

PERIL IN THE NORTH

A Doc Savage Adventure By Kenneth Robeson

- Chapter I. THE BLUE DOG
- Chapter II. STRANGER'S WARNING
- Chapter III. THE ELUSIVE MR. LOGAN
- Chapter IV. THE WORRIED GIRL
- Chapter V. UNWILLING STOWAWAY
- Chapter VI. THE SIDETRACK
- Chapter VII. ACTION IN ARK STREET
- Chapter VIII. THE MAN IS MAD
- Chapter IX. PERILS NORTH
- Chapter X. RACE
- Chapter XI. ICE TRAP!
- Chapter XII. HOPE BLACKS OUT
- Chapter XIII. FEAR ON THE FLOES
- Chapter XIV. WHITE STRINGS TO DEATH
- Chapter XV. WHO WAS MUNGEN?

Chapter I. THE BLUE DOG

THE man was in a wild hurry. He came across the street with his head back and his feet pounding. A taxicab nearly hit him.

He dived into the crowd in front of the Ritz-Astoria Hotel like a bowling ball going into a set-up of pins. He elbowed the elegant doorman of the Ritz-Astoria in the stomach when that resplendent mass of gold braid and brass buttons got in his way.

"Gosh!" he gasped. "Mr. Savage! Wait!"

Doc Savage was signing autograph books by the score as they were thrust in his face. The Ritz-Astoria bellhops and assistant managers were indignantly trying to shove a swarm of other autograph hunters aside and open a lane to the door.

"Mr. Savage!" panted the hurried man. "We've got rats!"

Doc Savage looked at him.

"Rats?" Doc said.

The man nodded. "Rats," he gasped. "Dozens of them."

The man was round, red-faced, perspiring. He trembled.

"What about these rats?" Doc Savage asked him.

The man pounded his chest to help get air into it.

"My pal is sitting there with a gun!" he exclaimed.

"With a gun?"

The panting man said, "He watches the rats."

Doc Savage considered the point.

"You mean," he said, "that your pal sits there with a gun and watches the rat holes for the rats to come out?"

"Oh, no! That ain't it." The man shook his head violently.

"How is it, then?"

"The rats are in glass bottles," the man explained.

Doc Savage said, "Why does your associate not pour water into the bottles and drown the rats, if he wishes to be rid of them?"

"That ain't it. You don't get this right."

"No?"

"He's afraid. My pal's scared."

"Afraid of what?"

"I don't know."

Doc Savage said, "You are not making this very clear. By any chance are you wasting my time? I am sorry, but there is a reception for foreign notables and army commanders here at the hotel, and I am supposed to be in the receiving line. If this is not important, I will have to ask you to excuse me."

"Oh, gosh!" the man gasped. "Wait!"

He jammed a hand into a pocket, fumbled and brought out a piece of paper, which he unfolded.

"Here!" He thrust the paper forward. "Maybe that will explain. My pal wrote it."

Typing on the paper read:

Have given my diabetic rats arteriosclerosis and returned them to normal several times. Now complications have come up. Would you be interested?

Bill Browder

Doc Savage shoved the paper in his pocket. "Can you take me to this pal of yours?"

"Sure!"

"Do it, then," Doc Savage said. "And quick."

A gentleman in a full-dress suit with medals and a red ribbon across his chest wailed, "But, Mr.

Savage, you are supposed to help entertain! And we hoped for a speech. The ambassador wants—"I am sorry. This happens to be important," Doc Savage said.

THEY wedged through the crowd. Because the sidewalks were jammed, they took to the street. The man glanced up at Doc Savage.

"Gosh!" he said.

His awe was understandable. Doc Savage was big, but it was only when you walked at his side or saw him in a crowd that you realized his size. His development was remarkably symmetrical. His skin was tanned by tropical suns a deep-bronze hue, and his hair was only slightly darker.

They ran to a car, climbed in and sped away. The big bronze man drove expertly.

Doc Savage said, "This pal of yours—what do you mean when you call him a pal?"

The man grinned. "He's a swell guy. I'm janitor of the house where he lives. I keep his furnace going and mow his lawns. He's a great egg."

"Then you are not a business associate?"

"Me? Oh, no. Not so you would notice it. He don't mow lawns and attend furnaces for his living."

"What does he do?"

"Them rats, mostly," the man said. "He puts in his attention on the rats."

"Where is he now?"

The man gave the address. It was beyond the city, in a suburb.

They whipped along in silence for a while. The man caught a glimpse of Doc Savage's eyes, and he was impressed. The bronze man's eyes were probably his most remarkable characteristic. They were like pools of flake gold, strangely stirred, as if by tiny winds.

The man said, "I've heard a lot about you, Dr. Savage."

The bronze man made no comment.

"I understand you're a great scientist and a great doctor," the man said. "I've heard a lot about that. And you help people out of trouble, don't you? Guys who are in a mess, and the law don't seem to be able to help them—you pitch in for them, don't you?"

Doc swung the car into a long, wide express highway.

"Sometimes," he said.

"I think Bill Browder and his rats are in trouble," the man said.

The city fled away behind them. Business buildings became smaller, turned to houses. The houses grew scattered. There were no stoplights on the express road. Traffic did not interfere with them. Cars gave them a wide berth.

"What makes the cars shy away from us?" the man asked. "I noticed, back there in town, everybody gave us the right of way."

"Red police lights on the front of the car," Doc replied briefly.

"You a cop?"

"We have honorary commissions on the force," the bronze man said. "Both myself and my associates."

"I've heard about them helpers of yours," the man said. "Five of them, ain't there? They're quite some guys, themselves."

Doc Savage did not answer. He was, as a rule, not exactly a fountain of information. In fact, he was not free with words. He almost never conducted a conversation merely for the sake of carrying on one.

They rushed along for about five miles.

Doc abruptly asked a question. "How did you happen to be so out of breath when you reached me?"

"Oh, that?" The man grimaced. "Bill Browder told me you were going to be at that hotel. He said you would get there a few minutes before nine o'clock, because the reception was due to start at nine. So I rushed. I rushed like the devil. But I made it."

Doc Savage made no comment.

They turned in at a brick bungalow in a modest-home section that was near a more pretentious residential district.

The man touched Doc's arm. "Say, will you tell me something?"

"What?" Doc asked him.

"What is it them rats have got—arteriosclerosis? What is arteriosclerosis?"

Doc Savage said, "Scientists for a long time have been experimenting in giving arteriosclerosis to diabetic rats, on the theory that a disturbance of fat metabolism allows plaques of fat to be deposited in the arteries, thus causing one of the principal diseases of old age. If Bill Browder has given it to diabetic rats, then cured them of it, and given it to them again, he has discovered what will be one of the great things of this generation. He has discovered the thing so many medical scientists have been searching for."

The man looked baffled.

"I still don't get what arteriosclerosis is," he said.

"Hardening of the arteries," Doc said.

"Oh!"

BILL BROWDER met them at the cottage door.

"Thanks, Snooker," he said to the man who had brought Doc.

Snooker went away, vanished in the night.

Bill Browder said, "Mr. Savage, I'm delighted and flattered."

Doc Savage said, "Where do you get your fat metabolism, Mr. Browder? Do you get it by retorting quinine?"

Bill Browder hesitated.

"Why, yes, I use that method," he said. "It's an old method, but I use lots of old ones."

Doc Savage's flake-gold eyes became a little more animated.

"That method," he said, "would be a new one. It would be more than that. It would be amazing."

Bill Browder's jaw fell. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that fat metabolism and retorting and quinine haven't the slightest possible connection with each other," Doc Savage told him. "Which would automatically prove that you know nothing whatever about medical research. So you would not be able to tell whether a rat had arteriosclerosis. I doubt if you would recognize a diabetic rat as such."

Bill Browder swallowed. "You didn't take long to trick me," he said.

Doc Savage's flake-gold eyes were intent on Browder.

"If you contemplate any ventures with that gun Snooker mentioned," he said, "you might give it a second thought."

Browder licked his lips. "I was not thinking of that, I assure you."

Doc Savage said nothing.

Bill Browder blinked, changed his weight from one foot to another. He looked more and more uncomfortable.

He took a gun out of his coat pocket and handed it to Doc Savage.

"Here," he said. "Take it. I don't want you to get the wrong idea about me. Now that you're here, I'm probably safe without a gun, anyway."

"What makes you think that?" Doc asked him.

Browder grinned slightly. "I've heard a little about you and that crew of men you work with."

"You know nothing of medicine?" Doc asked.

"Practically nothing."

"How did you learn about science experimenting with giving arteriosclerosis to diabetic rats?"

"Oh, I copied that out of a newspaper item," said Bill Browder. "I looked the word up in the dictionary. You have no idea how hard it is to pronounce a word like that."

"The idea being to get me to come here?"

"Sure. I'd heard you were one of the world's leading experimenters in medical research. I knew a thing like that would bring you here in a hurry, particularly if it was connected with a little mystery."

"You are clever."

Bill Browder grinned briefly. "I haven't been told that very often."

"How much of your story was genuine?"

"The mystery," Bill Browder said sincerely. "There's plenty of that."

Browder was a young man who went to width rather than height. He was not fat. His hands were knobby and strong. There were freckles on his nose. His eyes were blue, with crinkles at the corners, and he had brown hair and rather large ears. But there was, as a whole, nothing freakish about him.

Doc Savage finished inspecting him more closely.

"No rats," the bronze man remarked.

"No, no rats," said Bill Browder.

"But there is a mystery?"

Browder was suddenly serious. "Plenty of that," he said.

"Suppose we hear about it," Doc said.

Browder rubbed his jaw uncomfortably. "You . . . er . . . are not angry with me? I mean, about getting you out here with that gag about the funny rats?"

Doc Savage said, "I am not particularly amused by it. If it was justified—if there was a good reason for what you did—that would be different."

"There's this mystery."

"I have asked you to tell me about that."

Bill Browder grunted and wheeled. "Better than that, I'll show it to you." He walked toward the rear of the house. "It's due around here about this time."

Doc Savage strode beside him. "What is due about this time?"

"The blue dog," explained Bill Browder.

Chapter II. STRANGER'S WARNING

DOC SAVAGE strode along with Bill Browder until he saw that the young man was going to leave the house. Then the bronze man got in front of Browder and said, "I think you had better tell me more about this right now."

Browder pointed at the back door. "The dog will be out there." He consulted a wrist watch. "Yes, it's almost ten o'clock. The dog comes around ten every night."

Doc stood aside. "A blue dog?"

Stepping to the door, Browder said, "Yes."

He opened the door. There was a brick stoop outside. It was very dark. Browder went out on the porch.

Doc followed him. The bronze man was alert. "The dog is blue, you say. You mean that there is something unusual about the color."

Browder closed the door behind them, and it was darker than ever. "I'll say the dog is unusual."

Doc Savage stepped to one side. It was no accident that his back was against a brick wall. He gave his opinion. "This has stopped sounding unusual and begins to sound silly."

"Wait until you see the dog. That's the silliest thing of all." Browder fumbled around in the darkness. "Here's a chair. We might as well sit down. We may have to wait a few minutes. The dog doesn't come exactly at ten every—"

He stopped. "Sh-h-h-h!" he warned.

Doc already had heard the sound. It was out somewhere in the backyard. An animal. Judging from the sound, the animal was exploring a garbage can.

Browder came swiftly to Doc's side. "I've rigged up a homemade floodlight," he whispered. "That's so you can see the dog. I'll turn it on."

"You think that is the dog?"

"Yes, it must be," Browder whispered. "Wait. Here's the switch."

The next instant, light spouted over the scene. The backyard was a mediocre one with untrimmed shrubbery and a lawn that needed mowing.

The dog was blue! There was no question about that. The color of the animal was distinctly azure. Whirling, the dog showed teeth. It was a big animal, with almost the shoulder height of a great Dane, but with more the aspect of a wolf. Reflected light came from its eyes redly, as if it had the orbs of a dragon.

The dog suddenly shot away into the darkness. Where another animal would normally bark, it did not make a sound.

"You see!" breathed Bill Browder.

Doc dropped a hard grip on Browder's arm. "What are you trying to pull? That dog is not remarkable. It is simply a big police dog with freak coloration."

Browder moved in the direction the dog had taken. "Come on! You haven't seen anything, yet."

He sounded so earnest that Doc went with him.

Then the dog barked at them. It was a low, rather fierce woofing sound.

"He'll keep doing that," Browder whispered. "We can follow him by that noise." He opened a yard gate. "You say that color is actually natural?"

They walked down an alley. The dog moved ahead of them. It was intensely dark.

Doc said, "A freak of nature. In the case of plants, they call a peculiarly colored specimen a sport."

Browder stumbled over a rut. The dog barked hoarsely again. "I've followed this dog before," Browder said.

"You mean that you just saw it, became curious and followed it?"

"Yes."

"What happened?"

"The next day, someone tried to kill me," Bill Browder replied. "And they've tried twice since then to kill me."

Doc Savage yanked to a stop. Not so much because of what Browder had said did he stop. There was another reason, a reason who had popped up in their path with a gun! It was a girl.

THE girl had a small flashlight, the beam of which she turned on her gun long enough for them to notice the weapon. The revolver was shiny and cheap.

"Please stand still," the girl said.

They stopped, because of the obvious fact that a cheap gun will shoot just as violently as an expensive one.

She had come from behind a bush. She was tall, but the backlight from her flash had not disclosed much about her face.

"Bill!" she gasped. "Bill, you can't do this!"

"Huh!" exploded Bill Browder.

The girl blazed her flashlight in their eyes.

"Go back!" she urged. "Give this thing up, Bill. You've got to!"

"Great blazes!" said Bill Browder.

"Bill, you've got to stop," said the girl. "I don't know who this man with you is, but you're trying to get him mixed up in things. You can't do that. This has got to end, I tell you!"

