WAVES OF DEATH

A Doc Savage Adventure by Kenneth Robeson

Scanned and Proofed
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Chapter I. TIDAL WAVE

ITEM in the newspapers that bright morning in the month of August:

TWO DROWN IN MYSTERY TIDAL

WAVE ON LAKE MICHIGAN

NAHMA, MICH., Aug. 12th.—Two persons were drowned this morning in a large and strange wave which swept down upon the Lake Michigan shore near this lumber town.

The dead are two brothers, Ted and Ned Jones, twins. According to witnesses, they were bathing on the beach in calm water when a great wave came rolling in for no explained reason, and engulfed them.

The cause of the tidal wave is still a mystery, since instruments have shown no earthquake shock.

This was the extent of the item in the New York *Dispatch*, which was a conservative sheet and closely edited. In some of the other papers there were a few more paragraphs to the story, but they did not add anything of value, since they consisted of additional statements about the mystery of the affair. The fact that the Nahma, Michigan, region was not one subject to earthquakes, and that nothing in the nature of tidal waves had the habit of piling up on the beach unexpectedly, was emphasized.

Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Blodgett (Monk) Mayfair, the noted chemist who looked slightly like a Congo ape and who had a pig for a pet, drew the newspaper item to the attention of Doc Savage.

“Here's a screwy one, Doc,” Monk said.

Monk did not call the item to Doc Savage's attention solely because it was a curiosity.

Doc Savage's business was strange things. Things like this. Or perhaps this was not exactly correct. Doc Savage's business was actually the righting of wrongs and the punishing of evildoers, in instances where the regularly constituted law officers and courts were asleep, or outsmarted, or in regions so remote there was no law except the cruel hard one of the armed fist.

But Doc Savage was always interested in the inexplicable, the mysterious. The inexplicable and the mysterious—particularly when connected with death—had a way of demanding his attention.

Doc Savage read the item about the tidal wave which had drowned the Jones twins.

Doc was interested. He did not look excited, but then he almost never showed excitement. Calmness and control were part of the training he had received when he had been placed in the hands of scientists in childhood.

(The strange training which Doc Savage received, the education which made him such a remarkable individual, is familiar to the hundreds of thousands of individuals who have read the bronze man's fictional adventures previously. Doc, as a child, was placed by his father in the hands of scientists and underwent intensive training until he was almost twenty. This somewhat bizarre upbringing is responsible for the sometimes strange, always unusual, often of almost inhuman ability, combination of qualities which is Doc Savage, the Man of Bronze.—AUTHOR.)

“Get Ham,” Doc said, “and get busy on the telephone and learn more about this. Have Johnny check the seismograph.”

“Sure,” Monk said.

MONK MAYFAIR spoke with some pleasure over the telephone to Ham Brooks. Ham Brooks was Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks, eminent lawyer, product of Harvard, and earnest pursuer of the reputation of best-dressed man in the nation.

“Hello, you overdressed shyster,” Monk said. “I just dug up something. You better get down here and give me a hand.”

“Dug up something, eh?” Ham said. “I'm not surprised.”

Monk became indignant. “What's that? An insult?”

“A statement of fact.”

“You keep riding me,” Monk said indignantly, ignoring the fact that he had started the trouble, “and some day I'm gonna dance on your grave, sure enough.”

“Then I trust I'm buried at sea,” Ham said. “What do you want with me? I'm working on a brief.”

“You see the papers this morning?”

“No. Too busy.”

“A thing about a mysterious tidal wave in Lake Michigan. Drowned two.”

“Oh,” Ham said. “Is Doc interested?”

“Enough that he wants me and you to get on the telephone and see what we can dig up.”

“Be right down,” Ham said after a moment.

Ham Brooks arrived wearing a morning outfit which would have done credit to an ambassador. He was twirling the innocent black cane which was a sword cane. The chimp, Chemistry, followed him and made an incongruous note which Ham didn't seem to mind. Chemistry was Ham's pet, and also Monk's pet hate. He was a rather runt specimen of chimpanzee or dwarf ape, and Monk's dislike of the animal sprang from Chemistry's remarkable physical resemblance—mental also, Ham insisted—to Monk Mayfair.

They got busy on the long-distance telephone and, two hours later, laid their findings before Doc Savage.

“We learned,” Monk explained, “a lot that adds up to nothing. The thing seems to be a mystery.”

Ham said, “I called Johnny, and he says there positively could not have been an earthquake large enough to cause any kind of a tidal wave or it would have been recorded by his seismograph gadget.”

“There was nothing phony,” Monk contributed, “about the tidal wave. The darn thing was at least fifteen feet high, which for a Great Lakes wave isn't a mouse.”

“There seems to be just one suspicious thing,” Ham said.

Doc Savage showed interest. “What was that?”

“A man turned up in Nahma,” Ham explained, “and asked a lot of questions of the relatives of the two drowned men. This fellow said he was a newspaperman. He told them he worked for the Escanaba *Press*. It turned out he didn't. He was a fake.”

“How did you happen to dig up that item?” Doc said.

“Well, in gathering information, I talked to the managing editor of the Escanaba *Press* as a matter of course. He mentioned this thing about the stranger. It struck him as unusual.”

“Any description?”

“Not much. Short and dark. Fast talker. Smoked a short pipe.”

“What happened to him?”

“He disappeared.”

Doc Savage was thoughtful.

“You two had better take Johnny, and fly up there and investigate,” he suggested. “That is, if you have nothing more important to do.”

Monk grinned. “It'll be cool up there, and it's plenty hot here in the city.”

“Johnny mentioned wanting to go,” Ham said. “He is intrigued by the earthquakeless tidal wave.”

“Then what are we waiting on?” Monk asked.

THEY took an amphibian plane, got the necessary military clearances for flying in restricted areas and took off. Ham handled the controls and Monk did the navigating, and spent his spare time heckling Ham.

Monk inquired, “Listen, why do you part your hair like that for?”

“It looks better,” Ham said.

“It wouldn't be because every block has an alley, huh?”

“Your jokes,” Ham informed him, “are remarkably stupid.”

Monk said smugly, “I have to adapt myself to the company I'm in.”

They went on from there.

William Harper (Johnny) Littlejohn rode back in the cabin and pored over geophysical charts of the Great Lakes area, using calipers to measure and pencil and paper for figures.

Johnny was a remarkably tall man who was astonishingly thin. Being so thin, he wore his clothes with all the aplomb of a beanpole against which a sheet had blown. He kept, attached to his left lapel, a monocle which he had not worn in years, and which he sometimes employed as a magnifying glass.

He was accepted as one of the world's great archaeologists and geologists, although his reputation as a user of words nobody could understand was almost as extensive.

He got up now and went to the cockpit.

He indicated his map.

“An unbathycolpian hydrographical euripus,” he remarked.

Ham winced. Monk made vague gestures of fighting off something, and said, “Yes, I think so, too.”

“You think what?” Ham demanded.

“Whatever it was he said.”

Ham turned to Johnny and said, “Look. Just once would it be asking too much for you to use little words? Play like this is a vacation or something.”

“Yes, play like you are visiting among the feeble-minded, and have to speak very simply,” Monk suggested.

Johnny said, “I wouldn't be far wrong at that.”

“That's fine,” Monk told him. “Now we understand you. See how we smile?” Monk smiled for him. “Now what the hell was it you said the first time?”

Johnny was patient.

“I said,” he explained, “that it is a large body of very shallow water.”

“What is?”

“Nahma, Michigan, is located on Bay de Noc, which is a shallow arm of Green Bay, which in turn is attached to Lake Michigan.”

“So what?”

“A most unlikely spot for a tidal wave.”

“That's why we're heading up here,” Monk reminded him. “It was an unlikely tidal wave in the first place.”

Disgusted, Johnny said, “Go back to your fighting.” He returned to his seat.

Before they resumed their quarreling, which was what they did with their spare time, Monk and Ham held a consultation about where they would land. According, to their chart there was a landing field near Nahma, only a mile or so from the little town.

“Maybe it's not used much, though,” Monk said. “We'd better check by radio and see.”

There was no radio station at Nahma, so they had to contact the nearest government airways station, which in turn telephoned long-distance to Nahma, and obtained the information that the airport was usable. This data was relayed to the plane by radio.

“We're all set,” Monk said.

THEY flew directly across Lake Michigan from Charlevoix and picked up the small islands at the mouth of Green Bay, Summer Island and St. Martin Island. Because Johnny wanted to look over the district from the air they flew south past Chambers Island in Green Bay, almost to Menominee, then turned north again. By now it was getting dark. There were a few clouds, low on the western horizon where they were packed in rolls against the setting sun.

“The Nahma airport isn't lighted,” Ham reminded Monk.

“That'll be all right,” Monk said. “We've got plenty of lights on the ship.”

They picked up the airport, locating it by the smudge from the chimneys of the big sawmill in Nahma. Monk sent the ship down and set the flaps.

“Aren't you going to drag the field first?” Ham asked.

“Why?”

“Well, it's a strange field.”

“If it was a pasture I'd drag it,” Monk said. “But it's a waste of time. This is an airport.”

Johnny Littlejohn, using small words, said, “Better drag the field. This might not be a picnic.”

Monk eyed him strangely. “You got a hunch?”

“Maybe. And maybe I've been around Doc enough to get his habit of never taking a chance.”

Monk nodded and brought the plane in low, leveled off, and instead of landing, flew across at an altitude of a few feet, inspecting it. At the end of the drag, Johnny was a little pale.

“Put a flare over,” he said.

Monk nodded again. He wasn't pale but his mouth was as tight as if he had tasted a lemon.

They dropped a flare and it shed white glare, struck the field and cast a spreading and dancing whiteness.

In this whiteness there were thin upright shadows and even thinner festooning ones.

“Well,” Johnny said. “What do you make of it?”

Ham said, “Steel rods driven into the field and barbed wire tied between them, it looks like.”

Monk said, “We'll land on the bay. It's not far, and the water is smooth.”

They came down on the water, very carefully, and landed without incident, then taxied inshore.

They turned on the lights in the plane cabin and moved about ostentatiously. The cabin was bullet-proofed, but nobody shot at them. They went ashore then, still being cautious. They walked to the airport without incident, except that they were barked at furiously by someone's dog.

The steel rods were ordinary iron fence posts, and the wire was ordinary barbed wire, but if they had landed in it the result would have been destruction of their plane certainly, and probably their death.

“Somebody was anxious to welcome us,” Monk said dryly.

Chapter II. SMALL DARK MAN

THEY examined the fence posts.

“New,” Ham said.

“Wire is new, too,” Johnny pointed out.

“Let's get some fence-post dealers out of bed,” Monk said.

They put flashlight beams on the soft earth and found numerous tracks.

“I'll get a camera and photograph these when it comes daylight,” Johnny declared.

“Road over this way,” Monk announced. “Come on.”

The road became blacktop after a while, and was lonely, then houses began appearing. They were barked at by more dogs, crossed a bridge of wood, and were in the town proper.

“Look at the sidewalks,” Johnny said, astonished. “Wood.”

Not only the sidewalks, but every building seemed to be made of wood. The place was obviously a lumber-company town, the lumber concern owning all buildings.

Their feet made thumpings on the wooden sidewalks and pleasant trees made a canopy overhead. To the right they could hear the sounds that a large sawmill makes in the night.

Close by and to the left were other noises, music and mirth. These came from a large building which seemed to be the only place that was open at this hour.

They went in, and it was a little strange, not as commercialized as they had expected. They stood at a door and listened to accordion music, watched dancing.

“It's a lumber-company recreation hall,” Johnny decided. “Let's find that telephone.”

They located a telephone booth and found telephone directories of the larger nearby towns—Gladstone, Escanaba, Manistique—and began calling hardware stores and asking about recent purchases of metal fence posts and barbed wire. They got no results.

“Lumber yards handle that stuff, too,” Ham reminded.

It was Monk who came up with the information they were seeking.

“Gladstone,” he announced. “About twenty-five or thirty miles from here. Lumber yard there says man in a truck rushed in there in a heck of a hurry and bought all the metal fence posts on hand and a half dozen spools of barbed wire. That was this afternoon.”

Ham was interested. “Any description?”

“Short and dark, fast talker, smoked a stubby pipe.”

“Blazes!” Monk said. “I've heard that description before. Isn't that the guy who was pretending to be a newspaperman and going around Nahma asking questions of the relatives of the two drowned men?”

“That's him.”

“There was more than one man's footprints at the airport,” reminded Johnny. “One man didn't haul those iron posts up here and drive them and string the barbed wire. It took several men.”

“All right, so there was several,” Monk said. “They don't like us. They don't want us here. They don't want us here bad enough to try to kill us. Now what does it add up to? Why? Don't try to answer that—we don't know. But how'd they know we were coming?”

Ham thought for some time, and then said, “The radio inquiry we made about the usability of the airport, you knothead. That's how they knew.”

THEY talked to the telephone operator in Nahma and she was frank enough.

“He was a small dark man who talked very fast,” she said. “And he smoked a short white pipe. He gave me five dollars to let him know if any strangers were coming into town who might be interested in the strange tidal wave.”

“He didn't seen interested in the Jones twins, who were drowned in the wave?”

“Not particularly.”

“What reason did he give for wanting the information about strangers.”

“Said he was a newspaperman.”

“That's hardly an explanation.”

“It seemed like one to me,” the telephone operator said, not embarrassed. “Newspapermen are always gathering facts, aren't they?”

“You told him we had made an inquiry about the usability of the flying field?”

“Yes. The government airways telephoned and said you wanted to land here if the airport was usable. I relayed the information to this fellow, this short dark man.”

The girl was attractive, and Monk and Ham, who had an eye for a pretty girl, were not inclined to doubt her. But Johnny Littlejohn was more immune to feminine charm. He frowned at the girl, asked, “That the only piece of news you gave him?”

She looked at Johnny steadily.

“I'm sorry you don't like it,” she said. “No. That wasn't the only information I gave him. Two traveling men came to town, and there have been some strangers walking around and I told him that.”

“I see.”

“I'm not a crook, you know,” the girl said pointedly.

“We're sure you aren't,” Monk said gallantly.

Johnny snorted, told the young woman, “Monk will next show you his pet pig, following which he will ask you for a date.”

“My pal!” Monk said disgustedly.

They left the telephone office, stood on the wooden sidewalk and debated their next move. It was not too late, they concluded, to make some inquiries about the Jones brothers, who had drowned in the tidal wave. The attendant at the soda fountain informed them that a cousin of the Jones brothers worked as bartender in the tavern which was under the same roof as the big recreation hall.

The cousin was a fat, red-headed man with a prominent jaw and a free flow of words. He had known his deceased relatives very well, he insisted.

An enemy? Not a chance. Not an enemy on earth. Ted and Ned Jones had been the friends of humanity personified.

Monk and Ham and Johnny, listening, discounted the man's loquacity and read between the lines and decided that Ted and Ned Jones probably had not had any enemies in actuality. At least not any enemies who would be making tidal waves to murder them.

“They must have been innocent victims,” Monk said.

“We better wire Doc about this,” Johnny remarked. “He'll be wanting to know about it.”

The telephone operator, it developed, accepted telegrams at this time of night.

They wrote out a message to Doc Savage, a complete report that contained all developments, and gave it to the operator.

“We'll stand here and watch you telephone it in,” Johnny told her dryly.

“All right, keep on thinking I'm a crook,” the girl said wearily.

She telephoned in the message.

“There,” she said.

“Good,” Johnny said. “Don't tell anybody about *that*, if you don't mind.”

“Of course not!” the operator snapped.

THE man on the telephone pole had been very busy. He was a short and dark man. The telephone pole was one that stood in the thick woods, and they had been using it to eavesdrop on the conversations—all of them—which passed over the wires which the pole supported.

It was an expertly efficient job of wire-tapping, and it had gotten results.

The man put the tip of his tongue against the roof of his mouth and made violent hissing noises.

A man below answered this signal with a “Yeah?”

“Come up here and take over.”

“Sure, Stub,” the voice said. A man climbed a tree and stepped over onto a crude platform which had been rigged for the eavesdropping on the tapped telephone wires. He wore a net and heavy gloves, complained, “Whoever said these mosquitoes were as big as eagles was a liar. They're not much larger than robins. But they're sure fierce.”

Stub said, “Doc Savage's men just filed a telegram to Savage. A report.”

“It get through?”

“Of course not. I pulled the little switch here and cut the wire, and made the telephone operator think the telegram had gone through O. K.”

“Then Savage won't get it?”

“Not unless he gets it by mental telepathy.”

“And his men won't know it had been intercepted?”

“I don't see how they'll find it out.” Stub pulled in a deep breath. “Stick on these wires. Watch everything.”

“Where you going?”

“We're going to have to get rid of Savage's men.”

“Have they got any idea what is behind this yet?”

“No, but with their luck they're going to find out,” the man called Stub said. “We'll have to shut off their water while we can.”

He went away through the timber.

Chapter III. THE SCARED CLAY

TWENTY years or close to that ago this country had been logged over, so that trees which grew now were second growth, none much more than a foot in diameter, most of them six inches. And thrusting up

everywhere was the short verdant undergrowth, springing rank out of a mulch of dead leaves that was like walking on a mattress. Mosquitoes and night bugs swarmed in multitudes and there was the sound of animals feeding or hunting.

The man called Stub kept walking with grim purpose, using a flashlight with a blackout lens at times, cursing the bushes which whipped at him and the trees against which he jarred.

Suddenly, in the darkness, a man had a gun against his chest and was saying, “Who is it?”

“Listen, don't be so damned free with the guns,” Stub snarled. He was irritated at the thought that the gun might be cocked, might have been jarred into exploding. “Suppose I was just some local citizen.”

The other said, “O. K., O. K., I guess I'm nervous.”

“Well, get un-nervoused,” Stub said.

There was a shack ahead. He shoved inside after prudently tapping a signal on the door and cursing those inside in a friendly tone by way of giving them his identity.

There were nine men in the shack, all of them dressed for the woods in summer, although they did not look or talk like men who knew too much about the bush country. There was not one of them who did not have hold of a gun, and visibly.

Stub delivered a profane opinion of them, the opinion including his conviction that their ancestry included snakes, worms and insects, but only the more obnoxious insects. “Standing around here like Kid Wild West, all of you!” he snarled. “What in the ring-tailed hell do you think would happen if some local citizens barged in? They'd take one look at you and ring in the law just on general principles. Get those guns out of sight! Keep them out of sight.”

“You mean we're not to carry guns?” a man asked.

“Of course I don't mean that. Just don't go around acting as if you were loaded for bear.”

One of the others said, “Loaded for bear isn't even enough if Doc Savage is on this.”

“He isn't.”

“But three of his aides—”

“Savage isn't here, I mean,” Stub snapped. “He sent the three aides to investigate. Just a check-up on general principles.”

“What general principles? What made him suspicious?”

Stub was almost insultingly patient. “Look, what we were afraid might happen is what happened. We were afraid that damned tidal wave would bring an investigation by somebody who would be dangerous. It did. It aroused Savage's curiosity, probably, and he sent his three men up here to look around.”

“When they report an attempt was made to kill them when they landed on the airport he's going to have more than his curiosity aroused.”

“They won't report. I just took care of that.” Stub told them about the intercepted telegram.

“Sure, but what about the next report they make?”

“Won't be any.”

“Eh?”

“Those three guys,” Stub said, “are going to meet with an accident.”

“What kind of an accident?”

“One we'll fix up,” Stub said, “and send looking for them.”

MONK MAYFAIR and Ham Brooks had lost an argument with the proprietor of the local hotel, an elderly gentleman who had a pet dog and was determined there were to be no other animals in his hotel. He was not too concerned, either, over whether he had guests in the hotel or not.

Upshot of it was that Monk and Ham and Johnny had repaired to the cabin of their plane, which was anchored in the calm water off shore, for the remainder of the night.

“Those two pets, Habeas Corpus and Chemistry, are always getting you two in trouble,” Johnny complained. “I would think you would leave them at home now and then.”

“Get us in trouble—how do you mean?”

“We were just thrown out of the hotel on their account.”

Making a fine point of it, Monk said, “How could we be thrown out when we never even got a room—”

The argument ended at that point, the ending being more sudden, probably, than any which had attended a previous argument between Monk and Ham. Because a young man and a gun came out of the back of the plane cabin, came out of the washroom in fact.

One look at the young man's face and they knew he was not fooling. Whatever he wanted, whatever his business, he was not fooling. His expression was that of a man who had accidentally eaten a snake. It was pretty bad.

“You came out here to investigate the deaths,” he said. “Is that right?”

Monk swallowed his astonishment enough to say, “You mean the Jones brothers, the two who died in the wave.”

“That's the ones.”

“Sure,” Monk said.

“You came out here to look into it?”

“Sure.”

“I am going to tell you something,” said the young man. “Then I am going to surrender.”

“Surrender for what?”

“I caused their deaths!” He waved the gun. “But first, listen! I have something to tell you.”

He was not an unhandsome young man. He did not look particularly weak in any way. He had the

general look of a man who had some pride in himself, who took care of himself, who liked nice genteel things. He had been out in the sun a great deal. His clothes were good, rough, outdoor clothes which looked as if they had come from some high-priced Fifth Avenue sporting-goods house instead of a woods general store. They were not outlandish or unusual clothes. They were just very good quality. The gun was the long-barreled, heavy blue gun which only a sportsman would carry; it was too expensive for the average woodsman.

