



JIU SAN

A Doc Savage Adventure by Kenneth Robeson

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*Scanned and Proofed
by Tom Stephens*

Chapter I

THE little Jap, the one they got to calling the Flying Dutchman, was not important looking. He seemed innocent, if one will admit that any Jap can seem innocent these days.

The point was that he certainly didn't look like an earthquake hunting a place to happen, which in a figurative sense was what he proved to be.

He first appeared flying a Mitsubishi 96 "Karigane" MK II near Dutch Harbor. The 96 is the Mitsubishi which was copied from the U. S. Army Northrop A-17, the Japs putting in an 800-horsepower radial engine.

An ex-sheep rancher from Texas shot him down pronto. Dutch Harbor, Alaska, was no place for a Nip plane to appear. There was a string of fire and smoke in the sky, a splash in the sea, and a gray patch of bubbles as if a cotton ball were sinking. They thought the Jap pilot was killed.

A half-dozen navy ratings in a launch rushed to the spot hoping to find souvenirs. Carlta Trotter, the lady war correspondent, the blonde bomber of the press, climbed into the boat with them.

The launch prowled around for a few minutes in the oil slick from the downed Jap plane. Then Trotter pointed and yelled, "Oh, look! The Jap pilot!"

Everyone grabbed for a gun or a club. They circled warily, but what Trotter had seen—a Jap if it was a Jap—had vanished.

"I tell you I saw a Nip," Carlta Trotter insisted.

She was angry, because she wanted very badly to see a Jap, a real, living, uncaught one. Trotter considered that her career as a war correspondent was a mess, because all the Japs she had seen so far had been either fettered or demised.

"There he is! Over there!" a sailor yelled.

About half those in the launch saw the Jap this time. The Nip pilot, with only his head sticking out of the water, looked like a small brown walrus, because the fellow had a pair of mustaches as impressive as the horns on a buffalo.

Like an owl, the Jap batted his eye at the Americans in the boat. Then he quietly sank. And for another ten minutes the sailors and Trotter hunted vainly for him.

"It couldn't have been a seal we saw, could it?" Trotter asked.

The waves were running about six feet high, with enough wind blowing to now and then pick the top off a wave. When the wind got a wave crest, it would turn it to spray and the blowing spray would look like pale smoke from a campfire. The sea was so rough that spotting a man was a difficult matter.

The sailors steered the launch around and around. They actually saw the swimming Jap another half dozen times, and each time he went out of sight like a seal. It became funny. They began shooting at the walrus-mustached head whenever they saw it, not trying to hit the Nip, but rather endeavoring to frighten him into surrendering.

They had no luck. The shooting brought a crash boat and a P.T. out to investigate. The three boats churned around and around like cats hunting a mouse hole, but the little Jap with the big mustaches was not seen again in the sea.

"Drowned himself," Carlta Trotter said.

That night, a P-38 pilot had his sheepskin-lined flying suit stolen.

CARLTA TROTTER filed a story on the incident. The incident was pretty tame stuff, so she needled it up all she could. *"For two hours this afternoon, our sailors chased a Flying Dutchman,"* she wrote. *"He was a little Jap pilot with a pair of mustaches you could hang your hat on, and he committed hari-kari by water rather than be taken prisoner."*

Sort of dumb journalism, Trotter thought wryly. Later she wondered how many of the plug-headed readers of the *New York Blade* would know what she meant by the Flying Dutchman reference.

So Trotter wrote an add to the story, explaining that the Flying Dutchman was the spectre-ship which haunted the sea, and the sight of it portended disaster. A phantom ship commanded by a German named Herr von Falkenberg, condemned to sail the storming seas forever, without a helm or a steersman, while the skipper played dice for his soul with the devil, endlessly.

She heard about the P-38 pilot losing his sheep-lined suit the next morning, and thought it funny.

Over in Honeymoon House, officially Barracks Three, two fellows lost their K rations during the day.

The next morning two soldiers woke up without their blankets.

The cook of Company C got together a fine big platter of fried chicken as a special little dinner for the

cooks, something the cooks weren't supposed to do. The platter disappeared, chicken and all.

Honeymoon House was again the victim when a soldier lost a box of chocolates sent him from home.

Now pilfering was singularly scarce about the place, and news of the vanishings began to get around and cause comment.

A boy from Missouri awakened during the next night—again Honeymoon House was the victim—and found himself looking at a Jap. A Jap with a pair of mustaches like the horns on a Texas steer. The Ozark boy figured he was dreaming, and he closed his eyes to go back to sleep before it soaked into his drowsy brain that dreams weren't *that* real. He came off his cot with a howl of alarm. The next thing he knew, or didn't know, he was asleep again, but this time from a punch that was like the kick of a Missouri mule.

The Missourian came out of it in five minutes or so, and made an impressive uproar dashing up and down the barracks in his shirt tail, shouting about a Jap with handlebar mustaches. A phantom Jap.

From that minute, the big Nip hunt was on. There were more beds looked under than there would have been at an old maids' convention, and there was no very sound sleeping the rest of the night.

And in the middle of the turmoil something else happened that was very amusing to everyone except the shavetail to whom it happened. A second lieutenant lost a quart bottle of Scotch whiskey from under his pillow.

Carla Trotter, the war correspondent, filed a story that began, "*The Flying Dutchman rides again. A rooting, tooting whiskey-drinking spook in a fur-lined suit has come to haunt this American base.*" Trotter was rather proud of the yarn, and she was grinning when she handed it to the censor.

A strange thing happened to the story. Trotter got it handed back to her. Thumbs down. No can send.

TROTTER complained violently. Trotter's tongue could handle swear words adequately and with the dignity of a duchess—this being something a gal acquires when she learns her business in the city room of a tabloid newspaper.

The censorship officer looked as if a hot towel had just been lifted from his face when Trotter finished with him.

"And don't get kittenish with me!" Trotter said. "Why didn't that story go out? Give me an explanation or don't give me one, but don't get kittenish."

"Nuts!" said the censor bitterly. While in his cups one night he had made a pass at Trotter, something he had been aching to do while sober. Having made the pass, he learned why some of his brother officers got that funny look on their faces when Trotter was mentioned. Until a guy had made a pass at Trotter, he hadn't learned how quick he could be buried six feet under the ice.

"What's wrong with the story?"

"Nothing," the censor said. "A trifle childish, but then I suppose you have to write down to the mentality of your readers."

"Too many of my readers got in the army and were made censors," Trotter said. "Come on, come on, what's wrong with my little opus?"

The censor grinned at her. "Is this making you mad, Trotter?"

"Not in the least. If I let you wolf-puppies get me mad, I would have had hydrophobia months ago."

"That's fine."

"Are you going to tell me what's wrong with my Jap story?"

"No."

"That's what I thought."

"You're not mad?"

"No."

"Then we're still friends."

"We are not!" Trotter said.

"Get out of here, pal," the censor said, grinning sheepishly. He tossed a couple of sheets of copy paper toward Trotter, adding, "And you might as well take that along."

Trotter picked up the copy and looked at it. Then she shrieked, "My *first* story about the mustached Jap! Didn't that one go out either?"

"No."

"God bless us, why not?"

"When you yell, Trotter, you sound like a little walrus barking. Did you know that?"

Trotter folded her two stories, the first one and the second one, and put them in her bag. She jerked her parka hood over her blond head.

"There's more to this than meets the eye," she said, and left.

TROTTER took a walk. She took a walk to reflect about herself and the war. The war was going very nicely, she understood from the radio. Great thing, radio. At least it told you that a war was still going on.

Trotter felt she was in a blind alley as far as the war was concerned. She wondered how many journalists had grabbed hats and a War Department clearance and had dashed off to the shooting, and landed in a hole of monotony and rotted there. Not many, she hoped. It wasn't pleasant. She should know, because Dutch Harbor was certainly a hole of monotony.

The aggravating part was that Alaska had seemed such a logical war theater. The Aleutians—Dutch Harbor was on one of the Aleutians, practically—was on the shortest route from Seattle to Tokyo, or vice-versa. Trotter had foreseen action all over the place. There hadn't been any action worth the name. She was disgusted.

Lately she had begun to suspect she was the victim of a snide deal from her paper, the *New York Blade*, one of the ranker and more successful tabloids. Trotter was trying to make up her mind whether coming to the Alaskan theater had been her own idea, or whether Pot Johnson, managing editor of the *Blade*,

had pulled a smarty on her. Pot was a little guy with a big ego who hired only beauty and brains in combination when he employed females. Then they always had trouble with the silly side of Pot. Pot Johnson fancied himself a lover. He was a little guy who could sigh like a furnace.

When Pot failed to make a conquest, he didn't give up. He just changed his interest from love to psychological sadism. He became an unholy experimenter. In other words, he would set out quietly and deliberately to give the death of a thousand cuts to the gal who had spurned him. There was something devilish about his system. His victims never seemed to realize what was happening to them, Trotter had noticed. They wound up married to guys they didn't like, or something like that, without knowing why.

Trotter was stuck in Dutch Harbor, where nothing was happening. Pot Johnson had a suave answer every time she demanded another spot, in the South Pacific, Italy, anywhere. Something would pop eventually.

I'll pop, Trotter thought bitterly. Here I am, stuck in this God-forsaken hole while my career rots. Another six months of this, heaven forbid, and the newspaper business will have forgotten there ever was an up-and-coming journalist named Carltta Trotter.

She suspected the worst from Pot Johnson. Any girl who'd spit in his eye had better watch out. Trotter had done just that, verbally.

And now they weren't even letting her send little color stories about a downed Jap flier. Could that be Pot's fine hand?

At this point, a group of soldiers came out of the C. O.'s office with the Jap in question. The escorted prisoner was obviously the little man with the handlebars on his lip.

"They caught him!" Trotter gasped.

She hurried forward. She could speak a little Japanese, unless her brother's houseboy in New York had misled her.

"*O hayo!*" Trotter said, addressing the prisoner.

The little Jap looked like a baboon. "*Arigato!*" he said, and grabbed Trotter's hand and shook it like an insurance salesman meeting a client.

"*O namaye wa nan' to moshimasu?*" asked Trotter.

"It's John Doe, sister," said the Japanese in first-class English.

One of the officers demanded, "What'd you ask him, Trotter?"

"His name," Trotter admitted sheepishly.

"It's John Doe, sister," said the Japanese. "Anything else you want to know?"

The American officers all laughed. Trotter's eyes snapped, and she said, "A Jap wise-guy."

They led the Nip off to toss him into the klink. Trotter stared after the fellow sourly. Trotter hated being made a fool, which she felt was what the Jap had done to her.

A funny-looking Jap, she reflected. Funny-looking even for a Jap. The fellow would have to stand on

tiptoes to look into Trotter's top parka pocket, and Trotter wasn't a tall girl. It must have been the thought of her parka pocket that made Trotter absently feel there.

Her gold fountain pen was gone.

Trotter swore bitterly over losing the pen. The pen was a gift from the *Blade*, a token of esteem bestowed by the ribald tabloid for a particularly salacious job of reporting which Trotter had done on a paternity case involving a motion-picture star. She hated to lose the pen. Today was one darned thing after another.

Another officer, a Captain, came out of the Colonel's office.

"Hello, Fred," Trotter called to the Captain. "When did they catch the Flying Dutchman?"

"About ten hours ago."

Trotter said, "Ten hours! Did they spend all this time questioning him?"

"I couldn't say."

"I'll bet they got some sassy answers out of him."

"I couldn't say."

"Weren't you there?"

"How about singing a number at the camp show tonight, Trotter?"

Trotter wrinkled her nose at him. "Giving me the run-around, aren't you? Look, Fred, I buy you drinks every night, and with the price of Scotch what it is, it would be cheaper to support a gigolo. What is this, an anti-Trotter campaign around here? Or do you just bite hands that pet you?"

The Captain grinned.

"Take it easy," he said. "What about singing the number?"

"Okay. It'll serve you right."

The Captain laughed and left.

TROTTER was thoughtful. Getting news was her business and she had a sixth sense about news. She had never particularly analyzed her ability to feel a news story when it began to develop around her, and there probably wasn't anything mysterious about her perceptive skill. It was probably a combination of many small things, things like voice tones, the expressions on faces. Excitement is a difficult emotion to conceal.

Right now, Trotter had a hunch that something was brewing.

I hope I'm not getting mental williwaws, she thought. If something isn't developing around here, I've lost my nose for news. And if I've lost my nose, that's bad. Very bad. It would make Pot Johnson too happy.

She decided to see the C. O., Colonel Rieger. She would use the loss of her fountain pen as an excuse.

She wouldn't get any information out of Rieger, she foresaw. The Colonel wasn't talkative. An oyster was an orator alongside big, flat-cheeked Colonel Rieger.

Trotter went into the Colonel's office as innocently as a cat entering a room where there was a goldfish bowl.

The Colonel was behind his desk. He was standing. He had a perplexed expression, and was searching his pockets with both hands.

"You know, I seem to have lost my gold cigarette lighter," the Colonel complained.

"That Jap!" Trotter cried angrily. "He's a pickpocket!"

Chapter II

TROTTER was right. She didn't get any information out of Colonel Rieger.

But she left headquarters feeling very sure her hunch was right. Something was stewing. There was tension in headquarters, an atmosphere as tight as a fiddle-string about to snap. No one said or did anything. But Trotter got the feeling.

In fact, Trotter grew alarmed. Maybe, she thought, we had lost the war, and the news was being smothered. That was foolish, but it gave some idea of the ever-present tension.

"I'll have that Jap searched for your fountain pen and my lighter," Colonel Rieger said vaguely.

There were one hundred and sixty-two Jap war prisoners in the Dutch Harbor holdover. Most of these were sailors from the Imperial Japanese Navy.

The holdover was a group of Nissen huts surrounded by a high woven-wire fence topped by barbed wire and a charged wire carrying a discouraging amount of electricity. The wooden guard towers were equipped with machine-guns and lights. It was a standard prison camp. The Japs in it now would be transferred to the States later.

Trotter's room was situated so that she could look into the prison yard, the area inside the wire. This was an accident.

But it was not an accident that Trotter watched the little Jap with the mustaches. She was interested in the fellow.

Trotter was astonished at what she discovered. The other Jap prisoners treated the little fellow with the mustaches with respect. A great deal of respect.

Trotter paid Colonel Rieger a call.

"I think I've got a trade-last for you, Colonel," she said.

"Eh?"

"Our Flying Dutchman is a big-shot."

"What makes you think so?"

"I've been watching the way the other Nips kowtow to him. They fall over each other to lick his boots.

You'd think he was the Mikado himself. Maybe he is."

Colonel Rieger pushed out his lower lip and examined the ceiling, not meeting Trotter's rather entrancing blue eyes. "So you've been watching the Flying Dutchman," he said.

"Yes. Did you know he was somebody important in Jap-land?"

Colonel Rieger cleared his throat. He took his attention from the ceiling, and put it on his desk drawer, from which he removed Trotter's missing fountain pen.

"Here." Colonel Rieger tossed the pen across the desk. "Somebody found this where you lost it."

"I know where I lost it," Trotter said. She got out a cigarette. "Do you have a light, Colonel?"

Colonel Rieger grinned. "If you mean did I get my lighter back too, I did."

"Who is he, Colonel?"

"Who is who?"

"The little Nip with the mustaches."

Colonel Rieger shook his head wryly. "Trotter, the censor tells me he suggested you forget about this particular Jap. I think it would be a good idea."

TROTTER left headquarters determined not to forget about the Flying Dutchman. This was partly training. When you worked for a scandal rag like the *Blade*, people were always trying to keep you from getting stories. The harder they tried, the more certain you could be that the yarn was a dilly.

The other part of Trotter's interest was curiosity. This was the first thing that had happened to break the monotony. Trotter decided to play it for all it was worth.

She decided not to overlook the chance that it might have a Washington angle.

So that afternoon she filed a story, a yarn that read as innocently as a sabbath lesson, but which actually contained a privately coded message to Lee Carl Copeland, political editor of the *Blade*. Trotter's code text advised Lee Carl there was a mysterious Jap big-shot prisoner at Dutch Harbor, and to check Washington sources on it. She added a postscript not to tell Pot Johnson.

That postscript was Trotter's way of getting sure-fire action. Lee Carl Copeland and Pot Johnson were mutual gut-haters, although otherwise they were cut from the same cloth: both were chasers. Both hired lovely, brainy females on to the *Blade* staff, then took out after them. Frequently they were in simultaneous pursuit of the same female, which probably accounted for the nasty feelings around the office.

Trotter was pleased with herself. If there was a Washington angle, this would shake it out of the bush. Pretty slick, Trotter thought. Maybe I'm not going to seed as fast as I thought.

In a happy frame of mind, she spent the next two hours writing a letter home. Her parents lived on a farm in Iowa, where they made barely enough to live on. They were perfectly content. Her father had once amassed a total of fourteen million dollars, which he'd lost spectacularly in the nineteen-twenty-nine crash. The loss hadn't made her father give up. It had just made him philosophical. He said he had always wanted to know what it would be like to have fourteen million dollars, and now he knew, and so

he was perfectly happy. He meant it, too. He was a great guy. He was writing a book on psychoses of hogs.

Trotter's brother, Bill, was a discontented inhabitant of an advertising office which had a reception room like a Rajah's palace. He was 4F, and not pleased about it. Trotter felt sorry for him. He was a great guy, too. *His* book was about a farmlot bull who wasn't any Ferdinand, and it was practically as funny as his father's opus on hogs.

We're just a bunch of pixyish farmers at heart, Trotter thought gleefully.

A few minutes later, Colonel Rieger sent for her, and proceeded to bat the glee out of her.

COLONEL RIEGER used words that were in the dictionary, all of them. But he gave the slashing impression that he was a skinner taking the hide off a mule.

An Army bright boy had transcribed Trotter's code message.

Trotter became meek. She was scared. She had never had a man give her such a peeling as Colonel Rieger handed out.

And when Colonel Rieger had scared the devil out of her, he proceeded to blow Trotter's career higher than a kite.

"I am cabling Washington to cancel your clearance as a war correspondent," he finished. "You will be returned to the States as soon as transportation can be arranged, probably in a day or two."

Trotter stumbled out of there. She didn't cry. She wanted to. She didn't swear, which would have helped. She didn't kick things around in her room, which would also have been an aid.

She was sunk. Punctured, deflated, disgraced, a flop. She could see now where she had it coming, and that made it worse. Covering a war wasn't the same as covering a trunk murder on Park Avenue. She'd confused the two, and tried to use the same tactics. It hadn't been the thing to do. She should have known better.

She sat there in her room, thinking: *Pot Johnson would be happy to see me now, the amorous polecat.*

About an hour of that, and Trotter began to get mad. This was the regular road her ego followed. When she got a blow, it would knock her flat for an hour or two, then she would get mad and get up on her two feet and do something about it.

She went for a walk. She liked to walk when she was mad.

And that was how she happened to be on the beach when the Catalina came in with the mysterious sergeant aboard.

THE Catalina was one of the original PBV-5s which were now relegated to transport duty. This one arrived on its regular run from Seattle with mail, emergency parts for Supply, and a quota of brass hats.

Trotter was scrutinizing the brass hats to see if there was anybody with stars on his shoulders, and she nearly missed the sergeant.

Trotter's discovery of the sergeant was a queer experience. The sight of him closed a switch in her head. But the circuit didn't complete itself—she couldn't identify him. He was familiar. But who was he?

The sergeant was big. Very big. Actually a giant, but you weren't quite aware of this until you were close to him. He was a man with enormous physical strength, because there was a symphony of sinews in the backs of his hands and in his neck when he was moving. Something made you look at him repeatedly. He had something special. Personal power, probably, because personal power is something that is very hard to hide.

Trotter knocked her small fist against her forehead. Her memory picked the darndest times to collapse.

The big, impressive sergeant moved away from the plane and disappeared into Dutch Harbor. If he is trying to be inconspicuous, Trotter thought, he is certainly doing a good job of it.

She kept thinking about him. The fellow haunted her mind. He kept dashing through her thoughts like a headless ghost. That was exactly what he was, a headless ghost. Trotter played with that thought, and came to the conclusion that the man's body—his size, unusual proportioning and great muscular strength—must be what she had recognized. That didn't quite make sense, unless the man was disguised, but nobody went around disguised these days. Or did they?

TROTTER ran into Colonel Rieger in the officer's bar that evening.

