



KING JOE CAY

A Doc Savage Adventure by Kenneth Robeson

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*Scanned and Proofed
by Tom Stephens*

Chapter I

HE stole the young lady's purse when the train was about sixty miles out of Chicago.

He began by going into the day coach and standing in the aisle beside the girl's seat. A dozen other passengers were already standing in the crowded coach, so he looked innocent enough.

A man named Brigham Pope was helping him.

Brigham Pope came into the coach.

He saw with displeased astonishment that Brigham Pope was carrying a baby, a small baby.

He hurried forward. While passing Brigham Pope, he whispered, "Talk to you. Vestibule." He went on to the place between the cars, out of sight of the passengers, and waited there. Shortly Brigham Pope joined him.

Brigham Pope was short, blond, rosy-cheeked, athletic. He had a feeling about Brigham Pope, a feeling that if he ever learned the truth about the man, it would turn out that the fellow had once been an actor, probably a low comic. Brigham Pope wore a checkered sport coat. Two minutes after they'd originally met, Brigham Pope had told a dirty joke.

He asked Brigham Pope, "Where did you get the baby?"

“Belongs to a woman a couple of cars back.”

“You fool!” he said bitterly. “You complete, utter fool!”

“Now wait a minute!” Brigham Pope was indignant. “I know what I’m doing.”

“It sure looks like it! You know what the rap for kidnapping is? They electrocute you.”

“Keep your shirt on, bub. Woman I borrowed him off of is tired. She’s been traveling two days. Brat was squalling his head off. When I offered to carry him around and keep him quiet, she jumped at the chance.”

He examined the baby briefly. “It’s a her, not a him.”

“The hell you say!” Brigham Pope grinned. “Well, that’s okay. Quiet down. It’s okay.”

“It’s not okay!” he said violently. “If we get caught at this, they’ll throw everything at us. Robbery. Kidnapping too. I know how these district attorneys work it.”

Brigham Pope juggled the baby comfortably. “Tom Ittle said to use a baby. Don’t eat on me. Go tell Tom Ittle about it.”

He thought about it a moment. He was dissatisfied, but he decided it might not be wise to do any more squawking about it.

“Okay.” He shrugged.

“You look the girl over?” Brigham Pope demanded.

“Yes.”

“She the one?”

“Yes.”

“Is the seat facing her empty?”

“No. There’s a sailor in it.”

“I’ll take care of the sailor,” Brigham Pope said. “What about her purse. Has she got it?”

“She has her purse, yes.”

“Where is it?”

“On her lap.”

Brigham Pope was pleased. “She’s left handed. She’ll stick it down beside her, on the left side.”

“Let’s hope so.” He straightened his coat. “All right, let’s start it all over again.” He went back into the coach and took up his stand beside the girl’s seat. Her purse, he noted, was still on her lap.

BRIGHAM POPE came in and stood in the aisle beside the sailor who occupied the seat facing the girl who had the purse they wanted.

Brigham Pope started a business of shaming the sailor into giving up his seat to tired father and infant.

The sailor wasn't very coöperative. For this he couldn't be blamed. The girl was nice scenery.

She was a trim, bright girl, not too long and not too short. Hair about the color of good walnut, eyes about the color of a good lively lion. She was reading a book.

He was astonished when he saw what she was reading.

The name of the book she was reading was *Studien über Hysterie*, by Breuer and Freud. He thought: we had better watch out; the girl has brains. She didn't look like a girl who would be reading a book of psychiatry on a train, a book that was, moreover, a first edition in the original. Good God, that's heavy even for me, he thought.

He felt that the book alone should be enough to discourage the sailor, but it wasn't.

Brigham Pope began pinching the baby to make it squall. The baby coöperated. It squalled bloody murder.

The sailor stood up.

"You better sit here with the baby, sir," he said.

"Thanks. Say, thanks, sailor!"

The girl paid no attention. Brigham Pope took the seat facing the girl, squirmed, settling himself; he removed the blanket from the baby.

So far, so good.

He was getting a strange feeling about the girl, a hunch. A vague impression. A feeling of a double-something about her, a Jekyll-Hyde intimation. It wasn't just her neatness. It wasn't just the book. He didn't know exactly what it was. One thing he had learned long ago: he couldn't tell anything about women.

Brigham Pope leaned back, sighed, closed his eyes. Tired father. He let his hands drop away from the baby. The baby tottered. It swayed on Brigham Pope's knee. It started to fall.

That did it.

The girl dropped her book, snatched at the baby, caught it. From there on out, you would think she'd saved the baby's life.

"Oh!" she cried. "You poor darling!"

"What happened?" gasped Brigham Pope. He *was* an actor.

"The baby was falling!"

"Gosh!"

"I caught him just as he went over."

"Gosh, thanks."

"You weren't holding him right, you dope! The sweet little thing might have been badly hurt!"

It had worked fine.

He had her purse now.

THERE was the fat man across the aisle, though. He might have seen what had happened. It was hard to tell. The fat man—he was a big fat man, quite different-looking from most fat men, who look short or round, or at least chunky—closed his eyes again. If he'd seen, he wasn't going to do anything about it.

The swap had been simply managed. It was a swap. The girl's purse was long, black. He had another purse just like it. They had managed to buy this purse in Chicago before the train left. The girl had simply put her purse down, on her left side as Brigham Pope had said she would, and he had taken it and made a substitution. He had put the purse they had bought in its place.

He didn't leave right away.

He wondered if the long, fat man had really seen. If so, why the hell was he keeping quiet? Maybe he was waiting for the conductor to come by. Or the Military Police.

The girl was telling Brigham Pope the way he was taking care of the baby was a crime. “You weren't even holding on to him!”

“I dozed off, I guess.”

“You idiot! He could have had a bad fall!” She was a girl who said what she thought. She added, “You have to watch them every minute, particularly when they're that age!”

“Yeah. This'n jumps around like a flea, never still a minute.”

“How old is she?”

“Eleven months.”

“Eleven! She looks older, the little dear.”

“She's big for her age.”

The girl was looking at the baby the way women look at babies. She chuckled its chin. The baby hadn't bawled, although she'd been a little scared. The baby relaxed and smiled. It had a nice smile. It was a cute baby.

He left them.

He walked along the aisle toward the pullmans. He tried not to let it be apparent that he was holding the girl's purse under his coat.

He went into the men's washroom in the next car. No one else was there. He opened the girl's purse quickly, looked in it, took out everything that looked to him like what they might be seeking. This stuff he held in his fist, looking around for a place to hide it.

The waste-paper basket was over half full of crushed paper towels. He shoved the stuff he had taken out of the purse down in the towels, left it there.

He went back and stood between the cars, waiting, standing on widespread feet to counteract the

swaying. There was roaring under him and cold wind blew in through the joints between the cars. He noticed that the glass in the door was streaked with dirty water, and saw with surprise that now it was raining outside.

Brigham Pope joined him, asked, "You get it?"

He lifted his coat slightly, so that Brigham Pope could see the purse.

"Okay," Brigham Pope said. "Don't start looking at it. Don't let anybody see you got it."

"Where's the baby?"

"The girl is holding him."

"How come?"

"I told her I hadda get a drink."

"Oh."

"I'm going back and ask her to hold him a while longer," Brigham Pope said. "That way, we can come back later and get the baby, and switch the purses back again, so she'll have hers back."

"Whose idea was that?"

"Tom Ittle's."

"Oh."

"You wait. I'll tell her, be back. We'll go see Tom Ittle." Brigham Pope went away.

The train, traveling across the Illinois farmland, began attacking a slight grade. There were three baggage and mail cars nearest the locomotive, then four pullmans of which this was the last one, then the day coaches.

On the prairie flatland there had been through the whole train a loose, wild sensation of speed, but this was gone as the train threw itself at the grade. The driving pulse of the locomotive flowed back through the couplings, carrying through the cars a throbbing strength, a feeling of determined life.

He moved a little, stood where he could see into the day coach. He wanted to see that nothing had gone amiss with Brigham Pope.

He was curious about the long fat man, too. He had a feeling that the long flabby fellow had seen the purse deal.

But peace was in the coach. In the day coach there was already an atmosphere of settled resistance to the fatigue of traveling. It was tangible on the faces and in the manner of the passengers. Some seat occupants were sleeping, or wooing sleep by feigning it. Tobacco smoke, bluish and tenuous, appearing above seats here and there, was taken up and whisked away and dissolved by moving air from the conditioning system. Forward, four soldiers were playing twenty-one on a suitcase. The conductor had been through, punching the tickets, consulting, low-voiced, with a coach porter who followed at his heels—the porter scribbling mysterious numerals on little tabs, then shoving the tabs into the clips over the windows. They had gone on, and merely by going they had taken with them a nebulous feeling of suspense, a possibility for mild excitement. Now there was nothing left to do but ride. And so they rode resignedly, complacently, and the only excitement that was left was in the minds of those with

imaginations agile enough to be titilated by what the future might hold.

He saw Brigham Pope coming toward him along the aisle.

He turned and walked toward the front of the train.

Chapter II

BRIGHAM POPE overtook him when he was pushing and pulling at doors between the pullmans.

Brigham Pope was pleased. "You're okay, Clark," Brigham Pope said. "Nice, the way you got her purse. I didn't even see you do it myself."

"Think anybody saw it?"

"No."

He was tempted to mention that he thought the long, fat man had seen, but he decided not to. He didn't know enough about this thing yet.

Brigham Pope said, "I'm going to see that Tom Ittle knows what a fine job you did, Clark."

"Thank you." He put gratitude in his voice.

At Compartment 2, Car 3, they stopped. Or rather, Brigham Pope stopped, and grinned ingratiatingly. "Look," he said. "Any good we can do each other, it won't hurt. What I mean, build each other up a little, see."

He nodded. "Okay," he said.

"You build me, I build you," Brigham Pope said. "A little advertising hooey never hurts."

"Okay."

They went in to talk to the incredibly stout man whose name was Tom Ittle.

Tom Ittle did not look up. He wore a pin-striped dark blue suit of soft-finished cloth, and he was doing a crossword puzzle. The crossword puzzle he was doing was not in a newspaper, but in a book of them; he had the book on his knee; his mouth was making shapes for different words as he stared at the puzzle.

Tom Ittle asked, "What would be a five-letter word for cold, beginning with G?"

"Would it be gelid?"

Tom Ittle wrote in the word. "Could be," he said.

Ittle had thick lips. He was a man who did not make a bad looking fat man, but who would have made a hideous, vulture-like thin man. This was because Tom Ittle's features were all large—big nose, big eyes, big ears, besides the large mouth with the pink bicycle tire lips. On a skinny man the big features would have been repulsive; on him they were not bad.

Ittle's body was the shape of a football and the size of a small barrel and his suit had pre-war cuff's on the trouser legs. His old-fashioned black button shoes were polished like mirrors.

There was something about him that was unnerving. Like looking at the cobra in the zoo reptile house and noticing they had a glass panel between you and the cobra so it couldn't spit its poison on you and kill or blind you.

"Gelid," Tom Ittle said. "That seems correct. You are pretty good, Clark. You are a smart fellow."

"Thank you."

"Were you smart enough to do what I told you to do?"

He gave Tom Ittle the girl's handbag. Then he waited, wondering what Tom Ittle would do when he looked in the bag and found what they wanted wasn't there.

Or maybe what they wanted would be in the bag. He didn't know. He was not exactly sure what they were after. He wished he dared ask questions about it, find out what it was, but he was cautious about doing that because he wasn't sure whether he was supposed to know.

Tom Ittle was a dangerous man, he knew that.

"LET'S see what we got," Tom Ittle said, and opened the purse. He took things out of the purse and handed them to Brigham Pope, who passed them on.

The girl's name, according to what her ration books said, was Trudy Stevens, of a West Fifty-fifth Street address, New York City. Unmarried. She had a cigarette case, so expensive it must be a gift. No woman would buy such an expensive thing for herself. Engraved on this case was *Patrick to Trudy, Yuletide 1944*.

There was a love-letter. A letter from a Captain Patrick O'Sien to Miss Trudy Stevens. Tom Ittle read this, and chuckled as he read.

"I could write a better love letter than this to that babe," Tom Ittle said.

"You ever see an Irishman who could write a love letter? They do it with talking. At talking, they got the world beat."

Ittle looked up. "That's right, Clark." He passed over the love letter. "Want to read it, Clark?"

He did want to read it. He thought, after he had read a while, that an Irishman should be ashamed of such a letter. It opened with some mush, rambled around to the matter of a new Leica camera the writer had taken from a German officer, closed with some more mush.

He realized he was scowling. He thought: Good God, am I jealous of this guy, this Irishman! He hoped not. But the letter had made him angry, and that was a bad sign.

Resolutely, he concentrated on his main interest, which was deciding whether or not the letter was a code message. If it was, it was a slick job.

He asked, "You got an infra-red lamp?"

Tom Ittle grinned. "You are smart."

He opened a suitcase. He had the infra-red outfit in that, and an X-ray, one of the tiny portable ones, too.

He took the letter and went over it again, and when he finished it was pretty certain it was not enciphered with secret ink of any generally known sort.

“Now,” Tom Ittle said, “I’ll go over the rest of the stuff just for luck.”

He didn’t find anything.

Ittle put everything back in the purse.

“We didn’t do so good,” he said.

THE train was running loosely again, somewhat more slowly. It passed through a hamlet. Switches clicked past under the wheels, a crossing whipped past, an automatic signal swinging its arm with the red disc for a hand; two automobiles and a truck were waiting at the crossing. And then the feeling of strength flowed through the train again as it picked up speed.

He was watching Tom Ittle. He couldn’t tell whether the fat man was suspicious or not. What they wanted wasn’t in the purse, that was sure. They had drawn a blank. He hoped that he hadn’t drawn a blank. He hoped that what they were after was among the stuff he had thrust down in the washroom wastebasket, down among the used paper towels.

He hoped. Tom Ittle wouldn’t notice that he was taking care to stand with his back to one of the compartment walls. So that Brigham Pope was not behind him.

Tom Ittle picked up the crossword puzzle. He gazed at it, wrote in a word, pursed his Brobdignagian lips. He lifted his eyes from the puzzle, sat looking at nothing in a fixed sort of a way. His eyes were large, brown, calf-like.

“Clark,” Tom Ittle said.

“Yes?”

“She knows us.”

“Not me, she doesn’t.”

“That’s what I mean,” Tom Ittle said. “She knows me and she knows Brigham Pope here, but she does not know you.”

“I thought you said she didn’t know she was being followed.”

“I’m not making myself exactly clear,” Tom Ittle explained. “We’ve been following her. She may have noticed us. She wouldn’t have noticed you. In other words, you stand the best chance.”

“Best chance for what?”

“Pick her up.”

“Eh?”

“Get acquainted with her, start following her around, make love to her,” Tom Ittle grinned. “That shouldn’t be tough.”

"It'll be tough for me."

Tom Ittle laughed. "You're kidding."

"Okay. I'm kidding then."

"You'll do it?"

"If you say so."

"Good."

He supposed this was all of it. He had the girl's purse now, and the stuff back in it. He put the purse under his coat, shoved it down inside his belt, and laid his hand on the door.

"Wait," Ittle said.

The fat man's face had become cold, ugly, full of ferocity and hate. He was silent, as if turning violence over and over in his mind.

Finally Tom Ittle said, "Did you ever hear of a man named Doc Savage?"

He didn't answer immediately. He wet his lips, took his hand off the door, turned and put his back to the door. He had one thought: How could they kill him here? Now. There were lots of ways they could try it. But he didn't believe they could make any of the ways work. There was just the three of them in the compartment, and space was close. He believed he could keep them from killing him.

He asked: "What about Savage?"

Tom Ittle slapped his hand down on the book of crossword puzzles. It made a report. It startled them all, even startled Tom Ittle.

"So you've heard of him!" Ittle said.

"Is that so unusual?"

He was pleased with the cold placidity in his voice.

"I guess it ain't unusual." Tom Ittle made a conscious effort to speak properly, but it did not come naturally to him, nor did he do a very good job. "No, I guess it ain't unusual." Ittle eyed him intently. "Don't it scare you?"

"Should it scare me?"

"What would you say," asked Tom Ittle, "if I told you we think Doc Savage may be sticking his nose into this?"

"Is he?"

"We think so." Tom Ittle nodded slowly. He turned the puzzle book in his hands. He asked, "What are you going to do about it, Clark?"

"Do?"

"Yeah."

“I’m going to be about ten times as careful as a man walking on eggs,” he said.

“You going to quit?”

He pretended to consider this, to give it deep thought. Having done that, he shook his head. “Not right now,” he said. “I’m not scared.”

Tom Ittle was pleased. “Neither am I, I don’t mind telling you.” Ittle grinned at him. “I don’t mind telling you I think you’re a sensible man, Clark. A mighty sensible man. In my book, that means a lot.”

“I’m no God Almighty,” he said.

Nodding, Tom Ittle said, “Most of us stop being that when we get to be about twenty-five years old.” He chuckled, added, “I hope you can do all right with this babe, though.”

“I’ll try.”

“You do that.” Ittle opened the puzzle book. He took a pencil out of a vest pocket where there were at least ten other pencils. “You do that, and you tell us what you learn about her.”

“Okay.”

Tom Ittle suddenly laughed. “It would be nice if you could interest her in you becoming her protector.”

“That might be an idea.”

Brigham Pope became excited. “Say, that *is* an idea! Maybe we could fix a little attack on her, and Clark here could rescue her from us. That ought to put him in solid with her.”

Tom Ittle looked up. “What do you think of that idea, Clark?”

“Comy.”

Ittle wasn’t displeased. “It is, at that. But we might dress it up for her.”

“Maybe. The old gags are usually dependable.”

“Yes, that’s true.”

Tom Ittle began working on the crossword puzzle. He didn’t look up. There was an air of indescribable evil, quite tangible evil, about him as he sat there.

He left Tom Ittle and Brigham Pope.

He did not immediately go back to the day coach. Between two of the pullmans, someone had left open the upper half of an outside door. He leaned on the door and watched the farmlands slide past. To his astonishment, he saw that the train was running through gay sunlight. They were out of the rain.

He felt—mentally—as if he had come out in the sunlight himself. Relieved.

He wondered if they knew that he was Doc Savage.

Chapter III

BRIGHAM POPE came past, paused to say, "Let's get the babe's purse back to her."

"Right."

He waited a while, went on back into the day coach, took up his stance where he had been before.

The girl tickled the baby. "You're a sweet kid." She sounded happy. "You've got a dirty nose, though." She got out her handkerchief and cleaned up the baby's nose.

Brigham Pope held out his arms to take the baby. "I better take him."

"I enjoy holding him," the girl said.

"Gee, that's sweet of you," Brigham Pope said. "But his mother has a seat farther back in another coach. She's probably wondering what happened to him."

The girl surrendered the baby.

"Thanks a lot for holding him," Brigham Pope said.

