



THE TIME TERROR

A Doc Savage Adventure by Kenneth Robeson

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Chapter I. MYSTERY ABOUT NO NEWS

THE first hint of big things to come was when Onie Morton fell over the milk bottle.

This was a very innocent thing that could happen to anybody. So innocent, in fact, that no one noticed it was too innocent. Not at first.

Onie Morton lived in the Bronx with a red-headed wife who liked to sleep late, and every morning Onie went promptly to work at seven ten. His late-sleeping wife of course took in the milk before he went to work, which meant that taking in the morning milk was the last thing Onie did before he went to work. This morning Onie took in the morning milk as usual, placing it in the refrigerator.

This must have thrown him off guard on the milk situation, because he wasn't expecting any more milk in front of his door, and so he came backing out as usual, and he fell over more milk in bottles in front of the door. Then he bumped into the skinny man in the gray suit.

It was a stinking mess.

"Whew!" said Onie Morton. "Phew! Whew! Phooie! What is that stuff?"

The skinny man in the gray suit had been carrying a package, and this had popped like a rotten egg, spewing over Onie.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" exclaimed the skinny man. "Gosh, I'm sorry."

"Phew! Pheweeeee!" said Onie Morton. "What *is* that junk?"

“Perfume.”

“Perfume?”

“Yes,” said the skinny man.

“It's a hell of a smelling perfume,” said Onie Morton. “Phew!”

The skinny man in the gray suit nodded sadly. “Yes, I'm afraid it is. At least that's what the people I have been trying to sell it to keep telling me.” He shook his head gloomily. “I guess I'm wrong. I thought it was a very lovely and distinctive odor.”

“It's distinctive, all right,” said Onie. “And a skunk might think it is lovely. But what about the people in the office where I'm supposed to work today?”

“Maybe they'll like the odor where you work.”

Onie scowled. “Brother, who you kidding?”

“I guess you're right,” said the skinny man disconsolately. “I'm afraid this is unfortunate. You see, the odor is defiant to water and very difficult to wash off, so you may not be able to remove it successfully for a while.”

Onie let out an indignant yell.

“You mean I won't be able to wash this stink off me so I can go to work today?” he bellowed.

“I fear so,” said the tall man.

And he was right.

ONIE MORTON worked for Doc Savage. Onie was a news condenser, which was a term invented for his job. Doc Savage maintained an elaborate set-up of specialists whereby the news from all parts of the world, which came into his office on leased wire printers and by special telephone and cabled missives from special correspondents, was gathered and condensed each day.

The idea of gathering and condensing this news was so that it could be presented to Doc Savage in a form brief enough for his quick examination. Doc Savage was very busy. In addition to pursuing his rather strange profession—distinctly strange, in fact—of righting wrongs and punishing evildoers in the far corners of the earth, or of sticking his nose into other people's business, as his enemies referred to it, Doc Savage was a scientist and experimenter of note.

Doc Savage liked to look at the news in brief to keep in touch with things, and to pick out items which needed his specialized kind of attention. He could go over these items and smell trouble.

“Goes over them as if they was tracks and he was a bloodhound, and smells trouble,” was the way Monk Mayfair expressed it.

The daily news digest was really quite an important thing in Doc Savage's routine, and he had handpicked his specialists who did the news-condensing with care.

Onie Morton, who had had the accident with the milk bottle and the stinking perfume, was one of the news condensers.

Which had a lot to do with it.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL ANDREW BLODGETT MAYFAIR, the eminent industrial chemist whose name would be in the history books of chemical development, and who looked like a hairy ape out of Darwin, sat in Doc Savage's eighty-sixth-floor headquarters in a midtown skyscraper and took a telephone call from Onie Morton. One look at Lieutenant Colonel Mayfair and you knew why people who had never seen him before automatically called him Monk. He also had a ridiculous small boy voice. Hearing him when he was mad was funnier than listening to Hitler speak with a Yiddish accent.

Monk Mayfair was one of a group of five assistants who worked closely with Doc Savage. The five were Doc's lieutenants. One of Monk's headaches was the news-condensing service. Which was why Onie Morton called Monk.

"Sure, sure, Onie," said Monk into the telephone. "I get it. You fell over a milk bottle and bumped into a package and got some stinking stuff on you. It won't wash off, so you don't want to come to work. That'll be all right. No, I guess we won't dock your pay unless it gets to be a habit."

Monk hung up. "Oh, for the life of Riley," he said.

"What would you call the life of Riley?" asked Ham Brooks, the eminent Harvard lawyer and lover of fine clothes.

"Don't start riding me this early," Monk warned. "This ain't my day to be rode."

"Having troubles?" Ham asked hopefully.

"Yes," Monk said, "and you don't have to be so damned happy about it."

"I hope they're big troubles," said Ham.

"Well, they're not very," Monk told him. "This just seems to be a tough morning on our news condensers. Two of them woke up feeling sick. The girl of another one suddenly decided she wanted to marry him, and no day would do but today. And Onie Morton just called up to say he wouldn't be down."

"That's four who won't be at work today."

"Sure."

"We only have four news condensers employed."

"Sure."

"With nobody at work, there won't be any condensed-news report today."

"Your deduction," said Monk, "seems elementary to me. Although doubtless it could be a strain on a legal brain."

"Oh, you realized the facts I just mentioned?" said Ham.

"Yes."

"I seem to have underestimated your intelligence," Ham apologized. "But not very much, probably."

"I think I'll kill you about ten o'clock," Monk said thoughtfully.

“If you condense that news report yourself,” Ham said, “you may not have time for any murders. You going to do that? Condense the report yourself, I mean?”

“Naw, it ain't that important today,” Monk said.

Which was one of the biggest wrong statements of his life.

SO milk bottles, perfume, girls who decided to get married, and uncondensed news reports got no attention until nine o'clock that night. The skinny man in the gray suit should also be included in the items which did not get attention until nine that evening.

Nine o'clock was when Doc Savage showed up.

Doc Savage, a giant of a man with bronzed skin and flake-gold eyes, which were unusual characteristics, had spent the day sitting on a war-strategy board in Washington. Doc was not happy, as a whole, with his part in the war. Sitting on boards was all right; somebody had to do it.

It had been pointed out—firmly, too—to Doc, that he was doing more good to the country performing the kind of work he had been performing for years. More good than he would be if he walked into battles making a target of himself. He did not agree. But he had been having the same luck as the average guy in disagreeing with generals.

He was not in a happy temper when he arrived at his office, but he was a man who did not show how he felt. He dug around in the stuff on his desk.

“Where,” he asked gently, “is the condensed-news report?”

“Oh, there wasn't any today,” Monk Mayfair said. “It seemed to be an unlucky day for our condensers because none of them got down to work. They'll be back tomorrow, all but the one who got married. I told him he could have a few days off.”

Doc Savage said nothing for a moment. He leaned back in his chair. A small, trilling sound came into the room, faintly audible, a tiny note that defied exact description. It had an exotic quality.

Monk sat up straight and looked startled. Because the sound was a small unconscious thing which Doc Savage did in moments of mental excitement. The sound almost invariably meant something was wrong.

“Unlucky day,” Doc Savage remarked thoughtfully.

“Yes,” Monk said. “But there didn't seem to be anything unusual about what happened to our different news condensers.”

Doc Savage said, “Quite a coincidence, all four of them failing to show up for work the same day.”

“Well, they all had good explanations. And they're honest men. We can trust them all.”

“During the past year,” Doc said, “only two of the news condensers have been absent for any reason whatever.”

“That's right,” Monk admitted.

Monk was beginning to look alarmed.

“Suppose,” suggested Doc Savage, “you check with the news condensers and see if there could possibly be anything amiss.”

“I sure will,” Monk said hastily.

Monk noticed that Ham Brooks was grinning at him. Monk scowled. It would hurt him if he had made a mistake. Ham would rib him, probably.

Ham said, “You don't think you overlooked anything today, do you, Monk?”

“I won't answer that,” Monk snarled. “I ain't no lawyer—I can't talk without thinkin'!”

TWENTY minutes later Monk put down the telephone with an idiotic expression.

“Doc,” he said sickly.

“Yes?”

“Onie Morton, our news condenser, bumped into a man carrying a jug of perfume. The man was a skinny guy in a gray suit.”

“Yes,” Doc said.

“The news condenser who got married,” Monk continued, “got married because his girl took a sudden notion that today was the only day that'd do. The girl took that notion because a man paid her five hundred dollars to do it. She wasn't to tell her boy friend about the five hundred, but she got ashamed and did it. The guy who gave her the five hundred was a skinny guy in a gray suit.”

“Yes,” Doc said.

“The other two news condensers didn't show up,” Monk added, “because they got up this morning feeling sick. They were sick at their stomachs. Both of them had dinner last night with—”

“A skinny guy in a gray suit,” Ham put in.

“You keep out of this, Ham,” Monk said. “Or my second mistake for the day may be to yank a leg off you.”

Doc Savage stood up. His bronze face was without expression, and there was no noticeable disapproval in his tone as he said, “Monk, get a very full description of the man in the gray suit, the thin man. Work up a drawing of the fellow, then have the news condensers add any details they can remember. Have several thousand copies of the drawing and description made and put in the hands of the police, taxi drivers, railway ticket agents, conductors, train porters, and bus employees. Get them in the hands of subway guards, toll men at the bridges, and filling-station employees. Don't miss the airports. Better offer a reward for the man's apprehension, a reward substantial enough to get results. Say five hundred dollars.”

Monk nodded.

“Gosh. Doc, I'm sorry,” he muttered.

Ham Brooks made no remarks to Monk. It was not the time for remarks.

Doc said, "Ham, get the rest of the men together. We have to go through the news report ourselves. There is something in it today that we were not supposed to see. That is a logical conclusion because the thin man in the gray suit went to a lot of trouble to see that we would not get a condensed-news report today. We will see if we can find this item he was trying to keep from us."

Ham said, "I'll have to do all that myself, Doc."

"Why? Where are Renny, Long Tom and Johnny?"

"Johnny, the archaeologist and geologist, is giving an important demonstration at the museum tonight," Ham explained. "He can help us as soon as he's through. But Long Tom and Renny left for Europe by plane this morning. Combination electrical and mechanical engineering job the British government had for them." Ham came over and went through the papers on Doc's desk, selected one. "Here's the explanation they left for you."

Doc examined the document which his two assistants, Long Tom Roberts and Renny Renwick, had left. The paper explained that they would be in England several weeks, probably, as part of the war problem.

Not because he was suspicious of the note, but because he made a practice of trying never to overlook any possibility, Doc got on the telephone. He called the British war mission. Yes, Renny and Long Tom had been asked to go to England. Could Doc talk to them by telephone? Well, it was irregular, but it could be arranged. However, the man at the Washington war mission, himself, had put them on the transatlantic plane.

Doc was satisfied that the thin man in the gray suit had nothing to do with the absence of Renny and Long Tom.

"Have to sift the news report ourselves," he said.

"What about asking Pat to help?" Ham inquired.

Pat was Patricia Savage, a cousin to Doc, a young lady who was extremely attractive and extremely avid for adventure.

"No Pat," Doc said.

"You don't want Pat rung in on this?"

"May we be preserved from Pat," Doc said fervently.

Chapter II. DEATH AND A CLEAR SKY

WILLIAM HARPER "JOHNNY" LITTLEJOHN joined them at midnight and helped with the examination of the day's news report.

"A cabalistically obreptitious anagrammatism," Johnny remarked calmly.

Johnny was a very long and incredibly thin man and nobody looked surprised at these words. Most of Johnny's words were as lengthy grammatical specimens as he was a long human. He wore clothes which fit him the way a circus tent would fit its center pole if all the other poles fell down. He carried a monocle; once he had needed it, but Doc had operated on the bad eye and now the monocle was a magnifier. Professors with long beards were amazed at his knowledge of archaeology and geology.

Monk Mayfair also joined the hunt. Monk had succeeded in getting a composite picture of the skinny man in the gray suit who had caused the nonappearance of all the news condensers, and had distributed them as Doc had directed.

It was Doc Savage, though, who found the item someone hadn't wanted them to see.

It was:

PLANE IS MANGLED

IN CANADIAN CRASH

Trapper Lake, Northwest Mackenzie, Canada—The wreckage of an airplane which had been strangely mangled was found by an Indian trapper near here last night.

The nationality of the plane was not learned at once. But Henry Muskrat, the trapper who found it, stated that it had the appearance of having been torn and crushed to fragments after it crashed. What caused the damage is not known. There was some panic among superstitious Indians who claimed a supernatural monster of the werewolf type had wrought the damage, but these reports are, of course, discounted.

A report that red-painted pieces of fabric covering were part of a Japanese rising-sun emblem on the plane were also believed inaccurate. Authorities point out there would be no reason for a Japanese plane flying over this section.

Monk Mayfair finished reading the item and said, "You think that is it, Doc?"

The bronze man was not too positive. "It is the only likely thing which has turned up."

"How'll we check to make sure?"

"Telegraph," Doc said, "to the Mounted Police official in charge at Trapper Lake. Ask for full details."

Monk said, "Why not use the radio? We have powerful equipment and we could get direct or nearly direct contact. The Mounted Police stations have radio up there—"

"Telegraph," Doc said.

"Sure," Monk said. "As you say. Only I thought—"

"And then use the radio, too," Doc said. "But keep the two separate. On second thought, wait an hour before you start using the radio."

"Telegraph first, then use the radio?"

"Yes."

"I don't get it," Monk said, puzzled. "But I pulled one bonehead play, so I ain't asking no questions."

THEY got an answer to their telegram in forty-five minutes, which was remarkably good service.

The reply said:

REPORTS OF MYSTERY SURROUNDING PLANE CRASH ARE GROSSLY EXAGGERATED. PLANE BELONGED TO BUSH FLIER NAMED CURLY JONES, WHO JUMPED WITH

PARACHUTE AFTER OIL LINE BROKE. PILOT JONES LANDED SAFELY AND REACHED TRAPPER LAKE THIS MORNING.

CORPORAL OSGOOD,

NORTHWEST MOUNTED POLICE.

Ham Brooks examined this and sighed. "Well, there doesn't seem to have been any skeleton in that closet," he remarked.

"Untesselated and unclinquant," remarked Johnny.

"What?"

"I just said it was simple," explained Johnny.

"Too bad you couldn't use simple words to say so," complained Ham.

A buzzer sounded and a small light flashed, indicating they had a visitor. Monk arose and went to the door. He came back looking sheepish.

"Well, the circus is in town," he said.

Everybody knew what he meant.

"Pat," Doc said.

Patricia Savage came in gayly and said, "This is nice. The welcome mat out as usual."

She was a tall, well-made girl, exceedingly perfect of form, with the same bronze coloration of skin and hair, and a touch of the same gold in her eyes as Doc Savage. She was a cousin, one of Doc's few living blood kin, and for a livelihood she operated an ultra-swanky beauty establishment for the Park Avenue clientele. She charged umpteen prices at the place.

Doc glanced at the clock. It was almost two in the morning.

"Up rather late, aren't you, Pat?" the bronze man asked idly. "Been to the opera, or something?"

"A prize fight is more her speed," Monk muttered.

"You've got something there," Pat told Monk. "However, you are both wrong. And you know very well you're wrong."

Doc Savage sighed.

Pat added, "What about the skinny man in the gray suit?"

"How did you find out about him?" Doc asked.

"Oh, I've got a friend on the police force," Pat said. "He called me up and told me you had put out a circular with a pencil drawing of a man on it, and his description, and an offer of five hundred dollars if he could be located. I knew something was up."

"So now you think you are going to join in the excitement?"

"I do. And how!"

“There is no excitement,” Doc said.

“I’ll stick around.”

HAM BROOKS came into the room. He was excited. “I’ve been on the radio, in contact with the Mounted Police post at Trapper Lake, the way you wanted,” he told Doc. “And I’m beginning to find worms in the apples.”

He handed Doc Savage a message. It said:

PLANE MERELY HIT HILL AND CRASHED. NOTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT IT. BODY OF PILOT WAS FOUND IN WRECKAGE. PLANE WAS OWNED BY MINING COMPANY.

NOTHING ABOUT CASE TO WARRANT YOUR INTEREST.

CORPORAL OSGOOD,

MOUNTED POLICE.

Monk said, “But the other message said a bush flier was the pilot and that he was alive.”

“That,” Ham agreed, “is what I meant by finding worms.”

Pat stared at them. “You mean one of the messages is a fake?”

Doc Savage answered her quietly.

“Both of them, no doubt,” he said.

“You mean somebody doesn’t want us up there?” Pat asked. “Doesn’t want us investigating that plane crash?”

Doc nodded.

Pat said, “I’m in favor of investigating it then.” She looked very pleased. “If somebody is going to all this trouble to keep us from fooling around with the thing I would say it might be interesting.”

“A dubitative arbitrament,” Johnny remarked.

“That’s right,” Monk agreed.

“What’s right?” Pat asked. “What’d he say?”

“I think he said we might be wrong,” Monk explained. “But he hopes we aren’t.”

WHEN the telephone whistled, everyone jumped. It actually whistled, because it was the instrument attached to a high-frequency buzzer, which meant it was the unlisted number called only by people who were closely associated with them.

Monk picked up the instrument.

“Yes,” he said. “Yes. . . . Yes. . . . Yes. . . . O. K.”

He hung up.

“A very agreeable conversation, your end of it,” Ham said.

Monk was excited. “That was Onie Morton,” yelled the homely chemist. “What do you think! The skinny guy in the gray suit is at Onie Morton's place now. Onie wants us to come up.” Monk grinned. “Onie has got the guy tied hand and foot.”

There was a concerted rush for the hatrack, then for the door, Pat with them.

But Doc got in Pat's way and said, “Pat, this is once you do not mix in it. You stay here. You are not going to have anything to do with this.”

Pat sniffed.

“Listen, we've been over that before,” she said. “Let's not have an argument—”

“Right, let's not have an argument,” Doc said.

The bronze man grasped Pat's arm. He hauled her across the room.

“Hey, what're you doing?” Pat cried, alarmed.

Doc Savage shoved Pat into the library. He fastened both doors, locking Pat in the place.

Through the closed and locked door, Doc said, “Think it over, young lady.”

The bronze man looked pleased with himself as he rode down in the private high-speed elevator and climbed into a car in their private basement garage. Monk, Ham and Johnny did not look exactly displeased, either.

Ham chuckled and said, “She's a lot of fun, but these things are too dangerous for a girl. True, she hasn't been hurt in any of them yet, but she's been lucky as a cat.”

Monk grinned complacently. “Now, if we could get rid of that chimp, Chemistry,” he said. “We would have some peace.”

Chemistry was Ham Brooks' pet chimpanzee. Monk detested the animal because of the startling physical resemblance it bore, on a reduced scale, to himself, to Monk. In order to irritate Monk, Ham made a habit of taking the animal along whenever possible.

The car was equipped with emergency red lights and a police siren. They used these sparingly and got uptown at a good speed. In the Bronx, they drove directly to Onie Morton's modest apartment.

Onie Morton met them at the door. A strong odor still surrounded Onie.

“Where,” Monk asked, “is he?”

“Is who?”

“The long drink in the gray suit.”

“I don't know what you're talking about,” Onie said.

Monk blanched. “Didn't you just telephone me you had him prisoner?” he bellowed.

“No,” Onie said. “Of course not.”

“You don't have him here?”

“No.”

“It was a trick!” Monk howled. “We've been tricked.”

Onie Morton rubbed his jaw and his eyes narrowed. “Say, you say somebody telephoned you? Was it on the private-number line?”

“Yes.”

“In that case,” said Onie, “I can tell you how he got the private-telephone number.”

“How?”

“Half an hour ago a voice called up and said it was the numbers clerk at the telephone office,” Onie explained. “The voice said the exchanges were being changed around because of the war situation, and that private numbers were being changed. He said your private number would have to be changed, and he sounded so authentic and reasonable that before we got done talking I had mentioned your private number. He didn't even ask me for it. I asked him if the new number was taking the place of your old one, and I told him what the old one was. What a sucker I was!”

