righto." Strand smiled. "The altimeter keeps it from being effective below five thousand feet.

Your own planes can fly under it with perfect safety."

"Won't it chase them?"

"No. The pursuit device cuts in at the same time the detonators are armed."

"Then this altimeter arrangement will keep it from rushing at objects on earth?"

"Yes," Strand said.

"But it will chase any moving thing in the sky?"

"Not any moving thing," Strand corrected. "Only very hot objects, such as airplane motors giving off heat and movement."

The army man grunted. "Will you explain that fully?"

Strand hesitated, then turned to Doc Savage. "Mr. Savage, would you attempt that? I am afraid I can not go into the details without becoming too technical."

Doc Savage nodded quietly. "You gentlemen," he told the army men, "are familiar with the ordinary photoelectric cell which is in light meters."

"I've got one for my camera," admitted an officer. "It registers light. That's all I know about it."

Doc nodded again. "The device in Mr. Strand's apparatus is similar in principle," he said. "The photoelectric cell is composed of a compound which, upon the absorption of motion, ejects two electrons. This compound differs in that the absorption of motion and heat by its atoms leads to the ejection of three electrons."

The officer pondered. "I take it that one of the arms which is nearest a plane motor picks up this radiation, and that sets off the rocket affair so as to drive the thing in that direction. That it?"

"That," Doc said, "is exactly it."

"What is this compound?"

"It is called Compound Monk."

Ham pointed upward. "The thing is after a plane now," he said.

Strand watched placidly. "There is no need for alarm," he said. "The pilot of the plane understands that the gas will not explode because the detonators have been removed."

They watched the device strike the army plane in the sky. The pilot shut off his motors before the collision occurred, so that no harm was done. The plane began to spiral slowly toward Floyd Bennett Airport. They saw the crew reach out with hooks attached to poles and gather the device into the ship.

"Holy cow!" Renny muttered.

LATER, Monk got Doc aside. Monk was perturbed.

"Who named that stuff Compound Monk?" he demanded. "How come I never knew about this?"

The bronze man smiled slightly. A display of emotion was rare with him. "It seemed a good idea at the time," he said.

"I don't get it," Monk growled.

Pat overheard and laughed. "I thought it was a perfect name," she said. "This compound is very sensitive to the presence of movement and warmth. It chases movement and warmth. Everyone knows that you chase after any pretty girl who happens along. Both you and Compound Monk chase hot numbers. Get it?"

Monk didn't like getting it.

"I can see that was one of Ham's ideas," he growled. "Where is that shyster? I'll make a compound out of him."

DOC Savage sat at a dinner in a restaurant with Monk and a friend.

The girl appeared and walked directly to their table. She was very pretty. She was a stranger.

She seemed to know what she was doing.

She carried a small soft purse and she jammed this against Doc Savage's left side below the shoulder blade and squeezed.

Then she opened the purse, took out the hypo needle which she had just emptied into Doc Savage's back and placed it on the table in front of them.

"You naturally know what that is," she said. "However, it might be interesting if you also knew it was—was, mind you—filled with germs."

Doc Savage contemplated the girl.

"What," he asked, "do I do now?"

"You help me," the girl said. "I need your help. I had to have it; so I used those germs on you. You've now got to do something about those germs, and you can't do anything about them without helping me. Get the idea?"

"This seems a little strange," Doc said.

"You haven't seen anything yet," the girl said. "Wait until you find out about the three wild men."

The remainder of this affair of "The Three Wild Men" is related in the issue of Doc Savage magazine on sale next month.

THE END