"It wasn't any trouble. I liked it."

She had stood up to return the baby, and now her own purse was back in the seat. He had managed the exchange without trouble.

The baby didn't want to leave. It let out a squall. Brigham Pope, with a meaningless grin on his face, walked away with the howling kid.

A sailor, the same sailor, had his eye on the seat. He moved toward it.

But Doc Savage beat the sailor to the seat. He sank into it. He felt a little guilty about imposing on a member of the armed forces. The sailor was a young kid, clean-looking, with three combat stars on his ribbons.

The girl brushed herself, straightened things around, picked up her purse, laid it down on her lap, leaned back, turned the leaves of her book slowly.

The long, fat man across the aisle was looking at nothing in a fixed way. His hand wandered inside his coat and brought out a cigar and a pencil, and he made a hole in the end of the cigar with the pencil point instead of clipping it. He lit the cigar with a gold lighter that had a lodge insignia on it. He blew a foam of bluish smoke down on his lap.

Doc Savage wondered if the long, fat man knew he was Doc Savage. He wondered who the long, fat man was. The fellow wasn't the same kind of a fat man as Tom Ittle, not at all. He was a placid-seeming fat man.

The farmlands whisked past the windows. The sun was shining; farmers were harvesting their oats. The oat fields were like rugs of rich, yellow fur. Now and then blue smoke would spout from the exhaust stack of a tractor, and loading trucks followed the combines closely the way suckling pigs follow the sow when they are hungry. Oats dribbled out of the combines' pipes and filled the truck beds. A loaded truck would give its place to an empty one, and the truck filled with oats would go toward the farms with their dairy sheds and bin sheds and silos.

It got him. He wished he was off the train. He wanted to kick through the oat fields.

He said aloud, "I want to kick through the oat fields and strip kernels off with my hands and blow the chaff out of my palms and bite the kernels to see how ripe they are, to feel their fat richness between my teeth. I want to climb those barbed-wire fences and hear the wire grunt in the staples as my weight comes down on it, and I want to drive a combine, or just lay in the shade of an elm tree."

The girl was looking at him fixedly from the sides of her eyes. She thought he was a daffy, and he didn't blame her.

He smiled slightly. "What I'm trying to say," he said, "is that I feel in the mood for peace."

"So do I!" the girl said, rather pointedly.

"It won't do us any good," he said. "Because we're in for something unpleasant."

She didn't know what to say to that.

He said, "That guy who was just sitting here. That guy with the baby."

"Yes?" She was puzzled.

He said, "That guy got into your purse. He grabbed a lot of stuff out of it."

Her face became blankly astounded.

He added, "Don't make a fuss about it. But look and see."

SHE sat there, holding her book for a few moments. She had understood what he said, all right, but she was turning other things over in her mind. And the way she took time to think it over convinced him that at least Tom Ittle and Brigham Pope had made no mistake. This was the girl, all right, because she had more to think about than just the loss of her purse. She was thinking about it.

She asked, "Why didn't you say something about it when he did it?"

He had the answer to that all ready.

"I thought he might be your husband," he said, lying. "It just dawned on me he wasn't when he said something about the baby's mother. I didn't call him a thief, you noticed. That was because I still don't know. Is he? I mean, is he a friend?"

The girl didn't answer immediately. She opened her purse. He was watching her closely and the only sign of surprise or emotion he could detect was a momentary holding of her breath, and he wasn't sure about that.

Mentally, he warned himself to be damned careful. This girl was a better actor than he was, better than all of them, probably.

"Some things are gone," she said. "He's a thief."

He nodded.

"Would you like to do this my way?" he asked.

"What way is that?" she asked.

The sailor was scowling at him, and this made him feel a little less guilty about depriving a member of the armed forces of a seat. He wondered why sailors were that way about girls. It must be the salt water, or something. Or his imagination.

He said: "Peace is wonderful. Trouble is trouble. Never the twain shall meet."

"You sound like a nut," she said.

"Probably. But maybe I'm just on a vacation from sanity, maybe I think a vacation should include more than a change of scenery, maybe it should include a change for the mind, too."

She considered him. "Maybe you're not so crazy after all."

"Thank you, lovely lady," he said. "Now I will go and speak with that guy, and I feel that he will willingly return your property once he understands our philosophy of peace. In other words, you get back your stuff, we forget about it. Why mar a pleasant trip?"

"That's a funny attitude."

"I'm not really a funny man, I assure you. Just temporarily. Just in passing," he said.

"You *are* strange!"

"Don't worry about it. It's nothing to you."

"I guess that's right," she admitted. "It's nothing to me."

"Okay for me to go get your treasures back?"

"Well—if you wish. I mean, it's your idea, your responsibility."

"Good. Read your book." He stood up. "It's a very good book, although one or two of the theories in it have since been proved as wrong as it is wrong to call daylight darkness."

He left her.

He hoped he had interested her in him. He believed she was a girl who would not easily be intrigued by anything less than the unusual.

THERE was a man smoking a cigar and taking pulls out of a pint bottle of whiskey in the washroom of the coach where he had stuffed the girl's things down in the wastepaper basket. The man didn't show any disposition to leave.

He gave the man a wild-eyed look.

Parting day

Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues

The last still loveliest, till—'t is gone,

And all is gray.

The man looked startled. He held his cigar out in front of his lips, stiffly, and his eyes got wide. But the

man didn't leave.

He thought of another one:

There were his young barbarians all at play;

There was their Dacian mother: he, their sire,

Butchered to make a Roman holiday!

That did it. The man stuck his cigar in his mouth, jammed his bottle in his pocket, and departed.

He was slightly disappointed. He had thought of another one, too. Byron could be frightening when you quoted him without warning.

He was rather enjoying not being Doc Savage for a change.

He dug into the wastebasket. The stuff was still there.

The billfold was feminine and expensive, and the money in it amounted to one hundred and thirteen dollars even. There were travelers checks for an even thousand dollars, American Express. There were two shades of lipstick, a small bottle of perfume, powder, aspirin, a small bottle containing a dozen nembital capsules. The small package was last.

He had expected the package to be what he was seeking, whatever that was, but it was a cigarette lighter. A new one, jeweled, expensive. He re-wrapped it.

He examined everything again, intensively. He tasted the nembital in the capsules to make sure it was nembital, and he looked at the bills closely.

Finally he put everything in his coat pocket, feeling somewhat surprised at himself for not being more discouraged than he was. He hadn't gotten anywhere with what could have been a dangerous piece of double-crossing, and he didn't feel badly about it.

He decided to distrust this feeling of non-disappointment. It was a bad sign, a symptom of an attitude that would get him into trouble if he didn't watch out.

The trouble was, the girl was too darned good-looking.

HE found that the sailor had taken the seat beside the girl. He wasn't surprised. He was even relieved when the sailor gave him an unpleasant look.

He decided to tell another lie. He had rather enjoyed the other one he had told, about why he hadn't immediately called attention to the imaginary theft. Doc Savage had the reputation of never lying, and he was enjoying being different.

"Mind if I sit by my wife?" he asked.

The girl started.

The sailor started too, and got up and left. He went away to another coach.

He sat beside the girl.

“Got it,” he said.

He gave her the stuff he had taken out of the wastebasket.

“That all of it?” he asked.

She looked over the stuff and put it in her bag. She said, “We must have had a quick courtship and marriage. I don't seem to recall it.”

“We did,” he agreed. “And a quick divorce. As of now. Okay?”

She examined him, puzzled. “Why did you do it?”

“Do what?”

“Get my things back from that man.”

“Biological reasons, I suppose. You are a very pretty girl. I wanted to show off. Don't you think that was very natural of me?”

She had to laugh. “For a crackpot, you're certainly full of logic.”

“I should hope so!”

“Did you have any trouble with him?”

“With the guy with the baby, you mean?”

“Yes.”

“Not a bit.”

She said, “I was afraid you'd have trouble.”

He thought for a moment, quoted:

The summer day was spoiled with fitful storm;

At night the wind died and the soft wind dropped;

With lulling murmur, and the air was warm,

And all the tumult and the trouble stopped.

She was surprised. “That's from Ceilia Thaxter's 'The Nestling Swallows',” she said. “I don't think I ever heard her quoted before.”

He registered discouragement. “I'm disgusted,” he said. “I'm afraid you're a bright girl. Bright girls frighten me.”

“You don't look frightened.”

“That's the two-faced Machiavelli in me.”

“I wish you'd talk more sanely,” she said.

He pondered this. “I've got a perfectly sane idea,” he said. “Want to hear it?”

“Yes.”

“I wonder if they've got a diner on this train?”

“Yes.”

“Why don't we hurry thence,” he suggested, “and you buy me the dollar-twenty-five dinner as a reward for my activities?”

“Now you sound normal,” she said. “I'll do it.”

He nodded. “I'll probably get even more normal and make a pass at you when we go through those nice secluded places between the cars.”

She told him, “If you do, you'll get an abnormal slap.”

He thought he would, too. But he seemed to be getting along all right.

Chapter IV

HE was never able to figure out exactly when the girl talked to the conductor and had him wire ahead to have police meet the train. He suspected it was sometime before they went through Marceline, Missouri, the last stop before the train reached Kansas City.

Anyway the girl must have had a long talk with the conductor, because he was somewhat in charge of the proceedings.

The train crossed the three-span bridge over the Missouri river, rushed through the lowlands, slowed a little and went into the long cut. The viaducts carrying Kansas City streets began to flash overhead, dashing darkness into the coaches. The streamliner slowed, and they were under the sheds, passing baggage trucks, train service men, piles of suitcases being unloaded from another train.

“Carry your suitcase?” he asked politely.

“I'll manage,” she said.

He started to carry her bag anyway, but she took it away from him. That should have tipped him off, but it didn't, because she smiled. He kicked himself later, mentally, because of the way the smile put fur in his boots.

They got along fine as far as the platform. He didn't notice another thing, either. He didn't notice that she was keeping right behind the long, fat man who had sat across the aisle.

The conductor, three police, were waiting.

The girl became efficiency itself.

She pointed at the long, fat man; she pointed at Doc Savage. The police stepped forward and took possession of both gentlemen.

She pointed to Doc. “This one stole my purse.”

She pointed at the long, fat man. “This one saw it.”

“You are under arrest,” said the policeman.

The long, fat man jerked his arm away from the officer who had taken hold of it. He said, “Let go me! I’m not a criminal!”

“Nobody said you were,” the cop said.

The girl said, “What is your name?” to the long, fat man.

“Laurence,” he said. “Laurence Wilson.”

“Mr. Wilson, did you see this man”—she indicated Doc Savage—“take my bag?”

The fat man nodded vehemently. “Your handbag, your purse. Yes, I saw him take your purse. He put another one in its place that looked almost like it.”

“He had help, didn’t he?”

“If he didn’t,” said Lawrence Wilson, “things worked out awfully opportunely. Yes, I would say he had help.”

“Can you describe the man?”

Mr. Wilson could. He described Brigham Pope, and he did a very good job of it.

The girl turned to the conductor, said, “That’s the man I told you to have arrested. Did you?”

The conductor had. Two uniformed policemen were approaching. They had Brigham Pope with them. The officer at Pope’s left punched Pope in the ribs, pointed at Doc Savage, said, “Who’s your buddy, here?”

“Never saw him in my life,” Brigham Pope said.

Doc Savage gave Pope a stare. “Am I,” he demanded, “supposed to be acquainted with this fellow?”

“I can see everybody is going to talk very freely,” one of the cops said. He didn’t sound disgusted. He said to another policeman, “Better frisk them, Mike.”

THE things in Brigham Pope’s pockets proved that he was Brigham Pope of Boston, Mass., dealer in aeronautical fabrics.

The things in Doc Savage’s pockets proved he was William Clark, Cleveland, office manager for Galehart Aviation Industries, manufacturers of precision instruments. The coincidence about this was that one of his names really was Clark. He was Clark Savage, Jr. And if they telephoned the Galehart Company in Cleveland, they would be assured that William Clark, office manager, was indeed a man who answered Doc’s description, and was on a vacation trip to the midwest.

The police didn’t believe a word of it.

Mike had Doc Savage’s wallet in his hand, opening it.

“Wait,” the girl said. “Before you count the money in there, wait a minute.”

They looked at her.

She continued. "That man took approximately twelve hundred dollars out of my purse. Now, I want you to all notice that I haven't seen what is in that man's purse." She indicated Doc Savage. "I'm going to describe, as nearly as I can, the money I lost."

Sister, you're very good indeed, Doc reflected.

The girl said, "There were ten one-hundred-dollar bills, one fifty that I recall, and the rest was in tens. There were no twenties. The hundred-dollar bills were fairly new and crisp."

Doc Savage was amazed. There were exactly ten one-hundred-dollar bills in his billfold, plus a fifty and tens and fives. How had she known it? What the devil!

Mike asked, "You got the serial numbers, Miss?"

"Who ever heard of taking down the serial numbers on your money?"

"You ain't got 'em?"

"Did *you* ever get the serial number off a bill someone gave you?" she countered.

"Heck, no."

Mike did some counting in Doc's purse. He grunted with satisfaction. "Just ten one-hundreds in here," he said.

"With a bank wrapper around them," the girl said.

The light came to Doc Savage. Bank wrapper! She had seen the inside of the billfold. And he knew how!

It was quite simple. The reflection in the train window beside Mike. It must be a very good reflection, and she had seen that there were hundreds, and a package of them, and reasoned that there would be ten hundreds in the package.

She's very good, Doc thought again.

She's going to make us pay her a nice profit for trying to pull something on her.

Tom Ittle drifted past. The fat man had a bellboy laden down with a large shiny antelope suitcase. He looked prosperous, pleased with the world. He waddled past behind his stomach, holding a good cigar between thumb and two first fingers of his right hand, the little finger of the hand sticking up daintily. He didn't look at them.

Brigham Pope pointed at Doc Savage.

"Am I accused of being a thief, and this fellow my confederate?" Brigham Pope demanded.

"How'd you guess it?" Mike said.

"I never saw this fellow"—Brigham Pope pointed at Doc Savage indignantly—"before in my life! Never!"

"Sure, I know." Mike was skeptical.

The girl asked, "When do I get my money back?"

Mike scratched his head. "We better talk to somebody at headquarters about that."

“But it's my money!”

Mike was uncomfortable. He thought of something. He eyed the packet of hundreds furtively. “Hey, what bank?”

“What do you mean?” the girl asked.

Doc smiled slightly. Now she's stuck, he thought. She couldn't see what bank, because the bank name, Chase National of New York, was on the band in small lettering. He happened to remember.

The girl took a deep breath.

“Chase National Bank,” she said.

Doc closed his eyes tightly. Now how had she found that out?

He thought she gave him a look of triumph after Mike had verified her guess as correct. He wasn't sure.

“But what am I going to do without money?” The girl was looking at Mike piteously. “I can't have my vacation. I can't buy the things I wanted to buy, the dress for my mother and the other things.”

Dress for her mother! Hah!

Mike gave up. He handed her the packet of hundred-dollar bills, enough more money to make twelve hundred.

Doc said, “You are making a mistake.”

“Shaddap!” Mike said.

“You'll want me to sign a complaint against these men, won't you?” the girl asked.

“Sure. You'll probably have to appear as a witness.”

“That's perfectly satisfactory,” she agreed. She smiled sweetly at Mike. “Oh!” she added. “Oh, isn't that silly of me! You know what I did? I forgot and left my small suitcase on the train.” She turned and stepped up into the vestibule of the train. “I'll get it. I'll be back in a minute,” she said.

Doc told Mike, “You're a sucker.”

“Yah?” Mike said. “How ya figure that?”

“She won't be back.”

“Hah, hah, hah!” Mike said.

But she didn't come back.

“We're going to lock you two guys up anyway,” Mike said. He was indignant about the whole thing, having searched the length of the train without finding the girl.

Doc asked, “Where did she get off the train?”

“Other side of the sec—” Mike scowled. “Okay, she skipped, but that—”

“She skipped with twelve hundred good dollars of my money, which you handed her.”

“Yeah, but—”

“Twelve hundred dollars,” said Doc, “that will come out of your salary, if you don't happen to have that much in the bank.”

The other two policemen got to laughing about it. They thought it was funny. The more they laughed, the harder they laughed, and the blacker Mike's rage became. Finally he gave them a cussing, and finished with the rather plaintive announcement that he would like to know why in the hell he ever became a policeman in the first place.

Doc became indignant.

“I demand,” he said, “to see someone with authority. This is ridiculous!”

Brigham Pope decided to become indignant, too. He yelled, “This is a fine note! Getting thrown in jail for being fleeced by a slick confidence worker.”

“Come on,” Mike said.

“We want to talk—”

“You can talk to everybody from the governor on down!” Mike snarled. “But do it at headquarters.”

THEY walked to the stairs which led up into the station, climbed the stairs, tramped through the mouse-colored marble vastness of Union Station. The conductor left them. He said he had his work to do. There were Mike and two other policemen with them.

“Strong and Doyle, you watch them,” Mike said. “I'm gonna get on a telephone. I'm gonna put out a pickup for that girl.”

The policemen thought it was funny that Mike was so upset. “She had brown eyes, Mike,” one said. “The biggest brown eyes.”

“Legs, too, Mike,” said the other cop. “Did you notice?”

Mike expressed some pointed doubt as to their legitimacy, and went off looking for a telephone.

Doc Savage caught Brigham Pope's eye. When he had Brigham Pope's attention, he lifted his right hand, made a fist of it, blew on the fist, waited a moment for Brigham Pope to get the idea. Then he hit the nearest officer, Strong, a clip on the jaw. It was a nice clean knockout. Strong collapsed.

The other officer, Doyle, said, “Hell!” He stepped forward, seized Doc Savage. Brigham Pope just stood there, a gape-mouthed look on his face.

Doc wrestled about with Doyle. The marble floor was slick, and their feet skidded, made whetting sounds as if a knife was being sharpened on a kitchen steel. Doyle began to shout. “Mike!” he bellowed. “Help! Come here and help me!”

Doc managed to trip Doyle, fell on top of him. He worked an arm loose, and hammered at the side of Doyle's head, finally got Doyle limp.

Leaping up, he glanced at Brigham Pope.

“You can stick around if you want to,” he said.

This brought Brigham Pope to life. He began running. Doc ran behind him. They dodged in and out of the crowd, turned a corner, slackened their pace to a less suspicious trot. Brigham Pope looked back, asked, “Why don't we just go out in front and get in a cab? We might get away with it.”

“Good as any.”

The cab they got was blue and gray and had a dent in the left front fender. The driver said, “Tenth and Walnut? Okay.” He picked up a form of some kind and wrote on it, taking his time. Finally he got the cab moving. There was no shouting, no other sign of excitement behind them.

Brigham Pope breathed outward, heavily. “Whoo-ee!” he said. “I wasn't much help, was I?” He was ashamed of his part in the escape. “It kind of took me by surprise,” he explained.