"Listen to me," he repeated. "Listen to what I say. I have been in hell over this thing. I did not know what to do. I was responsible for it, yet it was an accident, and I did not know what to do, or which way to turn."

Monk stared at him. "You caused their deaths, eh?"

"Yes. Accidentally."

"How?"

The young man shook his head. "I am sorry."

"Anybody who kills anybody is usually sorry," Monk agreed. "But how'd you do it?"

"I am sorry—I cannot tell you."

"Huh?"

"I cannot."

"You did it with the tidal wave, huh?" Monk jeered.

The young man met this question with a rather horrible, staring silence. Monk gazed at him, dumfounded. "Blazes!" Monk yelled. "You didn't *make* that tidal wave!"

The other was silent.

Monk, starkly unbelieving, said, "Tell us a lie if you want to, but don't tell us one *that* big!"

The young man continued to just stare. The snake he had eaten, figuratively, was in his eyes, the ghastly set of his face.

Monk turned to the others. "You hear what he said?"

This should have been a foolish question, but somehow it wasn't.

No one answered.

"Two things," Monk said solemnly. "Two things. Two possibilities. Either he's crazy, or he's lying."

They did not answer this time either, but they agreed.

"Lucky we brought some truth serum," Monk said. "We'll use that on him."

The young man with the gun went through a kind of convulsion. Decision and indecision fought on his face; fear and courage struggled there.

Then he was menacing them with his gun and backing toward the plane door.

“I see now,” he said, “that I can't take the blame for it, and still keep the cause a secret. I didn't think of truth serum.”

Monk said, “Hey now, wait a minute—”

“I didn't think of truth serum,” the young man repeated. “You stand still, the three of you. I would hate to kill you. But to keep this secret I would. I would, indeed.”

He didn't sound overly dramatic, but just utterly determined, as he jumped out of the cabin door into the water.

THE water was about chest-deep, and they could hear the young man splashing toward the shore. The wind was blowing offshore, and that meant the plane was pointing toward the young man.

Monk demanded, “Did you see how he kept aiming that gun at our heads? Never once did he point it at anybody's chest so we could jump him.”

Monk's complaint was not as senseless as it sounded. They all wore bulletproof vests. The young man hadn't offered to shoot them in the vests.

Ham scrambled into the cockpit. He switched on the landing lights. These were very strong and spouted a flood of glaring light. There was a shot, and one of the lights went out. Another shot extinguished the second light.

Ham said, “I would say he knows which end of a pistol the bullets come out of.”

Johnny Littlejohn fell into the cockpit seat and started the motors, which was the sensible thing. The engines were cold, and getting fuel on, ignition on, took a little time. The plane began to move, but by that time their late visitor had undoubtedly reached shore.

The big plane rushed forward, grounded on the beach, saving them some time. They piled out after seizing weapons and flashlights.

They could hear a crashing in the brush nearby.

“There he goes!” Monk whooped. “Come on! He's the answer to what we wanta know!”

Ham drew back and threw a small object as far as he could. It was a hand flare, a thing of magnesium and chemicals with a timing mechanism like an ordinary hand grenade. It lit in the trees and made a great light, also starting a fire.

Johnny caught shadowy movement, shouted, “Yonder!”

They ran fifty yards or so, and a voice stopped them. The voice, a male one, meant business. It said, “Stop it right there!” And a rifle put out an orange tongue of flame and much noise to emphasize the order.

Monk and the others hit the ground on their stomachs, like skis as they slid.

There was an impressive silence.

“Get up,” the man's voice said.

It was deep and not unmusical for a male voice. It sounded a little like the voice of Ham Brooks. Not the same voice, of course, but it had some of the deep-throated, chest-driven quality and pear-shaped tones which characterized Ham's voice. Ham had an orator's voice.

"I have a hand grenade," the well-made voice informed them. "Several, in fact. I am going to toss them over there unless you stand up immediately and identify yourself."

Not liking the grenade talk, Monk demanded, "Who are you?"

"Stand up, damn you!" the man snarled. "This is the law!"

"Law?"

"The sheriff from Manistique," the man said.

Monk and Johnny promptly stood up. Their figures were outlined by the flare glow. Ham remained prone, noiseless.

The man demanded, "Where's the other one? There was more than two of you."

Monk said innocently, "Ham? Oh, Ham's on the plane still."

THE other man showed himself. He was a tall and gaunt fellow, a tower of determination in the darkness. His voice got bigger and more booming, more confidential.

"That's fine," he said. "Fine. Now we're getting somewhere." He was keeping his rifle pointed at them.

"Where's the rest of your gang?" Monk asked.

"Gang?"

"Your deputies."

"Oh, them." The man laughed largely and joyously. "Why do I need help? Does it look like I need help? Two-gun Atz, that's me. Two-gun Sidney Atz. Ready to serve you, brother, if you don't watch your step."

Monk and Johnny now disclosed that they had not dropped their guns. They presented the muzzles of the weapons casually for Atz's inspection.

Johnny said, "A dehortative ultra-hazard."

Monk nodded violently.

"That's about it," Monk said. "You notice these pistols, friend? They look like automatics, except they've got warts and horns on them? That means they're machine pistols. They squirt bullets like they was poured out of a barrel. If you don't want to find yourself scattered over the landscape, stand still!"

The man was dumfounded. "But I'm the sheriff—"

"If you're a sheriff I'm a frog on stilts," Monk said. "Anyway, you said you were from Manistique. Manistique is in Schoolcraft County, a different county. You're out of your pew."

The man examined them and the guns, the guns getting the greater attention. Finally he shrugged and

started to move the rifle underneath his arm.

“On, the ground,” Monk said.

The man said, “I don't want to get my clothes dirty.”

“The rifle,” Monk explained.

The man said, “Oh.” He tossed his rifle on the ground. Monk picked it up.

Ham arose from the weeds, a little disappointed that he had not had to do anything.

“What'd you say your name was?” he asked.

“Sidney Atz,” the man said.

“Still claim you're a sheriff?”

“No. I guess that story wasn't so good.” The man seemed calm, possessed. There was no fright in his manner. There was no change in his deep orator's voice.

“Got any further explanation?” Monk inquired.

“Only,” Atz said, “that I'm a friend of Dave's.”

“Dave?”

“Dave Clay.”

“You wouldn't be meaning the young fellow who just ran away from us?” Monk asked. “He of the desperate manner.”

“I would.”

THEY stood very still in the darkness, listening. There came no sound of Dave Clay's footsteps. He must have assumed caution for the remainder of his escape.

Ham Brooks spoke to Atz gently, but firmly, suggesting that Atz drop his weapons because there was imminent danger that he, Ham, might shoot Atz out from between his ears if he didn't.

“He's already dropped his gun,” Monk reminded.

“I'm talking about his others,” Ham said.

Atz produced, grudgingly, two small revolvers which he passed over.

“You fellows better put out that fire your flare started,” he suggested. “Or the forest service will have you behind bars, and I will be very pleased.”

Monk and Ham went back and fought out the blaze which the flare grenade had started. They had some difficulty with this. While they were being firemen, Atz stood by and marveled at the fact that they had a flare grenade. “What do you carry around with you?” he asked. “Everything?”

Monk and Ham, hot from their labor of extinguishing the fire, approached Atz. They collared him. Monk

showed Atz a remarkable hairy fist.

“Will break bones,” Monk explained. “Will crack skulls.”

“Meaning you want words out of me?” Atz asked.

“You have a sense of understanding.”

“I have a sense of friendship, too,” Atz said. “That is why I am here.”

“Eh?”

“I am a friend of young Dave Clay. He is in some kind of trouble. Very bad trouble, I should judge. I don't know what it is. I have been trailing him around trying to find out. I saw you fellows chasing him. So, eureka! I stopped you. Thereby helping Dave.”

They digested this. Atz had spoken in his resounding orator's voice, with the ringing conviction of a platform orator, so there might not be a word of truth in what he had said. Monk personally didn't think the man had said a word that was so, but he was reasonable enough to realize he thought this because Atz sounded like Ham sounded when Ham was doing his best lying.

“Let's bandy more words,” Monk said.

They went back to the plane because there did not seem to be much else to do, and the plane needed getting off the shore before it was damaged by waves. They wrestled and pried around with the big ship and finally got it off the ground and back out in waist-deep water, where they anchored it.

Then they had some conversation in the cabin.

Ham said, “Mr. Atz, we want to know who Dave Clay is.”

Atz smiled at them largely.

“Dave Clay,” he said, “was born in Waterloo, Iowa, in 1909. His father, believe it or not, was the local dog-catcher. Dave went through grade school, high school in Waterloo, and went to Iowa State, then to some school or other in England. He was studying illumination, or at least he must have been, because he went to work for a company making electric-light bulbs. He worked there until three years ago, when an uncle left him some money, and he came up to this country. That was when I met him. He has a nice little cabin on a lake about forty miles back in the woods here, and he has lived here three years. As far as I know, he has done nothing since he came up here but enjoy life. He was rather young to retire, but I think that retire is exactly what he did. That's all.”

“All but his being scared,” Monk reminded.

Atz gave them another of his big smiles and a nod. “Oh, yes, that. Well, he's worried. I noticed it this morning. I asked him about it and he acted as strange as could be. I knew something was up. So I've been trailing him around trying to find what was wrong and help him.”

“You seem to have gone to a lot of trouble for just a friend,” Ham suggested.

“Not just a friend. A special friend. I like that boy. Great kid.”

Monk contemplated Atz at some length. “Tidal wave have anything to do with it?”

“What?”

“You've heard of the tidal wave, haven't you?”

“Oh, that.” Atz did not seem to know what to think.

“Know anything about it?”

“Why, of course not.”

“Strange,” Monk said. “Thing got in the New York newspapers. Yet you, here on the ground, don't know a thing about it.”

“Oh, I know what everybody else knows,” Atz said. “If that's what you mean.”

“That's not what we mean, exactly,” Monk said.

“Then what is?”

“We sort of got the silly idea that Dave Clay felt he was responsible for that wave.”

Atz stared at them. At first he looked disbelieving. Then he let out a whoop of derision and smacked a hand down on his knee.

“Who let you out of the insane asylum?” he asked.

Monk was about to give a pointed answer to this, but there was a sound, a quick, loud, violent noise. It was followed by another sound, not as loud and growing less, as if a violin string was singing.

Astonished, Monk said, “A bullet!”

HAM made a sudden dive for the floor and lay there. Monk examined him and commented, “After you've heard them, they say it's usually too late to dodge. That one's come and gone. So why flop?”

“It might have brothers,” Ham said.

Johnny dived into an equipment case and came up with a flashlight with a head like a funnel and a barrel as long as his arm. The thing could throw a beam as powerful as one of the landing lights. Johnny got the cabin door open and lunged out on the right wing, flopped down behind the wing-mounted motor, where the motor would stop bullets. He turned the light on the shore.

The extremely powerful beam soon located the figure of a short dark man. The man held his rifle to his shoulder, but they could also see that he had a white-bowl pipe, a short one, gripped between his teeth.

“Oh, oh,” Monk said. “Our old friend!”

Atz stared at the rifleman. “He's going to shoot at us again!” he said in a frightened voice.

Ham was leaning out of the plane cabin with a machine pistol.

“Know our friend?” Monk asked Atz.

“Of course not,” Atz said. “Should I?”

“I don't know about you,” Monk said. “But we should, because a guy of his description bought some iron fence posts and set them all over the flying field where we were expected to land.”

Ham's machine pistol made a loud, gobbling noise, and a fiery tracer scooted through the darkness. The small dark man promptly flopped in a ditch—it must have been a ditch which he was straddling, because he disappeared instantly—and there was no more shooting.

Johnny lobbed two smoke bombs into the water. These were not affected by the water, and ripened a pair of big bulbous masses of smoke which the wind caught and drifted toward the shore.

Johnny and Ham dropped into the water and began wading toward shore, hidden in the smoke.

Monk said, “Come on, Atz.”

“Not me,” Atz said. “This isn't any party of mine.”

“Sure it is,” Monk assured him. “Dave Clay is your friend, and this is all about Dave Clay and tidal waves.”

Atz said he thought they were crazy, indeed he was sure of it, but he became shocked and silent when Monk showed him the thin snout of a pistol. He climbed overboard. Monk followed him, kept a hold on his arm. The water was cold, and they waded rapidly, keeping up with the cloud of smoke from the smoke bombs which the breeze was sweeping along.

They could hear Johnny and Ham ahead. They heard Ham call, “There he goes! Down the beach!”

There was some shooting then. And more running. The machine pistols erupted twice. They made a sound something like a big bull fiddle, except that it was loud enough to shake the earth.

Atz did not seem happy about any of it. But Monk kept a tight grip on him and propelled him into the chase. They covered not much more than a quarter of a mile.

A motorboat started. They saw the craft, scooting out on the surface of the comparatively calm surface of Little Bay de Noc. The craft appeared to be half motor.

“Forty miles an hour already!” Monk exclaimed. He turned Atz around. “Back to the plane,” he said. “We're gonna chase that guy.”

“You think that short dark man—”

“Sure. He had the boat hidden. Run,” Monk said.

THEY reached the plane and scrambled aboard. They had anchored her by a tail cleat, a common practice so that she would not run up on the mooring and yank about when the motors were started for test runs. They had a little trouble with the patent anchor, finally cut it and left it there. The ship surged across the surface of the lake. Monk, at the controls, hauled back on the stick and got the ship on step. Ham and Johnny hung out of the windows and searched the bay surface.

“To the left,” Ham yelled. “I can see the boat against the bay.” The white animal of disturbed water that was the boat wake was what Ham was seeing. If the man out on the lake had stopped the boat, or cut its speed below five knots, they might never have sighted him.

Monk hauled the ship up higher. He saw the boat now. He gave the engines more and more fuel.

Ham called, “Hey! There's a little island out there!”

They stared ahead.

“Headland,” Johnny corrected.

They were both right in a way, because it was really a low island that was attached to the mainland by a sandbar or reef which was partly exposed to view.

Then Ham yelled again.

“Hey!” he barked. “What's *that?*”

They stared. They all saw it at once because it came into existence suddenly—two great pillars of a smoky-looking light, hovering in the air like the huge naval searchlights used by the coast guard in spotting planes at night.

Monk, in awed undertone, said, “It's *growing!*”

It had color. It had several colors without having any one more than the other. It had greens and blues and purples. There was red, but it was a strange deep red that tinted all the other colors in some hellish nightmare. It was remarkable how clear the whole thing could be seen, even in the darkness of the night.

The two pillars of light kept moving and swaying and drawing closer to each other. The colors began to flame more brightly and a strange smell filled the air. It was a smell of something burning, a sharp, acrid odor.

Somewhere back in the plane cabin Atz was seized with a great shivering and he started shrieking. His screeching was wordless with fright, as if he knew what was coming, and as if some terrible catastrophe was about to befall them.

And then came the tidal wave.

BUT first there was a great crashing sound as the two pillars of light met, indescribable because it was not understandable. Sound that was roar and crash, sizzle and hiss, all impossibly combined. And then motion, water swelling and climbing and mounting. Water in motion, and the motion was as fantastic as the sound that was with it, preceded it and followed it.

Monk battled the throttles, tried to keep the plane going on an even keel. But there was something wrong with the air, too. The air also was in motion with a great whooshing sound and it would not support the plane. And the plane hit the wall of water, crashing, rending itself as if it had smashed into the side of a mountain.

The huge tidal wave engulfed them.

Chapter IV. SOME SLIGHT MYSTERY

THE large old gentleman with a pale face, white mustache and white hair, and a potbelly, who got off the train in Escanaba, Michigan, did not bear much resemblance to Doc Savage. Or at least the individual, who was Doc, hoped not.

Disguise was something Doc Savage found difficult, yet he used it frequently. His size was a handicap. It was the main problem. His unusual bronze hair, the remarkable flake gold of his eyes were less trouble.

Dye would work over his hair and skin, and colored glass contact lenses would alter eye color.

With Doc, disguise was almost strangely effective. Probably he was such a distinctive personality that people who knew him by sight never associated him with a disguise.

He had come out from New York by fast plane, hopped the train in Menominee. Renny Renwick—Colonel John Renwick, eminent engineer, notable also for his fists—had been in the plane and had flown the ship on into the west, pretending to be Doc. Renny had orders to circle back to New York City where he was to pick up the remaining member of Doc's group of five assistants, Long Tom Roberts, and wait for orders.

Doc Savage, having arrived in Escanaba, rented an automobile. He rented the car in a large garage and had just completed the deal when he noticed a small panel truck labeled, *Mary's Laundry, The Bachelor's Friend*. The bronze man made a deal for the truck instead. The white smock with *Mary's Laundry* across the back, which he found in the seat, would fit him. He put it on and drove to Nahma.

It was then slightly after ten o'clock in the morning.

Doc Savage found the telephone operator who had been on duty in the small Nahma exchange the night before. He identified himself.

“Now what is it all about?” he asked the young woman.

She said, “I don't know what it is about.”

She explained about the call which had come yesterday afternoon—she went on duty at four in the afternoon, and the call had arrived only a few minutes later—from the government airways as to the usability of the Nahma flying field. She described the call made on her later by Monk, Ham and Johnny.

“They seemed to think I was a crook,” she said. “That hurt me a little. I didn't know there was anything wrong about informing this short dark man with the short pipe about any calls about strangers in town, or any strangers.”

“Tell the rest of it,” Doc said.

The girl said, “They came in later in the night—Monk and Ham and Johnny—and filed a telegram to you. The telegram was phoned to the nearest telegram office—”

“Remember the text of the message?” Doc said.

“It told you about what I have already told you, with the added information that an attempt had been made on their life when they landed at the Nahma field. I think someone had driven iron fence posts over the field and strung barbed wire between them, and Monk and the others narrowly missed crashing into the mess when they landed.”

Doc said thoughtfully, “They were reporting to me so that I would know that they had not come up here on a wild-goose chase. Didn't you advise me the telegram had been intercepted?”

The telephone operator nodded. “Yes, the wire was tapped. You see, I noticed that a different voice took the wire over the telephone. It wasn't the operator's voice. I know the operator, and I know there had been no change in operators. It made me suspicious.”

“So?”

“So about three o'clock this morning, when I usually sleep a little in the office, I went out, got in my car and drove to Gladstone. I found out the telegram hadn't been received in the telegraph office.”

“The message was not telegraphed from Nahma—”

“No. Maybe I didn't make that clear. There is no telegraph operator on duty in Nahma at night, and messages are telephoned to the nearest telegraph office instead.”

Doc nodded. “You notified me as soon as you found there was funny business with the telegram?”

“No. I didn't know what to do.”

“What decided you?”

“The tidal wave.”

THE house in which the telephone operator lived was made of wood, as was every other building in the lumbering town. It was a rather pleasant place with its wooden sidewalks, and neat wooden fences around every house, the large trees which overspread the streets, and the feel and odor of the North woods which pervaded everything.

“Tidal wave?” Doc prompted.

“Yes.”

“Another one?”

The operator said, “The second. Last night, late. It came while I was in Gladstone, checking on the telegram. I didn't hear about it until a little after I got back.” She smiled ruefully. “Lucky I wasn't gone from my job much longer or I would have gotten fired. There were several telephone calls about the affair.”

Doc Savage's face—the very deep bronze hue of his tanned skin always gave his features a metallic aspect—was without visible emotion. “Tell me the details about this wave,” he suggested.

“There's not much to be told. It was not as large as that other one, the one which drowned the two brothers. But it was a big wave, and last night was a very calm night on the lake.”

“Did anyone actually see the wave?”

“What makes you think they didn't?”

“It must have been very late at night. After three o'clock, according to your story.”

She nodded. “It was. But a man and his wife had gotten up early to go fishing. They rented one of the company cabins on the beach, about half a mile from here. They were standing inside their cabin when they heard a noise in the distance. Later the wave—”

Doc interrupted her again. He did it in a tone and manner that made the interjections seem less brusque than the words sounded.

“I want this straight,” he said. “First a sound, then a wave. That the way it was?”

"Yes."

"An interval between the sound and the wave?"

"Yes. Several minutes between them."

"What was the sound like?"

"It was a rather strange sound," the young woman said. "The man and his wife both described it as like a whole combination of sounds, all put together in one."

"In other words, they couldn't describe the sound by comparing it to any other sound they had ever heard?"

"That," she said, "is about the size of it."

"Did they see anything?"

"They were in the cabin when they heard this strange sound," the girl explained. "They came out on the porch to see what it was. The porch faces the lake. They saw nothing for a while, then they noticed a line of foam far out on the lake. This came toward them and they realized it was a tidal wave. So they fled into the woods and climbed a tree."

Doc said thoughtfully, "They probably recognized it as a tidal wave because there had been another one."

"Yes. That was it."

"What happened?"

"The wave just came. It damaged the cabin and rushed back into the woods. No one was drowned."

Doc Savage nodded. "Do you know of any reason why anyone should have wanted to drown the two brothers, the Jones brothers, who were killed in the first wave?"

"Do you think they were murdered?" the operator asked, wide-eyed.

"Do you know whether they had any enemies?"

"No."

"And do you know anything else that might be of importance?"

"No."

"Thank you very much," Doc Savage said.

THE bronze man went out and climbed into his rented laundry truck. He drove up Nahma's main street, then back again. He located where the telephone lines left town. He drove a mile down the blacktop road that connected with the highway, pulled off on a log tote road until his car was out of sight, and parked.

He went back and began following the telephone wires carefully.