A pixyish idea hit her, and she said, "Colonel, that is quite a hunk of sergeant you acquired today."

It rang a bell. It was a wild shot, but it hit a bull's-eye.

Because the way Colonel Rieger acted convinced Trotter he was thinking up a quick lie.

"I have no idea who you mean," the Colonel said, putting the lie he'd thought up into words.

Trotter winked at him derisively. "Could I interest you in a nice first-rate correspondence course for prevaricators? Sent you in a plain envelope, Colonel."

Colonel Rieger winced.

"Trotter, you would be a lovely girl—if you didn't have brains," he said.

"I shouldn't have noticed the big sergeant, eh?"

"Exactly."

"But I did."

"Hm-m-m-m."

"And now I want to know about him."

Colonel Rieger looked up at the ceiling thoughtfully. Trotter knew he absent-mindedly did that when he was disturbed.

"Forget it, Trotter," he said quietly. "Forget it, before you get into worse trouble than you're in."

"How could I get in any worse?" Trotter asked reasonably. "You're kicking me out of Alaska. My paper

will fire me."

"I hope not," Colonel Rieger said sincerely. "You have been very ornamental around here, and also an entertaining freak because, as I said, you have a mind."

"That's sweet." Trotter gave the Colonel a honey-coated, baby-faced look which usually made strong men bulge their muscles and start thinking of a table for two. "Now be nice and tell me about the sergeant."

"Sorry."

"You won't."

"That's the general idea."

"Damn you!" Trotter said. "I recognized that sergeant the minute he got off the plane—"

The Colonel's dumfounded look silenced her. She was about to add that she hadn't been able to think of the sergeant's name. Before she could do that, Colonel Rieger was grinding out a warning.

"Trotter, you forget that Doc Savage is here!" Colonel Rieger said violently.

Trotter was floored. Trotter was astonished.

"Oh!" she said, making mental grabs for her composure.

"Forget Savage! You hear me!" Colonel Rieger said grimly.

"My, my, my!" Trotter gasped. "My goodness, you're impressive when you yell at people."

Colonel Rieger did some clutching at his own composure. He took a deep breath, and wiped the wild expression off his face.

"Trotter, you never seem to talk to anyone more than a couple of minutes before you are being bellowed at. A most unusual thing," he said.

Trotter was without words. Doc Savage. My Lord, I should have recognized him instantly, she was thinking. Trotter was speechless, something that didn't happen to her often.

"You forget you saw Savage!" Colonel Rieger repeated fiercely.

He stalked away.

Chapter III

CARLTA TROTTER thought: The lightning has struck, no less!

She stumbled outdoors. She took a walk, which was also what she liked to do when she was excited. She wandered along like a sleepwalker, because her mind was busy with fandangoes.

She had seen Doc Savage just once before, and that was at a meeting of scientific bigwigs in New York. Savage had given a talk on something about electronics, none of which Trotter had understood, but she had sat there fascinated, recalling some of the things she had heard about this Clark Savage, Jr., or Doc Savage, or the Man of Bronze, variously called.

The *Blade* would give its right eye, its keyhole-peeping eye which was its most valuable asset, for an eyewitness story of one of Doc Savage's adventures, Trotter had thought at the time.

Because Doc Savage was a Name. In the far corners of the earth, he was a Name. A legend. A legend of danger, excitement and mystery.

So far as Trotter knew, no newspaper had been able to get an authenticated story about the Man of Bronze. It was well known that Savage dodged publicity. To get any information about him at all backed by facts was almost impossible.

Trotter knew what Doc Savage's business was supposed to be, but she had her doubts about the truth of that. Savage was supposed to "make a business of righting wrongs and punishing evildoers in the far corners of the earth." The quotes were from another newspaper story on Savage.

Hokum, in Trotter's opinion. The thing had another angle, doubtless, because nothing that sounded as Boy Scout and idealistic as that could be true. Working for a scandal-mongering newspaper had made Trotter suspicious of anything too idealistic.

Other supposed facts about Doc Savage: He was a scientific genius, a muscular marvel, a mental wizard. Probably eats his spinach too, Trotter thought skeptically.

But news about Doc Savage was something the *Blade* readers would gobble. Trotter suspected the *Blade's* public was composed entirely of morons, of lazy ignoramuses who were too lethargic to put any excitement into their own lives, preferring to get it second-hand by reading the exaggerated, overwritten blah the *Blade* printed.

I can't pass this up, Trotter thought. If I do, I'll get into it with the army, the navy and the marines, probably. But I'll do it.

She proceeded to devote herself to finding Doc Savage and keeping track of every move he made.

SHE got her money's worth.

There was not much night-time at this period of the year in Dutch Harbor. But what there was of it was dark. In the middle of the night, Trotter trailed Doc Savage on a furtive trip which the bronze man made to the war-prisoner compound.

Savage crept to the prison pen secretly, in the dead of night.

He talked to more than one Japanese war-prisoner. Trotter didn't know what was said. She couldn't get close enough to overhear.

Nobody but herself, Trotter was sure, observed Savage's secret, ominous-looking move.

It had been in Trotter's mind to approach Doc Savage and try for a personal interview.

After the night visit, she didn't. She kept at a distance. She made herself as unnoticeable as possible, which was quite a job for a somewhat spectacular blonde girl about five feet three.

All the next day, Trotter kept tabs on Savage. She used a good pair of binoculars and plenty of care. She didn't believe he knew he was being watched.

She got several small rewards for her effort.

The cumulative effect of them was horrifying.

Savage spent a bit of time on the dock to which the PT boats and smaller speedboats were tied. He showed interest particularly at the time the boats were being refueled. Finding out which boats have full fuel tanks, Trotter thought, and shivered.

Savage sat down near a pile of Seabee's tools. When he moved on, Trotter was sure a small trenching shovel was missing, stowed under the bronze man's G. I. overcoat.

Savage collected, in the same furtive fashion, a supply of Army emergency rations.

All of this took several hours to transpire, but the effect on Trotter was that of a series of blows delivered in a few minutes.

She was stupefied, and frightened, and sickened. The plain fact was that her skepticism about Doc Savage had been pretended. Actually she had regarded him as a magnificent, romantic international figure, a sort of modern Launcelot in a world that was badly in need of Launcelots.

But what was happening didn't look good.

That night, Doc Savage paid another secret visit to the enclosure where the Japanese prisoners were kept.

Trotter followed him there. But she didn't eavesdrop. She ran for Colonel Rieger's office.

COLONEL RIEGER was sitting at his desk with his elbows on the desk top and his face in his hands, looking like a man who had a headache.

"Hello, Trotter," he said quietly.

Trotter said, "Last night Doc Savage had a sneak talk with the Japanese prisoners. Today he picked out a boat that was gassed. He snitched a trenching shovel. He sneaked some rations. And right now he's back having another sneak talk with the Japanese."

Colonel Rieger half-lifted out of his chair and half-stood for some thirty seconds, with his face assuming an increasingly ghastly expression.

"Oh, Lord!" he said hoarsely. "Are you sure?"

"I think so," Trotter said.

"Think! You spring such a thing, then you say you *think!*" Colonel Rieger straightened, tightening his hands as if physically taking hold of himself. "No, no, I don't mean that. I apologize, Trotter. If you're right—"

Trotter was scared. This was a bad accusation she was making. If she was wrong, it would be a hideous error.

"Why don't we go look?" she said.

"We will. Right now."

The Colonel snatched a service revolver out of his desk. Face grim, he strode outside. Trotter followed.

The Colonel collected half a dozen armed soldiers with quietness and efficiency.

"Colonel Rieger," Trotter said. She was getting jittery. "Colonel, what I told you is true. But maybe we shouldn't interfere."

"An American soldier holding secret talks with enemy prisoners is a serious thing."

"You mean to tell me that Doc Savage is here as a plain soldier?" Trotter demanded.

"Yes."

"But I understood he had a high Army commission, that he was a Brigadier General or something like that."

"Not now."

"What happened?"

"He was busted."

"You mean he was demoted from Brigadier General to Sergeant?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Come on," Colonel Rieger said grimly. "We'll talk about it later. It's a dirty story, one I hardly believe, and I don't want to tell it unless it's necessary."

THE night had the bluish aspect which Aleutian nights have. Mountains across the mile-and-three-quarter long harbor were the color of a gun barrel, and overhead the clouds stalked the stars and icy-looking moon like dark hunting foxes. Everywhere was the feeling of nerve-edging loneliness which haunts the Aleutians.

Guided by Colonel Rieger, Trotter felt the high wire fence of the prison enclosure.

"You can wait here if you wish," the Colonel whispered.

"I want to go along. I started this," Trotter said.

They crawled through the darkness. Trotter, on all fours, could smell the dark muck which was so much a part of this darkly monotonous land.

If this turns out to be a wild goose hunt, I'm going to die, Trotter thought. I'll never be able to live with myself, much less live it down.

"Where?" Colonel Rieger whispered. "Where was he?"

"Not much farther," Trotter breathed. "About fifty feet or—"

She fell silent. She had heard a sound, a noise as if something metallic had hit the earth some distance away.

The vicinity came alive like a stepped-on steel trap.

Guards challenged, "Who goes there?" Floodlights blazed, spraying everything with a brilliance that blinded.

Trotter heard Colonel Rieger say, "Don't move until we are identified!" But she had already frozen, thinking of those guards who had orders to be quick-triggered. She was blinded, but afraid to make even the slight movement of covering her eyes with her hands.

The guards shouted. Colonel Rieger did some authoritative shouting back at them. Other guards approached, to make sure. By the time it was safe, Trotter's eyes had accustomed themselves to the light.

She saw Doc Savage. The big man was standing near the high fence. A black cloth was across his face, but she knew it was Savage. And, when he removed the black cloth from his face by request, it was.

"ALL right, Savage, what are you doing here?" Colonel Rieger demanded.

"Taking a walk." Doc Savage's voice was quiet. It was the same voice, remarkable with tonal qualities, to which Trotter had once listened in New York.

Rieger asked coldly, "Masked?"

"You mean the black cloth?"

"Yes."

"I put it to my face when I heard a noise. I was afraid a sentry would shoot and ask questions later, and I did not want to be shot in the face, the part of me that would be most distinguishable in the darkness."

"And you were only taking a walk?"

"So I said."

"A stroll to the Japanese prisoner compound."

"Is that what this is?" Doc Savage looked at the prison as if he hadn't seen it before. "Why, it is, isn't it."

Colonel Rieger clamped his lips together. He wasn't pleased. Rieger was a little in awe of Doc Savage, Trotter saw. He was afraid to get tough.

Trotter, who couldn't afford to be awed by anyone because she worked for a tabloid newspaper, said, "Colonel Rieger, didn't you hear something fall over in that direction." And Trotter pointed.

Rieger was grateful. "Come to think of it, I did. Lieutenant, take a look, will you."

The Lieutenant didn't have to hunt long. He came back with a trenching shovel.

Trotter said, "Oh, ho, something a Jap could have used to dig under the fence."

Colonel Rieger turned the shovel thoughtfully in his hands "Savage, did you throw this away?"

Doc Savage, in a voice so sharp and violent that it startled Trotter, said, "You had better be able to prove such accusations."

The violence in the bronze man's voice aroused Colonel Rieger.

"Savage, you are under military arrest," he said.

TROTTER, to her indignation, was shut out of the rest of the night's happenings. Colonel Rieger told her to go home and get her beauty sleep, and he sent a Lieutenant along to see that she did just that. Trotter's protests were ignored. For a little anti-climax, the Lieutenant escort became exhilarated with Trotter's charms and got ideas. In relieving him of them, Trotter got rid of the steam she was packing.

The next morning, one of the first people Trotter met was Doc Savage, walking down the street as free as the air.

Savage's face looked much different this morning. He had obviously been disguised, and had removed whatever had given his skin a pale color, and whatever—tinted glasses of the contact type which fitted on the eyeballs, probably—had given his eyes a nondescript brown shade. Now his skin was deeply bronzed, and his eyes were like pools of flake gold always stirred by tiny winds. The eyes were his most unusual characteristic, Trotter thought.

Trotter had an attack of nervousness when the bronze giant went out of his way to confront her.

"Good morning," Savage said.

"What, no jail this morning?" said Trotter.

"Not quite. But don't give up," Savage told her.

"I won't."

"Thank you. It is good to know who friends are," Savage said. And he went on.

Feeling as if she'd had ice-water splashed on her, Trotter burst into Colonel Rieger's office. The Colonel was cleaning his pipe. He didn't look as if he had slept. He seemed angry.

"I met Savage outside," Trotter explained. "In a few well-chosen words, he covered me with frost."

Colonel Rieger's lips twisted wryly. "I can imagine."

"He's loose."

"Yes," said Rieger bitterly. "He's loose."

"What'd he do, talk you out of it?"

The Colonel nodded gloomily. "That's right, Trotter. That man is the most remarkable personality I ever encountered. I actually believe the fellow has hypnotic powers."

"He has something. I understand he's known in every corner of the earth."

"Yes, I know."

"How did he explain last night?"

"I'd rather not talk about it," Rieger said sourly.

TROTTER perched on a corner of the desk and showed the Colonel some leg. Trotter usually wore slacks and G. I. gear, but this morning she had particularly put on a little thing from the expensive end of Fifth Avenue. Being no longer a war correspondent—this was still official, she supposed—she could wear civvies. The effect, she hoped, would make the Colonel dizzy.

"Last night you said it was all a nasty mess," she reminded. "And you said you'd tell me about it."

"I'm not supposed to." Colonel Rieger was contemplating the leg. It got him. "Oh, all right," he said. "And when I said nasty, I meant nasty."

"Yes?"

"Doc Savage," said Colonel Rieger, "has for some time been as influential a man as you can find, just about. His prestige connected to a project was an insurance of success. When he put his name to anything, it went over. The man is a scientist, and he contributed invaluable inventive help to the United States. He has been a sort of trouble-shooter for things that had had everyone else buffaloed. The War Department used him for that through the early part of the war, against Savage's protests that he wanted to see some active service. And they were wise. Savage, as I said, has done amazing work. Just a few months ago, he helped crack one of those German secret weapon scares, only this time they had something, and Savage fixed them so they couldn't use it."

Trotter said, "All right, you're painting the picture of a famous and skilled man. I've got it."

Rieger nodded. "The picture changes."

"How?"

"It began changing about two months ago. Nasty rumors at first. Rumors that Doc Savage had turned pro-Japanese."

"I didn't hear any such rumors."

"The public hasn't. But the War Department is rotting and crawling with them."

Trotter was sickened. "Isn't that a little ridiculous?"

Colonel Rieger shrugged. "They broke Savage out of the Brigadier Generalship because of it. He was on the inactive list, in a special way, but he was still a Brigadier General. They knocked him down to Sergeant."

"For being pro-Japanese?"

"Yes."

"That is treason. That is being a traitor," Trotter said grimly, "Couldn't they do more than yank his commission?"

"Not to a man like Savage, apparently."

"What brought about this change, this pro-Japanese stuff, in Savage?"

"Nobody seems to know."

"Why is he up here?"

"I think they shipped him to the deadest part of the war to get rid of him."

"If they were putting him in a graveyard, they sure didn't miss when they put him here."

"It's dead, all right."

"What," asked Trotter, "did Savage tell you to explain last night?"

"Nothing."

"Eh?"

"He stuck to his story that he was taking a walk."

"What about the trenching shovel?"

"Denied ever having seen it."

"He was lying, you think?"

Colonel Rieger made a gesture of exasperation. "Of course he was lying. But he didn't actually lie. Every answer he gave to every question, when you picked it apart, told exactly nothing."

"That's strange."

Rieger nodded. "But it's the picture as a hole that is tragic, Trotter. Here is one of America's leading citizens becoming a Jap lover. That's a stinking note, begging your pardon. It's awful. It's the kind of a thing that will play the deuce any way you look at it."

Trotter frowned.

"What do you want me to do about writing this up?" she asked.

"Go ahead and write it up," Colonel Rieger said bitterly.

"Is that permission official?"

"It's official."

Trotter slipped off the desk, arranging her dress to cover the knee. "I see I wasted my time dressing up in this sarong," she said.

"What do you mean?" asked Colonel Rieger, puzzled.

"Try two guesses," Trotter said. "And tell me about them later."

She left the office.

Trotter felt quite sure that she was a girl who had been lied to.

Chapter IV

TROTTER'S father, who was a philosopher in a backhanded way, had a saying that if you wanted to know why a pig likes to roll in the mud, go ask the pig. Trotter decided to take the advice.

Trotter was no fool. What about the Flying Dutchman, the mustached Jap? Why was Savage wandering around wherever he wanted to go? Sergeants just didn't do that.

There were some other square pegs that wouldn't fit round holes.

Trotter made up her mind to find Savage and go a round or two with him. It should be interesting. The man fascinated her.

Her previous gumshoe work had shown her that Savage was staying in a private barracks on a hill above the Japanese prisoner compound. In a private hut. That was another thing.

Trotter went straight to the hut, knocked on the door, got no answer, listened and heard nothing, tried the door and found it unlocked, opened the door and went in. She found herself confronted with a gun muzzle.

The man holding the gun was small, lean, dark. Trotter recognized him. He was one of the bulldozer skimmers in the Seabee battalion. Trotter had supposed he was an Italian-American.

"Very still, please," the man said.

He was no Italian-American.

He took Trotter's purse and examined the contents, pocketed about four hundred dollars of Trotter's hard-earned money which he found therein, and tossed the purse aside. He gave Trotter's person a slap or two and decided she had no weapons.

"*Ki wo tsukero!*" he said.

"You're a Jap!" Trotter gasped.

"I'm a mean cookie," the Jap said. "I'll shoot two holes in you if you get funny."

He wasn't trying to be humorous. He didn't sound humorous, either.

Doc Savage was standing near the window. He had a rifle, a Garand, in his hands.

"You've had some bad luck," he told Trotter.

She thought so, too. Her mouth was beginning to feel dry, a sign of great fright. Trotter knew tension when she encountered it. There was tension in this room. She had bungled into something ominous.

Doc Savage said, "Moshi wanted to knife you."

"I'm going to anyway," Moshi said.

"So you see, you are in a jam," Savage added.

In a voice as steady as she could make it, which wasn't very steady, Trotter asked, "Are you kidding? Surely you're not serious?"

It was earnest enough. Moshi's face told her that. She didn't like Moshi's face. She had seen the same face, or faces with the same glazed, blood-simple look, on murderers in New York police stations.

Savage said, "Moshi, we will have to take her with us. Out of town, anyway. If we turn her loose now, she might ruin the whole thing."

"You are the boss," Moshi said.

DOC SAVAGE raised the window in the north end of the room quietly. He sank to a knee in front of it, brought the rifle to his shoulder, and aimed carefully.

Trotter moved quickly to look out of the window. Moshi skipped around warily and got in front of her. But Trotter could see past him out of the window.

What she saw was so ordinary that it puzzled her. There was the high wire enclosure where the Japanese war prisoners were kept. The guards were in their towers. The Japs were taking morning exercise, marching back and forth listlessly.

Near the enclosure was a shack, a rough board and tarpaper affair, probably once a tool shanty. Doc Savage seemed to be aiming at the shack. Trotter had barely time to wonder why. Then the bronze man's rifle cracked.

The earth seemed to sink a couple of feet, then jump ten. The shack had gone up. The shack, the earth twenty feet deep under it, all went in a terrific explosion.

Trotter saw the fence, the guard fence around the Jap prisoners, split. She saw the blast rock the exercising Japs off their feet. Then the whole scene began to disappear behind smoke.

The smoke was remarkable. The shack, Trotter realized, had contained, in addition to the explosive Savage's rifle bullet had set off, a large quantity of some chemical that made smoke.

The smoke rolled and spread and enveloped the prison enclosure.

"*Kakeru!*" she could hear the Japanese prisoners yelling. "*Kakeru! Naru-take hayaku!*"

That told her all she needed to know. This was a planned escape of the Japanese prisoners.

Moshi nudged her with his gun muzzle. "Get going," he ordered. "And when we run, you run!"

They went outside. American soldiers were running from all directions. Anti-aircraft gunners had swarmed around their pieces, on the chance the explosion had been a bomb from a high-flying plane that had somehow evaded the radar. A squad of soldiers dashed past Savage, Moshi and Trotter. Trotter wanted to scream. She was afraid to. She went on, wishing she'd had the nerve to scream an alarm. No one paid them attention.