“The girl kind of took us both by surprise, didn't she?”

“Boy! Did she!”

“She must have known who we were all along.”

“She must have.” Brigham Pope scratched his head, puzzled. “We must have made a little mistake somewhere.”

“Twelve hundred dollars' worth of mistake.” His voice was not pleased.

Chapter V

THE restaurant, on Grand a little north of Ninth Street, was done in pastel greens and blues. The head-waitress, whose uniform carried out the same colors in pastels, said, “Would you like a table or a booth?”

Tom Ittle, sitting in the back, waved at them.

“We'll join our friend,” Doc Savage said.

They walked toward Ittle's table. Brigham Pope was pleased with himself. “I figured he'd be here,” he said.

“How did you figure that?”

“Oh, we got it arranged where we're to meet in different cities if we got separated,” Brigham Pope said. “In Kansas City, it's this restaurant. In Tulsa, it's Bishop's Waffle House, in Dallas it's Babbitt's, and in Denver it's the Blue Parrot.”

“Those are all darned good restaurants.”

“Tom Ittle likes his food.”

“Ittle likes his vittles, eh?”

He thought: That lousy joke should be enough by itself to prove conclusively that I am not Doc Savage, if they suspect such a thing. Doc Savage would never make such a joke. Doc Savage practically never made any kind of a joke, for that matter. He had been too busy most of his life taking things seriously.

Tom Ittle greeted them expansively. He asked them what they thought of the weather; wasn't it lovely? He told them the hot biscuit and coffee service should be tried by all means. There was a waitress standing near. She went away. "All right, what happened?" Tom Ittle demanded.

They told him the story, the whole thing.

"How'd she get wise to you, Clark?" Ittle demanded.

"Search me," he said. "Maybe she's clairvoyant."

Tom Ittle snapped, "It's not funny, dammit!"

He decided that he would show Tom Ittle some rage. He jammed his fist down on the table, half stood, glared at the fat man.

"Blasted right it's not funny!" he told Ittle. "And it was funny as hell you walking off and leaving us in the hands of the cops! What kind of a pal is that?"

Tom Ittle scowled. "I'd have gotten you out."

"I bet!"

Tom Ittle leaned forward. "Listen, Clark!" Ittle sounded angry, desperate. "There's too much at stake to take any chances. I'd have tried to get you released from jail, but if I didn't manage it, I'd have gone off and left you. There's too much involved for me to waste time hanging around getting you two out of trouble. Now that's the truth, and you can like it or you can't like it, and the hell with what you think!"

He grinned at Ittle. "That's more like it." He sat down comfortably.

Ittle was surprised. "You're not mad?"

"Straight talk doesn't make me mad," he said. "Do you want to know where the girl went?"

Tom Ittle was astonished. Brigham Pope was astonished. They looked so amazed that he hastily amended his outright declaration. "Where I think she went," he corrected.

"Where?" Ittle demanded. "Where is she?"

"The airport."

Brigham Pope ogled him. "How the hell do you know that?"

"Something she said," he explained. "A slip of the tongue she made." He grinned at them. "Nothing she'll remember saying."

Tom Ittle leaned forward. "Can you get on her trail again?"

"Sure."

"Do that," Ittle said. He sounded pleased. "We aren't licked yet. No sir, the cat isn't skinned yet."

HE rode to the airport in a cab, leaning back on the cushions, wishing he could feel relaxed, even for these few minutes. It was not far to the airport. Kansas City had been one of the most foresighted cities in the nation in respect to putting its airport in an accessible spot. From midtown, it didn't take much

more than five minutes to reach the administration building.

He was glad they hadn't asked him just what the girl had said that had led him to believe that she would be at the airport. He didn't believe that he could have thought of a good answer.

As a matter of fact, she hadn't said anything about airports or airplanes.

He'd known the girl was supposed to go from Kansas City to Miami, Florida, by passenger airplane.

Charlotte had told him that. Charlotte d'Alaza. Over the telephone.

A traffic light held up the cab. He glanced about nervously, then made himself settle back. He thought of Charlotte d'Alaza. A remarkable old woman. An unholy old woman, it was reported. As greedy a human being as God ever made.

He hadn't seen Charlotte d'Alaza for years—which didn't mean he was an old man. He had been a very young man, his ideals blooming like tulips, when he first met Charlotte. He had wondered how such a woman could happen. How she could have been created. Or rather, how she had created herself, for it was generally understood that she was a self-made job. She had been born Charlotte Malcewicz in Centerville, Iowa, it was reported.

Charlotte . . . The memory of her made him shiver. She should have been born a queen. She should have been born a queen to sit on the most despotic throne there ever was. He felt that it was a darned good thing she hadn't been born a man, otherwise the world would have had on its hands another Genghis Khan, Napoleon or Hitler. Charlotte had left Centerville, Iowa, quite early in life, he was sure. Probably done this because Americans, particularly Iowans, couldn't be dominated easily. Charlotte had gone to Europe where the populations were accustomed to being dominated.

She had married, he understood, five times for convenience. And made darned good use of each convenience. She had three titles, which she fashionably didn't use, probably because the impact of a title is much more when you don't flaunt it. She owned industries, wealth. Wealth, of course, was power with Charlotte. Always Charlotte had marched forward. She was, he supposed, still going purposefully about the business of getting big, big, big, big.

She had called him by radio-telephone from her Bahama island.

He still thought it was funny that she had *told* him to help her. That was like Charlotte.

"There's something they want," she told him. "One of the men who wants it is using the name of Tom Ittle. It may be his real name. I don't know how many or who are working with him."

She had sounded breathless. Static, tropical static, had crackled softly when she paused to breathe.

"I don't know who will have what they're after," she added.

Here her voice became loud, strident, commanding.

"I want what they want," she said. "You get it for me."

He had wanted to laugh here. An *order*.

"You interest me," he had said.

"Of course it does!" Charlotte had snapped. "The unusual always interests you, and this is unusual enough for anybody."

“Is it important?”

“You're damned right it is important,” Charlotte had said. But she said it in French, which gave it added emphasis and mystery.

Charlotte had become specific. “You go to Chicago. They'll be taking the Sante Fe train Number 23 out of there at ten-fifteen tomorrow morning. Gives you time to get there.”

She had described Tom Ittle quite well.

“You can just walk up to him and say you've been assigned to help him get it. Tell him the boss assigned you. Don't tell him any more than that. If he wants you to be specific, just dance around with words.”

He had asked, “What else do I need to know?”

“Nothing. Oh, if the chase isn't ended by the time it gets to Kansas City, it will go on to Miami, Florida, but by airplane. Regular passenger liner.”

“That's all sort of vague,” he had said.

“What are you kicking about? You like mysteries?”

“Not always.”

“You'll like this one,” she said. “Get to work on it.”

There was just one reason why he hadn't told her where she could go.

He had been about to investigate Charlotte, anyway.

THE cab swung in around the little U-shaped drive and stopped in front of the airport depot building. He paid the driver and went inside to the ticket windows.

His first job was to get a reservation to Miami, and the reservation had to be good on any plane he chose to take. A funny kind of a reservation.

The ticket clerk thought it was very funny, and permitted himself a supercilious laugh at the idea. The very idea!

“Is Fred Thompson around here?” Doc asked.

The clerk lost his superciliousness quite suddenly. “I'll call him.”

“You do that.”

Fred Thompson was a lean, wolfish man in his forties, a vice president of the airline.

“Hey!” said Fred Thompson. He didn't immediately recognize Doc Savage. “What the hell have you done to yourself? Your hair, blond instead of bronze. And your skin, paler, and your eyes a different color.” He became dubious. “By God, I don't know whether you *are* Doc Savage.”

Doc Savage showed him how the change in his eye coloring had been managed. Contact lenses, tinted. They made his flake-gold eyes brown, thus altering one of Doc's most startling appearance tags.

"I'll be damned!" Thompson said. "I wouldn't have known you. The clerk here gave me your name, but I still didn't believe it was you."

"I want a reservation."

"Sure. If you want a whole airplane, it's all right, too."

"Just a reservation," Doc said. "Good on any plane I pick."

"Fix him up that kind of a reservation," Thompson told the clerk.

"There's something else," Doc said.

"Anything?"

"Planes bound for Miami."

"Yes?"

"I believe one is leaving soon?"

"That's right."

"Is it a through ship?"

"No, the flight is made up here."

Doc was pleased. "Then the plane will be over at the shop," he said. "I want to go over there and get aboard it. The idea being to be in the plane and out of sight before the passengers get aboard."

"Don't want one of the passengers to see you, maybe?"

"That's it."

"I'll take you over to the shop myself," Thompson said.

"No, better send someone else," Doc suggested. "It might cause too much attention if the boss turned up."

Thompson went away, came back a moment later with a co-pilot. "This is Jennings. He'll show you the ship."

Doc and Jennings departed together.

Thompson scowled at the clerk. He told the clerk, "All I can say, dope, is it's lucky he's the kind of a guy he is, or we wouldn't have any more jobs now than a rooster has teeth."

"How do you mean?" asked the startled ticket clerk.

"I mean he owns the damned company, that's all," Thompson said. He left laughing over the look on the clerk's face.

THE ship was a Douglas DC-3. Flight seven, Kansas City, Memphis, Birmingham, Miami. The plane made the ground trip from the airline hangar over to the depot building, and the attendants ran the

wheeled steps out to the ship. Doc could hear the loudspeakers announcing the flight was ready for departure. He could see the cluster of passengers.

The girl was aboard. Miss Trudy Stevens. He wondered if that was her real name, and thought it might be. But he'd bet she hadn't made this reservation under that name. He noticed she'd arranged her hair differently, put on a different frock, changed her appearance as much as she could. Doc got out a pencil and paper, wrote:

ON MIAMI PLANE WITH HER.

TRY ME AT ROSE BOWL MIAMI.

—CLARK

He thought Tom Ittle would appreciate the Rose Bowl touch, for it was one of the better restaurants.

He was forward in the pilot's compartment. There was room for him there. He pressed the button that lit a signal light for the stewardess. When she came, he handed her the message.

He told her to telephone it to Tom Ittle at the restaurant on Grand not far from Ninth. Or have someone telephone it to Ittle. But get it to him.

"Yes, sir," she said.

He saw someone had told her who he was, or she had recognized him. "Did you recognize me?" he asked, worried.

"No, sir. Jennings told me."

"Jennings should have kept his mouth shut," he said. "But as long as Jennings didn't, it would be a big help if you did."

"I will, sir."

"Have you told anyone else?"

"No, sir."

"Good."

She left, and he went back to watching the passengers come aboard. He could see them, and he didn't think they could see enough of his face through the plexiglass to recognize him. He had been watching them file aboard even while he was writing the note and giving it to the stewardess.

There was one passenger he hadn't expected.

This was the long, fat man from the train. The one who had sat across the aisle from the girl.

He was the last one aboard before the attendants wheeled the steps away and the pilot started the motors and the plane rolled down the taxi strip, turned its nose to the runway, got the green light from the faded green-colored control tower, and took off.

Chapter VI

IT would have taken a day or two of hard barreling to drive an automobile from Kansas City to Miami, Florida, but that didn't keep the plane flight from seeming long. The stewardess, trying to be sweet, brought him one of the dinners they were serving the passengers, and he spent quite a while worrying about whether any of the passengers, specifically the girl and the long fat man, had noticed that an extra dinner had gone into the pilot's compartment.

He saw that it was going to be very dark when they reached Miami. He made an arrangement with the co-pilot. The co-pilot was to get in the administration building and get the lights shut off for a few seconds, long enough for Doc Savage to get out of the plane in the resulting darkness.

This plan worked very nicely. Doc was able to leave the plane on the heels of the last passenger. He hot-footed around to the other side of the administration building before the lights came back on. He got a cab.

The long, fat man came out first. Doc was tempted to follow him. But the girl appeared also, and he trailed her instead.

As it developed, it would not have made much difference which one he trailed. The girl went to the Gables, a fine hotel on Miami Beach. So did the long, fat man.

They did not arrive separately. The long, fat man was there first, and the girl seemed rather astonished to see him. Doc thought, for a moment, that she was going to duck out. Instead, she made a hurried side trip into one of the hotel lobby shops, didn't come out until the fellow had registered and gone to his room. Then she came in and got a room.

Doc decided to register himself. It would give a good reason for his loitering about the place. He got 314. That was all right. It was low enough down that he wouldn't have to depend on the elevators. It was always disconcerting to step out of an elevator and meet someone you didn't want to meet.

The bellhop was about forty-five years old. "How would you like to make ten dollars?" Doc asked him.

"What do you want? Name it, anything short of murder." The bellhop looked greedy.

"I want the names and room numbers of the two people who registered just before I did. Can you do that for me?"

"That may not be so easy." The bellboy was dubious. "This old guy they got on the desk thinks he's important. He makes us stay at the porter's desk when we ain't on call." He scratched his head for a while. "I'll see what I can do."

He was back in ten minutes.

"Sandy and Pedro took 'em to their rooms," he reported. "They happened to remember their names. Girl registered as Teresa Swingles, and guy registered as Ben Holland. Girl is in 1412, and guy is in 901."

Doc gave him the ten. "Don't spend it all in one place."

The bellhop grinned. "Any other little jobs, you know who to ask for. I'm Jim."

"Good enough. Thanks, Jim."

HE went over and tested the bed by thumping it with his fist. It was a good bed, and he was tired. He sat

on it, but did not start undressing. He was plagued with the feeling that he should be doing something.

He wished he could call New York, get some of his assistants down here to help. But they weren't in New York. He had five assistants, specialists in various professions, who had worked with him for a long time.

But all of them were out of the country. Monk Mayfair, the chemist, was in England, and Ham Brooks, the lawyer, was in Italy. The engineer, Renwick, and the electrical expert, Long Tom Roberts, were in China, and Littlejohn, the geologist, was in Iran. All of them were doing important work in the wake of the war.

He was in this alone. The first time that he had tackled anything alone for a long time. The feeling he got out of the thought wasn't pleasant.

He knew, he decided, much too little about what he was doing. This chasing around over the country, while exciting, was beginning to seem aimless. He wished Charlotte d'Alaza had told him more.

He decided to call Charlotte.

The hotel operator sounded sleepy. She got Long Distance for him, and he explained, "I want to talk to Charlotte d'Alaza, on King Joe Cay, one of the Bahama islands. Give the call to your overseas operator; she'll know how to handle it."

He actually didn't think he would get hold of Charlotte at this hour of the night. He didn't suppose the King Joe Cay radio station was monitored all night, although he wasn't sure. He'd never been to King Joe Cay. But, to his surprise, Charlotte was on the wire in about ten minutes.

"Hello, Creepy," she said.

Charlotte sounded husky and he wasn't sure it was really she.

"Charlotte?" he asked.

"Yes."

"This isn't Creepy." He wondered who Creepy was.

"Dammit, of course it's not," Charlotte said angrily. "What do you want at this hour of the night, you nitwit?"

"This is Doc Savage."

"Oh," Charlotte said. "*Quelle surpris!* When the operator said Miami, I supposed it was Creepy calling."

"Who's Creepy?"

Charlotte didn't answer immediately. When she did speak, there was a great change in her voice. It had become afraid. "Don't you know yet?" she demanded.

"No."

"Oh, my God!" Charlotte said. She didn't just say it. It came out with a coating of horror.

"Who is Creepy?"

She was silent a while. "Never mind that."

He knew Charlotte. There was no sense in pushing her for an answer, because she wouldn't give one.

He said, "I want some more information."

"Tell me what's happened." She was getting more excited. "I must know what has happened."

He said, "I threw in with Tom Ittle and a man named Brigham Pope, and we have been pestering a girl who has used the name of Trudy Stevens and Teresa Swingles. She is at the Gables in Miami Beach. So am I. So is a rather long, fat man who used the name of Ben Holland."

Screaming, Charlotte said, "They shouldn't both be in the same hotel!"

"Who?"

"Creepy and—I mean—oh, damn you! Let me think!" She was silent. He decided she wasn't thinking. It sounded more like she was suffering from terror. He could hear her rasping breathing, and it sounded as if someone was scuffing a foot on a carpet.

Charlotte spoke finally.

"Listen," she said. "Listen, you're doing all right. Just keep at it."

And she hung up on him.

He replaced his own telephone receiver on the hook. He sat there, bemused, for a while, realizing that he had been puzzled by Charlotte's fear.

HE tried to telephone the Rose Bowl, the restaurant where he had told Tom Ittle and Brigham Pope, in the note he'd given the stewardess to telephone them in Kansas City, to meet him. But no one answered at the Rose Bowl number. The place evidently wasn't open at this ungodly hour of the morning.

He frowned at the bed. He wasn't sleepy, that was sure. A few minutes ago he hadn't been sleepy either, but he realized now that he could have slept. He wished he hadn't called Charlotte. He hadn't learned much.

His own uneasiness began to crawl up inside him. He was alone in this thing. That bothered him. He hadn't supposed it would. The vagueness of things didn't help, either.

It was not entirely vague. He knew, or at least had strong reason to suspect, that the international aeronautical situation was behind it. International. Not just one airport, or one airline, or state aviation or inter-state aviation. International. Big.

International aviation was about to go into a phase which those able to think for themselves had been afraid it would go into.

Seventy years or so ago the same sort of thing had happened in the United States railroads picture. With the great wealth of the western states there for the tapping, there had been a wild scramble among railroads to get rights and concessions, a dog-eat-dog affair.

It was that way with the airlines now—almost. The fabulous possibilities for money-making in international flying were there for the picking. And aviation companies, corporations, cartels, were

beginning to shoulder each other.

Of course there was a great deal of inter-governmental agreement and maneuvering aimed at stopping this sort of thing. Washington was sincere in its efforts. Perhaps every man in Washington wasn't sincere, but enough of them were. London was sincere, probably by about the same percentage. Paris, Moscow, Chungking, all making a fairly honest effort. But they—the companies, corporations, cartels in aviation—were trying to crowd each other out of the trough.

Everybody wanted to be big pig. But competition was one thing; the tactics of man-eating sharks was another. If one company started man-eating, all the others would do the same thing in self-defense.

It was, when the situation was reduced to ultimate simplicity, this man-eating that the really sincere and important people in the international aviation picture wanted to stop before it got started.

There were quite a few of these white knights in the aviation scene, and Doc Savage happened to be one of them. He had been watching things develop, watching them very closely, with his teeth on edge.

Some rumors had reached him about America-Pacific-Transit-Airways. APTA as it was called. It was a big outfit, a mushroom, a kid giant. It had grown so fast that some thinking minds were wondering if its growth was entirely healthy.

APTA was controlled, from the dural rivets in its airplanes to the souls of its employees, by Charlotte d'Alaza.

That was why Doc had been about to investigate Charlotte d'Alaza.

He wondered if she knew it. She might.