“What a sucker we all are!” Monk howled.

Doc Savage asked quietly, “Could it have been the thin man in the gray suit?”

“Come to think of it,” said Onie Morton, “it sure could have been. It sounded just like him, only I didn't think of that at the time.”

“Now why'd he send us up here on a wild-goose chase?” Monk pondered.

PATRICIA SAVAGE could have answered that question. She was apprehensively examining the muzzle of a gun in the hands of a very skinny man who wore a gray suit. There was some kind of a gimcrack on the end of the pistol, a thing about the size of a condensed-milk can, but longer, which Pat presumed was a homemade silencer.

Pat had just managed to pick the lock of the library door which Doc Savage had fastened on her. She had stepped out into the reception room in time to hear a loud blast and see the main door open wide, its special lock destroyed by some powerful explosive. A thin man in a gray suit was standing in the doorway, watching her like a cat watches a mouse.

“Oh!” Pat said when he showed her the gun.

“Anybody else home?” asked the thin man.

He had a rather peculiar accent, as if he was American and had learned to speak the American language in his youth, but since then had spent much of his life speaking another tongue.

“What's the idea?” Pat demanded, ignoring his question.

The thin man jerked his gun at the door. “Out. And don't push any buttons or pull any levers. I

understand the place is full of-them.”

Pat saw that he meant it, and decided not to fool with him. The fellow was scared. They went out into the corridor. The man wrapped his gun in a large brown paper, making a package of it, but keeping his hand in the package, holding the gun. His hands shook while he was doing this.

“I will be very glad to get out of here,” he assured Pat. “You have no idea what courage it takes to walk into a place about which you have heard so much.”

“If you get out of here with a whole hide,” Pat said encouragingly, “you will be one of the few who have.”

“Oh, I will get out all right,” the man said.

“If you do you won't get far.”

“I think I will,” the man said. “I am very clever, you see. Ring for the elevator.”

Pat took a step back from him, extending a hand to push the elevator call button. She seemed to turn her ankle. She cried out, not loudly, and sank to a knee, grimacing. She reached around and clutched her ankle, and the chic and expensive shoe she was wearing on her right foot.

“I . . . I twisted my ankle,” she said.

The thin man was looking at her terribly and had the package containing the gun thrust out.

Pat stood up. She was scared. “I can still walk all right,” she said.

She rang for the elevator.

The elevator came and took them down to the street. The thin man smiled affably and rather terribly at Pat during the entire trip down. He walked beside her, not touching her, but telling her where to go. Finally they reached a car. It was a non-descript machine, a coupé, very old, with tires none too good.

They did not get in the machine. Instead, the skinny man removed a suitcase from the car. It was a very new suitcase.

“You can carry this some of the time,” he told Pat, “if you want to be polite.”

“We're taking a trip?” Pat suggested.

“A long trip,” the man said. “Out of town, in fact. Far away from here, young lady.”

“Oh,” Pat said. “Doc won't like that, do you think?”

“You can send him a souvenir to let him know how you are getting along.”

“Souvenir?” Pat was puzzled.

“Does Mr. Savage have your fingerprints?” the skinny man asked.

“Why, yes.”

“Then one of your fingers might make an excellent souvenir,” the thin man said grimly. “He can compare it with your fingerprints and thus be quite sure it is really your finger.”

Pat began to feel sick. He wasn't fooling.

“You see,” continued the thin man, “I needed someone to have with me, someone whose safety would persuade Mr. Savage to spare me his interest. I decoyed them uptown, figuring they would leave one or more of their number behind. It was an agreeable surprise to find they had left such an attractive member behind.” He chortled wolfishly at his little humor.

Pat didn't feel like laughing.

Chapter III. NEW GADGET

DOC SAVAGE, Monk, Ham and Johnny Littlejohn returned to headquarters and discovered Pat was gone and the main door wide open.

Doc examined the library-door lock. “Picked from the inside,” he said. He inspected the damage to the outer lock and made briefly the small trilling sound that was his unconscious habit, the thing which always meant something unexpected had happened.

“That's a new and very dangerous explosive,” he said of the outer lock.

Ham lost color. He emitted an apprehensive gasp and dashed out to question the elevator operators.

He looked anything but placid when he came back.

“Pat left with the skinny guy in gray!” Ham explained grimly. “The thin guy had a package and kept his hand in it. That means he had a gun in the package. He was kidnapping Pat.”

Monk Mayfair said violently, “That's why we were decoyed uptown. He figured we'd leave somebody here. And he'd grab whoever it was.”

Ham nodded. “We got it all figured out,” he said. “Now what do we do?”

They discovered that Doc Savage had left them. The bronze man had gone into the laboratory. They followed to see what he was doing, and found him putting some apparatus together. The device was a large thing, and at first Monk thought it was some kind of a gadget for finding buried treasure, one of those things you carry around over the ground, watching for a meter needle to move or for a note from a loudspeaker to change.

Doc Savage said regretfully, “We have not been able to get the apparatus in a compact form as yet.”

Monk looked at the contraption.

“What does it do?” he asked. “Walk, talk or sing?”

Doc Savage explained it patiently.

“Being a chemist, you are familiar with radio-activity,” he said.

“You mean,” said Monk, “the property of spontaneously emitting radiations of a special character which are able to penetrate through matter opaque to ordinary light.”

“I didn't know Monk knew such words,” Ham said.

Doc said, “Yes, that kind of radio-activity is what I mean. But going deeper into it, you know that the atoms of certain heavy elements are not permanently stable, but break up with explosive violence and

great emission of energy, leading to the formation of new and different elements which usually have a limited life.”

Ham Brooks looked desperate. “Look, if this is an explanation of that gadget, why not let all of us in on it. I don't understand a word you're saying.”

Doc Savage nodded. “That might be a good idea. Perhaps this can be best illustrated by a reverse explanation. You have seen the small luminous markers used to mark electric light pull chains, the kind which glow after they are exposed to light.”

“Oh, sure, luminous paint,” Ham said. “You expose it to light and it shines for a while.”

“All right,” Doc said. “In Pat's shoe heel there is a plaque of radio-active compound of our own creation. The heel is a high one and the inside of the heel, adjacent to the instep, has to be pressed to release the spring cover over the plaque. The thing resembles a watch. Press the catch and the lid flies up—inside the heel, of course.”

Ham was astounded. “When did this happen?”

Doc said, “Pat has been helping me experiment with the stuff for some time.” The bronze man grimaced. “It was a mistaken hope that she would think she was making herself useful and leave us alone.”

“Maybe Pat wasn't wearing the trick shoes!”

“She was,” Doc said.

Ham said, “Just what does this radio-active stuff in the shoe heel do?”

“It affects its surroundings like ordinary light affects ordinary luminous paint,” Doc explained. “In other words, any material which the shoe heel has approached closely will for a time—not for very long, unfortunately—be itself mildly radio-active.”

The bronze man touched the apparatus. “This,” he said, “is really the key to the whole thing. It is an electroscope of enormous sensitivity, reacting into an amplifier, which in turn is connected to a meter. When brought near a spot where Pat has walked with the trick shoes, the needle will register.”

Ham looked vacant.

“I'm all mixed up,” he said. “Let's see the thing work.”

Doc Savage carried the contraption out into the hall. Near the elevators, the needle gave a jump.

“Pat turned on the gadget in her heel here,” he said. “She could do that by pretending to stumble and twist her ankle.”

AN hour later, Ham Brooks was willing to admit that the machine had some value.

“It's marvelous!” he exploded.

They had trailed Pat to a subway station, to an express platform, northbound. They had worked every express station on the route, eventually finding where Pat had quitted the train. From there, Pat had gone to a rent-a-car agency.

“Sure,” they had been told. “Long guy and girl rented car. Speedy drove 'em. Ain't back yet.”

Speedy came back soon, though.

“Sure,” he said. “Guy and girl seemed mad at each other. I took them upstate fifty miles and let them out in the country.”

“In the country!” Monk exploded. “You mean away from any town?”

“There wasn't even a house close.”

“Take us to the spot,” Doc directed.

They were on their way now. Speedy, the driver, looking back at them, seemed to have the impression they were crazy. He had not recognized Doc Savage.

Monk was tinkering with the apparatus and enthusiastically declaring that he could detect movement of the meter needle at intervals.

Ham said dryly, “Pat being in here doubtless charged the car floor boards, you homely goon.”

“Huh?” Monk was embarrassed at overlooking such a simple point.

“You're slipping,” Ham jeered.

Monk tried being pathetic. “Listen, I'm so worried about Pat I don't know what I'm doing. Poor kid, she doesn't know what this is all about, and to be caught like that.”

“We're doing our best,” Ham said.

“Well, it's about to drive me out of my mind,” Monk muttered.

“I can't figure anybody wanting to stay in a mind like yours,” Ham said unkindly.

That started a quarrel that lasted the next thirty miles.

“Here it is,” Speedy said.

“Wait for us,” Doc told him.

“It'll cost you while I'm waiting,” said Speedy, who obviously didn't want to wait.

“Speedy,” said Monk ominously, “if you ain't here when we get back I'll hang your legs in one tree and your arms in another.”

It was a barren, infertile, thickly wooded flat country in which they found themselves.

Doc Savage, using his apparatus, at once picked up Pat's trail. This led through a wood and came out almost immediately in a meadow.

At the meadow edge, under the trees, there was a scattering of leafy boughs which had been chopped from trees nearby.

Doc Savage inspected the branches. He gave attention to the ground.

“A plane was concealed here,” he said.

It was evident on further examination that the plane had lately rolled across the meadow and taken the air.

“He got away with Pat,” Ham said. “This is getting worse.”

Monk had measured the width of the plane tracks and had found a spot where the ship had rested for some time, so that the tail-wheel mark was also discernible. By measuring these and by examining the spot where bushes had been shoved in the ground as a part of the concealment of the ship, Monk announced that it was a monoplane, single-motored—the oil drippage from the engine gave him the motor information—and that it was a large ship which could make a flight of considerable distance.

Monk added, “Here seems to be where Pat sat on the ground while he was clearing the brush away from the plane. I guess she was tied.”

Doc Savage went over and looked at the spot.

“Have you disturbed anything here?” Doc asked.

“No.”

Doc indicated a number of small twigs on the ground. “Have you touched these?”

“No.” Monk eyed the twigs. “Hey, these could have been broken up and arranged by Pat!”

Then Monk's jaw sagged.

“Blazes!” he yelled. “This guy is taking her to Trapper Lake, that place in Canada where the crashed plane was torn up so mysteriously.”

Ham came running over. “How'd you figure that out?”

“A long pile of twigs,” Monk said. “Then a short pile, a long one and two short ones. You know your radio code, don't you?”

“T and L,” Ham said. “She couldn't have meant anything but Trapper Lake.”

Doc Savage went back to the car.

“Get us to town as quickly as you can,” he said. “The Hudson River water front opposite the midtown area. Big building, brick, which looks like a warehouse but is large enough to be a plane hangar.”

Chapter IV. THE DEVIL OF TRAPPER LAKE

WHEN Johnny Littlejohn saw Trapper Lake he was shocked into using small words and said, “A thousand miles from nowhere.”

This was an exaggeration. The place was only three hundred and sixty-five miles from anywhere, somewhat more than that from a railroad or a paved highway, or even any kind of a road at all. To get into Trapper Lake you used power canoe or airplane. There was water transportation all the way, although the water in places was shallow. But air was by far the easier medium. There was a wide, smooth meadow behind the trading post and Mounted Police station, and it offered an excellent landing spot, although it was wise to be sure there was not a caribou or a stray moose grazing on it.

Trapper Lake was inhabited by a Mounty, a fur trader, his wife, two half-grown children of the fur traders, five white men who had grown too old to trap, about a hundred Indians during the slack summer season, and what seemed like approximately a million dogs.

Monk and Ham had brought along their pets. Monk had his pet pig, Habeas Corpus, and Ham had brought Chemistry, the chimp. These two animals had one encounter with the horde of sled dogs, which were more fierce than wolves, after which the surprised dogs retired in a circle to bark as if the world was coming to an end.

An exceedingly wide, and he wasn't short either, Mounty came out to see what was happening. He had upstanding red hair and a grin that was sunshine.

"Welcome to the end of creation, whoever you are," he said cheerfully.

He took off his red dress coat and threw it at the dogs, and all of them ran.

"Had a pet wolf once that could lick the whole pack of 'em," he explained. "Used to paint my wolf red to worry 'em. Got 'em scared to death of red. You can show 'em your tongue and they'll run." He put out a hand. "My name is Osgood. Corporal Osgood, the law in these parts."

Doc Savage identified himself. Corporal Osgood invited them up to his quarters for coffee. It had been a long, tiresome flight from New York and they accepted with appreciation.

The Trapper Lake settlement was built entirely of logs. Small logs, because it was not a region of large forest trees. Roofing material was sod which supported a plentiful growth of weeds as well as grass. Fireplaces were very large in most of the cabins, and piles of firewood, already prepared for the winter, were in all cases larger than the cabins they were to warm.

Corporal Osgood apparently had employed his spare time turning out a very comfortable supply of rustic furniture. The post radio outfit occupied a prominent place in a corner.

"I understand you had a plane crash in the neighborhood a few days ago," Doc began.

The corporal nodded. "We had something. You never saw a plane tore up like that one is. And the marks on the ground!"

"We telegraphed you and wire-lessly you," Doc explained. "Your answers did not exactly agree."

Corporal Osgood opened and closed his mouth.

"I didn't get any message from you," he said. "I didn't answer any either."

"You did not?"

"No." The Mounty indicated the radio. "Set went to pot two days ago. Current supply blew up. Can't send or receive."

Doc Savage went over and examined the apparatus.

"Tampered with," he suggested.

"Well, that's what I thought," the officer admitted. "But who would tamper with my radio up here? Nobody would have any reason to do that, that I can think of. I decided I must be wrong."

Doc Savage said quietly, "With your radio out of commission, another outfit could be set up and tuned to

the same wave-length near here—and receive any messages intended for you as well as transmit faked answers.”

Corporal Osgood scratched his head.

“Got something to do with that torn-up plane, eh?” he asked.

“We are afraid so.”

“Could be.”

Doc asked, “Have you heard any airplanes since the crash, or seen any?”

Corporal Osgood nodded. “Sure have.”

THERE was no accurate information about how many planes had been heard, or when. Corporal Osgood thought it might be only one ship which had come and gone a time or two.

“The Indians heard it,” he said, “and the Indians are scared out of their shirts. They went out to look at the place where that plane crashed and none of them have been able to sleep since. They're reviving old legends.”

“What kind of legends?”

“Oh, stuff about loup-garous and werewolves. Most of them have French blood, and the Frenchmen used to tell a lot of hair-raising stories about werewolves and monsters. The Frenchmen were probably kidding, but it built up a legend among the Indians. They're always seeing something. This gives them an excuse.”

Doc Savage studied the officer intently. “Have they seen a loup-garou since the crash.”

“Brother, have they!”

“Mind telling us about it?”

“Well, an old boy named Two Trout saw it, he claims.” Corporal Osgood looked sheepish. “You'll think I'm nuts, believing that old Indian. Well, I don't believe him. Only he was so earnest about it he had me about half going.”

“What did he see?”

“He says he saw a thing about as high as he was, but wider, and that the thing could spread out. He claimed it could spread out twenty or thirty feet, and it made a hell of a hissing noise and chased him. He said it chased him without any noise and he fell down and it went right over him. If he hadn't fallen down it would've got him, he claims. It didn't come back.”

“Anyone else have a story like that?”

“Not as far as I know. One of them claimed he saw a big black shadow over the trees, making a hissing noise.”

“Was Two Trout's monster black?”

“Yes, and it hissed, too.”

Doc Savage studied Corporal Osgood thoughtfully. “You really think there is something to this, don't you?”

Corporal Osgood nodded uncomfortably. “I sure do. Maybe I'm getting bush silly, or something.”

“Would you like to take us to the spot where the plane was torn up?”

“I sure would,” said the corporal fervently. “The thing is beginning to work on my nanny.”

THE mangled plane fragments were located in a small glade which had once been the bed of a landlocked lake, but which was now dry and grown high with rank grass. All around was the flat, uninteresting bush country, much of it semi-swamp. There were no hills, mountains or tall trees, nothing to break the infernal monotony. Trapper Lake—the lake which gave the settlement its name—was approximately three miles distant.

“Here you are,” said Corporal Osgood.

Doc Savage made a circuit of the meadow, examining the tall grass. The place had been trampled somewhat by the Indians and by Corporal Osgood on his previous visits, but there was still evidence which showed Doc Savage that the plane had managed to put its landing gear on the ground near the middle of the meadow.

Every indication was that the plane had landed, and had not had much speed when it crashed into the brush at the other end of the meadow.

The plane, by this reasoning, should not have been greatly damaged.

Furthermore, had the ship hit with enough force to demolish it as completely as it was demolished, the wreckage would have been strewn over a great area. Pieces of it should have been hanging on the brush for at least a quarter of a mile.

Yet the entire wreckage of the craft was in an area of forty feet.

But it was incredibly mangled. Ripped and torn, wrenched and twisted. Skin metal and girders knotted up in wads like tinfoil and wire.

Monk whistled.

“If I was twenty feet high, and crazy,” he said, “I would be able to do about this kind of thing.”

Ham remarked that all Monk needed, really, was to be twenty feet high; he was already equipped for the rest of it. But Ham managed to get little enthusiasm into the insult. He was impressed, awed.

Doc Savage asked Corporal Osgood, “You said something about marks on the ground?”

“Over here.”

The marks were in an area about ten feet across where the grass was mashed down, and the earth torn and marked with senseless pits and grooves. Nearby, at the edge of the spot, was a tangle of control wires and fuselage frame.

Ham said, "I hate to say what it looks like to me."

"I figured," said Corporal Osgood, "that the monster got tangled up in this mess of wire and stuff while he was tearing up the plane. He flopped over here in a rage to get loose from the stuff. Of course, I knew I was crazy if I thought that."

"That makes two of us," Ham said, "because I'm thinking the same thing. And it *is* a crazy possibility."

"I'll be superamalgamated," said big-worded Johnny. "Where did the thing go? Where are its tracks?"

THERE were no tracks, it developed. Not monster tracks, at least. There were many human footprints, but selecting alien prints among these would be an extended task.

Doc Savage went back to the plane and began going over the wreckage more closely.

"What gave you the idea it might be a Japanese plane?" he asked Corporal Osgood.

"Well, that red paint on that piece of metal skin."

Doc continued his examination.

"You were about fifty percent right," he said.

"What do you mean?" asked the corporal.

"The plane," Doc said, "seems to be partly Japanese manufacture and partly American. To be more exact, it seems to be a Japanese light bomber which has been wrecked, and rebuilt with parts from an American ship of approximately the same size."

"A wrecked Japanese bomber rebuilt with parts of an American plane," Corporal Osgood muttered. "What would such a ship be doing in this neck of the woods?"

"You think of easy questions," Monk told him.

Doc Savage continued his search. He made wider circles, examining the soft ground. He found some tracks. The tracks had been made by two persons, a man and a woman, although he was not quite sure about the woman. The running stride of women was usually different from that of men, but in this case there was not much difference.

The woman had not been Pat, because the tracks were at least three days old. It was three days ago, as nearly as they could calculate, that the plane had crashed. The man and woman—girl, for she was young, probably—had run away from the meadow in great haste.

They both wore moccasins, but the marks in the soft earth showed that they were not the type of moccasins the local Indians wore.

Doc Savage followed the man and the girl a short distance, far enough to make sure that they were trying to get away from the meadow with all haste possible. He also noted that the fugitives had kept under the foliage of the bush whenever possible, as if they were trying to hide from something overhead.

Doc went back to the mangled plane.

Johnny Littlejohn was holding something. He had found it in the plane wreckage.

Johnny was so agitated he used small words.

“Doc,” he gasped. “Did you notice this?”

It was a piece of thong with which two parts of the plane had been lashed together, and Doc admitted he had noticed it.

“What is it?” Johnny exploded.

Monk came over, looked at the lashing and asked, “What are you laying eggs about? That's just a piece of rawhide.”