Savage led the way. They worked out of town. As soon as they were in the clear, they began to run. Trotter was sure they would be stopped, but they weren't, and she realized the route of escape had been selected, and selected carefully.

They ran fully a mile. Trotter's lungs ached, and her high heels were agony. She thought they would never stop running, and the presence of Moshi behind her was a source of increasing terror.

Their route was parallel to the seashore, but about two hundred yards inland where the rocks were big and the going awful.

Trotter finally wailed, "I'm all in! I can't go any farther!"

Doc Savage paused long enough to say, "All right, Moshi, leave her here."

He went on. Moshi looked at Trotter and grinned. Trotter didn't like the grin. But Moshi went on, following Doc Savage. They disappeared among the weathered boulders.

A few seconds later, a small object sailed through the air and landed near Trotter's feet. Trotter looked at it, looked at it fixedly, knowing what it was, but unable to move. She had seen the things before. American soldiers weren't supposed to have them for souvenirs, but some of them did anyway. The object was a Japanese hand grenade. The pin was out, so that it would explode.

In five seconds Trotter lived a thousand lives, or maybe it was died a thousand deaths. The awful thing was that she couldn't move. Or it seemed she couldn't. Actually, she did move, trying to reach cover, reach shelter. But all of her movement was in slow motion, it seemed. She knew she was going to die, and she didn't want to die. She went flat on her face in the dark muck among the stones.

The Jap grenade didn't explode. Half of them didn't, Trotter remembered—five minutes later.

She crawled madly, and sank down behind a rock, after which she gave way to loose, shaking relief.

I've heard soldiers talk about such moments, she thought. Now I know what they mean.

Then she heard Moshi, the killer, coming back.

THE terror came into Trotter like needles and clamps. But now she was able to move, for she had her breath back, and her legs did what her nerves telegraphed them to do. She began creeping away, trying to escape Moshi.

It was the first time she had ever engaged in that kind of a game for her life. She was not an adventuress. She had been in actual physical danger very few times.

This, being hunted for her life, was different than she would have supposed. She supposed it would be like her nightmares, those nightmares which everyone has, where someone or something is chasing you, and just as it grabs you, or just as you fall over a cliff, you wake up with the damndest feeling. But this wasn't like that. This was cold, impersonal, and strangely detached, as if it really wasn't happening to her.

Moshi mustn't trail her, she realized. So she began stepping on rocks, balancing from one rock to another. But she saw with horror that her feet were too muddy, that she was leaving footprints.

I've got to run, she thought. That's all I can do. Run, and maybe Moshi won't see me or hear me. So she began to run, and immediately stepped on a rock which rolled and she went down hard in the mud and rocks, making quite a clatter.

The pursuer heard her. She heard him coming toward her, and then he was standing over her, and it wasn't Moshi. This man was short and wide and as homely as a man could be made, almost.

"Who the devil are you?" he demanded.

He had the squeaky voice of a small boy, not unpleasant.

There was one answer Trotter could give and be safe. She gave it, pointing, saying, "Doc Savage went that way."

The homely man seemed relieved.

"You were with Doc?" he asked.

"Yes," Trotter said. "They brought me along."

She didn't know who this man was. There ought to be something familiar about him, but she couldn't place it. She didn't know whether he was in the plot with Savage.

He said, "I couldn't hide the plane at the agreed spot. There was a beach patrol hanging around there. I had to hide it close to here."

"Hadn't you better overtake him?" Trotter asked.

"No. Might not find him. I left enough sign to tell him what to do. He'll be back to the plane."

"Oh."

"I didn't know there was a woman in this," the man said.

"Didn't you?"

The homely fellow grinned at her. "I'll bet, when we get that mud scraped off you, I'm not going to mind, either," he said. He was so obviously flattering Trotter that she didn't find it offensive.

"We had a tough time," Trotter said. She wondered how she was going to escape. This fellow was working with Doc Savage, it was clear.

"Come on," the man said. "Here, I'll give you a hand."

Trotter's alarm climbed wildly. "I'll stay here," she said.

"Nonsense. Doc will find the plane. Come on. Here, I'll help you."

Trotter let him pick her up and carry her. She was afraid to do anything else. He thought she was in Doc Savage's plot. If she tried to escape, the fellow would know otherwise. Having just missed death a few minutes ago, Trotter had no wish to take a chance on her luck holding out a second time.

They went down through the stony waste, through the slopping mud, to a small niche on the beach where the sea squirmed like the pelt of an ugly green dragon. In the little crack in the barren land, as if it was a big dragonfly tormenting the dragon, sat a large plane. A very slick bus.

THE plane didn't look too large at first, but Trotter was astonished at the size of it when she got inside. It was no Mars boat, but it would accommodate a dozen people neatly.

The homely man waded out in the icy, surging green water, feeling his way on the slippery stones, and handed Trotter into the craft.

He said, "There is some hot water for tea in the galley. Use it to clean yourself up, if you want to. And there's a sheep-lined flying suit in the back cabin that'll keep you warm until we get in the air and get the heaters on."

He sounded quite calm. He grinned at Trotter, gave her a wink, and went back ashore. He's got plenty of nerve, Trotter thought. A regular brass monkey—and looks like one, too.

She waited for the homely man to go away, so she could hurry ashore and flee. But he didn't leave. He stood on top of a rock at the edge of the water, waiting and watching for Doc Savage.

Because she was dirty and cold, Trotter went back to the galley, which was a cupboard rather than a cabin, and found the hot water. She wet a towel and scrubbed at herself. There was a porthole through which she could watch the homely man, who gave no sign of intending to go far enough away to give her a chance to escape.

The cleaner Trotter got, the better she felt, and her mind seemed to function better. She was peering out the porthole at the homely man when her memory clicked. Bingo! She knew who he was.

Monk Mayfair! He was one of a group of five specialists who were understood to be associated with Doc Savage. One of Savage's helpers.

Trotter made a whistling shape of astonishment with her lips, but no noise. The homely man had a reputation as a chemist. His full name and title was Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Blodgett Mayfair. Why he was called Monk was obvious. He couldn't have escaped the nickname.

She saw Monk waving his arms. He was signalling to Doc Savage and Moshi, who had appeared in the distance.

Too late, now, to escape. Trotter looked around wildly, and found a little cabin in the rear of the plane, the nearest thing to a hiding-place. She concealed herself there, waiting, terror once more crawling through her body.

SHE could hear the talk outside. No one was trying to keep his voice down.

Monk called, "Doc, I had to hide the plane here. There was a patrol at the other place."

"That is all right. We found your warning signs," Doc said. "Monk, this is Moshi."

"H'yah, Moshi," Monk said.

"*Konnichi wa!*" Moshi said.

Monk, sounding astonished, exclaimed, "Hey, Doc, this guy is a Jap! What is this?"

Trotter, who was listening, was pleased to notice that Monk didn't sound as if he thought any more of Moshi than she had.

But the point wasn't discussed any more at the moment, because there was a sound, a kind of multiple hissing sound of winded men trying to keep enough air in their lungs, and the sound of feet running. The runners were evidently some distance inshore, out of sight of the beach.

Moshi apparently could recognize a Jap from the way he sounded when he ran, because Moshi lifted his voice, shouting "*Kochira ye oide! Kochira ye oide!*"

A babble of excited Jap voices answered him. Trotter couldn't make out the words.

"Holy blazes!" Monk Mayfair said. "A whole hatful of Japs." Then Monk swore violently, said, "Where's my gun! They're enemy soldiers!"

"Monk!" Doc said sharply. "Keep your shirt on. Let them get aboard the plane. We will take off with

them."

Monk, who didn't seem to know what it was all about, said, "Well, I'll be damned!"

Trotter listened to the Japs arrive. They made as much noise as turkeys, most of their speech too rapid for Trotter to get.

They loaded into the plane. It didn't take long. The plane was cast off. The motors began howling, and the ship began to knock against wave crests. Trotter, frightened in the little cabin, thought the battering would loosen her teeth. A wave gave them a last bang and tossed them into the air.

Trotter, gluing an eye to the little port in the cabin, saw that they were lined out not more than a hundred feet off the water, and that one of the endless mouse-colored fogs was around them. They weren't likely to be caught by American planes.

She was still looking out when the compartment door opened. It was Monk Mayfair. He looked at her ruefully.

"I just told Doc about you," he said. "He was considerably surprised."

"I imagine," Trotter said.

The plane cabin must be wonderfully soundproofed. They had hardly to lift their voices.

"Come on back," Monk directed. "He wants to talk to you."

"What'll he do to me?"

Monk shook his head. "I don't know. I don't get this situation at all."

Suddenly Trotter saw that Monk was worried. He was disturbed, angry, trying not to show it. Trotter wondered if the thing that was eating on him was the Japs.

Just to see what would happen, she said, "Did you know that Doc Savage blasted the Jap prison compound in Dutch Harbor and turned these Nips loose?"

Monk hadn't known that, she saw. He wet his lips uneasily, said nothing.

Trotter slammed him again with, "Did you know Savage was deprived of his Brigadier Generalship because of his pro-Japanese ideas?"

Monk visibly winced. He stared at her uneasily for a moment.

"Don't get me excited," he said. "Come on."

THE six Japanese in the cabin all popped their eyes at Trotter. They were a seedy, scared looking crew, Trotter decided. She ignored them, although one of them gave a street-corner whistle as she went past.

Doc Savage was in the greenhouse, flying the ship. He was very busy fooling with instruments, and did not look around for a moment.

The occupant of the co-pilot's seat was no less than the Flying Dutchman. He bristled his mustaches amiably at Trotter.

"Hello, John Doe," Trotter said.

The Dutchman was pleased. He grinned. "You get your fountain-pen back all right?" he asked.

"That's right."

"It was a fine fountain-pen. I hated to lose it. I thought maybe that Colonel Rieger would steal it from you."

"No, I got it back."

"You're in a peck of trouble, did you know that?"

"How bad?" Trotter asked.

"It couldn't get much worse."

Monk Mayfair interrupted, saying, "Mind swapping places with me a minute?" to the Flying Dutchman.

The Dutchman looked Monk in the eye. "I like it here," he said.

"I want to talk to Doc," Monk said. Monk couldn't keep anger and dislike out of his voice.

The Dutchman shrugged. "Go away, bub. Leave the little number here. We'll talk to her."

Monk was obviously no diplomat.

He put his jaw out and said, "Get out of that seat! You hear me!"

The Nip started to say something. Whatever it was, it was insulting. You could see that. But he didn't get it out because Monk grabbed him by the two big mustaches. Monk held him the way you would hold a catfish by its whiskers. The Dutchman, in surprise and pain, made honking noises. About like the sound from an oboe.

Doc Savage said loudly, "Stop that, Monk!"

Monk, was angrier than Trotter had supposed. He bellowed, "This isn't my day to take lip off smart Japs!"

"Turn him loose! Sit down!" Doc said.

"Nuts!" Monk yelled. "And by God, let's get some things straight! What's going on here? Your orders were to bring this plane and pick you up secretly at a named time and place, and I did it."

"You did fine. Sit down."

"What about this raft of Japs? There wasn't anything said to me about Japs!" Monk was hanging on to the Flying Dutchman's remarkable mustaches. Monk yelled, "Are these fish-eaters escaped war prisoners? If they are, I want to know it!"

"Yes, they are."

"Did you help them escape?"

"Yes."

"Where are we going?"

"To Japan."

Monk batted his eyes. The news knocked the noise out of him. Trotter, watching him, realized that his rage wasn't just of this moment. It was something that had built up in him over a length of time. It wasn't just these Japs. It was a lot of things that had happened.

Monk made up his mind.

He said, "Doc, I haven't liked a lot of things that have happened, but I took them. I'm not taking this. There's not going to be any Japan this trip. We're going to hand these Japs back to the Americans."

Doc asked, "You want an answer to that argument?"

"You're darned right I do."

He got it. Trotter didn't see the blow. Monk reeled against her, and they went down together on the plane floor. Doc Savage had used his fist. Monk did not move, and not until the Flying Dutchman got out of the co-pilot's seat and hauled and lifted was Trotter able to get from under him.

Chapter V

THERE was now a short and—to Trotter—intensely horrifying discussion.

Moshi, with the I-want-to-kill look again on his face, came forward.

"I can get plane door open," Moshi said. "We throw him out. *Atsukamashii!*"

"He is going to make us trouble," Doc Savage said thoughtfully. "But here is something to think about. He is Monk Mayfair, one of the best industrial chemists in the States. He has been working for the Chemical Warfare Service in the development of poison gases. If the United States Army has any new gases, he knows about it. Do you think you ought to kill such a fellow?"

They argued about that for a while. The verdict turned out to be not to chuck Monk out of the plane just yet.

Monk, during this discussion, lay loose and unconscious. He was seized by the arms and dragged back to the rear compartment, where he was tied and rolled on the narrow bunk. Trotter was tossed in with him, her hands and ankles also tied. She heard the door close.

She watched Monk, anxious for him to recover consciousness. She was, she decided, going to like the homely guy. She had guessed him wrong in the beginning, when she had every reason to think he was in on the plot.

He opened his eyes, then closed them, after testing the ropes that held him. He was a man who had been knocked out before. He waited for a clear head.

He said, "Doc hit me, eh?"

"Yes."

"Then what happened? Tell me exactly."

She told him about the argument. He was most interested in that. After she had finished, he closed his eyes for a while.

"We're in a nice ring-tailed mess," he said finally.

"Very ring-tailed," she agreed. "What is going on?"

He shook his head bitterly. "Doc apparently has gone haywire. For about the last six weeks, he has been changing. He used to pal around with us guys—the five of us who are what you'd call his assistants. But about six weeks ago he began to stop that. And this pro-Japanese talk began to start up. Subtly, at first. Appeasement stuff. And then it got worse." Monk eyed Trotter ruefully. "You had it right about why he lost his commission. Pro-Jap sympathies. I got it straight from a friend in the War Department."

Trotter said, "Actually, I don't know much about Savage. I've heard of him, of course."

"It's pretty wild stuff you hear," Monk told her. "But, the funny part is, the real facts are usually even wilder."

He talked to her for a while about Doc Savage. Trotter became more interested in what his tone and manner conveyed of his feelings for Savage. There was a deep attachment, she saw. And admiration. More admiration, she began to realize, than she had ever seen one man show for another. In spite of what had happened, Monk Mayfair still thought Doc Savage was a great individual.

She was liking Monk more and more. She put a high value on loyalty, and Monk was standing by Savage, in his mind at least. It was a tough test of loyalty.

She learned something of Monk himself. The guy was blunt, two-fisted, but he had brains. She thought she knew what had made him a somewhat cockeyed character. It was his looks. A fellow so homely was bound to be different. When you were so homely, you went through life taking a lot of things off people, wisecracks and such, or just knowing from the way they looked that they thought you were a freak.

"I've heard of you, too, Mayfair," Trotter said.

Monk grinned, pleased. "Just so you didn't hear it from a pal of mine named Ham Brooks. He lies to people about me, and I lie to them about him. We make each other out as black as possible."

"Ham Brooks—isn't he the lawyer of your group?"

Monk nodded. "We act like a couple of half-wits when we get together. I guess people figure we're clowns. Can't blame them. Ham and I have carried on a kind of juvenile non-stop quarrel ever since we knew each other." Monk's face twisted painfully. "I miss the overdressed shyster."

"Where is he?" Trotter asked.

"He disappeared about a month ago," Monk said.

Worry was heavy in his voice.

THEY refueled from a Japanese submarine that lifted, water sloshing off its dead-looking gray sides, from the sea. The sea was calm, as slick as a pot of molten glass, when they landed on it, and no submarine was in sight. They heard various rapping signals on the plane hull. Having picked up these on the sonic gear, the sub came up.

Monk was still lashed to the bunk. But Trotter could get her eyes to the porthole. She described the sub to Monk, and what was going on. The sub had aviation fuel in five-gallon tins.

Monk said sourly, "This seems to be what I figured."

"What do you mean?" Trotter demanded uneasily.

"It's following a blueprint. There is a plan. That submarine, in order to meet us, had to put out of a Jap base several days ago."

Trotter had been thinking the same thing. She shivered. "What do you think we're into?"

"Danged if I know," Monk muttered.

Trotter, putting words to the thing that was most personal to her, asked, "What will they do with me? Will they keep me alive as a prisoner?"

"Sure, sure," Monk said immediately.

He said it too quickly, and it scared Trotter. She sat there and listened to the gobble of Japanese voices. They were shouting, "*Arigato! Ki wo tsukero!*" That meant the refueling was done.

The plane rocked across the glassy sea, pulled itself free of the water, and went on. The Jap sub hastily dived.

Time dragged. Trotter, normally talkative, found words hard. Monk was knotted up in his own misery, and silent. Trotter would not have imagined she could stay frightened for so many hours, and actually become progressively more terrified. She was positive they weren't going to let her stay alive. Whenever she closed her eyes, she found she was seeing Moshi's butcherous face, and as the hours dragged on she saw it without closing her eyes.

BELOW there was a harbor, land, a city.

Monk said, "Describe it to me."

"A breakwater, half-moon-shaped, with one opening about the middle. Harbor inside the shape of a fat piece of pie, about two miles wide. Sticking out into it a dock with railroads. A town beyond." Trotter was at the porthole.

"Any canals or rivers in the town?" Monk demanded.

"Yes, there seem to be two low sections in the town, with about three canals, or creeks, going through each. It's a large city."

"Not a chimney and not a church spire. Bigger buildings along the waterfront to the left of the quay you described? Commercial shipping on the right?"

"Why, that's it exactly!"

"Yokohama," Monk said.

"You've been here?"

"Sure, before the war, and there hasn't been enough bombing yet to change it around much. Yeah, I know the place."

"We're landing in the harbor," Trotter told him. "There's a battleship and several destroyers under us."

Monk chuckled wryly. "Too bad we haven't got a bomb or so, eh?"

On shore, they were jittery. Trotter, by straining her eyes, could see the anti-aircraft crews on the bund keeping their guns trained on the plane as it came in. And the same was true of the warships. Japanese sailors were in the gun buckets like ugly little dolls, tense and nervous.

The plane sloshed, lifted, sloshed again. It turned to the left.

Monk asked, "Heading toward a long single pier with two railroad tracks that sticks out into the harbor by the big one?"

"Yes."

"That's the customs pier," Monk said. "The harbor office and the water-police station used to be there. I suppose it still is."

The plane taxied in and began to round up to the pier.

Trotter had been looking at the buildings on shore.

"It looks modern," she said. "Where are the temples and that sort of thing?"

"That," Monk said, "is a very snide trick the Japs pulled on us Americans as a people. They got us to thinking of Japan as a silly nation of pagodas, kimonos, rickshas and flowers. Actually, it's a little different."

"You mean it's all like this?"

"Oh, no. It's two-faced. Modern business places. But the houses are like they were a couple of thousand years ago, mostly."

The plane was warped in to the dock. There was much bustling about and important shouting.

The cabin door was yanked open by the Flying Dutchman. He scowled at Monk and felt tenderly of his mustaches.

"End of the line for you two," he said.

THE next hour was not something Monk cared to put with his better memories. It was nasty.

There was a crowd on shore. A big crowd. They filled the street from the harbor office to the Yeichiban tram station, swarmed thickly in front of the custom house. Japanese police held them back, but the prospect was ominous.

Monk saw nothing of Doc Savage. He had disappeared. And the Flying Dutchman vanished as soon as he turned Monk and Trotter over to strange Japs.

They had ropes tied around their necks. Each rope was about twenty feet long, and there were two of

them. Monk's neck was tied in the middle of one, Trotter's in the middle of the other. Japs got each end of the ropes.

"*Susume!*" a guard snarled.

Trotter said, "He means march!"

A guard slapped Trotter, yelling, "*Yakamashii!*" It was a brutal blow. It knocked the girl off her feet. The Japs on the rope yelled gleefully and yanked her erect cruelly, by jerking.

Monk thought: I won't be able to take much of this. I might as well blow up now and get it over with.

He was influenced by the fact that Moshi, of the murderous moods, was in reach.

Monk hit Moshi. Trotter had told him about Moshi, so he gave it all he had. It was an uppercut. It straightened Moshi out, actually lifted his feet off the ground. And before Moshi was back on the ground, Monk hit him in the middle. He knew he broke some of Moshi's ribs. Moshi hit the ground. His mouth came open and some of his teeth came out with his gagging.