He decided to go up and talk to the long, fat man who had registered under the name of Ben Holland. He was curious about the man.

901. The figures were in gold on the mahogany door panel.

Doc Savage hesitated in front of the door, wondering what kind of a gag would get him inside.

The hall was long, dimly lighted, sparingly but tastefully decorated. A window was open, a breeze thrusting the curtains inward gracefully. With the wind came the sound of the sea, the gentle sneezing of waves against the sand beach.

The old telegram gag, Doc thought. Knock, tell him there's a telegram. If he says shove it under the door, explain that the delivery slip has to be signed.

That wasn't very good, though. To really work it, one should first call the victim's room, explain there was a telegram. That was the way to do it.

He decided to give it the extra touch needed.

He went back downstairs, found the booths in the alcove off the lobby. He hoped the operator wouldn't listen in, called 901.

He heard the click of a lifted receiver. A pause. That was understandable. If the ringing had awakened the long, fat man, it was understandable that he would be slow getting the instrument to his ear. But the pause stretched out.

Doc said, "Mr. Ben Holland?"

"Yes." It was a whisper.

"This is the desk calling, Mr. Holland. We have a telegram for you, marked urgent. We are sending it up."

The whisper, hoarse, said, "Let it go 'til morning."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Holland. The boy is already on his way up with the message."

"Okay," the whisper said. And the receiver went back on the hook.

Doc frowned, hung up himself. He was puzzled by the whisper. Was the fellow trying to disguise his voice?

There was a long wait for the elevator. At least three minutes. Doc looked for an indicator which would show what floor the elevator was on, but there seemed to be no such device.

"Nine," he said when the cage finally came.

He went straight to 901, knocked. Waiting for a response, he watched the breeze move the curtain inward from the window, then suddenly suck it outward. He knocked again, more firmly.

"Telegram, sir," he called.

The sound of airplanes flying came in through the window. There seemed to be five or six of them, and they were offshore a mile or so.

"Telegram, sir," he repeated.

He frowned at the door for a while, then whipped out his handkerchief and used it to keep his fingers off the door knob while he turned it. The door was unlocked. He opened it an inch or two, said, "Your telegram, sir."

Pale lemon light filled the part of the room he could see. The carpet was taupe, the walls tan and cream, the furniture modern with leathers and blond woods.

He threw the door the rest of the way open, went in.

The dark green spread on the bed had been turned back, an apple green blanket with deep leaf-green edging was tangled in a ball, and the sheets, also green, but of a very pale shade, were tangled among the long, fat man's arms and legs. The mattress, green-striped, was depressed into a shallow valley by the long, fat man's weight, and the valley had caught and held a considerable quantity of the man's blood.

Doc Savage retreated a pace, punched the door with his elbow to make it close. Then he went to the bed. His early training in surgery had made him accustomed to death, and the inner parts of the human body were not unfamiliar to him. But murder was something else again.

It was as sloppy a job of throat-cutting as he could imagine anyone doing.

Chapter VII

THE lemon light came from a reading light attached to the head of the bed. He decided it was

inadequate, returned to the door and flipped the switch, using his elbow again. The room instantly filled with blue-white light from a ceiling fixture, and the knife was disclosed.

He went to the knife and examined it without picking it up. It was a steak knife, steel with a serrated edge. It was marked with the cross-in-a-circle insignia of the Santa Fe railway.

He tried to remember whether the girl had had a steak when he took her to dinner on the train. Knives like this were served with steaks.

She'd had a steak. He was sure.

Wheeling, he looked at the telephone. That whisper! A girl whispering over a telephone could very well sound about the same as a man whispering over a telephone.

He went to the windows. They were closed. He opened them, leaned out. Almost directly below was the entrance canopy of the hotel. To the left, three taxicabs were parked at a stand. But there was no one walking on the street as far as he could see in any direction.

Moving rapidly and purposefully now, he went to the blond dresser. The long, fat man's toiletries were spread out there, a safety razor, shaving lotion, cologne, a man's perfume labelled Hunter, a hazel-brown man's powder, a gold key chain with three keys, a wristwatch.

He found hotel stationery in the writing desk drawer, envelopes and two sizes of paper. He took a sheet of eight and a half by eleven stationery, wrenched off the cap of the powder container, dumped all the powder on the paper, made a package of it. Hefting this, he decided it wasn't heavy enough, dug three silver half-dollars out of his pocket and included them in the packet. He went back to the window.

The taxis were still there. The street was deserted. He left the powder packet on the window sill, went back and opened the dead man's suitcase.

The suitcase contained a winter suit of blue serge. He looked at the labels. Paul Morrell, Tailor, Nassau, New Providence, BWI. He made a mental note of that, because Charlotte's Island was only about eight miles from Nassau.

There seemed to be nothing else enlightening in the suitcase.

He did not like to disturb the body or the bed clothing, but he thought it advisable. He was glad that he did pry around, because he found that the man had been wearing something fastened to the inside of his left leg, just above the knee. The fastening had been done with adhesive tape. The marks of the tape were plain. The object held there, and the tape which had held it, were gone.

He heard a cab start in the street. He had been listening for that. He went to the window quickly.

The taxi was pulling up to the front of the hotel. It halted before the unwallled tunnel made by the awning, and the hotel doorman opened the cab door.

As soon as he was sure a woman had gotten into the cab, Doc leaned far out of the window with the paper packet he had made of the powder.

He took his time throwing the packet. It hit the top of the cab, the paper split, the powder scattered over the cab top, marking it.

The surprised hotel doorman stepped on to the cab running board to look at the powder. He bent his head back, looked upward. Doc withdrew quickly. He waited, heard the cab start, go away.

He could not make out the license of the cab. He had been fairly sure he wouldn't be able to. The doorman had found one or more of the silver half-dollars and was hunting the others.

USING his handkerchief to prevent fingerprints, he lifted the telephone receiver.

"May I speak to the doorman? . . . Yes, the doorman, please?"

The doorman's voice was deep, gruff. "Hello."

"You just put a lady in a cab?"

"Yeah."

"Do you happen to know the name of the driver of the cab?"

"Naw." The doorman became inquisitive. "Say, you the guy who threw something on top of that cab?"

"There's five dollars in it for you if you know the name of the cab driver."

"Listen!" The doorman was indignant. "We don't allow guests throwin' stuff outa the windows. What's the idea? You're liable to hurt somebody."

"That was most unfortunate," Doc told him. "It won't happen again."

"It better not."

Replacing the receiver on the hook, Doc considered the possible destinations of the cab. Miami proper, he believed. It had taken the first turn to the south, turning right, and that street led to one of the causeways to Miami.

The sound of knocking on the door nearly made his hair stand on end.

"What is it?" he called. He tried to sound sleepy.

"Telegram, sir."

He went to the door quickly, lowered his voice, said, "Shove it under the door."

"It has to be signed for, sir."

"Just a minute," he said.

The key was on the inside of the door. Carefully, very carefully, he turned it, locking the door.

He didn't waste time on the window. The building was a new one, and while there was a vague possibility he might be able to reach another window by that route, he didn't care to chance it in the darkness.

There was a connecting door, though. The room, as was the case in many hotels, could be made part of a suite by using this door. They had used the old hotel gag of increasing a guest's feeling of security and privacy by putting the head of the bed against the door. Doc slid the bed back, and it made little noise. The door was locked.

It was a wood-paneled door, not particularly solid. He knew immediately he could break out the lock, but how quietly was another matter. He took a pillow off the bed, put it under his foot, brought the foot

and all his weight hard against the door just above the lock. There was a splintering sound, much as though he had stepped on a cigar box. About that loud, which was pretty loud.

The bed in the adjoining room was also headed against the door. He began to push against the door, pushing the bed back at the same time.

“Here, here!” an angry female voice said. “What in hell are you doing now?”

A man's voice, also from the bed, said, “It ain't me, Myrtle.”

DOC SAVAGE thought of various expedients he might use to silence or deceive the pair. None of the ideas seemed very good. But he had to try something.

He said, “The police! Sh-h-h-h. Keep quiet. Here, I'll show you my credentials.”

He was in the room now. He closed the door, moved around the bed. “I'm going to turn on the light.” He spoke in a low voice.

The light showed a large determined looking woman and a small sheep of a man in bed. The woman glared and yanked the covers up around her neck. Her hair, done up in curlers, made her look like an albino Fiji Islander, if Fiji Islanders weighed as much as two hundred and twenty-five pounds.

“Sh-h-h-h,” Doc said. “This burglar is in the hall, we think.”

From the way the big woman looked, he knew what she was going to say. She was going to say she didn't think he was a policeman.

“I don't think you're a policeman,” the big woman said.

“I'm sorry about this,” Doc said. He hoped they wouldn't hear him in the hall. “Here, I'll show you my credentials.”

They were knocking on the door of the other room again.

Doc got his billfold out. It contained nothing that would prove he was a policeman, but he pretended it did. He took out a card which proved that Clark was entitled to use the facilities of the YMCA. He waved this card, and said, “Here, you can see for yourself that I am an officer.”

“You're not in uniform,” said the big woman.

“Plain clothes.”

“Let me see that card.”

Suddenly there was a dull crashing sound in the hall. They had burst open the door into the other room.

“Sh-h-h,” Doc said. “I think they're about to catch him!”

He leaped back to the light, and turned it off. He whipped off his coat, vest, necktie, shirt. He dropped these beside the door. The room was very dark.

It was a good thing, he reflected, that the woman was big and belligerent. A lesser woman might have screamed when he turned out the light.

He mussed his hair. He grasped his pants at the belt as if he had just put them on and was afraid they would fall off.

He opened the door, stepped out into the hall.

“What's going on here?” he demanded.

There were four uniformed policemen in the hall, and at least two others in the room with the dead man. Doc noticed that he had gotten a very lucky break indeed, because he had closed the door behind him, and apparently the officer hadn't noticed what room he had appeared from. He repeated, “What's going on? What the dickens is this?”

The policemen looked at Doc, noting his resemblance to a startled hotel guest who had just left his bed.

“Get back in your room,” an officer said. “This isn't any of your business.”

“What *is* your room?” demanded another officer.

“Nine-forty-three,” Doc said, and was startled at his good fortune in remembering the room that was nearest the elevators and, incidentally, the stairs leading down.

“Go to your room,” the cop directed.

“Okay,” Doc said. “But I don't see any reason for it.”

He walked down the hall, reached the steps, extended his hand and pantomimed opening a door. He passed through the imaginary door, hoping the police wouldn't be looking too closely.

He went down the steps with flying haste. He didn't know how long the large lady would stay in bed, but it probably wouldn't be long.

The stairs ended at the mezzanine floor, and a wider and quite ornate staircase led on down to the lobby. The mezzanine was in the form of a balcony surrounded by a railing. As a precaution, Doc looked over the railing before going on down. He was glad he did, because there were policemen in the lobby.

The hotel clerk was haranguing a police captain loudly.

“There hasn't been any murder, not in this hotel,” the clerk was saying.

“We'll find out,” the captain told him. “And stop acting as if we're just trying to make trouble for the hotel. You know better than that.” The Captain became indignant. “You'd be better off if you cooperated.”

“I'm perfectly willing to cooperate,” said the clerk.

“Why don't you act like it, then? Why give me an argument when I ask you what room this William Clark is registered in?”

“William Clark, you say?”

“Yes.”

“What do you want with him?”

“This telephone tip we got said he'd murdered the man in 901!” snapped the captain. “Now let's have

fewer questions and more action.”

The doorman was listening. “Hey! That’s the guy!” He became excited. “That’s the guy threw the stuff onto the cab.”

“Who?”

“Guy named Clark in three-fourteen.”

“Room 314?” the Captain demanded.

“Yeah. I got the room number from the telephone operator because this guy called me, see, to ask about a dame.” The doorman was feeling important. “It was this way, see. The dame comes out . . .”

Doc withdrew. There was a window on the west side of the mezzanine, and he opened it quietly, looked out, decided it was not too much of a drop to the ground. He swung out and dropped.

It didn’t jolt him much when he landed. It did sting his feet a little. He lifted first one foot then the other and shook it while he was listening. He decided no one had seen him.

He walked through a playground for children, carefully outmaneuvering slides and swings and teeter-totters. Beyond was a hedge of poinsettias, then a side street with a border of tall silver-trunked palms.

On the street, he swung out in a distance-eating walk, a giant of a man with a remarkably muscled chest and arms. He regretted leaving his coat and shirt and vest behind.

He thought now that he might have worn his shirt too and gotten away with it.

Chapter VIII

HE walked five blocks, and by that time he was quite glad that Miami Beach was a resort town, because in resorts people walked the streets wearing almost anything. Going to the beach, they simply wore trousers over their swimming trunks if they were men. Sometimes they had a towel around their neck. He wished he had a towel.

He heard music, and as soon as he had decided it was an orchestra, not a radio, he headed for the sound. A neon sign said *Chi-Chi Club, Fifty Beautiful Girls, Fifty*. There were some taxicabs parked there, which was what he had been hoping for.

“The main causeway to Miami,” he directed.

The cab driver’s head was as bald as a boiled egg. “What address in Miami, you say?” His head looked a little like a boiled egg, too.

“Just the causeway.”

“Sorry brother, but that’s too short a haul to . . .”

“That’s not the end of the haul,” Doc said. “Keep your shirt on.” The cab got going. Doc examined the driver’s keg-shaped neck speculatively. “What size shirt do you wear?”

“Huh?”

“What size shirt.”

The driver gave this some thought. “Whatcha wanna know for?”

“I want to buy your shirt.”

“The hell you do!” The driver gave it some more thought. “Size eighteen. Whatcha wanna buy it for?”

Doc explained patiently, “I want to buy it because I haven't got any shirt. What about five dollars? That suit you?”

The driver began to laugh. Evidently he was visualizing something spicy as the explanation for his fare wanting to buy a shirt. “You bought a shirt,” he said.

“Stop at this end of the causeway and give me the shirt,” Doc directed.

They made the change.

“All right,” Doc said. “Now you wait here. Keep your motor running. You have plenty of gas, I hope?”

“I got gas, yeah.”

“All right, keep your motor running. I'm going to stand on top of the bridge railing here by this street light. I may have to stand there quite a while. But you wait.”

The driver began to have doubts about the sanity of his passenger. He said, “I'll be damned!”

Doc said, “You've heard of these crazy stunt parties, haven't you? You have to do a crazy stunt.”

“Oh,” the driver said. “Yeah. Yeah, sure.”

“All right. You wait.”

Doc perched on the wide concrete railing of the causeway bridge. Whenever he saw a car coming from Miami, he watched it intently. If it was a taxicab, he stood up on the railing, a vantage point from which he could see whether there was a smear of powder on the top of the cab, as it passed.

After about fifteen minutes of that, he began to wonder if he might not be crazy after all.

IT was not as big a gamble as it seemed. The night clubs, the real hot spots, were mostly on Miami Beach, and at this time of the morning—it was a quarter past three—the niteries offered the best pickings for the cabs. If the driver of the powdered cab had taken the girl to some nearby spot in Miami, there was about a seventy percent chance that he would turn around and cruise back to the Beach, where there was a better chance for another fare.

He gave himself thirty minutes of this.

It took twenty. The cab was empty when it went past.

He ran to his own taxi. “Catch that cab.”

“You mean trail it?”

“I mean catch it.”

There was a brief chase, and a shouting between the cab drivers. The other cab stopped, the driver demanded, "What the hell is this? What gives?"

"You picked a lady up at the Gables about half an hour ago. Where did you take her?"

The new driver was a young man with a long face. "What's in it for me?" he asked. Apparently he had a mercenary nature too.

"Couple of dollars."

"Not enough." The boy put his cab in gear.

Doc said with authority, "There's some trouble in it for you if you don't come across, my friend."

The boy thought this over. "Five," he said.

Doc gave him a five-dollar bill. "Where did you take her?"

"Miami."

"Where in Miami?"

"That'll cost you another five," the boy said.

Doc reached into the cab, got the boy by the shirt front, jerked his head and shoulders out of the cab, said, "Listen, squirt, if you want to stay in one piece, you'll cut that out." He waved a fist in front of the boy's eyes. "Where did you take her?"

The size of the fist made the boy's eyes bulge. "Pier Four," he said hastily. "You know, Pier Four, where the yachts tie up."

"I know," Doc said. He threw the driver back into his cab.

The other cab driver was more respectful as they got going.

"Say, you were kind of tough on him."

"Tough? On that chiseler? He got off easy."

"You scared the socks off him."

"He got off easy. Pier four."

"Pier four, okay. I heard him tell you."

SOME of the nicest hotels in Miami faced wide Biscayne Boulevard, on the other side of which lay Bayfront Park, a pleasant place with tall palms and tropical shrubbery. The yacht basin was on the east edge of Bayfront Park, and beyond it was a dredged channel leading north, to the steamship basin which was dredged much deeper, and from which the main ship channel led, bearing one hundred fifteen degrees magnetic, out through the breakwater and to sea.

There was around sixteen feet of water off the yacht basin, and the piers there were numbered, Pier Five being the party fishing pier, and Four the yacht pier.

Doc opened the little gate with the *No Admittance* sign and moved out on the pier. The dock wasn't flood-lighted, but there was enough illumination from the street lights over by the hamburger stand. He avoided a pile of water hose, an overturned dinghy with a freshly coppered bottom.

There was one good-sized schooner, about sixty feet waterline. There was a smaller schooner, a yawl, two ketches. The rest were powerboats of assorted sizes. He walked softly, watched for lights, listened for sounds.

He intended, as a last resort, to investigate each boat individually. But only as a last resort. He wished he'd asked the cab driver if he had seen the girl go aboard a boat. He had forgotten to do that.

There was a wooden canopy roof in the center of the pier. He stood under that, in the shadows. There was enough breeze to move the boats, make the springlines grunt softly, to shake an ensign which someone had forgotten to take down.

Waiting there, watching, he was suddenly aware of a feeling of coolness, almost as if the temperature had dropped. The temperature hadn't changed, but the sensation was quite real.

A large, dark man appeared from the companion of a ketch. He yawned and stretched. He sat for a time scratching himself, raking his fingers through his hair, otherwise acting like a man who had just awakened. He lighted a cigarette, threw the match into the water where it fizzed and went out. He contemplated the little puff of smoke the extinguished match had made, watched it rise, drift away. Then he got up himself and climbed on to the slip runway, walked to the dock, came down the dock. He was smoking.

When he was opposite Doc Savage, he took the cigarette off his lips, held it out in front of him, blew smoke on it. This was quite a gesture. He intended it to take Doc's attention from his other hand, which went inside his coat after something or other.

Doc kicked him in the stomach.

THE kick wasn't very sporting, but it was the handiest thing to do. Doc stopped feeling ashamed of it when he got hold of the man, they began to go over and over on the dock, and he found that the man had put his hand inside his coat with the intention of producing an enormous automatic pistol. It was a very big pistol. It weighed almost as much as an anvil.