There was deep, almost tearful vehemence in her speech. Completely serious.

She made one more statement.

"This is the last chance I'm giving you," she said. "You'd better stop, Bill, before it is too late."

Then she began backing away. She put her flashlight on her gun. While the weapon was in the light, she cocked it, obviously so they would realize she meant business.

Her light went out. They could hear her running away.

Bill Browder let the air out of his lungs in a windy rush.

"Whew!"

he exclaimed.

"Who was she?" Doc Savage asked.

Browder snorted.

"I never saw that girl before in my life," he said. "Isn't that the strangest thing?"

Doc said, "She called you by name."

Browder gulped. "That's what makes it queer."

Doc said, "You stay here. Do not move from this spot, you understand."

Bill Browder grabbed Doc Savage's arm and snapped, "Here, here! You can't--"

Doc Savage took Bill Browder by the neck, and they struggled for a while. Doc gradually worked his fingers around to the young man's neck, and Browder, apparently realizing something drastic was about to happen to him, struggled furiously. Doc located the nerve centers he was seeking, put pressure on them and Browder became limp.

Doc put him on the ground. Browder was unconscious. The effect of the nerve pressure was about the same as a knockout blow, although senselessness would grip him longer; and there would be no great feeling of discomfort after he revived.

The bronze man followed the girl. He was not breathing hard. He was not excited; at least he showed no signs of excitement.

DOC traveled fast. The lay of the ground was unfamiliar, but the girl was still within hearing, still running. He pursued the sound.

They left the alley, went across an open lot which was studded with brush and trees. Doc heard limbs crackling under the girl's feet several times.

She reached a street. A car engine started. The motor came to life suddenly with an urgent roar, and gears gnashed iron teeth.

Doc put on speed. He whipped out of the trees, felt a sidewalk underfoot and reached the street. The car was plunging away. Its headlights were not on, but the machine was a dark shape like an elephant with no legs against a distant street light.

Sprinting madly, Doc got his hands on the cold, slick metal back of the machine. There was no spare tire. He located the gadget which held the license plate. It was fragile. But under that was the handle which locked the turtleback, and the handle was stronger. And the bumpers projected some distance.

He got on the bumper. It was no small feat in gymnastics to do so. And he could not remain there long, particularly if the driver went over rough streets.

He tugged out his handkerchief, swung down and jammed it into the end of the exhaust pipe. Almost at once, the car began to slow as the exhaust gas crowded back into the machine and choked the motor.

Before the car had fully stopped, he was around to the front and had jerked open the door on the driver's side.

The fat girl glared at him.

"The very idea!" she said. "What is the idea, anyway?"

Doc Savage's flake-gold eyes narrowed. This was not the girl he had started out to pursue. This one was older, had a different voice, and there was certainly nothing comparable in their figures. This girl would weigh considerably more than two hundred pounds.

Like all fat girls, she looked jolly. But there was nothing jolly about the swing she aimed at Doc's jaw. He barely got out of the way.

"You . . . you woman-frightener!" yelled the fat girl.

Doc said, "Stop that!"

She went silent. The bronze man's voice had a way of conveying emphatic power, without rising in tone, that was effective.

"Why were you in such a hurry?" he asked.

She stared at him. "I heard you running through the trees toward me," she said. "What girl wouldn't get scared?" Her voice grew indignant again. "Here I am walking home across that vacant lot from my friend's house, and--"

"Who is your friend?"

"Anna Stringer," snapped the fat girl. "She lives over there"--she pointed beyond the empty lot--"and her brother is a policeman, in case that means anything to you."

"Your name?" Doc asked.

She scowled. "It's none of your business."

Doc said, "Your name, please." He said it so she jumped.

"Er—Fern Reed," she said.

"Did you see anything of a girl with a gun?" Doc Savage asked.

She gaped at him. "Of course not!"

The bronze man nodded. "It is possible I made a mistake," he said.

The fat girl snorted. She pressed the starter button, and her car motor whirred.

Doc Savage fished in a pocket and drew out a glass vial holding not more than a large tablespoonful of liquid. He stepped back, waited for the car motor to start.

When the engine began firing, Doc hurled the glass vial against the side of the car. It broke.

The contents, a liquid, splashed over the car.

Doc watched the car go away. He made a mental note of the rather strange point that the car had no license plate on its holder.

BILL BROWDER sat up, took hold of his neck and groaned a groan which contained more astonishment than anything else.

"What'd you do to me?" he demanded.

Doc Savage did not answer.

Browder said, "You did something to my neck. Made me pass out." He frowned. "Yeah—that's what you did. You're a surgeon and doctor, and you would know how to do such things."

(The causing of unconsciousness by such means is not new. It is, however quite dangerous in unskilled hands. There was one case recently, at an Atlantic coast bathing resort, of a lifeguard who produced this unconsciousness for amusement, in various victims who agreed to submit. He was not experienced. He held the pressure too long, with the result that his "hypnotism," as he was calling it, became a death. He faced charges of manslaughter.)

Doc said, "You have not been hurt."

Browder lurched to his feet. "I guess not. Say, you did that because you don't trust me, didn't you?"

"As a precaution, rather," Doc corrected him.

"While you went to look for the girl?"

"Yes."

"Did you find her?"

Doc Savage said, "Do you know a very fat girl named Fern Reed?"

Bill Browder chuckled. "Fern Reed? That name sure doesn't sound like a fat girl. No, I don't know her."

"She is working with the girl who accosted us, I think," Doc said. "The fat girl was posted in the vacant lot at the end of the block to decoy me away from the other girl. I fell for their trick, unfortunately."

Browder shook his head. "That seems fantastic."

"Have you a neighbor named Anna Stringer?"

"Stringer? No, of course not," said Browder. "No one by that name in this neighborhood."

"Fern Reed said she had been visiting Anna Stringer," Doc said. "That merely verifies my suspicion she was lying."

Out of the darkness nearby came a hoarse woofing noise.

Browder whirled to the sound.

"Great blazes!" he exclaimed. "That dog is still hanging around!" He started forward. "Come on!"

Doc gripped his arm. "You are still going to follow that dog?"

"Of course," Browder said. "Come on. You'll see something fantastic. You'll see what I've gone to so much trouble to bring you out here to see."

Browder pushed ahead. Doc moved at his side. For a while, they heard nothing. Then the dog's bark came again, ahead and to their left.

Doc listened closely to the dog. He was as silent as he could be and still keep pace with Browder until he heard the dog bark again.

Then the bronze man flung out a hand and stopped Browder. "That is not a dog; it is a man," Doc said. "Do you know anything about that?"

"Man?" Browder blurted. "But we saw the dog!"

"It was a dog in the beginning. Now, it is a man." When Browder tried to go on, Doc held him.

"You said something earlier about someone trying to kill you."

Browder sounded earnest.

"Yes, twice," he said. "Three times, I mean. Once it was poison in my milk; I caught it that time because the milk tasted queer. Then a car tried to run me down. And someone heaved a knife at me last night. It just missed me."

"Who did all that?" Doc asked.

"I don't know. So help me, I don't." Browder groaned. "But it started happening after I followed that strange blue dog and found out that the lives of two hundred and fifty people are at stake." Doc Savage tightened his grip on Browder's arm.

"Two hundred and fifty people?" he said. "Their lives at stake? What are you talking about?"

Browder breathed inward hoarsely.

"That's why I'm going to such lengths to get you interested in this," he said.

THE grip which Doc Savage was holding on Bill Browder's arm was tight enough that Browder squirmed uncomfortably, tried to loosen the bronze man's fingers, but failed.

"This is the truth about two hundred and fifty people," gasped Browder. "Please believe that. I know I lied to you about the arteriosclerosis and the rats. But it's the truth about all those people."

The dog barked again. Evidently the "dog" was getting impatient, because this bark was not as good an imitation as the others had been.

"Two hundred and fifty people," Doc said. "How are they in danger?"

"I don't know."

"Are their lives in danger?"

"Yes. They'll die if something isn't done."

"Where are they?"

"I don't know."

"What menaces them?"

"I don't know."

"Apparently," said Doc Savage, "there is a great deal you do not know—or are not telling."

Browder squirmed. "Look, here's how it happened," he gasped. "I follow the dog, see? I'm only curious, because it's so funny-looking. That blue color, you know. This is four nights ago, and I don't have nothing to do but follow the dog and satisfy my curiosity."

He paused while the woofing of the "dog" came from the darkness again.

He continued, "Four nights ago, see? I follow the dog to a house, a big house over there"—he pointed toward the south—in the woods. I hear men talking. They are outside the house, in what I guess is the garage. There are three of them, and they are firing questions at a fourth guy. They are asking this fourth guy where a Bench Logan can be found. The fourth guy says he don't know no Bench Logan. The others think he is lying, and they say so. They talk back and forth rough to each other. It comes out that two hundred and fifty people are going to die if this Bench Logan cannot be found."

Bill Browder paused to swear.

"Right then, this blue dog barks at me," he added, "and I have to take out like a rabbit. The men all hear me, and they give me some chase, I can tell you. I think I get away, but I guess I don't, because right away begin these mysterious attempts to knock me off."

Doc Savage was silent for a moment.

"There is one big hole in your story," he said. "Unless you can clarify that, the thing is not believable."

"What hole?"

"Why you did not go to the police?"

Bill Browder grunted in surprise. "Why, I left that out," he said. "I forgot to say that I heard these men say that nobody but this Bench Logan could save those two hundred and fifty people. And Bench Logan is wanted by the police. If Bench Logan is arrested, he can't help those people. So—well, what would you do? I didn't go to the police. I racked my brain. I was worried about it, I can tell you. Finally, I thought of getting you. You are supposed to be the kind of a man to go to when something like this comes up."

There was silence. Then, coming into existence almost imperceptibly, a trilling. It was a low and weird note which traced a definitely musical, yet tuneless, pattern in the darkness. The trilling was the sound of Doc Savage, a thoughtless thing which he did in moments of mental stress.

"Browder," he said, "in the darkness ahead is a man barking like a dog. He is trying to decoy us somewhere. I am going to follow him and see what happens. Do you wish to go with me, or return?"

Browder pulled in a shaky breath.

"I'll go along," he said.

They moved on together.

The "dog" kept ahead of them, barking a little more happily, now.

Chapter III. THE ELUSIVE MR. LOGAN

THE man who was barking like a dog did not lead them into a trap.

Astonishingly enough, it was the other way around. The man walked into one himself.

Almost in mid-bark, as it were, the man was interrupted. There came a sudden, dull sound, as if a blow had hit him. The man yelled. There was nothing nice in the yell. It was filled with agony and astonishment.

Then an automatic pistol blasted itself empty! Its bullets knocked bark off trees, dug at the ground not far from Doc Savage and Bill Browder. Browder made a barking noise of his own and dived behind a tree.

Ahead, the fracas continued. There were blow sounds, profanity, men falling down! Someone turned on a flashlight, but the light was shattered before the beam revealed anything except vague dodging bodies.

Doc Savage watched and listened with interest. Mostly, he listened. There was not much to be seen in the darkness. But the sound—plenty of it—told him that one man was fighting three or four others. The one man was doing a bearcat job of it. He did not, obviously, need help. The terrific fighter was the man who had been doing the barking. The others had jumped him without warning.

"Mr. Browder," Doc Savage said, "what do you imagine this means?"

"Gosh!" said Bill Browder. "I never expected anything like it."

He sounded amazed.

Suddenly the terrific fighter got the best of all his opponents. He tore off through the darkness, running like an animal.

Doc Savage had been waiting for this. He went into action himself.

He pursued the man, and did it silently. He did not set out directly on the man's trail, but headed rather at an angling course to the right. He did this for two reasons. First, to get ahead of the runner. Second, there was a street light far ahead, and against its glow he could see such obstacles as trees and dodge them.

Within two blocks, Doc was ahead of the runner.

The bronze man took anaesthetic grenades out of his pocket. He was wearing the full-dress suit—getting somewhat mussed by now—in which he had intended to attend the affair at the Ritz-Astoria.

Naturally, the pockets of the dress suit had not been full of the gadgets which the bronze man was in the habit of using when he went to the Ritz-Astoria. But trouble found him at unexpected times. So he kept a supply of his more common gadgets in his car. He had, when the strange business about the diabetic rats came up, prudently transferred some of the devices to his pockets. The anaesthetic grenades had to be carried in a metal case because they were so breakable. Thin-walled glass globules which contained chemicals, they would shatter readily and the liquid contents would vaporize almost instantly.

Doc heaved grenades ahead of the runner. It was a tough job, because the runner was traveling fast. Three of the grenades had no effect. But the fourth did better, and the headlong pace of the runner slackened.

Shortly thereafter, he stopped. Then he sank down, as if sleepy.

When Doc reached him, he was snoring. The snoring was one of the effects of the harmless, but potent, anaesthetic.

The victim was a lean, tall young man. Doc struck a match and let the light shed over the fellow's face. The face was flat-cheeked, not unhandsome. There were hollows under the eyes, evidences elsewhere of a long period of strain.

The man had not come unscathed from the fight. His lip was split, his jaw skinned; he would have a black eye, and a quantity of skin was missing from his hard brown knuckles.

One thing stood out about the man—his violent physical force. He gave the impression, even while unconscious, of a stick of dynamite with a fizzing fuse attached.

Doc picked him up. How the fellow had been able to whip a number of assailants was instantly apparent. His muscles were hard. Even the biceps were as firm as tendons.

Doc carried him to his automobile, put him inside. The car, innocent though it looked, was armor-plated and had bulletproof windows. It would hold the young man safe, once it was locked. The car stood under trees where it was intensely dark.

Doc was in a hurry. As soon as he had tossed the unconscious man into the machine, he slammed the door, turned the key and left. He ran back toward Bill Browder.