Monk made a run for his rope-holders. He didn't quite make it. Those in the back yanked him to a stop. He grabbed the rope and tried to pull them close enough to work on them.

There was an eminently satisfactory amount of howling and cursing by the Japs. Moshi wasn't moving. A Jap Colonel charged in and Monk overenthusiastically slugged at him so hard that he fell down when he missed. Then they were on him.

For minutes they stamped and beat him. Trotter screamed in horror. Monk did his best. He broke at least one leg. Finally they got him to his feet, wild-eyed, reeling, but pleased.

He knew the Jap words for snake. "*Hebi! Hebi!*" He yelled it at them.

"Don't!" Trotter screamed. "They'll kill you!"

Monk was of the opinion they would do that sooner or later, anyway. He knew why they were keeping him alive. That gas-secret talk Doc had given them. Monk didn't relish the idea of having his fingernails pulled off and his eyeballs pushed out with thumbs and sand tossed into the sockets behind them and such things.

Moshi was rolled onto a stretcher by solicitous Japs. Likewise the man with the broken leg.

The march began. They went up Satsuma Cho, where the tram lines ran. Monk, looking at the Japanese crowd, as thick as weeds in an abandoned field, felt sure he wouldn't live through what was going to happen to him.

HE got a surprise. The crowd acted fierce enough—with its voice. There was plenty of screaming. Things were thrown.

Monk's astonishment developed slowly. Nobody fought the Japanese police very hard to get at the prisoners. The stuff that was thrown at them was soft, objects which wouldn't do damage. He was spit on only twice.

They're afraid of us, Monk thought. This demonstration has been ordered, but they're afraid to deliver any rough stuff. He got a grim pleasure out of that.

Monk had talked to Americans who had been in Japanese hands earlier in the war. He knew an infantryman who had been in the Bataan death march, when Americans were forced to beat other Americans to death or bury them alive.

They were marched to a building near the city office, overlooking the Satsuma Park and the Minato Bashi. It was a dour-looking place.

There was one elevator. Trotter was shoved into this. They started to put Monk in also, but hesitated, and there was a loud argument.

"What's the fuss about?" Monk asked Trotter.

"They're afraid to get in the elevator with you," Trotter told him.

"That's fine," Monk said, pleased. "But if they try to haul me up the stairs, watch the excitement."

A burly Jap made a frontal rush at Monk, who squared off to meet him. Another one came in behind, slammed Monk over the ear with a rifle-stock.

Before the rubber left Monk's knees, he was upstairs and being dragged down a smelly corridor. He didn't know what they had done with Trotter. He had lost her. They had taken her off somewhere.

Monk was hauled into a room with a bare floor, a big ultra-modernistic desk of bleached mahogany, and a case containing a recording apparatus made in the U.S.A.

The Jap behind the desk was lean, with lips not much thicker than cardboard, and darkly malevolent mannerisms. He reminded Monk of a villain in a ballet dance sequence. Whenever he smiled, there was the most remarkable effect of his teeth protruding. He protruded them now, not pleasantly.

"Is this the one who struck Moshi?" he asked. His English was fair enough. None of the guards understood it, so he had to translate it to Japanese.

"*Chigai nai, machiron,*" he was told.

"He is, eh?" He swung on Monk. "Moshi is my elder brother."

Monk measured his chances of breaking some ribs for this one, too. But the guards had prudently taken turns around the rings in the floor with the rope ends. Evidently the rings were there for such a purpose.

The paper-lipped Jap's rank markings puzzled Monk for a minute. A *Chusa*, Monk concluded. A lieutenant-colonel. That enraged Monk unreasonably, because he was a Lieutenant-Colonel himself.

"So you are the great and famous chemist, Andrew Blodgett Mayfair," the Jap said. "How is Tulsa, Oklahoma, these days?"

Monk jumped, he was so astonished. He had been born in Tulsa.

"Never been there," he said.

The Jap protruded his teeth. "I imagine you know we are going to make you talk. But probably you don't think we will yet. You need some time to think it over."

He ripped out some Japanese too fast for Monk to get, and Monk was hauled out and thrown in a cell.

THE building was a prison. The cell, a pitch-black dark cubicle about four by six by six, smelled very much as if it had been recently occupied. Monk felt his way around, found absolutely nothing but a canvas bucket. No bed, no bed-clothing and no furniture.

He located a tiny barred aperture in the door, one that was shaded on the outside so that it would admit air but no light to speak of.

"Who've I got for company in here?" Monk yelled through the opening.

He got no reply. Yet he was sure the other cells were occupied.

Monk probed around in his aching head for some Chinese. He knew a few phrases of many languages, although able to speak only a few. The only thing he could think of was the query: What is this for?

"*Ching wen! Jeh shirr shun mo yung choo?*" he bellowed. "And I hope that means what I think it does," he added in English.

A perfectly American voice said, "Better pipe down, Joe. They don't allow talking."

"Who're you?" Monk demanded.

"Name's Flynn. Flier. Marines."

Monk said loudly, "By golly, it's good to know I'm with the human race again. My name's Monk Mayfair. How do they treat you birds?"

"Pretty stinking bad," Flynn said.

"Any more of you in here?"

"The place is full of us."

"In case you're interested, we're giving them hell," Monk said. "This war isn't going to last much longer. They're beginning to act like guineas with their heads cut off."

Flynn laughed. "That's good. We had it figured that way. They're beginning to get scared of us. They even put an extra fish-head in our rice now and then."

Another American voice said, "My name's Tub Gaylord. Mayfair, you wouldn't be the Mayfair who is a Doc Savage aid, would you?"

"That's right," Monk admitted.

"What do you know!" Gaylord said. "I used to work for Central-Allied Chemical. You did a production-installation job for them once. Remember?"

Monk did remember. "You aren't the long, hungry guy with the new theory about machining austenitic steels?"

"The same! By golly, it's a small world."

The door at the end of the corridor banged open, and a belligerent Jap stamped inside. It was Moshi's brother, the Lieutenant-Colonel. He had a pistol in one hand and a club in the other.

"Oh, oh, here comes old shut-your-face," said Gaylord. "Watch out! He's going to beat it out of

somebody for talking."

Moshi's brother stopped in front of Monk's cell. He ripped an order. Four soldiers unlocked the door and hauled Monk out.

Moshi's brother swung his club back and forth. It made swishing noises. "Take him to the playroom," he ordered in English. He repeated the order in Japanese.

It was a short trip to the playroom. Down two corridors, down a flight of stairs. Then to a door.

Moshi's brother grabbed Monk by the arm. He spoke Japanese to the escort. He was, Monk realized with astonished anticipation, saying he would take care of Monk from here on, but for the guards to remain outside the door.

If he gets in there alone with me, Monk thought, I'll fix his box quick. He won't have time to bellow for his flunkies. Boy, oh boy!

"Get in there!" Moshi's brother gave Monk a violent shove into the room, which was dark. The Jap sprang in after Monk.

Monk came around, eager, intent on taking an arm or a leg off Moshi's brother if it could be done with bare hands.

Thump! Bump! Wham, wham! "Damn you, try to fight me!" snarled Moshi's brother. "*Watakushi no iu tori ni itase!*"

He wasn't beating Monk. He was pounding himself, evidently, and scuffling his feet on the floor.

Monk stood there with his mouth open.

Moshi's brother hissed, "Yell, darn you! Help me out with this trick!"

"Ouch! Ow!" Monk howled. "Damn you, you hit me from behind!" He had no idea what was going on.

"Yell for mercy in Japanese!" whispered Moshi's brother.

"I don't know the words."

"Yell *no butsu!* Put some heart in it."

"*No butsu!*" Monk squalled. "Ouch! Oh, nuts, *no butsu!*"

The phony beating continued for a while. Then Moshi's brother laughed loudly, triumphantly. "*Taihen ni amoshiro gozaimashita!*" he roared.

Which Monk vaguely decided meant that he'd had a jolly time of it.

"Keep your shirt on until I turn on the light," the Japanese whispered.

A light switch clicked a moment later. Monk was blinded by the brightness; his eyes felt as if needles were at them.

And now he made a mistake which would have been ludicrous under other circumstances. He saw himself. That is, he presumed he was looking into a mirror, for there was his image.

His bloodthirsty thought was: brother, where there's a mirror there's glass, and I'll bust the mirror and get me a piece of glass and cut somebody's gizzard out with it if necessary. He took a step forward to carry out this impulse.

But the image stepped sidewise, put up both hands and said, "Take it easy, take it easy!"

"Huh?"

The image said, "Sh-h-h!" and walked around Monk a time or two. "The stupid makeup man made some mistakes," he grumbled. "He dyed my hair too red, and you've got a scar back of your left ear that we didn't know about."

"You're made up to look like me!" Monk blurted.

"IT'S not all makeup, God help me!" the image said. "I look like you." He stared at Monk and shuddered. "Now I know why the dogs bark at me."

"Blazes!" Monk said. "Blazes!"

"Hold still," said the image, "while we get that scar right." He and the Japanese, Moshi's brother, went to work with some kind of makeup.

"Who the devil are you?" Monk asked the image.

"I'm an English actor named Ferble," the image said. "The British Intelligence hired me to do this. I get fifty thousand pounds if I come out alive, and my heirs get twice that if I don't."

Moshi's brother said, "The price was ten thousand, wasn't it?"

Ferble grimaced. "Minus the customary exaggeration an actor applies to his salary, this is the correct figure."

"How did you get here?" Monk demanded.

"I was whisked across Russia by plane, and into China, then dumped into Japan by means of a parachute. As had been arranged, Japanese picked me up—certain specific Japanese, to be more exact—and here I am."

"Great blazes!"

The image said, "Keep talking to me, Mayfair. I've got to acquire a reasonable facsimile of your voice, and quick."

"What's the general idea of this?"

"I'm to take your place."

"You mean my place as a prisoner?"

"Yes, unfortunately."

Monk said, "Say, you know anything about chemistry? That's my racket. It's liable to trip you."

"I spent a week memorizing chemical formulae and mumbo-jumbo."

The image was speaking now with a reasonable imitation of Monk's rather juvenile tone.

Monk said, "Here's something. I bellow when I get mad. My voice changes."

"I heard it a while ago," the image said. "You sound like a little red bull." He turned to Moshi's brother. They had finished with the scar application. "Look all right?"

"If they put the two of you together, it wouldn't fool anybody," Moshi's brother said. "But it'll do."

The image put out his hand to Monk. "Wish me luck."

"I sure do," Monk said fervently. "But I hope you never get as surprised and confused as I am right now. What do I do now?"

"You get the devil out of here by the back window," Moshi's brother said.

A round-faced Jap who took himself seriously was waiting on the fire escape outside the window.

"I ssspeak Englissss good," he said, hissing like a leaking tire. "You come."

He led the way down two flights and into a window. They took a back stairs. Down the stairs and into a narrow areaway. They popped into an expensive Italian limousine that looked as ratty as some of the big cars in the United States were beginning to look. The fellow who ssspeaked Englisss drove.

Chapter VI

THE place was a Japanese home. It looked very seedy from the street, which led Monk to conclude that it would be rich inside, and it was. The car entered through a reedy looking gate in a dull looking wall, and parked in an alcove.

Moshi's brother didn't get out. "I have another trip to make. You've got friends inside. Go on in."

Monk got out. Instantly an old man, an old man who looked as much like an elderly turkey as a man could possibly look, was beside Monk. The old one had a revolver so big that it should have overbalanced him. The gun was cocked, and his finger lay like a piece of dark bone across the trigger.

"That is Shichi Men Cho," said Moshi's brother. "Don't get him excited. I think he has always wanted to kill a man. He doesn't speak English."

The car drove away, Moshi's brother waving airily.

Monk's spirits were on a toboggan again. He had been feeling better. Getting out of that Jap jail had brought energy out of him like taking the cork out of a bottle of warm champagne. The mystery had intrigued him. But now it wasn't looking good.

They went inside. The old man made a grunting, and Monk's nape skin crawled. But he was only supposed to take off his shoes, and put on the slippers provided, Japanese fashion.

There was more to it than that. The old one cackled and gobbled fiercely. His pants, Monk decided. He was supposed to take off his pants.

"All right, all right," Monk muttered.

A Japanese man, he remembered, might wear his forty-yen business suit at the office, but when he got

home he took it off and put on a kimono. That wasn't as dumb as it seemed. A Jap did his sitting around the house on the floor, crosslegged, and a pair of trousers were never meant for that. A kimono was much more comfortable.

Monk put on the kimono the old man held out. The old one beckoned with great formality. Shichi Men Cho was his name, Monk remembered. Shichi Men Cho was the Japanese word for turkey. Somebody had a sense of appropriate names, Monk reflected. Nickname, no doubt.

They moved through the house. All Japanese houses seem rickety, Monk reflected, probably because of their windowless construction, usually with two sides not even having permanent walls. Just the big *shoshi*, the sliding outside screens of paper. The walls were either unpainted or black.

They moved over the straw mats, the universal floor covering. They even designed their rooms to fit a definite number of the standardized mats, six-mat and eight-mat rooms being most common. An eight-mat room was about twelve feet square.

Monk was being taken, he realized, to the principal room in the house.

It was a big room. It was gloomy. A little heat—it was chilly outside—came from the *ro*, the hole in the center for the charcoal fire. This was a pretentious room, so there was the raised dias at the end, the *tokonoma*, with its family image and heirlooms in place of honor.

Three people were there. Doc Savage, Moshi and the Flying Dutchman.

Doc Savage said, "Sorry about that wallop on the jaw, Monk. It happened to be necessary at the time."

Monk looked at Doc. He examined Moshi and the Dutchman. Monk began to grin. The grin felt good.

"Something is going on that I don't know about," he said. "Is that right?"

"That is right," Doc agreed. "Sit down and we will tell you about it."

MONK'S grin got bigger. The grin felt very good. It felt like sunshine on his face. He felt fine all over.

He looked at the Flying Dutchman. "You are in on it, too?"

"Yes."

"Is it something that will make you my friend?"

"It should make you happy," the Dutchman said. "However, friends are made by other values, which include qualities calling forth such sentiments as esteem, respect and affection, a mutual desire for companionship. I am a philosopher, you see."

Monk turned to Moshi. "Does this include you, too?"

"I hope so," Moshi said.

Monk examined Moshi's bandages uneasily. Moshi was a wreck. His lips were daubed with tape, and his middle looked as if it were in a cast. All the result of Monk's attack.

"What had I better do?" Monk asked Moshi. "Apologize for that going-over I gave you?"

Moshi indicated his face. "If my lips weren't so swollen, I would smile. Your apology would be nice. But not necessary, because your attack was a very nice touch. It added a good touch of reality which we badly needed."

Monk scratched his head. "I don't get it."

"You were supposed to consider Doc Savage a traitor to the United States," Moshi explained. "Your attack showed very plainly that you did."

Monk winced, his mouth flying open to deny he'd thought any such thing. He swallowed the denial. It would sound like a lie. It would be the truth, for Monk sincerely felt that deep inside himself, where it counted, he had stood by Doc. But he didn't want to voice a denial now, for the reason that it always sounded phony when you denied the obvious truth.

"You gave me a bad scare," he told Doc.

Moshi was pleased. "If you fooled your own friend," he told Doc, "you did a superb job of building yourself up as a traitor."

Doc said, "The point is—is the deceit planted in the places in the Japanese government where we want it?"

"It had better be," Moshi said.

The way he said it made Monk uneasy. Moshi sounded worried. And Monk's experience with Japs of Moshi's calibre had taught him they didn't sound alarmed over nothing.

Moshi wasn't the blood-simple thug Monk had thought him. That had been a masterful piece of acting by Moshi. Moshi was a cultured Jap.

The Flying Dutchman offered Monk a cigar.

Monk took it, looked at the smoke, said, "By golly, good Cuban cigars in Japan. How come?"

"Oh, I lifted a fistful of them off Colonel Rieger at the same time I got his lighter." The Dutchman laughed heartily. "They got the lighter away from me, but not the cigars."

Monk lit up. He was pleased. He was happy. There had not been much demonstration a few minutes ago when he had met Doc Savage again, but it was not their custom to let their affections have a circus. He was pleased. Both of them were pleased.

Doc Savage said, "We will hold up the story a few minutes, Monk, until Carlta Trotter is brought here."

"Where is she?"

"It took a little while to find a reasonable double for her," Doc explained. "The double for you was arranged for more than two weeks ago in England, and he was found only after the wildest kind of a search. Finding doubles for people is not the easiest kind of a job."

The Dutchman smirked and said, "We got a lucky break. We got us a Russian girl who looks like Miss Trotter. Miss Trotter is an easy girl for another girl to look like, on account of her blond hair. The Russian girl has dark hair, which is being bleached. The bleaching is the reason for the delay."

Monk was delighted. He guessed at what Trotter would probably think and say when she walked in here, and the prospect made him chuckle.

NO one else chuckled. In fact, no one else seemed the least bit happy. There was a certain amount of satisfaction on the faces of Savage, Moshi and the Dutchman. Monk, when he had watched them thoughtfully for a while, got the feeling that their pleasure was in the same class with that of a man who was walking a tightrope about a hundred feet off the ground—glad he still hadn't fallen off.

Monk turned the situation over in his mind. The bigness of it impressed him. A double had been found for him, Monk, in England, and that meant the English government was cooperating. There were other indications of magnitude, the Dutch Harbor thing, the "disgrace" of Doc Savage in Washington being some of them.

No one seemed to have anything to say, and Monk sat there in silence. He began to get nervy. He didn't scare easily. But the more he thought about it, the more he felt as if he were standing, tiny and helpless, under the overhang of a gigantic cliff down which boulders might come thundering, or which might collapse any minute in a landslide he couldn't possibly escape.

"Doc," Monk said.

"Yes?"

Monk described the feeling he was having, then asked, "Justified?"

"Fully," Doc told him. Doc sounded serious.

Carla Trotter lived up to expectations when she arrived. When she walked in, Monk hardly knew her. Her blond hair was black, her mouth had a different shape due to the careful use of lipstick, her brows were dark arches, and she had a little mole—beauty spot if you wanted to call it that—on her left cheek.

The marvelous change, though, was in her eyes. They had used something to tighten the skin of each temple, so that her eyes had a pronounced obliqueness. Her lashes had been curled so that they converged, instead of diverged, which was typical of Japanese. A kimono completed the change.

When she began talking, it was Carla Trotter. She addressed a few well-chosen words generally. Not profanity, but the words should have peeled varnish.

Moshi looked somewhat uncomfortable.

He said, "I am sorry. The whole thing was difficult. I had to convince you that I was very vicious, that Doc Savage was associating with the worst kind of Japanese. I thought at the time you would be left behind to write your story of what happened and send it out to the world. That was what we wanted."

"What you wanted?" Trotter was dumfounded.

Moshi said, "It's too bad you didn't keep the grenade I threw for a souvenir."

"If you think—"

"It had no explosive inside," Moshi said.

Trotter looked at them wildly. After she had done that she sat down on the floor without saying anything. She fell to gnawing her lower lip and twisting her fingers together.

Monk told her, "I'm about in the same frame of mind. But I think we're going to hear explanations."

SOMEWHERE a gong tinkled softly. The old man, the scrawny vulturous one, went away, his slippers feet making soft snake noises on the mats. Shortly there were voices.

The Flying Dutchman listened, then smiled. "Our friends arrive."

Doc told Monk and Trotter jointly, "There is to be a meeting here tonight. The story behind this thing is a bit startling. You will find it more believable if you learn it as it comes out in the course of the meeting."

The new arrivals were conducted into the room. Two of them. Monk stared at one of them, and surprise slowly opened his mouth.

Trotter, startled, leaned over and whispered to Monk, "Isn't that fellow—I've seen that face?"

Monk, wondering if he could possibly be right about the identity of the individual, looked at Doc Savage questioningly, shaping a name with his lips. Doc was lip-reader enough to get the query. He nodded.

"That's who it is," Monk whispered to Trotter.

"Holy smoke!" she said.

To the average American who read his newspapers and not much else, the name of the elderly Japanese who had entered the room would not mean much. His name was not too often in print, particularly since the war had been in progress. That didn't mean he was a minor figure.