The fight ended with Doc astride the man and in possession of the howitzer.

A man put his head out of the cabin of a thirty-thousand-dollar cabin cruiser. "What's goin' on?" he demanded. He'd heard the fuss.

Doc began laughing happily. Loudly, too. "I could throw you when we were kids, and I can still do it," he said.

The man Doc had grabbed also laughed. Doc was astonished at this.

The man who had put his head out of the cruiser cursed. "Dammit, can't a man sleep around here?" he complained. His head disappeared.

When no other inquisitive heads popped out of boats, Doc hoisted his captive erect. He said, "What do I call you?"

"Joseph," the man said.

“All right, Joe, let's go talk to Trudy Stevens, or Teresa Swingles, or Creepy, or somebody.”

“Joseph,” the man said. “Not Joe, please.”

“Okay, Joseph.”

They went to the ketch. It was a nice-looking boat, around forty-two feet on the waterline, with a fine bow, not too much beam, a little tumble-home and a double-ender stern. A centerboarder. A good sea boat, too, probably. It was done in white and mahogany and brass, but the sail-covers were red.

Joseph called, “Let's not start anything.”

This got a period of silence from inside the ketch. Then a girl's voice said, “Come aboard.” It was *the* girl's voice.

Doc punched Joseph with the gun for effect. Joseph became worried. He said, “Don't cock that gun. It slips off cock sometimes, and shoots.”

Joseph wore sneakers and dark trousers and a sweater. He wore a knife in a sheath on his belt in the middle of his back. He was a seafaring man, obviously.

“This is a great piece of artillery for a sailor to pack,” Doc told him. “What do you use it for, an anchor?”

With dignity, Joseph said, “The piece is a family heirloom, sir.”

The ketch had a main cabin aft; forward it was split into two state rooms. From the size of the engine compartment, and the faint odor of fuel oil, Doc decided it had a Diesel auxiliary of considerable size.

Doc looked at the girl. “What do I call you? Trudy Stevens? Teresa Swingles? Creepy?”

HE was astonished at the amount of fear she was showing. It was a distending agony in her eyes, and a paleness around her lips. She had an automatic shotgun, holding it with both hands, forefinger inside the trigger guard. “Creepy?” she said. “How did you know I was called that.”

“Charlotte,” he said.

He was surprised at the change in her. At the amazement, the stunned wonder, the remark brought over her face.

She put the gun down.

“Joseph, I've made a terrible mistake,” she said.

Joseph seemed confused.

The girl was looking at Doc Savage. “Charlotte told you that, didn't she? You're a friend of Charlotte's?” She watched him intently. “You are, aren't you?”

“What makes you think that?”

“She wouldn't call me Creepy to anyone but a friend.”

“Why on earth should she call you that any time?”

She thought for a moment. "You remember that book I was reading on the train to Kansas City?"

He nodded. "*Studien über Hysterie*, by Breuer and Freud. It seemed a little heavy to me at the time."

"I suppose so. Anyway, you get the idea. I like that sort of thing, and that's why Charlotte got to calling me Creepy. She says its creepy for a young girl to like reading such stuff. But she never used the name in public."

"She might be right. You were reading a first edition in the original, too, if I recall."

"Don't you know who I am?" she asked.

"No."

"I'm Charlotte's social secretary."

He was surprised. It was reasonable that Charlotte would have a social secretary. But he would have expected an older woman, a broken-down countess or baroness.

"*Je vous crois*," he said. "*Je crois bien*."

"*Taut mieux!*" she replied.

He tried Russian. "*Ob vas kharo'-shy vy' gavar.*"

"Blahardaryoo."

He tried a hard one. Roumanian. "*De ce-i vorba?*"

"Depinde," she said. "What on earth are you trying to do?"

Feeling a little foolish, he explained, "It just struck me that any social secretary of Charlotte's would have to speak a hatful of languages."

"A test?"

"In a way. Yes, it was." He frowned at her. "What made you think a woman whispering over the telephone would sound like a man?"

He saw by her expression that she had really been the one who whispered over the telephone.

He added, "So you killed the long, fat man."

Chapter IX

SHE wasn't shocked at all.

She said, "My name is really Trudy Stevens."

She picked up the automatic shotgun, and he stiffened, but she was only going to move the weapon back on the sofa berth in the cabin, to make room to sit down. She perched where the gun had been. She was dressed differently now, he saw. Slacks and old sneakers and a man's shirt. Boat things. The sneakers had rope soles, which were the best on a small boat at sea. They wouldn't slip.

“Poor Raedeker,” she said. She spoke softly, sorrowfully.

“His name wasn't Ben Holland?”

“Holland?”

“The name he registered under at the Gables.”

“Oh. No, his name was Hurd Von Raedeker.”

He started then. He knew who the long, fat man was. One of Charlotte's employees. Perhaps employee wasn't the word, because Von Raedeker was, or had once been, an important man in his circles. Von Raedeker had once headed Le Courtage Raedeker, Boulevard Haussman, Paris, and it had been a large brokerage concern. The man had a business head on his shoulders. For the last three years, Doc's preliminary investigations of Charlotte had shown, Raedeker had been associated with Charlotte's interests. He was one of many experts she had assembled about her. There was one thing about Charlotte: she knew how to collect brains, and make them do her bidding.

He said, “I think we should all have gotten together on that train to Kansas City, instead of playing tricks on each other.”

“You are working for Charlotte?”

“Yes.”

“Then we should have gotten together.”

The breeze, stiffening for a moment, pushed against the masts and stays of the ketch, made the little craft heel slightly. The cabin light, hung in gimbals like the lights in the old-fashioned sailing ships, swung slowly and its shadows traveled on the cabin walls like uneasy ghosts.

“Let's start at the beginning,” Doc said.

She said, “Your part of it began in Chicago. I saw you with Tom Ittle and that other man, and I was sure you didn't know I saw you. When you used that trick to get my purse, you didn't fool me.”

“I thought we did a pretty good job with that,” Doc said. He sounded discouraged.

“Oh, it was all right. You didn't fool me. I decided to get you, all of you I could, in some trouble in Kansas City. I couldn't find Tom Ittle, or I would have gotten him in trouble, too.”

“He walked right past us while you were having the police give me the works in Kansas City.”

“He did!” She was disappointed. “I didn't see him.”

Joseph stirred impatiently. Joseph wasn't a negro, or even a mulatto, as Doc had first thought. He was just an island white man, burned black by the tropical suns. He addressed Trudy Stevens. “Lady,” he said. “I better go topside and watch.”

“Yes, you better, Joseph.”

Joseph went out.

“You expecting visitors?” Doc asked.

“You found me, didn't you?” she replied.

“I don't think anyone else will find you the way I did,” he told her. He explained about the powder he had thrown to mark the top of the cab she had taken, and how he had later found the cab by looking for one with powder on its top. She did not seem impressed; it was discouraging.

She said, “Von Raedeker called me tonight at the hotel. I went up to talk with him. He was dead when I got there.”

Not having expected her to explain what had happened at the hotel, bluntly and in a few words like that, he was startled. He wasn't satisfied, either.

“Who killed him?” he asked.

She shrugged. “Tom Ittle. That other man. Maybe some of their helpers. I wouldn't know.”

“What makes you think Tom Ittle?”

“Why not?”

“How could he get here so quickly?”

“You got here, didn't you?”

“I came on the same plane with you, however.”

That astonished her. She looked so surprised that he explained how he had done it, by riding in the compartment with the pilot.

“How on earth did you manage that?” she demanded. “I wouldn't think the airline would allow it?”

He started to say they couldn't very well refuse, but didn't. Surprise parted his lips for a moment.

She didn't know he was Doc Savage. He covered his surprise, decided not to enlighten her. It would be rather embarrassing if he should announce profoundly that he was the notable Doc Savage, and then discover she had never heard of him. This had happened to him before.

He said, “Von Raedeker was wearing a money belt.”

She lost color at that. “Yes.”

“Someone had opened it.”

“Yes.”

“Did you?”

He thought for a moment she was going to faint. “No,” she said. “It had been opened when I got there, before I got there, I mean.”

“How long had you been there when I called on the telephone?”

“Not very long.”

“Why did you whisper?”

“Why, I naturally wouldn't want anyone to know I was in that room.”

“And you got right out of there after I said there was a telegram being sent up?”

“Right away.”

He knew she had, too. There had been about time for her to reach her room, get her things together, and take the taxi.

He said thoughtfully, “Tom Ittle could have gotten here from Kansas City, of course. He could have chartered a plane, a fast plane, and made it by the time we did, or a little before.”

“How would he know I was coming to Miami?”

“I passed him the information in Kansas City,” Doc admitted.

“That was a big help,” she said bitterly.

“It would be a bigger help if you told me what was behind this!” he snapped. Some of his indignation began to come out. “Is this all you're going to tell me?”

“Until I know more about you, it is,” she said.

He snorted. “I don't see how I'm going to be able to help you with Tom Ittle and Brigham Pope if you won't . . .”

Fascinated, he watched her horror.

BRIGHAM POPE. Mention of Brigham Pope's name had stricken her with stark fear. Charlotte, he remembered, had been affected by the name of Brigham Pope so starkly that he had known it over the land line-radio hookup.

He took time out to give Brigham Pope some thought. His opinion of Brigham Pope hadn't been high, he recalled. He'd supposed the man had been an ex-actor, probably once a comic of the cheaper sort, an emcee in night clubs of the honkytonk level. He scowled. Actor? What in the devil had made him think that Pope was an actor? He tried to pin the answer down in his mind, and suddenly he began to suspect that he might have thought that, not because Brigham Pope had been an actor as he'd supposed, but because the man was acting. Maybe he'd made a wide miss when he judged Brigham Pope.

Trudy Stevens now startled him. She got up stiffly, went to the hatch as if she were sleep-walking, said, “Joseph.”

“Yes, ma'am?”

“Cast off. We're leaving now.”

“Ma'am, there's a right spanky offshore breeze,” Joseph said. “There'll be some chop outside, and you know how seasick you get.”

“Cast off.”

“Yes, Ma'am, only . . .”

“The short, blond man I was telling you about is Brigham Pope,” the girl said.

“Oh, God!” Joseph was impressed. They could hear his feet scampering around on deck, casting off springlines, making ready for departure.

Doc Savage went over. He touched Trudy Stevens' arm. She jumped like a wild thing herself.

He asked, “Who's Brigham Pope?”

“Didn't . . . Didn't Charlotte tell you?”

“No.”

She shook her head wearily. “I don't understand how you can be working for Charlotte and know so little.”

He said, “She assigned me to the job over the long-distance telephone, and she probably felt there were some things the long-distance operators shouldn't hear.”

She was impressed by that, although he hadn't intended to impress her.

“Charlotte must have a high opinion of you,” she said. “I never heard of her doing a thing like that before. She generally gives her people small jobs and works them up over a period of years, to make sure they are efficient and she can trust them.”

He didn't answer that.

Instead, he said, “I wish you hadn't called the police after you left the hotel and told them I killed Von Raedeker.”

“I call them!” She was shocked. “Oh, I didn't! I didn't, really!”

“Someone did. Gave them my description.” He was not sure she wasn't lying.

“Who else knew your description—I mean, who else do you think of that could have done that.”

“Unless it was Tom Ittle or Brigham Pope,” he said, “I don't know who could have done it.”

“That's it!” The terror became a sickness deep in her eyes. “Brigham Pope and Tom Ittle! That's who did it!”

She scrambled wildly for the companionway steps.

“We've got to get to Charlotte's island,” she said.

SHE went on deck. He followed, feeling there was no use questioning her further now, that she was too upset to answer questions. He had never seen a girl so consumed with apprehension.

Joseph had cast off all the springlines. With a boathook, he was shoving the ketch out from the dock piling. Doc helped him, asked. “Hadn't you better start the motor?”

“No, no!” Joseph's throat had phlegm in it. “No one must be able to tell when we left.”

The fenders and the rub-boards were still hanging over the side of the hull. Doc picked them aboard,

took them forward to the forecastle. He began taking the stops off the jib. There was, as Joseph had said, a rather fair breeze, and he presumed they would ghost out of the slip under jib alone.

Trudy Stevens joined him. "Ever sailed a boat?" Her words were right, but her tone wasn't because of the fright.

"A little." His eyes were on the shore end of the docks. He thought he had seen a man leave Pier Five, scuttle through the luminance of the street lamps. He asked, "You just see a man running on shore?"

Her intake of breath was a low whistle. "Where?"

"Pier Five," he explained. He pointed out the spot.

"Joseph!" she called. She pointed out the spot to Joseph. "Mr. Clark, here, thinks he just saw a man run from there."

Joseph cleared his throat. "I been thinking a guy there was maybe watching the boat," he said. Joseph looked at Doc Savage. "Mister, if you don't think you can stand plenty of trouble, you better jump ashore. I'll run up to the end of the dock so you can."

"Thanks," Doc told him. "You needn't mind."

It was a short, northerly leg to the steamship turning basin, then a hard right turn around the flashing buoy into the steamer channel. The wind filled the jib, billowed it out. The long string of channel marker lights strung out ahead of them. Now that they were even this short distance out on the water, the wind seemed stronger. It was no longer a breeze. It was wind.

Joseph handled the wheel. He said to the girl, "You steer." He came forward.

Doc asked, "Going to break out the mains'l?"

"Yes, sir," Joseph said.

The jibsail was bulged out over the bowsprit, pulling them along like a big white mare. They uncovered and unstopped the main, and Doc hauled away on the halyards, pausing to shake the marconi slides loose when they stuck in the track. There was a lot to be said, he thought, for the old-fashioned mast hoops.

Joseph adjusted the sheet ropes, his eyes on the throat for the telltale wrinkles that would indicate they were trimming the main too hard. "The jigger," he said.

Doc went back to unstop the jigger sail. He stood back of the cockpit, untying the reef knots. The girl, handling the wheel, was close to him.

Doc said, "Want to tell me something?"

"What?"

"What is all the shooting about?"

She said, "There is something that belongs to Charlotte. Those men are after it."

"I knew that," he said. "But what is it?"

"I don't know."

"I'll bet you don't," he said disbelievingly.

"Suit yourself," she said.

He shook out the last sail stop. He took the halyard off the pin rack, began hoisting the jigger. Joseph was letting him handle this sail himself. Joseph had already seen that he was a small boat sailor.

He said, "Who has it?"

"What?"

"The thing the shooting is all about."

She didn't answer for a minute. "Von Baedeker had it, I think."

"In his money belt?"

"I think so."

"Charlotte," he said, "gave me the impression that you had it."

"I?"

"That was what she led me to think."

She thought about this for a while. "I see what Charlotte was trying to do. She was using you to mislead and confuse the enemy. In other words, when you joined up with them, they were sure that I had it because you thought I had it."

"You confuse me."

"I'm confused, too."

"Too confused to tell me what it's all about?"

She said, "I don't know."

"Like fun you don't," he said. But he dropped the subject.

THE Miami to Miami Beach causeway ran alongside the ship channel. The causeway had been made out of the material dredged up to make the ship channel. They boiled along, making probably seven knots, which was fast for a sailing craft under working sails only.

They were shot at just before they reached the stone breakwaters. The first shot went past like a stick breaking, a sucking brittle sound. Doc cried, "Down!" And the second shot came instantly afterward. Joseph, who was already running aft, fell heavily and skidded aft across the top of the deck house. He tried to stop himself sliding, and grabbed at the deckhouse skylight, missed, rammed his hand down through the skylight. The sound of glass was a brittle jangling.

Doc threw the girl away from the wheel.

"Get below!" he said. "Get below the waterline. Lie on the cabin floor."

She did as directed, which surprised him.

He worked for a while with the wheel, with the sheet ropes. The sheet lines came aft to the cockpit so that the boat could be one-manned or single-handed. One man could do everything but raise the sail without leaving the cockpit, or even taking both his hands off the wheel.

There was a small lock on the wheel, a gadget by which the wheel could be clamped immobile in any position. He turned that.

He went below.

“We'll go aground!” the girl cried.

“The boat's trimmed to hold her course,” he said. “I think we'll make it clear out through the breakwater without hitting.”

More bullets from a rifle began hitting the boat. A clip of them. They could hear the whacking report of the rifle on shore. But far the nastiest sound was the bullets going through the boat.

Joseph's hand hung down through the skylight. Blood dripped from it, fell on the girl's back as she lay pressed to the cabin floor.

Another clip of rifle bullets entered the boat.

Doc said, “That fellow I saw running. He must have gotten to a telephone.”

“It looks that way now.”

“I suppose they'll try to follow us in a speedboat.”

“I imagine so.”

“Don't worry too much about it,” he said. “There's going to be a pretty dusty sea outside. In a speedboat, they won't want much of it.”

THE ketch began to crawl up on wave crests and sink into hollows. He knew that they were well out on the breakwater channel, and that the rifleman, unless he could run like a mountain goat over the great stones of the breakwater, was well behind. Too, he was worried about crashing into the breakwater.

He put his head outside. They were almost exactly in the middle of the channel.

There was a red flashing buoy on the port, a bell buoy to starboard. He could hear the cow-like mooing of the sea buoy. Here was where they had better change course, because the ship channel angled a little northward here.

He started to go out to the wheel, but more rifle bullets came skipping toward them. He hastily returned to the cabin floor, lay there counting the shots.

The girl screamed in horror.

She had found blood was dripping on her.

Doc went outside. He changed the course, trimmed the sails again, went to Joseph.

“You awake?” he asked Joseph.

Joseph began cursing him, cursed softly and with considerable feeling. "You'd let a man lay here and get shot to pieces," Joseph said.

"Where did they hit you?"

"I don't know," Joseph said. "I think the bullet paralyzed me."

"You were hit in the leg," Doc said. "And if you really wanted to get down into the cabin, you could have gotten down there." He got out a pocket knife and began slitting Joseph's trouser leg. Joseph began cursing him again. "Stop that," he told Joseph. "Just because you're hurt is no reason to act childish."

The girl came out of the cabin. She hung over the rail and was sick.

Doc said, "That's a normal reaction to fear."

"I'm not that scared, damn you," she said. "I'm seasick." She sounded as if she would cheerfully cut his throat, or anybody's throat for that matter.

They were not shot at again.

The ketch was climbing young mountains now. It ran up long slopes of water, poised dizzily in foaming turbulence, pitched over and careened down the other slope. The sails were fat and hard with wind. A scattered scud of dark clouds moved rapidly overhead, but they seemed to move more swiftly than the clouds.

Chapter X

"HOLY GEE," Joseph said. "A man would think you were a doctor."

Doc Savage made no remarks about the thought. He finished working over Joseph's leg, and he was well satisfied with it. Most sailboats carry a good medicine kit, because the inhabitants of the craft are always falling over something and barking their shins, or worse.

"You do seem rather skilled," Trudy Stevens said.