BILL BROWDER was being very still. The other men, however, were moving around. Doc Savage stood in the darkness, listening to them, for a while. Then he moved boldly.

"Gentlemen," he called, "what is going on here?"

Instant silence fell.

A man broke it with, "It must be a policeman!"

Doc said, "It is not a policeman. I am Doc Savage, and my companion, who is around somewhere, is Bill Browder. We witnessed that fight a moment ago. As a matter of fact, we were following that fellow who got away from you."

A new voice came out of the darkness. It had authority, and it took charge of the other end of the conversation.

"I am amazed," the voice said. "Is it all right if I come forward and talk with you?"

The man had a slight accent, as if he were a foreigner speaking English, or an American who had been in a foreign country a great deal.

Doc Savage got more of his anaesthetic bombs ready.

"Come ahead," he said.

A huge blob of the adjacent darkness became a man. He was enormous. The fact that he had short legs had little bearing on the impression he gave of size. It was fat size. Bulbs and balloons of flesh that bounced and shook. A human blimp.

"As I said," remarked this elephant, "I am amazed."

Extremely fat men are usually funny. This one wasn't. If extremely fat men are not funny, they are usually pitiable. But there was nothing pitiable about this one.

He was an elephant, and he conveyed the feeling of being just about as effective as one, in anything he might undertake.

"I am Thomas J. Eleanor," he said.

Doc Savage had trained his memory to retain a great quantity of general information. He had heard of Thomas J. Eleanor. The man was an international financier of some note, and about whom not a great deal was known. The man had lived much of his life abroad—Paris, London, Rome, Berlin, Budapest—which would account for his accent.

(The amazing quality of Doc Savage's memory—his whole mental equipment, too—is a never-ending source of wonder to his friends and associates. Those who have followed the bronze man's past adventures know of the scientific training which he received, and which is responsible for his unusual development. Doc was placed in the hands of scientists at childhood, by his parents, and received unending training for many years. Naturally, he became a mental genius and a physical marvel. When you train and study like that, you are bound to become good. Naturally also, this life has had its handicaps. Doc is really a fellow who has missed a lot of fun—as you and I know fun.)

Doc asked, "The Thomas J. Eleanor who controls World Zone Airways?"

The fat man chuckled. "Right," he said. He thumbed on a flashlight briefly, so that the glow revealed Doc. He chuckled. "You are the Doc Savage of whom I've heard, I can see that," he added. "This astounds me. How did you happen to be here?"

Doc seemed not to hear the question. He listened to footsteps approach. Four men. Thomas J. Eleanor turned his flashlight on them.

The four men were, by their clothing, a butler, two chauffeurs and a gardener. They looked as if their employer had picked them while hunting men who would not be afraid of anything.

"My servants," said Thomas J. Eleanor. "You need not be alarmed by them."

Doc Savage turned his head.

"Bill Browder," he called. "You might as well join us."

There was a silence. Then Browder came forward cautiously out of the night. He had a flashlight, and he turned this on the group.

"Hey!" Browder exploded. "These are the guys I saw questioning that fellow about where they could find a man named Bench Logan."

THOMAS J. ELEANOR was suave and polite. He stepped forward and looked at Browder.

"I never saw you before," he said. "I don't understand— Oh, I think I do, too! Did this happen four nights ago?"

"Yes," Browder said.

"Then you're the fellow who ran when the dog barked at him that night," said Thomas J. Eleanor.

"We have wondered who that was."

Bill Browder snorted.

"You're being mighty dang polite about it," he said. "But how about the three attempts to kill me? How about them?"

"I have no idea what you're talking about," said Thomas J. Eleanor.

He sounded properly incredulous.

Doc Savage said, "I trust you will not say you have no idea about the fellow you just attacked, Mr. Eleanor."

The enormously fat man was silent.

"That man," he said abruptly, "might have told us where to find Bench Logan."

Browder exclaimed triumphantly, "There, Mr. Savage! Didn't I tell you they were hunting a man named Bench Logan?"

Thomas J. Eleanor seemed lost in thought for a while. "That fellow we were trying to capture—the one who got away a few minutes ago—do you suppose there is any chance of our finding him?"

"Very little chance," Doc Savage said.

"That is too bad," Thomas J. Eleanor said with feeling.

A police siren sounded out of the distance. It approached. Someone had finally called the police to investigate the gunfire, apparently.

"It might save endless questions if we were not found here," suggested Thomas J. Eleanor.

"Suppose we . . . er . . . walk to my home. It is only a short distance. We can talk there."

Bill Browder did not act enthusiastic about this. But he finally accompanied Doc Savage, Thomas J. Eleanor and the other men.

THE home of Thomas J. Eleanor was as large as a hangar for a trans-Atlantic airplane, and considerably more ornate. There were maids, housekeepers, footmen and more chauffeurs in evidence. Everything functioned discreetly.

In a great study, paneled with teak, Eleanor faced them. He produced excellent cigars and drinks, which Doc Savage declined. Bill Browder accepted.

Doc was studying Thomas J. Eleanor. The man undeniably had enormous personal magnetic power.

There was something strange about this. He was not a man you would enjoy being with, or a man you would laugh with as a buddy.

As a whole, one got the feeling that Thomas J. Eleanor had devoted his whole life so intensively to getting things he wanted, and getting tasks accomplished, that he could not be any other way. He was a master of men, and everything about him said so. His slight foreign accent only enhanced his dynamic, mysterious character.

Thomas J. Eleanor took a pose. Lights in the study were low.

"Mr. Savage," he said, "I do not know why you are here, but I do know your reputation. You have the name of a man who rights wrongs and punishes evildoers in the far corners of the earth. I have heard much of you in my—in my past life. As I say, I do not know why you are here, but I want you to help me."

Doc Savage said, "We rarely help individuals."

"When you say we, you mean yourself and your five associates, I presume. Actually, you have six associates, because there is a young woman, a cousin named Patricia Savage, who occasionally helps you."

The bronze man nodded.

Thomas J. Eleanor frowned. "What do you mean when you say you rarely help individuals?"

"When one person only is in trouble," said Doc Savage, "it usually means that he or she got into it because of greed, selfishness, or some other unpleasant motive. Usually, when one man is in trouble, it is his own fault. Not always, but usually. When a number of people are in trouble, it is usually the other way around. Some one man is usually responsible for their predicament."

The huge, dynamic man nodded. "Very well put, and very true. And that will bring me, without delay, to making a statement. The statement is this: Two hundred and fifty people, approximately, are going to die if I do not find a man named Bench Logan."

Bill Browder exploded. "You see!"

The dim lights in the room made it hard to distinguish the expression on Thomas J. Eleanor's face, if there was an expression.

Doc said, "Two hundred and fifty people."

"Approximately."

"They will die?"

"Unless we get Bench Logan."

Doc Savage shook his head patiently. "You will have to be more specific than that," he said.

ONE of the servants had kindled a fire in the fireplace, and it blazed up brightly. Thomas J. Eleanor moved out of the glow it cast.

"The thing can be put very simply," he said. "I want you to find Bench Logan and turn him over to me. I know you do not take pay, but I will donate any reasonable amount you name to any charity you designate."

"What would you consider a reasonable amount?"

Thomas J. Eleanor shrugged.

"Would one hundred thousand dollars strike you as reasonable?" he asked.

Bill Browder gasped in astonishment.

"You must want Bench Logan badly," Doc said.

Eleanor shook his head. "I don't want him at all," he said. "Those two hundred and fifty people who are going to die want him badly. They have to have him, or they will stop living. All of them. You see how it is?"

"I do not see at all how it is," Doc Savage told him. "We are doing a great deal of talking and getting nowhere. Where are these two hundred and fifty people?"

"I cannot tell you that."

"What can you tell me?"

"Anything you want to know."

"What menaces these two hundred and fifty persons?"

"Death!"

"What form of death?"

"Sudden!"

"What is its exact nature?"

"I cannot tell you that," said Thomas J. Eleanor.

"What are the names of these people?"

"I cannot tell you that."

"When will they die?"

"Very quickly. Some of them may be dead, now."

"Can you produce their bodies?"

"No."

"Or show me where they can be found?"

"I cannot do that, either," said Thomas J. Eleanor.

"Just what can you tell me?"

"Anything," said Thomas J. Eleanor, "about Bench Logan."

"Who is he?"

"He is the young man we attempted to seize a short time ago and who got away."

"What connection has he with the two hundred and fifty people whose lives are in danger?"

"I'm sorry, but I cannot tell you that."

Doc Savage walked over to the light switch at the end of the room and punched it. Bright light flooded the room. Instantly, Thomas J. Eleanor moved, lifting a hand and turning his face.

One of his men sprang forward and switched off the lights.

"Bright light hurts Mr. Eleanor's eyes," the man explained.

Doc Savage walked toward the door.

"Come on, Browder," he said.

Bill Browder stared. "What? Are you leaving?"

"We are walking out of here," Doc Savage told him.

Thomas J. Eleanor bounced forward with surprising agility for such a big man.

"You can't do that!" he yelled. "After all, you haven't learned anything about this yet."

"I have been asking questions, and getting what actually amounts to no answers at all," Doc Savage said.

Bill Browder bleated, "What about who tried to kill me? I haven't found that out. I want to know."

"I'll tell you everything," said Thomas J. Eleanor.

Doc swung on the fat man.

"Where are these two hundred and fifty people?" he demanded.

"I cannot tell you that," said Eleanor.

Doc whirled to the door.

"Come on, Browder," he said.

Chapter IV. THE WORRIED GIRL

THEY walked out of the mansion without the slightest interference. Thomas J. Eleanor merely stood and stared at them.

The fat man seemed, for some reason or other, very pale.

Doc Savage swung down the winding walk toward the estate gate, and Bill Browder trotted at his side.

"I wonder who tried to kill me," said Bill Browder. "I wish I could have found that out."

Doc made no comment.

Browder complained, "We didn't learn anything, did we? We didn't find out a thing about the blue dog, or about the two hundred and fifty people."

Doc walked in silence.

Browder said, "But one thing sure, you know now that I was telling you the truth about all this." The bronze man still said nothing.

"I wonder what became of Bench Logan," pondered Bill Browder.

Doc spoke. He said, "Browder, go home."

"Huh?"

"Go home," directed the bronze man. "Lock your doors and stay inside. Better still, if you have a friend or a relative, go and stay with him. Telephone me your new address."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Browder. "Do you think I'm in danger?"

"By your own confession, you have been the victim of three attempts on your life. What makes you think the attempts will now stop?"

"I hadn't thought of that."

"Go home."

"Listen, I ain't afraid!" Browder declared. "I want to go with you. I'd like to see you work. I've heard you're a wonder. I think I would be safer with you, too."

Without another word, Doc Savage took Bill Browder by the neck.

Browder was instantly horrified.

"Wait! Wait!" he squawked. "I'll go home! Don't do that to me again! I'll go!"

Doc released him. Browder galloped off into the night. His feet hit the sidewalk hard for a while, then silence fell. Doc glanced around. The night was, if possible, darker than before. Three or four blocks distant was a small drugstore on a lighted corner. The establishment seemed to be open.

DOC SAVAGE walked to the store and entered. There were no customers, and the proprietor looked up vaguely.

The bronze man went to the telephone booth. The telephone directory dangled from a chain on the outside of the booth. He killed some time looking at the directory.

A slight sound came from the rear of the store. The proprietor wriggled his nose like a rabbit, but did not turn his head toward the sound.

Doc whirled and entered the rear of the store. It was a storeroom littered with boxes, and it

contained a table at which Bill Browder was just seating himself. Browder was in the act of adjusting a telephone headset over his ears. Bill Browder emitted a howl of fright an instant before Doc Savage got hold of his neck. That was the only vocal sound he made. His other noises were futile blows and a clatter as he kicked over a packing case in his struggles. When Browder was unconscious, Doc placed him on the table. The bronze man walked back into the front of the store. The druggist was the color of old canvas. He had not moved more than a foot from where he had been standing, and he did not look at Doc Savage. He did not stir or look up while Doc entered the telephone booth, or while the bronze man was telephoning. A young woman with a very pleasant voice answered the telephone. Doc seemed surprised. "Pat," he said, "what are you doing at headquarters?" "Oh, I just like to sit around the place," Patricia Savage told him. "I sit here and think of all the exciting things that have happened in the past and hope more of them will happen." "How did you get in?" "Oh, I snatched Monk's key out of his pocket. He doesn't know that, yet." "Where is Monk?" "Uptown," Pat said. "Monk, Ham, Johnny, Long Tom and Renny are all getting ready to throw you a birthday party. They have everything all set. The trouble is, they haven't been able to find you. Where have you been? They thought you would be at that doings at the Ritz-Astoria. Monk and Ham went down to get you, but you weren't there. What's up?" Doc Savage spoke rapidly. "Get hold of them," he said. "Have Monk and Ham investigate a man named Bill Browder." Doc gave Browder's address. He added, "Have Johnny and Long Tom find out everything possible about Thomas J. Eleanor, the international financier. The fellow is something of a mystery-man. I want everything they can dig up on him." "Whee!" said Pat gleefully. "Something is breaking!" Doc said, "Have Renny check up on a man named Bench Logan. I know nothing about Bench Logan, except his name, which is probably spelled B-e-n-c-h L-o-g-a-n. " Pat was excited. "What's happening?" Doc Savage did not ordinarily talk a great deal. Now that he thought of it, he had talked more tonight than was his custom. He had felt, for some reason or other, more free. It might be because it was his birthday. But the truth was that he had completely overlooked the fact that this was his birthday. However, Monk and the others needed a general idea of what was happening, in order to start working. It was a bad idea to give Pat the information; she was sure to want to mix up in the thing herself. They always had trouble with her on that point. Doc said, "Someone is trying to pull a fast one on me. A man named Bill Browder got me interested in a fantastic story about diabetic rats, then in another about a blue dog. Both stories were part of a trick. Browder is probably working for Thomas J. Eleanor, and they want me to catch a man named Bench Logan for them. Everyone seems convinced that the lives of two hundred and fifty people are at stake. I am convinced that part is the truth." Pat gave an exclamation of surprise. "What a wild story," she said. "Say, Doc, what do you want me to do? What is my part?" "You are to go home, go to bed, and dream about making fat dowagers grow thin," the bronze man said. "That is, after you get hold of the others, of course." Pat's laugh was derisive. "You know me better than that," she said. She hung up.