To the Americans who followed the better economic journals, the name would mean something. To anyone who was familiar with the Japanese economic and educational setup, this man would mean a great deal.

But since the war, he had been almost unknown in public print. He was a thinker, an industrial man. War did not feature such men. And it was no credit to war that it didn't.

The old Japanese was presented to Doc Savage. The greeting was formal. Monk, who knew Doc Savage very well, could see that the bronze man was impressed. He should be, Monk thought. That old Jap is one of the most influential guys in the country. He's one old bird the war clique hasn't dared smear. Or at least the war clique has left him alone.

The second Japanese seemed to be the son of the first one. He had little to say.

There was another wait. The scrawny old serving-man brought in hot rice wine, *sake*, in a little pitcher that squeaked when poured. Monk noticed that Doc, Moshi, the Dutchman and the famous old Japanese did not take *sake*, but dark tea instead.

Now more Japanese began arriving. Monk knew some of them by reputation.

Trotter took to leaning over and whispering to him, asking him their names. Monk had no memory whatever for names, but he could remember a face as if it was a photograph in a file. He was able to give Trotter most of the information she wanted.

She whispered admiringly, "You're a regular encyclopedia on Japan. You once live here, or something?"

"Nah, they hired me to put an efficiency system in a chemical plant before the war," Monk said. He chuckled sourly at the memory. "I worked here four months, and got their chemical plant in a worse mess every day. I could see Pearl Harbor coming up. By that, I mean I knew they were gonna jump us. So I

didn't do 'em any good. And dang them, they wouldn't pay me."

"Then that's how you got acquainted?"

"Uh-huh. I figured at the time it might pay to learn all I could about who was who and what was what. So I did."

The room had filled up. Conversation was low. The faces of the Japanese were either emotionless, or had expressions of politeness on them which might or might not mean something.

Monk whispered, "Hey, Trotter. What do you think about this meeting?"

"I can't make it out."

Monk said, "They're a queer people. They're taught that it's vulgar to show their emotions. They're taught that right from the time they're kids. American kids are taught not to spit on the floor and not to eat potatoes with a spoon. But Jap kids are taught not to laugh when they're happy or cry when they're hurt."

"Why do you tell me that now?"

"Remember it. Keep it in mind, and you'll understand these monkey-faces better."

"Oh."

"For instance," Monk said, "every Jap in this room is plenty worried."

"Worried?"

"I don't know what's going on," Monk said. "But every one of them feels he is sitting on dynamite."

There was a new arrival. Instantly, everyone stood. Then there was a general kow-towing.

"My Lord!" Monk gasped.

"Who is he?" Trotter whispered.

Monk was gaping at the rather unimpressive-looking Japanese who had entered with Moshi.

He whispered, "The Emperor has a brother. There have been rumors that he was opposed to the Pacific war, and has been kept under some kind of restraint, and that only reverence for the imperial house is believed to keep him out of full custody. In other words, they'd lock him up if he wasn't the Emperor's brother."

"You mean?"

"I think that's the one. Prince Chicibu."

Chapter VII

WHEN the meaning of the whole thing came out, it came fast. It was, Monk thought, like being shown a complete picture.

Doc Savage took the floor and said, "I will give my conception of the situation. Then you can correct me

or add things I should know."

Doc then outlined the political set-up in Japan. The nation, of course, was ruled by the Emperor. But actually the nation was dominated by huge business trusts, the largest being the houses of Misui and Mitsubishi. A man named Ginjior Fujiwara was the genius of the Mitsui enterprises. Other industrial magnates were Gisuko Ayukawa and Kieda Goto, who had the support of the Kwangtung Army, the semi-independent army in what had been Manchuria.

The business trusts were tied up with the army to rule Japan and dominate the Emperor. It was this clique which had led Japan into the war.

Monk had known that. Everyone knew it.

But Monk was surprised as Doc continued. Doc wasn't softening any words.

Japan, Doc Savage pointed out, was licked. The war was lost. It wasn't over, but Japan had lost it. There would be weeks or months of frightful destruction, and it wouldn't be nice with America taking revenge for Pearl Harbor and Bataan and a few other things like that. It would be terrible. But there wasn't any way of avoiding it. Japan had to be smashed. America knew that. So Japan was going to be rolled out flat, following which there was going to be a series of trials and executions of individuals guilty of atrocities.

Monk thought: Talk like that is liable to get Doc thrown out of here.

None of the Japs in the room looked happy. But none of them tried to put up an argument.

Doc said, "The worst horror Japan now confronts is the post-war adjustment. When Japan collapses in defeat, any number of things can happen. The country is certain to lose all its bloodthirsty military leaders—those who aren't killed in the war or executed will have fled for their lives. The leaders are the government, so there will be no government.

"It doesn't mean much to make the general statement that the government will collapse. What it means is that there will be no law. Your money worthless. Any riff-raff can walk in and rob and murder you and there will be no law to punish him. Might is right. Brute strength and murderous attack taking the place of right and order.

"People will get hungry, because your government controls everything now and the system will go to pieces when Japan collapses. Hungry people aren't reasonable. A hungry man doesn't stand around and die. That means rioting, chaos, anarchy.

"Poor people always blame their poverty on the rich. They are nearly always wrong, but the last thing a stupid or a lazy man will admit is that he is stupid and lazy—the two go together. When they haven't, they blame those who have. The result isn't pleasant. Those who have none do not get any. It just ends up with everybody having nothing."

Doc was speaking English. Most of the Japanese present seemed to understand English.

"The Allies realize this," Doc said, "and we want a government of the right kind of Japanese, Japanese who conform to the world's standards of decency, to put in charge. Nearly a year ago, Allied agents contacted certain Japanese believed to be suitable."

It dawned on Monk that the Japanese in this room were the men the Allies intended to put in charge of Japan after the war.

Monk caught Trotter's eye. Trotter looked dazed. She was a newspaperwoman, and news was her business, and the magnitude of the present affair had stunned her.

"THE Allies do not want to deal with traitors," Doc Savage said. "That is why we got in touch with you men. We wanted a group of far-sighted Japanese in Japan who are out of sympathy with the militarists. We didn't want political climbers, men who happened to be out of office and would do anything to get in. We wanted the kind of Japanese that the rest of the world would like to see in charge of Japan after this war."

Doc said that he understood this was the group of Japanese who had organized to take charge of post-war Japan.

"Several weeks ago, you appealed for help," he said. "You had run into trouble. And the Allied High Command, in what seemed to me a burst of overconfidence, handed me the job of helping you."

Monk thought: now it begins to make sense.

"Your trouble," Doc said, "is with one of your own group. This man has demanded that he be your leader, and installed as Emperor of Japan after the war. If his demand is not agreed to, he threatens to betray all of you to the present militaristic government." Doc glanced over the room. "That is the general situation, is it not?"

Monk watched the Emperor's brother. The man was conferring with the younger man who had arrived with him. The latter stood up.

He said, "Mr. Savage, before discussion continues, will you clarify your reasons for entering Japan as you have. If I may be blunt, why did you enter Japan under the pretense of being an American who had become so pro-Japanese that he had to flee the United States?"

"To save my neck," Doc said.

"I do not understand."

"The idea of being shot as a spy if I was caught did not appeal to me," Doc explained. "This way, I am supposed to be an American who turned pro-Japanese. That makes me a very valuable fellow to the bloodthirsty clique who are running Japan now. They can point to me and say: 'Look, here is a prominent American who is all for us. Doesn't that prove we are okay?' They consider me very valuable because they plan to use me to persuade America that she is wrong and Japan is right."

"Will it work?"

"It is serving its purpose. I have already talked with the Japanese High Command, and a series of radio broadcasts to America arranged."

The Japanese said uncomfortably, "What I meant, will your activities create trouble in America?"

Doc smiled slightly. "Not a chance. America is a democracy and the people think for themselves. If anything, the broadcasts will backfire and make the Yankees even madder at Japan."

"I see."

"The way it is now," Doc said, "The Japanese government is breaking its neck to give me every

freedom." He smiled again. "They are delighted to have a traitor of my calibre."

"But the broadcasts will be very bad for you in America, will they not?"

"Not when the truth comes out. But the broadcasts will be drowned out by American radio interference for the first week or so. By that time, my job here may be done."

That seemed to be all the questioning.

"What about this fellow who is making trouble?" Doc asked.

THEY didn't know who he was.

They called him Jiu San, or the Thirteen Man. The words *jiu san* were Japanese for thirteen.

Monk decided that the Japanese were embarrassed about it, possibly because it was melodramatic.

He realized another thing. Suspicion. This Jiu San was one of them, but they didn't know which one, and it was causing a natural amount of uneasy doubt. Every man suspected his neighbor.

The Jiu San man had done all his communicating with them by written messages. They found the messages in some conspicuous spot.

Answers weren't necessary. Being one of them, the Jiu San man knew their answers.

The sum and substance of it was that they didn't have the least idea who the Jiu San man was.

NOW the meeting tapered off. There was just conversation. Doc Savage was asked about conditions in the United States, and he gave polite answers which told nothing. He asked about conditions in Japan, and got the same kind of answers.

In about an hour, the visitors had all gone.

Moshi and the Flying Dutchman remained. Moshi came over and explained to Monk and Trotter, "I don't think it was specifically explained who I am."

"No, it wasn't. Who are you?" Monk was curious.

"An intelligence agent." Moshi grinned. "I was in California ten years. I had an orange grove. Very nice, California. Then I joined the American army, about two years before Pearl Harbor. I got transferred to a Seabee battalion later. I am a Japanese spy." His grin got bigger. "My brother is mixed up in this new thing, which is how I got in it."

Monk nodded. Moshi might be all right. But he still couldn't get rid of a creepy feeling about the guy.

Monk went over to the Dutchman. "Nobody explained who you were, either."

"Me? I'm the man who was sent to bring Doc Savage into Japan." The Dutchman shrugged. "I run into a little hard luck over Dutch Harbor, and that guy from Texas shot me down. That water was cold. Boy, was it cold! And I had a devil of a time not getting caught until I had managed to contact Moshi, who got word to Doc Savage to come to Dutch Harbor."

Trotter was startled. "Was Colonel Rieger in on this frame-up?"

"Sure."

"I'll be darned!" Trotter said.

Doc Savage explained, "It was an elaborate scheme. The plans were weeks in the making."

"If you ask me," Monk said, "we've still got the mountain to climb. We've come to Japan to catch a guy, and nobody knows who he is."

Trotter had the same idea. "It looks impossible to me."

"Almost all jobs look tough when you first tackle them," Doc said.

"But you've nothing to go on!"

Monk muttered, "To say nothing of being surrounded by the whole Japanese empire. How are we going to move around? Any Jap can tell we're Americans. I can't even speak the lingo. I don't see—"

He had more gloomy possibilities to mention, but the Flying Dutchman let out a yell. The Dutchman's mustaches were standing out straight.

"Look there!" he howled. "On the floor." He was so excited he lapsed into Japanese, shouting, "*Kore de wa ikenai! Atsukatnashii!*" Then back into English with, "My God, where did it come from?"

Doc said, "What is it?"

It was a bit of paper, about six by three inches in size, folded in the shape kids fold paper into when they make gliders.

"Mr. Savage!" Trotter gasped. "I saw it come into the room. It was thrown from there!" She pointed at one of the sliding screens which formed a side of the room. The screen was ajar a crack. "From there."

Doc said, "Monk, take the other side of the house."

He headed for the screen.

Chapter VIII

THE screen was a *shoji*, an outside screen covered with white paper as a substitute for glass windows. Doc shoved at it, and it moved in its grooves. Beyond was darkness.

He stopped, listening. He was on the *genka* of the house, a sort of porch or vestibule. Straw mats were on the floor here.

Somewhere ahead, and above, there was a soft noise. It was a soft stirring. The bronze man moved quickly, silently, but when he stopped again the sound was no longer audible. He was in the outer darkness, with the stars bright overhead and a few stars sulking among them. The conference had taken longer than it seemed, and night had come.

He studied the silhouette of the house roof against the sky, and noted that part of the roof was covered with the glazed iron-sand tiles so popular for the roofs of old-time Japanese houses in the Noge-yama section of Yokohama. But part of the roof was thatched with *kaya* grass.

Monk was outside now. They listened. The only sound was the multitudinous sound that was Yokohama after darkness, a sound that was not like American cities.

Monk, voicing his opinion of what the city sounded like, said, "Reminds me of a great big corn-crib full of gnawing rats."

Doc got the idea there was a dark shape on the thatched part of the roof that might not belong there.

"Flashlight," he said. "Get a flashlight."

The Dutchman was standing behind them. He was angry. He had heard Monk's statement about a corn-crib and rats.

Very bitterly, in English, the Dutchman said, "I love Japan. The men who were here tonight love Japan. That is why we are doing what we are doing—for the sake of Japan's future."

Monk said, "I don't love Japan. Let's get that straight."

"The flashlight!" Doc said sharply.

Monk and the Dutchman went away. They came back with the flashlight in a minute or so.

Doc took the light, and passed its beam about. There was a formal garden, not extensive, but beautiful. Beautiful from a Japanese standpoint. There were dozens of places where a prowler could be hiding.

"Careful," Doc warned. He began to search the garden.

Carla Trotter was beside him. He said, "We may be shot at, you know." But she did not go back. She was looking at the garden.

She said, "The Japanese idea of the artistic horrifies me. These little trees which they stunt and twist into tortured shapes in the growing. The grotesque forms they give their art. I think there's something basically ghastly about the people."

Doc thought it was a great time to try to start an argument about Japanese psychology versus Japanese art forms. These women!

He said, "I am wearing a bulletproof vest. Otherwise I would not be walking around pointing a flashlight at places where a Jap with a gun may be hiding."

That scared her. She said, "Oh!" She ran for the house.

Doc found no one in the garden.

He turned back to the house, and in so doing let his flashlight beam dab briefly over the roof of the house as if it were an accident.

The skulker, as he had expected, had clambered up on the roof of the house and lay crouched there.

Doc went back to the house as if he had noticed nothing.

HE stood on the porch-like *genka*, knowing the skulker was above and could hear him. He asked, "What was on the paper?"

Moshi and the Dutchman looked at each other uncomfortably. Then the Dutchman said, "It was a suggestion from Jiu San, that he found your presence distasteful."

"Let me see it."

"It is written in Japanese."

"Let me see it." Doc examined the paper which the Dutchman surrendered. He read it twice, then said, "You gave a rather mild translation."

Monk, staring at the Japanese characters, demanded, "What do they actually say, Doc?"

"One day to get out of Japan. Or get shot. Or have the truth about us to the Japanese government. Signed with the Japanese character for thirteen," Doc said.

Monk wasn't impressed. "What, no knives, dynamite or rattlesnakes?"

Trotter shivered. "It isn't funny."

"No, but it talks language I understand," said Monk. "And it's finally something that happened that made sense right off. Until now in this thing, there's been too much waltzing to slow mysterious music to suit me. Get out of Japan or I'll shoot your head off. I like that. You know where you're at when a guy talks like that."

Moshi suddenly fell to coughing. He held his side and stumbled to a chair and sat on it. He looked genuinely weak, exhausted.

Monk, remembering the beating he had given Moshi on the dock, was surprised the man hadn't caved in before.

"Dang it, Moshi, if I had known the score I wouldn't have tied into you this morning," Monk said.

"Forget it. Part of the game." Moshi sounded sick. "I think I'd better go to bed, though."

The Dutchman said, "Sure, Moshi. You stay here. I'll get you a pretty nurse."

This must be the Dutchman's house, Monk decided.

Also, Monk thought, I don't like Moshi. I can't stomach the guy.

Doc Savage said, "Miss Trotter, Monk and myself will leave now. We will get some sleep, lay some plans, and contact you later."

The Dutchman grimaced. "But about this mysterious note—"

"Oh, he gave us some time."

"I know. But be careful. This Jiu San isn't going to wait any day before he starts working on you."

"We will keep that in mind."

As they were leaving, Moshi told Monk again, "Don't feel sorry because you beat me up. I am glad you did it, because a general was looking on and it certainly made him think I was not a friend of yours, if he had any doubts."

The cadaverous old serving-man let them out. The excitement over the note had alarmed him, and he was

shaking a little. Doc, brushing against him casually, discovered the old fellow seemed to have his belt full of guns.

He closed the somewhat shabby looking gate behind them. They were in the blacked-out street.

Almost instantly, two Japanese strolled up to them. Both wore some sort of insignia, although they were in civilian garb. Trotter gasped, clutched Doc's arm. She was scared.

"*O namaye wa nan' to osshaimasu?*" one demanded. He sounded ugly.

DOC SAVAGE said in Japanese, "*Watakushi wa Smith to moshimasu.*"

"Komban wa."

"Arigato."

The two Japs went away.

Trotter whispered, "They asked you your name and you said it was Smith, then they said good evening, and you thanked them. What was it? A password."

"Password is right," Doc told her. "They're lookouts for the group of Japanese we are working with. They're all over the neighborhood."

Monk muttered, "Boy, was I worried for a minute! How come, if the neighborhood is watched, that Jap got in to toss his paper glider at us?"

"That is a question," Doc said.

"Maybe that old buzzard of a servant tossed the paper?"

"The man who did that is hiding on the roof."

"What! Blazes!"

"Wait here," Doc said.

The bronze man turned back, going into the shadows. He moved along the wall, going carefully, feeling his way. He found a spot where he could reach up, grip the wall and chin himself. He did so silently, and his eyes searched the roof of the Dutchman's house.

The skulker was still there. He had moved a little, sitting more erect. Doc waited patiently. He saw the man's head move. The fellow was listening.

After a while, the skulker began to work his way down the roof slope. He went carefully, and finally stopped, apparently afraid he would be heard. He remained there until planes roared past in the distant night sky, Japanese army ships headed for somewhere. Then, under cover of the noise, he scuttled down the roof slope and landed in the courtyard. For a while the ornate garden held him. Then he appeared again. He climbed over the enclosing fence about twenty feet from where Doc was watching.

The skulker was a short, wide man, but with nothing to particularly distinguish him from the male Japanese race as a whole. Doc Savage knew quite a bit about Japanese, but even to him they all looked somewhat alike.

Like hogs, he thought. It takes a hog farmer to tell his hogs apart. He wasn't particularly pleased with himself for mentally comparing Japanese to swine. Not that he thought much of Japs. But such thinking showed that he had the same violent hate that all Americans had now.

Or was that good?

The skulker moved along the street. He went boldly. One of the watchers—they were ostensibly air raid wardens—stopped him.

The two exchanged a countersign. The skulker was one of the "wardens." That explained how he had gotten into the Dutchman's house through the cordon of guards.

The two talked. Doc got close enough to hear them, learned they were arguing about the scarcity of good *sake* wine, and decided the gabfest wouldn't break up for a minute. Doc went back to Monk and Trotter.

"THE three of us may be able to trail this fellow," he told Monk and Trotter.

Monk's impulse was for action. "Maybe we should grab him. Maybe he knows who this Jiu San man is."

"Probably not. Did you notice the way the glider-note was folded?"

"Folded?"

"It had been carried in a wallet after it was written. There was no ink in the creases, so it had not been folded when the writing was put on."

"Someone gave him the note to deliver?"

"That is the idea."

Monk grinned. "And so we trail him and hope he'll go report to the guy who gave the note to him."

They went quietly. Trotter had been given low-heeled sneakers to cut down her height so that she wouldn't seem too conspicuously tall for a Japanese woman. She'd complained about what the sneakers were doing to her arches. Now she was glad they enabled her to go silently.

The skulker was still gossiping with the man he had met. Doc did not get too close. Eventually, they heard a siren moan in the distance, and gave exclamations of relief.

"All clear air raid signal," Monk surmised.

The skulker and the other man separated, calling "*O yasumi nasais!*" to each other.

Trotter whispered, "Pretty slick, having air raid wardens to guard the meeting tonight. Nice way of getting the whole neighborhood full of lookouts without arousing suspicion."

"Come on," Doc whispered.

Their man was striding out as if he had a place to go.

Following him was not too difficult. They strung out. Doc went ahead. Monk and Trotter followed farther back. That gave them an advantage, because if the man should become suspicious of Doc, the bronze

man could appear to give up the trail, and Monk and the girl would take up.

They were in the Noge-yama section of Yokohama, the district favored by wealthy Japanese. It had none of the rich aspects of a fine American residential section, outwardly, although it was luxury compared to the Mina Miyoshira-Machi section.