The undergrowth was surprisingly thick, and mosquitoes swarmed in unbelievable numbers. Twice he flushed up deer, one of them being a hiding fawn that flashed out from almost underfoot. There seemed to be a great deal of game.

Eventually he found the man in the tree. The fellow was excellently camouflaged, but he was smoking, and the tobacco odor was a distinct tang in the woods.

Doc moved carefully, used binoculars. The man wore a headset, telephone type, and in front of him was a small board on which were switches. An arrangement, obviously, for tapping the telephone line to Nahma, and cutting off such communications as were not wanted—such as the dispatching of the telegram last night.

The bronze man moved fairly close, concealed himself, tightened the muscles of his throat, and imitated a faraway voice. The imitation, a voice in the distance, was one of the easiest which ventriloquists do.

“Hey, Freddy!” he called.

He did a good job on it, and the voice sounded as if it came from a distance of at least a quarter of a mile.

“Yeah, what is it?” This voice was a deeper one, with a little of the local French accent.

“According to the instruments,” Doc said with the first voice, “that wire is tapped around here some place.”

“What do we do? Start climbing every pole?”

“That's it.”

Doc became silent and watched results. These came promptly. The man on the crude platform wildly disconnected his wires from the telephone line. He scattered his platform by tossing the pieces far out into the brush. Then he scrambled down with his apparatus and took flight. He was convinced that the telephone company had in some way located the tapping, and had dispatched linemen to investigate.

The man traveled away from the telephone line, running, for two hundred yards. Then he went more slowly, watching his back trail, making sure that he was leaving no footprints. The ground was soft and he was leaving tracks. He swore. For the next quarter of a mile he was very busy jumping from tufts of grass to slabs of bark to fallen branches. Finally he reached a tote road and, on its grassed surface, could move fast without leaving signs.

He followed the tote road some distance, then went into the woods again, sat down on a rotting log, and got his breath. He tied his wire-tapping equipment into a bundle, climbed a tree and lashed it out of sight in the foliage. He went back to the tote road and marked the spot by sight so he could locate his apparatus again.

After that he set out for the shore of Bay de Noc.

Doc Savage watched the man use a compass and make various calculations as to direction. Finally the man selected a direction with his finger and followed it steadily toward the shore.

Doc circled the man, quickened his pace and went on ahead.

As he expected, he found a boat. It was concealed in a creek.

THE bronze man's idea in going ahead—so he would not get left behind—was to take the oars if it was a rowboat, or disable the motor if it was a motorboat. But it was a motorboat, the small type called a cruiser, about twenty-four feet, with a decked-over cabin, a berth on each side, an abbreviated galley, even a small, inclosed locker. The locker was too small to hide Doc safely. But there was a compartment in the extreme bow large enough.

He wedged himself into the bow section and waited.

The wire-tapper arrived, out of breath again and slapping mosquitoes. He jumped aboard, swore some more, and worried with the motor awhile before he got it going. The man was no boatman and he had difficulty with the mooring lines, ran aground, swore some more, shoved off, and eventually got out in the lake.

For an hour he ran the boat without sparing gasoline.

Then a bullet hit the craft. It went through the bow, near the little compartment in which Doc Savage was crouched. The *smack-whack!* in and out of the bullet was deafening.

“What the hell!” howled the man at the controls. “Who do you stinkers think you're shooting at?” He said some more, mostly about the relatives of the person he was screaming at, evidently the one who had fired the shot. All of this individual's relations were worms, apparently.

The boat had slowed. He moved quietly. The motor went silent. Then the bow nudged up on a mud bank and stopped.

A new voice addressed the boat pilot.

“I thought I told you,” it said, “not to come smacking across the lake in plain sight in daylight.”

“Listen, the phone company! They sent linemen out. They found out about the tap.”

The other man, who had a deep, harsh voice like rocks knocking together, said, “That's damned funny! We put an inductive tap on them wires. How'd they find that? You can't locate the kind of a tap we put on that telephone line with a Wheatstone bridge gadget like they use to spot breaks and grounds.”

“All I know is they come.”

“They see you?”

“Don't think so. Don't figure they'll even spot where I had the tap on. I got away clean.”

“O. K. But why'd you come busting across the lake like this?”

“I figured you'd want to know about the phone wire.”

The hard-rock voice swore with astonishing violence. “The damned troubles we got!” he said. “And you take a chance over a ten-cent detail like that!”

“I didn't see anybody. And who would be watching?”

“You dope! There has just been a second tidal wave, is all! Doesn't it enter your thick head that there is going to be a lot of interest in this place on account of that?”

“O. K., O. K. I'm sorry. How's it coming? You got hold of Doc Savage's three men and Atz yet?”

“Hell, no!”

“What's wrong?”

“They don't wanna get took,” the rock-voiced man said with deep sarcasm.

THE two tied up the boat and went away.

Doc Savage untangled himself from the little bow locker. Before thrusting his head out of the hatch he gave stiff leg muscles a kneading to loosen them, so that he could move quickly if necessary. Then he put his head outside.

The boat bow was jammed up on a mud bank in an inlet. Small trees overhung the creek. Doc got out, jumped ashore. Fifty yards away stood a tree of some size and he made for it.

He climbed the tree, slowly and carefully, did not have to go high before he saw that this was an island. It was very low, almost a part of the mainland, and very thickly wooded over indeed.

The bronze man moved a little, secreting himself in a clump of leaves. He watched and listened. The island was so small that there did not seem to be much percentage in prowling around.

As time passed he began to get an idea of what was going on. A siege seemed to be in progress. The south end of the tiny island was higher, rocky, less whiskered with undergrowth.

On this high end of the island four men seemed to be entrenched in fox holes in the rocks. Doc got out a gadget which he usually carried—a combination of periscope, telescope, breathing tube for under water, other things—and studied the defenders.

Monk, Ham, Johnny Littlejohn and a man Doc had never seen before. The latter was tall, gaunt, with a skin which from that distance looked as if it was made of good leather.

The men doing the besieging were back some distance, and being careful about showing themselves.

There were two shots while Doc was in the tree. He was there almost an hour.

He noted the direction of the breeze and saw why the four men were able to hold out so easily.

Gas was the answer. Monk, Ham and Johnny would have brought along a supply of anaesthetic gas which Doc had developed. The stuff would be in grenades, and all they had to do was toss out one or two of these and the wind would carry the stuff down on the enemy if he came too close. That was why he wasn't coming close.

But the situation was not good. The besiegers were too casual. Waiting too patiently. They evidently had some kind of plan.

Doc scrambled down out of his tree when he saw a speedboat coming out of the haze that blurred the southern distances of Lake Michigan.

The speedboat pulled into the little creek where the other boat was tied. Two men were in the craft, crowded into the cockpit with half a dozen boxes and jugs.

“All right, you two, you took your time,” said a man on shore.

He had a voice like a pair of colliding rocks. Doc Savage noted, with much interest, that he was short and dark, and that he had a short white pipe between his teeth. This, then, was the man who had given the Nahma telephone operator five dollars to give him information—the information which had resulted in the attempt to wreck the plane when it landed on the Nahma airport.

“We done our best, Stub,” said one of the men in the speedboat.

Stub was in a bad mood. Apparently he wasn't trusting the intelligence of anybody.

He said, “All right, now, what'd you guys get? Tell me.”

They named chemicals, having trouble with the technical pronunciation.

Doc Savage's face went tight. There came into existence, so low-pitched that it was almost inaudible, a trilling sound. This note, musical and yet without tune, had a strange quality of seeming to suffuse the adjacent air itself.

The sound—Doc stopped it the moment he realized he was making it—was a small, unconscious thing which the bronze man did in moments of mental excitement. It meant excitement, surprise, shock. In this case—shock.

Any chemist would have recognized the purpose of the chemicals they had named.

The ingredients were for mustard gas. Monk, Ham, Johnny and their associate—Doc had no idea who the latter was—would have no defense against mustard gas.

(It is policy to refrain from publishing chemical formulas which are dangerous, or which could be used for illegal purposes should they get in the wrong hands. Hence the omission of the ingredients of mustard gas here, although the formula is a widely known one.)

Chapter V. ISLAND SIEGE

THE short dark man, Stub, clapped his hands together approvingly. “Well, what do you know!” he said. “Somebody done something right around here for a change.”

One of the two in the speedboat grinned. “You still as mad as you were this morning?”

“Sure. I ain't had no reason to cheer up,” Stub said. “Get that stuff ashore. Let's start mixing her.”

“Don't it take equipment?”

“We got that.”

Doc Savage counted them. Six men. The others, back in the brush at the other end of the island, were too far away to be of help to these. He had tackled worse odds. But there was no way that he could see of getting close enough to go into action quickly enough for surprise to give the needed help. He did not have—one of the few times he had been caught without the stuff—any of the anaesthetic gas which he often used, gas which would produce quick unconsciousness only if breathed, would dissipate itself after something like a minute of mixing with the air.

The bronze man eased back into the brush. He headed for the siege at the far end of the island.

He went carefully, watching the ground for tracks—not alone tracks, but bent grass, twisted limbs, leaves turned—which would show where men had gone. That way, by the primitive Indian method of tracking, he located his first victim.

The man was gold-bricking on his job of trying to pick off Monk, Ham, Johnny or the other person. He had done it cunningly. He had rigged a string across the path from the rear, so that anyone approaching would hit the string, the other end of which was tied to one of his fingers, thus awakening him in time.

Doc saw the string, stepped over it, approached the man with care, fell upon him, got the fellow's face jammed down in the soft, almost muddy earth, so that no sound came from it.

The man's body did the things a body does when its brain thinks it is going to die.

But the remarkable trained strength, the knowledge of nerve centers which Doc Savage had acquired as a part of his training, held the other helpless until he was senseless.

(The full extent of the remarkable training—which is responsible for the strange combination of mental wizard, physical marvel, and scientific Aladdin which is Doc Savage—is not delineated fully in each Doc Savage novel. Such repetition would be monotonous for regular readers of the magazine. But Doc Savage's past was this: He was placed, by his father—his mother died in Doc's youth—in the hands of scientists for training when he was very young. Doc Savage thus became one of the first “scientific” babies, and probably the only fully successful one. Because of the years of incessant scientific training to which he was subjected in the course of his training, he missed many of the pleasures and playtimes of ordinary youth, and while such pleasures and playtimes may not be necessary to mold a well-rounded personality—there is some argument among psychologists on this point—the bronze man's unorthodox early life is in part responsible for his character. It accounts for his almost inhuman lack of emotional response to disaster and to joy—the perpetual poker face he wears, in other words. Such training was bound to have an effect. Doc Savage has been, for instance, under the wing of a Yale expert on atomic phenomena, a Virginia experimenter in supersensory activity, a Yogi practitioner from India, a jungle chief and tracker in Africa. These are only a few examples of the type of men who were employed in training Doc Savage. The training cost a fortune, a tremendous sum, and in fact was the sole purpose for which Doc's father worked through a period of many years. His sole heritage passed on to Doc, heritage in the way of wealth, was a secret hoard of gold located in a Central American republic, far from where any so-called civilized foot had trod. And even this hoard of gold was one which Doc Savage had to go out and earn for himself. So in truth everything that the bronze man's father ever made was poured into the unique, fantastic, and sometimes hair-raisingly strange training which Doc received. This training was, of course, aimed at the sole purpose of fitting Doc for a career of righting wrongs and punishing evildoers in the far corners of the earth. That was the career for which Doc's father trained him in the very beginning. Why Doc's father should go to such lengths to train him for such a strange life is something the bronze man has not been able to fully account for, no satisfactory explanation for it ever having come to life.—AUTHOR.)

Doc did not tie or gag the man. Instead, he used a small hypo needle, a particularly constructed needle which administered a measured dose each time the plunger was depressed. Each plunger shot was good for about four hours of unconsciousness, although the effect naturally varied somewhat on individuals. A drunk, for instance, would be knocked out only about an hour for each shot. Doc gave the victim four loads of the chemical.

Then he went hunting for another victim.

The second man was not asleep. But he was trying very hard to get a shot at Monk Mayfair, keeping an eye pressed to the telescope sight on a rifle. A telescope sight does not allow much side vision.

If he ever knew for sure what hit him he found it out by clairvoyance. Doc went after his next victim.

The third man turned around unexpectedly and almost managed to shoot Doc between the eyes. The bullet went where the bronze man's forehead had been. This third man yelled like a dragon.

Doc got down, got hold of the man's gun and took it away. But then it was too late to do anything except slug the man so hard he fell on the ground, tight and shaking and without consciousness. The hornet nest was stirred up.

THEY came from the other end of the island, the man called Stub yelling like a circus calliope. The other men, those doing the besieging, also yelled. They did some shooting, too, on general principles.

Doc decided he might have cleared away one end of the besiegers' line.

He made his voice very loud, yelled in Mayan, “Monk, Ham, Johnny—try the west end of the island! Make a run for it! Keep down! Bring your friend!”

It was not likely that anyone but his aides would understand the Mayan.

(This Mayan tongue, used frequently by Doc Savage and his aides, is the true language of ancient Maya, the people whose Central American civilization rivaled, and in many respects excelled, that of ancient Egypt. Doc and his men learned the language in the course of an adventure among a small clan of the descendants of ancient Maya.—AUTHOR.)

Monk, in the same language, howled, “Here we come.”

It was no noisy affair. Monk and the others hardly showed themselves. But they moved fast.

Sure that they would be seen unless some kind of diversion was created, Doc Savage moved to the east, carrying the rifle with which the third guard had tried to shoot him. He caught sight of a man and put a bullet close to the fellow.

At the same time Doc showed himself. Then he flopped out of sight and crawled. Bullets came hunting him. The firing was scattered, hysterical, at first. But Stub stopped that with words which should have taken the leaves off the nearby bushes.

Doc got clear, stopped and watched Monk and the others working their way out of the trap.

He saw what happened to Ham Brooks. He was helpless to prevent it.

In a way it was Doc Savage's fault because he had overlooked one man. The fellow, more cautious than any of the others, had been better hidden. And he had been sensible enough not to show himself when the uproar started a moment ago.

The man was in a tree, crouched on a low branch in a tangle of leaves. He had a rifle.

Ham Brooks had the ill fortune to attempt to pass directly beneath the tree. The man struck with the stock of his rifle, not swinging, but shooting the way you shoot with a billiard cue. It brought Ham Brooks down as if he had been blackjacked.

“Monk!” Doc shouted instantly. “Ham! Help him!”

But Monk never heard that, because there was shooting again and Stub bawling commands.

The man who had clubbed down Ham rolled out of the tree, having discovered Doc Savage, and took a quick shot at the bronze man. The bullet came close. So close that the short hairs on the back of Doc's neck were on end for five minutes afterward.

Doc went down. More bullets hunted for him. He retreated. He was helpless to aid Ham.

One thing he did do.

He yelled, “You fellows harm Ham Brooks and we'll turn your men over to the law!”

He was surprised, much pleased, when someone howled, “What men you talkin' about?”

“The ones we've got trapped,” Doc shouted vaguely.

Then he put on speed and got away from there.

DOC joined Monk and Johnny and the other man without much trouble. He noted that the other man, a tall, gaunt tower, was a stranger.

“Name's Atz,” Monk said, indicating the tall man. “Where's Ham?”

“Come on,” Doc Savage said.

They ran. It became apparent that Doc was managing to pick a course that would circle the enemy and reach the boats.

Monk stopped and demanded, “Where's Ham?” in a voice full of strained anxiety.

Doc Savage went close to Monk, pointed off to the left, said, “Look yonder.” When Monk looked, Doc put a fist hard against the end of Monk's jaw and made Monk senseless.

Atz, eyes apop, gasped, “What the—”

Doc picked Monk up bodily, carried him. They reached the small notch in the island—creek was hardly the word for it—where the speedboat and the cabin cruiser were tied up.

The bronze man piled Monk into the speedboat.

He said, “Johnny—cabin cruiser—ignition wires!”

Johnny understood and got into the engine pit of the cruiser, came out with ignition wires dangling from his fists like roots.

Doc had the speedboat engine bawling by then. Johnny made a sprawling leap aboard. Doc jammed the clutch into reverse. The speedboat backed then went ahead as Doc changed the control. They went out of the inlet with a moaning violence that threatened to pull all the water out behind them.

Bullets began to come. Doc said, “Into the front cockpit and down, everybody.” He had already put Monk there. “The motor will stop their bullets.”

Nothing was said for some time after that. Then, after they were nearly a mile out on the lake, Doc straightened. The shooting had stopped.

“Made it,” he said. He did not sound pleased.

Monk was still out. Johnny sat up, said, "I'll be superamalgamated!" and then was silent, as if that covered everything.

The stranger, Atz, eyed Doc Savage.

"Who the devil are *you?"* Atz demanded.

Johnny Littlejohn, astonished, told Atz, "This is Doc Savage."

Atz held his mouth open a moment. Then he registered skepticism. "Sure, and I'm a flying fish named Henry," he said. "What're you trying to give me? I've seen pictures of Doc Savage."

Doc Savage's disguise of pale face, white mustache, white hair and pot stomach had stood up fairly well. A little of the gummed-on mustache was missing, and the rubber padding which made up the stomach was a little askew. Doc fooled with the valve and deflated the stomach. He was more comfortable without the thing, anyway.

"Oh!" Atz said. "Disguised!"

Johnny Littlejohn was looking at Monk's unconscious bulk. "What happened?" Johnny asked. He never used his big words on Doc Savage. "I saw you hit Monk, but I didn't hear what was said."

Doc explained, "They got Ham."

"Oh!" Johnny looked bleak.

Atz, puzzled, demanded, "But why did you hit Monk?"

Johnny answered that.

"Nothing else would have kept Monk from going back after Ham," he said.

THEN Johnny fell to watching Doc Savage, becoming curious about why the bronze man should be staring so intently at the mile-distant shore of the little island from which they had just escaped.

He was further puzzled when Doc seized the small but obviously powerful searchlight with which the speedboat was equipped, and aiming this toward the island began jiggling the switch. Then, suddenly, he understood.

"Where's the signal coming from?" he demanded.

"South of the inlet where we got the boat," Doc explained.

Johnny spotted it then. The bright sunlight made the flashes very difficult to locate.

He watched Doc flash a request to the distant Stub to repeat the earlier message.

Stub replied. His transmission was erratic, but persistent.

"Don't call in the law,"

Stub transmitted, *"and we will keep Ham Brooks alive."*

Johnny said softly, "Monk will sure be glad to hear that."

Doc flashed, *"O. K.,"* with the searchlight.

Atz said, "They had a searchlight on the island last night, trying to locate us. That must be the one they're using."

The light flashed at them: *"Better forget this and go back to New York."*

Monk awakened then, all in a snap like an animal, but somewhat confused, and bellowed, "Who hit me? Who done that, anyway?"

Chapter VI. THE WAVE MAKER

THEY drove the speedboat hard—there was no absolute assurance that the men on the island did not have another boat that would overtake this one—and headed into Nahma. They tied up at the lumber-company dock and walked through the mill yard, past the conveyor which carried sawed lumber that was being sorted by graders, then past the many acres of neatly stacked dimension lumber, shingles and laths, and finally turned right to the wooden hotel. They registered there. Monk, Johnny and Atz were very tired. They took baths.

Atz said, "Trying to do my friend Dave Clay a favor seems to have gotten me into right smart excitement."

Doc Savage told Atz, "I want to hear all about that."

It was after the regular meal hour, but after an argument they got served in the dining room. Corned beef and cabbage and the good, solid stuff lumbermen eat.

Doc Savage said, "Let's bring this thing up to date. First there was a mysterious tidal wave which drowned two brothers named Jones. It seemed worth investigating, so Monk and Ham and Johnny came out here to do that. An attempt was made to get rid of them when they landed. They wired me the details. But the telegram was intercepted."

Monk stared. "We didn't know about the intercepting!"

"How did you happen to come out, Doc?" Johnny asked.

"The telephone operator got in touch with me," Doc told him. "She has a head on her shoulders."

"She's pretty, too," Monk said. "Ham liked her. Poor Ham." Monk fell into a hard-mouthed silence, thinking of Ham and worrying about him.

Johnny picked up the story and said, "Here is what happened, Doc. We arrived in Nahma and looked around and found out that a short dark man—we know now it was that Stub—engineered the attempt on our lives. Then we went back to our plane, and we found a man named Dave Clay hiding there."

"Hiding?"

"Yes, that is the word for what he was doing, even if he did have a gun. He wanted to surrender, he said. I don't know. Maybe he did."

"Surrender for what?" Doc's face was composed and there was no excitement there or in his voice.

"Guilty of causing the deaths of the two Jones brothers, he said."

Now Doc showed some emotion. A flicker of movement in his flake-gold eyes.

“Jones brothers. The two who died in the tidal wave?” he asked.

“That's what he meant.”

“What about the wave?”

Johnny's jaw was thrust out and solid for a moment. “That's where he blew up. We thought of the wave and asked him about it. He blew up. He got away from us. Ran for it. Escaped.”

“You think he caused the tidal wave?” Doc inquired.

Nothing in the bronze man's tone or manner indicated that he thought this might be a silly question.

“We got the idea,” Johnny said.

Atz said, “It's ridiculous, of course.”

Johnny frowned at him, demanded, “After what happened last night, you claim—”

Doc Savage put in, “Wait a minute. What did this Dave Clay look like?”

“Nice, pleasant young chap,” Johnny said. “Scared as the dickens, of course, when we saw him. But he looked all right.”

“He *is* nice,” Atz said emphatically.

“Why do you say that?” Doc asked.