Johnny stared at the thing he was holding. “Don't be stupid,” he said.

“Well, what does it look like?” Monk asked him.

“It's a piece of hide,” Johnny said, “but it is a quarter of an inch thick and it is an aves-type epidermis.”

“What the heck's an aves-type epidermis?”

“Bird skin.”

Monk bloated a little. “You mean to stand there with your bug eyes and tell me that is a piece of bird hide a quarter of an inch thick?”

Johnny nodded. “Indubitably.”

“You couldn't be stubbing your toe?”

Johnny, with some indignation, said, “I believe I know the skin of a bird when I see one. This is a small fragment, but there is plainly discernible the trace of the lower umbilicus of the quill, which indicates this is not a pre-plumulae feather, but a fully developed plume.

“Furthermore,” continued Johnny, “there are traces of epitrichium, flattened cells overlying the malpighian layer, cylindrical, with—”

“That's enough,” Monk said hastily. “If you can put it in words like that I'll take your guess on it.” The homely chemist scratched his head. “Bird, huh. Quarter of an inch skin. Hm-m-m.”

Ham Brooks made a wild gesture but said nothing.

Corporal Osgood scratched his head. “I kinda hoped you guys would clear up the mystery,” he said. “Not make it worse.”

Chapter V. THE STRONG GIRL

CORPORAL OSGOOD was enthusiastic about the affair in spite of his voiced misgivings. It was not often that he had company from the outside world, still more seldom that the company was interesting, and less often that the monotony was really broken around the place.

So the corporal did not exactly throw his hat in the air when Doc Savage said, “Corporal, without being able to explain exactly what this is all about, I have the feeling that our plane should be guarded and guarded heavily. Will you assemble a group of the Indians you can trust, all of them possible, and guard the ship.”

“These Indians are kind of practical,” said the corporal. “They will want to get paid.”

“They will be paid,” Doc assured him. He produced a roll of bills, asked, “Can you take care of it out of this?”

Corporal Osgood counted the roll and admitted he could, and have a bit of change left to buy the House of Parliament, if Doc wanted that, too.

He departed.

Doc said, “There is a trail leading away from here. Two people. Man and a girl.”

“Pat!” Ham gasped.

“No,” Doc said.

“Do you suppose Pat is around here anywhere now?” Ham demanded.

Doc said, “It is quite possible we got here ahead of the ship carrying Pat and the skinny man in the gray suit.”

Ham lifted his head involuntarily and listened, but there was no plane sound in the sky.

Doc Savage began the job of following the trail which he had located. This led to the north. After they had gone perhaps a hundred yards the bronze man halted suddenly.

He indicated marks—small pits—in the ground.

Monk said, “I’ve seen marks like that too often not to know what they are. Machine-gun bullets.”

He examined the course of the lead, the distance between the slugs.

“The nose gun from an airplane,” he said.

Doc Savage indicated other bullet marks and pointed out, “But these look as if they came from a cockpit gun from the way they are bunched.”

They did some digging, eventually came up with sample bullets from each. Doc scrutinized them.

“From the nose or wing-mounted gun, Japanese,” he said. “From the cockpit gun, American.”

Ham scratched his head. “That plane back there was a mixture of Japanese and American,” he reminded.

It was also obvious, they decided, that the man and girl they were following had taken cover under a fallen log while the plane was diving and firing upon them. The two had left the imprints of their bodies in the near mud under the log.

“What do you know!” Ham said. “The guy seems to have dressed in skin clothes, a la Daniel Boone.”

“The girl,” Monk remarked with enthusiasm, “seems to have been dressed in no more than the law allows.”

They went on. After they had progressed another half mile through the bog and brush, following the trail without trouble, but fighting mosquitoes continuously, Monk remarked, “I wouldn’t say she was so smart.” He swatted another mosquito.

A PLANE stood at the edge of the lake.

It was in a bay. The bay seemed to be shallow, with a solid bottom. They had driven four stakes into the bay bottom, and to these had staked the plane, as far as they could get the craft from any shore, with its nose pointed toward the open lake.

Some distance from the plane, between it and the shore in all four directions, they had erected four platforms just above the water. They had made these of poles. There were machine guns mounted on the platforms.

There was a man on guard on each platform, and the alertness of these men was surprising. The tense, avid manner with which they scanned the surroundings was hard to credit.

It was no temporary alertness, either. Doc and his aides lay in the brush and watched. The four watchmen did not slacken their vigilance for a moment.

“Japs,” Monk whispered.

“Yes, but look at what they're wearing,” Ham breathed.

He meant the skin garments which the four guards were wearing. The outfits were not too well fashioned, and they were made from some type of crudely tanned hide.

At the end of about an hour the four guards were relieved by four others. Two of these latter were white men, tall fellows. The astonishing alertness continued.

“They're sure scared of something,” Johnny remarked.

They waited. They seemed to be somewhat at an impasse, unable to do much more without the certainty of being discovered.

Then one of the white guards shouted to the other.

“Niles,” he bellowed. “Oh, Niles!”

“Yeah?” shouted Niles.

“When did Saki say Shorty would get here with the plane and the Savage girl?”

Niles bellowed back, “About an hour, should be. Maybe longer. Shorty got chased by a Canadian army plane and had to make a detour to pick up gasoline at an airport where there wasn't a radio.”

“O. K.,” yelled the other. “I'm getting damned tired of this watching.”

“Seen anything of the pet?”

“No, and that ain't half of it.”

They fell silent.

“Americans,” Ham remarked.

Monk pondered aloud, “What'd they mean by the pet?”

“Looks like it must be whatever they're standing around watching for with the four machine guns,” Ham told him.

Doc Savage changed his position a few times, examining the plane. The craft, large and powerful, was an American naval craft. But he could distinguish evidence of repairs of quite extensive nature having been made to the ship. And some of the replaced parts looked as if they had come off a Japanese ship.

The machine guns on the platforms were two Japanese and two Americans. He thought the wing-mounted guns of the plane, the ones controlled mechanically from the cockpit, were Japanese. They had evidently been installed to replace the original American guns. It was hard to be sure at that distance.

It began getting dark. Doc examined the sky. There were some clouds, and the night would be dark, what there was of it. This far north the night would be very short at this time of the year.

He went back to Monk, Ham and Johnny.

“You fellows be ready to create a diversion if necessary,” he said. “I am going to try to get out to their plane.”

THE project was not as hare-brained as it sounded. There was actually not much risk during the first part of the trip. The bronze man had brought along—his men had the same equipment—one of the tiny portable gas masks which had a self-contained oxygen supply so that it also served as a diving “lung.” He fitted the mouthpiece of this between his teeth and put its clip on his nostrils.

The swampy growth extended into the water at a number of points, so it was not hard to get into the bay without being observed. He used a good-sized rock to keep himself under, and took a compass bearing on his luminous wrist compass. The lake water, fortunately, was not clear.

He took his time so as not to create a commotion in the water.

Near the end of the trip the water suddenly lightened to the color of cream over his head and remained that way. The reason for the light color of the water was evident when he reached the plane and came up cautiously beside the fuselage. They had turned on searchlights. These were powerful—the landing lights of the plane—and they had removed the condensing lenses so that the lights threw a great diffused glow instead of beams.

The object was obviously to light up the surroundings as much as possible.

The guards were still alert at their machine guns on the platforms.

Doc moved along the side of the plane, listening, using his ears, his nostrils. Strangely enough, his nostrils were of more assistance than anything else. The skin suits the men were wearing were moist and smelled.

He found that two Japanese were crouched on each wing of the plane. They had rifles.

Their alertness was the alertness of terror.

Doc was wondering how he could get into the plane without being observed when the problem solved itself.

Or, rather, things happened that made boarding the craft the least of his troubles.

Plane sound came out of the southern night. It approached rapidly, for the ship was a fast one. With a

booming roar the plane came down over the bay.

One of the Japanese tilted a searchlight upward and hurriedly replaced the condensing beam. The light impaled the newly arrived ship.

The craft howling overhead was, Doc concluded, the ship containing Pat and the skinny man in gray.

He was thinking that when a terrific fight broke out aboard the plane beside which he crouched.

THE fight began suddenly with two figures piling out of the cabin upon two of the Japanese. The attackers were a man and a girl. The man was past middle age and wore skin garments. The girl was young and shapely in a very lithe fashion and wore, as Monk had enthusiastically guessed, no more than the law allowed. Certainly she did not wear enough to interfere with her fighting.

Her fighting was something extraordinary. She was upon the two Japanese like a cat. She got them both at once. She lifted them. They howled in agony. She hurled them bodily over the top of the cabin—the ship was a low-wing type—upon the two Japanese crouching on the other side.

She tossed them easily, as if they were bags of rags. It was a feat which Doc, who was speechlessly amazed, doubted if he could have done himself.

The girl then went into the water. She entered with a sliding speed that was more animal than human.

The old man—he looked older than he was—lacked her speed by a great deal. She did all that while he was getting onto the wing and piling into the water.

Doc had a chance to examine the man's face. It was familiar.

“Western!” Doc called. “Calvin Western!”

The man in the water turned hurriedly.

“Savage?” he gasped.

“Yes,” Doc said.

“I was trying to reach you,” Calvin Western gasped. “They shot my plane down—”

One of the Japanese appeared on top of the plane cabin. He had a pistol. He leaned down and shot Calvin Western.

Calvin Western instantly threw up his arms and sank.

“*Yoku deki mashita!*” the Japanese said, lowering his gun.

A second Japanese appeared beside the first. He was angry. Very angry.

“*Kore de wa idenai!*” he screamed. “This won't do! You had your orders not to shoot him,” he added, shrieking in Japanese.

“But he was escaping,” said the one who had shot Calvin Western.

“*Atsukamashii!*” snarled the other, “Fool!”

He struck the man who had shot Calvin Western, knocking him unconscious.

Then the Japanese dived into the lake and brought up Calvin Western. The water was not over neck deep here. The man hauled Western to the plane wing.

“*Kochira ye oide nasai!*” he squawled at his companions. “Come here! Help me get this man aboard.”

The two Japanese whom the remarkable girl had hurled into the lake got the water out of their lungs and swam to the wing, climbed onto it and aided in getting Calvin Western out of the water, shouting, “*Ki wo tsukeros!*” to each other. The Japanese words for being careful.

They were very concerned over Calvin Western's injury.

“Through the shoulder,” said one of them, examining the wound. “The shock, in his weakened condition, has made him senseless. We must take care of him.”

“Get him in the cabin. We must treat his wound. His life is very important to us.”

The last part of this conversation led Doc Savage to decide not to interfere just now. The men on the gun platforms were too alert now. The moment he climbed on the plane wing they would riddle him.

He remained where he was, listening for more words that might tell him something additional. He spoke and understood *go-jio-on*, the so-called *fifty sounds* of the Japanese language fluently.

Then one of the platform guns cut loose in a gobbling burst. The tracer bullets reached like a red-hot wire for the girl. They had sighted her.

She had covered an astounding distance under water.

Chapter VI. MONK AND THE DEVIL

THEY did not hit the girl with the machine-gun burst. She popped her head above the surface, got air, and was under again in an instant. Doc thought of a hunted wild thing.

Two of the Japanese who had taken Calvin Western into the plane cabin now popped out again.

“Western was talking to someone in the water just before he was shot,” one yelled. “I heard him.”

“To Ga,” the other said.

“You are sure?”

“They escaped together. Who else could it have been?”

“*Naruhodo!*” said the other. “That is good.”

Doc Savage was glad he had caught that part of the conversation.

They did not know he was about.

The plane which had arrived, and passed overhead, now came back. Its speed was much slower, just above landing speed, and evidently the wing flaps were set.

The Japanese on the wing above Doc's head were delighted.

“*Goran nasai!*” one exclaimed joyfully. “Look! It is Shorty. Everything is good. He is here. Now we can go back.”

The machine gun interrupted again, hammering out fiercely at the escaping girl. Its bullets knocked spray high in the air, went skipping off into the sky with the whanging of breaking fiddle strings.

But again they missed the girl. She was far enough out of the flood-light glare when she came up this time to be a poor target.

“The girl!” snarled one of the Japanese above Doc. “That Ga! What about her? She is escaping.”

The other swore. “It is unfortunate, but not a disaster.”

“She is escaping. If she gets in the bush we will never capture her. Not even if we dared stick around and spend the necessary time.”

“It is no disaster, I tell you,” retorted his companion. “She does not speak any known language.”

“Well, that is true. No one could understand her.”

“And a girl like Ga—you know what these stupid Canadians and Americans would think when they found her.”

“A wild woman.”

“Exactly.” The Japanese laughed, a rather startling sound, because Japanese did not often laugh. “They would be closer to the truth than they dreamed, too,” he added.

Doc Savage, in the shadow under the wing, close to the fuselage so that he hoped to be mistaken for a part of the plane if anyone looked at the spot where he was hiding, began to wonder about this girl, Ga. What did they mean—wild woman? She was remarkable, anyway. What little he had seen of her proved that.

The plane in the air circled again. It was preparing for a landing on the cove, obviously. On the floats, one of the men had indicated wind direction by flashing a flashlight.

The plane came in more slowly than before.

And then, over the top of the bush, something came flopping and convulsing. A darkly hideous object. The thing which the Indian named Two Trout had seen, the thing that was as high as a man, and as wide, and yet which could spread out to a width of twenty feet, and which hissed.

It was the “pet” to which the American machine gunners on the platforms had referred.

Twenty feet was a conservative estimate of how far the thing could spread itself. It was somewhat more than that.

It was the reason the machine guns were on the platforms.

It was also the reason why Doc hurriedly submerged and swam back to the shore.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL ANDREW BLODGETT MONK MAYFAIR was standing beside a bush when he heard something that could be steam escaping, but of course wasn't, overhead. He looked

upward. "Gracious!" he said, which was the mildest exclamation he had used in a long time. He couldn't move. Astonishment riveted him to the spot.

Johnny and Ham were beside him and Johnny said, "I'll be super-sup-sup—" and couldn't finish his favorite big word. Ham said nothing. He was speechless.

The thing flopped overhead.

It went fast, and it stank. It had the stink of a carnivora, of a meat-eater, of a beast. The smell of a lion cage that had not been cleaned.

The flying thing did not see them. It went on. It headed for one of the machine-gun platforms. The gun on the platform ripped and chattered, and the flying thing gave a louder hiss than ever.

It pounced on the gun platform and it was almost like an explosion. The destruction was amazing. The thing ripped and tore with incredible violence. Pieces of platform, parts of the gunner's body, flew into the air.

Then the thing lifted, made for the second platform.

Monk blurted, "That's what tore up the airplane. That thing!"

"What is it?" Ham Brooks gasped.

Johnny made gurglings. He seemed to know what the thing was. But he was too excited to make words.

The two pets, the pig, Habeas Corpus, and the chimp, Chemistry, shot out of sight into a bush. They were terrified. They did not get that scared easily.

Monk got rid of his paralysis and crowded out where he could see what happened.

The flying thing dived for a second gun platform. But here something a little different happened.

The gunner had rigged up some kind of dummy. He threw this over the muzzle of his gun at the last moment and himself dived into the lake water.

The flying thing, deceived, grabbed the dummy. It seemed satisfied with what it had. It arose with the dummy, flopping and convulsing in the air like a harridan body to which was attached great dark sheets of rubber.

The man who had swapped himself for the dummy yelled, "Stop shooting! Everybody stand still! Maybe it'll keep the dummy long enough to do some good!"

The machine guns were instantly stilled.

The plane flown by the skinny man in the gray suit had swerved hurriedly away from the bay. The man had seen the flying thing.

Monk watched the thing.

"That devil," Monk blurted, "is coming this way."

JOHNNY LITTLEJOHN gave a brittle order. "Run," he said. "And scatter. If it sees you, flop on the

ground and lie still.”

He sounded as if he knew what he was talking about. They obeyed.

Monk took out toward the south. He kept both hands out in front and went over bushes and through them. He left pieces of hide and clothing hanging on the brush. He was frankly scared.

He was not afraid of being heard. The airplane motor was making a great frightened noise in an effort to get the plane away.

Monk never did know whether the flying thing saw him, or whether it flew after him by accident. Whatever happened, he swore his hair should have turned white.

Flop on the ground and lie still was something of which Monk never thought. It reminded him of the time he shot his first bear, or tried to. He was very small. He never knew what happened to the bear. But he did know they had to pry him off the topmost branch of the tallest tree in the neighborhood. He felt that way now, and he could smell the stink of the flying thing, and that did not help.

When he laid down it was an accident. It was a fall. He practically buried himself in mud. But he turned instinctively so that he hit on shoulder and back, face upward. He always fell that way, and Ham claimed it was an indication of the nearness of Monk's tree-climbing ancestry, an instinct inherited, the way African warthogs always turn around and back into their holes, no matter how closely pursued.

He was looking square at the thing when it exploded.

Literal truth was that the dummy the thing was carrying did the exploding. They had planted explosive in the dummy. That was the object of trying to give the dummy to the flying harridan, the attempt which had succeeded.

The blast was terrific. Its effects were plainly discernible because on the plane they had turned one of the searchlight beams on the flying object, and were following it, keeping track of it.

The blast did what any other terrific explosion would do—scattered the flying monstrosity over a considerable amount of landscape.

Monk was hammered somewhat deeper into the mud. He was indeed glad that the dummy had not contained shrapnel, but only high explosive.

He watched pieces of the monster fly around in the blaze of light from the searchlight. The searchlight kept glowing, and there was enough illumination to show the surroundings.

Monk carefully spotted points where fragments of the monster fell. He was very curious about the thing.

Confident they could not see him through the bush, he extricated himself from the mud and began hunting for fragments of the what-is-it.

The piece he found seemed to be a fragment of wing. He noticed that it, or its stump, was bloody. The blood reassured him in a way; the thing had been an actual living organism. In another way, the discovery that the thing had been flesh and blood was most unnerving. It made his hair want to stand on end.

He expected the wing to be heavy. He nearly fell on his back when he picked it up. It was light. Remarkably light, although not fantastically so. It was merely that he had witnessed the astounding violence with which the thing had disposed of the machine gunner on his platform and he had expected something different.

In general it felt like a framework—the wing—of duralumin tubing to which was attached a great sheet of rubber similar to the rubber in a good inner tube.

The girl came out of the bush then.

MONK was not exactly proud of his reaction to her appearance. He was all drawn out, like a string that had been about to snap, and hadn't. Instinct purely caused him to make a jump for the girl, as if she was an enemy.

He was less proud of what it got him. He was seized. He was hit twice so fast and hard that it seemed impossible. He was slammed down on the ground, the girl was on his back, and had his neck in a grip. From the kind of grip she had, she wasn't playing.

“Ouch!” he said. “Hey!”

She relaxed her clutch slightly then. Apparently she had expected to recognize his voice and had not.

“Lay off the neck,” Monk said as calmly as he could manage. “They're hard to replace, kinda.”

The girl felt around and got a fistful of coarse grass. She scrubbed the mud off Monk's face. Then, in the light that diffused down through the bush from the searchlight beam, she examined Monk.

She seemed startled.

While she was staring at Monk, the plane which contained Shorty and—they hoped—Pat Savage, came buzzing back. It was going to pass directly overhead at a low altitude.

As soon as he saw there was danger of their being discovered from the plane, Monk made frantic gestures indicating they should get under better cover. The girl understood. She let him up and they got under shelter.

Monk was much relieved. She was a friend, then.

“Thanks,” he said. “Guess we had our wires crossed.”

She said nothing.

“I'm trying to tell you,” Monk explained, “that you and I seem to be mad at the same people.”

The girl spoke. It sounded like she said about a dozen words.

“Eh?” Monk said. “I didn't get it. Do you speak English?”

The girl seemed defeated. She made a gesture admonishing silence. The plane was coming close.

After the ship had howled overhead with a great noise—it was a good thing they got better cover, because a flare popped out of the plane and spewed incredible white light over the region—Monk crawled away from the spot. He hurried. The girl followed.