They passed the shrine at the end of Ise Cho, then went down Noge-yama Hill, to the east of the temple. And finally past the Nenokami shrine. They could hear an electric train clattering as it crossed Noge Street. There was more foot traffic now.

The man they were following turned into a building off Isezaki Cho, the theater street. It was a crowded section. The building looked shoddy, like some of the places just off Broadway in New York City.

A sign said *Hotaga-ya* in Japanese characters. An inn. A dump.

Doc studied the place for a while. He decided to take a chance, go in.

ACROSS the street was an arcade, an imitation of Coney Island featuring ten-sen peep-shows.

"Wait over there," Doc told Monk and Trotter. "Walk in and begin patronizing the place."

He gave them some bronze two-sen and five-sen coins, some ten-, twenty-, and fifty-sen silver. A handful of it. He added some yen notes. Monk and Trotter crossed the street acting like Yokohama defense workers out for a spree.

Doc went into the hotel. It was dark. It smelled of fish. All of Japan seemed to smell of fish. The floor mats were worn, filthy.

A Jap whose looks fitted very well with the place came forward. He was barefooted, with very big and ugly callouses on the outer part of his instep. Most Japs had callouses on their outer insteps from much mat-sitting. But the ones on this one were particularly big and ugly.

"*Kamban wa*," the Jap said. He was a low fellow, and off his lips even the Japanese words for good evening sounded filthy.

A dump, Doc thought. And a Japanese dump was really a dump.

He flashed a twenty-yen paper note, about the pre-war equivalent of an American ten-dollar bill. But worth a lot less now, with their inflation. But still a lot of money to a Jap.

"The man who just came in—what room is he in?" Doc asked.

He spoke in Japanese, and used the dialect of the Nagasaki district, giving it a low-brow tint.

The clerk's eyes were on the twenty-yen note. The Japs had more liking for paper money than for silver.

"You keep your mouth shut about who told you," the Jap said.

"Sure."

"This way," the Jap said, and made a gesture with his right hand. The gesture was wrong. It wasn't the right kind.

Doc lunged, but the Jap already had a gun in his hand when Doc caught the hand. Expecting Judo, Doc went to work on the fellow without delay. He wasn't wrong. The man began doing Judo with his free hand and both feet. In quick succession, he tried several moves that should have maimed or killed.

They struggled violently, but not very noisily. .

Japs began coming out of rooms. They came silently, purposefully, most of them with guns, knives, garroting cords.

It was, Doc saw, a first-class trap. It was good. It was very good, and it was as queer as thunder in December. Because the fellow Doc was fighting, the fellow with the calloused-looking insteps, managed in his fighting to get close to Doc's ear, and to whisper, "Put up a scrap, Doc. But let them take you before you get hurt." He spoke this in good, if breathless, English.

With a flavor of Harvard accent.

Chapter IX

DOC continued to jostle around with the room clerk of the flophouse, if that was who he was. He made, also, the mistake of slightly easing up on the fellow. He was punched, gouged and twisted for his kindness.

The other Japs closed in. Those with the guns held back. Apparently the idea was to use a knife or a garrot, and shoot as a last resort.

The Jap room-clerk had another thing to say to Doc. "Don't jerk my wig off, dammit!"

He didn't have a wig. Doc was sure of that. What he probably had was some added hair stuck to his scalp with makeup gum.

Doc got loose from him. The bronze man lunged, dodged a Jap who rushed too cautiously and reached a chair. This hotel was a business place, so it was Europeanized to the extent that it had chairs. He began using the chair to keep away the knives.

Being experienced in violence, he knew that, next to a loaded six-shooter, the best defensive weapon against a man with a knife is a chair. There is something disconcerting about having the legs of a chair poked at you and knowing the thing may bop you over the head. A chair makes as good a makeshift defense as any against a charge of weight and violence, which is one of the reasons lion-tamers use them.

The skulker appeared, evidently having decided it was safe. He came out of the back room, one which probably had a window possible for escape into an alley.

He asserted his authority at once.

"Put those guns and knives away!" he shouted in Japanese. "Get hold of him with your hands, you cowards!"

He was big for a Japanese, and had a soft look which made him seem fat although he wasn't fat. His face was rubber-lipped and the eyes were unpleasant. He had the general manner of a man who habitually gave orders.

He had the good judgment not to get near the fight.

Doc made a few vicious swipes with the chair, keeping the Japs back.

It was the flop-house clerk who said, "Come on, somebody! Let's grab the table and rush him!"

They did that. Doc splintered the chair over the table, accomplishing nothing. The table hemmed him in a corner. Japs dived under the table and got his legs. Others came in from the sides. Doc, table and Japs were tangled in a mêlée, and wood broke.

They got the best of him.

THE skulker came over now. "I am Tobi-iro," he said.

Doc said nothing. The name Tobi-iro meant nothing to him. He suspected it wasn't a very important name anyway.

"I tricked you," Tobi-iro said. "Do you see that now?"

"You knew I was following you?" Doc demanded.

"More than that." Tobi-iro showed his teeth, pleased with himself. "Did you think I tossed the paper with the warning on it, then hid on the roof because I was afraid? No. No, I expected to lead whoever followed me to this place. I did, you see."

"Oh," Doc said.

The soft-looking Jap said, "I did not expect to deceive you so readily, Mr. Savage."

Doc said nothing. He wondered uneasily if he'd been too obvious, too careless. Trickery and scheming was part of a Jap's training, the world was beginning to learn. Being schooled in the devious, they would be inclined to expect others to be more tricky than they perhaps were. Must be more careful, Doc thought.

He said, "I expected to trail you to Jiu San."

"Naturally. And if I didn't lead you to Jiu San, you planned to seize me and beat what facts you could out of me?"

"Something like that."

"Where are your friends?"

"What friends?"

"The girl, the newspaperwoman. And your apish associate, Monk Mayfair."

"I couldn't say."

Tobi-iro showed his teeth again, making a very big smile-shape of his mouth, but with no humor. "They are across the street," he said. "Would you like to watch?"

"Watch what?"

"Watch a very expert job of assassination," Tobi-iro said grimly.

He gestured toward a window in the front of the room overlooking the street and the arcade across the street where Trotter and Monk were waiting.

ONE of the things which least interested Monk Mayfair was the design of Japanese money. But he was scared and worried, and so he was talking about the Jap money. This was to take his mind off thoughts that were worse.

"You take this twenty-sen piece," he was saying. "The size of a good American jitney, just about. Not that anybody would mistake it for a nickel." He chuckled and indicated the coin. "Look here at the bottom, it says 'fifty sen,' in English. Everything else on it is written in grasshopper tracks, but the amount is in English."

Trotter said thoughtfully, "Maybe that is significant, the indication of an inner feeling that the real value of humanity are not their own."

"You think so?"

"No. No, I'm just mumbling." Trotter grimaced. "I'm scared stiff, is my trouble."

"Me, too," Monk told her. "I've got a funny feeling about the way Doc walked into that joint across the street."

"What do you mean?"

"Doc walked in there. He just walked in. That isn't like Doc. He doesn't plunge into things like that."

"I thought it was dumb myself," Trotter agreed uneasily.

"I don't know how dumb it was, but I sure got a queer feeling about it."

They had been standing alone, but now a Japanese patron of the place wandered over to drop a bronze five-sen in a slot machine near them.

Monk whispered, "Let's try this other slot machine. We can watch the place across the street."

Trotter nodded. Business, Trotter noticed, had been picking up in the place the last few minutes. Men were drifting in from the street.

Encouraged, a barker stood up in the back and began to cajole, trying to get patronage for his shooting gallery. For targets, a string of Americans, Chinamen and Englishmen marched back and forth against the backdrop. Some of the new arrivals went back and stood around listening. One finally picked up a small-calibre rifle. Then two more followed his example.

The popping of the rifles set Monk's nerves on edge. In order to watch the other side of the street, he had to keep his back to the joint's shooting-gallery. The skin on his nape got to crawling.

He jiggled the slot-machine around vigorously. There was a mirror on the thing, and he slanted the machine until the mirror gave him a rear-view picture of the shooting gallery end of the place. He felt better.

"You're nervous," Trotter said.

"Damn right. Doc has been in that flophouse too long."

"What will we do?"

"Keep our eyes and ears open."

Trotter nodded. She was a cute figure in her kimono and sandals. Now and then a Jap would make a remark to her, then realize the apish size of Monk, and move on uneasily.

Trotter said, "We might as well make a profit out of this."

"Nobody ever made a profit out of a slot machine," Monk said. "They weren't made for that. Particularly this kind."

"Once when I was a police reporter, someone showed me a little trick," Trotter said. "You do it with a hairpin. I have one. Watch. Or rather, drop in a five-sen piece and pull the handle."

Monk put in a coin, yanked the one-armed bandit—then wished he hadn't. Too late. One bar, two bars, three bars. The slot-machine gave a mechanical grunt, and began vomiting bronze coins. He'd hit the jackpot!

It was then that Monk saw, back by the shooting-gallery counter, a Jap taking deliberate aim at them with a rifle. The fellow was going to shoot them in the back of the head.

Coins were filling his hands, overflowing, scattering over the floor.

He threw the coins, as hard as he could, at the man with the rifle. They wouldn't harm the man, but the arm-gesture helped Monk get around and down behind the slot-machine.

The little rifle went *pip!* and Monk heard the bullet spit past.

It was a repeating rifle. The man pumped in another shell.

Monk suddenly knew, from the way the other Jap patrons were moving, that they were all part of an ambushing party.

MONK reached around, got hold of the handle of the slot-machine, and broke it off. The handle was cast iron, not too hard to snap off.

He realized he was telling Trotter, "Get down! Get down! Watch these gooks!" Saying it over and over.

He was keeping his head behind the slot-machine. He heard another small-calibre bullet hit it, heard parts broken loose in the one-arm bandit and tinkling.

All of this had taken hardly seconds. Anyway, the coins Monk had thrown were still rolling around or making the rattling sounds that dropped coins make before they become motionless on a flat surface.

Monk popped his head out. He didn't wait long enough to see anything. He just showed himself, knowing it would draw a bullet, and got his head back before the bullet could be fired, but not before the gunner could stop his reflexes from firing. Out on the other side of the machine Monk popped, and to his feet. Sure enough, the gun made its *pip!* noise and put another bullet past the slot machine.

Monk threw the handle. Monk was quick and muscular nearly to the point of being a freak. He could perform, without too much trouble, the often-heard-of and little-seen feat of straightening a horseshoe out with his hands. So when he threw the iron handle as hard as he could, it went straight, and brained the

Jap with the rifle as neatly as it could have been done.

Monk let out a howl. It was almost impossible for him to fight without yelling.

He charged for the back of the room, the shooting gallery, the counter. He wanted at the rifles. They were little rifles, but with them you could kill bulls and probably, if you hit them in the eye, elephants.

He went over the counter feet first. The proprietor was crouched back there, and he looked up in horror as Monk came down on him. Then he was crushed down flat. Monk stamped on him a few times, as if he was a bug.

He was reaching for the rifles at the same time. One of the Japs had seized Trotter. Monk shot him. He didn't trust the rifle to put a bullet where he aimed it, and he didn't want to hit Trotter, so he shot the Jap in the biggest part, the buttocks. He had to shoot him there three times before the Jap let Trotter go and began jumping around.

"Come here!" Monk roared at Trotter.

She raced toward him. Monk was shooting other Japs. He was right about the gun. It didn't shoot very straight. He fired on one Nip with a perfect bead between the eyes and plugged the fellow's ear.

But the little bullets had the Japs leaping for cover. They were diverted long enough that Trotter was able to reach the counter. She was having trouble with the kimono and the sandals.

"Back door!" Monk said. "See if there's a back door."

The proprietor carried his cartridges in a sack around his waist, an affair like a carpenter's apron. Monk tore that off him. The guns were fastened to the counter with chains, the same as in a Broadway gallery.

Trotter, excited, said, "There's some kind of a hole back here. It may be a door."

"Get through it," Monk said. Then, horrified by a storm of bullets, he threw himself at the opening, keeping close to the floor. With Trotter, he went through the aperture.

Outside was a dark alley or back street in which the Japs had been too dumb to post a guard.

"Can you run?" Monk asked Trotter.

"You'll do well to keep up with me," she said, and meant it sincerely.

SHE did well, too. Monk, encumbered with his armload of .22-calibre rifles, had to stretch himself to keep pace with her. When Japanese military police appeared ahead, they doubled into an empty doorway, panting.

"Where'd you learn to run like that?" Monk whispered.

"Believe me or not, I learned it three minutes ago, when they started shooting at us."

Monk heard her teeth chatter, then stop as she tightened her jaw muscles. He suspected his own would rattle together too if he should unclench his jaw. He looked out, warily.

"The M. P. patrol didn't see us," he whispered. "They've heard the shooting, and are heading for the noise."

"There is a stairway back of us."

"Up it. They may put a flashlight beam in here."

The steps led up to a small landing, a little box of the blackest kind of darkness enclosed by three locked doors. They rested there, listening.

"What happened to Mr. Savage?" Trotter breathed.

"God knows." Monk didn't want to think about that.

The M. P. patrol went past in the street. Monk began loading the .22-calibre rifles, the cartridges rubbing together softly as he dipped into the canvas bag.

He remembered that the little rifles had missed fire a few times when the Japs were shooting at the targets in the gallery. It was important, but he hadn't remembered it before. He made a mental note not to depend too much on the cartridges if he had to begin using the guns.

"The patrol missed us!" Trotter whispered.

"We better get out of here," Monk said.

"I'm afraid."

"Standing still is the worst thing to do when you're afraid," Monk said, although he wasn't sure whether there was any truth in that.

They crept down the steps, shrinking to a stop with their teeth on edge each time a step creaked.

"Two of these rifles are enough," Monk muttered. "I don't know why I grabbed so many. Here, put this one under your kimono if you can."

He waited until Trotter whispered that she had stowed the rifle, then he left the other rifles, except the one he carried under his own kimono, and they went out on to the street.

The street wasn't crowded. It wasn't empty, either. They began to walk. The feeling that they might be shot down any minute made Monk's legs stiff, and they started aching.

They passed an automobile. Fifteen years ago the automobile had been a dignified limousine. It was still neat, and the paint had been polished off it in many places. Attached to the radiator was a complicated affair of iron drums and a smokestack. Monk, going past, distinguished a sign on the car that said *Basha*.

He stopped. "*Basha*. Isn't that Jap for taxi?"

"It means carriage. But I think that's a cab."

Monk gripped Trotter's arm. "When we get in, use your best Japanese to tell him to drive to Yoshida Street."

THEY opened the cab door, got in, and settled back hurriedly on the lumpy upholstery.

"*Yoshida Machi ye hayaku*," Trotter ordered.

The driver turned around slowly. He had one eye, and a scarred face, and wore various ribbons. A

discharged soldier, probably. He gobbled something in Japanese.

Trotter looked confused. She leaned over to whisper in Monk's ear, "He wants to see our priority card. I didn't know you had to have a priority to use a Japanese taxi."

Monk, who was in no humor for patience, muttered, "I've got just the right priority." He hit the cab driver's out-thrust jaw, coming up with the fist on the blind side. The man collapsed. Monk shoved him over and scrambled in behind the wheel.

Trotter, watching the street, said, "I don't think anyone noticed."

"Damn!" Monk was fiddling with gadgets. "Blast the luck!"

"What's the matter?"

"This danged thing is one of those wood-burners like the Europeans got to fixing up for their cars after the war started," Monk explained. "The blasted thing is home-made."

"Can't you get it started?"

"I don't know. It's as bad as running a railroad engine."

Suddenly the engine started, the car giving a violent jump, for it was in gear. They rattled around a corner and went northeast along Sugatami Street. "I don't know how to stop the thing," Monk muttered. "Anyway, we're going."

"Where are you heading for?" Trotter demanded.

"The Flying Dutchman's house, I guess."

"But we were followed from there," Trotter warned. "We had to be, or they wouldn't have trapped us so neatly and quickly."

"No," Monk said. "No, I don't think so."

"Then how did they know where to waylay us?"

"The thing was too elaborate to be set up in a few minutes," Monk told her. "It was all rigged. Those Japs were already all over the neighborhood when you and I walked into that arcade. I'm darned sure two of them were already in the place and playing the machines. The proprietor was already in on it. All that took time."

"You mean they planned for Mr. Savage to get on the trail of the man who threw the note and follow him there?"

"That's what I figure."

"You're going to see if the Dutchman and Moshi can help?"

"Yes."

Trotter was silent: She sat looking at the back of Monk's head with increasing displeasure. Finally she said, with some acid, "I know we're both scared, and I know it's dangerous, but—"

"But you think we oughta go back and try to help Doc," Monk finished for her. "Let me do the thinking

right now, will you."

"I don't like the idea of deserting him," Trotter snapped. "And don't tell me what to think!"

"Listen—"

"I'm not so scared that—"

"Listen to me!" Monk yelled. "Doc knew what he was doing when he walked in that flop-house. He knew something we didn't know."

"Oh, bosh!" Trotter said angrily. "If you're afraid to help Doc, why not admit it."

"Shut up!" Monk said.

THEY were not on speaking terms when they reached the Dutchman's house in the Nogyama section. They left the taxi, the driver still senseless, near the Daijingu shrine which loomed impressively in the night. Monk slugged the driver to prolong his coma, and they walked in silence.

Monk had a bad few minutes when two air raid wardens separated from the shadows and walked alongside them. The two stubby Japs didn't say anything, just stared at them and walked along with them for a while. Then, without having said a word, the two Nips stepped back. When Monk looked around, the shadows had swallowed them. It was an eerie performance.

Trotter, frightened by the Japs, had drawn closer to Monk. Now she put an angry six feet between them and kept it there.

She had plenty of nerve, Monk reflected. Pretty, too. And brains. Any girl who had made the name for herself that Carita Trotter had in the newspaper business had to have brains.

Monk didn't especially admire mentality in the opposite sex. But he wished they could have a little respite from the excitement. He would like to make a nice gentlemanly pass at Trotter and see what happened.

He was reaching for a string that rang chimes in the Dutchman's house when the gate opened unexpectedly. There stood the elderly serving-man who so much resembled a buzzard.

"Plis-s-s some ins-s-s-side," the old man said, sounding as if he was giving more effort to hissing than to speaking.

"We want to see the Dutchman," Monk said.

"Who, plis-s-s-s?"

Startled, Monk realized he didn't know the Dutchman's Japanese name.

"Your boss," Monk said. "The pickpocket."

That seemed to tickle the old man. He giggled like a schoolgirl, and let them in. He closed the gate, then led the way through various rooms. The old guy, Monk thought, overlooked that formality of taking our street sandals and giving us indoor sandals.

They were taken into a room where they hadn't been before. An ornate room, the beams all studded with elaborate nail-heads forming designs of dragons, seashells, and lobsters. A hot charcoal fire burned

in the square *ro* in the center of the room.

The Dutchman and Moshi were sitting on the floor mats. The Dutchman's elbow was resting on one of the small round cushions which were a part of Japanese house furniture. Both their faces had queer expressions.

Monk said, "They've got Doc Savage, I think."

The Dutchman grimaced.

"They've got all of us, to be exact," he said.

"What—" Monk began. Then he saw what the Dutchman meant.

The old buzzard of a serving-man had an automatic pistol in his hand. He said, "Drop your rifle!" with much less hissing than before.

Screens on two sides of the room slid back. One of them squeaked softly as it slid, and Monk noticed the sound; the squeaking seemed to cut a way through all his thought, probably because his thinking was paralyzed by the number of guns pointed at him and the grim Japanese faces glowering at him.

"Drop the rifles-s-s-s," the old man said, back at his hissing again.

Chapter X

DOC SAVAGE was finally untied. Or rather, handcuffs were put on his wrists and ankles, and the ropes which had been wrapped around him like bandages on a mummy were removed.

He knew where he was. Not the exact house, but it was in the Bluff area, which was the part of Yokohama favored by foreigners for their homes before the war. It was beyond the Fairmont Hotel, well past the nursery, in the hills. Not as far out as the Negishi race track and golf course.

The house was unusual. It was a sample of what a good architect could do with the Japanese native motif when he went modernistic. The place was ultra-modernistic enough to be a peacetime exhibit in Radio City. The decorators, instead of using chrome and red leather, had taken bamboo and *kaya* grass and reeds and raw wood and paper screens for their materials. The effect was spectacular. It out-swanked a Manhattan penthouse.