“He is a very, very good friend of mine,” Atz said. He spoke in a way almost violently determined, as if he was afraid his story sounded thin, and wanted them to see it wasn't. “I have known him some time, and yesterday morning, I noticed he was very worried. So I began following him, trying to learn what was wrong, so I could help him.”

“That is how you got mixed in this?”

“That is how,” said Atz grimly. “And I don't think you or your two friends here believe me.”

NO one said whether they believed or disbelieved Atz, and this seemed to make him uneasier, and he fell into a sulking silence. A waiter came with apple pie and coffee, which he put in front of them without speaking, then went away.

After the waiter had gone, Doc Savage said, “Go ahead with it.”

Johnny nodded. “Last night, Dave Clay got away. We chased him, and Atz, here, stopped us. He said he stopped us because he was afraid we meant harm to Dave Clay. Well, we brought him back to the plane and were talking to him when somebody took a pot shot at the plane. It was that short dark man, Stub. We chased him. He got in a speedboat. We ran back and used the plane to chase him. We chased him and the boat out on the lake.”

Johnny stopped and was silent a moment.

“We chased him across the lake to that island,” he added.

He became quiet again.

There was stillness in the room. There was no sound from the kitchen, no noises from anywhere. Atz finally lifted his coffee cup and drank. He made a sucking noise.

Johnny said, blurting, “That damned thing just waved in the sky, and then there was the tidal wave!”

He was so vehement—he never used even mild profanity normally, either—that Doc started. Johnny's tone, more than the bizarre character of the information, disturbed him.

“Damned thing?” Doc questioned.

“Well, describing anything that way sounds goofy. But it was like that. Big. That is, it started from nothing and got big. It was kind of a bluish or purplish—”

“Visible in the night?” Doc interrupted.

“Yes. Quite visible.”

“Was the night dark?”

“It was pretty dark,” Johnny admitted. “We had been chasing the speedboat by the sparks from its exhaust stacks, I remember. That, and the wave, which we could see at times.”

“Were there clouds?”

“A lot of clouds. I mean, it wasn't overcast solidly, but there were clouds.”

“It wasn't storming?”

The line of questioning seemed to puzzle Johnny. He shook his head. “Oh, no. No storm. There was only some heat lightning earlier in the evening, but it was the kind of thing you see almost any night.”

Doc seemed satisfied about the weather. “Go ahead,” he said.

Johnny was silent a moment, thinking about the previous night.

“This thing—I'll call it *thing* because we have no idea what it was—suddenly put two long feelers up into the air. They were thin, and the same color as the body of the object itself. These went very high, clear up through the clouds probably. And then there was a roaring noise. Well, it wasn't a roaring, but more like a . . . a—”

Doc Savage interrupted him again, this time to describe the sound which the Nahma telephone girl had said that the two vacationists in the cabin on the lake front had heard just before they saw the tidal wave. “Was that the sound?” he asked.

Johnny nodded. “That's as close as anything to it.”

Atz came out of his sulk to stare at Doc Savage and demand, “Where did you find out about that sound?”

Doc seemed not to hear him but asked Johnny, “When did the tidal wave come?”

“Right after the sound.”

“How big was it?”

“It seemed awfully big,” Johnny said. “But maybe it wasn't as huge as all that. I would say the wave was at least twelve feet high—”

“Twelve feet—hell!” Atz interjected. “It was forty feet high!”

Doc Savage judged that Johnny's estimate of twelve feet for the wave was probably nearer the fact.

“Well, anyway,” Johnny said, “it was big enough that when the plane hit it we were wrecked. Tipped the ship and one wing went under. Tore the wing off. Ripped a hole in the cabin when the wing came loose. The plane then sank. The water was deep there and the plane went completely out of sight.”

“And you fellows?” Doc prompted.

“Oh, we swam ashore with what equipment we could grab. Anaesthetic gas grenades and bullets for our machine pistols, mostly.”

Atz said, “Then we had a hell of a fight.”

“It wasn't such a fight,” Johnny corrected. “This Stub was on the island and he had a lot of men already there. And they tried to catch us.”

“I thought it was a hell of a fight,” Atz insisted.

“We just stood them off. All night. The anaesthetic gas we used scared the dickens out of them, and helped. Only trouble was the gas only made them unconscious for an hour or so at a time. And we never were able to gas enough of them at once to give us a chance to lick them. That's the way it was until you showed up.”

Doc Savage studied the three of them intently.

“What caused the thing you saw and the wave?” he asked.

Johnny made a desperate gesture.

“We can come about as near explaining the law of gravity as we can what happened,” he said.

“Nearer,” Monk contributed.

THE pilot who brought a plane up from Milwaukee when Doc Savage telephoned an airport there for a ship was a young man with a reasonable bump of curiosity.

Apparently, too, he had heard a great deal about Doc Savage and hoped his association with the bronze man would be interesting. When they told him they would take over the plane, and he could remain in Nahma and enjoy its attractions, he was not enthusiastic. He tried to sell them the idea of his going along, and he was more persistent than an old-fashioned insurance salesman.

“Listen, bub,” Monk told him. “You keep pestering us and I'll personally flatten you out so thin they can use you to slice cheese.”

“It might be worth it,” the young man said, “if I'd get to go along.”

They finally left him behind largely by main force, and took off in the plane. They flew over the island. They kept discreetly high.

There was a faint plume of rabbit-colored smoke rising from the midsection of the island.

“Otherwise the place seems as deserted as an old maid's heart,” Monk remarked.

Johnny frowned. “What's that burning?”

Doc Savage sent the plane lower and lower, but still with care. The fact that they could see no one did not mean the island necessarily had to be deserted. The trees were thick, their foliage heavy.

Atz said, “Flown the coop, looks to me.”

Doc made no comment. Atz was too obviously right. He set the ship upon the lake, and put it close to shore, but not upon the beach. He worked with the motors until the nose of the craft was turned lakeward, so that it was ready to get away in a hurry.

“Johnny, you and Atz stay with the ship,” he said.

Atz said, “The hell if I'm going to. I want to see what this is burning. My friend Dave Clay is mixed up in it, you know.”

He then sprang out of the ship and wallowed and splashed neck-deep in water and made the shore.

Doc Savage was not pleased, but he made no fuss about it. He followed in silence. Monk, however, was less restrained. He overtook Atz and clapped a hand unceremoniously on the other man's neck.

“I'm going to give you a gentle tip this time,” Monk told Atz. “And next time I'll knock a permanent crick in your neck. Do what Doc tells you, see!”

Atz, not sounding afraid, said, “Friend, you're bigger than I am and six times as strong, probably. But that doesn't give you control of my brain.”

“It'll give me control of your body, though,” Monk assured him. “And I'll break every bone in it if you don't take Doc's orders.”

“Can't he enforce his own discipline?”

“He won't need to.”

IT was some kind of a building that was burning, but the thing was too far burned for them to tell much more than that. It was a roaring fire. The heat was terrific. It was just a little too much fire for things to be right.

Monk Mayfair, who for all his clown behavior and his simian looks was rated one of the great industrial and research chemists of the era, walked around and around the place, sniffing and frowning. Suddenly he struck out in a run, back toward the plane. He returned with some bottles containing chemicals.

“I think I know a thermite fire when I see one,” he said. “But it won't hurt to be sure.”

He fooled around with the chemicals, mixing them together in a larger bottle. He threw this bottle in the fire. There was quite a display of violent flame.

“Thermite,” he told Doc.

Atz said, “Thermite? You mean the stuff they put in incendiary bombs?”

Monk nodded. “That's it. But it wasn't incendiary bombs in there. This stuff was in boxes or a barrel or something and there was quite a lot of it. The fire has been burning some time and it's about burned out now, so you can see how much of a fire it was when it was going full tilt.”

Atz said, “You mean they wanted a hot fire?”

“I mean,” Monk told him, “that they wanted this shack so completely destroyed that we'd never get a clue by examining the ashes.”

Atz digested this mentally. He shrugged. “Probably it was just a summer cabin. Yeah, somebody's cabin. Look yonder, a power line. An electric power line to supply current to the place.”

The line was an ordinary one, the poles extending to the mainland across the reef of half-exposed rocks which connected the island to the mainland like an isthmus.

And then, while they were looking at the line, they saw two men coming, picking their way along under the poles. They were workmen, obviously. They came close.

“A fire, eh?” one of them remarked. “That answers it then.”

“Linemen?” Doc asked.

They nodded. “There was a short showed up in this line,” the spokesman said. “We were tracing it down.”

Doc Savage asked, “Who was the subscriber here? Who owns the cabin?”

“Dave Clay,” the lineman said. “At least that's the name of the guy who pays the light bill.”

“The cabin is rather remote,” Doc remarked.

“Yeah. It's four miles to the main high line.”

Doc asked, “Your company usually build lines four miles to service single cabins?”

“When the subscribers pay for the lines, they do,” the lineman declared.

“The line,” said Doc thoughtfully, “must have cost several hundred dollars.”

“More than that.”

“How long ago was the line built?”

“Year. Just about.”

The linemen snipped off the dangling ends of the power line then went away.

Monk collared Atz. “Little question for you, my golden-tongued friend,” Monk said.

“Yes?”

“You told us Dave Clay had a cabin—*but you told us that cabin was on a lake forty miles back in the woods,*” Monk said. “How do you account for the discrepancy? Slip of the tongue or something?”

Atz spread his hands. He looked strange.

“I didn't know Dave had *this* cabin,” he said.

THEY got into the plane and took off. Doc headed across the lake in a southwesterly direction, not explaining where he was going.

Atz, who seemed to resent Monk, scowled at the homely chemist and said over the motor noise, “It strikes me you don't care much about your friend, this Ham.”

Monk, who undoubtedly thought more of Ham Brooks than he thought of his own life—he had demonstrated this a time or two—looked at Atz with an absolutely dead pan. “Yeah? How you figure that?”

“After you escaped from the island you started taking your time. You had something to eat. You talked it all over. And when you got back out here the birds had flown, taking Ham with them.”

Monk asked, “You forgetting they promised to knock Ham off if we went to the police?”

Atz frowned. “You mean you're actually not going to try to rescue him?”

Monk shrugged. “Doc is doing it. I'm not as worried as I would be otherwise—not by a long shot.”

“What's he going to do next?”

Monk just snorted.

Atz, not encouraged by his session with Monk, flopped in the co-pilot's seat beside Doc Savage.

“Look here, I've heard you fellows have a reputation for these things,” he shouted. “But I've got a stake in this. Dave Clay is in damned serious trouble and I want him out of it. If you don't intend to do anything I'm going to call in the State police. I'll call the F. B. I. in, too. Kidnaping is in their line of business.”

Doc Savage took this mildly and instead of arguing showed Atz a telegram which he had written.

The message was to the remainder of his associates—Renny Renwick, the engineer, and Long Tom Roberts, the electrical expert, in New York City. It read:

PROBLEM HERE GETTING DIFFICULT. HAM SEIZED BY SOMEONE. BETTER FLY OUT HERE AND HELP US. BRING EQUIPMENT AND LAND IN MARQUETTE FOR INSTRUCTIONS.

DOC

Atz read the message and said, “That's only two more men.”

“The equipment will help,” Doc said.

Atz studied the bronze man's face. “Look here, if you think we're really making progress I won't do anything but ride along and help all I can.”

“Progress,” Doc Savage said quietly, “is not always a thing you can see.”

“You might be right at that,” Atz admitted.

THEY sent the telegram to Doc's two aides in New York, sending the message from Menominee, Michigan.

Then Doc Savage got lost.

Or, at least, Monk, Johnny and Atz missed the bronze man. Monk and Johnny were a little bothered. “Maybe he ran into the gang unexpectedly,” Monk said anxiously.

Atz snorted. “Nonsense! The gang, whoever they are, can't cover the whole State of Michigan.”

It was almost thirty minutes before Doc Savage appeared. He had purchased, they discovered, some lumberjack shirts and work trousers.

“Things that will make us a little less conspicuous,” he explained.

“You had us worried,” Monk told him.

Atz frowned at the lumberjack clothes and complained, “Getting disguises strikes me as kid stuff. When do we try something constructive?”

“How would visiting Dave Clay's other cabin strike you?” Doc asked.

“Now,” Atz said, “you're talking.”

Chapter VII. WHEN DEATH STOPPED FOOLING

THE darkness that night had a polished-aluminum quality from the moon.

The little logging railroad that ran through the timberland was rough. Looking ahead of the slowly moving locomotive in the beam of the headlight, the unevenness of the rails was noticeable, a little scary. The tops of the trees, in places almost overhanging the railroad, were cut clean against the bright night sky. Shadows under the trees were dark, almost tangible.

The train consisted of engine and caboose and five cars in between, two of these box cars. The train slowed often, and frequently it was barely crawling.

About forty miles back in the woods, when the train was going very slowly, men began hastily unloading from one of the box cars. The shadows were very thick there, and there was a sharp curve, so that train-crew men in engine and caboose would hardly be likely to see them. Weeds were high along the right of way, too, and they piled into these in haste.

Stub, who had been the first man off, kept flat in the weeds until the train had gone.

“Think anyone saw us?” he asked.

His men didn't think anyone had. They got up out of the weeds and took count. There were eleven men. Each one had more in the way of guns, ammunition and explosives than he wanted to carry. Particularly three men who were burdened with dynamite; they were scared because of the way they had been tumbling around with the stuff.

“I fell on a rock,” one muttered. “And there's enough of this stuff to blow the train out of the woods.”

“Getting blowed to hell is the least of our worries,” Stub said disagreeably. “Quit worrying about a nice quick death. Suppose one of these bears around here would get you and eat you slowly.”

“How far is it?” asked another with no enthusiasm.

“Mile or two,” Stub said. “Just an appetizer.”

“Why didn't we come up by car on the road?”

“We could have marched in procession behind a steam calliope, too,” Stub said.

He led the way. Stub was no woodsman, and he said so profanely. He had a compass, which he claimed he distrusted. He swore with vigor at two owls which followed along and hooted at them.

They traveled the mile with the greatest of difficulty.

“I begin to see why this is still wilderness,” a man said. “I wonder if there's still Indians in it.”

“If an Indian ever got into it, he never got out again,” Stub announced.

Then they were at Dave Clay's cabin.

THE cabin had a dark loneliness about it that was depressing. It stood in a clearing that was hardly a clearing at all, and the trees were high and dark all around.

Stub directed the placing of the dynamite.

He did not plant the stuff all in one spot, but set it skillfully, a charge here and another there. The result was that no part of the cabin would escape. He wired the stuff, each with its own separate wiring, to three separate battery detonators, coupled with little metal boxes which they had brought along.

He was so careful. He allowed no one to smoke. The odor of tobacco might linger. He commanded them not to spit anywhere, or chew matches and throw them down. He took pains that none of the wires showed, connecting the explosive charges to detonators.

“All right,” he said. “We got the eggs in the nest.”

They then retired with great care to the thick undergrowth.

Stub placed a metal box on the ground.

“The rest of you blow,” he said. “Go on back to the railroad and walk out, or wait and hop a train, or something. Better walk out, though.”

“I'd rather ride,” a man told him.

“Sure. Go ahead. After Savage is knocked off the army and navy and marines will be watching every road, railroad and lovers' lane in this part of the country. But go ahead. When they find you bumming on freight cars, you can tell 'em you're Napoleons looking for your Josephines. I guess they'd believe it.”

Stub took pleasure in the speech. He was sounding as if, for the first time, he was about ten percent satisfied with the situation.

“How you gonna set off that dynamite?” a man blurted. He was puzzled.

Stub indicated the box. “Ever hear of a radio detonator?” he demanded.

“Huh?”

“O. K., O. K. Such Einsteins and Kierans they give me for assistants.” Stub snorted. He tapped the box. “This is a radio transmitter, see. I punch a button and it puts out a radio wave. Savvy.”

“I don't see—”

“Shut up and listen. Attached to the dynamite charges are some more little metal boxes. You saw 'em. They're radio receivers that close relays and the relays shoot a current into the charges when they close. Result: Everything blows up at once.”

“Oh.” The man went away.

They all went away except Stub, and he climbed a tree. It was a large tree which he had carefully selected—he had been here at the cabin in daylight, obviously—so that he could watch the cabin.

He was not satisfied when he crouched and watched the cabin. He got down out of the tree carefully and went back to the cabin.

He had to know, somehow, when Doc Savage arrived and entered the cabin. Some way, somehow, of telling. He listened and pondered, and then he heard the clock ticking inside the cabin, and he remembered that the clock was an alarm one with a radiant dial.

He went into the cabin. He was alone and he was scared. He thought: What if all that dynamite should explode? What if a burst of static or something should set off the radio firing mechanism and it should explode? The idea made him nervous. He got the alarm clock and placed it on a low stand table in front of the door, where he could see it from the tree—if the door was open.

He closed the door when he left the cabin.

He went back and climbed into the tree. He had a pair of binoculars; he trained these on the spot where the cabin door was located in the darkness.

He waited tensely, but it was the tension of a full-wound watch spring. It would not snap. He would do nothing, not a single thing except breathe just as little as he had to, until he saw that luminous clock face. When he saw it the door of the cabin would be open, of course. Then he would wait just a moment longer. Perhaps he would see the face of the clock disappear momentarily three times. That would mean Doc Savage, Johnny and Monk had gone into the cabin. Then he would thumb down on the radio-transmitter button and the cabin would, the very next instant, be a hideous mess in the air. He waited patiently.

DOC SAVAGE had stopped his rented automobile about a mile from the Dave Clay cabin. He had told Atz, “Let us know when we are within a mile of the cabin.” Atz let him know.

They got out and walked. They left the car pulled off to the side of the road, concealed from passers-by. The bright silver moonlight thrust down upon them, making the road clear and easy walking.

Doc Savage put a flashlight on the road dust, examining the tracks.

“No cars past here since dark,” he said.

“How can you tell?” Atz was curious.

Doc explained about the dew. It was heavy tonight. It was moistening the dust slightly, not enough for the unskilled eyes to be certain, of course. But there was the dew on the tall grass which grew up between the ruts in the road; passing cars would have knocked the dew off that, had there been any passing cars.

Atz said, “Tricks in all trades.”

Not more than three minutes later Atz took his fall. He had stepped close to the road and suddenly there was a gasp, mixed profanity and astonishment, and Atz shot out of sight. He fell. He made the heavy sound a man's body makes taking a hard fall. A sound which is always so surprisingly loud because a man goes so quietly.

“Atz!” Monk gasped.

No reply.

Johnny said, “Talking of tricks, he sure pulled a nice one. There's a ditch here, a culvert.”

They climbed down beside Atz. He was rag-limp. They shaded a flashlight lens over his face. A worm of red was crawling out of his scalp.

Doc Savage explored carefully, said, “He will come out of it, but it is hard to say when.”

Monk indicated a sharp rock. “Must have lit on this on his head.”

“An inexpectative galimatias,” Johnny remarked.

“Something like that,” Monk agreed vaguely. “Who's gonna carry the clumsy lug?”

Doc did the carrying. Monk and Johnny were coming to a point where they were beginning to realize that the human body was made so that sleep was an essential.

Doc did not carry Atz far, however. Something like a quarter of a mile from where Dave Clay's cabin was supposed to be, the bronze man swung into the brush.

He lowered Atz to the ground.

“Gonna leave him here?” Monk asked.

Doc said, “Yes. With a note and a flashlight.”

The bronze man wrote on a bit of paper:

We have gone on. Stay here. We will be back for you.

He pinned this to Atz's coat sleeve where the man couldn't miss it, and put a flashlight on the man's lap. They left Atz that way.

Doc led the way fifty yards onward, stopped, said, “Johnny, you are posted here.”

“Here?” Johnny was too astonished to use big words.

“Why?”

“Monk and I will go on,” Doc said.

JOHNNY LITTLEJOHN settled down silently in the darkness of tree shadows. He knew it was no use arguing with Doc. Too, it had been his experience that Doc always had good reasons when he did things like this.

Johnny watched Doc and Monk go on, disappear. The two were almost noiseless, and they seemed only a few feet away before they were out of sight. Johnny grinned. Monk must be part ghost.

Nothing that Doc did ever completely astonished Johnny. The bronze man was so unusual that you got the habit, after a while, of going around expecting him to take rabbits out of the most unexpected hats. But Monk was different. Monk's forehead looked as if it had room, at the most, for a scant spoonful of brains. But Monk was really remarkable when you came to know him. An astonishing fellow. And intensely attached to Ham, with whom he quarreled continually. Monk and Ham never exchanged a civil word except by accident. Yet they were two of the most sincere friends Johnny believed he had ever known.

Johnny leaned back and relaxed. He did not suppose Doc Savage and Monk were going into any great danger. Doubtless they would just find Dave Clay's cabin deserted. It was too much to hope that Clay would be around there, after what had happened. But Dave Clay's cabin had to be searched. You couldn't overlook a thing like that.

Johnny did not try to puzzle out the mystery. He had tried that all during the previous night, when the horror and surprise of the fantastic thing that had appeared, and seemingly made the tidal wave, had been fresh in his mind. He hadn't figured it out then, when his mind was new to the problem. Now he was very tired. He wasn't going to work himself up over it now.

It was a very still night. Johnny sat motionless and thought of unimportant things. He'd been slighting his big words, he reflected; he'd have to use more of them. Using the words gave him a certain sly pleasure. He was a man of few pleasures and few real friends, and it had always been so. He did not mind. His work, his pleasure—except for the intense excitement he got from working with Doc Savage—came from his work, archaeology and geology.