"First aid," Doc said modestly.

She let him work with the bandages for a while longer, then she asked, "How long will he be laid up, doctor?"

He almost fell for that one, but caught himself, let a moment elapse, said. "If you mean me, I wouldn't know. I don't think the bullet hit the bone."

He knew darned well the bullet hadn't hit the bone and he could have told her within a day or two of how long it would be before Joseph could use his leg again.

He added, "Getting over your seasickness?"

"Maybe it was fear after all," she said.

He leaned back, glanced up at the sky. There were no stars visible, because the scud of strato-cumulous cloud had thickened over the warm gulf stream.

The wind hadn't changed, though. It was quartering off the stern, and it was a good, rousing number

seven on the Beaufort scale. Blowing about forty miles an hour.

They had started the Diesel, and because the wind was so near astern, had pulled up most of the centerboard. They weren't worried about leeway.

Doc transferred his attention back to the sea ahead. The seas were running large for the amount of wind, and he surmised that they had gotten in on the tail end of a larger gale. The size of the seas made it difficult to navigate a small boat.

He was worried. Ahead somewhere, and not very far ahead either, should be Great Isaac light. He hadn't spotted it yet, and he was afraid the cloud scud was down on the water, or the compass was off, or the wind direction had changed, or the Gulf Stream didn't have as much set as he had allowed for, or had more set. A lot of things could be wrong. If he cut through north of Great Isaac, fine, there was plenty of water. If he got too far south there was a hell's backyard of coral reefs, coral niggerheads that would cut a hole the length of their hull in a trice.

"Where's your West Indies Pilot," he asked.

Joseph said, "Haven't got one."

"What? No Pilot?"

Joseph snorted. "I can get around in these waters without any damned book."

Trudy Stevens was irritated. "Joseph, there's no sense you losing your temper."

"This man here, this Clark here, there's been nothing but bad luck since you met up with him," Joseph said. "I think he's a Jonah."

The girl was angry at Joseph. She told Doc, "Joseph can't read or write. That's why he doesn't have a West Indies Pilot aboard."

"You didn't have to tell him that." Joseph was hurt.

Doc knew he might need Joseph's help later, and need it badly. He didn't want the fellow angry at him. He said, "Joseph, what about this Great Isaac?"

Joseph said, "It's about three quarter of a mile long, not over forty feet high, narrow, bleak as can be, honeycombed rock. Foul and steep, tough place to land. There's about four and a half fathoms of water between it and Northeast Rock, and about the same between it and the other Brothers. But you best keep outside all of them. Great Isaac's foul half a mile out southwest."

"You have a remarkable memory," Doc said.

"Sure I got a good memory." Joseph was pacified. "Man with a good memory don't need no book."

Doc lifted his head suddenly. "Man with a radar plane detector doesn't need good ears," he said. "Too bad we didn't have one."

There was a plane coming.

It was a lightplane. He could tell by the coffee-mill quality of the motor sound. Four cylinders, and not over seventy-five horsepower, although guessing the horsepower that close was stretching his luck.

They did not see the plane. It went grinding past about half a mile behind them, flew on into the north. From the effect of the sea on the motor sound, Doc decided the ship was very low.

“They could put out two planes,” Doc said. “They would know we would have gone through at Gun Cay or Bimini, or here at Great Isaac. All they would have to do is put out two planes and patrol.”

“Where would they get planes?” the girl asked.

“You can rent them anywhere.”

“Oh.”

“There's Great Isaac light,” said Joseph proudly. “We done a good job of navigating across the Stream.”

Doc thought they had too. It wasn't much over seventy miles across the Gulf Stream the way they had come, but it was probably as tricky a piece of small boat navigating as there was in the world. You had the Gulf Stream, the velocity of which could never be depended upon, the wind, tide set, drift, all fairly unpredictable. But pride flowed out of him, and his head lifted. The plane was coming back.

“Douse all the lights,” he said. “Running lights, everything.” The girl ran to do this. It took but a moment.

“It's too near daylight. They'll find us,” she said.

She was right.

The plane, a little two-place high-wing monoplane with floats, didn't come very close. It circled, about half a mile away. Two complete circles. Then it bored off in the direction of Miami.

Joseph said, “I guess they decided not to fool with us.”

Doc and Trudy Stevens didn't share his optimism.

Doc said, “We'll hear more of them.”

“Another plane, you mean?” The girl's face was taut.

He shook his head. “Power boat, probably. They can't do much against us with planes unless they're armed, and I don't imagine they could rent a plane with a machine gun on short order. No, they'll use a boat. A fast one.”

Joseph snorted. “We go straight across the channel. She be rough as a cob. Speedboat have a hell of a time catching us.”

Doc didn't share his optimism. It was true the ketch could live in a sea that would swamp a power boat twice its waterline length, because of the steadying influence of the sails, and because sailboats are built for seagoing rather than fair-weather sailing. But he didn't think there was quite that much sea.

THEY did better than he expected. They were nearly across the channel before he picked up a boat pursuing them. The boat was an express cruiser, narrow-beamed and snaky. It climbed up on top of a mountainous wave, and it was close enough for the sight to hit him in the stomach.

Doc gave Joseph his enormous pistol. “Can you hit anything with that?”

“I can shoot the eye out of a pelican a mile away,” Joseph said.

“If you fall overboard, be sure and let go of it,” Doc said. “It would sink you like a submarine.”

Joseph shrugged. “I got a box of shells in the chart locker,” he said. “Would you get it, huh?”

Doc got him the shells. There were about thirty of the cartridges, and they were green with age. He suspected they would blow the gun up, wouldn't shoot at all, or would shoot hard enough to sink a destroyer. There was no telling. He resolved to get something solid between himself and Joseph when Joseph started shooting.

He found a small rifle for Trudy Stevens. It was a .22 calibre, and he found only four cartridges. “Pick out a thin-skinned one when you shoot,” he suggested.

She didn't smile. She was an aquatic green color. She had been seasick again. He thought it was really seasickness, not fear.

The speedboat was wallowing toward them. It was trying to charge, but it wasn't having much luck in the short, steep sea. Such a boat had no business outside on such a day. By rights, the craft should have foundered before this.

“Aren't you scared?” Trudy Stevens asked him.

“You bet I'm scared,” he admitted.

Joseph said, “I got an idea.”

“Yes?”

Joseph pointed up at the mainmast. “You haul me up there. The balloon jib halyard'll hold me. I'll lash myself to the mast.” Joseph got more excited about the idea. “The reefs begin again right ahead. No boat, not even a rowboat, can get through them if you don't know the way. I know the way.”

It was a good idea. Doc frowned. “You bump that mast just once with your leg, and you'll pass out,” he said.

A bullet came singing across overhead. Somebody on the speedboat had fired, but it was a wide miss.

“You really want to try it?”

“Yes,” Joseph nodded. Already he had a piece of line through the trigger guard of his portable cannon, was tying it about his neck.

Doc pointed the ketch in toward the white water. He hoped Joseph knew what he was talking about. There was a forest of coral heads before them. When a wave hit one of these, it would break, and the spray shooting into the air was like a whale spouting. There were hundreds of these whales spouting.

JOSEPH hit the mast with his leg once being hauled up. He cried out, but kept his consciousness. He had another line, and he took turns around himself and the mast, hauled tight. “Okay,” he said. He looked out ahead. “About three points starboard. Put her starboard!”

More bullets came from the speedboat. Some of these made small, ragged holes in the bone-hard, wind-filled sails.

Doc took the wheel, relieving Trudy Stevens.

He asked, "Want to make a last-minute confession? Tell me what is behind this?"

"I would if I knew," she said. She seemed hurt that he didn't believe her.

"How did you get into it?"

"Why, Charlotte sent me to New York. I was to go to her bank vault, gain access to her safety deposit box with the authorization she gave me, pretend to get something from the box. Then I was to become very furtive, go to Chicago, then Kansas City, then Miami, and back to Charlotte's island, King Joe Cay, on this boat."

"What do you think was the idea of all that?" he demanded.

"I think I was a herring."

"Red herring," he corrected.

"All right, red herring across the trail. I think I was tossed in to confuse Tom Ittle and Brigham Pope."

He asked, "And bait for me, maybe?"

"How do you mean?"

"I wish I knew," he said. "Charlotte is capable of some cute ones, so no telling."

She went below, came back at once. She had the shotgun. "You'll need a weapon," she said.

"We'll all need the hand of God." He looked up at Joseph, whose face showed his awful agony. "Joseph most of all."

A queer combination of wave timing—they in the hollow when the speedboat was on a crest—kept them from seeing the enemy until he was startlingly close. There were men on deck, armed.

Doc fired the shotgun. Twice. "That'll chase them inside, anyway," he said.

"Hard port!" Joseph bellowed. "Hard port, dammit!"

Doc put the wheel over. He didn't see the coral head until a geyser of water shot up almost alongside when a wave broke on it.

"You take the shotgun," Doc said.

He was going to be busy with the wheel.

THE speedboat came boiling up. It was twice as fast as they were. And almost as long, too. A man bawled at them around the windshield. "Heave to!" he roared. "Heave to, or we'll ram you!"

He was no one Doc had ever seen or heard. But a gasp from Trudy Stevens advised him she knew the man.

"Straight as she lies!" Joseph screamed. "Stand by for hard to starboard!"

A man on the speedboat cursed. They could hear him. He leaned out and took a deliberate aim at Joseph. The .22 went *ping!* and the man fell over backward foolishly, still holding his arm in aiming position.

Doc said, "You shoot them in the head like that, you can kill them even with a .22."

Sound from the girl got his attention. Her face was sickly. She hadn't intended to kill the man. A moment later she caved down in the cockpit.

"Starboard!" Joseph bellowed.

The ketch heeled over, the rail went under. There was no time to trim sail for each course change. Water squirted out of the wet sheet lines as they went under frightful tension. But they held.

"Hold her!" yelled Joseph. "Straight as she goes."

The speedboat was going to ram them. A bone of ugly foam in her teeth, she charged down on them. Doc roared up at Joseph, "Clear to port?"

"Twenty feet," Joseph yelled. "Then crowd 'em to starboard." He pointed.

Doc knew what he was trying to do. Trying to crowd the express cruiser into ramming a coral head.

Doc watched the speedboat charge at them. A sailboat, because she had the pivoting effect of her sails, could outmaneuver the express cruiser on short turns. He could dodge them the first time. But once only, probably.

The bow of the express boat was almost on them when he spun the wheel madly. The ketch spun like the dancer she was. The express boat was so close Doc heard the startled curse of the oarsman. Up on the ketch mast, Joseph pointed his old gun downward, and a yard of fire and smoke came out of the muzzle. What he hit, no one ever knew.

The express cruiser helmsman saw he couldn't ram. Then they saw the coral ahead off the bow. There was yelling.

Doc could see the coral head himself. And he saw the speedboat was going to crowd against them, go between the ketch and the blackhead.

Throwing back his head, Doc shouted, "Jibe! Joseph, Jibe!"

Joseph nodded. He understood.

Doc came around on the wheel. A jibe was a devilish thing to happen in a sea and a wind like this. It consisted of swinging the boat the few points necessary for the wind to catch the other side of the sails and swing them over. The boom weighed two or three hundred pounds. It would lash across the ketch stern with the speed of light and the force of a thunderbolt.

He let it swing. He jerked the sheet ropes loose from the cleats when the slack came. The jibe would have torn the cleats out bodily anyway, but it would have slackened the slamming force of the boom.

Swinging like a great club, the boom went over, slammed into the deckhouse of the express cruiser. It smashed through mahogany and glass and brass.

The speedboat steersman did the natural thing. Sheered off. Tried to escape the flailing horror. He got away from the boom, all right. But the cruiser hit the coral head.

It seemed to hit gently. The only intimation of what had happened was its sudden stop. The next sea lifted it. Doc saw the coral head, saw the bottom of the express cruiser above it, saw the cruiser drop, and there was no trouble hearing the impact this time. The coral head went into the innards of the express cruiser like a shark's teeth into the guts of a dead gull.

Doc looked up. Joseph was still conscious, although the shock of the jibe must have been terrific.

“Straight as you go,” Joseph called.

Doc lined the ketch up. The jigger jibed back, and they ran wing-and-wing. The mainsail, mangled and torn, wasn't doing much good. It was swung out against the mainstays. But they were still traveling like a scared pelican.

The cockpit of the ketch, Doc realized, was knee deep in seawater they had shipped. The girl was sloshing around in that, gagging. He caught her, hauled her half erect, held her. She coughed and sneezed and spouted water. Her eyes were open.

“You didn't kill him,” Doc said.

“But the way he fell after I shot . . .”

“He just tripped. After you fainted, he got up and started shooting again,” Doc said.

This was a lie. But the relief on her face made him glad he had lied. It wasn't pleasant to carry in your mind the thought that you'd killed a man. He wasn't sure she had, anyway.

He looked back. He saw that they had broken loose a life raft from the cruiser. They were getting aboard.

Joseph began shouting indignantly. “Damn them, there's a dozen little islands they can reach around here! Let's go back and finish 'em off!”

“You're too bloodthirsty,” Doc said. “Anyway, they haven't thrown away their rifles.”

Joseph called him a soft-hearted so-and-so. “Get me down from here,” Joseph finished. “There's a fairly clear channel ahead.”

Doc looked at the girl. “Able to steer?”

She said she was. He went forward, undid the balloon halyard, lowered Joseph to the deck. Joseph started dragging himself aft. He was not as far gone as Doc had expected.

“How's your leg?”

“It hurts like hell,” Joseph said cheerfully. “We sure fixed them fellers, didn't we?”

Doc agreed they had. Then he went back to the wheel, and examined the girl suspiciously.

“Too bad you didn't see the last of our little party,” he said. “You'd have noticed something unusual.”

“Unusual?”

“They didn't shoot at you, or me. They shot at Joseph.”

“Why was that?” She might have been genuinely puzzled, but he couldn't tell.

He said, "Maybe they wanted us alive because they figured one of us had what they're after. What everybody seems to be after."

She looked at him steadily.

"Have you got it?" she asked.

Chapter XI

THE ketch ran through the darkness with nervous dancing haste. Joseph, who knew the way, sat on the deckhouse, his back propped up by a pile of life preservers, and watched ahead. It seemed a miracle that he could see the way, but there were small signs a stranger wouldn't have noticed, a distant navigating light or two, a difference in the way the seas ran, the sound of seas breaking on reefs and small islands. Once in a while he called for a sounding, and always he seemed satisfied.

Doc Savage handled the wheel thoughtfully for quite a while. He was thinking.

"Can you take it for a minute?" he asked the girl. She steered and he went below.

The ketch had a seacock in the hull. Most boats had them, because a hull was a little sweeter when there was a little clean seawater in the bilge.

He opened the seacock wide, let the water pour into the boat. He left it running.

As an excuse for having been below, he brought on deck a can of Vienna sausage, a package of hardtack crackers.

"Does this boat always have a little water in her bilge?" he asked.

The girl didn't answer, but Joseph turned his head and said, "Ain't many boats bone-dry, you know. This'n always makes a little water. I pump her out twice a week."

Doc gave the girl some of the sausages, gave Joseph some of them. Joseph took four, wolfed them all at once, ate hardtack crackers with big bites.

"I thought maybe our brush with the express cruiser opened something," Doc said.

He felt he had laid the groundwork for the discovery of water in the cabin later. He didn't want the girl to go below, so he began talking rapidly. He told her about the part of the fight she had missed, knowing that would hold her interest.

In telling the story, he glorified Joseph's part in the fray so much that Joseph snorted modestly several times. But Joseph was pleased. Doc told him, "You really did a remarkable thing. Not many men would have had the guts to stay up on the hounds of that mast with a broken leg. Not many men with two good legs would even have gone up there in a blow like we were having, to say nothing of being shot at while they were up there."

After he had talked about twenty minutes, he said he was thirsty, and turned the wheel over to the girl again.

He went down into the cabin. He exclaimed, "Great grief." loudly. He did considerable lunging around and splashing.

Putting his head out, he said, "We're sinking."

He lighted the lantern in the cabin so they could see the water rushing across the floorboards, sloshing up the bulkheads.

"This wasn't over the floorboards when I was in here a minute ago," he said. "It's coming in fast."

Joseph looked down through the skylight. He was impressed.

"You better see if there ain't no bullet holes in the dink," he said. "It looks like we're gonna need it."

The dink was a Bimini built affair, large for a dinghy on a vessel this size. It had a sail and detachable rudder. Joseph was cheerful. "We can get home in this," he said. "Won't be no trouble." He became optimistic. "Water here ain't over three fathom. Salvage boat can come out when the weather moderates and raise the ketch." There were no bullet holes in the dink.

Doc said it was fine, and he thought they could save the ketch later. He didn't pay too much attention to what he was saying, because Trudy Stevens had lashed the wheel and gone below. He wanted to watch her.

She evidently planned to make a quick trip. Doc could see her through the cabin skylight. He hoped she wouldn't go into one of the staterooms. She didn't.

She went to the bookcase in the cabin. A bunch of receipted bills for paint, stores, wharfage and other boat expenses were stuck on a hook. She picked all these off the hook, sorted a few sheets of paper out of the middle and stuck the others back on the hook. Those she had taken she folded and put, woman-like, into the top of her stocking.

She came out on deck.

"The water is getting higher," she said. "We'd better abandon ship while we can."

Doc said, "I'm going to take another look."

He did more than that. In the cabin, he went forward to where the sea valve was, immersed himself in the water, and closed the valve.

Out on deck again, he asked, "The Diesel got a bilge pump on it?"

It had, Joseph said. He told Doc how to hitch it on to the Diesel. This was done somewhat old-fashionedly, by slipping a belt onto a turning pulley in the engine box. Doc got the pump going.

He came back, extended his hand to Trudy Stevens.

"Dig," he said.

She stared at him. "What do you mean?"

"In the sock," he explained. "I saw you, so let's not have an argument."

She made a cat-quick grab for the shotgun, but he put a foot on it. She sat there for a while, her hand on the gun, her eyes on him hatefully.

"Joseph!" she said. "Shoot him! He's one of them!"

Joseph, perfectly willing to oblige, felt for his gun. "It's gone!" he screamed. "I musta lost it!" He sounded horrified over the loss of the gun.

"I've got it," Doc told him. "I picked your pocket."

Trudy Stevens suddenly tried to snatch the documents out of her stocking and throw them overboard. In the brief flurry of movement, he got slapped twice, quite hard, but he got the sheets of paper.

"We won't sink," he explained cheerfully. "I opened the seacock, then closed it again."

He was pleased with his cupidity.

He took the shotgun, the .22 rifle, and Joseph's remarkable pistol, and went down into the cabin, after he had moved Joseph back into the cockpit. He was careful to keep an eye on them as he spread the documents out on the top of the motor box, which served as a cabin table.

He was surprised at what he found.

But more puzzled than surprised.