DOC SAVAGE gave the dead telephone an intent, and displeased, inspection. This, he saw, was going to be another of those affairs when Pat would insist on taking part in the trouble. Pat loved excitement. She was also capable and was often of great assistance. But Doc disliked the idea of a young woman being exposed to danger, even a young woman who reveled in it. Patricia Savage normally operated a beauty establishment on Park Avenue, where she charged unearthly prices, and worked miracles at slimming fat women. Pat's methods were hard. She frequently made her clients move to the beauty establishment and get all their meals and sleep there, as well as their exercise. Park Avenue society loved it. Pat was making a fortune off the place—and yearning for something more exciting. Doc walked out of the phone booth. He confronted the druggist. "Is the tap in the back room the only one they had on that telephone?" he asked. The druggist looked as if he was going to faint. "I . . . I . . . yes," he gulped. "How much did they pay you?"

The druggist swallowed several times. "Fuh-fifty dollars," he managed finally. "They . . . that Browder fellow came in this afternoon and wanted to do it. I wouldn't let him. It's against the law, and I didn't like the way it looked. So at first I turned him down."

"What made you change your mind?"

The man hauled in a deep breath.

"Mr. Thomas J. Eleanor, the financier, came in and told me it would be all right," he said. "So I . . . I took their money and let them do it."

"Bill Browder and Thomas J. Eleanor are working together?"

"Yes."

"How long," asked Doc, "has Bill Browder lived in this neighborhood?"

"As far as I know, just today," the druggist replied. "He rented a furnished house down the street yesterday and moved in today."

"And Thomas J. Eleanor?"

"Oh, he has owned that big mansion for a long time," said the druggist. "Ten years, I guess. He's gone a lot. Sometimes you don't see him for years. Then he will turn up." The druggist became more effusive. He seemed to feel that emphasizing his acquaintance with Eleanor would make his act less reprehensible.

"He uses cigars made special in Turkey, Mr. Thomas J. Eleanor does," the man said. "Cost him a dollar each, wholesale. I don't charge him a profit, but he always tips me ten dollars on an order." The druggist leered greedily. "So it's not so unprofitable at that."

"How long has Thomas J. Eleanor been here this time?"

The druggist frowned. "I guess I shouldn't be telling you—"

"How long?" Doc's voice did not rise in tone, but the man jumped and grew pale again.

"Three months," he said.

"Do you know anything about a blue dog?" Doc asked.

"Blue dog? No, can't say I do."

"Or about two hundred and fifty people?"

The druggist just stared.

Doc Savage walked out of the store.

DOC SAVAGE walked rapidly through the night to his parked automobile. He took the key out of his pocket, and used it to tap on the thick bulletproof glass window.

"Get over close to the glass where you can hear me," he said.

The car, due to its peculiar construction—it was gas-tight among other things—was practically soundproof.

The young woman in the car came close to the window.

Doc turned his flashlight on her.

It was the young woman who had accosted Bill Browder and himself and had warned Browder to stop what he was doing.

Doc said, "Drop that gun you are holding. Hold up your hands where I can see them, and be sure the gun is on the floor."

The young woman told him quite specifically where he could go, but did not use any swear words doing it. She was quite angry.

"This car," Doc Savage advised her, "is equipped with a gas device whereby the machine can be flooded, and you will be rendered unconscious. If it becomes necessary to do it that way, you will only inconvenience yourself."

The young woman knew by now that the car was an unusual one. She had not been able to get out of it. The bulletproof glass was nicked in many places where she had pounded it with her gun in an effort to break out.

Furthermore, Doc Savage's matter-of-fact voice had a quality of truth in it that removed all doubts that he might be bluffing.

She dropped her gun on the floor—the same cheap gun with which she had menaced Doc earlier—and held her hands in view.

The bronze man unlocked the machine. The girl immediately made an attempt to scoop up her weapon, but Doc had expected that and beat her to it. He pocketed the gun.

"You have a permit for this weapon?" he asked.

She hesitated, then snapped, "Yes, I have!" It sounded like the truth.

He told her, "We will not throw it away, then. Someone might find it and shoot somebody, and it would get you in trouble. The numbers of the gun are on record."

"Very thoughtful, aren't you?" she snapped.

Doc Savage leaned over the back seat. Bench Logan was lying there—if it was Bench Logan—and breathing deeply. Doc took his pulse. It was about normal. The bronze man felt of Bench Logan's forehead for temperature, and that seemed normal, too.

Doc told the girl, "In case you should get any idea of grabbing your gun out of my pocket, we will just put it in the pocket in the back, here."

He thrust the weapon in the rear door pocket.

"Won't that fellow wake up and get it?" the girl asked.

"It is not likely that he will wake up for some time yet. The gas with which he was overcome is rather potent."

"Oh!"

Doc Savage slid behind the wheel. He started the motor. "You were in the back of the car when I placed the unconscious man in the machine," he said.

"Of course," he girl said briefly. "How else do you think I got into this thing? I couldn't get out. What kind of a car is this, anyway?"

Without appearing to hear the query part of the girl's speech, Doc Savage put the car into motion, and drove for a short distance. Then he stopped.

Some of the devices in his pockets seemed to be gouging him, because he squirmed around and put some of them in the dash compartment. He swung around to put another in a rear door pocket. He emitted an exclamation of annoyance.

Anyone knowing the bronze man would have known that he never became upset to the point of showing his emotions with an exclamation of annoyance. The girl, however, was deceived.

She said, "Oh, you spilled something on that fellow in the back! What was it?"

"Merely some liquid," Doc Savage said. "It will not harm him."

The bronze man settled back in the seat and started driving again.

"Now," he said, "you had better tell me who you are, what you are doing, and any other facts you think might be interesting."

She sniffed. She locked her fingers together. "Fat chance you've got of getting anything out of me."

DOC SAVAGE turned onto a highway. The hour was late enough that there was not much traffic.

Doc said, "Bill Browder insisted that he did not know you; that he had no idea who you were."

The young woman's reaction to that was violent. She bolted upright and smacked her knee with a hand.

"Why, the liar!" she exclaimed. "The fibber!"

"He knows you, then?"

"If he doesn't, it's time he started to," the girl said. "We are engaged to be married, Bill and I."

"He insisted he had never seen you before."

"What a whopper for him to tell!"

"Your name is—"

"Nicky Jones," she said. Then she made an angry gesture. "Wait, I wasn't going to tell you anything."

Doc Savage sent the car into the fast-traffic lane.

He remarked, "That was an ingenious bit of herring-dragging you used earlier, when you got away from us. Meaning, of course, the rather plump girl you had waiting in the car. She told me a fairly convincing story."

"She ought to. She used to be an actress."

"She said her name was Fern Reed."

"That is right."

"Bill Browder said he had never heard of Fern Reed."

Nicky Jones stared fixedly at the pavement, which was running toward them like a gray snake.

"Bill seems to have become a stranger to the truth for tonight," she said.

Doc Savage made no comment.

After a while, Nicky demanded, "Who are you, anyway? Right in the beginning, I thought there was something familiar about you. I don't think it's your looks, but it might be. It's more your voice.

I bet I've heard your voice before. Where could it have been?"

Doc was silent. He was driving more slowly.

Nicky Jones said, "Yes, there's something familiar about you, but I can't place it. I've heard you, or seen you, but I still believe I've heard you." She pondered for a while. "Say, could it have been on the radio? You made a speech, didn't you? Something about the war situation? I think I begin to remember. It was about two weeks ago. You were on the air—"

Bench Logan heaved up in the back of the car. He had gotten the gun which Doc Savage had placed in the door pocket.

Logan said, "You can clip that speech off right there, young lady. In fact, the next word you say might be your last one!"

He did not sound like a man who was fooling!

Chapter V. UNWILLING STOWAWAY

BENCH LOGAN remained very still after he spoke. They could feel his tension, his alertness. There had been nothing overexcited in his voice, and there was certainly no hysteria in his manner.

He was a man who was accustomed to trouble.

When Doc and Nicky did not move, Logan said, "That's fine. We understand each other. But in case

we don't, I'll explain that I'll shoot the first one of you who bats an eye the wrong way." There was another silence. Doc Savage drove slowly. The man's gun was a few inches from the back of his neck.

Nicky began, "Say, you, whoever you are—"

"Shut up, little girl!" snapped Bench Logan. I'd hate to pop a woman, but I might if you push me. As for your pal here, the great Doc Savage, I would shoot him as quick as I would anybody."

Nicky gasped. She stared at the bronze man.

"Doc Savage!" she exclaimed. "That's who you are! For the love of mud, what is a man of your caliber doing in this?"

"Shut up!" ordered Bench Logan.

Doc drove with a steady hand. "Mr. Logan?" he said.

"So you know who I am," grunted Bench Logan. "Well, what do you want?"

"Is this story about the lives of a large number of people being in danger a true story?"

Bench Logan made a snarling sound. "Two hundred and fifty-six of them. It's a safe bet to figure as many as five or six have died by now, so that leaves around two hundred and fifty."

"How do you know there was two hundred and fifty-six of them?"

"There was that many when I left them."

"Then these people are together?"

"Sure." Suddenly Bench Logan put the cold muzzle of the gun against the back of Doc Savage's neck. "Say, what is this—a gag? You know all about it. What you trying to pull?"

"It is possible you misunderstand—"

"Shut up!" snarled Bench Logan. "I don't misunderstand anything. I saw you talking to that Bill Browder. I know Browder is one of Tom Eleanor's pups, and that's enough for me. You're working for Tom Eleanor. What'd Eleanor do—hire you to get me?"

Doc Savage said, "He tried to hire me to catch you and turn you over to him."

Bench Logan swore violently and at some length. He mentioned no names, but it was obvious his opinion concerned Thomas J. Eleanor, Doc Savage, and fate in general.

"Excuse the words," he told Nicky Jones when he finished, "but that is the way I feel about it."

Doc began, "Perhaps—"

Bench Logan gouged him in the back of the neck with the gun. "Don't perhaps me," he grated. "I've been away from the United States for ten years, but I've heard about you. The great Doc Savage." He snorted. "I saw a little rat of a gangster turn as white as a snow-shoe rabbit in a cafe in Rome when your name was mentioned. I saw almost the same thing in Prague, only it was a crooked banker that time."

He was silent a moment. The gun remained against Doc's neck.

"A professional righter of wrongs, they called you," Bench Logan said bitterly. "A guy who does big deeds and doesn't get paid. I says to myself right then: 'This guy Savage is just a big-shot crook; so slick nobody knows it. He's got a racket. He's a two-faced so-and-so.'" He swore again.

"You know what I said to myself right then? I said that if this guy Savage ever crosses my trail, I'll pop him out of the way so fast it won't be funny." He tapped Doc with the gun for emphasis.

"And that's what I'm going to do!"

He shoved two round tablets of whitish color to them, one to Nicky, one to Doc.

"Swallow those and don't waste time about it," he ordered.

NICKY JONES sat quite still for some time. She seemed to be thinking. Doc drove with a steady hand, holding the tablet, but making no effort to swallow it.

Finally Nicky said, "I've got a horror of being poisoned. I'd sooner be shot. Mr. Savage, I'm going to turn around and grab this devil. I've heard that you can keep going for a few seconds after you're shot. Maybe I can get hold of him and keep him from shooting you long enough for you to grab him."

A silence followed that.

Bench Logan broke the quiet with, "Lady, you've got nerve. But you won't need to do it. Those tablets are harmless."

"I'll bet," said Nicky suspiciously.

"Oh, they'll make you unconscious," Bench Logan told her. "But that's all. You see, I lead kind of a rough life. There're times when I want to be unconscious for a long time—in cases where people wanted to make me talk, for instance. So I carry a couple of those tablets. I carry them in my hatband, under a piece of Scotch tape."

Nicky's voice was shaking.

"What . . . what are you going to do with us?" she asked.

"I don't kill people except when I have to in self-defense," said Bench Logan. "So stop worrying. I'm just putting you out of this, is all. When you wake up, you'll be all right, but you won't be where you can make me any more trouble."

Nicky was still suspicious. She snapped, "I won't swallow these things!"

Doc Savage spoke quietly. "It would probably be the best thing to do so, under the circumstances."

Nicky gasped, "But—"

Doc Savage brought his tablet to his lips.

"Turn your head!" barked Bench Logan. "I want to see you swallow that thing."

Doc did so, put the tablet on his tongue, closed his mouth and swallowed.

"All right, open your mouth," Bench Logan ordered. "I want to be sure it went down."

Logan used a flashlight from the bronze man's pocket to make an inspection, and he was satisfied.

"Now you!" he directed Nicky.

She obeyed, but with no enthusiasm. Then she sat there, as if she expected to explode.

"You better park this heap," said Bench Logan.

Doc complied with the order. They sat there. The headlights were on, thrusting out a long fan of gentle light. Cars passed in either direction on the highway, sounding as if they were being blown out of a tube.

Finally Bench Logan swore, "What's wrong with that stuff?"

"I don't feel a thing," said Nicky.

Doc Savage told her, "You will, in a moment."

The bronze man's eyes were beginning to act heavy-lidded. A little at a time, his head slumped, his shoulders loosened, and he tilted over in the seat, against Nicky.

Nicky tried dazedly to push him away but finally gave it up, and they seemed to go to sleep with their heads together.