Archaeology, the past, was a fantastic richness that had enough to fill the lives of any man, of any hundred men. What Johnny got from his association with Doc gave his life all the hot sparkle it needed, and of quietness and study there was ample in his work.

He jerked up suddenly.

He had seen a flash of light. Atz. The man had regained consciousness.

Johnny arose and went silently toward Atz. He did not call out, and his approach was quite noiseless.

That was how he happened to be close enough to Atz, undiscovered, to see Atz's shocking reaction to the note pinned to his sleeve.

For Atz read the note and laughed fiercely.

Then Atz got up and went away. Not toward the cabin. In the opposite direction. He ran like a man with an idea.

JOHNNY watched the man run away and he felt ghastly. It was as if somebody had poured a bucket of

something awful on him. All through his body, horror.

Atz was a liar!

Atz was a crook. He had fooled them. He hadn't fallen and knocked himself unconscious. He had just pretended that, then waited while they went off and left him, waited until they were far enough away that he had thought it safe to get up and flee.

But whey was Atz running? To escape? Escape from what? There wasn't anything the man should want to escape from—unless he wanted to get away so that he could do something.

Johnny felt terrible. He remembered Renny Renwick and Long Tom Roberts in New York City. Doc's other two assistants. Doc had wired them to come.

Atz knew Doc Savage had wired Long Tom and Renny. Atz was in a position to trap Long Tom and Renny. That is, if Atz was a crook. And obviously he was.

And Doc! Atz had known Doc was coming here, and he'd had plenty of chance to tip off somebody that the bronze man would visit Dave Clay's cabin.

Suppose there was a trap in the cabin?

Should he pursue Atz? Or warn Doc? If he warned Doc, Atz would reach their car and escape.

Then the question answered itself, because there was a sudden jerk of the earth, an impact. It was followed so closely by blasting thunder and lightning—the kind of lightning that a furious explosion makes—that jump of earth and blast seemed all one continuous succession of movement and noise.

Johnny was not knocked off his feet. Terrific as the blast was, it did not do that. He wheeled. He must have turned very quickly, because the great blaze of the dynamite was still in the air, pushing up a changing shape that was what was left of the cabin. It went up above the trees, breaking to pieces, some pieces climbing very high, far past others which fell back slowly.

As soon as he could think at all, Johnny raced for the explosion. He got there, and like a madman, chasing the beam of his flashlight, he hunted for Doc and Monk.

“Doc!” he shrieked. “Doc! Monk!” There was no answer, and he knew there could be none. He screamed other things, he never did know what, and then got his judgment back. As soon as he did that he knew he should go after Atz.

He ran back down the road. Ran until he heard the car leaving. Atz was gone.

Johnny ran on, hoping that some miracle would happen whereby he would catch the car, but knowing it wouldn't. Knowing also, feeling in his bones, that Renny and Long Tom in New York were in great danger, if not already worse.

He fell a moment later, tripped over a stick in the blindness of his running, and went down in a long, mad stumbling that took him over the edge of a ditch into a tangle of stumps and brush, a horrible place for a fall. He did not make much sound other than the hard sounds his body made hitting, and he hardly moved at all after he fell, not for a long time.

Chapter VIII. USEFUL AS WELL AS ORNAMENTAL

IN New York City, Renny Renwick—Colonel John Renwick—was just finishing with his share of an army planning-board meeting. Renny's share of the meeting had been a noisy one, and he had accidentally split the top of one of the tables when hammering it with his fist to drive home a point. Renny's fists were so enormous as to be ridiculous, and splitting of the table had caused a sudden outburst of laughter, in the midst of which mirth it had occurred to Renny to hold up the fist with which he had smashed the table and say, "Gentlemen, it is having bigger fists than the enemy which wins wars for you." And thereupon Renny had won his point. There would be more big cargo-carrying planes built.

So it was in a light mood that Renny rode a cab downtown through New York's still, dark night streets. He whistled cheerily. He was a very big man, and besides fists he had a long and astonishingly sad face. The gloomy visage was deceptive, because it looked saddest when the owner was happiest, and vice versa. Being full of pleasure now, he looked as if he was about to cry.

Renny alighted before a midtown skyscraper, one of the tallest, and rode to the eighty-sixth floor in a private elevator. The building was very quiet.

The eighty-sixth floor of the building had been Doc Savage's headquarters for a long time. It was an extensive affair, although there were only three rooms—reception room, which was small; library, which contained one of the best collections of scientific works in existence; then the laboratory, which was far the largest room, and jammed with the intricate gadgets which Doc Savage used for chemical and electrical experimenting.

Long Tom Roberts was there.

He grunted at Renny Renwick.

Sociability was not one of Long Tom's assets. He was the electrical expert for the crew, and there was not much doubt but that, a hundred years from now, the history books about electricity would have his name.

Long Tom was a thin, emaciated fellow with a very poor complexion. Undertakers could not look at him without anticipating business. Deceptively enough, he had never been ill that anyone could recall.

He was in the laboratory and Renny knew just barely enough about electricity to know what he was doing. Long Tom was using a cyclotron to tag atoms for biological research, the eventual idea being an attempt to find out just why a plant—grass weed, or anything like that—was able to grow. The cyclotron beam of atomic particles were hurled at fabulous speed so that they changed some of the bombarded atoms into a radioactive type, Renny had heard it explained. He didn't exactly understand it. He did know that there were probably only one or two men who understood the system Long Tom was using.

Long Tom switched off the apparatus.

"Message." He pointed. "Over there. From Doc."

Renny hurriedly scanned the telegram.

"When did it come?" Renny demanded.

"Hour ago. Where the heck were you?"

Renny said, "One of those army meetings." He frowned at the message. "This doesn't look good. They're in trouble."

"It's about that tidal-wave stuff, of course," Long Tom said. "I saw by the newspapers that they had

another of those tidal waves out there."

Renny nodded. He had a great, rumbling voice which made small articles tremble on the surrounding shelves.

"Let's get equipment packed," he boomed, "and strike out for Michigan."

"I packed it," Long Tom said. "Been waiting on you."

There was a noise from the reception room. Renny looked through the door. When he turned around his face was blank. "Guess who," he muttered.

Long Tom, wearing a long face, made some gestures which were intended to indicate such things as the world coming to an end, things blowing up, and frenzied calamity in general. "Right?" he asked.

"Right," Renny agreed. "Miss Patricia Savage in person."

PAT came in a moment later. She was a long, bronze and remarkably attractive young woman with a breezy manner and very fine clothing.

"Hello, Grumpy and Grouchy," she said to Renny and Long Tom. "Is everything set, ready for us to go?"

They looked dumfounded. They were dumfounded, as a matter of fact.

Renny told Long Tom solemnly, "You must be right."

"I thought I was," Long Tom agreed. "But it seemed a little fantastic, though."

"Oh, well, they say that a duck always knows which way to fly when he wants to go south," Renny said.

Pat demanded, "What *is* this? You forget your hats or something this morning?"

Renny told her, "We got it figured out. Or Long Tom figured it out. You're excitopsychic. That explains it."

"I'm what?" Pat demanded.

"Excitopsychic."

"That sounds like one of Johnny's words. What is it?"

"It's not Johnny's word. It's ours. We made it up," Renny assured her. "It means psychic to excitement. That's you. Let some excitement come within flying distance of an airplane and you're right there."

Pat smiled gorgeously. "How sweet of you boys to be so glad to see me."

Renny and Long Tom looked indignant.

"We're not glad to see you!" Long Tom screamed.

"I'll say we're not," Renny echoed. "And now we're going to tie you hand and foot and have you committed to an insane asylum. This is one piece of excitement you don't get in on and mess up."

Pat, showing some alarm, said, "Wait a minute! You're not serious about this asylum stuff?"

“Oh, but aren't we!” Long Tom said. “We've got it all figured out. Renny is going to tell the madhouse you are his poor unfortunate sister. We've already arranged for a padded cell. Did you know you can rent padded cells? We didn't know it.”

Pat retreated hastily. She had a handbag and she fumbled with this.

“Wait!” she exclaimed. “Doc telephoned me!” She eyed them earnestly.

“I believe you *are* tetched in the haid,” Long Tom said. “Don't you think so, podner? Doc never voluntarily invited Pat into a case in his life. Why should he do so now?”

Pat hastily dragged a sheet of paper out of her purse. She extended it, exclaiming, “Look, you two idiots! The notes I made from Doc's telephone conversation!”

The notes said:

Wired Renny and Long Tom to come. . . . Ham captured by enemy. . . . Very clever foe. Want you to help me trick him. . . . Get hold of Renny and Long Tom at once. . . . They have orders to come to Michigan by plane and land in Marquette for instructions. . . . Want you to have them look for trap in Marquette.

Renny scratched his head. “But why'd he telephone you that, instead of getting it to us?”

Pat said, “Obvious, don't you think, Watson? Doc figures someone might be checking in on any messages coming to you.”

Renny glowered. “We'll look around.”

They did their looking around, but found nothing, and within an hour they were in a plane headed west.

That is, Renny and Long Tom were in one plane flying west.

Pat was in another ship, an entirely different type of craft which she kept in an airport north of Westchester County.

RENNY and Long Tom landed in Buffalo. A military patrol ship put them down, and they thought it was all a very clever idea. They had arranged it and they were arrested—this was faked through the co-operation of the military—and ostensibly held for investigation. Newspapermen were called in and the story immediately went on to the wire services.

They were released from the military police offices through a rear door and made their way to the outskirts of town, where they found Pat and her plane waiting in a pasture.

“Nice finagling,” Pat said.

She had painted a legend on her plane with quick-drying paint while waiting for them.

NORPEN LUMBER CO.

“You don't finagle so bad yourself,” Renny told her. “This should throw anybody off the trail who was following us.”

Pat flew south, taking the longer south-shore lake route, then cutting across to Chicago. She continued

on west to Elgin, Illinois, then kept well west of Lake Winnebago on the way north through Wisconsin.

“They are liable to be watching all the towns around Marquette,” Renny warned.

“Sure,” Pat said. “We'll have to land somewhere close. Tell you what, I'll circle out over the lake and come in where we'll be less likely to be seen.”

Renny said, “Better idea to fly very low over the land.”

“Eh? I don't see why.”

“Practice what bomber pilots are beginning to learn,” Renny explained. “Fly low, and trees and buildings that are in the way keep people from seeing you. Furthermore, the sound of your plane isn't heard as far away, usually. Ground absorbs part of it, or something.”

Pat considered that. “Sounds reasonable. Irregularly shaped objects do absorb sound, I know. Take in a theater for example.”

Later she lowered the plane nose and they began hedgehopping. The ship was very fast, and the country below was thickly wooded, so that it was doubtful if many people saw them. Then Pat cut in the special muffler which Doc Savage had designed, and their passing was considerably less noisy, although somewhat slower.

She touched another lever, causing a change in the plane sound that made Renny look interested. “Hey!” he exploded. “What've you got on here?”

“Like it?” Pat asked.

Renny grinned. The plane was sounding—they could tell it plainly—much as a speeding automobile sounds. “How'd you do it?” he demanded.

“An arrangement of vanes that take the motor slip stream and alter its path,” Pat explained. “I got it by experimenting. It's simple, really. I guess just nobody thought of it before.”

Long Tom laughed. “Muffle a plane, then treat what sound there remains so that it resembles the noise a motor car makes traveling on a highway! Slick idea.”

“I've given it to the war department,” Pat said proudly. “There's a field where we can land.”

THREE hours later Pat reported to Renny and Long Tom that, “The airport where they will have a trap, if there is any trap, is in that direction.” She pointed.

Pat had grayed her hair and given her face an upside-down-apple effect by keeping chewing gum in her cheeks. She also wore glasses and was talking in a grandma voice.

“Anybody suspicious around?”

“Marquette isn't a small town,” Pat said. “Not like a village, where you notice strangers.”

“What leads you to figure this airport?”

“Just the only logical one.”

“O. K.,” Renny said. “We'll go over that way and you can look the place over.”

They went—they were afoot—to the vicinity of the flying field, where they again concealed themselves, and Pat sauntered toward the airport.

She was gone half an hour. She made a few inquiries about taking flying lessons and talked the kind of airplane talk that an inexperienced aviation fan would use. So as to allay any suspicions, she arranged for a half-hour trial flight the next afternoon to see how she would like it, and paid for this in advance.

Renny said, “Well?” when she rejoined them.

“One chance,” Pat said.

“What do you mean?”

“Have you taken a look at the airport?”

“Yeah. Through these bushes.”

“See the men with the cat and hydraulic scoop?”

“Yes,” Renny said.

“What's a hydraulic scoop?” Long Tom demanded.

Renny, who was an engineer and knew more about such machines than most of the men who built them, said, “That jigger yonder. Big caterpillar tractor towing the thing which looks a little like a partly flattened barrel on wheels. It's a machine for moving earth. The barrel is the earth bucket. It's a five-yard bucket. A lot larger than it looks from here.”

Pat said, “The bucket is covered with canvas. Now, why should the bucket of a hydraulic tumblebug be covered with canvas?”

Renny frowned. “You make any inquiries about it?”

“Yes. The thing showed up and the cat driver claims he was supposed to demonstrate it to somebody named Robert Jacques. Nobody around there has heard of Robert Jacques, but the cat driver said he was sure the fellow would show up, and he has been waiting. He said Robert Jacques is some kind of an airport construction engineer who was going to come to Marquette for the demonstration.”

“Story sounds like fish feathers to me,” Renny said.

“Ditto,” Pat agreed.

Renny crawled to the edge of the bushes in which they were concealed and eyed the hydraulic scoop. The thing was parked on the airport property, but not far from the hangars and field office.

“The bucket is probably full of armed men,” Renny decided. “Idea is for them to pull out to meet the plane when we land and cut loose with guns from the shelter of the bucket. Steel in that bucket is not quite as bulletproof as tank plates, but it would do.”

Long Tom said, “Come on. I got an idea.”

Chapter IX. THE LAWYER PLATE

THE cat driver had bowed legs and used snoose. The snoose was the brand of snuff that was most popular in the lumber country, and he was digging thumb and forefinger into a round can of the stuff when Pat Savage came onto the field in a car. A rented car.

The machine was a roadster and Pat shut off the motor and sat there looking very attractive in the car. She was a pleasing picture and got proper attention from the cat driver. After Pat had done the gazing that a mere curiosity-looker would do, she turned on the switch and tramped the starter. The starter whined and whined, but nothing else happened.

“Oh, mister,” Pat called. “Do you know anything about cars?”

The cat driver came over with alacrity. “Babe, what I don't know about 'em ain't worth knowin'.”

He leaned into the car confidentially.

Pat showed him the mass of an automatic pistol, army size. She showed it to him sidewise at first so he could see what it was and be impressed, then presented the muzzle.

“I hope you know enough about these things, too,” she said.

The cat driver tightened like a rooster that had seen a hawk shadow.

“No words,” Pat warned.

He said, “Huh?”

“Get in the car.”

“But—”

“Or be picking lead out of yourself.”

The man looked at Pat. There was a complete fierceness in Pat's expression which would have astonished the platinum trimmed dowagers who came in flocks to her Park Avenue beauty establishment to have excess pounds rubbed off.

“Gosh!” he said. He got in the car.

Pat drove down the road, got out of sight of the airport, stopped, and Renny and Long Tom came out of some tall weeds.

The cat driver jumped nearly a foot off the roadster seat when he saw Renny and Long Tom, but otherwise he did not show emotion.

Pat said, “I think they're in the hydraulic bucket, all right.”

Long Tom looked at the cat driver, said, “A nice red leather blazer you're wearing. Nice red stocking cap, too. Get out of them!”

“Listen!” the driver barked. “What's the idea—”

“Out of em!” Long Tom said.

The man hastily shucked his garments, and Long Tom put them on. “All right,” he told Pat.

Renny asked, “You sure you can run that cat, Long Tom?”

“I believe so.”

Pat rode back to the airport—they left the cat driver with Renny—and drew up near the cat and scoop. Long Tom got out, keeping his face away from the scoop, climbed onto the cat, and worked with the controls. He presumed the motor was all ready to go, and he was correct. The electric starter got the gasoline Diesel-starter engine turning, and this soon had the big Diesel banging over. Long Tom let the engine warm.

There had been no sign from the canvas-covered hydraulic scoop bucket.

Long Tom put the caterpillar in motion, headed for the gate, and went rumbling out of the airport. Once on the road he batted the throttles open and let the machine roar. There was a mirror for watching the bucket without turning his head and he kept his eye on it. No sign of life there.

He came to the spot where their car was parked, yanked the thing to a stop.

He piled off into a ditch where he was sheltered.

Renny, Pat and the cat driver were out of sight.

Long Tom shouted, “You guys know what a Molotov cocktail is?”

No answer from the bucket.

There was a rifle shot. The bullet whanged against the bucket rim. That would be Renny's work.

Long Tom yelled, “All right, light that gallon bottle of gasoline and toss it into the bucket.”

Men began coming out of the bucket then.

A RIFLE was tossed out first, actually. Then a man climbed out, squirming from under the canvas cover. More followed. Two, three, four, and they kept coming. Six, altogether.

“Holy cow!” said big-fisted Renny. “They were in there like sardines.”

The six lined up with hands in the air. Pat came out and began menacing them with an enormous single-action six-shooter which she liked to carry in her purse, although how she got a weapon of that size in her little handbag was a mystery. The six men ogled the gun in astonishment.

Long Tom went to the scoop bucket, carrying a pint bottle of gasoline which had been cached at the spot where he had flopped into the ditch. This bottle was wrapped around with a rag which had been soaked in gasoline—and kept soaked by leakage from a hole in the cork.

He struck a match to the gasoline bottle, tossed it into the scoop. Hard enough for it to break.

There was a yell in the scoop bucket. One more man came out of it, howling, clothing ablaze. He tried to run. Long Tom tripped him, fell on him, rolled him in the road dust until the flames were extinguished.

He made the man line up with the others.

Renny now put in an appearance and demanded, “How'd you know that last one was in there?”

“Oh, I figured they'd try to fox us,” Long Tom said. “I didn't really know.”

“You're clairvoyant,” Pat told him.

The captives were looking at them disgustedly. One asked gloomily, “Just the three of you around here?”

“We didn't need any more, did we?” Long Tom said.

Pat finished searching the seven men. She tossed what weapons she found in the road. These made quite a pile, mostly small revolvers.

Renny looked them over disagreeably, “Well, well, now,” he rumbled. “This seems to bring us to the question of who put you up to the little trick.”

No one said anything.

Pat declared, “We're going to give them truth serum. That'll make them talk.”

The gasoline which Long Tom had tossed into the bucket was blazing and roaring softly, but was not making much smoke.

Renny said, “We'll take them into the woods. Leave the scoop parked here. It won't attract attention, after the fire burns out, which it will in a minute.”

They herded the captives afoot into the woods. The growth was very thick and they kept the prisoners close together, did not take their eyes from them.

“Far enough,” Renny said finally. “Lay down, you guys. Long Tom, give me that truth serum.”

Long Tom did not have any truth serum. However, he pulled a small flask of vitamin pills out of his pocket and gravely presented them. Renny was surprised at the appearance of the pills, thinking for a moment they were really some type of truth serum. Then he caught Long Tom's slight droop of an eyelid.

“Fine,” he said.

“You think it's safe to administer the stuff without hospital facilities available?” Long Tom asked gravely.

Renny snorted. “What do we care how safe it is? They were laying for us, weren't they?”

Long Tom looked concerned. “Yes, but you know how Doc feels about killings. Even accidental ones. He'll raise the dickens.”

Renny snorted again. “They won't die from this stuff.”

“Maybe not if we had hospital facilities available, so we could revive them, or such of them as have their hearts affected,” Long Tom answered, sounding more and more worried. “You know how those pills shock the heart.”

Renny didn't know, because he had no idea what the pills were. “Oh, let 'em take their chances!” he said. “Holy cow! We've got to get the truth out of them.”

The argument had its effect—the effect they were hoping to achieve—on the prisoners. These had blank faces now, and fear.

A captive said, “That truth serum?”

“Yes.”

“Will it hurt us?”

“Not always,” Long Tom said. “But I would rather—”

Renny boomed, “Oh, stop arguing. Let 'em take their chances. If they get knocked off by the stuff it's what they've got coming.”

The prisoner said quickly, “You don't need to use it on me. I got plenty of words without that.”

THE man who came out of the nearby brush at that point, and showed them the thin muzzle of a small pistol-type machine gun which had a ramhorn magazine, said, “I want to get in on this.”

They stared at the stranger.

He was a sturdy, pleasant-faced, gray-haired man who at a distance looked to be about sixty years of age. At closer range years fell off him so that actually he was not much over forty. There was something competent, composed, undisturbed about the way he looked at them with clear blue eyes.

“Yes, I really want in on this,” he added.

He sounded as if he was at a lawn social and telling them how he would like their party.

Renny eyed the gun magazine. Fifty cartridges, at least, it held.

“Plate,” the stranger said.

“Eh?” Renny said.

“Plate. My name.” The man smiled pleasantly. “Roy Hungerford Plate. I am a lawyer. I am often called Lawyer Plate, although I'm not particularly fond of it.”

Renny had maneuvered until his pistol was including the newcomer, Lawyer Plate, in its casual sweep. Pat had done the same thing.

Lawyer Plate, not in the least disturbed, apparently, by their grimness, chuckled. “Really, I hope we don't have to have a who's-quickest-on-the-trigger sort of thing.”