The plane came back and made a tight, howling bank over the spot. The flare died out. The plane pulled away, climbing a little, made a wide circle to give the pilot time to adjust his eyes to the darkness again, then came in and landed on the little lake bay.

Shorty seemed quite familiar with the bay. He ran the plane in close to shore and beached it gently on a sandbar.

Monk Mayfair found Ham and Johnny in the darkness.

“Ps-s-t!” Monk warned. “I’ve collected a trophy.”

“Who is it?” Johnny asked.

“A girl,” Monk explained.

“It would be,” Ham said dryly. “Can you imagine Monk collecting anything but a woman. Him with a wife and thirteen kids already at home.”

Monk sneered audibly at Ham. “You’re wasting your breath telling that old lie. I don’t think she understands English.”

Doc Savage joined them then. He did it quietly. The diving “lung” gave his face a grotesque appearance.

Monk noticed that the girl seemed to have known that Doc Savage was near them a long time before he appeared. Her senses seemed extraordinarily keen.

Doc said, “Quiet. Let’s see what happens.”

THE thin man in the gray suit bounded out of his plane as soon as it grounded gently on the sandbar. He had managed the grounding expertly, letting the breeze drift the plane backward upon the bar, so that the motors could pull it off without trouble. He had cut the motors. He was a small figure standing beside the big amphibian and waving his arms.

“Ahoy Saki!” he yelled.

“Yes,” answered one of the Japanese. “This is Saki. Was it destroyed?”

“Blown to pieces,” Shorty bellowed back. “I could see the pieces scattered around in the light of the flare.”

“*Hijo ni yorokobimasu,*” Saki said. “I am delighted. It is good. The thing has had us in terror ever since you left.”

“It hung around here then?”

“Yes. We saw it at a distance three times. Often enough to worry us.”

Saki then shouted some orders and the searchlights were doused. The three surviving machine gunners on the platforms began dismantling their weapons. Without the searchlights it was quite dark.

Saki yelled, “Did that man, Doc Savage, learn of this?”

“He sure did,” said Shorty disgustedly.

“Did you manage him?”

“That,” said Shorty, “is a long story. You better come over here and I’ll tell you about it.”

“You come out here,” Saki said with the manner of a Japanese who could order an American around and was proud of it.

Shorty objected, “I got a prisoner aboard.”

“Who?”

“A girl named Pat Savage. She's a cousin of Doc Savage.”

“Why?”

“Well,” said Shorty, “I figured she would keep Doc Savage off our neck if we got in a fight.”

“Tie her tightly,” Saki ordered, “then knock her unconscious. And come over here and tell me the story.”

“O. K.,” Shorty said with not much grace. “Have we got the time?”

“We have Calvin Western a prisoner aboard,” snapped Saki, “so we can return at our leisure.”

Doc Savage grouped his three aides closely in the darkness. He kept his words low, a whispering that blended with the slight noise the night breeze made in the bush.

Doc said, “You fellows all saw that flying thing?”

They had. “I saw almost too much of it,” Monk whispered.

“You guessed what it was?” Doc asked.

“I think I know,” Monk admitted.

Ham said, “I can make a guess, Doc.”

“It's incredible,” Johnny said. “Utterly incredible, and absolutely unbelievable.”

“I picked up a wing of the thing, then got excited and dropped it,” Monk said. “The wing was plenty believable. It was genuine, all right. The thing was bloody. And you could tell from the look and the feel that it wasn't no fake. And the smell of it! I didn't know those things smelled.”

Doc Savage said quietly, “You fellows can imagine what kind of a place the thing might have come from. And from what Saki just said they are going back to the place with Calvin Western. Shall we go back with them?”

They were thoughtful. “That might not be so much fun,” Monk said at last. “But I'm willing to take a crack at it if the others are.”

Johnny was more enthusiastic. “I'd give half my life, actually, to see such a place,” he said.

“All right,” Doc Savage told them. “Shorty just left his plane. We will get aboard it and see what we can do about the thing from there on.”

Ham asked, “What about the girl Monk collected?”

“She is probably an inhabitant of the place,” Doc said. “We will take her. She may be of considerable help.”

“If the place has got many citizens like the little pet that just blew up,” Monk said, “we'll need all the help

running around loose.”

The girl had stood by without any sign that she understood a word they said. Now, when Doc Savage touched her arm, and indicated by simple signs that they wished her to accompany them, and that silence was imperative, she examined the bronze man as closely as the darkness would permit.

But she came with them.

Chapter VII. THE UNKNOWN

PATRICIA SAVAGE was glad to see them. Pat was too stiff from being tied so long and too dazed from the blow which Shorty must have struck her to move for a while after they took the cords off her. Monk and Ham got down and rubbed her arms and throat.

Doc went back into the plane cabin but no one else was aboard. He returned to the cockpit. The escape hatch was open and he could hear the murmur of Shorty and Saki talking. Murmur was all he could catch.

Pat revived enough to say, “That skinny guy! He’s a cold fish. Watch him.”

“He hurt you?” Monk asked.

“My dignity,” Pat said. “And after we left New York and got over Canada an army plane chased us. I guess it was an army plane. Anyway, they put a machine-gun burst through the back of the cabin before he got away.”

“Scare you?”

“I don’t mind admitting it did,” Pat said.

Doc Savage gave a quiet warning for caution. Shorty was coming back, he said. They had better conceal themselves. Pat was to lie on the cabin floor where she had been, with the cords replaced around her wrists and ankles, and around her body, but not tied. Did she think she could grab Shorty and silence him long enough for Doc and the others to get their hands on him?

“I can try with plenty of enthusiasm,” Pat said.

The aft section of the plane cabin was loaded with gasoline drums, carefully lashed to prevent shifting. There was time to slip the lashings and move some of the drums forward, making a space behind in which they could crouch. Monk, Ham and Johnny remained there with the pig and the chimp. Doc got down in the cockpit, concealed behind the seats for pilot and co-pilot.

The thin man climbed into the ship. His clothes were drenched and he was grumbling. One of the Japanese came with him.

They walked back and stood looking down at Pat.

Shorty said, “I don’t like it, kid. I don’t like it a little bit. We’re supposed to knock you off. Saki doesn’t figure we need you.”

Pat said nothing. She was not close enough to grab the man. Anyway, there were two of them now.

“I like everything about it but this,” Shorty added. “But I ain’t no woman killer.”

The Japanese said harshly, "Shoot her!"

He was not much more comfortable than Shorty about the task.

Shorty glared at him. "Listen, my little superman, you can have the job yourself."

The Japanese blanched. "You," he said. "You were ordered."

"Yes, but you do it," Shorty told him, "or it don't get done. I'll tell Saki you refused to do it, and Saki won't be happy about that. Saki is one of them guys without any morals that they talk about."

"*Baka iu-na!*" the Japanese gasped. "No!"

Pat settled the argument by heaving up and getting the little Japanese by the throat.

SHE managed to hold him silent. Doc Savage came out of the cockpit and took Shorty. Monk and the others piled over the gasoline drums. The cabin was full of silent fight for a minute. Then the Japanese and Shorty were senseless.

"See if they heard us," Doc said.

Monk and Ham thrust their heads out of the hatch, poised to dodge back if a searchlight came on.

"Nothing alarming," Monk reported. "Sounds like they're loading the machine guns into the other plane."

Johnny was busy with the cords which had secured Pat. There was an abundance of these, and he divided them, tying both Shorty and the Nipponese. He contributed half of his shirt to make a gag for each one.

Pat was on her feet and rubbing her wrists.

"Things are looking up," she said cheerfully. "Say, what was all the shooting awhile ago. Shorty was all excited. Scared out of his wits for a while."

"He was scared, all right," Monk said, "of something that was flying around."

"What?"

No one answered because the motors of the other plane burst into life. Their sound drummed in waves across the cove and fire poured from the exhaust stacks like red silk.

Doc Savage climbed hastily into the cockpit of Shorty's ship. He started the motor. It was hot, took the spark instantly.

"How is our gas?" Johnny asked.

"Tanks almost full," Doc said.

Pat said, "Shorty landed in some little bush place less than an hour ago and made them fill everything."

The other plane rammed the white beams of its lights out ahead and began to move.

Doc said, "We will have to take the chance that we were supposed to follow."

He gave their own motor enough gas to pull them free of the sandbar. They moved forward. No one said anything. They had taken off in seaplanes innumerable times, but there is something about a take-off that makes it a moment of silence.

Pat watched the strange girl during the take-off.

The girl had very blond hair, and it certainly needed the attention of a good beauty parlor. What wave it had was natural. Its texture was fine, though. And the girl's features were not coarse, although there was nothing doll-faced about them. The strange girl was, as a whole, a rather beautiful amazon of a creature.

The girl was no veteran in an airplane, Pat could see. She was as frightened as an animal, but controlling herself.

"There's no danger," Pat told her. "Doc can make one of these things turn handsprings and never ruffle your hair."

The other girl seemed more satisfied by the friendly tone than by the words.

She said something in a language completely unintelligible to Pat.

Pat hesitated, then went forward. She asked Doc, "Where did the blonde menace come from?"

"Monk collected her," Doc said.

"I imagined he had. But who is she? Where did she come from?"

"You will probably be surprised," Doc said.

He sounded as if he meant it.

HAM BROOKS joined Doc Savage as soon as they were off the lake surface and following the other plane in a long climb into the north. Ham was worried.

"Doc," he said. "The only weapons we've got are the ones we're packing. We might be able to use more. We have plenty back there in our plane."

Doc shook his head. "To go back would draw suspicion to ourselves."

"I guess it would," Ham admitted. "But I'd sure like to be better heeled." He hesitated. "That thing that was flying around, that pet, was the thing that tore up the other plane, wasn't it?"

Doc nodded. "Apparently. But let's hold the talk a few minutes. See if we are going to get away with this trick we are pulling. Then we can have a kind of verbal roundup."

"Sure."

The bronze man continued to climb their plane. It soon became evident that their ship was faster than the other craft, which was the larger one. He throttled back a little in order not to get too close. But he could not get far behind because the darkness was deceptive.

The ship ahead had not switched on its navigation lights, so that it was only a deceptive shape slashing the night. Doc became more and more certain that they were not going to be able to follow the other craft without lights.

He switched on the radio apparatus.

While the tubes were warming he remembered carefully how Shorty's voice had sounded. He tried several imitations of the fellow's tone and accent.

Pat said, "That sounds enough like him to fool anybody."

Doc picked up the radio microphone.

Imitating Shorty's voice, he said, "My compass is going bad. You will have to turn on your navigation lights so that I can follow you."

They held their breaths.

Navigation lights of the ship ahead came on.

"You worked that!" Pat said delightedly.

The plane was not equipped with any gadgets for passenger comfort. Obviously the craft was a bomber. But there was an automatic pilot which would take over straight-and-level flight, and Doc turned control over to the gadget as soon as it seemed safe.

"The prisoners awake yet?" he called.

"They're awake." Ham reported. "But they're not exactly sounding off like phonographs."

Doc Savage went back. He put the hooded beam of a flashlight on the faces of the two captives.

"Going to talk to us?" he asked Shorty.

Shorty said at once, but bitterly, "About the weather, the stock market, the chances of the Dodgers. But that's all."

Doc said, "It might be easier on you if you talked."

Shorty showed his teeth in a grimace that meant nothing except that he had made up his mind. "The hell with you," he said. "I don't like being outsmarted the way you've outsmarted me. I thought I had done the best job on you that I had ever done in my life. My feelings are hurt."

Doc did not argue with him. He knew quite positively that nothing less than truth serum, of which they had none, would persuade Shorty to tell anything.

Doc asked the Japanese, "Your name?"

"Hashigo," said the Japanese.

"How do you feel about talking?"

"*Arigato, Yoshirnasho,*" the Japanese said, and that was the last word he spoke for hours.

Ham, who did not speak Japanese, asked, "What'd he say?"

"No, thank you," Doc translated.

Doc Savage went back to the cockpit. It was not safe for him to be away from the controls for long because the plane ahead, even with its flying lights, was not an easy thing to follow. Not against the

dancing aura of the Borealis, now lancing high into the polar sky.

“It would be a good idea,” Doc said, “if we had a summary, a verbal roundup, of what we know. This thing has become more complicated and a little confusing.”

Monk said, “That is what I was thinking.”

“THERE is a man named Calvin Western in that plane ahead,” Doc Savage explained. “He is a prisoner. He is also an acquaintance of mine.”

They looked at him with astonishment. It was the first they had heard of Calvin Western.

The name had a meaning to Monk, for Monk popped his hands together and said, “Wait a minute, I know a Calvin Western. The Calvin Western I know is a chemist, a greater chemist than I ever hope to be.”

“That is the one,” Doc said.

“What is he doing in Saki's plane?” Monk demanded.

“A prisoner, who seems to have a value to them,” Doc Savage said. “They are anxious to keep him alive. That means he has a value to them, either because he knows something they wish to know, or for some other reason.”

Monk scratched his head, said, “I take it Calvin Western is the reason we're mixed up in this?”

Doc nodded.

Ham said, “Doc, how does the story seem to shape up to you?”

They did not really expect the bronze man to answer. He was usually very reluctant about voicing theories or guesses. But he surprised them.

“Apparently, Calvin Western was flying south toward New York in a plane,” Doc said. “The plane was a very modern bomber, but had been damaged previously and patched together with parts from another ship. It was a Japanese light bomber patched up with parts from an American bomber.

“Pursuing Calvin Western,” Doc continued, “were Saki and his men, including Shorty and Hashigo, here. Near Trapper Lake they overhauled Calvin Western and shot his plane down, or forced it to crash. Calvin Western's ship made what ordinarily would have been a safe crash landing. Calvin Western and this girl here—the girl's name is Ga, incidentally—were able to get out of the damaged plane. They fled into the bush. Saki and his men—they were in two planes—fired upon them with machine guns.”

Doc was silent a moment.

“But Calvin Western was carrying something in the light bomber,” he added. “Something incredible. Something he might have been bringing to New York to show us, in order to convince us that what he had to tell us was the truth. This thing was lashed tightly in the plane. It was lashed with control wires from another plane, an American ship.”

Doc looked at his aides. “That is partly a guess,” He said. “But it is probably accurate. In the wreckage of Calvin Western's plane there was a surplus quantity of control wires, and these were lashed together and tied in knots as if they had been used for bindings.”

Ham nodded, said, "I kind of noticed that myself."

"The crash of Calvin Western's plane freed this thing he had for a cargo," Doc said. "It got away. It was in a strange environment. It remained in the neighborhood. That Indian, Two Trout, saw it around and thought it was a loup-garou because it looked like nothing he had imagined was on this earth."

Pat put in, "Then Saki's planes landed on this bay and they caught Calvin Western and Ga, here?"

Doc Savage said that was probably what had happened.

The planes were moaning into the north at more than normal cruising speed, which meant around three hundred miles an hour. It was getting cold.

It had not been exactly hot at Trapper Lake, but it had been above freezing, which was the heat of the summer for Trapper Lake. But now the temperature was well below freezing, probably close to zero. The plane cabin was equipped with a heater, one of the few gestures toward luxury which the bomber carried. And below them already there was snow and perpetual ice. The way they were going soon they would be over the Arctic Sea, and if they held their course then, out into the great section north of Bering that was marked *unexplored* on all maps.

Doc Savage continued his summary.

"Saki and his men must have known Calvin Western was coming to us for help," Doc said. "And after they caught him, Calvin Western doubtless scared them. Western is clever. He wanted us to help. So he would try to scare Saki into thinking we had learned, or might learn, what was going on.

"The upshot of that," Doc continued, "was that Saki sent the very clever Shorty here, to New York to sidetrack us. Shorty did so. He was very skillful. He surmised that a news story of the crash of Calvin Western's plane might be filed and might attract our attention. He found out a great deal about us in a hurry, found out about our news-condensing methods. How he did that is a mystery—"

Pat interrupted.

"Shorty had underworld contacts in New York, Doc," Pat said. "He mentioned that once, boastfully, while we were flying up here. He used those contacts to get a great deal of information about you. He was proud of his skill and speed."

Doc Savage thought of the complicated and ingenious scheme which Shorty had evolved to keep them from getting the days news report, and afterward in his efforts to thwart them, efforts which had climaxed in the successful seizure of Pat.

"He *was* clever," Doc said.

Monk put in, "They put Corporal Osgood's radio on the kibosh so he couldn't answer. Then they used their own radio, the one in the plane yonder, in place of the corporal's outfit. That's how they received our messages of inquiry and sent the fake answers." Monk hesitated, scratched his head. "Wait a minute! Those messages were different. They must have landed a man at the nearest telegraph office to intercept telegrams."

"Probably," Doc agreed.

Ham Brooks said, "That seems to clear up the picture, as much of it as we can see. Shorty's scheme fizzled, and so he grabbed Pat as a hostage and lit out here. He didn't expect us to follow."

Monk growled. "We got here and they killed that flying thing that had been in Calvin Western's plane. Now they're headed back where they came from." Monk peered at them uneasily. "You suppose there'll be more of them flying babies in the place?"

No one ventured an opinion.

It got still colder. They were over Beaufort Sea, over the pack ice. The air was clear. Night had gone and there was no haze. The pack ice below was an expanse of white without beginning or end, with few leads of open water. They were like blue steel where they appeared, almost black against the white of the ice.

Johnny looked at the thermometer and voiced his inevitable, "I'll be superamalgamated." He looked at the girl, Ga, who was dressed for a tropical jungle. "It's forty below outside," he said. "If we crack up down there we'd freeze to death."

Ham had been watching the ice through a pair of glasses which he had found. "If we have to land down there we won't need to worry about freezing," he said, impressed by the dog-fang nature of the ice pack.

Pat went to Ga.

"Cold?" she asked.

The girl looked at her. Ga was frightened, the way a person with a limitless courage can become frightened.

Pat got blankets—they were Japanese army blankets—and wrapped them around Ga. Ga was grateful. She said something in her not unmusical, but completely mystifying language. Her tone was friendly.

Pat pointed a finger at herself. "Pat," she said carefully and distinctly. "Pat." She pointed her finger at the other girl, said, "Ga."

Ga broke into a smile. She touched herself. "Ga," she said.

"Now we're getting some place," Pat said. "I'm going to see what we can work out in the way of a mutual language."

"Good idea," Doc Savage agreed. He went back to the controls, to the interminable business of following Saki's plane out into the unknown waste of the arctic.

Chapter VIII. A WORLD LOST

It was hours later, long enough afterward for them to have become astonishingly hungry, when Johnny Littlejohn put the binoculars on the horizon ahead and said, "A Sisypheanly onerous obstruence."

"I guess you mean trouble," Monk said. "Gimme those glasses a minute." The homely chemist put the binoculars to his eyes, frowned. "Clouds," he said. "That'll make it tough, following those guys ahead."

Doc Savage made no comment. But he went back and ripped Shorty's gray coat off and tore it up the back, and put his arms through the sleeves. While he sat in the seat it would do. He also put on Shorty's hat.

“The rest of you keep down,” he warned.

The plane ahead had slowed up in order to allow the distance between the two craft to close.

More slowly than they had expected, the cloud bank ahead heaved up. It grew, magnifying itself, until they suddenly realized that the cloud bank stood at least six thousand feet in the sky, packed like soiled cotton.

Doc Savage, who had studied meteorology extensively, and who was familiar with arctic weather conditions, eyed the cloud bank.

(Doc Savage maintains a hideout in the remote arctic, west of Greenland, a spot called his Fortress of Solitude, to which he goes whenever he has free time for intensive work and study and experiment.)

“Monk,” he said. “You have seen arctic cloud formation. Strike you as being anything peculiar about those clouds?”

Monk admitted he had been thinking something of the sort. “Those are clouds caused by a sharp differential in temperature, warm and moist air hitting very cold air suddenly and condensing,” he explained. “I hardly expected anything of the kind in this section.”

Doc Savage nodded in agreement. “We are over what is popularly supposed to be a great waste of ice, where there would be no sharp change in temperature,” he said. “As a matter of fact the temperature outside the plane has not varied more than five degrees in the last six hours.”

“Funny,” Monk said, frowning at the clouds.