BENCH LOGAN drove them to a steamship.

The ship was not large; it was obviously old. And if it could be called any color, the color was rust. The vessel did not have the appearance of having been painted, or having anything else done to it in the line of sanitation, for a long time.

Bench Logan consulted no one on the ship. In fact, no one saw him. He took care to see to that. Due to the war situation, there was a guard near the gangplank. But the Oscar Fjord, which was the name of the old kettle of rust, was not a large vessel nor an important one. So there were only two men in the guard, and both of them were breaking the rules by sitting in a shanty, playing cards. The spot was remote, and most of the watching the two guards did was for their commanding officer, or whoever had put them on the job.

Bench Logan climbed up a hawser near the stern, and soon lowered a line over the side. He tied Doc Savage to the end of the line, and hauled the bronze man on board the Oscar Fjord. Then Logan clambered back to the dock, tied the girl to the line, scrambled up to the ship and hauled the girl on board.

All of this took the agility of a monkey, but Bench Logan seemed to have energy to spare. He was as tough as a fiddle string.

He stowed the two in a smelly compartment near the stern. He was not even breathing hard when he finished the job.

"Now," he told himself, "that's that."

Bench Logan stood there and contemplated them for a while, then shrugged.

He returned to deck, closing a couple of bulkhead doors behind him. He stood there in the night, gazing at the rusty old bulk of the Oscar Fjord, and making sure the two gangplank guards were still playing cards.

The decrepit old steamer seemed quite familiar to him. It was as if he was looking at an old friend, or at least something with which he was well acquainted.

He slid down the rope, hand over hand, to the dock and walked off. He went back to Doc Savage's car, climbed in the machine, turned the switch, stamped on the starter button. He got no results. The starter did not even turn the motor over.

Bench Logan tried repeatedly to start the car.

"Hell!" he said.

He walked down the street. But he traveled only two blocks on foot before he was fortunate enough to hail a passing taxicab. Bench Logan climbed into the cab, and the machine moved away.

NICKY JONES pointed down the darkened street and said to Doc Savage, "There goes Logan. He's leaving in that cab."

Doc Savage did not answer. He climbed into his car, reached under the dash, pressed what could have been mistaken for a rivet head and, after that, started the motor.

Nicky watched the business with the rivet head, and chuckled. "So that's why he couldn't get the car started," she said. "I suppose you have to do that every time before you start it."

Doc did not turn on the headlights. Luminance from street lamps made it unnecessary. The car rolled quietly.

Nicky announced, "He must have been conscious in the back of the car here for a long time. Before you got back and found me in the car, in fact."

Doc said, "He was conscious when I came back, yes."

That was the extent of the bronze man's conversation for some time to come. Nicky, however, rattled on excitedly.

"You found those pills in his hat when you first got him, didn't you?" she said. "And you substituted ordinary shirt buttons for them. They looked like shirt buttons, and when I ate mine, I thought it was darn funny I couldn't chew it. I almost remarked about that. It would have given the thing away, wouldn't it?"

The taxi ahead was obeying speed laws. Doc Savage kept it in view without difficulty. As soon as they encountered traffic, he turned on the headlights; but he left the red police lights dark. Nicky said, "I caught on to the pills, though. When you passed out, I got it. So I pretended to pass out, too. You know, I'm surprised I was that smart."

Doc approached closer to the taxi ahead. There was sufficient traffic that he could do this safely.

Nicky sighed.

"I had you wrong," she said. "I didn't know who you were in the first place. If I had known, when I confronted you and Bill Browder with my gun tonight, I would have acted differently."

The car climbed up the long ramp approaching a bridge to Manhattan Island. A policeman saw Doc's machine, and waved a greeting. And for several minutes, the bronze man kept a close watch on the cab ahead. But apparently Bench Logan had not noticed the policeman wave. At least, he gave no sign. Nicky leaned back in the seat.

"I'm going to tell you all I know about this," she said.

Doc made no comment.

"It's darn little," Nicky said.

Doc turned north on Broadway, following the cab.

Nicky said, "Bill Browder is mixed up in something bad. I know it. I don't know what it is, but I can tell that it's something serious. And I don't like it."

She was silent a moment. "When you fall in love with a guy, you get so you can read his mind almost. Any girl will tell you that. Or you think you can read his mind. Anyway, I've got the conviction that Bill is headed for trouble."

She grimaced.

"What I should do, I suppose," she added, "is kick the big lug in the pants and tell him to get off my boat. But that's hard to do. I guess I love him. Maybe he isn't worth it, but I love him anyway. I've made some mistakes in my time, too. And that's what Bill is doing now—making a mistake."

She spread her hands wearily, and ended her explanation.

"I just mixed up in the thing to warn Bill; to try to scare him away from whatever he's doing," she said. "And that's every darn thing I know about it. I didn't even know about the two hundred and fifty people everybody keeps talking about."

DOC SAVAGE picked up the transmitter of the short-wave radio apparatus with which the car was equipped. He allowed the tubes time to warm.

"Headquarters," he said.

Patricia's voice answered almost instantly.

"On deck," she said brightly.

"Anyone there?" Doc asked.

"I'm here, but you don't seem to consider me anybody when excitement rolls around," Pat said.

"Yes, Renny is sitting here biting his big fingernails. He can't find anybody named Bench Logan or any record of anybody by that name."

Doc said, "Put him on."

Colonel John Renny Renwick had a voice that sounded somewhat like a subway train going through a tunnel. "Hello, Doc. Say, I can't get to first base on anybody named Bench Logan."

"Get a car from the basement garage, one of the machines that has nothing distinguishing about it," Doc Savage said. "Drive south on Broadway. Keep in touch with me by radio, so that you can pick up a cab I am trailing."

"What about this Bench Logan—"

"The man in the cab is Bench Logan."

"Holy cow!" Renny rumbled. "Coming up."

Doc Savage left the radio turned on and drove in silence.

Nicky Jones was staring at him. "You fellows sure have things organized," she remarked.

DOC began keeping a watch for Renny after a few minutes.

Finally Nicky said, "Look, I'm not one to ask favors, but give Bill Browder the breaks, will you? I don't mean let him off. If he's done something, he'll have to take his medicine; and I'll stick by him if he wants me to. But if you can prevent that, I wish you'd do it. Pull him away from the fire before he gets his fingers burned, I mean."

Doc said, "We will do that for anyone who is innocent."

Suddenly Renny's tearing voice came out of the loud-speaker. "All right, Doc," Renny said. "I am behind you now. You just passed me."

"Swing around the block," Doc said, "and get on Broadway ahead of us."

Several minutes later, Renny appeared ahead of them. He was driving a dark, nondescript car. Doc said, "The cab next you is the one. Pick up the trail. I will pretend to lose out. Notify me where the passenger goes."

DOC SAVAGE drove to headquarters, the establishment which he maintained on the eighty-sixth floor of the mid-city office building. From the garage, he rode upward in a private elevator. The garage was also private and contained an assortment of cars. Nicky Jones was impressed.

Nicky was further impressed by Patricia Savage.

"Goodness, darling," she told Pat, "I didn't know you were that Patricia Savage. I've seen your pictures. I've walked past that beautician's place of yours, but never had the nerve to come in." Doc Savage checked and learned that no reports had yet come in from Monk and Ham, who were investigating Bill Browder. Nor was there anything from Long Tom and Johnny, who were checking up on Thomas J. Eleanor. Their work would probably be more difficult, and would depend on running down and talking to Wall Street financiers who might have some slight information about the rather mysterious Eleanor.

The bronze man entered his laboratory and locked the door behind him. The lab occupied a great floor space, and it was full of complex apparatus for scientific experimenting.

Doc changed clothes. His full-dress suit was, to say the least, conspicuous, and even more so because it was now dilapidated. He changed to a discreet business suit, and put on a bulletproof undergarment that might have been called a vest, although it was made of alloy-metal mesh. It covered his entire body and portions of his legs and arms, and would turn anything up to a slug from a military rifle. It would stop a military slug, too, but the blow would do almost as much damage as the bullet in that case.

He added more gadgets to his equipment.

"Pat," he said, "will you take care of Miss Jones?"

Pat smiled at Nicky Jones.

She told Doc. "You're always giving me somebody to watch, and thinking it will keep me out of the excitement. I don't think that's fair."

Doc said, "This may be—" He did not finish. He had been about to say dangerous. But it was useless. That would just bait Pat on.

"What do you think it is?" Pat asked curiously.

The bronze man hesitated. Might as well tell Pat. She would worm it out of somebody, anyway.

He explained, "The thing is not yet very clear. A man named Bench Logan seems to be the key to the safety of two hundred and fifty—or fifty-six—people. Bench Logan is suspicious of everyone, including us. Thomas J. Eleanor, a more-or-less figure of international mystery, is endeavoring to get hold of Bench Logan, and has hired Bill Browder to help him. Browder is Miss Jones' fiancé, and she is worried for fear Bill will get into serious trouble. There is a blue dog in it, too."

He left Pat looking puzzled and full of questions.

Chapter VI. THE SIDETRACK

COLONEL JOHN RENNY RENWICK was a man who had a pair of fists as big as his voice. The rest of him was big, too, but nothing that compared with his fists. He could not get them into quart pails. Renny looked at Doc Savage. He was looking very sad, which meant that Renny was feeling rather good. He wore his saddest expressions in his happiest moments.

"Nice birthday present for you, this excitement," Renny remarked.

Renny had long ago come to the conclusion that Doc Savage followed his strange career for the same reason that he—Renny—followed it. For the breathlessness of it. The stimulation of excitement. Doc examined a row of brownstone houses which looked as if they had been built during the days of Napoleon, and probably had been.

"Which one?" he asked.

"Third from the end," Renny said. "Holy cow, you know that fellow was wise that he was being followed. He did some tall ducking and left his cab as soon as he thought he had lost you."

"Do you know what room?"

"Yes," Renny said. "First floor front. You know something? That fellow is scared."

"What makes you think so?"

Renny said, "I've rented the room next to him. That place is a common rooming house, you know. I could hear him pacing the room and doing a lot of swearing and muttering. That guy is scared."

Doc said, "He has reason to know that Thomas J. Eleanor is looking for him."

Renny shook his head.

"I don't mean only scared that way," said the big-fisted man. "I mean—well, he's scared in another way. Inside himself. He's faced with some kind of decision. Terror faces him, no matter which way he decides. That's what I mean. That kind of a thing."

Doc said, "We might pay a visit to this room you rented."

It was a shabby room. They entered by the back door, and attracted no attention. Renny closed the door cautiously, then pressed an ear to the partition.

"Hear him," he said. "He's pounding the floor in there."

This was true. Doc Savage hurriedly rigged a mechanical gadget, a "listener" device utilizing a super-sensitive pick-up microphone, an amplifier and a headset. The amplifier could step up volume to such an extent that a fly would sound as if an airplane was in the room with them. Bench Logan, however, was not muttering words. He was just muttering.

"Holy cow!" Renny said.

They listened for some time, without gathering any fruit.

Doc Savage gave that up. He let himself quietly into the hall and, at the crack below the door of Bench Logan's room, carefully emptied a bottle containing the anaesthetic gas of the type which he had used on Logan earlier.

He used the gas a very small bit at a time, so that Logan would think he was growing sleepy naturally.

In order to escape the effects himself, the bronze man held his breath and retreated to an open window in Renny's room, at intervals, to get more air.

It was a tedious job, but eventually they heard Bench Logan pile down on his bed and go to sleep. Five minutes later, Renny asked, "Well, did our phenagling get us anything?"

Doc Savage spread out for inspection what they had found in Bench Logan's room.

There were three suits of business clothing, with shirts, socks, shoes, neckties, all very new, and sales slips showing at least two of the suits had been bought within the last two weeks. One suit of attire for very cold weather consisted of one pair of bearskin pants, a parka with the hood edged with wolf, a pair of bearskin moccasins. There was nothing new about these. They were, in fact, falling to pieces from age and wear.

There was one short Eskimo knife with the blade made out of a piece of bone. This was sharp.

Six passports: One of them was English, the others French, Italian, German, Yugoslavian and Monrovia. No two of these passports bore the same name, but all of them had the picture of Bench Logan as the bearer.

There was no United States passport. All the other passports bore up-to-date visas—none of them was more than six months old—entitling the passport owner to travel anywhere. This was, considering the state of Europe, unusual.

And there was one diplomatic document from Monrovia, entitling the bearer to special considerations at the border.

These documents were wrapped in an oilskin pouch which was much the worse for wear.

There was one letter. The paper looked as if it had been spotted with drops of water, possibly tears.

The letter was from a noted New York attorney, and read:

My dear Flagle:

I must advise you that the man you mention, your acquaintance named Bosworth Hurlbert, is still wanted for murder by the authorities.

I am also sorry to advise you that nothing can be done about "squashing" this murder charge, as you suggest. Murder charges simply are not squashed here in the United States.

I would further advise you that, if you have any idea of the whereabouts of this man, Bosworth Hurlbert, you turn the matter over to the police.

My investigation of the matter indicates that Bosworth Hurlbert slew a banker named John Kimball in New York City, five years ago. As I say, the thing for you to do is turn Kimball's murderer over to the police if you know his whereabouts.

Sincerely,

E. E. Kincaid, Attorney

Renny finished reading that. "I wonder who Bosworth Hurlbert is. This letter isn't addressed to this street. It's to a post-office-box number. Bosworth Hurlbert—Bench Logan. Those two names aren't at all alike. But I wonder if Bench Logan could be this Bosworth Hurlbert, who is wanted for murder."

Doc said, "You might check on that."

"I sure will."

Renny ambled back to the Eskimo clothing and picked it up. The tattered condition of the garments intrigued him. He examined the stuff closely.

"Look here," he said. "This stuff has been chewed on, as if the guy who wore it had got kind of hungry and tried to make a meal off his own clothes."