“You'd lose,” Pat said.

“That's a rank guess, young lady. You've never seen me fire a shot,” Plate said. “However, I'll admit the odds would be interesting. But it would be quite foolish, don't you think?”

Pat said, “If you are figuring on coming in here and taking over these prisoners, after we went to all that trouble catching them, you are making a mistake a yard long.”

Lawyer Plate laughed. His laugh had a way of sounding as if it started at his heels. “Have I suggested anything of the kind? I merely wish to listen in on this.”

Renny, his long and sad face somewhat fixed, started toward Plate. “Give me your gun,” Renny said.

Plate casually let Renny look at the muzzle of the weapon.

“I don't have to, you know,” he said.

“Yes, you do.” Renny's voice had a hardness. “Oh, yes, you do.”

Renny kept walking toward the man, and Plate stood there with his unconcerned smile. The smile remained unconcerned and there was at no time any change in him, any appearance of hardness. Yet there was not much doubt that he was seriously considering shooting Renny.

Pat Savage, watching the stranger, Lawyer Plate, had a queer feeling. She wasn't sure it was a pleasant sensation. The man was so composed. Nothing, she suddenly decided, would ever excite him. Here was a man who, somehow through some freak of bodily construction, was without involuntary emotion. Likes and dislikes, hates and fears, all such emotions were simply without visible effect on the man.

It was eerie.

Lawyer plate gave his gun to Renny.

“Purposeful chap,” Plate said dryly.

NOW the seven prisoners had undergone a change. They had, it was quite plain to be seen, changed their minds about talking so freely. The reason for this was a mystery until Long Tom strode over and gave Renny an angry kick, yelling, “You big gossoon! Look what you did! Held that bottle so they could see the label on the thing!”

One of the prisoners snorted at them. “Truth serum, huh! Hah! A damned bluff!”

Pat told the man, “If you thought we were lying to you about the effects of truth serum on you, you're jumping for a tall tree.”

“A damned bluff!” the prisoner said.

Lawyer Plate said, “It looks as if your little scheme has hit a snag. Now how are you going to get them to talk?”

Renny was indignant about the whole thing, including being kicked by Long Tom. He bellowed, “We'll do it with truth serum! And we're going to give it to you, too, if you don't talk.”

“You want me to talk?” Lawyer Plate asked.

“Sure. Why not?”

The white-haired man shrugged and spread his hands palms up.

“Talking is what I do best and like the most,” he told them. “What do you want to know? Or shall I just launch into a general lecture?”

“A general lecture on the subject will do to start on,” Renny said.

“All right. There is a young man named Dave Clay. He has lived in this part of the State, or rather down south around Nahma, for three years. He is now doing some kind of devilment. It has to do with those tidal waves. You know there was a tidal wave which drowned two people. And another one just last—”

“We know about them,” Renny snapped.

“All right. I've been trailing young Dave Clay around. He seems to be working with a gang.” Lawyer

Plate nodded at the seven prisoners. “These are part of his gang. They left in a hurry and came up here, and so I followed them to see what was going on. I have been sticking around. I could see that they were going to ambush someone at the airport, but I didn't know who. I stuck around, as I said. Incidentally, that was a nice piece of out-foxing you did on them.”

Renny turned around and looked at Pat. “What has he told us? I mean, what does it add up to?”

“About the same thing the little boy shot at,” Pat said.

“That's right,” Renny scowled at Plate. “You'll have to do better.”

“What do you mean?”

“Don't be unnecessarily playful about not understanding,” said Renny impatiently. “What you've just told us is so many words. Don't tell us a thing more than we knew already.”

Plate shrugged. “If the truth don't make sense, I'm sorry.”

“You just told the truth?”

“Of course.”

Renny considered the point dubiously.

“Do you,” he asked, “know anything about one of our friends named Ham Brooks, who has been taken prisoner?”

Still with his perfectly expressionless manner, Lawyer Plate said, “A slender man with good shoulders, a wide orator's mouth, and slim hips, who carried—or did carry—a sword cane? And who has a chimpanzee for a pet?”

Renny and Long Tom looked as if their hair was going to stand on end.

“That's him!” Renny yelled.

“Then,” said Plate, “I know where he is.”

“Where?” Long Tom howled.

“I'll show you—”

The expressionless man went silent. Pat watched his face and knew then that there was actually something constitutionally wrong with Plate so that he could not show emotion, or at least did not need to show it, the way a normal person must mirror feelings.

“Oh, my!” Plate said. “Oh, my!”

Which was a mild way of wording any kind of an expression to fit the appearance of two grenades—they went *whup!* so they held tear gas—and at least a dozen rifle barrels. These came out of the surrounding woods, and Renny Renwick silently cursed a breeze which had been rustling the leaves and had covered the sounds the men had made in surrounding them.

Chapter X. FLIGHT

PATRICIA SAVAGE squealed and put both hands to her cheeks, and every joint in her body seemed to bend at the same time. She went down.

“Fainted!” Renny bellowed.

He bellowed it out that way because it was so utterly unbelievable that Pat should faint.

Then he realized Pat had done a good job. Later he told her it was the best job of doing that kind of thing that he had ever seen anyone do. And particularly good because it was on the spur of the moment. The quickness was probably what made it seem so natural.

At any rate, Pat just pretended to faint, doing so because it gave her a chance to get down in tall grass. Once she was down she went away from there.

Renny threw his arms in the air and howled to distract attention from Pat. Renny was not scared, which was the kind of howling he was doing. Nor was he going to fight, which was what some of the newcomers seemed to think. It was foolish to fight with a dozen rifles pointed at you.

Long Tom Roberts must have thought the same thing, because he stood rigidly with his arms straight up.

Lawyer Roy Hungerford Plate showed that, while his face might be expressionless, nothing was wrong with his reactions. He took off like a high diver, went into a thick bush, and was gone like a scared rabbit.

The raiders seemed utterly astonished. One of them fired a gun, but not at anything in particular, and yelled, “Here! What's the idea?”

Someone called him a fool and the direct male descendant of something with long ears. “That shot'll wake up the whole country!” the man snarled. “To say nothin' of the howling.”

There was some running through the brush. But Plate got away.

Then, “The girl's gone, too!” a man bellowed.

After that, they decided they would have to get out of the vicinity. The prisoners were herded together. Renny and Long Tom were pushed along with the others. The general exodus, while it was confused, was fast.

The seven original prisoners—Renny and Long Tom had just been taken over and added to their own crop of captives—were plainly convinced that they would be shot if they tried pulling anything out of the way. They seemed to know the new arrivals. Renny and Long Tom took their cue from this and behaved themselves.

They reached the road and there was a large motor van parked there. The prisoners were boosted into the back, the raiders, such of them as were not needed to drive the van, climbed inside.

Long Tom said, “I begin to get it. We're not fighting one gang. We're in trouble with *two!”*

“Looks that way,” Renny agreed. “The seven we got were the first gang. These guys who showed up later belong to another outfit. That outfit doesn't like the first one.”

“Two groups,” Long Tom said.

A man laughed at them and demanded, “You master minds just now realizing that?”

Renny and Long Tom stared at him blankly. “Does that make us a little dumb?” Renny asked.

There was a window into the driver's compartment. A man opened this and yelled through, “Hey, Daisy Chain! What do you know about these two friends of Doc Savage? Up to now they figured they were going up against just one outfit.”

The man driving made no comment except to state that if the other called him Daisy Chain again there would be a mangled body found by the roadside.

The big van began rumbling and swaying as it traveled fast.

PATRICIA SAVAGE watched the van depart and at the same time rapidly acquired a low opinion of the reliability of single-action six-shooters. Single-action six-guns were the weapons with which the wild West was won, and there was not supposed to be anything more reliable in the way of guns. Neither wind nor sand nor rain not sleet nor anything else was supposed to prevent them from doing their prescribed duty.

But her six-gun wasn't functioning.

By the time the van was out of sight she found that a broken bit of stick had gotten down into the action and the falling hammer had lodged against it so that the firing pin wasn't even touching the cartridge.

She gouged out the impediment. Then she ran to her rented roadster.

The tires were flat and the contents of the gasoline tank were evaporating off the pavement. She was not surprised.

She was startled, however, when Lawyer Plate walked out of the bushes. He was a little scratched and minus his hat and part of a coat sleeve.

“I look a sight,” he said. “I feel worse, though.”

“How'd you get away?” Pat asked.

“The same as you. Minus the fainting, however. Incidentally, that was an impressive fainting job you did. I wish some of my clients could do as well on the witness stand.”

“What kept them from shooting you?” Pat asked.

Plate frowned at her. “Blessed if I know.” He didn't look scared. But then, Pat realized, he would probably never look emotional about anything.

Pat said, “Come on.” And began running for the airport.

Plate galloped after her, casually at first, then running at full speed in order to keep up. “You . . . got . . . an idea?” he puffed.

“I've got as many ideas as I have rage,” Pat snapped. “And that's plenty.”

She reached the airport and set about getting a plane. She lost more time doing this than she expected, and her ire mounted accordingly. But finally she was in the air—a cabin ship, a man from the airport flying it—and following the paved road. Plate rode in the cabin with Pat and helped scrutinize the highways.

They covered subsidiary roads. They flew over the city, circled Presque Isle Park, sent the plane several miles in each direction along Federal Highway 41. Results were disappointing.

Pat directed the plane to the spot where she had left her own ship, and paid off the local flier. Then, with Plate, she spent nearly four hours searching for the van and consulting with the police.

Finally she got in her plane and started south.

"Now where?" Plate demanded.

"To get Doc," Pat told him.

WHILE they flew south, Pat questioned the lawyer who said his name was Plate. "I want to know," Pat said, "all that you know," Pat said, "all that you know about this thing."

Plate spoke readily enough. "I am a lawyer and my offices are in Milwaukee. A young man named Dave Clay has been my client for about three years."

He paused, remembering and smiling.

"I should say," he corrected, "that Dave Clay has been more friend than client. Dave doesn't get in trouble, really, so he has no law business to speak of. We're friends. We go hunting the Upper Peninsula in the fall for deer and fish for pike and pickerel in the summer. We're very good friends."

Pat was flying high, using binoculars, and also fooling with her plane radio, trying to call Doc Savage or one of the others. Doing this, she still managed to listen to what the lawyer was saying. Her face had less than its normal color and its muscles were tight.

Plate continued, "Three days ago Dave Clay called on me for help. It was a telephone call and he sounded sick and scared. He asked one to come right up. And I did. And then, when I got there, he wouldn't talk to me. That is, he wouldn't talk straight. He insisted it wasn't he who called me."

Pat sent the plane in a long dive at a large vehicle moving on a road, but it proved to be a different type of van from the one she was seeking.

"You're sure it was Dave Clay who called you?" she asked.

"Yes. He finally admitted it. Was ashamed, he said. Told me a practical joke had been pulled on him so that he had thought he had run over a man with his automobile and killed the fellow. It was while he was thinking this that he sent for me. Then, he said, he learned it was a gag. And so he felt kind of foolish. He was ashamed. He thought at first that he'd try to make me believe he hadn't even telephoned me. But he hadn't made me believe that, of course."

Pat was climbing the plane. "The second story was a lie, too, you think?"

"Sure."

"He admit it was a lie?"

"No." Plate shrugged and spread his hands. "Young lady, I have been a lawyer for a long time. A very long time. A criminal lawyer. I have dealt with crooks for as many years as you have lived. I don't think I ever had a single client in my life who didn't try at least one lie on me. I can tell a liar as far away as *you* can tell an Irishman from a Chinaman."

Pat contemplated the green furring of timberland below the plane. Bad place for an emergency landing, she thought.

“Then what?” she asked.

“What about Dave Clay? Oh, I stuck around. In the background. I saw these men following him around, keeping touch with him. I lost Dave myself. But I kept track of these men. I was following them when they led me to the Marquette airport, where you folks so nicely seized them.”

“I see,” Pat said.

Lawyer Plate leaned forward. “Now, if you don't mind, I'd like to know what kind of trouble poor Dave Clay is in.”

Pat shook her head. “Believe it or not, all I can tell you is that it has something to do with tidal waves.”

“Tidal waves?”

Pat asked, “Didn't you know there was a connection?”

“No. It seems ridiculous.”

Pat eyed him. “That second gang which showed up and grabbed everybody, almost including us—what do you know about them?”

“Not a thing,” Lawyer Plate said.

IT was getting dark, and clouds in the sky made it a very dark night when Pat sloped her plane in to Nahma. She had consulted the chart and located the little Nahma flying field, and she intended to land there.

Plate grabbed her arm hastily. “No, no! There are steel fence posts and barbed wire on the field. They haven't been removed yet!”

Pat was astonished. “How come?”

“I heard,” the lawyer explained, “that someone set them there in an attempt to wreck the plane in which Monk Mayfair, Ham Brooks and Johnny Littlejohn arrived. The attempt failed.”

Pat's ship was not an amphibian. Landing on the lake was out of the question. She came down and dragged the sand beach west of the lumber mill three times, then swung into the wind, picked the sand close to the water and landed. It was not too bad. At least they did not ground loop until near the end of their run, when it did no damage.

“Where now?” Plate demanded.

“I'm going to try to find Doc or some of his men,” Pat explained.

“Where will they be?”

“I don't know,” Pat admitted. “I'm worried. They usually keep their short-wave receivers tuned in on the radio band we use. But I can't raise any of them. I tried all the way down here. I don't understand that.”

They walked the distance, slightly less than half a mile, to Nahma, and picked the hotel as the most likely source of information.

Yes, Doc Savage had been in the hotel. So had Monk Mayfair, and another man. Pat asked for a description of the other man and got it. It meant nothing to her. Johnny had been along, too.

But it had been more than twenty-four hours since Doc had been at the hotel, or since any of the others had been around there.

Feeling defeated, Pat stood on the screened-in porch of the little wooden hotel, and wondered what she should do.

Plate touched her arm, said, “Something strange about this.”

“It's all strange,” Pat told him. “What part of it do you mean?”

“That fellow they described as with Doc Savage and Monk Mayfair and Johnny Littlejohn.” Plate scratched his head. “I think I know him.”

“Yes?”

“Name of Atz. Sidney Atz. I know him slightly. He is a real-estate man. Or promoter would be a better word. He promotes summer resorts and hunting camps and deals in them as middleman. And he's a friend of Dave Clay.”

Pat started to say something about that, but didn't. Instead she opened her mouth slightly in a white, tense way. And her eyes were suddenly almost ill.

Because Johnny Littlejohn had stumbled around the corner and to the foot of the five wooden steps that led up to the hotel porch.

“Doc and Monk are dead!” Johnny said.

Chapter XI. MONSTER

JOHNNY'S voice was dry in his throat and infinitely weary. He was mud and grime, scratches and tears, bruises and insect bites from head to foot. His stumbling progress was infinitely difficult because the forked stick he was using was a clumsy substitute for a crutch.

Pat dashed down the steps, gasped, “Doc and Monk—when?”

Johnny's left ankle was swollen enormously. “Last night,” he said. “Up in the woods. Explosion. There was a cabin where this mysterious Dave Clay is supposed to have lived. It was mined, a booby trap. Doc and Monk walked into it.” He sounded and looked infinitely sick.

“Give me a hand!” Pat snapped at Lawyer Plate.

They got Johnny into the hotel and rented a room. Then Pat examined Johnny's ankle.

“Not broken,” she said.

“I sprained it,” Johnny explained grimly. “I fell in a ditch. That was right after the cabin blew up.”

“Where have you been since?” Pat asked.

“I was knocked out so I couldn't move for about three hours, by the fall,” Johnny told her. “I wasn't unconscious all that time, but I couldn't navigate. The rest of the time I've been getting back to town. It was almost forty miles. The most deserted wilderness you ever saw. I didn't see a person until I got to the junction of the Nahma road with U.S. Highway 2.”

Pat hurried out and in the lumber-company recreation hall was lucky enough to find the operator of the general store. She bought work clothes which would cover Johnny, although not fitting him. Clothes never fitted Johnny's bony length, however, so it would not matter. She took them back to the hotel.

“Who's this?” Johnny asked, indicating Plate.

“Roy Hungerford Plate—”

“He told me his name. Where does he fit in this?”

“He's a friend of Dave Clay,” Pat explained.

Johnny scowled. “Another one of those, eh? We had one of them with us, unfortunately. Bird by the name of Atz.”

“I am acquainted with Atz,” Lawyer Plate said.

With a darker look, Johnny said, “You're not recommending yourself when you say that, brother.”

“Mr. Atz is a fine gentleman,” Plate said.

Johnny did something that he would not have done under ordinary circumstances. He lost his temper, his self-control. He suddenly clenched his fists and bellowed, “Atz is the guy who led Doc into the trap that got Doc killed! That's all Atz is!”

Pat grasped the excited, trembling Johnny's arm and pushed him back into the chair. “Take it easy. Kicking the wrong dog won't ever cure your bite.”

Johnny shut his eyes and put his hands, tight fists, on his knees. “Yeah, I know,” he muttered. “But this damned thing is getting me down. Those blasted tidal waves! It doesn't make sense.”

“Use a big word and you'll feel better,” Pat suggested.

“I'll be superamalgamated,” Johnny said. “Maybe you're right.”

“Now,” Pat said, “tell me what happened.”

“Don't you know?”

“I'm completely in the dark.”

Johnny absently fumbled the coat lapel from which his monocle usually dangled while he assembled words. The monocle was gone, a casualty of his encounter with the timber country.

“And keep using small words,” Pat added.

Johnny said, “Here it is, briefly. Doc saw a newspaper item about a mystery tidal wave on Lake Michigan at Nahma. He sent Monk, Ham and me up here. Someone tried to wreck our plane when we landed. It was a fellow named Stub. Then this Dave Clay came to us for help, but got scared and ran away. This fellow Atz popped up and kept us from chasing Dave Clay. All Atz would tell us was that he

was Clay's friend. Same story as Plate, here. Well, some guy took a shot at us while we were talking to Atz. It was Stub. We chased him. We decided later he led us deliberately to an island, into a tidal wave which wrecked our plane. We were chasing him in a plane—"

"Wait a minute!" Pat exclaimed. "Hold it! Tidal wave, you say?"

JOHNNY spread his hands. "I know. It sounds like something a wild boy made up. But there was a hell of a mysterious thing before the wave—two pillars of light that appeared over the island, visible in the dark. We don't know what it was. And then the wave."

"You might describe these lights that appeared," Pat said dryly.

"What's the use of describing it? It doesn't make any more sense after you describe it. It just wasn't a reasonable kind of a thing to be there."

Pat sighed. "Go ahead."

"Well, Monk and Ham and Atz and I got ashore on the island," Johnny continued. "We fought them off all night. This Stub and several men. Then Doc Savage got there and all of us escaped but Ham. They caught Ham. But, in an exchange of signals after we got away, they agreed not to kill Ham if we wouldn't call the police. We made that deal."

Johnny spread his hands angrily.

"There was a burning shack on the island when we went back," he said. "It belonged to Dave Clay. At least he was paying the bill for the electric light line that ran to the cabin. Apparently Dave Clay had two cabins, the other one about forty miles up in the woods. Atz told us where it was. We went there, all of us, to see if we could dig up anything. The cabin was mined."

Now Johnny sprang to his feet and his face was twisted with emotion.

"That Atz!" he yelled. "Doc left Atz and me behind. Atz pretended to fall and knock himself out. But that was a fake! Because, as soon as Doc and Monk left him, he got up and ran."

Plate stepped forward suddenly. "You *sure* of that? I wouldn't think such a thing of Atz."

"I'm sure enough!" Johnny snapped. "Positive!"

Plate settled back. He looked puzzled, worried.

Pat said gravely, "Ham is a prisoner. So are Renny and Long Tom. Doc and Monk have been—well, it couldn't get much worse, could it?"

No one said anything for some time.

"It could!" Plate exclaimed suddenly.

"How?" Pat was surprised.

Plate produced a gun. It was Pat's enormous old-fashioned single-action six-shooter. He had a little trouble getting it out from under his belt where he had stuffed it.

"It would be worse if one of you makes a move," Plate said. "Then I would have to mess up the place

with you."

JOHNNY wet his lips and blinked and said, "A stultifying Machiavellianism."

"Don't you two start talking code!" Plate snapped.

Pat had to laugh but it was a wild kind of a laugh, not at all one of humor. "Words like that are his natural words," she said. "Don't get excited."

Her apologizing for him seemed to make Johnny mad. He glared at her and yelled, "A fine thing for you to do! Leave your purse lie on the table with your gun in it!"

Pat shrugged. "It may come out in the wash."

"Let's hope not," Plate said. He contemplated them, then added, "This may be a little difficult for you. But I am going to ask you to walk out of here ahead of me and not start anything. That will be after I search you, of course."

Plate put a leather Windbreaker over his arm, covering the gun. Then he got on one side of Johnny and helped him down the hall and out of the front door. Pat was on the other side of Johnny, pretending also to help.

They walked out into the night. The night, not old, was very dark. Clouds were packed thickly and in the north, very far away, there was heat lightning. But in the south there was different lightning, and now and then a very low and deep thunder grumble.

"So you're a crook," Johnny said.

Plate laughed. "That word—crook—makes me sound cheap. I'm really above that, you know."

He kept them walking. He didn't know where he was going, it seemed, except that he wanted to keep to the left-hand side of the street.

Pat got the idea he was hunting something.

Sure enough, a voice said, "Hey!" softly.

Plate stopped them.