The clouds had heaved up now like a mountain chain. The height of the mass was about what they had estimated before, five to six thousand feet. The width of the mass, as nearly as they could estimate, which was within ten miles or so of correct, appeared to be about forty miles. Farther on the cloud bank might be either more wide or more narrow.

The plane ahead climbed sharply. It was evident that the craft was going over the clouds.

“Get down,” Doc warned a second time. “We are going to have to pull up close to them.”

Monk asked, “You think this batch of clouds is their destination?”

Doc said, “We will soon know.”

The clouds were under them, packed thick and dark it seemed, although actually they were probably far from being as impenetrable or as opaque as they seemed. The planes dropped lower over the nodular masses. The ship ahead seemed to know where it was going.

Then Saki's plane suddenly upended its tail and dived into the mass of cloud.

Doc Savage then made one of the few serious—and stupid, he thought—mistakes of his life. He dived his own plane into the clouds. He did exactly what the other ship had done—except that he did not wait to reach the spot where the other plane had dived.

He went down into the clouds.

AND suddenly a mass of rock fanged out of the abyss of vapor. It was astounding. The earth should

have been five thousand feet below. And it should have been a great mass of flat ice.

But here in the sky was rock, and they hit it.

They hit lightly. Doc gave the motors everything, hauled back on the controls. But they hit anyway. A *s-s-sick!* noise. A propeller blade. Badly bent. There was a roaring, and a shaking as if a monster had hold of the ship as the unbalanced blade whirled. Doc shut off that motor, cut it, got it stopped. He worked with the stabilizer and the controls, getting the plane back in trim, getting it away from the stone peak which they had hit.

Monk bellowed, "Other motor's going, Doc! Vibration ripped loose an oil line!"

The bronze man said nothing, but he had seen the dark oil sheeting over the motor housing.

They had to land now.

Ham said, "Great grief! I wonder if there's any parachutes. "Has anybody looked?"

On the floor, Shorty said, "No need of wasting your time. There are none."

Monk swooped upon the gaunt, extremely tall Shorty and barked, "We came down into the clouds. We hit what looked like a rock peak."

"You came down too soon," Shorty said. "You hit the rim."

"Rim?"

"The edge, the lip," Shorty said. "There's a ring of high peaks around the place. Like a crater rim, only it probably isn't. I don't think the place was ever a volcano."

"Oh," Monk said. "Just what is it like—"

Doc Savage called sharply, "Get hold of something, everybody! Pad yourselves all you can. We are going to hit!"

The bomber was no great shakes as a glider, and the best Doc had been able to do by holding it at its flattest angle of flight was to keep from hitting the rapidly sloping sides of the mountain ring which they had hit. Now he was nearing the bottom, or at least less precipitous territory, and they would have to land.

Crash, more likely.

There was no area fit for a landing. There was only vegetation, and strange stuff at that. Plants which seemed to be about fifteen feet high, and like grass.

Doc Savage set the wing flaps at full, retarding speed of the ship as much as possible. He flattened off, leveled, did a stall, and they came down in a landing that could not have been better—except that the grasslike plants proved to be as tough and springy as bamboo, and no place for a landing, except where their necks were concerned. It was not dangerous. But it left the plane so that it would never fly again. The noise was terrific.

When they had stopped, Monk looked at Doc Savage and asked, "Bad?"

"Not good," the bronze man said. "As far as the plane is concerned we might as well have hit a cliff."

They got out, climbing from the cabin hatch and stepping onto the wing and fuselage. The grass was very much like bamboo, being round and about half an inch in thickness near the base. Also very tough. The stuff had literally ripped the skin off the plane.

“Savage,” said Shorty, inside the plane.

“Yes?”

“You had better dismantle the machine guns on this ship and get them so you can fire them by hand,” Shorty said.

Monk asked him, “What's the idea?”

“You'll probably find out,” Shorty said.

It made no one any easier of mind when Doc Savage took Shorty's advice. The cockpit mounted guns—the one in the gunner's blister was not difficult to dismantle. The others, the big .50-caliber guns, were more difficult, and heavy.

While the others were working on the guns, Doc Savage stepped out on the wing to inspect their surroundings.

There was more light than he had expected, and it was evident that the clouds were only a thin layer. Furthermore, there would probably be even more light farther from the mountain range where the heights did not shut off, partially at least, the light from the low-lying arctic sun.

There was, however, a kind of fog in the place. It was not possible to see an object the size of a man at a distance much greater than two hundred yards. The fog made the place somewhat uncanny.

Doc Savage went into the plane cabin. He seized Shorty and hauled him outside.

“Shorty your name?” Doc asked.

The man shrugged. “Shorty is as permanent a name as any.”

“All right, Shorty,” Doc Savage said. “On your advice, on your honest advice, may depend our lives, including your own.”

Shorty stared at him. “That's good sense.”

“What does the place offer in the way of natural protection? Caves, or anything like that?”

“A few caves,” Shorty said. “They're the best. The thorn thickets help. But there are no thorns this far out toward the edge.”

“We are on the edge of it, then?”

“That's right.”

“Very dangerous here?”

“Not too much. Keep your eyes open. One thing bad, though, is the fact that the things out here seem to be more intelligent than the ones in toward the center.”

Doc Savage was silent for a moment. "We are going to have to trust you," he said.

"I can be trusted," Shorty said. "But I'm not a dope. The first chance I get to do myself some good I'll do it. I just tell you that as a warning. I'm not to be trusted. I could give you my word of honor, but the minute I got a chance to do myself some good I'd do it. I've always been that way. I'm not proud of it."

"Think we could trust you with a gun?" Doc asked.

"I doubt it. I would rather have a good strong flashlight. You got one?"

"I think there are three in the plane."

"Give me one. Take the other two yourself. They're better than guns."

Monk, sticking his head out of the plane, had listened to the last part of the conversation. "What do you mean, flashlight better than a gun?"

"They think the light is fire. Most of them, the ones that are able to get scared, are afraid of fire."

Monk scratched his head. "This sounds like a great place."

Doc Savage lowered his voice so that the Japanese could not hear, and asked, "What about Hashigo?"

Shorty grinned. He whispered, "Thanks for not letting him hear you ask me that. I wouldn't trust him. You can do as you like. Hashigo's code of honor seems to be about the same as Saki's—double-cross you as much as he can."

"Thank you," Doc said.

He gave Shorty one of the flashlights.

HAVING dismantled two of the machine guns—one .30 caliber and one .50 caliber, the latter quite heavy—and burdened themselves with ammunition, they quitted the plane.

As they moved away from the ship, Doc warned, "Keep closely together."

In order to be able to retrace their route without trouble if it became necessary, they placed frequent markings by thrusting twigs into the ground, pointing the direction of the back trail.

The Japanese, Hashigo, walked sullenly with them. He would say nothing. Ham caught Hashigo looking longingly at one of the machine guns and said, "You make one false move, my little descendant of an ape, and we'll kick you out to shift for yourself."

Hashigo looked frightened at that.

Doc Savage noted that the girl, Ga, seemed at home now. She did not know the exact lay of the ground, it appeared, but she knew the general character of the vegetation they were likely to encounter.

They came upon a path through the harsh, reedy grass that was actually a little like forcing a way through iron rods thrust into the earth. Monk started to follow this path, which was wide, and very hard, so hard that it did not bear traces of the feet of whatever had made it.

"*Wan, wan!*" Ga said excitedly, and gestured away from the path.

Pat said, "The word *wan* means no, in their language. Better stay off the path, Monk."

Monk looked at Shorty. "Know what made this path, long-fellow?" he asked.

"No," Shorty said. "I don't know too much about this place myself."

Monk snorted. "Well, if you think I'm going to bat my brains out on this grass—and it's not my idea of grass either—you're mistaken."

"You've just demonstrated you haven't any brains," Ham said.

Monk took the path anyway.

His pet pig, Habeas Corpus, however, followed Doc Savage and the others as they entered the grass and began a laborious progress parallel to the trail, but some distance away from it.

Monk had quite a cheerful time on the easy going of the trail. He got some distance ahead of them, scouting.

Then there was a howl from Monk. It was an unearthly howl. An impressed howl. An air raid siren could not have done better.

They scrambled madly for the trail, got near enough it to see Monk coming at full speed.

Behind Monk, not far enough behind for his comfort, came a large animal. This animal had about the height of a tall horse, but considerable more width and certainly several tons of weight. Its ears were small, it had a pronounced hump back of the neck, and dark hair which reached the ground. It had two tusks, spiral in shape, turning upward and outward, and about ten feet in length. The animal was equipped with a long elephant trunk which was extended hopefully, between the tusks, for Monk.

(It has been, and still is, our policy to avoid the fantastic and the impossible in fiction. It is almost invariably true that nothing appears in the Doc Savage stories which has not already been accomplished by scientists, at least upon a laboratory scale. For that reason, all dinosaurs and mammals appearing in this story are drawn with scientific correctness. They are dinosaurs and mammals which existed on earth during the Pleistocene, the Palaeolithic, and other time periods. Years of research by the author and other authorities were expended in order to gather scientific data which is presented in this story.)

"Help!" Monk squawled.

Doc Savage pitched forward. He had a flashlight, a powerful five-cell hand searchlight. He stabbed the beam at the monster pursuing Monk.

The light terrified the animal. It veered off to the right of the trail, seemed to forget all about Monk, and went away like a rampaging engine, snorting, the hard, brittle grass cracking like bones.

Monk stopped running, plunged into the grass and fell down, panting.

"What *was* that thing?" he gasped.

"A woolly mammoth," Doc Savage said.

"It had teeth ten feet long!" Monk exploded. "Boy, what choppers! They reached out for me like spears—hey! Hey, wait a minute. What'd you say that was?"

"Mammoth. Woolly mammoth."

Monk's face went blank. "Mammoths disappeared off this earth a billion years ago," he said.

"It was a mammoth, all right," Shorty put in dryly. "About the most harmless thing you'll find in this place."

"Most harmless, eh?" Monk said. "In that case I'm open to an offer to leave this place right now."

Chapter IX. BACK INTO TIME

DOC SAVAGE stood silent, listening, for some time. His sensitive ears picked up sounds, but they were not the sounds of a plane. They were bestial sounds, the sounds of animals, without being the sounds of any animals found in zoos.

"The plane must have landed," he said. "Saki's plane, I mean."

"I never heard the other ship after we crashed into the peak," Pat said.

Johnny the archaeologist, was jumping around excitedly, berating everybody because he didn't happen to have a camera. "A picture of that mammoth would be worth a fortune," he kept explaining. "It was a genuine woolly mammoth. The undercoat was yellowish brown wool, and the longer hair was in patches on cheeks, flanks and so on. It had the short, high, pointed skull of a genuine mammoth. Oh, if I only had a picture of it."

"You can have my picture of it," Monk said. "It's a picture I don't think I'll ever be able to get out of my mind."

Johnny finally worked himself up into such a frothing excitement that he waved his arms.

"It was a genuine pterodactyl, after all!" he yelled.

"What was? I thought you just said mammoth—"

"I mean that flying thing back at Trapper Lake," Johnny said. "The thing they blew up with the explosive in the dummy. The thing Calvin Western brought out of here in his plane. A pterodactyl! Think of it! If I ever get out of here I'm going to organize an expedition to go to Trapper Lake and find the bones of that thing. I hope the wolves don't scatter them too much. They're priceless."

"Pterodactyl?" Monk was puzzled. "You mean one of them flying what-is-its they had around in prehistoric times?"

"Exactly. A prehistoric pterodactyl."

Monk began to get as excited as Johnny. "You mean Calvin Western brought a pterodactyl out of here?"

"Of course. You've known that since we left Trapper Lake, haven't you?"

"Yes, but I didn't believe it," Monk yelled. "I figured there was a string to it somewhere. I figured we'd find a guy who had found out how to grow one of the things from an egg he'd found, or something."

Shorty laughed. "They hatch from eggs every day around here," he said.

"You mean this place is running loose with such things?"

Shorty nodded. "Such things," he said, "is a mild description."

WHEN the excitement had subsided, except for Johnny, they continued ahead. Johnny did not come back to earth at all. It was as if his archaeological and geological leash had been slipped, and he was loose in a wonder garden of science. He dashed hither and yon, almost hysterical, collecting specimens. Every bush, every different plant and grass he saw, he clutched up for a specimen. He measured mammoth tracks, other prints which he found. He tried to memorize the measurements. "I just know I'll forget this," he wailed. He became so burdened down with specimens that he could not carry them all, then howled like a kid losing candy when he had to discard them.

"The idea," Ham said. "A grown-up man."

Shorty said dryly, "I felt the same way, first time I got in here."

"The specimens would be worth a lot of money, I guess," Ham admitted.

"It's not worth as much as something else here," Shorty said—then looked as if he wished he hadn't spoken.

"What do you mean?" Ham asked.

"Nothing," Shorty said.

"You said—"

"I know what I said," Shorty told him grimly. "And it's all I'm going to say. It was too much."

Doc Savage heard the conversation but made no comment. The course they were following was taking them steadily downward, and the vegetation was changing. It was becoming more lush, and rapidly approaching the tropical. The grass, the great rank stuff which had ruined their plane, had been a harsh product of a fairly cold climate.

Now they were entering jungle. Not jungle in the accepted African sense, yet it didn't differ greatly, except that everything which grew here was on a more immense scale. And the vegetation was coarse, its color pale, as if it did not get much sunlight.

They came to a thicket of thorns. The thorn bushes were enormous, a hundred feet high, with thorns that were a yard in length, some of them. The bushes grew in a great tangle, almost a matted protection overhead.

"These were the thorns I was telling you about," Shorty said.

Ga now asserted herself, definitely, for the first time. She stopped them. She stood and harangued them in her language, saw they did not understand, and gave it up. She then made it clear that they should stop—business of standing still—and eat—business of eating—and get some sleep—eyes closed.

Doc Savage said, "It is a good idea. All of us are tired."

"But what're we gonna eat?" Monk asked.

GA seemed to have the answer to that, also. She looked them over and made more signs indicating that she wished one of them to accompany her on a hunting trip. She selected Monk for this.

“No doubt on the strength of your mammoth performance,” Ham said unkindly.

Monk was not enthusiastic.

“Me go hunting with her?” Monk said. “I dunno about that.” He peered at the surrounding jungle. “I sure dunno.”

“First time I ever saw you hang back when a pretty girl suggested a walk,” Ham said.

“Yeah,” Monk growled. “Suppose you go.”

“She didn't ask me,” Ham assured him. “And am I glad!”

Monk did some more muttering but was ashamed to back down. “All right, give me a flashlight and a machine gun,” he said. “And if anybody has got any hand grenades or anything, I'll take them, too.”

Ga, however, put a stop to the machine-gun toting. She grasped a thorn bough, swung upward, avoiding the long stickers, bounced acrobatically to another branch, then back to the ground.

“She means,” Pat translated, “that you'll be burdened down too much with the heavy machine gun. She wants you to travel light.”

“So you can run,” Ham said maliciously.

“Nuts to you,” Monk snarled. “If a girl isn't afraid, I'm not—very.”

He went off with Ga.

As soon as Monk was gone, Ham Brooks reversed himself. He became concerned. Actually, as everyone knew, Ham thought a great deal of Monk, and worried like a hen with an only chick when there was a prospect of Monk getting in trouble that might be serious.

“You think it was safe, letting Monk go off alone with that girl—that cavewoman?” Ham demanded.

Pat shook her head. “I think Monk will be safe. In fact I've noticed Ga casting thoughtful looks at Monk. I think she's falling for him.”

Ham became indignant.

“That homely gossoon,” he said, “must hypnotize the women or something. I don't understand his power.”

DOC SAVAGE asked Shorty, “Safe to have a fire?”

“Probably,” Shorty said. “It couldn't be seen far through the haze.”

Shorty seemed flattered that he had been consulted. He obviously had a high opinion of Doc Savage, a high-enough opinion that he was proud of being asked for an opinion by the bronze man. Shorty helped get the fire going, gathering wood and a particularly rank type of moss which burned like straw and made an excellent kindling medium.

After the fire was burning they stretched out on the ground and rested, waiting for Ga and Monk to return with whatever Ga had gone after for food.

Doc Savage sat near Shorty.

"I take it," he told Shorty, "that there are things you will talk about and things you won't."

Shorty looked at the bronze man thoughtfully. "You take it right."

"Is Calvin Western one of the subjects you won't talk about?"

"Yes, and no."

Doc said, "What I want to know is how Calvin Western came to land here. What heading does that come under?"

"I don't mind telling you how he got here," Shorty said. "Calvin Western is a chemist, and he was in a certain foreign country before the war started."

"I understood he was in Japan," Doc said.

Shorty shrugged. "That's right. He was doing industrial research—which he wasn't, of course. Industrial research was just a name that could mean anything. He was spying. Spying is a better word. He was doing research on poison gas, finding out what gas the Japs were making, what they had on hand, and if they intended to use it. General stuff about poison gas."

Shorty stopped talking, looked uncomfortable.

"I was helping him," he confessed, naming the thing that was making him uncomfortable. "There were five of us. Me, and them two white guys who are with Saki now, and two more who got killed when we landed here."

Shorty was grim for a moment, continued. "Well, what made us leave Japan was a simple thing. We got found out. We made it to a place on one of the northern Japanese islands where a light American navy bomber picked us up.

"The Japs had chased us. They lit out after us in Japanese planes. They chased us into the Pacific, out to sea. They kept after us. You see, the Japanese figured we had a lot of important material, including poison-gas samples, and specimens of protective masks, which we did. That stuff was something they didn't want the United States to have."

He looked at Doc Savage.

"Those gas secrets aren't any good now," he said. "That's not what all this trouble is about. This stuff I'm telling you about happened more than a year ago. The American government knows about it, because it has been used. They started using it in China."

Doc Savage nodded. "Are you working up to telling me that the Japanese bombers chased you into the unexplored section of the arctic?"

"That's it."

"It must have been a long chase."

"It was."

"How did you happen to land here?"

“We saw the clouds,” Shorty explained. The clouds hang over this place always, you know. That's why it hasn't been discovered before, we decided. The warm air from the pit, here, rises up and hits the cold air, and the moisture in it condenses to form the moisture particles that make up clouds.”

Doc Savage made a gesture of agreement, was silent.

Shorty finished, “Well, our pilot saw the clouds. The Jap planes were close. Everybody on our plane needed sleep. So we dived into the clouds, hoping to shake the Japs.”

He grimaced. “We got down under the clouds and found there was land below. So the pilot set the ship down. We knew we couldn't whip those Japs. There were three plane loads of them. Japanese navy men. So we landed. And they found us. They came right after us.

“Then they landed themselves,” he concluded, “and every one of their planes was damaged in one way or another. They thought it was grass on which they were landing and it turned out to be moss. And the damned dinosaurs finished ruining the ships before they could be gotten to safety. We were isolated here.”

“You repaired the planes?”

“Eventually.”

“How did Calvin Western escape?”

“He stole one of the planes. He and that girl, Ga. She's quite a girl, Ga is. She's one of the natives. A palaeolithic woman, or something like that.”

“Not palaeolithic,” Doc Savage said. “She is a little too high a type for that age.”

Shorty shrugged. “Well, she's good in her environment, anyway.”

He looked at Doc.

“My story ends here,” he said.

WHEN Monk Mayfair and Ga returned, Monk was elated. Gone were his earlier fears.

Monk was carrying two gray animals by their ears.

“Jackrabbits!” he announced.

Ham Brooks gasped. “Rabbits?”

“Yeah.”

“What'd you do—get scared and start running and run over them before they could get out of your way?” Ham asked.

Monk sneered at the insult. “They just sit there. One of us stands in front of them and waves arms and holds their attention. Then the other one just walks up behind them and pops them one with a rock. Some rabbit hunting, I say.”

The rabbits, and they undeniably were rabbits, were somewhat larger than any of the species which Ham

had ever seen. Their fur was thick and woolly, and their eyes rather colorless. They were somewhat coarse, as if belonging to an early phase of rabbit development. But they were unquestionably rabbits.