Doc Savage made no comment. He was examining the floor. He beckoned and pointed.

Renny stared at what the bronze man was interested in.

"Doesn't mean anything to me," Renny said. "Just some short hairs. Kind of coarse. And blue."

"Dog hair," Doc Savage said. "And blue."

THEY were back in their room when Bench Logan awakened. They heard him yawn mightily and turn restlessly on the bed. Thanks to the lack of after effects from the gas, they surmised that he did not know he had been knocked out.

Doc had carefully replaced everything in Logan's room exactly as he had found it.

Sounds ceased coming from Bench Logan's room. The man seemed to be either asleep, or lying on his

bed thinking.

Doc whispered, "Renny, you might as well get busy checking up on the Bosworth Hurlbert angle."

"Right," Renny agreed.

"And check that Monrovia passport. Get hold of the Monrovia consulate and have them dig up anything they can regarding Bench Logan."

"Why particularly the Monrovia passport?" Renny asked.

(Readers familiar with the foreign situation will immediately realize that Monrovia is an entirely fictitious foreign country. Because of the parallel between actual events and certain happenings depicted in this story, the author wishes to point out that it is his policy to deal with fiction only in these stories. Hence, this explanation that Monrovia is a nonexistent country and Mungen a non-existent person.)

Doc Savage did not answer that. Renny frowned at him—not because the big-fisted engineer was irritated but because when Doc seemed not to hear an inquiry it usually meant something. It suddenly dawned on Renny that the Monrovia angle must be important.

"Monrovia," he said. "Say, that's the country where they got rid of their dictator about six months ago. There was a revolt, and the dictator, named Mungen, committed suicide while besieged in his chancellory."

"That is right," Doc Savage said.

The bronze man did not sound as if he wanted to discuss the matter further. Renny shrugged, put on his hat and left, being careful to make as little noise as possible.

When Renny had gone, Doc Savage seated himself beside the wall and kept the headset of the sound pick-up device over his ears. He could hear Bench Logan breathing. The sound was like a series of deep gasps, but that was the exaggerated effect of the amplifier.

Bench Logan was not asleep, but eventually he did go to sleep.

Doc Savage also slept. He kept the headset over his ears, so that any noise from the other room would awaken him.

NEAR daylight, Renny returned. He was excited.

"Bench Logan is Bosworth Hurlbert, and he's wanted for murder," Renny explained.

The big-fisted engineer had done an industrious job of digging people out of bed, he explained.

"Here's another thing," he said. "Bench Logan was an archenemy of that dictator I mentioned—that lug named Mungen. And Mungen was a lug, too. One of the most bloodthirsty devils that have fastened on a nation in centuries, and there've been some bloody ones, too."

"Details," Doc Savage suggested.

"The first record of Bench Logan I was able to dig up," Renny said, "was as a prize fighter, then a vaudeville acrobat. He went to Europe working as an acrobat for a circus and doing strong-man stunts. On a street in Naples, Italy, one day, he saved a little girl who had her foot fast in the stirrup of a runaway horse by grabbing the horse and knocking the horse senseless with a blow of his fist."

Renny paused and glanced toward the adjacent room, where Bench Logan was sleeping.

"He must be quite a guy," he said. "Anyway, the episode of the runaway horse attracted the attention of Thomas J. Eleanor, the international financier, and Eleanor hired Bench Logan as a bodyguard."

"When did Bench Logan enter Eleanor's employ as bodyguard?" Doc asked.

"A little more than five years ago."

"Go ahead."

"Well, then there was the murder. It was here in New York. Bench Logan was body-guarding Thomas J. Eleanor, and some banker named John Kimball went off his top and tried to kill Eleanor. Bench Logan had to kill the banker, Kimball.

"Right there," Renny continued, "Bench Logan did a jackass thing. Thomas J. Eleanor must have paid him to keep his, Eleanor's, name out of it. Because Bench Logan took the imaginary name of Bosworth Hurlbert and covered up his connection with Eleanor, concealing the fact that he was bodyguarding Eleanor when he killed this banker in self-defense. Eleanor hired him to keep his name out of it, I haven't a doubt. Bench Logan skipped in a hurry."

Doc Savage had been listening intently. He asked, "Is there any chance that Bench Logan did not think there would be a murder charge when he fled?"

Renny became thoughtful.

"That might be," he said.

"Following this murder, or killing, did Bench Logan remain in Eleanor's employment?"

"Oh, sure! He was working for Eleanor when he got in trouble with this dictator, Mungen, two years later."

"How did that come about?"

Renny grimaced. "You see, I got all this from the Monrovia consul. He jumped out of bed and hurried down to the office and got it out of his files for me. All this stuff about Bench Logan was in his files because they dug it up when Bench tried to kill Mungen, the dictator."

"Logan tried to kill Mungen?"

Renny nodded. "Girl stuff, believe it or not. This Bench Logan was engaged to a showgirl in Bucharest, and the girl fell for Mungen and went to Monrovia. This Mungen, the way I remember his pictures, was no bargain. He was a hog. But the guy must have had something on the ball, because he got the girl."

Doc held up a hand. Sounds were coming from the bedroom, noises which indicated Bench Logan was awakening. But the man did not get up at once.

Doc breathed, "Be careful about noise. But go ahead."

"That Mungen was a devil, and the girl had spirit," Renny said. "Anyway, Mungen had his secret police take care of the girl. She was 'killed' in an automobile accident. I guess that might have fooled some people, but it didn't deceive Bench Logan any. He got a pistol and went for Mungen. Probably he already had the pistol. Anyway, he shot Mungen three times in his bulletproof vest, and once in the leg, and got clean away. You no doubt remember that. It was called an 'attempted political assassination,' and they made quite a fuss. But they didn't catch Bench Logan. I suppose he went back to bodyguarding Thomas J. Eleanor. At least, the records indicate he did."

Doc Savage gestured at the listening apparatus.

"Bench Logan is making a telephone call," he said.

BENCH LOGAN spoke from the telephone in his room. They could hear each word he said, but the other part of the dialogue was not audible.

"Give me his nibs," Bench Logan said, "and hurry up about it. Tell him it's Logan calling. If he's not on here in thirty seconds, I'll hang up."

Renny commented, "He sure gets his feelings in his voice. He sounds like a desperate man who has finally made up his mind."

"Hello," Bench Logan said. "You know who this is. Here's the final. The absolute alternative. Either you have a steamship equipped with planes on its way north to rescue those people in five hours, or I go to the police."

He evidently listened to what the other said for a moment.

"That's all right; I'll face the murder charge," he said. "I've thought it all over. I may get off with a light sentence. All this publicity that will be aroused may work in my favor. Anyway, I'm going to take the chance. There's two hundred and fifty-six people up there, and that's two hundred and fifty-six lives against mine. My life hasn't been any too useful. I guess nobody would hesitate in trading my life for the lives of those people. I've been hesitating because it's my life, and I hate to spend it." He was silent a while. "But you'll die with me, you know that!"

The other said something.

Bench Logan swore bitterly.

"I won't argue," he said. "I know you can't get a steamship sailing in five hours, but you can get one started preparing. And you'll have to do it. Either that, or the newspapers will be on the streets with extras telling about the plight of those people."

Again he listened.

Then he laughed violently.

"All right, so I was lying when I told you Doc Savage was working with me," he snarled. "I knew you had found it out. I knew Savage was working for you. But don't start depending too much on Savage. I took care of that. He's on a ship bound to a foreign country, right now, and that ship sailed at midnight. They won't turn around and come back on a radio order, either, because they'll think it's an enemy submarine trying to trick them. Savage is out of the way."

For the last time, Bench Logan listened.

"Five hours," he said, "or I go to the police."

He hung up.

Doc Savage stood with the headset clamped to his ears, and decided that Bench Logan was packing his clothing. Logan seemed to be throwing everything into a suitcase in mad haste.

The bronze man took off the headset.

"Renny," he said in a low voice, "this man is getting ready to leave. He must be afraid that his telephone call will be traced, and they will come here after him."

Renny nodded dubiously.

Doc said, "Follow Logan. Get hold of Monk and Ham by radio, and have them help you. Also, contact Johnny and Long Tom, and have them come here so they can lend a hand if necessary."

Renny took a deep breath. "Holy cow! You want me to go off and leave you? I don't like—"

"Get moving," Doc suggested, "if you want to trail Logan."

The big-fisted engineer put on his hat and left.

Chapter VII. ACTION IN ARK STREET

THE man wore a white suit, and he came in a little white wagon. The wagon had a bell—or rather, there was a bell attached to the horse. A tiny and musical bell, it tinkled enough to pleasantly soothe anyone who might be awake and happen to hear it this early in the morning. But not loud enough to awaken anyone.

The milkman got out of the wagon, took a wire basket of white-filled bottles from the back and

entered the brownstone-front rooming house where Bench Logan had lived. He was in the house not more than three minutes, then he came out again. He climbed in his wagon. He drove down the street. The bell tinkled. The milkman began whipping the horse. But the horse was old; he knew his pace, and held it. His trot was not fast enough for the milkman.

The man jumped out of the wagon and began running. Doc Savage was on the roof of the row of buildings. He had kept pace with the milkman. The rooftops of the buildings were the same height throughout the block, separated only by brick walls, three or four feet high.

Doc hooked a folding steel grapple over the edge of the brick wall and flipped out a silk cord which was attached to the grapple. It was the simplest kind of gimmick, but he carried it with him always. He started down.

The front came out of the house where Bench Logan had been! There was, for a split second, no noise. There was just a quick outward jumping of the side of the house. Not a few bricks, nor a few square feet of them. The entire wall.

The wall came outward as if pushed from behind by red hands. The red fingers of the red hands pushed through the wall, breaking it in fragments. And the red fingers were flame, the flame of explosive!

Sound came then. It was sudden, like the rip of a high-powered rifle. Not a roar, but a pop. It did something to eardrums. And the air became a great weight with pressing force.

Doc Savage fell the last dozen feet. The buildings were four-story walk-ups, with areaways and winding steps in front of each. Doc hit a flight of steps. It was not a good spot for landing. He tumbled down to the sidewalk.

The air pressure fled, and suction seemed to follow. Suction that sought to jerk eyes out of sockets and pluck eardrums.

Falling bricks made a great roar.

Doc Savage came to his feet. The stuff the man had planted in the milk bottles had been terrific. A liquid-oxygen explosive of some sort, probably. As destructive as an aerial bomb.

Doc could not hear. His body felt numb. But he got up and began running.

The "milkman" had gone down. This was why he had gotten so impatient with the slow horse. The fellow struggled to his feet.

The horse had stopped dead-still and was just standing there. The animal seemed to be shell-shocked.

The milk wagon had been turned quartering, and upset, and a senseless figure had sprawled out on the pavement. The figure wore only underwear, shoes and a shirt. The genuine milkman, probably.

DOC SAVAGE ran for the fake milkman. He overhauled the fellow, seized him, and bore him to the pavement.

And a car came into the block from the west, a touring car with the top down. A man was standing erect in the back seat with a rifle. He began shooting deliberately!

The "milkman" was soft and smelled faintly of perfume. He discovered Doc Savage's identity and yelled in fright. He tried to fight. The first rifle bullets from the end of the block passed, and the man screamed in terror.

Doc ran with him, sidewise, to the opposite side of the street. There was an entry, three steps down into a basement entrance. He dived into that. The heavy stone steps leading up to the first floor of the house sheltered him.

He tried the door. It was closed by a steel grille. The windows were iron-barred. It was not an unusual construction for basement windows and doorways, but inconvenient.

The bronze man put all his strength against the bars. But all of it was not enough.

The car came down the street. The man with the rifle still stood erect in it. Another man had joined him. This one had a pump-action shotgun.

Another car came into the opposite end of the thoroughfare. A sedan. Men frantically waved their hats out of the windows to identify themselves as friends.

Doc Savage was having no luck with the window bars or door grille. He could hear someone inside the basement—a woman shouting angrily.

He was trapped. He could not show himself. There was at least one military rifle being used, and he did not relish getting shot with that, even with his bulletproof vest.

The touring car came close.

"There he is!" a man howled.

They lost no time. The car veered, bumped the curb, jumped it. An iron railing surrounded the sunken entry. The car rooted this over like a hog going through weeds. It jumped into the pit, crashed the iron window bars, caved them inward! Glass shattered. The woman inside the basement let out a yell.

Doc Savage was clear of the car. He had, of necessity, abandoned the "milkman." The latter was somewhere under the car.

The bronze man worked fast. He heaved up, grabbed hold of the rifle, then the man who held it. Simultaneously, he dropped two smoke bombs. These ripened into palls of dark vapor.

Doc brought the rifleman's head down against the edge of the car door. The man slackened. Another man aimed a revolver, began working the trigger. Doc got down, clear of the bullets. The smoke came up and surrounded him. The shotgun blasted. In the basement, the woman howled.

Bill Browder began screaming orders. Bill Browder was in the sedan which now stood in the street. "Get out here in the street," he shouted, "where we can tell who's who!"

Doc Savage dived to the car radiator, found that it had done what he had been unable to do—dislodged the window bars. He wedged through the bars. Some glass was out of the window. He dislodged more.

There was a living room, not badly furnished. The woman was not in sight. Doc crossed the living room. There should be a back door.

The woman appeared. She had a round glass percolator bowl full of boiling-hot coffee. She drew back to throw this.

Doc said, "Get out of here quick! The back door!"

She threw the hot coffee anyway. He dodged it. But it hit the wall, splashed back on him. It was like liquid fire coming through his clothing.

He told the woman, "At least, you had better crawl under a bed."

Someone fired a shotgun through the living-room window. The woman turned and ran. She found a back door, opened it. Doc was close behind.

The woman ran down a concrete-floored court, yelling, "Police! Police! Where's a cop?"

DOC SAVAGE took the opposite direction so as to draw attention from the woman.