The voice said, "Straight down the street. Quarter of a mile. Turn right on the road paved with hog feed. It's important."

Plate snapped, "Why all the secrecy when you could—"

"Sh-h-h-h!" the voice said.

Plate cursed and asked a question, but apparently the voice owner was gone because he did not reply.

"Who was that?" Pat demanded.

Plate didn't answer, but Johnny did. "That," Johnny said, "was our friend, and Dave Clay's friend—Sidney Atz!"

"But how did he—how did they—I mean, how did they get together just now?"

Johnny answered that, too. “Atz signaled Plate here, through the window. Oh, I should've realized something was wrong when I noticed Plate glancing at the window a time or two. But he was so sneaking about it you never noticed what he was doing.”

Pat said, “That was nice and knot-headed of you, not saying anything.”

“Not as dumb as leaving your purse lay around with that gun in it!” Johnny snapped.

Pat, irritated, spoke rather maliciously in Mayan. The Mayan tongue, which Doc and all his aides used for communication when they did not want to be understood by others, was one which Pat had learned. Just how she had learned it everyone professed to have no idea. Pat had talked somebody into teaching her Mayan, which had been against Doc's wishes. No one would admit being the tutor, and Pat had never tattled.

In Mayan, Pat said, “Since that gun is still upsetting you, it is empty. I unloaded it and left it in my purse deliberately.”

“You did!” Johnny yelled in English, astounded.

“I am always testing people that way,” Pat said.

Plate, irritated himself, snarled, “Stop jabbering something I can't understand or I'll shoot you loose from your arms and legs.”

“Shall we let him try it and be surprised?” Pat asked.

Johnny considered the point.

“We might as well see what is down the road,” he said grudgingly. And that was all anybody said in Mayan.

What was down the road was plenty, and also farthest from what anybody, including Plate—obviously—was expecting.

It was dark. It was astonishingly dark. The trees made an arching tunnel. Their feet made soft, crushing sounds on the mixture of chewed-up bark and wood, scrap from the sawmill which had been put through the mangling machine called a “hog,” and which therefore was known as hog feed.

Abruptly in that intense blackness there was a pale glow. It was almost about them in fact. Or at least it came from either side of the road. The glow was so pale that it was hardly anything at all, and diffused over a considerable area.

It was not so pale soon. Not that it ever became bright. It was at no time more than a noticeable presence. Yet it was tangible, real. Pale as it was, not one of them doubted that it was there.

“I'll be superamalgamated!” Johnny gasped.

“What is it?” Pat hissed.

“This is *it!*” Johnny blurted. “This is the thing. The jigger. The thing we saw before the tidal wave.”

They were astonished.

But Plate must have been more astonished than they. Paralyzed and knocked speechless, in fact.

Plate made a sound that was a little like someone trying to get a tight cork out of a bottle. He got the cork out. Words followed in a squawl of terror.

“Run!” he screamed. “They've set a trap for me! Run!”

He said more that was inarticulate, just mad, frenzied yell. Then he came to himself, apparently decided he didn't give a hoot about Pat and Johnny. He ran.

Plate's departure was remarkable for his speed. Both Pat and Johnny jumped for him. But missed. Plate went back the way they had come.

Pat and Johnny, in their futile effort to get Plate, tangled with each other and upset. They sat there, listening to locate Plate's route of flight.

“Boy!” Pat said. “He sounds as if he was hitting the ground about every forty feet.”

“We better catch him,” Johnny said. “Come on.”

They started to get up.

“Do not,” a voice said from the bushes nearby.

They recognized the voice. They were so shocked they fell back on the ground. They were wordless.

The strange luminosity of the surrounding air—it was a color they could not define, or perhaps more like a combination of the colors in the blue end of the spectrum, violets shading to other colors—began to decrease. The color went out of the air very slowly.

Johnny was trying to find his voice. He was having more difficulty with corks than Plate had had a moment before.

Finally he blurted, “Pat, wasn't that Doc's voice?”

“I think so,” Pat said.

The voice, which was unquestionably Doc Savage's, said from the darkness, “There is nothing about which to be alarmed. Everything went off as it should.”

Johnny, relieved to the point of wanting to cry, said, “You sound pretty substantial for a ghost, Doc.”

Chapter XII. CANS ON THEIR TAILS

DOC SAVAGE, coming to their side in the darkness, asked, “Are you all right?”

Pat, slightly hysterical with relief, said, “One, two, three, four. Boys, I'm going to permit myself a luxury. I'm going to faint. Don't ever tell anybody.”

She slumped over.

Doc examined her.

“She did,” he said.

“First time she ever did that,” Johnny said foolishly. “Now we'll have something to rag her about.” He

tried to get up, having forgotten about his ankle, but was abruptly reminded of his injury and couldn't keep back a whinny of pain.

“You are hurt,” Doc said.

“My ankle,” Johnny admitted. “But never mind that. I *could* get up and run, yelling at every jump. How did you get here? What was that thing we saw a minute ago? Where is Monk? Is he alive?”

Doc said, “Wait until Pat comes out of it.” He worked over Pat, rubbing wrists for a while. When she began to show signs of revival, Doc went away into the bushes. He came back a moment later with a small radio transceiver, which he thereafter kept beside him.

Pat said finally, “Well, I'm back in the world of the living. You know something? That is the first time I ever did such a thing.”

Johnny, impatient, demanded, “How is Monk?”

“He is following the fellow who just ran away from here,” Doc said.

“Plate, you mean?”

“Yes; if that is his name.”

Johnny sighed. “I don't get it. Go back to the beginning. How did you and Monk live through that blast when Dave Clay's cabin blew up?”

Doc Savage adjusted the radio transceiver controls. He seemed concerned about the instrument, expecting something from it.

He said, “We can go back farther than that. To when Atz stumbled, as we were moving along the road in the darkness toward the Clay cabin. That fall Atz took seemed a fake. And when I carried him he was not unconscious. An unconscious man's muscles are in a state of relaxation which a surgeon can easily recognize.”

“He was faking, all right,” Johnny said. “But he had me fooled.”

“So, after Monk and I left you with Atz, I told Monk to go back and be ready to trail Atz if he made a break for it,” Doc said.

“Oh! Then Monk wasn't in the cabin when it blew up?”

“No. I was not there either.”

“You weren't!”

Doc Savage explained, “Atz faking the faint was a warning that something was about to happen. So I scouted around the cabin. That fellow Stub was waiting. He had a radio device for firing blasts, and he—”

Astonished, Johnny said, “It was darker than a bottle of ink around there. How'd you find Stub so quick if he was hiding?”

“Stub's pipe. You remember he smokes that short pipe all the time? Everyone who has seen Stub and described him has described that pipe. Well, it is an odorous pipe. It was easy to spot.”

Johnny grinned in the darkness. He believed that Doc had located Stub by the smell of the man's pipe, all right. Doc, with his trained hearing, sight and olfactory organs, was as efficient as an animal. “Then what?” he asked.

“Stub was watching the cabin with binoculars,” Doc explained. “But it was too dark to actually see the cabin. So obviously the man had some kind of a system for learning when we entered the cabin. I crept up to the cabin and looked in the window. There was an alarm clock with a radiant dial on a table inside. That was the answer.”

“How'd you fool him?”

“Simply by moving back from the cabin door a safe distance, putting the dial of my wrist watch, uncovered, on a stick, and letting him get a look at it. It worked. He blew up the cabin at once.”

Johnny asked, “Were you able to follow him then?”

“Yes.”

“Where'd he go?”

“To a tourist camp in Escanaba,” Doc explained. “That is, the camp is south of Escanaba on the lake front. He joined a group of eleven men there. The men had been head quartered there, and after Stub joined them they did nothing but wait, apparently for orders.”

PAT, after a silence, said, “Well, that brings us up to date.”

“Up to date—what do you mean?” Johnny growled. “What about Monk and Atz. What about this—that funny light we saw here a few minutes ago?”

Pat said, “I seem to have overlooked that.”

Doc picked up the radio transceiver and said into the microphone, “Monk, any report yet?” He got no answer. He repeated the request without any better result.

“Monk lost track of Atz,” he said. “Lost him completely. Monk was quite disgusted about it.”

“Lost Atz when he stole our car, eh?” Johnny said.

“No. Monk surmised Atz would grab our car. So Monk stowed away in the machine. He didn't think Atz would drive the machine off a pier into the lake to get rid of the machine, which is exactly what Atz did. By the time Monk got out he was nearly drowned, and Atz had gotten away.”

Johnny groaned.

“What was that glowing thing?” he demanded. “The one a minute ago. It scared the daylight, or maybe I should say the midnight, out of Plate.”

“The story leads up to that,” Doc told him. “Monk managed to get a microphone planted in the cabin which Stub's men were using. We learned a few things from their talk. First, there are two gangs involved in this.”

“Two gangs!” Pat exclaimed. “That's the way I had it figured.”

“Who is the other gang?” Johnny asked.

“This man Plate.”

Pat said, “Sure! You remember the gang of men who grabbed the fellows we had just captured up at Marquette—”

Doc explained, “Stub is working for Atz. Atz sent some of Stub's men up to Marquette to lay a trap for you when you arrived from New York. In doing that, he fell into a trap I had set for him—”

Johnny jumped violently. “Hey! When you telegraphed Renny and Long Tom to come to Marquette, you let Atz see the telegram. That what you mean by trap?”

“Yes.”

“You figured if somebody laid for Renny and Long Tom in Marquette, it had to be Atz who tipped them off?”

“Yes.”

Pat said, “Then Doc got me on the telephone, and told me to warn Renny and Long Tom what to expect.”

“I remember when you did that,” Johnny told the bronze man. “It was right after we sent the telegram, when we missed you, and you turned up with some lumberjack shirts and overalls which you pointed out we could wear and look less conspicuous.”

“That is right.”

Pat said, “That was a nice job of setting a snare for Atz.”

Doc said, gloomily, “It was a shot fired into the air, as it turned out. Because Atz tipped his hand when he faked that faint, then fled from the vicinity of Dave Clay's cabin.”

Johnny was puzzled. “What made you suspect Atz in the first place?”

“There was nothing in particular in the way of proof,” Doc explained. “It just seemed to be a good idea to test him, try him out. After all, friendship was hardly enough of an explanation for the risks he had been taking. It looked a little as if he was very, very anxious to stay with us. Possibly so he could keep track of what we were doing. A very handy thing for him to know, if he was working against us.”

“I'm getting confused,” Johnny said.

DOC SAVAGE understood what Johnny meant. “I will go back to Stub and his men in the tourist camp below Escanaba. We were eavesdropping on them, as you know. We found, as I told you, that there are two gangs.”

“Two outfits.” Johnny nodded.

“Atz is heading the one of which Stub is the straw boss.”

“Stub and Atz together.” Johnny nodded again.

“Atz has Dave Clay a prisoner.”

Johnny looked greatly surprised. “Where?”

“That,” Doc told him, “is probably the one thing we want most to know.”

Johnny scratched his head. “I think I begin to see what you've done. Does that fellow Plate know where Dave Clay is being held?”

“We think so.”

“How'd you figure that out?” Pat interrupted.

“From what we overheard at the tourist camp.”

“Oh.”

Johnny said, “Doc, you scared Plate into thinking Atz had double-crossed him, didn't you? A minute ago, I mean.”

“Yes.”

“Oh, bless me!” Pat said. “You mean to tell me you faked that luminosity we saw? I thought it was genuine! I thought maybe you had solved the whole thing.”

Doc Savage said that he had not, actually, solved much of anything. He sounded disgusted, worried, impatient. He kept trying to get an answer from the radio, which remained unresponsive.

He showed them the gadget with which he and Monk had made the varicolored luminous phenomenon which had so frightened Lawyer Plate. The device was simple. It consisted of several perfectly ordinary automobile spotlights with the lenses covered thickly by filters made of colored paper. These lights were each set well back in a joint of ordinary galvanized furnace pipe so that not the light source but only the light itself was visible. To further the effect, Monk Mayfair had contributed an idea of his own—a jug of chemicals which gave off a considerable vapor which was like smoke, but without much odor. If the stuff had any odor at all it was the smell of ozone, or burned electricity—the scent which follows a lightning discharge at close range.

“What is the real thing?” Pat wanted to know. “It must be something extra to scare Plate the way this did. What is it?”

Doc Savage seemed not to hear this inquiry. Pat frowned. But she did not try any more words on him. That temporary deafness was an aggravating habit of Doc's when he did not want to answer an inquiry. Whether he knew what the thing was or not, Pat was not sure. But she was convinced that he had some idea. Otherwise he would not have been able to fake the thing so closely that Plate had been fooled, and frightened out of his composure.

THE radio transceiver began making a slight purring sound, and Johnny exclaimed, “There! There it is!”

The sound meant the other transmitter had been switched on and the microphone cut in.

Evidently Monk's transmitter was in an automobile. The sound was a car sound. But for minutes there was no other noise. The minutes became grim with suspense. Monk could be all right, just waiting for some reason or other, possibly not knowing the tubes were warmed up yet. Or someone might have the

transceiver, and have switched it on to see what it was.

Finally Monk said, “He stole a car, Doc.”

“Where is he going?”

“That tourist camp, I think.”

Doc said, “I am going to leave Johnny here in Nahma as a central headquarters for our campaign. We can use him as a clearinghouse for radio instructions.”

“Is Johnny hurt?”

“Sprained ankle. But Long Tom and Renny were caught by the gang.”

“Which gang?”

“We are not sure,” Doc admitted. “It may have been more of Atz's men, or it may have been Plate's. Plate pretended to escape with Pat, but he may have done that as a trick.”

Monk, in a dejected tone, said, “Ham and Renny and Long Tom all trapped. That's not good.”

“We will be seeing you shortly,” Doc advised him.

Johnny Littlejohn was not joyful over being left behind in Nahma. His objections subsided, though, after he tried to get around on the ankle. Doc gave him a transceiver a little larger than the others and more powerful.

“The hotel probably is watched,” the bronze man said. “At least, it may be. So better stay hidden here in the bush.”

Johnny consented. “The mosquitoes will probably eat me alive,” he grumbled. Which, from the number of insects about, was a possibility.

Doc had a car concealed nearby. He gathered up the trick light apparatus—it could be picked up in a moment because the lights in the stovepipes were simply strung together on wires, making them not much more difficult to handle than ordinary wire-basketed trouble lights—and loaded them into the car. “Never can tell,” he explained.

He drove through Nahma not too fast, but when he had taken the right turn onto the blacktop road that led in lazy curves for several miles to U. S. 2, he gave the car speed. For once in her life, Pat was scared by Doc's driving. She was surprised at her fear, for she had plenty of confidence in him. But by the time they were on the main highway, her teeth ached from clenching.

“Is there actually a fire?” she asked, not sounding at all facetious.

Doc said, “Trying to get to that tourist camp ahead of Plate.”

But he did not succeed.

THE tourist camp—it could be called just a collection of summer cottages—was fairly populous and noisy. Many of the cabins were lighted, but they were spread widely along the beach, giving each privacy. In a honkatonk not far away, a juke box was making considerable racket.

Doc Savage drove in quietly not a hundred yards behind Plate. Monk's car trailed Doc some distance back. Plate turned off to the left toward the cabin occupied by Atz's men. Doc made no attempt to follow, but parked.

"Stay with the car," he told Pat. "We may have to clear out of here in a hurry. And keep the radio. I may want you to trail someone and report in. Give your reports to Johnny."

"Right," Pat said. For once she was willing to take orders without an argument.

Monk joined Doc.

"Might as well take the lights," the bronze man said.

Carrying the lights and the dry batteries which supplied current to them, Doc and Monk found a footpath and pounded through the darkness.

They knew, from past watching of the place, where the guard was located at the head of the driveway which swept toward the cabin. They avoided him.

The cabin door was open and Plate was standing in the light. Apparently someone wasn't sure whether to admit Plate. But Stub stepped out. Stub extended his hand to Plate, who ignored it. Stub shrugged. They went into the cabin.

Doc and Monk reached a window, which was open. They used Doc's periscope gadget to keep track of what went on inside.

Plate was in a bad mood.

"Where's that damned Atz?" he demanded.

Stub scowled. "Now wait a minute, friend. I'm working for Atz and I don't like—"

"You fool!" Plate snarled. "Don't you know I am the real boss of this thing?"

Stub eyed him intently. "I know Atz is the man Dave Clay came to when he was scared. Dave Clay accidentally drowned those two people with a tidal wave, and it scared him, and he came to Atz. And Atz got this big idea."

Plate sneered. "Let me tell you something! Atz had the vaguest kind of an idea and no guts to go with it. No money, either. Who do you think is paying you, you knothead? I am. My money."

"Atz hired us."

"So what? Work for him and you don't get paid."

Stub was confused. He didn't understand why the other man was so angry. "What's the idea of stewing around so?" he demanded. "I don't care who's boss. I know I ain't."

Plate got hold of himself with an effort. "Where is Atz?"

Stub was now indignant and he said, "I don't know that I'm going to tell you. You come busting in here ranting and calling me a fool and—"

"All right, all right. You're a genius." Plate was now in control of his feelings. He grinned and took a more pleasant tone. "I'll apologize for what I called you. I'm upset. Something has gone wrong. I want to see

Atz."

Stub got out and lighted a cigarette, taking his time. He puffed smoke slowly, then, having demonstrated that he was not a man who could be pushed around, he grinned back at Plate.

"Atz is at his cabin," he said.

"Is Dave Clay with him?"

"Yes."

"What about Ham Brooks?"

"He's there, too."

"And all of Dave Clay's material?"

"Yeah. All at Atz's cabin."

Plate seemed to digest this. He took several moments. His face was crossed by a variety of expressions, increasingly evil.

"Stub, I'll need a gun and some grenades," he said. "Where are they?"

Stub went to a pine-board cabinet in a corner. "Here," he explained and opened the cabinet. The cabinet was crowded with weapons, rifles, revolvers, grenades, gas masks, two machine guns, boxes of cartridges.

Plate selected a machine gun. He clipped a loaded drum into the thing and put a shell into the barrel.

He took four hand grenades. They were fat black regulation army hand grenades.

"This will do nicely," he said.

He went to the door, stopped, turned slowly. His face was suddenly contorted.

"You stinkers!" he said. His voice was shrill. It was so full of emotion it gurgled. "You think I don't know you and Atz are double-crossing me?"

Stub gawked at him. "Huh?"

Plate said, "Try to grab this thing all for yourselves, will you! Well, grab this and see how you like it!"

He held the machine gun as if it was a garden hose and came down on the trigger.

Doc Savage leaned in the window and threw a dry battery at Plate.

THE battery hit Plate on the forehead. It was heavy, being one of the batteries with which Doc had supplied current to his trick lights. It should have brained Plate. But Plate just upset. His gun cut a long, jagged rent in the ceiling before it stopped its unearthly sound.

Doc Savage imitated the voice of Sidney Atz and shouted, "Grab Plate, fellows!"

Plate rolled over. He had fallen through the door. He took off through the darkness.

Doc used Atz's voice again.

“Catch him!” he shouted. “If he gets away all of you go to my cabin! Right away!”

The uproar now in the cabin was tremendous. Most of the gang had been inside and not happy about the way they had narrowly missed being machine-gunned.

Doc told Monk, “Come on. Only way to find that cabin is follow some of them to it.”

They moved back toward their cars. They went fast, but they were cautious. Any noise would bring a storm of bullets, the way Stub's men were feeling.

They reached their cars.

Monk said, “Now Plate is sure Atz is double-crossing him.”

“And Atz might think the same of Plate,” Doc said cheerfully, “when he hears about this.”

“We got the tin cans tied on 'em,” Monk said gleefully. “Now we should see some action.”

An automobile motor burst into frenzied racing.

“Here comes Plate,” Monk said.

“Pat and I will follow him,” Doc said. “You follow the others.”

DOC got into his car, started the motor and sent the machine racing out toward the highway. They could see the lights of Plate's machine ahead of them.

Pat groaned. “Doc, he'll see our lights! Our headlights! He'll think Stub and the others are after him. He won't go to the Atz cabin with Stub hot on his heels.”

Doc said, “Monk and I equipped this machine for night work today.”

“Infrared light, you mean?” Pat asked.

“Yes.”

Pat settled back, satisfied. She had seen the infrared equipment in operation before. It was efficient. Doc had developed a filter which eliminated all visible light from an arc-type flame. And the infrared light, normally invisible to the unaided eye, was converted into visible light by a device—something that used the same type of tube as a television camera as its heart—which was nothing if not complicated.

Doc switched off his regular headlights, turned on the infrared, and put the viewing gadget into operation. It was not too efficient. At least they could follow the road. And Plate's headlights guided them.

(Science has widened the adoption of so-called “black” light, or infrared light, enormously during recent years. During World War I, infrared light was used for signaling. But as early as the year 1800, Sir William Herschel identified the existence of radiations outside the limits of the visible spectrum, finding that a thermometer showed a higher temperature when placed in the red end of the spectrum. By 1847 a scientist named Fizeau had measured the wavelength of infrared radiations. Mascart, in 1864, took the first photographs using light outside the visible spectrum. So experimental work on infrared light is not a recent matter. Most spectacular recent development, as far as the general public is concerned, is the

placing on the market of a special “blackout” type of photoflash bulb, by which pictures can be taken with an ordinary camera by invisible light in pitch darkness. These bulbs, while called blackout bulbs, actually do make a faint flash of red light when they flash, but with the better types this flash is not noticeable even in extreme darkness, unless one is looking directly at the bulb when it burns.—AUTHOR.)