Johnny Littlejohn, the archaeologist, said, "Rabbits were one of the prehistoric life forms which are about the same today as they were then."

(Johnny's statement concerning the evolution of the common rabbit is the one considered correct by scientists. In prehistoric times, the rabbit developed with such creatures as the Imperial Elephant with its enormous cow-horn tusks, and the Gigantic Bison, technically known as *latifrons*, which commonly had a spread of horns of several feet. The elephant, the mammoth, the prehistoric bison, have disappeared, victims of environment, but the rabbit is a survivor. According to fossilized specimens, it is about the same physically today as it was then.)

Monk tossed his rabbits down triumphantly.

"Who can make a rabbit stew?" he demanded.

Ham grudgingly took over the job of cook, which he mentioned forcefully was not going to be any permanent duty for him.

Doc Savage watched Ga with considerable interest, wondering if she was accustomed to having her food cooked. Apparently she was.

The rabbits were not bad. They were not tough. They tasted a little more like beef than rabbit, which Monk claimed was Ham's cooking.

Later they slept. They were very tired.

Chapter X. AS MAN BEGAN

SLEEPING was not completely a simple matter, particularly when night came on. With the advent of darkness, short as the arctic night was, the multiple carnivora and dinosaur life in the place swung into action. The uproar was something fantastic.

"Like the sound track of a movie, run backward very fast," Ham said in awe.

Consequently, they lay awake listening to the strange noises that were like flutes, trumpets, deep-voiced violins, and the tac-tacs kids use on windows on Halloween night. There was one particular animal sound that fascinated Monk. It was, he claimed, as if something was beating a drum about twenty feet across.

It was not all show, either.

Ga collected a number of long sticks, around the ends of which she tied the stringy moss that would burn like straw. This made great firebrands. She kept these in readiness and kept the fire blazing brightly.

With pantomime they could not help understanding, she showed them that, if any dinosaurs came dangerously close, they were to seize the torches and frighten the monsters away. She seemed very worried. There was no doubt but that the nights here were terrible things.

"If this ain't a darned bad dream," Monk complained, "I hope I never have one."

"Man began," Doc reminded him, "in tougher times than these."

Monk had lost his appetite for sleep. He got up and promised to stoke the fire while the others napped. This was agreeable, and Monk took over.

Monk had been on duty about half an hour when he discovered a pair of large fireballs in the nearby darkness. Eyes. They weren't as large as they looked, probably. Monk studied them, guessed their distance apart, estimated the size of the creature from that, and was soothed. "Huh, another rabbit," or something.

He picked up a clod and threw it at the eyes.

The next instant Monk was jabbing torches into the fire and howling for everybody to climb trees.

The eyes of the animal were close together, but it wasn't small. It was about the size of a bull, but it was an infinitely more vengeful customer than a bull. It looked like no animal Monk had ever seen. It was like a bear, but without the head of a bear; the head was more wolfish. It had the body of a bear, but the long, bushy tail of a wolf. If wolf, lion, bear were all molded, by some alchemy, into a composition animal, and that animal blown up to a shoulder height of five feet, the result would be about like this thing.

The animal charged straight for Monk, and Monk jumped out of the way, a la toreador. The animal went straight on, through the fire—getting burned and bellowing—and on off into the night without turning or offering to come back.

Ham said disgustedly, "The animals here have got the funniest dispositions. You can't tell what they're going to do at all."

Johnny said, "Just figure on them doing what anything with little or no brains would do. Most of them have embryonic brains, and some of the brain matter is not even a brain at all, but brain tissue that is part of the spinal cord."

"Never mind the lecture," Monk said. "What was that thing that just went through here?"

Johnny looked at Doc Savage. "Doc, would you say it was a creodont?"

"Apparently," Doc admitted.

"Creodont? What's that?" Monk demanded.

"One of the very first of the carnivorous mammals," Johnny said. "Killer animals, such as the wolf, lion, bear and so on, which evolved from the creodont are called carnivora."

(The creodont was the root stock from which other branches of killer mammals evolved, as Johnny Littlejohn stated. They were large. The explorer, Roy Chapman Andrews, found the fossilized skull of a creodont in Asia which was thirty-four inches long.)

"Then it'd eat a man?"

"It certainly would."

"What'd it just go barging straight through the camp like that for?"

"Because it didn't have brains enough to chase anybody. It has an embryonic brain."

"Monk should be able to understand embryonic brains," Ham said.

"This is a poor time for your sass," Monk informed Ham.

Things settled down and they finally got some sleep. After daylight came, at the end of the short night, much of the dinosaur uproar in the weird lost world subsided and they were able to get something resembling rest.

THEY had more rabbit for breakfast. It was not quite as delicious as it had been the night before, and Ham claimed it was because rabbit wouldn't wear as a diet, but Monk maintained it was Ham's cooking.

Doc Savage said, "We have no time to lose. Saki and his men probably landed somewhere, and we should locate them as soon as possible. Before they find us if we can."

"Maybe Shorty, here, can tell us where they landed," Ham suggested.

"He won't," Shorty said.

"Ham, Monk and Pat will remain here," Doc said. "Johnny and Ga and I will go on a scouting expedition."

For once, Monk and Ham did not complain about being left behind, where there was no excitement. As Monk privately confessed, it wasn't the excitement he was fed up on as much as it was these dinosaurs. He'd got enough of dinosaurs, he claimed, at Trapper Lake.

Through the medium of sign language, and such words of Ga's language as Pat had been able to learn, they conveyed the purpose of their expedition to Ga. She signified that she understood by nodding. Pat had taught her that a nod was the signal of affirmative.

Before they left, Ga picked up several thorn boughs and thrust them into the soft earth with the thorny ends outermost. Then she drew a large circle with the campfire as a center.

"Thinks we had better build us a thorn fence, like they do in Africa," Monk said. "I think she's got something there."

Doc Savage, Johnny Littlejohn and Ga set out. Johnny carried a rifle, the machine guns being too heavy for handy packing. Doc carried only such gadgets as he had on his person. He rarely carried firearms.

Ga was unarmed. But, as soon as they were away from the camp, she tugged at Doc's arm and pointed to the east.

"Wants to go that way," Johnny said. "She seems to know this place."

Doc and Johnny trailed Ga. They went slowly, stopping often to listen. Their ears, they were finding, were a better means of locating danger than any other sense. The haze, which was about the same today as it had been yesterday, made vision unsure. And the manifold odors of the prehistoric jungle around them was a confusing conglomerate that defeated their civilization-dulled olfactory organs. Even Doc, whose sense of smell had been highly developed as a part of his scientific training, was not able to do much good.

They soon found out where Ga was going.

She climbed a large tree. They followed her up, Doc with ease, Johnny with more difficulty and using his big words as if they were cusswords.

Lashed high in a fork of the tree was a bundle enclosed in a skin that was wrapped flesh-side out and

heavily greased. Ga opened this. It contained a bow and a quiver of arrows.

Ga exhibited the bow and arrows proudly. Doc took them, examined them. The workmanship was good, and considerable science of archery had been applied to the manufacture of the bow.

It was a longbow type, made of some wood resembling osage orange, backed with rawhide. Doc nocked an arrow, tried the pull, and estimated it about eighty pounds, which was very heavy for a hunting bow, an enormous pull for a woman. Few civilized women could draw an arrow on such a bow. The arrows were straight, of light and firm wood, flint-tipped. They varied in length and weight, some being long flight arrows for distance, and others heavy and footed for close game. The feathering was balloon type, there were three of them, the cock feather marked plainly with some kind of dye, and the fletching feathers had all come from the same side of the bird, after the accepted fashion of good arrow-making.

Ga smiled, took the bow, nocked an arrow and let fly at a mushroom the size of a man's head which was growing a good fifty yards away. Her arrow cut the edge of the white bulb. She smiled again, handed the bow to Doc.

"She's good," Johnny said. "I can't even pull that danged bow back."

Doc took an arrow, drew and released it carefully. He was astonished when he hit the mushroom almost dead center. He was not a bad archer, but nothing less than extreme luck had enabled him to make a shot like that with a strange bow. He kept his face straight and gravely returned the bow to Ga.

She stared at him in amazement. And after that, as they went on, he noted that she was looking at him with new interest. He was embarrassed. Johnny thought it was funny.

THEY encountered something soon that was puzzling. It was not exciting, and there was no danger connected with it.

It was a squirrel. A perfectly ordinary-looking red squirrel that might have been jumping around in a Missouri woods instead of this strange place.

Johnny stopped and gawked at the squirrel.

"Now wait a minute," he said. "That's not reasonable. That's a twentieth-century squirrel. Prehistoric squirrels weren't like that one."

Doc Savage had evidently been thinking along the same line.

"The mammal and reptile life," he said, "does not seem to belong to any particular period of time in this place."

Johnny nodded emphatically.

"Yes, and that's queer," he agreed. "You take that creodont last night. Creodonts existed in the Eocene epoch, then evolved into their various branches of descendants, the bears and raccoons and weasels and so on. But that mammoth belonged to an entirely different age. Creodonts weren't on earth when mammoths were, or not that particular mammoth. And there was a modern squirrel in the same place with a creodont. The thing is screwy. This just can't be a lost world."

Doc said, "So the fact that prehistoric life forms from more than one epoch of time are here has struck you as strange?"

“Hasn't it aroused your curiosity?”

“Yes .”

“How would you explain a thing like that?”

Doc said thoughtfully, “This place is shut off from the world. First, by the impassable waste of the arctic ice pack. Second, by the mountain ring, although we do not know whether or not that is impassable. Warmth comes from some source, probably by volcanic or hot-spring nature. That means the place is shut off from the world, a natural preserve for prehistoric life forms.”

“Yes,” Johnny said, “but why is the animal and reptile life here from the Eocene, the Oligocene, the Tertiary and other epochs? That's screwy.”

“It is strange.”

Johnny insisted, “If this place got shut off in, say, the Eocene epoch, all the animals here should belong to that epoch. There shouldn't be woolly mammoths from some other age a few million years farther along in time, to say nothing of squirrels from this age.”

“The dinosaurs and other life,” Doc reminded, “could have drifted in here at various times. At different times, at widely separated intervals.”

“In that case,” said Johnny, “why hasn't evolution had any effect on them? The creodont belonged in the Eocene epoch, because the creodont was fitted for life in the Eocene epoch. The brontosaurus—and I think I saw the track of one of those back there—belonged in the Tertiary epoch, the Age of Mammals. The brontosaurus was Tertiary because he was fitted for life in the Tertiary.”

(Brontosaurus was a gigantic vegetarian dinosaur, and because of its size it probably stands forth most prominently to the average person. Best fossil specimens have come from the Upper Jurassic Epoch deposits in Wyoming. It reached a length in excess of seventy feet, and had a neck and tail of enormous length. It liked water, was semi-aquatic. Being a vegetarian, it was a comparatively harmless monster.)

Johnny held up a hand triumphantly.

“Now the climate and vegetation in this place isn't Eocene or Tertiary, either one. It's before that. It's before the Eocene, even. In such an age you should find only the primitive forms of life beginning, the amoebas and such things. What is this? Is evolution screwy?”

Doc Savage was silent a moment. “There is a possible explanation.”

“What?”

“Suppose these prehistoric life forms drifted here during different epochs and remained as they were,” Doc said.

“But they wouldn't remain as they were. What's evolution for?”

“Suppose there was something that arrested evolution?”

Johnny scratched his head. “There isn't anything that will stop evolution that I've heard of.”

Doc made no comment. He dropped the subject.

THEY went on about their main job, which was that of finding where Saki had landed.

Doc said carefully to Ga, several times, “Saki. Saki.” He decided that the girl did not understand. But, when he gave his face the cast of a Japanese, pulling his eyes into a slant, assuming the general expression of an ape which Saki resembled, the girl nodded rapidly.

Ga, pointing, indicated they should go to the southeast.

Doc said, “We had better make her understand we intend no good for Saki, and vice versa.”

The bronze man went through various beating and throat-cutting motions, and Ga seemed to comprehend that, too. She drew a quick, and fairly accurate, likeness of Saki on the soft ground, then stamped and beat it into unrecognizability.

“She understands, all right,” Johnny said.

They came shortly to the shore of a lake, and Johnny was elated. He was tired of getting his drinking water out of leaves—there seemed to be frequent showers in the place, but these were all very light, and there were few running streams—and he dashed forward to drink.

He took one mouthful then blew out the water.

“Phoe-e-e!” he said. “An ultra-malodorous degustative acrimoniousness.”

Some of the words were semi-coined on the spur of the moment, something Johnny seldom did, but they expressed the taste of the water.

It wasn't exactly wonderful, that taste.

Ga seemed surprised. She smiled and drank to show them that the water was all right. They were impressed, but not persuaded.

Ga proceeded, following the shore of the lake.

“I get it,” Johnny said. “Saki landed his plane on the lake surface. Their camp is somewhere along the shore.”

Doc Savage nodded. It was a logical supposition.

They had not proceeded far when Johnny noticed a mound of sand—the lake beach was sand, like the shore of any other beach—and pointed.

“I wonder if that could be turtle eggs under that mound?” he said. “You know, some fresh turtle eggs wouldn't make a bad meal.”

Johnny hurried forward.

Doc Savage eyed the beach sand.

“Wait!” he shouted. Then, “Run!”

But he was a little too late.

THE sand mound came to life, exploding upward. It was merely sand piled over a hole.

A man came out of the hole. Not a Japanese. Not a white man. This one had a leathery hide, a round face that was all animal mouth, two holes for nostrils, no forehead to spare. What the face lacked the body made up. It was an amazing body for muscularity. Animal muscles. But the creature was definitely a man.

Johnny stood there gawping and thought, "Great zanies! A prehistoric man!" Then the fellow got hold of him.

More sand mounds were exploding. The prehistoric men seemed to have been hiding everywhere along the beach. Doc had seen their footprints too late for his warning yell to Johnny to change events.

The beach men piled upon Doc as he tried to get Johnny free. They had weapons, but they dropped them, leaped upon the bronze man with bare hands. They did not seem to know how to use their fists. But their knowledge of wrestling was not small. And their strength was enormous, the weakest of them being nearly as strong as Doc himself.

Ga screamed. It was the first time she had shown genuine, uncontrollable terror.

The scream, the knowledge that the courageous Ga was that afraid of these bestial prehistoric fellows, was more of a shock to Doc than the surprise attack.

That, and the knowledge that they were caught. For Doc, Johnny and Ga were almost at once overpowered. They were held helpless.

One of the prehistoric men who was larger than the others, and by that right apparently leader, walked to his weapons.

He picked up a great club and came toward the prisoners with grim purpose.

Chapter XI. SKUNKS AND SKUNKS

MONK MAYFAIR, Ham Brooks, Pat Savage, Habeas the pig and Chemistry the chimp, all waited twelve hours in the thicket of great thorn trees. They kept Shorty and Hashigo under close guard.

At the end of twelve hours they were in a sweating worry.

"Something happened to 'em," Monk declared.

Shorty did not help their peace of mind when he said, "I don't want to lay any crêpe, but you guys better be doing something."

The upshot of it was that they decided to break camp and set out in search of Doc and Johnny and Ga.

"What could have happened to them?" Monk asked Shorty.

"Saki," Shorty suggested. "And, incidentally, Saki is one of the less pleasant things this place holds."

They kept in a group, not too close together, in case some monster charged them unexpectedly, and moved out into the gray haze that passed for daylight under the cloud-capped crater, if crater it was.

Because they did not know the lay of the ground they encountered much tough going. Particularly aggravating was a thicket of stunted palms which they encountered, the needled tips of these making disagreeable going.

In about an hour they came to a stream of boiling water. The water was surprisingly hot, giving off great quantities of steam which hung above the brook, so that the thing looked from a distance like a large gray snake crawling along the earth.

Ham tested the earth with his hand from time to time, and discovered it always warm, hot in some spots.

Shorty watched him, said, "You've got it right. The place is a nature-made hotbed."

"Warm all over?"

"Most all over."

They moved along the steaming creek for some distance and found a great spring where the thing originated. This was pit-shaped, and standing near they could hear the great gurgling of the subterranean channels through which the steam was blown out. "Like a geyser," Pat said.

"Sure, girlie," Shorty said. "Like in Yellowstone and New Zealand."

"Don't call me girlie," Pat said. "Call me Pat, or keep your information to yourself."

Shorty grinned. "O. K." He added sincerely, "Sorry. You're all right."

"You're all right, too," Pat said, "in some ways."

"But not in all ways," Shorty said dryly.

MONK met the black animal in a thicket of overgrown plants, great, broad-leaved things which resembled magnified weeds. The homely chemist was scouting off to the right, and he spied the creature deeper in the shadows.

The animal was not very large, which was what fooled Monk.

"Here's something," he called. "Maybe it's something that'd make a better stew than rabbit."

He ventured forward boldly. The animal stared at him, apparently not afraid, but not looking as if it exactly welcomed his presence.

"Another one of these dumb clucks," Monk declared, pleased. "I'll just walk around behind and bop it one."

The animal was somewhat more than knee-high, thick-bodied, with long hair that was black with here and there a messy-looking white patch.

The others watched Monk vanish into the shadows to the rear of the animal.

An instant later, Monk emitted the most ungodly howl of which he was capable, and came tearing out of the overgrown weed patch.

"Oh, my!" he wailed. "Oh, my! What's happened to me?"

Pat took one whiff, doubled over with laughter. Ham also burst into screams of mirth. "This is wonderful!" Pat gurgled.

"What's so damned funny!" Monk bellowed. "I've been gassed or something! How do you know I ain't gonna die?"

Pat indicated the animal. "That thing," she said, "must be an early mephitic."

"What's a mephitic?" Monk demanded. "And where do you get off, using words I don't understand? It's bad enough to have Johnny going around doing that."

Pat doubled over again with hysterical laughter. "I happen to know what a mephitic is because a perfume salesman came into my beauty parlor last week and bored me to death with a lecture about the various perfumes which nature makes."

"Well, what's a mephitic?"

"Any type of animal ejecting malodorous fluid," Pat said. "Skunk, to you."

Monk held his nose. "Skunk," he said.

The others turned and ran to get away from the odor which Monk now bore.

"It ain't funny," Monk kept protesting angrily as he sulked after them.

THE odor which Monk now carried proved to be somewhat of an asset, though. A number of large dinosaurs fled as soon as they caught the odor. They were afraid of the scent, obviously. Monk muttered that they had nothing on him; he didn't care to have much more to do with it, either.

Pat said, "The perfume salesman told me that mephitics are one of the few animals which do not have protective coloration which blends in with their natural surroundings. As you know, the skunk is about the only animal in the United States which is coal black, and does not merge at all with its habitat. Most other animals are camouflaged by nature."

"I've heard enough about mephitics, if you don't mind," Monk said sourly.

A few minutes later, Habeas Corpus, the pig, redeemed himself. Habeas didn't need redeeming in Monk's opinion, but Ham Brooks had been maintaining for some time that the runt hog was utterly worthless, serving no purpose except to make his owner, Monk, look somewhat more silly than normal as the pig followed him around.

They came to the lake. Habeas ventured out on the beach. He went to what looked like a loose pile of sand, rooted inquisitively. Then Habeas whirled and ran, grunting in alarm.

Monk, Ham, Pat and the two prisoners dived out of sight.

They stared from concealment at the cavemanlike individual who got indignantly out of the pile of camouflaging sand which Habeas Corpus had disturbed. The prehistoric man, in a dudgeon, threw rocks at Habeas, after which he went back to camouflaging himself in the sand again.

"By Jove!" Ham gasped. "Look at those other sand piles. The beach is loaded with those cavemen or sand men, or whatever they are."

"They didn't see us," Pat said.

"Thanks to Habeas," Monk declared proudly. "Good old Habeas."

Shorty asked dryly. "You want to know what those guys are in the sand?"

“Sure.”

“We call 'em the sand men,” Shorty explained. “They live in caves in the cliffs, but the hunters work the beach. They bury themselves like that, and wait for animals to come out of the jungle, or out of the water. That's the way they hunt. They're bad cookies.”

Monk eyed him. “What do you mean—bad cookies?”