In one respect the sheets of paper, five of them, were all similar. They were listings of different items. They could have been an inventory, except that no mercantile or business establishment would conceivably carry such an oddly differing assortment.

The items included stocks and bonds, such names as Bergman Et Cie., ICS Centrales, Moulin St. Clee, listings of property. The first sheet was signed at the bottom: *Samuel Fleish*.

He lifted a wary eye toward the cockpit, frowned.

The second, third, fourth and fifth sheets were much similar, but not duplicates of the first. They could have been duplicates except that the items listed were different. After each item, there was a code letter combination which he surmised was a price cipher. All were signed: *Samuel Fleish*, and the last three sheets were thumbprinted.

He frowned at the name. Fleish. Fleish . . . The only Fleish he had heard of important enough to cause Charlotte to get excited was the head of a Swiss banking cartel. Or at least there had been a Fleish who had headed . . . *Had been!* That was it. Had been. The fellow was at present in the hands of the Allied military authorities. He was one of those awaiting arraignment in the war guilt trials.

Trudy Stevens was watching him intently.

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

She didn't say anything. Just scowled at him.

He said, "Samuel Fleish, of Internationale Suisse Fleish, 23 Rue Pendule, Zurich, Switzerland." He tapped the papers. "Is this the same guy?"

"You ought to know," she said.

He shook his head slowly. "You overestimate me. I'm just a poor free-lance muddling along."

She didn't believe that. What she did believe, he had no idea. But she leaned forward suddenly and in a bitter voice asked, "Do you know what Charlotte will do to me now?"

“Draw and quarter you, if I know Charlotte,” he guessed.

She shook her head. “She won't say a word, not a word, not a single word, and it will be the most punishing thing that ever happened to me.”

He put the papers in his pocket, or started to, and realized he was soaking wet. He got a glass jar out of the galley and put them in that and put the jar in his coat pocket.

“It's too bad you are a female,” he told her. “I don't know why, but it keeps me from trying my hand at beating the truth out of you.”

“What are you going to do?” she demanded.

“Take you to Charlotte.”

“You'll wish you hadn't,” she said. She seemed surprised.

Chapter XII

TOM ITTLE stood on the dock like a barrel with legs and said, “Hello there, folks. I'm glad you made it.”

“I'll bet you are,” Doc said. He was astonished.

The sunshine, coming hotly out of the mid-morning sky, danced on the peaceful sea and seemed to cover it with diamonds. It turned the water many shades of aquamarine ranging from deep cobalt through the zaffer blues, the baby blues, and where the water was very shoal, tinted with yellow.

The sunlight was brightest of all on King Joe Cay, because the cay was mostly white coral sand and stone, with intensely green palms, palmetto and cactus for contrast. The cay, like most of the Bahama Islands, was quite low, nowhere reaching an altitude of more than forty or fifty feet.

The higher, wooded section of the island was to the north, and southward there were large and picturesque salt ponds.

Tom Ittle teetered happily back and forth, heel to toe. “Yes, sir, I'm delighted,” he said. The inevitable book of crossword puzzles was sticking out of his coat pocket.

“How'd you get here?” Doc asked.

“Why, your little message reached us in Kansas City, and since the parade was leading this way, we surmised where it would go, so we came.”

Doc said, “And got to Miami last night in time to give Von Raedeker a treatment with a knife?”

Tom Ittle smiled. “That remark was a bit crude, wasn't it?”

“Maybe it was,” Doc said. “Anyway, I'm beginning to feel a bit crude.”

“I understand,” said Ittle, “that the Miami police seek a man of your description for murder.”

“That was crude, too,” Doc said. “You should have done a better job of describing me to the police over the telephone. Then they might have picked me up.”

Tom Ittle wore whites, fine silken cloth. He looked like the Burmese planters liked to look before the Japs came. He said, "You have everything figured out in your mind, haven't you?"

"How did you get over here?"

"By plane."

"It wouldn't be the lightplane that picked us up during the night?"

"This plane," said Tom Ittle, "brought me over this morning." His smile was wolfish. "I don't believe you're glad to see me."

Doc gave him sincere assurance of his pleasure.

"I'm very glad to see you," he told Ittle. "It saves me the trouble of hunting you up when I'm ready to settle the score with you."

Ittle chuckled. "When the game is over," he said, "I'll be very easy to find."

He walked off.

DOC tossed a springline loop around a bollard of the little dock. He was amazed, but he was far from being as delighted as he had let Tom Ittle think he was. He didn't like finding Tom Ittle here at all.

He turned, and saw such an astonished expression on Trudy Stevens' face that he was moved to say, "You don't like me, Ittle doesn't like me, nobody likes me. I'm a pariah."

She said, "That was an act, probably."

"Listen."

"Yes?"

"You don't want to do me a favor, do you? Wait, the answer is no, I see that. But do yourself a favor. Don't tell anybody I've got hold of those sheets of paper."

"Why should I do such a thing?" she demanded indignantly.

He spoke sincerely. "Because I think you're the kind of a girl who'll wish she hadn't if she does. I mean, you'll wish it after you find out what a dirty, stinking thing this is."

"You sound like you had it all figured out?"

"I think I have."

"Will you tell me, then?" The question sounded sincere. And she was frightened, he could see. Not of him. Frightened of Tom Ittle, and more than Tom Ittle, too, he believed.

"That would be very smart, wouldn't it?" he said. But he was of half a mind to tell her his suspicions.

They were interrupted before anything came of his impulse.

Joseph pointed. "Charlotte!" he said. Joseph was feeling much worse now. The trouble during the night hadn't been good for his bullet wound.

It was Charlotte. She came like a queen. She couldn't come any other way.

The island sloped up from the dock, neatly beautiful in the hard harridan way that Bahama islands are beautiful. It sloped up to Charlotte's house, which was not a castle as one would have expected. It was a great house, though, two-storied, made of stone, and the walls were like the walls they used to build into the old forts for defense against the pirates, walls six and eight feet thick. The shape of the house and the roof made it look like a Spanish mansion. The roof was of mahogany-colored tile, the walls were white, and everything else was black. The other houses, the houses for the servants and the islanders, must be farther inland.

Charlotte was a witch without broomstick. She was past six feet tall and her tallness made her look thin, although she wasn't thin. She could have been the old queen of the Amazons, and in mythology she would have been, and her Amazons would have conquered the earth.

"Darling! Darling Trudy!" Charlotte screamed.

That was another thing about her. Charlotte was always at a boil about everything. She gushed and she effused and she sounded silly.

She wore a pearl-white dressing robe, and the garment streamed out behind her like Caesar's toga. Under it she had on a yellow bathing suit.

"Trudy! You angel!" she squealed. She galloped out on the dock, sounding like a horse galloping. She leaped on to the ketch like a fourteen-year-old tomboy. "My God, Creepy, you had me worried!"

She embraced Trudy Stevens. She looked over Trudy's head at Doc Savage.

"Hello, Princess d'Alaza," he said gravely.

"Mr. Clark!" Charlotte cried. "You dear boy, you! It's so lovely you could come!"

HE looked at her homeliness and wondered how she had managed to collect four or five husbands. Maybe it was a dozen, he didn't know. He imagined everyone wondered that when they first saw Charlotte.

His second thought was: well, you can see why she lost them. That face and that gushing ran them off. He supposed that was also a thought which everyone had. It was wrong. He knew it was wrong. Every one of Charlotte's husbands had been mad about her, and she had harvested each one as apples are taken from an orchard tree and sent them away, although sometimes later she had taken a second crop from one or another.

"Joseph!" Charlotte screamed. "Joseph, you rascal, what've you done to your leg?"

"I got hurt," Joseph said. "I got shot."

"Joseph, you rascal, you've needed shooting for years!" Charlotte squealed. She raised her voice. "Tombo! Bill! Come here and get Joseph."

Two big, grinning black islanders came down the path. They boarded the ketch, lifted Joseph with infinite gentleness, bore him away.

Charlotte turned a geyser of words on Doc Savage. She was again delighted to see him, he looked so

fine, she was so enthused, and so on ad nauseum. She called him Mr. Clark.

“The most wonderful house party I'm having,” she said. “You'll love it, Mr. Clark. It'll thrill you no end.”

He was willing to bet it would, too, if Tom Ittle was a sample of the sharks at the house party.

“I saw Mr. Ittle here,” he said slyly.

Charlotte gushed about Mr. Ittle. Wasn't he cute? Mr. Ittle and his crossword puzzles.

Then Charlotte slapped him on the back, said, “You can be just as happy as anything here. The Miami police would never think of looking for a murderer here.”

With that, she left, an arm around Trudy Stevens. But she did call back, “I'll send Tombo to show you to your quarters.”

He sat down on the ketch deckhouse, for he was a little stunned. He'd heard much of Charlotte, and knew a little from other contacts, but this was amazing.

He'd bet it would be some house party.

TOMBO, big and black, shiny and scrubbed, wore two pistols in low-slung holsters when he came back. He hadn't had the weapons when he and Bill took Joseph away. He was a Jamaican black. He spoke the King's English as it should be spoken. He said, “Mistress Charlotte wishes you established in the Head Throat Cutter's Suite.”

Doc was startled. “Rather appropriate,” he said.

Tombo grinned. “I trust you do not mind our little jokes here. You see, King Joe Cay was once a pirate's rendezvous, and this house was actually first built by a buccaneer named King Joe. The suites and parts of the house are named after his lieutenants, and the one you are to occupy was formerly the quarters of his private assassin. Bit whimsical, sir, but I hope you don't mind.”

“I'll let you know later,” Doc said.

He decided he had no quarrel with the luxury of his quarters. There was a bedroom that was more like a living room, high-ceilinged, as encrusted with dignity as a Spanish don. The bath was modern and tiled in green, and the rooms were air-conditioned.

He was letting off steam by looking for hidden microphones, secret doors and such dramatic things when he heard an aëroplane. A multi-motored ship.

He went to the window, watched a seaplane circle, do a wide procedure approach and set down on the dappled water inside the reef. It wasn't just a seaplane. It was a trans-ocean airliner.

A launch put out. Three men got out of the big plane and came ashore. The plane departed, heading southward. PICA AIRWAYS. That had been the airline name on the ship.

He frowned. Pica Airways was a South American concern, and it was one of the outfits suspected of fomenting trouble in the international aviation situation.

There was a neat telephone at the head of the bed. It was mother-of-pearl. He picked it up. A genteel serving man's voice said, “*Voila, Monsieur?*”

He used English, said, "Connect me with the radio operator."

"Oui, Monsieur."

The radio operator had a young pleasant voice, a slangy way with words. "You're out of luck," he said. "The radio isn't working."

"You mean," Doc said, "that you have orders not to put through calls?"

"I mean the outfit's on the kibosh. I may get it fixed."

"If you get it fixed," Doc said, "I want to talk to the Chairman of the United States Senate Aviation Committee in Washington, D.C."

The radioman was silent a while.

"I don't think I'll get it fixed," he said.

"I was afraid you wouldn't," Doc said, and hung up.

He was, he suddenly realized, as nervous as the proverbial cat. This whole thing was unnatural, and it was bearing down on his nerves. He went over to the window, stood scowling out, wishing very much that he had one or more of his five assistants, preferably all of them, on the job.

He had a feeling that he was in a trap, that he was on the island and isolated, that the enemy thought they had him where they wanted him. Who was the enemy? Tom Ittle? Brigham Pope? Charlotte? He had an idea that all of them might be his enemy, and if that were true, he was on the spot.

Uneasiness crawled on his nerves until he decided he couldn't stay in the room. He washed up in the bath and found, to his surprise that there was a fresh linen suit, his size, in the clothes closet. He examined it closely for some kind of trick poison, found none, and grinned at his fantastic fears.

He shaved, showered, put on the suit and a fresh shirt which didn't fit him as well as the suit, and went downstairs. Of the first servants he found, he asked, "Where is the radio station?" The servant gave him directions, as polite as any good servant should be.

The radio station was in a small concrete building under a spider-web of antennae. The operator, a tall young man, didn't look quite as pleasant as his voice had been. A cheek scar gave him a sullen, tough expression.

"Look for yourself." The operator pointed.

The transmitter tubes were smashed. The station could receive, but it couldn't transmit.

Doc asked, "How did that happen?"

"I had an accident," the operator explained. "I dropped a monkey wrench in the outfit."

"What were you doing with a monkey wrench around a radio set?" Doc asked.

The operator thought about that for a while. "Monkeying," he said.

"That's very expressive," Doc agreed. He looked over the apparatus. He thought he could take some of the receiver tubes and rig a transmitting station of about five watts output.

It would take time. Half a day, probably. He didn't think he had that much time.

He turned to leave.

The radio operator stopped him. "You know what I'd do if I were you?" the operator asked.

Doc said, "I rather doubt if you do, either."

"The hell I don't," the operator said. "I'd get out of here. I mean I would get out so fast there would just be a scorched streak where I passed."

"Any particular reason in telling me that?"

The operator hesitated. He said, "You're Doc Savage, aren't you?"

"You think so?"

"I know so," the operator said. "A guy like you shouldn't get himself killed. That's why I'm telling you."

WALKING back toward the big house, Doc carried the radioman's words in his mind, and they made an unpleasant burden. The operator looked like a pretty tough, competent egg, and he had seemed sure Doc was doomed.

The big old house looked threatening now, too. The view from the back was not like the one from the sea and the dock. From here you could see that it was what it was, a former fort. Doc didn't doubt in the least that it had been built by a pirate long ago. There had been a time when there were more pirates than honest citizens in the islands, at least in the outlying ones.

He walked warily, considering the things he could do now. He had the sheaf of papers with him, folded and reposing in his coat pocket. He expected an attempt would be made to take them from him, and it wouldn't be a gentle attempt.

He didn't think he could leave. The radio operator must have thought he could, and the operator might be right. He should know more about it.

Doc scowled. They didn't expect him to leave. They were planning on him toughing it out. He wished he could double-cross them.

Psssst! He jumped in spite of himself. The sound came from a bush.

A voice asked, "Okay if I join you?" It was Brigham Pope.

"Why not?" Doc asked.

Brigham Pope came into view. He was exhibiting all the signs of extreme terror. He said, "I never dealt in on the likes of this. I won't do it, see. I won't go through with it."

"With what?" Doc watched him intently.

"Murder and the rest of it." Brigham Pope licked his lips. "Let's me and you clear out of here? What do you say?"

Doc thought he had the answer to the whole thing now.

“Let's go up to my room and talk about it,” he said.

Chapter XIII

COOL shadows and stillness filled the room, made it like the inside of an elaborate tomb. Someone, one of the servants, probably, had put flowers in the room, and the odor of these added to the impression of a sepulcher. Everything was neat, dustless, and nothing was cheap.

Doc Savage, moving about the room slowly, began counting audibly on the count of three. He said “. . . three, four, five, six.” He went silent, and later said, “Nine,” but did not add any more figures audibly.

Brigham Pope was puzzled. “What's the idea?”

“At least a dozen,” Doc said. “But they did a very good job of it at that.”

“What on earth do you mean?”

“They searched my room when I was out. They haven't had over ten minutes to do it, so they did it nicely. But there are at least a dozen objects which aren't where they were before.”

Brigham Pope didn't look much more worried. But he already looked about as worried as he could manage. He wanted to know, “Why did they search the room?”

“On the chance I ditched those inventory lists here,” Doc said.

“Oh!”

Doc watched him intently. “You know about the lists, of course?”

Brigham Pope looked as if he would like to run. “I knew there were some lists, yes.” He shuddered. “That's what I wanted to talk to you about.”

Doc waved at a chair. “Sit down. Go ahead and talk.”

Pope frowned at the chair. “I wouldn't have let Tom Ittle hire me in New York if I'd known what this was going to develop into,” he said. He didn't sit down.

“Oh, Ittle just hired you recently?”

“Yeah. Four days ago. I been doing defense work, see, and the plant closed and I've got no job. I used to know Ittle, and he looked me up, says he has this job. He says it's investigating work.” He paused, shivered visibly, scowled at the floor.

“You took this job of investigative work,” Doc said. He was looking at the hard, stringy muscle in Brigham Pope's jaws, in his neck. “Then what?” The stringy muscles gave the man a look of fierce force.

“I didn't like it,” Pope said.

“You didn't show any signs of not liking it.”

“I'm showing them now, ain't I?”

“It's a little late, isn't it?”

Brigham Pope took the chair. "Oh, I don't know." He sat down with an uncoiling movement, rather than a relaxing one. "Maybe not."

"How do you mean?"

"Murder's what I mean." Brigham Pope leaned forward dramatically in the chair. "Tom Ittle killed that long, fat guy, that Von Raedeker, in Miami. As soon as I found that out, I decided to cut loose quick as I could."

"It would have been a good time to cut loose right then," Doc said. "Why didn't you call the police?"

"I had a damned good reason. I was in the room with Ittle when he cut Raedeker's throat. The cops would have held me, too."

"They certainly would have," Doc agreed. "Why did Ittle kill Von Raedeker?"

"He was mad. He threw a scare into Raedeker, and found out Raedeker had given that bunch of papers to the girl."

Doc was relieved. "So Raedeker *gave* them to the girl?"

BRIGHAM POPE was leaning forward, knotting and unknotting his fingers. "You left us in Kansas City, you know. Tom Ittle got your message at the restaurant, and we grabbed a fast charter plane." His fingers were moving almost continuously. "We got to Miami ahead of your plane, and we were at the airport. We trailed the girl and Von Raedeker and you to the hotel. That was the first Tom Ittle knew Von Raedeker was mixed up in it. Ittle says to me, 'We'll go up and talk to that chap.' And we did, and first thing I knew, Ittle is crazy mad and has cut Raedeker's throat."

Doc was standing with his hands behind him, fingers latched together. He asked, "Then what did you do?"

"We got right out of that hotel by the back way. Tom Ittle hired a seaplane to bring us over here first thing this morning, as soon as it got daylight."

"Aren't you overlooking something?"

"Eh?"

"A telephone call to the police."

Brigham Pope's mouth fell open for a moment. "What call to the police?"

Doc's voice did not change noticeably, contained no anger, as he explained, "The call to the police that described me and said I'd cut Raedeker's throat."

Closing his eyes, Brigham Pope was thoughtful for a while. "Oh!" he said. "Oh, so that's why Tom Ittle made a phone call." He opened his eyes suddenly, made them wide to register horror. "My God, that was a dirty trick, wasn't it!"

"It could have been inconvenient."

"Did the police get you?"

“Not yet,” Doc said.

“What a dirty trick!” Brigham Pope beat the arm of his chair softly with a fist. “Nothing is too low for that little! Nothing! It bears out what I knew.”

Doc eyed Brigham Pope. “Just what did you want to talk about?”

“My God, I've been talking about it!” Brigham Pope exclaimed.

“Have you?” Doc shrugged. “You've got something else on your mind, haven't you?”