Chapter XIII. PATH MADE OF LIGHT

IT was a long drive. More than an hour. Since at no time, except twice on corners, was the speed under fifty an hour, the distance put them well out in the woodland country.

“He's stopped!” Pat said.

The road was a winding thing, a track cleared through the timber, not much more. Doc stopped their car instantly. He got out, stood listening.

It was dark, intensely black, and thunder whooped and rumbled in the south. The storm, which had been gathering itself in the night sky like a black beast, was coming closer.

“Wait here for Monk,” Doc told Pat. “Keep the infrared apparatus. Use it to follow the gang when they get here.”

He got back in the car then, and cautiously drove it off the road. He could hear the howl of an automobile engine somewhere behind him on the road. That would mean Stub and his men. And, with luck, Monk behind them. The noise of the distant machine helped cover the sounds his own car made. He got it out of sight.

In running toward the spot where Plate had stopped, Doc kept to the road. But soon light from the approaching car was splattering leaves. He went off the road.

Stub's group passed him. There were three carloads of them. They traveled fast, went on, and stopped. The moment the cars halted headlights were turned off.

Doc listened for Monk's machine. He thought he heard it. He was not sure.

Then the shots. Two of them. A man cursed, then said, “Hey, he shot Elmer. Why'd he shoot Elmer?” There was another shot. The man who had been puzzled about Elmer emitted a shriek that was partly death. After that there was the noise of many men running for wherever they thought safety lay.

Monk was coming, all right. The shadow of a sound which Doc had been uncertain about had now become definitely motor-car noise. But Monk was driving carefully.

The man who had been shot, the second one who had been shot, began screaming that Elmer had been shot and then he had been shot and why was that? The shrieking had a dying quality that was as cheerful as a skull.

Otherwise there was just rustling of men taking shelter in the brush.

Doc went forward with care. His eyes were actually not a bit more efficient in the darkness than any other normal, trained and well-cared-for eyes. But he'd taken a lot of training at this sort of thing. He could have used that infrared gadget, though, he thought repeatedly.

He got a break. The lightning. It rippled across the distant sky like a red, crumpling ribbon for a moment.

The light showed the cabin before it went away.

The place was really two cabins, one an ordinary cabin such as a man of some means might build, and the other a cabin that was semi-boathouse. The latter was partly over a lake. The lake sat below the level of the surrounding ground ten or fifteen feet, and looked, in the lightning flash, to be no more than twenty acres.

Sound of the lightning arrived finally. A grunt and a rumble, a great stumbling in the sky that seemed to begin in the distance and come romping past overhead, with a lusty rowdy clamor. It sounded playful.

Doc saw that they were taking Dave Clay to the boathouse.

DOC SAVAGE had never seen Dave Clay before. But Monk had described him. Not weak of face, but still handsome; the general appearance of a man who had pride in himself. He had been out in the sun a lot. Good outdoor clothes, a little sporty and expensive for this country; not the clothes of a true woodsman, but the garments of a city slicker trying to be one.

By moving fast Doc got to the boathouse by the time they got Dave Clay inside.

Sidney Atz and two other men were dragging Dave Clay. Clay's hands were tied, and his ankles. Atz knocked Clay down. It was not difficult, since Clay's ankles were tied.

“Damn you!” Atz shouted at Clay. “This wouldn't have happened if you'd listened to reason!”

Clay tried to kick Atz with his bound feet.

“Help!” Clay bellowed. “Help! Help, whoever you are! And watch out! They're armed!”

Atz kicked Clay in the chest. The breath was knocked out of Clay, silencing him.

Atz said, “Bellow your head off, blast you! Refuse to help us with your apparatus! And now—bellowing your head off!”

Now came more shots. Someone letting go with an automatic as fast as his finger would operate the trigger. Then a vastly louder noise, so much more than any firearm could have made that it was probably a hand grenade. The cursing of fighting men afraid and enraged. The kind of cursing you hear on a battlefield.

Atz caught the frenzy of the fight.

“Stinkers!” he shrieked. “Double-crossing stinkers!” He whirled and ran out of the boathouse. “Kill them all!” he bellowed.

The two men who had helped Atz carry Clay into the boathouse were left with Clay on their hands. They had caught the fight frenzy, too. “We gotta help!” one blurted. “We may be outnumbered!”

“He may get outta these ropes!” the other exclaimed.

The first man dashed to a workbench. He came back with a canned quart of automobile lubricating oil. He shot a hole in the can with a revolver. Oil splashed and spouted. He spilled it over the ropes that held Dave Clay's hands and, ankles.

“Make the ropes too slick for him to untie!” he bellowed.

He was very proud of his quick thinking.

“Can't untie 'em now!” he yelled. “Too slick! Come on! Let's get them guys!”

The two rushed outdoors.

They slammed the door but did not lock it.

Doc Savage opened the door and went inside. The only light came from a lantern which Atz had carried. Doc scooped up the lantern, did not blow it out, but made the flame almost extinct by turning down the wick.

“Savage?” Dave Clay said. “You're Doc Savage, aren't you?”

Doc said, “Yes. Where did that bullet go, the one he shot through the oil can?”

“Into my leg,” Dave Clay said.

“Bad?”

“I probably need worse,” Dave Clay said.

THE shooting was more violent now. The amount of powder being burned surprised Doc Savage. All that shooting wasn't being done by Plate alone. There was just one explanation to that.

Plate's own personal gang was here. The crew who had seized Renny and Long Tom up in Marquette. Enough time had elapsed for them to have driven down here.

Plate's men had been here. And then, when Plate had rushed in a minute ago, yelling double cross, they had hastily joined him. And so a civil war.

If Plate's men were here—and if they were the crew from Marquette—it meant that Renny and Long Tom were probably here also. Probably, if they were not dead. There were two or three possible reasons why Renny and Long Tom—Ham also, for that matter—might still be alive. As reasons, they were not too good.

With a pocketknife Doc cut through the oil-soaked ropes. When he was free, Clay gasped, “I'll see if I can stand.” He got to his feet. “I suppose it's a flesh wound,” he said. “I can feel blood running down my leg. But the leg works.”

“Give me your necktie,” Doc said.

He tied Clay's necktie around the injured leg and shoved a handkerchief under it at the right spot to stop bleeding.

“Loosen it from time to time,” Doc warned. “That is very important.”

“I understand.”

Doc said, “I have three friends. Ham Brooks, Renny Renwick and Long Tom Roberts—”

“They're here.”

“Where?”

“Ham, the lawyer, is in this building. Right under us. The other two are in the other cabin.”

“They haven't been harmed?”

“I wouldn't say that. They're alive, though,” Clay said. “They've been beaten and tortured to make them tell how much you knew about the situation, and what your plans were, and little things about you which would make it easier to fight you.”

Doc was afraid they had been killed, and said so.

“Oh, no,” Clay said. “For two or three reasons. I think they were afraid to actually kill your men. Then they wanted information out of them. And they wanted them as hostages, too—in case you should discover either Atz or Plate were enemies when they were with you. That way they could trade your men for Atz or Plate if such a thing happened. That was one of their first aims. That first night, when they put the iron fence posts in the airport runway, they were going to dash out and try to get one of your men alive to use as a hostage.”

Doc said, “That was the night you came to Monk and Ham and Johnny for help.”

“Yes.”

“Why did you run away that night?”

“I was scared. I didn't want to go to prison. You see, one of my experiments caused that tidal wave which drowned the two Jones brothers. That terrified me. I didn't know what to do, and I had gone to Atz for help, and he had brought in Plate, and I didn't like their attitude. I didn't know, then, that they were going to grab the thing away from me and sell it to the highest bidder—whether the highest bidder was the United States government or not.”

A stray bullet suddenly went through the cabin roof. It hit with an ugly force. A moment later the shingle fragments which the bullet had knocked loose fell back on the roof. The pieces trickled down the slant of the roof with a sound like small, running animals.

Doc said, “You say Ham is here? Where?”

“Down below.”

“Where is your apparatus?”

“Down below.”

“Then down below,” Doc said, “is the place for us.”

IT was an open stairway, leading down into a naked room with a platform of a floor and steps leading to a float which formed part of the floor and the porch which was in front of the place. Four green canoes and one yellow canoe were on overhead racks. There was an outboard motor fastened to a wall bracket and another outboard motor lying on the floor. There were paddles, a surfboard, a pair of oars, a partly dismantled ice boat, a sail for ice sailing, and some rubber toys of the kind seen around bathing beaches.

There was Dave Clay's apparatus, arranged in front of a window. Stuff that looked like someone had tried to put together at least two big X-ray machines, and had gotten the apparatus connected up wrongly, and not very compactly. It seemed that no unit as a whole was in a case, although various parts

were in cases.

Then there was the cage containing Ham.

The shooting outside in the night burst out with renewed violence. Someone was cursing someone else with screaming volume and much sincerity. Whoever was getting cursed appeared to be a so-and-so who had earlier shown his true colors by cheating in a crap game.

Ham, in his cage, said, “Don't let Monk see me in here!” He sounded as if that was the very worst thing which could happen to him.

A sign on the cage said:

FEED THE BLACK BEAR!

Ursus Americanus

It was a genuine bear cage. Filling stations and roadside juke joints in this Hiawatha summer-resort country frequently had bears in such cages for attractions for children. No doubt, once this cage had seen such use. In it Ham looked unhappy, untidy, angry, apprehensive.

“Never tell Monk,” he pleaded.

Doc took one look at the padlock on the cage. There are some padlocks that can never be picked. This was one of them.

Doc said, “There is no quick way of getting you out.”

Ham's groan was a howl.

Dave Clay said, “There's a file, I think. I'll get it.” He ran into a corner to a tool box and came back with a file. He gave this to Ham.

Ham began filing furiously at the cage bars. “Where's Monk?” he demanded. Nothing else seemed to worry him.

“He's in that fight you hear,” Doc said.

Ham grimaced and worked with the file as if there was a fire in the cage.

To Dave Clay, Doc said, “Will the gadget work?”

DAVE CLAY went over to the apparatus. “They've been trying to get me to set it up so it would function again,” he explained. “You know, it was in my cabin on that island. They moved it, of course, after your men found the island and got away. I told them I couldn't seem to get it back together right.”

“Will it work?” Doc asked urgently.

“Sure. Take five minutes or so to hook it up, though.”

“Get at it.”

The file Ham was pushing made a frenzied rasping.

Doc went back up the stairs. He stood at a window on the upper floor which was on a level with the surrounding earth and listened.

The fight was still in progress. It had settled down to a redskin Indian affair of stalking and shooting at sounds.

Doc closed the windows, barred the door. He went back downstairs.

“How long have you been working on this?” he asked.

Dave Clay said, “Three years, almost.”

“You were testing it when you accidentally made the tidal wave that drowned those two people?”

“Yes.”

Doc said, “The way I understand it, you were scared after the accident and went to Atz for advice. And Atz called in Plate, and they decided to take your idea away from you and sell it to someone.”

Dave Clay was working furiously with the apparatus.

“To the highest bidder,” he answered. “Yes, and they didn't give a damn if it was to get into hands that would use it against America. I never thought Atz was that kind of guy. I knew he was shrewd. There was something about him, and I thought it was a hidden power and quality. I was wrong. It was just stinking crookedness I saw.”

A man began shooting at the cabin. Evidently he thought someone was on the cabin roof. Probably it was the chimney he saw. But he kept shooting, not very accurately in the darkness, so that his bullets went through different parts of the roof.

Doc said, “The drownings and the tidal wave got our interest, and Monk and Ham and Johnny came. You went to them for help, then got scared. How did you come to be free to go to them?”

“Atz and Plate weren't holding me prisoner then,” Clay explained. “But I danged soon found it out. They grabbed me, been holding me since.”

He threw a switch. There was an electrical whining and some tubes lighted.

“Power stage is O. K.,” Clay said. “Now for the rest.”

The thunder was gobbling rather steadily now. The thunder had a freshly violent quality as if the great electrical force of the storm was poised directly overhead.

“Explain this thing as you go along,” Doc requested. “Can you do that?”

Ham Brooks stopped filing and stared at them, torn between curiosity as to what the apparatus was and his anxiety to get out of the cage. Anxiety won. He went back to filing.

“Wires carry electricity,” Dave Clay said.

“Everyone knows that,” Doc told him.

“If a beam of light could carry electricity,” said Clay, “think what it would mean.”

(The possibility of using some type of “light” to carry electricity is far from fantastic. Scientists have

worked on it for some time. There are, at the moment this is being written, grapevine rumors floating around to the effect that an American scientist has perfected the thing. If this is true, the weapon could conceivably be in effect against enemy bomber and fighter planes before this novel sees publication. The exact method of accomplishment could not, for obvious reasons, be available. The electricity-carrying "light" will not, of course, be in the simple kind of light which comes from, for instance, a flashlight. It will be more complicated, and utilize something in the nature of the thing that happens inside a radio vacuum tube, actually the projection of electronic streams through atmosphere instead of a vacuum, in all probability. And the development itself will in all probability be an outgrowth of thermionics, which is the branch of science which deals with the influence of heat on matter in generating atomic or sub-atomic electrically charged particles, ions and electrons. The principles of the thermionics have been known for nearly two hundred years, incidentally. This, obviously, is general information. Too close and too detailed an exposé of the probable method, in view of America at war, would not be wise at this time. So I hope that this somewhat vague explanation of the Dave Clay apparatus, which certainly will not give aid or comfort to the enemy, will be acceptable.—AUTHOR.)

Doc said, "It would mean that huge electrical charges could be sent up two thin light beams which, when they touched an enemy plane simultaneously, would electrocute the crew and destroy the plane itself."

A cloud passed over Clay's face. "Yes, that's the way it works. I didn't realize at first that when the two beams met in midair that there would be an explosion and a tremendous pressure of air downward. That's what caused the tidal wave."

Dave Clay swung two large pivoted clumps of apparatus in an arc, watching a pointer on a scale and frowning. "There are two reflectors involved," he explained.

"You point this current-carrying light at the reflectors, and they in turn deflect it upward into the sky?" Doc asked.

"Yes. You couldn't direct the rays straight up from the machine, naturally."

Doc said, "That would be like Benjamin Franklin flying his kite with the key tied to the string."

Clay nodded.

"And like holding to the key," he said. "Only a thousand times worse."

"Where are the reflectors?"

Dave Clay pointed.

The things were not large, considering what they were probably capable of doing. They were in cases. About three feet by three feet by a foot thick. Each was connected to a reel of thick multiple-conductor cable. And one face of each was painted red.

Doc picked up one. It was heavy. At least two hundred pounds.

He asked, "Can we place them out in the woods?"

Clay nodded. "Yes. Put them flat on the ground. The red surface up."

Doc picked one of the things up in his arms.

"We have got to have some kind of a defense against whichever gang wins that brawl going on outside," he said.

Chapter XIV. DEATH WAS A FLASH

DOC struggled through the night with the heavy case. The shooting had stopped for the minute. Two men, casualties, were making noises in the darkness. One was moaning and calling for someone named Uncle Charles, and the other was just dying.

There was, suddenly, the grim suspicion that one side already had won the fight.

Doc placed one box.

He went back to the cabin. No one had discovered him. He was being lucky, he knew. Very lucky.

Dave Clay, pale and sweating, warned, “Get it at least a hundred yards away. The end of the cable. Closer will be dangerous.”

“All right,” Doc told him. “How are you coming?”

“I've about got it.” Clay was frightened. “I don't like this stillness.”

Doc went out with the other box, with the coil of heavy cable. Placing the reflectors was actually a job for several men. He was very tired.

He had covered not much more than fifty yards when he heard Atz shout.

“I think we got 'em all!” Atz yelled. “But be careful. Somebody show a light.”

No one seemed to think it was healthy to show a light, so the order was ignored.

Doc covered another twenty yards.

“Hey!” barked a voice close at hand. “Who're you?”

Doc, out of breath, wrenched with fatigue, tried to use Atz's voice and say, “It's all right. Keep your shirt on.”

His voice imitation was a flop. He sounded about as much like Atz as a dog sounds like a cat.

The man who had hailed him thumbed on a flashlight. The beam impaled Doc.

“Hey!” the man screamed again. “Savage! Doc Savage!”

Doc dropped the box, red side up, wheeled and dived behind a tree. He kept going.

The man shot at him. The fellow had a rifle and could not hold rifle and flashlight and shoot accurately. He was yelling for help.

Men—Stub and Atz and others—came pouring from the direction of the cabin.

Doc, apprehensive, about Monk and Pat trying to aid him, yelled in the Mayan tongue, “Go back! Keep away from this. Keep far from it. Better run for the road!”

And he crossed his fingers. Monk had a habit of not hearing such orders when there was a fight.

Doc gained the boathouse. He piled through the door. Bullets were hitting the walls, coming through.

He scrambled down the stairs.

Dave Clay, shaking with terror, yelled, “Are they coming?”

“Yes,” Doc said. “But do not get excited.”

Clay stared at him.

“I'm not excited,” Clay screamed. He threw a switch. “I'm not excited. I know what this'll do to them.”

He kept pounding at the closed switch with his fist, and shrieking more stuff about not being afraid. Obviously he was scared hysterical.

Obviously also, he had turned on the apparatus and sent two electricity-conducting light rays up through the reflectors toward the rumbling storm clouds overhead.

Doc Savage thought of the static electrical charges in the storm clouds and of the force that had caused the tidal waves, and of the men running toward the cabin, running near the reflectors, and he tried to reach the switch to turn off the thing.

Dave Clay sprang at Doc and tripped him.

IT was doubtful if any language had words to describe it exactly.

Monk Mayfair said afterward that if he was around on Judgment Day, and the world came to an end with a bang, he wouldn't be awed. He would already know what it was like for the world to come to an end with a bang.

The blast in the beginning had a definite rippling, crackling quality. As if huge sheets of paper were being crumpled. It was the same sound which one hears when a lightning bolt strikes within a distance of a few feet. This sound lasted only a fractional interval of time. A small part of a second. It was just a little fuzz of sound on the outside of the infinitely greater sound that came afterward.

The sound was the movement, and the movement was the sound. It was too great to be real or sensible. It was holocaust, din, bombilation, charivari, blare, blast. It was hell come there and having its moment.

The great lightning-smash charge of electricity from the storm clouds came down the beam and hit the deflectors and discharged into the ground. Exactly like lightning striking.

But some of the current ran on along the wire cables into the boathouse with electrical fire.

It knocked Doc and Dave Clay out for a few moments.

Ham it didn't affect at all. Probably because he was still inside the iron bars of the bear cage, and thus protected the way lightning rods protect buildings.

DOC came out of it and knew he had been unconscious some time. He looked at Monk and Pat, who were on the right of him.

Monk said, “It's over.”

Doc, woozy from the shock, asked carefully, “Dead?”

“Not all of them,” Monk said. “Most of the gang were standing around near the reflectors and that's where the bolt struck. A few of them were too far away but they got knocked flat and then they got up and ran.”

“Atz?”

Monk grinned and gave a ghoulish imitation of a man with popping eyes and tongue, a man who had been electrocuted. Monk was cold-blooded about such things. “Stub, too,” he added. “And Plate. But Plate didn't get hit by that hell bolt. Somebody shot him earlier.”

Doc turned his head. Renny and Long Tom were standing there. They looked healthy and pleased.

“You all right?” Doc asked.

They grinned.

“I'm supermalagorgeous,” Renny said, “as Johnny would say.”

“With a new respect for lightning,” Long Tom said.

THEY got the portable radio from Doc's car and with it contacted Johnny Littlejohn in Nahma, and he got busy sending the State police to the spot.

Doc Savage examined the area which the electrical discharge had mangled. He was astounded. He had expected a great deal of the thing, but there was more. There was more than burned grass and brush and split trees and disturbed earth. There was actually a pit, as if there had been an explosion over the whole area. Earth thrown up and earth actually vanished, and still in the air the weird smell of burned electrical discharge.

The tidal waves were not at all unbelievable now. This was not just lightning striking. It was more. It was the effect of electrical force such as man had never before released. It was something new. It was, actually, matter disintegrated by incredible electrical violence. No wonder the shock had kicked up those small tidal waves.

(The British Meteorological Office collected data indicating the average frequency of lightning flashes during a storm to be about 200 an hour. Such flashes are often miles in length. Since some 32,700 volts are required to jump a gap of .3937 of an inch between a pair of brass balls two and a quarter inches in diameter, some idea of lightning voltage can be imagined. Lightning, actually, is a little too violent for scientific study so far, with any degree of accuracy. Methods are indirect, to say the least, and largely involve deduction. For instance, scientist W. J. Humphreys estimated the current transferred by a lightning flash by the pinch effect produced on a lightning rod which had been struck and crushed by the attraction of the current elements on each other during the discharge.—AUTHOR.)

Dave Clay approached Doc. “It's all over, isn't it?” he asked wearily.

“It seems to be.”

Clay's fists were tight. “I want that apparatus in the hands of the government as soon as possible. I've been looking at it. It may take some time to repair.”

Doc nodded. “You understand, of course, that you will face some kind of charges over the accidental deaths of those two people in the tidal waves.”

Clay wet his lips. “What will they do to me?”

“Give you justice,” Doc said.

Clay looked fixedly at the ground. “All right. I won't complain.”

There was a howl of laughter from the boathouse.

The laughter was Monk's, and he sounded as if he was about to strangle with mirth, so evidently he had found an embarrassed Ham in the bear cage.

THE END

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