“How'd you like to be caught by Saki?”

“Not so hot.”

“You'd be a lot better off,” said Shorty, “than if those guys got you.”

“How come?”

“These sand men,” Shorty explained, “aren't kind to prisoners. First, they take out your eyes and dry them and make charms out of them. Then they skin you alive. Not all at once. Just a big patch at a time. They prize human hide off a living victim very highly. Don't ask me why.”

“I won't ask you.” Monk said, and shuddered.

“Take my advice,” Shorty said, “and make a big circle around this place.”

They did not need the advice.

SHORTY was clever. They had forgotten what a mind he had. The excitement, the strangeness of the lost world, had made them forget.

Also the near encounter with the sand men had excited them.

So Shorty led them into a trap without the least difficulty. Shorty had luck. He merely walked with them and acted just as he had been acting, which was nothing to arouse suspicion. But he managed to subtly guide them to the right, then along the base of a hill where there was open ground.

Saki's camp was on top of the hill and his sentries could easily spot them crossing the glade.

They found that out too late, when Shorty turned casually to face them and say, “I hated to do this. Believe me, I did. But there is too much money in it for me to do anything else.”

Then the Japanese came out of the jungle. Two of them leaped into view with a .50-caliber machine gun, which they wildly planted on the ground. A third Japanese sprang to man the gun.

Saki himself jumped out.

“*Ki wo tsukero!*” Saki exploded, speaking Japanese in his excitement. He changed to English, said, “Be careful! Do not move!”

They stood frozen.

“There's no percentage in an argument with a .50-caliber machine gun,” Ham said warningly.

So they stood still, let themselves be disarmed. Saki was elated and ran around slapping faces and spitting to show his contempt.

“Nice,” Monk snarled.

“You better be glad the sand men didn't get you,” Shorty said.

Shorty and Hashigo were released by Saki's men. Hashigo at once launched into a harangue to Saki in Japanese. Pat, Monk and Ham guessed the nature of the monologue from its manner and tone. Hashigo hadn't approved of the way Shorty had conducted himself while a prisoner.

Shorty disclosed that he spoke Japanese. He said something calmly and fluently. Saki grinned. Hashigo looked crestfallen.

“I just told him I guided you into this trap,” Shorty confided to Monk and the others.

“You skunk!” Monk said.

“You're a great one to be calling anybody skunk, the way you smell,” Shorty said cheerfully. “Anyway, like I told you, I can't be trusted. It's man eat man around here. Everybody for himself. I'm doing all right for myself, I think.”

Saki understood this and seemed to approve.

Chapter XII. CALVIN WESTERN

SAKI'S camp was on the hill. Rather, it was on top of the stone monolith which capped the hill. The thing had towered up to such a height that they had not noticed from below what it was like. It was hidden in the haze.

Pat stared at the place, said, “Ever see the Devil's Tower, in Wyoming? It's something like this, only this is not nearly as large.”

Access to the top was through a freak of nature, a long channel affair worn down through the stone by centuries of rain and weather. Inside this there were steps carved in the stone.

Ham, eyeing the steps, said, “These things are old. They weren't built yesterday.” He frowned. “They look as if they've been here hundreds of years.”

This was obvious, and Shorty said, “Sure. Sure. Saki chased the regular inhabitants out.”

“Sand men?” Ham asked.

“Not them guys,” Shorty said. “The caves of the sand men are like the caves of animals. These were Ga's people.”

“How many different tribes of human beings are in this place?”

“Just the two.”

“They seem to belong to completely different eras of time.”

“Sure. That was because they drifted in here during different time epochs.”

Saki said something loud and violent, evidently an order not to talk to the prisoners, and finished with a snarled command to,

“Achi ike! Achi ike!”

They climbed upward and came to the flat top where there were crude huts of stone, clean enough except where Saki and his men had disarranged them.

“I know what *achi ike* means,” Monk ventured. “That’s one pair of Japanese words I do know. It means scam! Get the heck away.”

“Shorty isn’t a bad guy,” Pat said.

“Neither is strychnine, unless you swallow it,” Monk said.

Their destination proved to be a long hut which was strongly made and which had no windows, and with a door constructed of great timbers. The door of this was closed and the Japanese put the prisoners to work opening it. Opening the door was a considerable task.

Pat had been staring in astonishment at the basket affair of timbers which covered all the huts. The structure was crude, but of enormous strength, and it was like nothing more than a wicker-work basket inverted over the huts.

“What’s that for?” Pat demanded.

Shorty said. “Pterodactyls. Keeps ‘em from landing here and smashing things up. Like the one you met back at Trapper Lake. Flying lizards. They’re the only flying thing that is dangerous around here. Naturally, just the things that can fly can get up here.”

Saki interrupted, flying into a rage. He called Shorty things in Japanese and more things in English, and if the Japanese things were as bad as the English ones, Shorty had good basis for the coldly dead expression that came over his face.

They got the shack door open. They were shoved inside. It was intensely dark when the door rumbled shut.

Pat whispered, “Monk, you see Shorty’s face. That Saki is going to push him too far.”

“Yeah,” Monk growled. “And I’d like to push both of ‘em.”

THERE was a hole in the hut wall, apparently, and it was closed with a lid. Because now the lid was thrown back from outside and diffused light, seeming unnaturally bright here in the intense darkness, streamed in.

The light fell across a pallet of blankets on the stone floor and on a man lying on this.

Saki, careful not to come near enough the hole so that they could grab him, said, “The man on the floor is Calvin Western. He was shot at Trapper Lake. He must not die. Save him and your lives will be spared. You understand?”

Monk took off one of his shoes.

“We’re not doctors,” he said. “But we’ll do our best.”

The quiet, even, frightened voice which Monk used fooled Saki, and he forgot to keep out of range of the hole in the hut. He stepped back from the hole and they could see him.

Monk let fly with his shoe. Monk’s shoes were heavy. He threw it with complete, unadulterated

enthusiasm. With good aim, too.

Saki's feet flew into the air. He landed on his back, choking on his own teeth.

The other Japanese gathered around Saki, gobbling excitedly.

"That'll probably get you shot," Ham told Monk.

"When I get shot I want it to be for something like that, only more so," Monk declared. He was pleased with himself.

Pat was at Calvin Western's side, making an examination. The man had been shot low in the shoulder and bandaged with a certain crude first-aid skill.

Calvin Western was a man of less than fifty, but with thirty years added to his age by suffering and worry. He was not unhandsome, although there was a somewhat Oriental cast to his features which, if his hair and skin were darkened, would make him look distinctly Japanese. Normal color of his skin was very light, with freckles and the normal hue of his hair was a train-stopping red. But they could see, from the outer ends of his hair, that the hair had been dyed black.

Monk indicated the dyed hair, said, "When he was in Japan doing that research on poison gas he must have been in disguise."

Ham Brooks agreed, "Dye his hair and give his skin an olive tint, and he'd look like a Jap."

Calvin Western seemed to be unconscious.

But, when Pat said, "Let's see if the bullet went clear through him," and bent close to turn him over, Calvin Western said in a whisper, "I'm supposed to be dying. Don't give me away."

Pat hid her astonishment and whispered to the others to do likewise. She placed herself between Calvin Western and the open aperture in the hut wall through which the light came and asked, "How bad off are you?"

"I wouldn't want to turn many handsprings," Calvin Western said. "But I'm not dead." He looked at them. "You are Doc Savage's associates?"

"Yes."

"Where is Doc?"

"That's what we don't know," Pat said. "He's been missing twelve hours, along with Johnny and Ga."

Pain and uneasiness crossed Calvin Western's wasted face. "I hope the sand men didn't get them," he said. "They're worse than the dinosaurs. The dinosaurs kill you quickly."

PAT went to the window, which was what the hole amounted to, and shouted for bandages and antiseptic, hot water and hot broth.

Saki had gotten his teeth out of his gullet, but he was otherwise a mess. Rage made him shake from head to foot. But he controlled himself, surprisingly, and commanded the medical aids brought and pushed through the hole. Saki seemed to be a man who could bide his time.

Pat, Monk and Ham, forming a close group around Calvin Western, proceeded to make enough commotion over pretending to dress the man's wound to cover more conversation with Western.

Monk said, "We got part of your story, Western."

"You believe it's the truth?" Calvin Western asked.

"We got it that you were in Japan as a secret agent, and the Japs got wise to you and chased you in airplanes," Monk told him. "They chased you up into this unexplored part of the arctic, where all of you landed, and your planes were damaged."

Calvin Western said, "That is right."

"The planes were repaired eventually," Monk continued, "and you escaped with Ga in one. You were coming to get Doc Savage to help you. So you brought along a pterodactyl to convince Doc the story was straight. Saki and his men chased you, and over Trapper Lake, in Canada, they caught you and forced you down. They caught you and Ga. They sent Shorty on to New York to make sure Doc didn't get interested in the thing. But Doc got interested, partly because Shorty was too clever for his own good. And we came to Trapper Lake, managed to take over one of the planes and the crew, and followed the other plane here. We landed in this place. Doc went hunting for you and Saki and didn't come back. We went hunting Doc, and here we are, thanks to being a little dumb."

Instead of commenting, Calvin Western waited.

"That's all," Monk said.

"You've left out a lot," Western said.

"Just detail."

"No. One big fact."

Monk said. "We know something's missing from the story. Maybe Doc knows what it is. But we don't."

"What do you figure is missing?"

"The motive. The reason for it. The thing that makes the cat spit. Saki is after something."

Calvin Western was silent a few moments. His eyes were closed. "Yes," he said gravely, "Saki is after something. And if he gets it the course of the white race, of all the races on the world, are likely to be altered, and not pleasantly."

Monk studied the wounded man.

"You wouldn't be feverish?" he said. "That is a pretty big statement."

"It's a big statement—but not big enough," Calvin Western told him. "And I'm not delirious."

PAT hissed warningly, indicating one of the Japanese was sticking his head in the hole in the wall to see what was going on. Monk said, "Where's my other shoe!" and the head jerked out of sight with great haste.

Ham complained, "Monk, you have no idea how you stink from that mephitic. If you would just go over

and stand by that hole, you'd gas them into staying away.”

“Bugs to you,” Monk snarled. “Western, what is Saki after?”

Calvin Western's voice was still strong enough as he asked, “Have you fellows noticed the rather strange thing about the life in this place?”

“Strange,” Monk said, “isn't hardly a word for dinosaurs—”

“You don't understand,” Western put in. “Haven't you observed that the dinosaurs come from different time epochs?”

“Well, we're not archaeologists,” Monk said. “Johnny is the bug for that. We're doing good to recognize mammoths, creodonts, pterodactyls—”

“There!” interrupted Western. “There is an example.”

“Example of what?”

“Creodonts are from the Eocene epoch. The mammoths here are from the Pleistocene epoch. Pterodactyls are from the Upper Cretaceous age.”

“So what?”

“Those epochs were millions of years apart. The type of pterodactyl here is the tailless type, as differing from the tail type of the Lower Lias era, which existed many thousands of years earlier.”

(The fact that such prehistoric forms of life as the creodont and the mammoth were not on earth, alive, at the same time is a fact often overlooked by the casual reader of fact material about prehistoric eras. In the age of mammoths, to see a creodont would be as startling, and as impossible, as seeing a dinosaur grazing in an Indiana cow pasture today. A pterodactyl never saw a mammoth, probably.)

The pterodactyl encountered at Trapper Lake was, incidentally, the type labeled *pteranodon*, specimens of which have been taken from the Kansas chalk deposits. This one had a wing spread in excess of eighteen feet, and its head was four feet or more in length. It is believed to be the largest flying animal of time. Remarkable feature of this flying monster was its bone structure, which was fantastically light for such a thing. The bony layer of the wing bones, for instance, was about the thickness of a visiting card, only slightly thicker than a single sheet of newspaper, surrounding an air space about an inch in diameter. They could fly incredible distances, evidently, because identical type specimens have been taken by scientists from the Kansas chalk deposits and from the English chalk deposits. No bird with so remarkable a bone structure survives today. The pterodactyls had brains very similar to bird brains of today, not much larger, and they apparently did not have a sense of smell, capturing their food by sight alone.)

That was food for thought. Monk stood there scratching his head and frowning.

“We hadn't given that much thought,” he admitted. “Is it important?”

Calvin Western said, “It has to be important. Because, without an explanation, it is a geologically impossible, and evolutionary impossible state of affairs.”

Monk thought about it. “I don't see where it's important.”

Calvin Western looked defeated.

“He doesn't understand things well,” said Ham, referring to Monk.

“Lay off riding me,” Monk frowned. “What I keep thinking is: Couldn't these dinosaurs have drifted in here during different epochs of time, and just remained here. Look at the way we drifted in! If we didn't have planes, we would have to stay here, maybe.”

“We may have to stay here anyway,” Pat said pessimistically.

“Saki will take care of that,” Ham reminded her.

Calvin Western said, “Look here! What I'm telling you about different time epochs is important! These dinosaurs and animals did drift in here as you have. But when they got here evolution stopped.”

“Evolution what?” Monk asked.

“Stopped.”

Monk looked blank. “I don't get it. How you going to stop evolution? Evolution is one of those laws, kinda like gravity or something. The process of natural selection slowly weeding out the weak and keeping the strong. Law of the survival of the fittest—”

“Evolution stops here,” Calvin Western said. “And that is the cause of, our trouble. *That is what Saki is after.*”

Monk peered at the wounded man. “You better rest now,” he said gently.

Calvin Western became angry. “You think I'm delirious?”

“You're not talking sense,” Monk said. “So what else could you be but delirious.”

“I tell you the water has a substance which stops evolution—”

“What good would stopping evolution—” Monk stopped. He stared at Calvin Western. “Water,” he said. “You say water?”

“Yes. The substance in the water. I discovered—”

“In what water?”

“All of it that comes out of the earth. By evaporation it is carried up into the clouds and comes back as rain. So you can't evade it.”

Monk looked at Ham, at Pat. Monk was beginning to see that Calvin Western's talk was not senseless or delirious after all.

But one thing Monk couldn't understand.

“What good would stopping evolution do anybody?” he asked.

Calvin Western was trying to sit up in his excitement. “I isolated the compound which retards evolution,” he said.

Monk, being a chemist, was interested. He frowned. “That must have been complicated. Worse than vitamin research.”

Western nodded. “But I was lucky. I got it without much trouble, and with the portable chemical lab we

had in the plane for my gas analysis work in Japan.”

“Then, the Japanese poison gas business has nothing to do with this?”

“Nothing whatever.”

Monk said, “I don't see what stopping evolution—”

“It isn't *stopping* it,” Western said excitedly. “It's *accelerating* it!”

“Accelerating? You mean the same compound speeds up—”

“No, no,” explained Western. “Once you have a compound preventing something, you can discover the opposite, the one *causing* it. That's what I worked out. And that's what Saki wants.”

Monk sat there. So did the others. It began to come to them, then, just how important this thing was. They saw the tremendous importance of it. They realized that Western had not exaggerated when he had said it would change the peoples of the earth. There were aspects of it that were horrible to contemplate if it was misused—

SAKI came in then. His men heaved open the great door. Saki stood just inside, a long-snouted pistol in one hand, a grenade with pin pulled in his other hand. Two of his men had flashlights.

“Calvin Western and Monk Mayfair will stay here,” Saki said. “The rest of you come out.”

They hesitated. They didn't like the Japanese leader's tone.

“Come out.” Saki looked at them coldly. “Do so, or we will be compelled to shoot you here, instead of outside.”

Pat blanched. “Shoot us?”

Saki bowed a little. His viciousness was polite and somehow in keeping with the man.

“What possible need do I have for you alive?” he asked.

It was a frightening question. The answer made it frightening. He had no use for them. In fact, he was much safer without them.

“Mr. Mayfair is a chemist,” Saki said. “Therefore I shall keep him alive. He can assist Calvin Western. Perhaps Mr. Mayfair is an even better chemist than Mr. Western. In case Mr. Western should unfortunately die, Mr. Mayfair can carry on.”

They stared at Saki in horror.

“You can't do a thing like that!” Pat blurted foolishly.

Saki showed his teeth. “It seems I will have to demonstrate how wrong you are,” he said. He lifted his gun without emotion.

Chapter XIII. PLAN OF DEATH

DOC SAVAGE returned the grimace of the beetle-browed leader of the sand men with a fierce look of his own. He was fastened, along with Johnny and Ga, by many turns of a tough vine. Their bindings were not knotted, a simple knot apparently being beyond the intelligence of their captors.

The sand man—his name seemed to be Od, which was the sound by which the others addressed him—grabbed up a formidable club. He made a rush at Doc and brought the club down on the sand, grazing Doc's head narrowly. The blow would have killed any living thing, probably. It was terrific.

Doc showed no emotion.

Od was disgusted. He had been pulling the club show repeatedly, having started it on the beach. He was trying to terrify the captives.

So far, Od had scared only Johnny. Johnny was frankly scared, and he saw no reason for not admitting it. He was so scared anybody could tell he was terrified anyway, he told them.

“He's liable to miss with that club,” Johnny mumbled.

“Not until he is ready to do so,” Doc predicted. “He is very good with that club, you will have to admit.”

It was now broad daylight. They had been prisoners throughout the night, but had been left alone during the hours of darkness. Their hairy, muscular, beetling captors had been rather pitiful during the night. The sand men were in abject, pitiful terror of the darkness, and the prehistoric monsters which prowled therein.

Now Doc and the other two had been dragged out of the caves onto a sand-floored ledge on the face of the cliff which contained the caves. The ledge was nearly a hundred feet above the jungle, too high for any dinosaur to reach, probably. The path to it was very narrow. The sand men were probably able to cope with any creature small enough to climb the path.

The sand men had a language. It was a primitive thing, a few sounds that were simple. Gestures and facial contortions finished out their vocabularies, apparently.

Doc had been paying close attention to their language.

Now, finally, he felt he knew enough of it to pull a simple trick which he felt should do them some good.

Od stood beside Doc. Od had rested his club on the ground and was leaning on it as if it was a cane.

Doc faced slightly toward the club and used ventriloquism.

He said, as nearly as he could in the sand-man language, “I am hungry.” It was one of the simple phrases he had heard. At least it meant something about hunger.

Od didn't realize, at first, that the club apparently was speaking. One of his fellows called his attention to it.

“I am hungry,” the club said again.

It took a second or two for Od's brain to connect up. Then he let go the club and jumped, flat-footed, all of a dozen feet.

Doc had the club speak another simple phrase.

The sand men gathered around and ogled the club.

Doc said, "Do not move, Johnny. No telling how they will take this."

The bronze man then used a cutting blade which he kept in a trick shoe heel, slashed through the vine which bound him and stood up. To the sand men, who were experienced with nothing sharper than a flint chip, his escape probably smacked of magic also.

The sand men scattered hastily as he stood erect, but they did not go far. They stood in a rough semi-circle about twenty feet away and watched Doc with open mouths.

THE bronze man's follow-up trick was fairly simple, but effective. He knew he had to deal with simple things which the sand men understood. Food was one, and he had used that. Fire was another.

So now he made the end of Od's club burst into flame. He did it by placing cotton—fuel-saturated cotton—from his automatic lighter on top of the club and striking a spark to it. He did this with some misdirecting mumbo-jumbo to make it look mysterious.

The sand men retreated several yards.

Doc stooped quickly, not taking his eyes off them, and freed Johnny. "Get Ga loose," he said.

Johnny muttered, "They're sure dumb bunnies. When they caught us by hiding in the sand I figured they must be pretty slick. The sand trick must be the only one they know." He freed Ga.

Ga had been abused by Od, and she picked up the nearest rock and started for Od. Johnny stopped her. "Here, here, we're using a different system, sister," he told her. She didn't understand his words, but the meaning soaked in. She subsided.

Doc Savage proceeded to work with the sand men much as if he was training animals. He got them to line up at his gestured instructions. They caught on to simple hand gestures easily.

"What's the purpose of that?" Johnny asked. "I believe we'd better clear out of here now. They'd let us, I think."

Doc Savage shook his head. "I have a scheme," he said, "that may be of help."