Brigham Pope scowled at different things in the room. “Yeah, that's right.” He gave the impression of a man fighting a battle to make up his mind. “Look,” he said. He stood up, stepped closer, dropped his voice. “Look, let's you and I doublecross Tom Ittle. That's the only way we can get out of here alive. Doublecross him.”

“How do you mean?” Doc made himself sound interested. He *was* interested, too.

“You got them lists,” Brigham Pope said. “With them lists, we got Tom Ittle in the palms of our hands.”

“How about Charlotte?”

“We got Charlotte in the palms of our hands, too.”

DOC SAVAGE went over to the door swiftly and jerked it open, but no one was crouched there listening. He hadn't thought there would be, but it made a good dramatic gesture. He hoped Brigham Pope was impressed. He laid it on a little thicker by looking cautiously out of the windows also. Then he went back to Pope and whispered tensely, “What are those lists?”

“Good Lord, don't you know?” Brigham Pope demanded.

“I have suspicions,” Doc said. “Let's check and see how right I am.”

“Okay, Clark. What do you think they are?”

Doc said, “You go first.”

Brigham Pope scowled at him. “Brother, I'm not so sure you're smart enough to tie up with.”

“Oh, they are listings of holdings,” Doc said. “Stocks, bonds, companies. In other words, the holdings of certain wealthy individuals who had been judged, shall we say, racially unworthy of the privilege of being so wealthy. Or *misjudged* is the word, isn't it?”

“Look,” Brigham Pope said, “Why don't you come out and say those are lists of property high Nazi officials had taken from their Jewish owners.”

“By Samuel Fleish.”

“Huh?”

“Samuel Fleish was the Nazi go-between for disposing of the loot,” Doc said.

“Oh, yeah.” Brigham Pope licked his lips. “Yeah, this Samuel Fleish was the broker the Nazi bigwigs used to sell these stocks, bonds and business concerns.”

Doc frowned.

“To make a complete picture,” he said. “This loot, these stocks and bonds and companies, as we’re referring to them, were located outside of Nazi territory, so they couldn’t very well be operated by the fellows who had taken them by force from their owners. So the thing was to sell them. Find a go-between, who was Samuel Fleish, and sell them.”

“Yeah, and he sold them . . .”

Doc held up a hand. “Just a minute. The Allied authorities have caught Samuel Fleish, and they have the goods on him. They know what kind of a business he was engaged in.”

“Fleish is in jail in France, all right.”

“Yes indeed. And it would be very embarrassing to the reputation of anyone who, for instance, had made a large purchase of properties and goods from Fleish—particularly a list of properties and goods known to be stolen, and bought all in one lump from Fleish, a known fence for Nazi brigands.”

Brigham Pope nodded. “We’re getting to the point.”

“Yes, we are,” Doc agreed. “If such a purchaser, for example, were now trying to get from the Allied governments the privilege of operating air lines, it would be rather inconvenient. It would look like a friend of the Nazis, who is automatically no friend of the world, was trying to hide a wolf character behind a sheep exterior.”

“That’s a damned good example.”

“Meaning Charlotte?”

“Yeah. She bought that stuff from Samuel Fleish, for about fifty cents on the dollar or less.”

“And if this came out, if the lists got into Allied hands, specifically in the hands of the U.S. Civil Aeronautics Authority, goodbye to Charlotte d’Alaza’s dream of establishing herself a world aviation empire.”

“That,” said Brigham Pope, “is what the fuss is all about.”

DOC SAVAGE was having trouble concealing his excitement. Some of this he had guessed, some of it he’d known must be true, but none of it had he been able to prove. He was glad to know what the listings were for sure. They would be very interesting reading for Civil Aeronautics Authority, and particularly the Senate committee on aeronautics.

He asked, “Why didn’t Charlotte destroy those lists long ago.”

Brigham Pope grinned. “That’s easy. They implicated somebody else. Somebody Charlotte’s afraid of. So she kept them.”

“How would they implicate this somebody else?”

“He bought part of the stuff that’s listed. He bought about a third, and Charlotte bought the rest.” Brigham Pope cleared his throat. “By a strange coincidence, this other person owns airlines, too.”

“Pica Airways?”

“Eh?”

“This other person owns Pica Airways?”

Brigham Pope hesitated. “Yeah.”

“Who is he?”

“Tom Ittle.” No hesitation this time.

Doc spread his hands, palms up. “All right, Pope. What do you propose we do?”

Eagerness lit Brigham Pope's eyes. “Easy. We go to Charlotte, or to Tom Ittle, or both. And we sell out to the high bidder. They'll pay plenty, including your life.”

“My life?” Doc pretended to be surprised.

“If you think you've got a chance of leaving here alive, knowing what you do, you're nuts.”

“I take it,” Doc said, “that Tom Ittle and Charlotte have thrown their lot together.”

“Ganged up on you? Yeah, that's right.” Brigham Pope nodded vehemently. “They hit a deal this morning, before you got here. They're gonna get them listings, then knock you off.”

Doc looked Brigham Pope in the eye, and began to laugh. He hoped his laughing was convincing. It must have been, because Brigham Pope looked alarmed. The alarm was ugly on his face, vicious.

“What the hell you laughing at?” he demanded.

“You, you chiseler.” Doc pretended to have difficulty stifling his mirth. “You're too late.”

“What?” Pope screamed.

“You fool!” Doc said. “Don't you think I know who owns Pica Airways? You do!”

Brigham Pope turned blue-gray with rage.

THAT last, the guess that Brigham Pope was Charlotte's real opponent, had been just that, a guess. He had based it on the fear both Charlotte and Trudy Stevens had shown of Pope. They hadn't been particularly scared of Tom Ittle. But Pope's name had brought genuine terror.

He was sure now. Pope was the one to be afraid of.

He hit hard, setting up his trap.

He said, “You're sunk, Pope. Didn't you watch that Pica Airways plane when it brought in some of your men a while ago?”

“Sure I watched it!” Pope yelled. “What the hell do you mean?”

“Evidently you didn't see a small packet passed to one of the men on the plane, a man who left with the ship?”

“What?”

“Maybe you did, and it didn't enter your head that Tom Ittle and Charlotte got together and framed up on you, and that Charlotte got the listings from me, and Tom Ittle got them to the man on the plane to take to safety? Did you think of that? Tom Ittle can be bought, you know.”

Brigham Pope cursed. There was nothing soft about the cursing.

Doc said quietly, “You want to talk business, Pope?”

Brigham Pope backed to the door. He showed his front teeth. “The hell with you!”

He whipped open the door, jumped out into the hallway.

Doc thought: The fellow didn't have a gun. He wasn't carrying a gun, because he was afraid I would grab him and search him, and finding the gun, wouldn't listen to that phony proposition of throwing in with him.

And probably a darned lucky thing, too. Pope was in a killing mood now, and if he'd had a gun, there would have been violence.

Doc went to the door. He watched Brigham Pope. The man went down the hall, walking stiffly. At the end of the hall was a wide stairway, winding down to the ground floor.

Brigham Pope met Tom Ittle coming up the steps.

“What kind of a gun have you got?” Pope demanded.

“Why, a thirty-eight.” Tom Ittle was surprised.

“Let me see it.”

Unsuspecting, Tom Ittle produced a .38 revolver. His suit was tight, and there was no visible bulge where the gun had been. He must have had it hidden between his rolls of fat.

Brigham Pope took the gun.

He asked, “What'd you give the guy to take away on that plane?”

Tom Ittle was surprised. He didn't answer for a moment. “Oh, that,” he said. “Why, I just gave the pilot his dough.”

Brigham Pope questioned his legitimacy in a deep grinding voice; then he shot Tom Ittle twice in the stomach.

Chapter XIV

THE shot, drum-hollow in the confines of the hall, nearly caused Doc Savage an upset. He was completely astonished. He hadn't known the crew of the plane had been handed anything at all; he had created this idea in Brigham Pope's mind out of whole cloth. But Tom Ittle had paid the pilot, and this accident had checked in with the fantasy. It would not have made much difference anyway, because Doc had not been expecting any such coincidence. It was just unfortunate for Tom Ittle.

Falling, rolling down the steps, Tom Ittle's enormous body made dull sounds like a sack of wheat.

Brigham Pope wheeled. He was coming back for Doc with the gun.

Doc half turned, saw there was no chance of returning to his room before being shot in the back. There were other doors. He didn't dare try them, because the one he picked might be locked, and there wouldn't be time for a second choice.

The hall was furnished with tall dark wood chairs here and there, straight-backed atrocities medieval in their discomfort.

Doc picked up one of the chairs. It was heavier than he expected; it must have weighed seventy-five pounds. He had to run with it, throw it as a discus thrower hurls a discus. Then he barely made it reach the head of the stairs, roll over the top, go whirling down the steps.

The chair hit Brigham Pope. But it could hardly have missed.

Doc sprinted toward the falling noises made by man and chair. He wanted to know whether Brigham Pope would be seriously damaged when he reached the bottom. He wished he hadn't been so curious. Because Pope was in fine fettle when he got to the bottom. He fired. The bullet missed, but it didn't miss much.

On the floor, Doc crawled rapidly. He thought Brigham Pope was going to come back up the stairs. Two bullets hit the ceiling, ploughed out plaster, which fell on Doc.

Five shots. Pope had fired five times, and that type of gun usually held only five cartridges. But Tom Ittle was at the foot of the steps too, and he probably had extra shells in his pockets.

A door opened in the hall, and Charlotte put her head out. "What the hell is this?" she demanded. She sounded like the queen wanting to know what had upset the royal household.

Doc saw no object in going back to his room. There were no weapons there. He changed his course, shoved Charlotte back through the door, followed her, jerked the door shut behind them.

Charlotte now wore yellow shorts and bra, and a ghastly purple robe. She didn't have the figure for shorts. She was indignant. "Well, I never!" she exclaimed.

"Maybe neither one of us will," Doc said, "unless you get busy."

"What do you mean, you idiot?"

Doc said, "I've got Brigham Pope to thinking you and I and Tom Ittle decided to doublecross him. He's a little angry."

"Oh, my God!"

"How many men have you got who can fight?"

"Fight who?"

"Brigham Pope's outfit."

"Oh, my God!" she said the second time. She ran to a window, put her head out, screamed, "Tombo! Bill! Joseph! Osa! Get 'em! Come here quick!"

DOC was listening at the door for Brigham Pope. He decided Pope wasn't coming up the stairs, and he was glad of it.

He went to the window. Men were coming to Charlotte's call. There were other buildings to the north, well away from the great old stone house, and the others were coming from there. Two black men, and the others white.

"Watch out!" Charlotte screamed at them. "We're going to fight them! Come on! Sic 'em, boys!"

Charlotte had reverted to her Iowa farm background. She sounded as if the old sow were in the garden, and she was hollering at the farm dog to sic 'em.

There was a shot. One shot. One of the black men gave a jump forward, throwing his arms out in front of him as he did so. He landed flat and bounced a couple of inches and didn't move.

The other servants vanished magically into the shrubbery.

"Poor kids!" Charlotte said. She sounded as if she was about to cry. "They can't fight. They don't know how." She pointed wildly. "That was Tombo they shot! Poor Tombo!"

Doc grabbed her, said, "Cut out the hysterics!"

She stared at him wildly. "Damn you!" she screamed. "If it hadn't been for you, none of this would have happened!"

Doc said, "So you knew I was getting ready to investigate your activities in the international aviation picture."

"Yes, I did." She glared at him. "And Brigham Pope was going to you if I didn't make a deal with him, he said. And so I had to get those listings down here, and I sent Trudy to get them, not knowing Brigham Pope would try to take them away from her, until Trudy phoned me he was."

Doc demanded, "Why did you call me in?"

She sneered at him. "To give you a good fooling, damn you! I was going to make you think Brigham Pope was the only rascal. Only it didn't work out."

He asked, "How many men has Pope here?"

"Three," she said. "Just the three who got off the plane."

"You had better get your head out of that window before they take a shot at it!"

"They wouldn't dare!" She was indignant.

"Don't be a fool."

She withdrew her head. Evidently the possession of more millions than most people had dollars had not entirely robbed her of judgment.

The house wasn't still. There was running, soft swearing. This was downstairs. Doc glanced around Charlotte's room hunting for a weapon. There was nothing adequate. The great bedroom, furnished with regal extravagance, smelled faintly of incense, of tobacco smoke.

"Where's Trudy?" he demanded.

Charlotte was swearing. Her vocabulary, for a woman, was hair-raising.

“Where is Trudy?” he shouted.

Charlotte pointed at a connecting door. “In there.”

“Does she know what's behind this?”

Charlotte sneered at him. “That idealistic little dope? Do you think I'm an idiot?”

Doc went to the connecting door. There was a shot downstairs, evidently directed at one of Charlotte's servants. If they try to come upstairs before I find a gun, Doc thought, I'm sunk. The connecting door was locked. He pounded on it, called, “Trudy!”

“Yes?” Her voice sounded frightened. “Who is it?”

“Doc Savage,” he said.

“I don't know any Doc Savage,” she said.

“Clark,” he said. If she didn't know he was Doc Savage, she probably didn't know about the other dirty details. “It's Clark.”

“Oh!” She sounded confused. “I don't know—”

“Open up!”

She unlocked the door.

He demanded, “Have you got a gun?”

“I—my shotgun,” she said. “The same one I had on the ketch.”

He started to say give it to him. Then he changed his mind, explained, “This thing has broken open. Brigham Pope and his men are fighting. They'll have to kill everyone on the island. That's the only way they can keep anyone from knowing what happened.”

She whitened. “I'll get my gun.” She got the shotgun.

He said, “You stay here. And don't be afraid to use that gun.”

He went back into the other room.

Charlotte demanded, “What are you going to do, idiot?”

Disgruntled, he said, “You better stay in here, old lady.”

Charlotte said something insulting about being not so damned old. “Where are you going?” she demanded.

“Going to see what I can do,” he said.

A shotgun went *blam, blam!* It was from the grounds outside. One of the servants. Downstairs, a man cursed and the cursing turned to screaming.

Doc went out into the hall. He put his head out first, ready to jerk it back, but nothing happened. He was not shot at.

He went down the hall, past the steps. He looked down the steps cautiously, saw Tom Ittle lying curled and motionless on the floor, both hands clasped over his stomach. Whether Ittle was dead or not, it was hard to tell.

There was a room at the end of the hall, a front bedroom, small, with large windows. He looked out of the windows.

Below, directly below, was a terrace with a stone wall, waist-high, surrounding it. One of Brigham Pope's men, one of those who had come off the plane, crouched there. He had two automatic pistols with long barrels.

Doc backed away from the window.

FOR a few moments, he studied the different objects in the room. He decided on the small mahogany chest by the foot of the bed. It was not too large. Not too heavy, he decided, lifting it. But heavy enough.

He lifted the chest. He studied the position of the man below, the probable effect of the window on the trajectory of the chest. It was a tricky job of calculating. He could have worried about it for an hour, and still not been certain. He threw the chest.

The man below turned when the window broke. Glass, the chest, hit him. The chest hit him on the left side of the face, his left shoulder. He went down, shrieking. His shoulder bones were broken. In his kicking, he knocked one of his guns skittering across the terrace.

Doc debated, for a moment, dropping to the terrace. He decided it was too much of a drop, too much chance of getting shot from inside the house.

He went back, entered the hall again.

Brigham Pope was coming up the stairs. On the balls of his feet, softly, a step at a time, Pope climbed. He was holding his revolver out in front of himself, cocked, ready.

Behind Pope, at the foot of the steps, Tom Ittle took his hands away from his punctured stomach. He had in one hand a small pistol, a tiny thing. One of the little .25-calibre automatics that gentlemen used to give their lady friends. He'd been covering the gun with his hands.

Ittle lifted the gun carefully, aimed carefully, and shot Brigham Pope three times in the back, shot him seven more times while Pope was turning slowly and collapsing and rolling down the stairs.

A man came leaping into the vestibule at the foot of the stairs. He yelled, "Pope! Mister Pope!"

Tom Ittle giggled, shot the man between the eyes. After which Ittle lay down straight on the floor and began to kick with his right leg, the kicking half-rolling his body in the fashion of a hog kicking after it has been shot in the head preparatory to butchering. He was dying.

Doc went down the steps rapidly. He began collecting guns, and was waiting beside the window when a voice on the terrace said, "Drop that gun, mister!" The command was evidently addressed to the man Doc had hit with the chest.

Doc called, "Tombo!"

He thought it was Tombo's voice. Evidently it wasn't, because a voice said, "This Bill."

Doc asked, "A while ago, did you shoot one of them from the yard?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's all of them, then," Doc said. He stepped out on the terrace. "Put down your gun," he told Bill. "Get the others here. All of you put your guns on the terrace here, and leave them there."

Bill, huge and black, eyed him suspiciously. "Who you? What you givin' orders for?"

Trudy Stevens came out on the terrace. "Do as he says, Bill."

Bill scratched his head. "Whatever you say, Miss Trudy," he conceded.

"Get the others," Doc ordered.

Bill went away.

Doc said, "Trudy, when they come, we'll get them disarmed, then cover them so they won't make trouble."

She was pale. "That should be easy."

It was.

Charlotte came down the steps when he was collecting the guns. She looked on coldly, without much visible emotion. She told the servants, "Gather up these bodies. I won't have them cluttering up the premises!"

SHE'S quite an old lady, Doc thought. She's an old devil. It's a good thing for humanity that not many are born like her.

He said, "Charlotte."

"Well?" She eyed him steadily. He could see the uneasiness in the back of her eyes.

"You know what is going to happen to you now?" he asked.

"I know."

"The Senate committee on aviation is going to work you over, and when they are through with you, you won't have any more of an international aviation empire than a shark has feathers."

There was no humor in her smile. But it was a smile. "I'm glad you called me a shark," she said.

He thought it was good, too. He thought it was very appropriate.

He was aware of Trudy Stevens. He was glad she wasn't a shark. But he was beginning to wish she didn't read such stuff as *Studien über Hysterie*, by Breuer and Freud. It had been his experience that he had enough trouble with women without their being amateur psychologists.

But then a psychologist might be interesting . . .

THE END

Maybe we're wrong, but we think KING JOE CAY is not only one of the best Doc Savage novels yet—but one of the best adventure novels barring none! That's big talk—but it's a big story. Read it and see if you agree.

Next month is full of surprises: tiny footprints and big barks. The tiny footprints were in a laboratory, and the big barks came from a dog who was so scared it wasn't funny. Why was the dog scared? What were the tiny footprints? Sorry—but you'll have to wait a month to find out . . . to find out why a whole town was suddenly terrified, why rumors kept half the population inside their locked houses. . . . It's the next Doc Savage novel, called THE WEE ONES . . . and it's different from KING JOE CAY in theme, but about equal in suspense!

The August issue . . . don't miss it. We hope to see you then.

So long till next month . . .