He covered no more than fifty yards when men poured out into the courtyard behind him. They yelled and fired guns.

Doc dropped containers of tear gas which fell on the concrete courtyard floor and smoked.

He went through a window. The window was not open, and he did not pause to open it; he walked through glass, sash and everything, coat skirts yanked up over his hands and face. The glass opened one of his trouser legs as if a razor had done the work, but he was not cut.

This apartment was empty, unfurnished. He went through it headlong. The front door had a spring lock. He let himself out in the street.

Far away, the woman was yelling, "Police! Police! Where's a cop!" And now she was adding, "Henry! Henry, for the love of mercy, come home!"

Doc took to the sidewalk and ran. He was in flight. He was making no bones about it. He had expected trouble, but nothing on the scale of this. There were two cars, at least six men in each. A dozen attackers. And they were armed like a panzer squad!

They shot at him. He left a few smoke bombs blooming on the sidewalk as he went. They could not see him, so they missed him with the bullets. And soon he was around a corner.

He turned to the left, because it was urgent that he get out of line of the lead. And left took him toward the river.

The river was naked here, empty of warehouses. The cobbled street sloped down to the concrete river embankment, grim and bare this early in the morning.

There was no shelter, nothing anywhere for cover, except, of course, the houses, from which sleepy heads were thrusting. But to double into any of those would mean danger for the innocent tenants, and probably no permanent safety. Doc kept going. He could hear the moan of automobile engines behind him.

There was, it now dawned on him, at least a third car, and maybe more. The third car had waited at a distance of two or three blocks. But now it bore down! Someone in this third machine fired a tentative shot, and every head that protruded from a window on the block suddenly jerked from view. Things had moved fast. The woman was still screeching, "Police, police!" and asking Henry to come.

He heard a man bellow, "Great grief, they're attacking the city!"

He went on. The river was before him. Cold. It steamed in the early-morning light as if smoke were coming from its surface. The opposite shore was not visible, nor could he see the spans of the big bridges upstream and downstream.

He swung left. There was, fifty yards away, a small dock—a finger of solid concrete, thrusting out into the river. At the end of this was tied a barge, and the barge had a heaping load of gravel. A small deckhouse, like a match box, made a wart on one end of the barge.

Doc hit the gravel load, sank to his ankles in the soft stuff and waded to the deckhouse.

"Get under cover, quick!" he shouted.

The warning was not necessary, he discovered. There was no watchman in the barge deckhouse; no one aboard except himself.

He raced out of the deckhouse, went flat behind the heaped gravel.

Rifles began making their brittle reports, and jacketed lead cut through the cheesy deckhouse as if it were cardboard. More lead, a tearing volley of it, disturbed the gravel crest, so that the loose stuff rolled down and half covered the bronze man's body where he lay.

"Get grenades ready for him if he goes into the river," a man yelled. This voice did not belong to Bill Browder, and it was much more bloodthirsty than Bill Browder had sounded.

DOC SAVAGE dug out and hurled an explosive grenade. It was a thing the size of a bantam egg; and when it hatched, it almost took the vicinity apart. Doc had his mouth wide open, ready for the report. The blast kicked loose gravel down the side of the mound. He looked quickly.

None of the gunmen had been close to the high explosive. Doc had known that. At the end of the dock, there was a hole that would hold a small house, and part of the dock end itself was still in the air. The killers would push no cars out on the dock for cover, or ride out in them as if they were tanks.

Doc knew by now that their cars were armored. That explained their recklessness, their lack of fear of the police.

The bronze man was, as a whole, completely astounded. He had expected no campaign on this scale. Further than that, he was disgusted at his own lack of foresight. It should not have taken a clairvoyant to foresee that the thing was big. The lives of two hundred and fifty people were at stake; that had been called to his attention so repeatedly that it was almost ridiculous. But that should have shown him the affair was big.

He took another look over the gravel, this time using a telescoping periscope that was smaller than a lead pencil. He saw the cars—four of them, now—roll toward the concrete dock and stop. Doc heaved tear gas again. The stuff surrounded the cars. But the men got out, undisturbed. They wore gas masks.

The voice that did not belong to Bill Browder gave an order.

"Begin pegging hand grenades in the river," it said, "so the concussion will cave him in if he tries to swim for it. The rest of you start working on that gravel barge."

He did not tell them to be careful. Apparently, he didn't care.

He added, "Sink the barge!"

He seemed to think Doc was cornered.

Doc prepared a few smoke grenades. The breeze was blowing out over the river. He could, barring a towering case of bad luck, let the smoke sweep across the river and swim with it. The grenades would not damage him greatly on the surface. The gunmen could not see to shoot him.

It was then, when his strategic position was the best it had been since the beginning of the attack, that an interruption came.

It was a car. Black, long, with an unmuffled motor that made the sound of an airplane. Possibly the noise of the motor was the really frightening thing about the car.

The car came close, but not too close, and stopped. A slit of a ventilating window opened, a gun muzzle came through, and the gun let out noise and lead.

Bill Browder shrieked. It was unquestionably Bill Browder's voice which screamed, and there was terror in it, not injured pain. Browder seemed to be in one of the armored automobiles.

"Cops!" a man bellowed.

They sent some well-chosen bullets toward the newly arrived car. Then sent some that were not so well chosen. But this machine also was bulletproofed.

The passing of time might have had something to do with it; police were due to arrive. And that bit of resistance broke up the fight.

Bill Browder, in a shaky voice, yelled, "Get away from here, men!"

They got away, like an alley-cat powwow breaking up at the appearance of a bulldog.

The new car pulled up close to the dock.

Thomas J. Eleanor put his head out of the window and shouted, "Are you safe, Mr. Savage?"

IT never-goes the saying-rains but what it pours.

Another rescue car appeared. This one was a deep-bronze color and less impressive outwardly than the other armored cars. The moment Doc saw the machine, he became intensely interested.

Thomas J. Eleanor leaped out of his own car and picked his way at a gallop over the blasted end of the dock.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "You haven't been harmed. I am so glad!"

Doc Savage watched the distant car head for one of the fleeing machines.

"How did you get here?" he asked.

"It's a long story," said Thomas J. Eleanor, excitement making his foreign accent more pronounced. "But I can tell you why I was late helping you. My blasted chauffeur got scared. He refused to drive my car. I had to knock him out, toss him from the machine and drive it myself." The distant car hit one of the fleeing machines a glancing blow. The fleeing car was knocked half around, so that it veered against a light pole. The light pole snapped off, the ornate glass globe seeming to explode into fragments.

The strain popped open a door of the car that had been hit. A man tumbled out. The machine kept going. The man who had fallen out was partially under it, and the machine ran over him.

The bronze car which had hit the other one slid to a stop in such a position as to protect the man who had been run over, and who was lying on the pavement.

All other cars, except the one driven by Thomas J. Eleanor, got out of sight.

Doc Savage extended his hand to Thomas J. Eleanor.

"Thank you, Mr. Eleanor," said the bronze man, "for saving my life."

Eleanor chuckled.

"As a matter of fact, I did nothing of the kind, and you know it," he said. "As it happened, that bronze machine was—I did not know it, though—amply capable of saving you."

Doc said nothing. He walked toward the bronze machine. Thomas J. Eleanor followed him.

Eleanor said, "Furthermore, I think you could have used those smoke grenades to conceal yourself, and reached safety by swimming in the river."

Doc made no comment.

Patricia Savage got out of the bronze car. She sank to her knees beside the man who had been run over.

"Doc, this man is dying," she said. "He's badly hurt. He's trying to talk."

Doc Savage knelt beside the dying man. The street-light standard which had been knocked over lay beside the man, together with the pole which bore the name of the street. And it was the metal name plate of the street which, when the car ran over the man, had really done the damage. The name on the plate, "Ark Street," was coated with crimson.

Chapter VIII. THE MAN IS MAD

THE man said, "I'm going to die." He spoke clearly, except for the whistling in his voice and the fact that his voice had no volume.

Because what the man knew about himself was the truth, Doc Savage made no answer.

"You go . . . go—" The man gurgled for a moment. His effort to speak was horrible. "Go north-northwest from Iceland, and—" He closed his eyes.

Doc Savage said, "North-northwest from Iceland—yes. Then what?"

The man mumbled some figures—degrees and minutes.

He was silent again.

"They're there," he said. "Two hundred . . . hun—"

He was quiet again.

He said, "Louise, I didn't mean it. Hello, mom. Hello, pop. Louise, I'm so glad to see you. I wanted to tell you how sorry—"

He did things that a dying man does then, and Pat put her hands over her eyes and turned away.

Doc Savage stood up.

"Dead?" asked Thomas J. Eleanor.

Doc nodded.

"He didn't seem to know me," said Eleanor.

"Did you know him?"

Thomas J. Eleanor nodded. "One of my bodyguards."

"Bench Logan is another of your bodyguards?"

"Was—not is," corrected Eleanor.

There were sirens in the distance. Police cars, of course. The whole incredible procession of incidents had taken less than seven or eight minutes; and the police, usually more prompt, seemed to be a little late.

Uneasiness twisted Eleanor's face. "Those sirens—the police, evidently," he said. "I have an enormous dislike of publicity. Is there any reason why we have to stay here?"

"Not necessarily," Doc said.

Pat got behind the wheel of the bronze car. The machine was one of Doc's, an experimental model on which he had tried out new types of armor plating and gasproofing. As a fortress, it fell very little short of an army tank.

They drove away. Eleanor followed in his car.

The river was placid, and the fog still lifted from it like smoke. Darker tendrils of vapor, the smoke from the bombs Doc had used, were blowing across it. Nothing else was peaceful. The neighborhood was coming to life, sticking its collective head out of the window and bellowing demands as to just what had happened.

Doc Savage watched, in the rearview mirror, Eleanor's car following behind them.

"Pat," he said.

Pat chuckled. "Don't start grumbling about my getting mixed up in this," she said. "Renny got Monk and Ham to help him trail Bench Logan. Renny told me you wanted Long Tom and Johnny to show up here and help you, but he said he couldn't contact them. Long Tom and Johnny are investigating this Thomas J. Eleanor, and they must be away from their radios. Well, I couldn't get Long Tom and Johnny to come here and help, so I got worried. I came myself." She made a wry face. "I practically missed the whole thing."

"Where did you leave Nicky Jones?"

"The girl? Oh, I left her at headquarters. She's scared. She'll stay there."

"What makes you so sure of that?"

Pat shrugged. "Oh, she's worried about her boy friend, Bill Browder. And now she's scared something will happen to her. When Bench Logan tried to stow you and her away on that ship that was to sail at midnight—we checked on that ship, incidentally, and found out it sailed, so Logan was trying to get rid of you—Nicky had the old fear thrown into her. She'll be at headquarters, all right."

Doc said. "We had better see."

THOMAS J. ELEANOR sauntered into Doc Savage's skyscraper headquarters as if nothing had happened. Eleanor showed no emotional traces of what had just occurred. He was composed. His dynamic force was unabated. He was so big that he had to turn sidewise somewhat to pass through the door, but he did it with dignity. His bigness was somehow not the blubber of a fat man, but rather the effect of fabulous power carefully stored and guided.

He said, "So this is your establishment, Mr. Savage. I have heard of some such aërie. I am impressed."

Pat went into the library quickly.

"Will you be seated, Mr. Eleanor?" Doc Savage suggested.

The big man chuckled. "Have a seat, eh?" he said. "And give out with some information. Isn't that what you mean?"

"An explanation would not be unwelcome," Doc admitted.

Thomas J. Eleanor nodded as emphatically as he could with his chins.

"All right, I'll tell you everything," he said.

Pat came dashing out of the library.

"She isn't!" Pat gasped.

"Is not what?" Doc asked.

"Isn't here. Nicky Jones. She beat it, the two-faced little liar!" Pat said.

Doc Savage swung to Eleanor. "You might get going with your story."

Pat's hands were against her cheeks. "Oh, Doc, what will I do? How'll I find her?"

Thomas J. Eleanor folded his hands on his stomach. He had lighted a cigar, evidently one of the dollar ones which he bought through the druggist near his suburban home.

"I know this story will intrigue you as much as it did me," said Eleanor.

Pat beat her hands together. "It's my fault!" she wailed. "I was a fool who wanted to get in on some excitement, so I went off and left that girl here. What a sap I was! It's a wonder she didn't wreck the place before she left. She could have. Doc, what will I do?"

Thomas J. Eleanor blew out fragrant blue smoke.

"In the beginning," he said expansively, "I was merely curious. I think my curiosity is what got me involved in it. Curiosity causes a great many people trouble, I have always said."

Pat walked around the room, looking as if she wanted to pull out her hair.

Eleanor said, "It was my bodyguard, Bench Logan, you see. The man was acting as if he had something on his mind. I am a judge of men, and I have had trouble with my employees before.

Particularly my bodyguards."

Pat kicked a chair.

"I hire men of hard character, necessarily, as bodyguards," Thomas J. Eleanor pointed out. "Their job is to be tough, and naturally I must employ men capable of being just that." He looked at his fingernails, not embarrassed, but as a gesture to show that it was really, in a way, his fault.

He continued, "I asked Logan about it. I confronted him bluntly. And, of course, he told me nothing. And he did it in such a way that I fired him."

Pat kicked another chair and put her fists on her hips.

Thomas Eleanor said, "As soon as I fired Bench Logan, I made a startling discovery. I found my other bodyguards and all my men were afraid of Bench Logan. And there was an incredible plot between part of my employees and Bench Logan, a plot involving wholesale murder and a tremendous fortune."

Pat stopped displaying her temper and became interested in the story.

"Some of my employees," said Eleanor, "were not mixed in it. But those who were left when Logan left. With one exception."

He smiled the smile of a fat man.