"Against Saki, you mean?"

"Yes."

Doc continued with his work on the sand men. They were not intellectual giants, but his exhibitions of fire and ventriloquism had gripped them as by a spell.

What made his hold on them complete was his annihilation of a large and ferocious dinosaur, a specimen which Johnny identified as a *Tyrannosaurus rex*, a carnivorous quadruped which resembled an enormous alligator walking on two large rear legs. Johnny claimed the creature was smaller than scientists had claimed the *Tyrannosaurus rex* had been, but it was as large as Doc cared to see them come.

Doc used a hand grenade on the thing. The explosion was tremendous, and blew the head of the thing to fragments. The body, however, took some time to become still in death, due to the sluggish nervous system.

(Sluggish nerve system was, scientists agree, one of the peculiarities of most prehistoric dinosaurs. Due to their primitive brains, it was quite possible some of them had bodies which would remain alive for hours

after being separated from their brains, the way the tail of a snake twitches until sundown.)

After that he had no difficulty whatever making the sand men do what he directed.

TWO hours later they stood in the edge of the jungle and looked up at the towering hill, capped by the great stone monolith, on which Saki was encamped in the former home of Ga's people.

"Wait here," Doc told Johnny and Ga. He conveyed the command to the sand men.

The bronze man took to the trees—this impressed the sand men also, because they frequently clambered into the jungle tops and swung along like apes—and made a careful circle, reconnoitering.

He located Saki's plane. It was on the beach of the lake, surrounded by a tall stockade of thorns. Fires were burning just inside the stockade, busily attended by two Japanese watchmen.

Doc was returning to the monolith-capped hill when he had a piece of luck. He discovered a figure walking in the jungle. Doc swung into the trees, followed cautiously, and learned it was Shorty. Doc moved ahead, positioned himself on a bough above the trail, let the man come below and dropped behind him. Shorty squawked in horror. Then, recognizing his captor, and the futility of resistance, he relaxed.

"Damn!" Shorty said. "Guess it's a good thing you got me. I was worked up too much to think, and the first dinosaur that came along would've found me easy meat."

Doc stared at him. "What is wrong?"

"Saki," said Shorty bluntly, "is going to shoot the prisoners. That's a little more than I can stomach."

"Shoot them?"

"Sure. First, he's going to scare Monk into using his chemical skill on that evolution-accelerating compound. Then, after Monk does that, Saki is going to shoot them all anyway."

Doc Savage was silent but his trilling sound, the small note that was his unconscious gesture of surprise, was audible for a while.

"Something to speed up evolution," he said.

Shorty nodded. "Yeah. Sounds goofy. What the stuff does isn't exactly speed up evolution. It just makes the individual more capable of adaptation to environment."

Doc said, "Evolution has been stopped here. Not speeded up."

"I know," Shorty said. "But Calvin Western found what slowed it up, then worked out what would accelerate it from that. His formula uses the speed-up chemical, but changes it just a little with some refining process."

"Saki has the formula?"

"No. Western has it. It's in Western's brain. He won't tell it. But Saki is going to get it."

"If Western won't talk—"

“Monk Mayfair could work it out then,” Shorty growled. “If Calvin Western could figure out what it was with the limited chemical equipment he had available, it wouldn't be any job for a chemist like Monk, or like yourself.”

Shorty spread his hands disgustedly.

“And if neither Western nor Mayfair will give Saki the secret,” he finished, “Saki will just kill them both. Then he'll fly to Japan, and return with Japanese scientists capable of doing the job. Saki's got the hole card any way you look.”

THE bronze man made no other comment, asked no more questions. He did not tie Shorty, but he gagged him thoroughly. Then he took his prisoner back to where he had left Johnny, Ga and the sand men.

Doc was thoughtful as he walked. This compound, this evolution-accelerator, was a fantastic thing. It seemed a little unreal, but then new things were frequently like that, like something magical. Vitamins had been like that when first discovered.

The thing had sinister possibilities in the hands of a race dominated, like the Japanese at the moment, by a governing clique hungry for power. The war lords were preaching super race to their people. The German leaders had done that. Just the preaching of a doctrine of super race had contributed to a war that cost millions of lives.

Here, incredibly, was something that would actually build a super race. If the stuff was taken and used on only one people, the Japanese for example, the result would be years and possibly centuries of frightful bloodshed. The inferior peoples would not let themselves be dominated readily. There would be war, unending war. And after that, slavery for ages.

The bronze man was very sober when he joined Johnny, Ga and the sand men.

Shorty looked as if he wanted to faint when he saw the sand men. He lost color and began shaking.

Doc removed Shorty's gag, warning, “Try to shout and it will not be pleasant.”

Shorty stared at the sand men and shuddered. “How'd you tame these guys? You may not know it, but the Japs are scared square-legged of 'em.”

Doc ignored the question. “We are going to tie and gag you,” he said. “Behave yourself and we will take care of you.”

Shorty licked his lips. “I'm sure well-behaved, then.”

Doc turned to Johnny. “Take off your outer clothing,” he directed.

Johnny glanced uneasily at Ga.

“You can leave some on,” Doc told him.

Johnny nodded. “You got an idea?”

“Yes,” Doc said. “Empty your pockets. I want particularly to know what we can assemble in the way of gas grenades. We should have a few small ones.”

"I've got some," Johnny said. Then he grinned. "I think I see your idea. I'll be superamalgamated!"

Chapter XIV. THE TROJAN'S SUIT

SAKI was proud of himself, standing with fists on his hips, breathing deeply of the outdoor air on top of the monolith, and listening to the distant rumbling which a dinosaur was making.

"That Monk, the fool, is at work," he said.

He had said that before. He had said a great deal more, boastingly, to two of his men who were with him. He had told them what a great man he would be in Tokyo, and in the history of the Japanese race. They would also be great, of course, he had assured his two men. But not as great as he, Saki, for he had discovered and secured for the mikado the fabulous secret that would enable Nippon to dominate the world.

It was quite typical talk for Saki, for he was a power-hungry man of the war class, the type which had brought on the war that had been so hard on the Japanese people as a whole.

Saki seemed about to start an elaboration of his speech of self-approval when a shout came up from below.

It was a guard. He wanted Saki immediately.

Saki hurried down the steps, reached the bottom out of breath. His eyes bugged.

"Shoot them!" he screamed.

The half dozen sand men standing under the muzzle of the guard's gun stared at Saki dumbly and hatefully.

"*Go men nasai!*" the guard said hastily, giving the usual preface of politeness which the Japanese use. "Excuse me. But they bring something of much interest."

"What?"

"These clothes," the guard said. "They belonged to Doc Savage and Johnny Littlejohn. See! This document was in the outside pocket."

"Don't shoot them!" Saki bellowed. "Where did they get the clothes?"

The guard looked helpless. "We do not speak their language. Their talk is only grunts and hisses and gobbles."

Saki explained, and not at all gently either, that he considered his subordinates the offspring of pigs, and beheaded pigs at that, and that if they had any initiative at all some of them would have learned to speak the sandman tongue. Did he, Saki, have to do everything? He went into that to some extent.

"Bring them up to the top of the rock," he snarled. "We will see what we can get out of them."

The half dozen sand men were not happy about being taken up to the top of the rock. They feared the place, which was probably a tribute to the fighting ability of Ga's people, who had inhabited the aërie before the coming of Saki. The sand men liked even less having their weapons—short, primitive spears without tips, but with the ends hardened by burning, and clubs—taken away from them.

They climbed sullenly to the top of the stone block. They stood under the big protective basket, protection against the pterodactyls, or flying lizards, which was made of timbers, none less than the thickness of a man's body.

“All right,” Saki said. “make them talk.”

“They talk now,” protested the guard. “They talk incessantly, but to none of our understanding.”

Saki scowled. “Wait. I will look through the clothing,” he said. “There may be some indication there as to what happened to Doc Savage and Johnny Littlejohn.”

For a man who came from a clique in Japan which had for generations considered trickery and deceit a code of honor, Saki was remarkably gullible about opening the packages of clothing. He merely slashed through the bindings.

The explosion that followed was not big, but it seemed big under the circumstances.

THE clothes flew in many directions, together with a stinging yellowish liquid that quickly vaporized to gas, and a multitude of black particles which sizzled and turned to choking, blinding smoke.

“Gas!” Saki screamed. “Poison gas!”

He headed for the steps downward.

His men piled out of the huts in alarm, such of them as were not already standing around. They decided it was gas, too. And they headed for the steps to escape to the jungle below.

“Stay here!” snarled Saki. “Watch the prisoners.”

It was foolish advice, and Saki should not have given it. The prisoners did not need watching. The Japanese broke for the steps anyway.

Then the sand men went into action. They began fighting. They fought noisily. With great uproar. One of the Japanese aviators had stacked their clubs and spears on the rock, and the sand men made a rush, got these.

After that there was no argument about leaving the top of the rock. The Japanese were driven from the place. They were afraid of the gas. The cavemen, not knowing what poison gas was, had no fear.

Furthermore, it was not poison gas. It was tear gas and smoke-bomb material, and the mixture had the irritant action on eyes and respiratory tract that could be confused with the deadly dichlorethyl sulphide, or mustard gas. The slight odor was also similar to mustard gas, or Yperite.

As the gas irritated and blinded them, the sand men only became more enraged and violent, thinking the Japanese were causing the pain.

Saki and his men went in headlong flight down the long succession of steps cut in the stone. They came out at the bottom.

Two guards there were sitting against a boulder. They looked somewhat natural, except that their eyes were shut.

“*Goran nasai!*” Saki screeched at them. “Look! You fools, there was poison gas in that clothing—“

He went silent then. There was probably a moment, a second or two, when he knew what had happened. Knew he had been tricked. But the interval was not long enough for him to do much about it.

Doc Savage and Johnny and the other sand men were upon them. Doc and Johnny and four sand men had been clinging to the stone beside the opening, so they had to hardly more than drop off and jump to be upon the enemy.

Saki's men had good automatic rifles, the little .25-caliber guns which their invasion troops had found so effective. But there was not time to get them in action.

Doc got two Japanese himself. He hit them, very hard, with his fists, one man and then the other. Then he grabbed them and tried to throw them against Saki.

But Saki jumped back. He kept his feet. Saki turned and fled. There was, to his credit, nothing wrong with his courage. Flight was the sensible thing, and that was what he was doing.

Ga stepped out of the jungle. She was not excited. She lifted her bow, nocked an arrow. Her eyes were on Saki.

“Don't!” Doc called.

He couldn't, try as he would, think of the word in Ga's language. Ga apparently did not understand the English, or if she did, paid no attention.

Saki had a pistol. It seemed to be his only weapon. He was holding it ready, looking ahead at a large tree. His plans were as clear as if he had bellowed them out. He was going to reach the shelter of the tree, then turn and shoot down Doc and the others at leisure.

Ga let fly the arrow.

The shaft flickered in the cloud-diffused light, then was standing rigidly in Saki's gun arm. Saki shrieked, lost his pistol. He tried to stop to pick up the gun, and saw Ga with another arrow already drawn to the tip.

Saki dived into the jungle. Ga's second arrow missed him.

The Japanese ran away into the jungle, making sounds of pain and holding to the arrow in his arm.

DOC SAVAGE decided Johnny and the sand men could handle the other Japanese.

Down by the lake the plane motor had started.

Doc ran in that direction. If the plane got off, took the air, what they had accomplished would be lost.

It was a long run, nearly a quarter of a mile. He heard the second motor of the plane start, heard the throbbing roar as the big cylinders warmed up.

Then he came into sight of the stockade of thorns which had been erected to protect the planes. It was a weird-looking place with the protective fires blazing yellow around the stockade.

He was too late, he saw. Already they had tugged open the crude arrangement in the thorn fence which served as a gate. They were finishing yanking this back.

There were three Japanese, and they were heavily armed. There was a large clearing around the plane inclosure. The beach from fence to water was clear. To get close without being shot to pieces would be an impossibility.

Doc imitated Saki's voice.

"Koko de sukoshi matte o kure!"

he bellowed as like Saki as he could.

The words were the Japanese equivalent of an order to wait there for a moment.

The Japanese obeyed. They were not enthusiastic. They wanted the safety of the lake. This was daytime, and apparently the aquatic dinosaurs did not prowl much in the daytime. Or not in this part of the lake. The water looked a little too hot here for dinosaurs, anyway, which might be why the place had been chosen.

Doc made a circuit. He reached the lake at a point where they could not see him.

He tested the water. It was hot, all right. But, under the circumstances, he could stand it.

He entered the water. The vapor which arose from the stuff, the fog caused by the cooler air sweeping the hot lake surface, stood a yard deep over the water, concealing him.

He moved to a spot in front of the plane stockade.

The Japanese at the plane were shouting questions at the jungle, at the spot from which they thought Saki's voice had come. They were naturally getting no answers.

"We will run the plane into the lake," one of them decided grimly. "It is more safe."

They rolled the big amphibian bomber down the sand beach, put it into the water gently. They cut the motors. The pilot began fooling with the gadget which lifted the land wheels. The contrivance seemed out of order, so that they had to get the wheels up by hand.

While they worked on the wheels Doc got out of the water into the plane. The heat of the water had made him weak. He was blistered in a spot or two.

The Japanese were tightly grouped, fighting the wheel-lifting mechanism. They were not expecting attack from the water. Doc came upon them unexpectedly, violently.

He got their guns. They had placed these aside while they worked with the mechanism. He tossed the weapons back into the cabin.

They fought then, but not for long. The little Japanese, even three of them together, had a tremendous fear of the bronze man.

They broke away, tore open a hatch and piled out into the lake.

Then they swam away into the lake, trying to escape.

"Come back!" Doc shouted at them, knowing how hot the water was. They could not make it. "*Oide nasaimasu ka!*" he called. "Will you come back?"

They swam on and he stood looking after them. They would die, of course. And, standing there, he was impressed by the depth of the frenzy into which men can throw themselves, the impossible they try to

accomplish when overwrought and overfilled with the thing which is called courage, and probably is more the anaesthesia of madness. He was saddened and a little sickened.

After a while, Monk and Ham came running down the beach, all out of breath, and with their fists skinned and their faces happy.

“It's all over back there,” Monk explained. “Everybody is safe.”

“Help me get the plane back onto the beach and into the stockade,” Doc said.

They returned the big plane to safety.

Chapter XV. ABOUT EQUALITY

THEY got plenty to eat that afternoon and plenty of sleep that night. And in the morning Doc Savage and Calvin Western had a discussion.

“You know the story that led up to this,” Calvin Western said. “I was in Japan and got some information they didn't want America to have, so when I escaped the Japanese trailed me. We got into this place by accident while I was trying to escape. While we were here—I was a prisoner of the Japanese by then—I worked out this compound which stops evolution, and then the opposite compound, the valuable one, which accelerates evolution.

“I escaped with Ga and a pterodactyl, the pterodactyl to show you to convince you of the truth of my story,” Western continued. “The Japanese chased us. They brought me down over Trapper Lake and captured me and Ga. They sent Shorty on to New York to make sure you didn't hear about it, and the upshot of that was that you got into the thing. You came up to Trapper Lake, and you trailed Saki here. Saki got some of your men. The sand men caught you and your other aids, but you persuaded the sand men to help you. You pulled what might be called a Trojan suit trick, and got Saki to release gas up here. That gave you a chance to attack and you won out.”

He smiled, ended. “I'm very glad.”

Doc Savage said thoughtfully, “Three of the Japanese swam out into the hot lake water and drowned. We know they drowned because the sand men found their bodies this morning. We have the other Japanese, with the exception of Saki, prisoners here. We will take them out and give them a treatment that will keep them quiet about this place.”

(The “treatment” to which Doc Savage refers is his unique criminal-curing “college” located in upstate New York. Here the bronze man sends criminals, who undergo operations which wipe out all memory of past, after which they are trained to hate crime and are taught a trade. The “graduates” of the institution have, therefore, no knowledge of their past.)

“Treatment?”

“They will not be killed,” Doc said.

“What about Saki?”

“We have to catch him yet. Monk and Ham are out looking for him now. They are going to enlist the aid of Ga's people. Shorty is with them.”

“That Shorty isn't a bad guy.”

“At least he admits his shortcomings.”

Calvin Western was silent and thoughtful. “That brings us up to now,” he said finally. “What about that compound?”

Doc Savage had the same thing on his mind because he said soberly, “That is what I really wanted to discuss.”

Calvin Western seemed lost in thought for a moment. Then he shuddered. “The stuff,” he said, “is rather terrible in its possibilities.”

Doc looked at him closely. “You do not seem happy about it.”

“Should I be?”

Doc's face was grim. “I have been checking over the formula,” he said, “and it seems workable. It seems genuine. We have been misnaming it somewhat when we call it something to accelerate evolution. Actually, it is more in the nature of a vitaminlike substance, without being in any real sense a vitamin, which will increase the adaptability of the human mind and body to change, to environment.”

Western nodded. “I'm thinking what would have happened if the Japanese had gotten away with it. That would have been terrible.”

DOC SAVAGE was silent for some time. The decision he had in his mind was important. And it was not in the sense of justice his decision alone, because Calvin Western was the discoverer of the compound and therefore its owner.

“All men are created equal,” Doc said finally. “That simple statement means a lot to the human race.”

Calvin Western lifted his head. “Yes. The same words occurred to me.”

“It might be,” said the bronze man, “that the natural course of events in human existence which has prevailed for thousands of years is better, since all men are really equal in the beginning, and certainly they should have equal rights.

“This thing,” he concluded gravely, “would upset the balance of nature, a thing that may be a little too big for mankind to undertake at the present stage in his development.”

Calvin Western leaned back. He smiled.

“I'm glad you said that,” he declared. “This compound will favor the few. It will not be a universal panacea. The ignorant, the unfortunate, would not receive it—just as they do not receive the other blessings of civilization. I'm speaking practical sense now. Theoretically, this compound could be distributed to every man in the world—if it could be manufactured in that quantity, which I doubt. But, actually, nothing of the kind would happen. A few would have it. One nation, probably. But something like that, in the hands of the favored few, would be rather horrible to contemplate.”

Doc stood up. “I would rather you said it in plain words.”

Western grinned.

“The hell with the stuff,” he said. “Let it lie. Let a hundred or a thousand years pass, and humanity will be ready for something of the kind. There's too much hate and jealousy loose now.”

“Those are my sentiments,” Doc Savage said sincerely.

MONK MAYFAIR joined them, accompanied by Ham Brooks. Monk was pleased about something. “You know what,” he said to Doc.

“What?”

“That Shorty,” Monk said. “He wants to stay here.”

“Wants to stay here?”

“Yeah,” Monk said. “You see, we found Ga's people. They ain't bad-looking people, and they live about like our Hopi Indians in the southwestern United States. Pretty civilized, I call them. Shorty seems to think so, too. He wants to stay here.”

“That seems a strange decision,” Doc said.

“Not to me, it don't.” Monk winked. “It's Ga. Shorty is ga-ga about Ga, if I may sound asinine about it.”

Ham Brooks laughed. “As a matter of fact, Ga and Shorty just had the equivalent of the local marriage ceremony.”

Doc eyed Monk and Ham.

“You are being rather careful not to mention Saki, it seems to me,” the bronze man said.

Monk and Ham looked uncomfortable, said nothing.

“Well?” Doc asked.

“It wasn't very pleasant,” Monk said finally. “We found Saki's foot sticking out of a dinosaur's mouth. The dinosaur was a thing Johnny calls a stegosaur. It wasn't quite large enough to swallow Saki all at once. It was his left foot sticking out.”

THE END

WAVES OF DEATH

Tidal waves are not common to the waters of Lake Michigan; especially are they not common when there is no reason for them; when there is no record of any disturbance which might bring a rush of water to the shores of this great lake. So when a tidal wave does come, and causes death, it is an occurrence strange enough to call for investigation by Doc Savage and his pals. You'll find that investigation exciting and mysterious; you'll find it as thrilling and as dangerous as Doc Savage found it, matching his wits and his life in a battle that will hold you every second. Don't miss this next exciting novel; it's the best so far. Complete in our next issue.

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