The soft-looking Jap, Tobi-iro, had collapsed when Monk and Trotter had escaped. The effect on Tobi-iro was interesting to watch. Before the escape, he had been arrogant, confidence on his rubber-lipped face. That had been a front. Japs were actors. The front had covered nervous tension, and after the escape the tension had spurted through his body like a flood.

Tobi-iro had had a first class quick-action nervous breakdown. He had made a few wild remarks, gibbered like an idiot about a Minister of Aviation, then fell over backward flat on his back.

They had brought him along, and now they carried him off to another room, talking about doctors.

The flophouse clerk sat down on the floor. He sat somewhat awkwardly, as if he wasn't too accustomed to it, although the callouses on his insteps indicated much such sitting. He took a gun out of his kimono. He was to watch Doc, he said. This was agreeable, for the others were anxious to see how seriously Tobi-iro was ailing.

Doc and the flophouse clerk were alone.

The flophouse clerk grinned at Doc, and said, speaking English in a low voice, "They were going to make Tobi-iro Minister of Aviation in the new setup. When Monk and whoever the girl is got away, Tobi-iro saw that plum float out of the window, so he blew his top."

Doc asked, "Did Monk and Trotter get away?"

"Trotter the girl?"

"Yes."

"They got away for the time being. Monk pulled one of his wingdings and made fools out of the Japs. All the Japs concerned as very unhappy. I wouldn't be surprised to see some hari-kari. Who is this Trotter?"

"Newspaperwoman."

"How'd she get in it?"

"The plan called for me making the initial personal contact with the Japanese group at Dutch Harbor, Alaska," Doc explained. "They already had a secret agent, Moshi, on the job in Dutch Harbor. But the Japanese group didn't think Moshi had enough face to deal with me. They wanted one of their big men to meet me, so Shand Hata—the fellow Americans took to calling the Flying Dutchman—came by plane. He intended to parachute to the island without being discovered, but underestimated the American defenses and he was shot down. He managed to survive, though, and got ashore."

The flophouse clerk said, "I hear the Dutchman clowned around a little before he was taken prisoner."

"Yes. Isn't that like a Jap. He lost face by being shot down, so he got it back, at least to his satisfaction, by pulling boyish pranks around Dutch Harbor—picking pockets of fountain-pens, cigar-lighters and snitching flying suits from unsuspecting aviators. He caused quite a rumpus. It was sort of funny."

"That's the Dutchman's hobby."

"What is?"

"Picking pockets. Honest it is. Some people take up photography or art or stamp-collecting for a hobby, but with the Dutchman it is picking pockets. He entertains his guests with it. He's clever, I hear. But where did the girl come in?"

"Trotter," Doc said, "is just a newspaperwoman who got involved and dragged along."

"Did Monk have anything to do with the dragging?"

"As a matter of fact, he did."

"He would!"

"Monk has a very innocent story to explain it."

"He would that, too," said the flophouse clerk bitterly. "No need to ask if she's pretty. She is."

DOC SAVAGE looked over the room uneasily. He was disturbed about possible hidden microphones.

He mentioned it to the disreputable-looking flophouse clerk, and was assured there wasn't a chance.

Doc fell to examining the flophouse clerk admiringly. The fellow not only looked like a Japanese, but he looked like one of the low-grade ones. Only when one paid particular attention to his eyes, his cheeks, nostrils, was it possible to tell that he was not a Jap at all. And then one had to know it beforehand.

"That's an excellent disguise, Ham," Doc said.

"It should be," Ham Brooks muttered. "I had some of the best men in the world work on me for nearly a month before I came into Japan. But you know that. However, you had never seen me with the disguise."

"I hardly knew you."

"I've gotten by all right."

"Any trouble with the language?"

Ham Brooks shook his head. "Not too much. I had been studying it ever since before Pearl Harbor, in my spare time. I hadn't told anybody that, except you, figuring that if I ever needed to use it, on a job like this, the fewer people knew I could pass for a Jap the better."

Doc Savage nodded. He was proud of Ham. Ham was one of his associates, who had done marvelous work on this job. Ham was actually Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks, detached service with the U. S. Army, and in private life one of the eminent products of the Harvard Law School.

The matter of picking a suitable group of Japanese to take over the government of Japan—to be the government of Japan—when the war was over had come up several months ago.

The big problem was: Get a group of Japanese of the type which the Allies wanted in charge of what was left of Japan after the war.

Ham Brooks had gone into Japan to do the preliminary work of finding out what was what. He was completely undercover. No one in Japan was supposed to know who he was or what he was doing. A plane had put him overboard in a parachute above Fukushima Province. That was the last Doc had heard of him until tonight.

Ham had carried in his head a complete picture of the Japanese situation. Names, places, organization, everything. With that to go on, his job had been to get into the thing and find out what he could.

Monk Mayfair had not known that. As far as Monk knew, Ham had disappeared mysteriously, and it had worried Monk a great deal.

Doc asked, "Ham, what luck have you had?"

Ham grimaced. "Wonderful luck, to a point. I'm like the guy lost in a blizzard who found kindling, firewood, and a nice sheltered place to build his fire—then couldn't find a match."

"Meaning?"

"Let me give you the story," Ham said,

HE got up and moved over to the sliding screen that served as a door, moved it back and looked out. Then he made a round of the other screens, to make sure they were alone. He came back and sat down.

"The Allies did a fine job of picking the Japanese to put in charge after the war," he said in a low voice. "Damned fine. The men are substantial, honest, as near human beings as you can expect a Jap to be these times. They are anti-war, and they aren't bigoted enough to think Japanese are the master-race and were intended for the rulers of the rest of the world. And believe me, that's what the present government thinks. It really is. As I say, I haven't been able to find anything particularly against the Japanese in the selected group.

"There is one exception—this Jiu San. One of those fine, upstanding Japs is Jiu San, but God knows which one. I've combed their characters and records like Sherlock Holmes on a hot case, but I can't turn up anything against any of them. So I took another way of finding out. I joined this Jiu San's gang."

Doc said, "I gathered you were in the Jiu San organization."

"That's right. I've been in more than a month. I'm not very important in it yet, but I'm one of the up-and-coming boys."

"And you've learned?"

"Exactly who every man in the gang is but one."

"Meaning you do not know who Thirteen is?"

"Jiu San. That's right." Ham grinned without humor. "That's a corny joke, isn't it? Thirteen, I mean. I figured that a guy who would take Thirteen for his name would be a childish so-and-so, easy to dig out of the manure-pile. But I've dug and I've dug, and all I've got to show is dirty hands. Believe me, some of these rats working for Jiu San are nasty characters. I keep wondering if I'll get some of it on me, associating with them."

"How were they assembled?"

"Simplest way on earth. Japan is full of crooks and grafters, and frequently when a whole gang of them are dipping into the same trough, they sort of get together for mutual protection. I don't know whether that's clear—"

Doc said, "They do it outside Japan. Not long ago dozens of shipyard workers in the States were arrested for belonging to an organization where they paid so much money each day to have their work-cards falsified so that they would show more hours worked. It was a ring."

"That was a dirty thing," Ham agreed. "The Jap radio gave it a play over here as an example of American corruption, which it was. Only the Japs made it sound worse, as if the whole American shipbuilding industry had gone to hell. But that's the kind of a swindling gang I mean."

"Jiu San is using such a group?"

"That's right. He got the dirt on them. He then merely informed them they had to work for him—or else."

"Or else what?"

"They'd get turned in to the government for what they had been doing, which would mean heads chopped off for all of them. You see, the government is getting pretty desperate about such things. There's been a lot of it. So when they catch somebody, off comes heads."

"Then they don't dare turn Jiu San in to the government?"

"Not if they want to keep their necks intact," Ham said. "But they couldn't turn him in anyway, because they don't know who he is."

"How does he handle them?"

"Mostly through that soft-looking Jap you met, Tobi-iro."

"Does Tobi-iro know who he's working for?"

"No."

"You seem sure."

Ham grinned slightly. "I've heard you say before that only fools are sure. But I'll lay a bet this time. You see, I got Tobi-iro drunk, got him on the pipe, then fed him truth serum. I pumped and pumped. I found out things about the skunk that turned my stomach. But he doesn't know who Jiu San is."

Doc said, "Then you think the Allies selected the right Japanese group?"

"They've picked out as good Japs as you could find. Even the best Japanese need to think a little differently if they're going to get along with the rest of the world."

"Then all we have to do is collar this Jiu San and dispose of him."

"That's all," Ham said wryly.

DOC was silent. It popped into his mind how incongruous this was. Ham, who looked like a guttersnipe from Tokyo low-town. Doc, looking not much better because of the way he had been manhandled. The two of them, sitting there settling the destiny of the Japanese nation, or at least holding it in their hands. It amounted to that, Doc thought gravely, even if it did seem far-fetched.

He didn't like the feeling of insignificance the thoughts gave him. Feeling insignificant wasn't good for a man's confidence, and it took no imagination to know that they were going to need all the confidence they could get, artificial or otherwise. One word described the situation. Mess.

He asked, "Leading me into a trap with the note was your idea?"

"Yes," Ham said uncomfortably. "You knew that, didn't you? The handwriting on the note—if you could call these Jap characters handwriting—was mine. I figured you'd know that. You coached me a lot on writing Japanese."

"I recognized the writing."

Ham said, "I couldn't think of any other way of getting in touch with you." He gestured, partly in defeat. "The best approach to spotting this Jiu San might be to work through his gang, the way I figured it. That's what I wanted to let you know—and to tell you I was all set here. All set, and learning nothing."

"It turned out all right."

Ham was depressed about the outcome, it became evident, because he said, "I didn't know about that trap for Monk and the girl."

Doc said, "It'll take you a long time to get that explained to Monk."

"Yeah, I'll hear about it for years," Ham ventured. "I sure hope they don't hurt him—"

Ham's face changed a little, and without much alteration in tone, he continued, "—because nobody likes to see his friends hurt, and you wouldn't like it a bit."

Doc got the idea.

"You threatening me?" he asked.

"No. Not unless the truth is a threat," Ham said.

One of the screens moved back, and a Jap came in. He was a fat, well-fed Jap, prosperous-looking.

Ham stood up and said, "This is Mr. Koto. This fine home is his."

Mr. Koto bowed politely and told Ham, in Japanese, that Tobi-iro wished to speak with him.

Other Japanese guards were placed in the room with Doc Savage. Ham and the well-fed Mr. Koto went away together.

When they were out of the room, Koto said, "You were speaking English with him?"

"That's right," Ham said. "Do you speak English?"

"A little," Koto admitted in English, after glancing cautiously about. "It is not too popular to speak English in Japan since the war. What did you talk about?"

"Oh, about his friend Monk Mayfair and what would happen to Monk if we caught him."

"We have caught him."

Ham went sick. He thought, for a moment, his knees wouldn't support him. He gave every iota of his concentration to just walking.

"That's fine," he managed to say, because he knew he should say something.

He wanted to ask if Monk had been taken alive, but he was having the most awful time doing it. His mouth was as dry as furnace clinkers. The words were like cactus burrs in his throat.

"Is Monk still alive," he asked—and his voice actually sounded so normal it horrified him.

"I don't know," Mr. Koto said.

A FAT man trotting proudly through his fine modernistic house, Mr. Koto let Monk into the room where Tobi-iro lay. Pretending a concern he certainly didn't feel, Ham walked to the elaborate sleeping mat on which Tobi-iro lay.

"Feel better?" he asked.

"They gave me barbital," Tobi-iro said. "The doctors say I must have a rest." And he cursed the doctors with a low bitter vehemence.

Ham looked sympathetic. At the same time, he was wondering: Is this soft-looking fellow Jiu San, by any chance? The idea had occurred to him before.

Tobi-iro wasn't a member of the group of men who were to take over Japan after defeat. But then, Jiu San might not be a member. That was a possibility which no one seemed to consider. If Jiu San wasn't one of the group, no wonder it was so hard to find Jiu San.

"Our men have taken Monk Mayfair and the newspaperwoman, Carltta Trotter," Tobi-iro said.

"Alive?"

"Yes."

Ham closed his eyes, afraid the relief would literally shine out of his eyes. He didn't trust his ability to keep the bounding joy out of his voice, so he said nothing.

Tobi-iro said, "Taken prisoner with them were Moshi and Shand Hata, or the Flying Dutchman as the Americans are calling him."

Ham was startled. Moshi and the Dutchman were important men in the post-war group. They weren't the leaders, but they were executives, or the Dutchman was. Moshi was a lesser light. But the Dutchman was important.

"Isn't that drastic?" Ham demanded.

Tobi-iro swore grimly. "We have stopped fooling with them."

"What do you mean?"

"The only thing that stood in the way of Jiu San was Doc Savage," Tobi-iro explained. "We have Savage. Therefore, the gloves are off. No more fancy stuff. We are going to knock sense in their heads."

"That means Savage will be executed?" Ham asked past a sand-like dryness in his throat.

"Exactly."

"Wait a minute!" Ham said sharply. "Doc Savage was sent here by the United States, in the name of the Allies, to pass judgment on whether the Japanese group is the sort they want in charge of Japan after the war. Kill him, and the Allies are not going to have his assurance. Without his okay, they won't go through with the plan. So disposing of Savage will wreck everything."

Tobi-iro stared at Ham. Ham suddenly had a hideous surging suspicion that he had been discovered, that his identity was known.

Chapter XI

THE place will be under guard, Ham thought wildly. If they've found me out, they're ready for me to make a break. I won't last ten seconds.

He began having one of those horrible times, such as he had had on a few occasions in the past, when he thought he was cornered, that he was going to die. It was bad. He believed that fear affected him much worse than it affected other men. It got hold of every nerve with a clawing, sick frenzy, a panic that made him weakly ill. Always, it was thus.

Tobi-iro said, "You are rather more clever than any of us thought, Shigi."

Shigi was the Japanese name Ham was using. For once in his life, it was the sweetest name he'd ever heard. He had expected Koto to call him Ham Brooks.

"Thank you," he said, and relief shook his voice a little in spite of his effort to be calm.

"How did you know Savage was sent here to investigate and okay the Japanese group?" Tobi-iro asked.

"A few minutes ago, Savage told me himself. I think he was anxious to put out the information, thinking it might save his neck." Ham shrugged. "I had suspected it before."

"Suspected? Why?"

"Savage is a man of extraordinary stature. Many people think he is a crook-catcher, an adventurer. I know he is a great deal more than that. He has taken a hand in shaping the course of world events more than once. He is a man who paints on a big canvas. The Allies would not send such a man to Japan for the sole purpose of catching Jiu San, because if they only wanted Jiu San out of the way, they would say to the Japanese group something like this: If you have the ability to handle post-war Japan, you had better demonstrate it by finding and disposing of Jiu San yourselves. That is the way Americans and other Allies would think. Therefore, Savage came to Japan to investigate and okay the Japanese group."

Tobi-iro nodded, "As I said, you are smarter than anyone thought."

"You can't kill Savage."

Tobi-iro showed his teeth unpleasantly.

"Not," he admitted, "until we force Savage to inform the Americans and the Allies that he approves of the Japanese group—including Jiu San."

"How are you going to do that?"

"Savage thinks a great deal of his friend, Monk Mayfair."

Ham, with the fear beginning to crawl in him again, thought of the attachment between Doc and his aides. It was close. It was so close that it was hard to describe.

"Probably," he said, which was one of the great understatements of his life.

"To save Monk Mayfair's life, Savage will inform the Americans that he approves of the Japanese group—with Jiu San as its leader. It will be put to him that way."

"What if he refuses?"

"Will he?"

Ham looked to Tobi-iro, wondering again if the man really knew his identity. What would Doc do in such an alternative? It was hard to say. Oh, it was easy to see that he should sacrifice his own life and Monk's and refuse. That would be the grand, the heroic way of doing it. But the grand and the heroic was really something in theology and in books. What men actually practiced, even the most courageous men, was often quite different. For moments Ham fought the frightening impulse to shudder, standing there trying to think of words.

"I don't know what he will do," he said finally. "We can try it."

"Savage will okay Jiu San," Tobi-iro said confidently. "The Americans do not have the blind, sacrificing

courage of the Japanese."

They're not the blind misguided fools that the Japanese are, Ham thought. That's nearer the truth.

"We can see," he muttered.

"We will."

"The idea is for Savage to get a message to the Americans okaying Jiu San?"

"Yes."

"Then what happens? When we turn Savage loose, he is not going back to America and tell the same story." Ham grimaced thoughtfully. "Wait a minute—if we turn Savage loose and keep Monk Mayfair as a hostage—"

"No good," Tobi-iro said quickly. "At the end of the war, which will be sooner than even the Americans suspect, I am afraid, the American soldiers will occupy Japan, and the first thing Savage would have them do is rescue Monk Mayfair. Then they would dispose of Jiu San's hopes to be Emperor in short order."

"Yes, that's the disagreeable probability."

"We will overcome it."

"How?"

"Savage will be accidentally killed as he is returning to the United States. It will be arranged. There will be no suspicion that Japs killed him. An accident. The Americans will not be suspicious."

Oh, won't they, Ham thought. You don't know Americans, brother. They've been dealing with Japs long enough that they'll expect a buzzard to hatch out a hen egg.

Tobi-iro was swearing again. "I am a sick man. The doctors insist I get complete rest for a while. So you are taking my place."

"Me!" Ham gasped.

"You will take my place. You will receive the orders from Jiu San and see they are executed."

Glory halleluiah, Ham thought!

TOBI-IRO gave instructions. Ham was to proceed at once to an inn west of Ooka-machi, in the country. Monk Mayfair and Carlt Trotter were already being taken there. So were the Dutchman and Moshi. Ham was to take personal charge of the transportation of Doc Savage to the inn.

Once everyone was at the inn, Ham was to personally handle the important matter of forcing Doc Savage to capitulate. He was to use his own methods, the inference being that how he got along would govern his future with Jiu San's organization. Jiu San needed good men, men who could think for themselves, but who could also take orders and knew which side of their bread was buttered, Tobi-iro intimated. Which Ham would bet was true. If Jiu San was handicapped by anything, it was a shortage of henchmen with brains.

"I have never been to this inn," Ham said.

He was told who would guide him. The man was a nephew of the Japanese who operated the inn, an old-fashioned country hostelry favored by the wealthy Japanese back in the days when a Jap could afford to take a vacation.

"Be careful of the Military Police," Tobi-iro warned. "See that you have passes in order."

Ham nodded. He knew how to get the passes. He at once despatched a man to the Yokohama Military Control office at the Kagacho Police Station, Yamashita-cho, for the passes. There was a payoff involved in the pass-getting, but it was a regular matter.

He was careful about his conduct. Reasoning that a Jap in his position would be feeling his oats, as it were, over his increased authority, and also that it was dangerous to be too close to Doc Savage, Ham did not ride in the same car with Doc.

They went southeast past the Negishi-machi race track, turned right and crossed the Yawata Bridge, then turned sharply right again, so as to avoid the strategic zone where they were sure to have all kinds of trouble with the army. As it was, they were stopped seven times. Automobiles and gasoline had never been plentiful in Japan, and now-a-days one never took a drive without having the military police stop him.

It became very dark. The air was sultry, heavy. Thunder thumped and gobbled in the distance, throwing out sullen cascading uproar, and lightning came in seldom but violent blazes.

The road twisted and turned as can only a road laid out in the beginning for two-wheeled man-pulled carts and jinrickishas. There were no farmhouses as one finds farmhouses in America—there was just a town, and then nothing at all until there was another town.

The inn was back from the road. It was too dark to tell anything about the surroundings, because, with a great wet rumbling and rushing, the rain was coming down. Ham scurried inside.

A tea-colored flunky leaped, clucking angrily, to remove his boots and give him the indoor sandals. He was led to his room, which was pleasant enough and warm, heated by a *kotatsu*, one of the under-the-floor charcoal heaters which the Japanese loved so much.

He heard an argument outside, a woman's voice. It was Carita Trotter, he knew, and she was demanding that she be permitted to take a bath.

Ham was very curious to see what Trotter looked like. He went outside, into the hall. She was beautiful. He was impressed. She could barely speak Japanese, but she was using the few words she knew to give her captors a flailing.

"Let her take a bath," Ham ordered in Japanese.

She looked at Ham thoughtfully. She didn't think much of him.

"I'd hate to meet you in a dark alley," she said.

He was disappointed that she did not like him. It hurt him so much that he grinned at himself. Been a long time since he'd seen an attractive white woman.

He wondered what she would think of the old-style native Japanese bath. The thing was like a big jug, and you did the real washing out of the tub with the small cloths called *tenuyui*, then jumped into the jug, and out and toweled with a big *taoru*, loose and absorbent.

He found one of his lieutenants and said, "I will have dinner with the prisoners."

They ate in the old Japanese style, all wearing the *yukata* kimonos provided by the hotel for its guests. They had *miso-shiru*, a thick bean soup with soy curds, then *ebi no tempura*, shrimp fried in a batter, and the inevitable fish hash called *yose nabe*.

A strange thing happened in the middle of the meal.

Monk fainted.

There was some warning. Mostly an odd expression around Monk's mouth, dumfounded incredulity, disbelief. They were intense emotions, but Monk held them back well. He hardly changed expression. But it was too much for him to keep inside him, and he passed out. He upset, spilling the *kasutera* he was eating at the time, as he rolled over.

Ham knew that Monk had recognized him.

The incident got Ham into a silly state. He wanted to burst out laughing, to howl with mirth. He was afraid he couldn't help it.

So he got up suddenly and told the guards, "Watch them closely. Let them get some sleep." He waved an arm sharply. "But lock them up now."

He watched the prisoners led away. Doc and Trotter carried Monk. The Dutchman and Moshi followed. No one had shown any tendency to talk during the meal.

HE intended to sleep. He hadn't realized how late it was until he was in his room, and rolled up the wooden shutter and saw that the eastern sky had a faint reddish flush. It was almost dawn.

He stood looking out of the window, scowling, wondering what the outcome of things would be, when he discovered there was a lake of considerable size below the inn—and a plane was going to land on the lake.

He watched the plane. The rainstorm had departed and left the sky washed clear. He could tell that the ship was a seaplane, a big one.

The plane made a landing approach turn over the inn. He identified it as an Aichi 98, a three-engine twin-float torpedo-bomber, a copy of the Italian Cant Z 506B. The ship had a five-man crew, three 770-horsepower Aichi engines, was probably good for twelve hundred miles non-stop.

With that plane, they could get out of Japan. The thought fascinated him.

Suddenly he shed all ideas of sleeping. He slid out of the window and dropped the short distance to the ground. He went down a path, and since he had placed the guards about the place, he avoided them easily.

The big plane had grounded its floats on the beach when he reached the lake shore. He could hear the Japanese crew talking.

They had landed, he learned from their talk, to avoid the storm which was ahead. The storm front was very wide, and they didn't want to fly around it; and the place where they were headed, Akita, was closed in. They expected to be there a couple of hours. They were laughing about the pilot's bum

landing. It seemed they had a heavy load of fuel aboard.

Ham wheeled. He made his way back to the inn.

He told the two guards at the door of the room where the prisoners were, "I am going to talk to them. I will call if I need help."

The prisoners stared at him. The only light came from candles in a *te-shoku* candlestick that was tall and ornately made of iron. All were there—Doc, Monk, Trotter, the Dutchman and Moshi.

"Doc," Ham whispered. "Doc, there's a big seaplane in the lake not a half mile away. Fueled. You and the others can get it, I think. It'll take you to China, or even one of the Aleutians we hold. Want to try it?"

"What is the alternative?"

Ham told him the alternative. How Doc was going to be forced to okay Jiu San to save Monk and Trotter, and how Doc would then lose his life in an "accident."

"Then we are not in danger of immediate death?" Doc asked.

"No."

"Do you think it's sensible to cut and run now?" Doc demanded.

Ham had thought about that. "I don't know. I've worked for months trying to find out who Jiu San is. How do we know we'll learn his identity if we stay?"

"It would be different if I already knew who he is?"

"Good Lord!" Ham gasped. "Do you?"

Movement exploded near Ham. The Dutchman came to his feet. He wasn't tied. All the prisoners were supposed to be tied, but the Dutchmen threw off his ropes without trouble.

The Dutchman hit Ham. The blow was quick, with the force of the Jap's headlong leap behind it, and Ham went down, crashing on the floor. He didn't pass out, but things were hazy. He knew the Dutchman had plunged to the door and torn it open and was bellowing in Japanese.

"Ham, cut us loose!" Doc said sharply. "The Dutchman is Jiu San."

Chapter XII

DOC SAVAGE had his wrists up, the ropes bared. He demanded, "What's the matter?"

"I haven't got a knife!" Ham said in a horrified voice.

In the hall, the Dutchman was screaming for more guards. "*Watakushi no iu tori ni itase!*" he shrieked.

Doc headed for the door. His wrists and ankles were tied, but they weren't bound together. It is surprising how much action a man can manage under such conditions when he has to.

Enroute to the door, he detoured to get the big candlestick, the *te-shoku*. The candles spilled out on the floor and began setting the floor-mat on fire.

A guard charged into the room. He had a fixed bayonet on his rifle. Doc could not get his hands above his head because of the way they were tied, but he threw the candlestick underhandedly. The thing hit the guard and made a mess of his face, and the guard went down, falling on top of his rifle and bayonet, which was a bad break because Doc wanted the bayonet.

Ham, still dazed, came staggering over and began trying to untie Doc with his fingers.

"No time!" Doc said. "Use the bayonet!"

Ham tried the bayonet, but the bayonet was too dull to cut anything.

Outside in the hall, the Dutchman stopped shouting.

Throughout the inn, men were running toward the hall and the room.

The Dutchman, triumphant now, shouted, "Savage! Savage, you hear me!"

Doc said he did.

"I tricked you!" the Dutchman said. "I had that plane land in the lake as a decoy. I know all about you and I know you never work alone, so I figured you had some of your men planted in my organization. I figured if you had, the man would try to help you escape in the plane."

Ham groaned. "I balled things up!"

"You haven't got a chance of getting out of here!" the Dutchman warned.

Doc said, "Ham, see if that guard hasn't got a sword."

The guard, the one Doc had hit with the candlestick, did have a sword. Many Jap soldiers carried them—the Samurai swords that had been in their families for generations. This one wasn't particularly good, but it was sharp. Ham cut Doc's bindings.

There had been two guards in the hall. The mystery of what had happened to the second one was now cleared up. He had been afraid to enter. They could hear the Dutchman cursing them.

Ham was still dizzy from the Dutchman's fist-blow, so Doc took the knife. He got Monk free, then Trotter and Moshi.

Moshi, in a low grinding voice, was calling the Dutchman the things that a Japanese hates most to be called. But Doc was not too confident of Moshi's loyalty.

"Keep an eye on Moshi," he told Monk.

Monk said, "That I will." He scooped up the rifle with the dull bayonet, picked a spot on the hall wall beyond which he hoped the Dutchman was standing, and put a bullet through it.

The Dutchman swore. But he wasn't hit.

Doc whispered, "Monk, shoot into the hall and drive him past the door."

Monk did that. He began at the end of the wall farthest from the door and put a bullet every two feet down the hall toward the door.

The Dutchman, trying to flee the bullets, leaped past the door. And Doc got him.

DOC had the heavy iron candlestick again, and he swung that as he jumped. The candlestick came down on the Dutchman's gun hand hard. The Dutchman held on to his gun, but his numbed fingers wouldn't behave with the weapon, which drove four bullets into the floor, two of them after Doc had hold of him.

Doc dragged the Dutchman into the room.

The Dutchman was screaming. The shrieking was animal-like, entirely fury, no fright.

Doc said, "Take his gun, Ham!" Doc was having trouble with the compactly built Dutchman, for the man was a master of the most vicious sort of judo.

Ham got the Dutchman's gun. By that time, Doc Savage had a neck hold on the Dutchman, a thumbs-pressing-nerves-under-the-ear thing that reduced the man to a dazed condition.

Outside in the hall, there was confusion. But the men were approaching. Japs were swarming around the room.

Doc Savage, crouching in the semi-darkness, considered ways and means. He thought of what the Dutchman had screamed in the hall. He didn't remember all of it, but he felt fairly sure that the Dutchman hadn't named any names. The yelling had been confined mostly to alarm, and to summoning help.

Doc turned the Dutchman around. He hit him hard enough to make him temporarily unconscious, then put him on the floor.

He picked up a mat and tossed it over the body so that the legs and an arm showed, but so that the face was covered.

Doc swept up the ropes and gave them a quick fake twist around his wrists.

"See if you can't make them think we are still tied," he whispered.

The others didn't get the idea, or if they did, thought it was impractical. But Monk forced them down on the floor, arranged the ropes, and did some shushing. "Doc's got some kind of a trick," he whispered.

Doc had a trick. It was a farfetched thing, one he wouldn't have taken under normal conditions. But the hall was full of alarmed Japs. He could hear them hissing at each other, making plans to rush the door. Now and then one would shout a question. They seemed to be confused, and Doc was depending on the confusion to help his trick.

Doc said, "Ham."

"Yes?"

"If I get the ball in the air, catch it and run with it."

"Right."

Doc lifted his voice, imitating the Dutchman's sly voice as exactly as he could, moulding his tones as closely as possible to the screaming frenzy that had been in the Dutchman's yelling a few moments ago.

"You men in the hall!" he shrieked in Japanese. "Can you hear me?"

They could, someone shouted.

"An attempt has been made to free the prisoners!" Doc screeched. "There is a plane on the lake. The crew are disguised as Japanese navy fliers. Capture them. Don't let them get away in the plane. Don't believe a thing they tell you about being navy fliers."

There was silence in the hall. Now they were more confused now.

"Who are you?" a Japanese demanded.

"Jiu San is here," Doc said.

NONE of the Japs were obeying the order to dash outdoors and seize the navy fliers. But neither were they charging the room, which was something accomplished.

Ham grabbed the ball. He shouted at the Japanese, "Get going, you sons of witless mothers! Do as you are ordered."

A Jap growled that they weren't satisfied. What was wrong in the room? Were the prisoners still there?

Ham, as loudly and arrogantly as he could, bellowed, "You fools, everything is all right in here! Come in and see! Come on, quick!"

There was no instant rush for the door. The approach was cautious, and rifle barrels appeared before Japs did. Then, when they saw everything seemed to be quiet in the room, all of them tried to get in at once.

Ham got in their way, swearing and poking with his rifle-stock. He let only three of them inside.

"I don't want a lot of confusion in here!" he screamed. "This isn't a peep-show. The prisoners are still prisoners, you can see that! Now get going!"

"Where is Jiu San?" a Jap demanded.

"He went out of the window. He doesn't want to be seen!" Ham yelled. "He went out of the window. The navy fliers who tried to rescue the prisoners escaped through the window, too. Go get them. Capture them."

Doc Savage thought: This is fabulous. It's working. It's crazy, but it's working.

Ham had an inspiration.

He roared, "Jiu San is a very tall man in a gray business suit. He has a red necktie. Don't harm such a man if you see him!"

That did it. The Japs began to scatter from the doorway. They went outside, a part of them. Not all. But most of them.

Ham yelled, "Shoot down those fake navy fliers the minute you see them! They're traitors! They're not navy fliers, even if they say they are! Their uniforms are disguises! Shoot them!"

More Japs left. Only three were left. The three who had entered the room. These did not leave.

Ham looked at Doc Savage helplessly. Ham was sweating from fright and tension, the perspiration a moist film all over his face. He had his hands pressed tight to his thighs, the fingers spread wide, to hide

their trembling.

He was afraid to order the three Japs outdoors. That would be too much.

He ordered them, "Get to the window! Be watchful! Do not show yourselves, or you may get shot. Watch and listen!"

The three Japanese began crossing the room. The story had taken them in, and all their attention was concentrated on the window. They walked close to the prisoners, looking briefly at them, then at the window.

When all three had their eyes on the window, Doc Savage came up. He came swiftly, silently, and he was on the toughest-looking of the trio before the fellow expected trouble. He got the man from behind, got a forearm against the man's windpipe, shutting off vocal sound.

Monk was almost as fast as Doc. He got a second Jap. And he silenced that one, too.

Ham had to take the third. He was quick, but not quick enough. He pinned the man, but the fellow wrenched madly and freed his mouth. He yelled an alarm, and kept yelling.

Trotter jumped around in front of the screaming Jap and jammed his mouth with a handful of the ropes that had been used to quiet the prisoners. That silenced him somewhat. Trotter then hammered at the fellow's jaw with her fists, but she lacked the strength to knock him out.

"Hit him with his gun!" Ham gasped. "Don't break your hands."

She tore the rifle away from the Jap and clubbed him with it, and he became loose. Trotter enthusiastically ran to the other Japs and beat them over the head with the gun, one at a time, until she had them unconscious.

Doc said, "Scoop up their rifles. But do not start shooting until you have to."

HAM went from one Jap to another, making sure that Trotter had hit them hard enough to keep them unconscious. He did this by hitting them again. He knew each of them personally, and he knew they were the offscourings of Japan, fellows who deserved no pity, so he hit them hard.

"You are overdoing that," Doc said. "No need to kill them."

"They're rats," Ham said.

Moshi got to his feet. He had taken no part in the fight, although he had tried. He wasn't able. He was pale, and looked sick, for the ribs which Monk had broken in the attack on the dock when they first reached Japan were beginning to bother him a great deal.

He looked at them and said, "I'm not worth a thing. You can leave me here if you want."

"You want to stay here?" Monk demanded.

"No, thanks," Moshi said.

"I will carry you," Doc told him. "Come on, everyone. Monk, you take the Dutchman. We had better get out of the inn."

They worked into the hall, down that, out of a window on the uphill side. There was a garden, not a formal one, but a diminutive jungle of shrubbery with stone pathways.

"Far enough," Doc said in a low voice. "Wait here, and see what happens."

They crouched down, and waited.

Shortly, from down near the lake, they heard a Japanese shout, "*Tomare! Tare da?*"

"Oh, oh," Monk whispered. "That's one of the navy fliers challenging somebody. Listen for the fireworks."

The fireworks came almost immediately, and they were exactly that. Gunfire. Rifle blasts in a ragged volley, a short bedlam that came popping up like brittle thunder, and its echoes scampered around in the valley and off nearby hills.

Doc said, "Come on. They jumped the navy fliers."

They began running. There was enough light to see their way. The lake was crinkling silver, placid in the pale light.

"Watch out!" Doc warned suddenly. "Take cover!"

They got out of sight none too soon. Because from the direction of the lake came running Japs. They were silent and they were grim. Their eyes were on the hotel.

The "navy" fliers and the Jiu San henchmen had gotten together. They were not genuine navy fliers, then. They must be navy men, Doc thought, to have gotten the big seaplane that was on the lake. But they could be in the navy and still be Jiu San henchmen. Anyway, they were together now. There must have been mutual acquaintances in the two groups.

The angry Japs went past. One was cursing Shigi—Ham's Japanese name—and telling how and where he was going to shoot Shigi when he saw him.

When they were gone, Ham whispered, "They've got my number now."

"Come on," Doc said. "The plane."

There were two Jap guards at the plane. They were not on the ship itself, but were on the beach, and in typical Japanese fashion, one was helping another climb a tree that had a slick trunk, where the man could post himself as a sniper.

Doc whispered, "Cover them with a rifle, Ham, while I rush them. Shoot if you have to."

Ham didn't have to shoot. Trotter gasped at the violence of the fight when Doc reached the two Japs, although the fight lasted hardly more than three seconds.

Doc raced on to the plane. It was barely aground. He heaved at the floats, and the big ship moved back slowly.

"Get aboard," he said.

THEY were handing the Dutchman into the plane when he tried to stab Doc. The Dutchman made the try

with the bayonet of the rifle Trotter was carrying. He had regained consciousness and had been sly enough not to let them know.

The Dutchman snatched Trotter's rifle. His idea was to fall backward, pulling Trotter and the rifle, so as to drive the bayonet into Doc's back.

Moshi screeched a warning. Doc twisted clear. The bayonet missed. Moshi shrieked again, this time in frenzied rage, and fell weakly upon the tangle made by Trotter, Doc and the murderous Dutchman. Moshi got the bayonet. He drove the blade into the Dutchman repeatedly, into the Dutchman's throat, chest, stomach, making sobbing sounds of fury, bayoneting the Dutchman even after he was dead and under the water and the water was filling with crimson.

Doc, seeing the sick awful look on Trotter's face, picked her up and shoved her into the plane.

Then he pinned Moshi's arms, pulled the rifle away from him.

Moshi, frenzy still in his voice, began cursing the dead Dutchman, who was Jiu San. The Dutchman was a devil; Japan would have fallen into his clutches after she was defeated in the war. Moshi wanted to drag the Dutchman's body out of the lake and cut it to pieces.

Doc threw Moshi bodily into the plane.

"Take him along," he ordered. "He will get over this. He'll be a big help in keeping in touch with the Japanese group with which the Allies are going to deal after the war."

Doc stepped back on to the beach.

"Aren't you going?" Monk yelled.

"Head for the Aleutians," Doc directed. "Use the radio to contact American stations so you won't be shot down."

"Aren't you going along?" Monk shouted.

"No," Doc said. "There is more planning to be done with our Japanese group. Get going."

Doc went back across the beach, into the shrubbery. He waited there long enough to see the plane turn slowly into the wind, gather speed, go on step and lift and moaning off the lake surface.

When the plane had lost itself in the blinding eye of the morning sun, he turned and began walking, his thoughts on the coldly dangerous problem of getting back into Yokohama.

THREE weeks and two days later, a Hiro 97 Japanese flying boat put Doc Savage aboard a U. S. Navy PT boat outside Dutch Harbor. Colonel Rieger was aboard the PT boat. He was no longer Colonel Rieger. He had stars on his collar.

Rieger shook hands warmly with Doc Savage. "I guess I won't have to treat you like a traitor this time," Rieger said. "Glad to see you."

Doc grinned at the stars. Rieger explained sheepishly, "Washington seemed to think I did a good job of handling your show when you took off for Japan. They booted me up to a Brigadier General. I feel like the guy who fell in the creek and came out with his pocket full of fish."

"Monk and Ham still here?"

Rieger nodded. "Safe. Trotter is still here, too."

"Is she all right?"

Rieger laughed. "She says she's going to stay in our hair until we send her on another secret mission to Japan." He sobered. "There's a delegation waiting for you. Brass hats from Washington. There's been so much rank arriving here the last few days that I feel like a buck private."

Rieger had not exaggerated about the quantity of rank on hand in Dutch Harbor. Doc Savage met with them that night.

He told them: "There is no need for a speech. We now have a satisfactory group of Japanese to take over Japan after she is defeated. They are not traitors, so the Japanese people will follow them. They are the kind of Japanese we want to put in charge of what is left of Japan after the war. They are Japanese who think the way we think.

"In the last three weeks, I was able to give them the entire plan formulated by the Allies for taking over Japan when collapse comes. They have agreed fully to the plan. They understand it. You gentlemen know the plan as well as I, so there is no need of re-hashing it now. It is enough to say that this post-war plan of operation will enable us to reduce by at least a million men the force necessary to occupy Japan. That means a million American soldiers get to come home a year or two sooner than otherwise. And there will be no extended mopping up work in Japan over a period of years which would take perhaps thousands of American lives. In short, we are all set for the end of the war with Japan."

DOC met Trotter outside afterward.

She said, "They threw me out of there. They wouldn't let me listen."

"It's hush-hush," Doc said.

"What would happen if I filed a story to my paper about this?" she asked.

"They would lock you up and throw the key away, probably," Doc assured her.

"Then I'd better write another innocent piece about the weather." She laughed. "Pot Johnson, my editor, will cry like a baby when he gets another one of those. I wish I could hear him, the bum!"

"Why not compromise and have dinner with me?"

"You mean that?"

"Of course."

Trotter burst out laughing. "Let's get Monk and Ham. This dinner is going to cost them exactly a thousand dollars between them."

"If Monk and Ham have fifty dollars between them, they're abnormally heeled," Doc told her. "Their normal living scale is just about twice what they take in."

"Why, darn them, they bet me a thousand to one that I wouldn't even land a dinner date with you. They said your wolf rating was strictly zero."

Doc, feeling foolish, wondered just who had landed whom. Possibly he was not the first man to wonder

about this.

THE END

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