"It is good to find a coward sometimes," he said. "The one employee who did not leave was a coward. He was afraid. He was as yellow as they come, as a good American would say. He broke down and told me the whole thing."

Pat said, "You're using a lot of words to get into this thing."

Eleanor smiled at her. "Once I was young and impetuous, too."

Pat said, "You're not old, now. You're just fat."

Eleanor winced.

Doc said, "The story?" impatiently.

Eleanor spread his hands, "Here is where you become amazed—or disgusted. With me, I mean."

He paused dramatically.

"On an island in the South Pacific," he said, "there is a shipload of people. Two hundred and

fifty-six of them, the last anyone knows. They had found something incredible, so incredible that they cannot leave the island alive. One man left the island, and that man is Bench Logan. He knows how to get back. But he does not want to get back. He wants those people to be in his power."

THE fat man puffed on his cigar. "Mind you, I admit the story is fabulous," he said. "I did not believe it myself, at first. But I became convinced it was true. And, now-well, you can just see for yourself."

"See what?" Pat asked.

"You saw what an organized effort was made this morning to kill Doc Savage simply because he was interesting himself in the thing," said Eleanor. "Doesn't that prove a great deal is at stake?" "It proves a lot is at stake," Pat said. "But it doesn't necessarily prove your story is true." Eleanor looked like a man who was not accustomed to having his word doubted.

"Humph!"

he said.

"You said Bench Logan was your bodyguard," Pat said. "Just when did he get on this island?"

Eleanor shrugged. "I gave him a leave of absence for six months last year. It was during a period when I was living incognito in Sun Valley, Idaho, and did not need a bodyguard."

Pat looked at Doc, then at Eleanor.

"Where is this island?" she asked.

"I do not know," Eleanor said. "So help me, I do not. That is what I was trying to find out."

"And why were you so interested?"

Eleanor smiled. "Believe it or not, I am a humanitarian at heart. There are those who say differently. I want to save the lives of those two hundred and fifty-six people."

"You weren't by chance interested in the fantastic thing they have found-which is the reason they can't leave?"

Eleanor leaned forward. "I will tell you the truth. Yes. Yes, if there is a profit in it for me, I am definitely interested. I am interested in anything that shows a profit." His lips twisted ruefully. "I am a machine for making money, they say."

"What is the thing?"

"I do not know."

"Then why are you so intrigued by it?"

The fat man spread his hands. "Obviously, since so many men are involved in it, and so violently, there must be a great profit at stake for someone."

Pat said, "Just how was Doc involved in this? We would like to know that."

"I contacted Bench Logan and demanded that he give me the location of the island and these people," said Eleanor. "I'll be frank. I threatened him. He told me . . . er . . . to go jump in the lake, was the way he put it. He said Doc Savage was working with him; and with help like that, he wasn't afraid of me. He was lying, I know now. But at the time, I believed him. So I took measures to contact Mr. Savage. Unusual measures, perhaps."

"You had Bill Browder call Doc out to the district and tell him the story about the blue dog?"

"Yes. The blue-dog story was by way of sounding out Doc Savage to see whether he knew anything."

"Bill Browder is working for you, then?"

"Oh, no. He's one of the enemy. You see, I unfortunately discovered that last night, after Mr. Savage was out there."

Pat asked, "How'd you find it out?"

"Through a drugstore owner who purchases cigars for me. It seems Mr. Savage was there and caught Bill Browder eavesdropping on a telephone. Browder had hired the druggist to let him do this."

Pat frowned suddenly. "You didn't know anything about tapping the wire in that drugstore, eh?"

Thomas J. Eleanor grimaced. "I should have. As a matter of fact, Bill Browder had brought me to the drugstore and had been so clever in a conversation that I unwittingly gave the druggist the impression it was all right with me to tap the wires. It sounds silly for me to tell you that, I know. But it is true. Browder had me go to the druggist and O. K. what I presumed was the "tapping" of my supply of cigars for himself. Browder told me he wanted to buy some of the cigars. I thought he was silly to pay a dollar apiece for cigars, but it was his money."

Doc Savage had been silent throughout. Now, he spoke.

He asked, "What about the spot north and east from Iceland mentioned by the dying man?"

"It was north and west of Iceland," said Thomas J. Eleanor.

"You did notice it, then."

"Ah, so you gave the wrong direction to ascertain if I had. Yes, I noticed. It means nothing to me. The dying man mentioned latitude and longitude figures, did he not?"

"Yes."

"A spot north-northwest of Iceland means nothing to me," insisted Thomas J. Eleanor.

THE telephone lines into the headquarters did not connect to regulation bells, but to high-frequency buzzers which had different notes that were not unmusical. One of them sang out a long, rather imperative note. Pat picked up the instrument.

"Renny," she said, turning.

Doc took the telephone and said, "Yes?"

Renny's deep voice had a grim uneasiness.

"We bit into a sour apple," he said.

"What do you mean?" Doc asked.

"We need a little help." The big-fisted engineer was silent a moment. "You know this guy Bench Logan? Well, he's not playing alone. He's got five or six guys with him."

Renny was silent a moment. He sounded unnatural.

"We have them spotted," he said. "They are not aware they are being watched. I am in a yacht-building boatyard at College Point—in the big building as you come into the yard from the street. The place is abandoned. Just walk right in. We'll be waiting for you and show you where Bench Logan has holed up. And, say—come right out, will you? I think something is developing."

Doc Savage stared at the telephone.

"I will be there shortly," he said.

"Good!" Renny said. He hung up.

Doc replaced the receiver, and again his flake-gold eyes fixed on the instrument. He made, after a moment, the low trilling sound which was his unconscious habit in moments of mental stress.

Renny was in trouble. Someone had held a weapon on him, forced him to make that call.

Because situations of the kind had developed before, Doc and the others had worked out a simple code to verify the genuineness of telephone conversations. The code did not depend on inserting a key word in a false conversation. Sometimes that was impossible. Rather, in every genuine conversation, they inserted a key word. Leaving out the word was a warning. Renny had left it out. Renny, then, was in imminent danger. Possibly Monk and Ham, as well.

Doc Savage's face had no expression.

"Pat," he said. "About Nicky Jones—"

Pat winced. "Yes?"

"You recall that she had a friend." Doc glanced at Thomas J. Eleanor. "A very fat girl named Fern Reed, the one who led me off on a false trail the first time."

"Yes, I remember that," Pat said.

"Get hold of the newspaper offices," Doc Savage told Pat, "and ask them to report to you, immediately, any humorous news story which may crop up about a car with an odor. The odor will be a completely different one. Nobody will be familiar with it. It will be a striking scent. Also contact the milk companies and have them broadcast a request for their drivers to report an unusual-smelling car. Offer a small reward. Better do the same with the taxicab companies. It is still early enough in the morning for you to catch the day-shift drivers before they go on duty."

Pat was astounded.

"A car that smells funny," she said.

Doc explained, "I was fortunate enough to manage to break a vial of chemical on Fern Reed's car. It will have a peculiar odor. "

Thomas J. Eleanor burst out in a gust of laughter.

"That's sure a goofy thing!" Then he sobered suddenly. "But it's just the kind of a thing that would work."

There was a noise at the door, and Long Tom and Johnny came in.

MAJOR THOMAS J. LONG TOM ROBERTS was a thin and unhealthy-looking fellow with a subway complexion and the general aspect of being an early client for an undertaker. His looks, though, were deceptive. He was not only quite healthy; he had the physical qualities of a wild cat. He was, in the profession of electricity, considered somewhat incredible.

"So you're Thomas J. Eleanor," he told the fat man. "We have the same first name and initial. I wish there was some other similarity between us."

"Meaning my fat?" asked Eleanor.

"Meaning your money," said Long Tom unkindly.

William Harper Johnny Littlejohn was as thin as Long Tom, and nearly twice as long. He was astoundingly thin. He wore, dangling from a lapel, a monocle which was never in his eye.

"I'll be superamalgamated," Johnny remarked to Eleanor. "The Homocousian hypostasis under perscrutation."

Eleanor smiled and said, "So you have been investigating me. You found my deeds have been satisfactorily dark, I hope."

Johnny was surprised. Strangers usually did not understand his words.

"Mansuetude indicates aphonics," he said.

"Contumeliousity is not a propendency," said Eleanor.

Johnny swallowed.

Pat said, "Great sails on the sea! We've finally run into somebody who can choke Johnny on his own words."

Doc Savage moved to the door. He addressed Eleanor.

"Mr. Eleanor, will you be kind enough to remain here with my associates and give them what aid

you can?" he said. "It will be necessary for me to absent myself for a while."

Thomas J. Eleanor bowed.

"Of course," he said. "I will be delighted."

Doc Savage left the building.

As he wheeled his car out into the traffic, a newsboy was shouting an early edition.

"Reward offered for insane killer loose in city!" the newsboy called. "Reward for Bench Logan! Another battle in Europe. Early editions."

Chapter IX. PERILS NORTH

THE scientific training which Doc Savage had undergone from childhood had given him a remarkable control of his nerves and of his emotions. Because of this, all but close associates were inclined to claim that he had no nerves or emotions, and few human qualities. This was an error. He could, for instance, become as astonished as the next man.

He was astonished, now. He sat there in the car and nearly rammed a cab in his path. He stopped the machine.

"War in Europe," called the newsboy. "Big reward for madman!"

Doc said, "Boy, paper."

The advertisement was half a page on Page 2.

\$20,000 REWARD FOR A MADMAN

This sum will be paid for the apprehension, or information leading to the apprehension, of the man known as Bench Logan, alias Bosworth Hurlbert, accused murderer.

This man is known to have insanity in the family, both his parents having died in an institution. Communicate with this newspaper.

Doc Savage drove two blocks and parked. The bronze man was frowning. He entered a cigar-store telephone booth and called the newspaper.

"Who inserted that advertisement offering a reward for Bench Logan?" he asked.

"The chairman of a group interested in public welfare," came the answer.

"What name?"

"I am sorry. The advertiser wishes that to remain anonymous. But I can assure you the money will be paid if and when you can--"

Doc Savage said, "Give me someone in authority around there. Connect me with Carl Mowbern, the business manager."

Carl Mowbern happened to be an individual with whom Doc Savage was acquainted. He was not yet at the office. Doc called Mowbern's home. The man sounded sleepy.

"Oh, that ad?" Mowbern said. "They telephoned me last night before we published it--this morning, rather. You see, it is possibly libelous, labeling the man Bench Logan as crazy--"

"Who had it published?" Doc put in.

"Thomas J. Eleanor," said the business manager. "Thank you," Doc said.

The bronze man ran to his car, sent the machine toward College Point, the spot from which Renny's telephone call had come--or, at least, from where Renny had said he'd been calling. It was not a long drive--express highway most of the distance.

He slowed his speed as he came near the address which Renny had given, the yacht-building boatyard at College Point. There were a number of these, but Renny could mean only one that was isolated from the others--the only one which was currently abandoned.

Half a dozen blocks from the boatyard, Doc parked his car.

TEN minutes later, a raging fire broke out in an old shack across the street from the boatyard. It was a raging fire in respect to the amount of smoke it created; otherwise, it was not much of a blaze. The College Point fire department soon extinguished it and stopped the smoke which was pouring across the boatyard.

The smoke and the firemen had created enough diversion for Doc Savage to get into the boatyard. When he found a serviceable cabin cruiser tied to the ramshackle old dock at the back of the yard, he went no farther. He climbed aboard and concealed himself in the locker alongside the engine, the only hiding place of sufficient size.

A few minutes later, men climbed on the boat in a hurry.

Bench Logan said, "Let's get out of here. I don't like that fire."

"It was just an accident, maybe," a man suggested. "One of those things that happen."

Bench Logan swore. "All right, so maybe it was. We get out, anyway. Savage is going to be suspicious when he sees that fire--if he didn't show up while it was burning."

The engine alongside Doc Savage burst into life. It gave off heat, and the boat rushed through the water.

There was at least six inches of odorous bilge in the bottom of the boat, and the odor of it was not pleasant. The boat ran at high speed for perhaps thirty minutes, then lost way and bumped against a dock. They made lines fast.

"No, the trap for Savage blew up," Bench Logan told someone irritably.

They left the boat. Doc lay quiet long enough to be fairly certain no guard had been left on the

craft. Then he threw back the engine-compartment hatch, climbed out of the cramped place. The dock was about as ramshackle as it could be. Beyond it was a sloping bank with brush. In the other direction, there was an expanse of marsh grass and, far in the distance, higher ground with houses. One of the inlets on Long Island Sound close to the city.

Moving with care, keeping out of sight of the bank, Doc slid over the side of the boat. The water was cold. He submerged, swam rapidly, came up close to the bank. A moment later he was in the weeds. He kept clear of a path which climbed the bank. The brush was profuse; ample concealment. He came to a mound of discarded clam shells and tin cans, skirted them and inspected a shack.

The place was obviously a miserable fisherman's shanty. Men sat on a shed porch, or walked around nervously.

Doc crawled to the rear wall. Tar paper had been tacked over cracks. He very carefully tore a bit of it loose.

Renny was tied to a chair inside, as were Monk and Ham.

Bench Logan stood spraddle-legged in the middle of the floor, glaring at the morning newspaper which he held in his hands. Copies of other newspapers lay on an old table.

Doc caught a small sound nearby and turned his head. He discovered that two animals had come close in the brush and were watching him. One animal was a pig, the other a species of large monkey or small ape.

The pig and the chimp were obviously friendly. Doc made a gesture with one hand, a gesture he knew would insure quiet. The animals were well trained.

The chimp was the pet of Brigadier General Theodore Marley Ham Brooks. The pig—it had enormous ears and the legs of a rabbit—belonged to Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Blodgett Monk Mayfair. The animals had evidently escaped when their owners were caught.

A burst of rage exploded from the shack. Doc put his eye to the crack.

Bench Logan stamped on the newspaper.

"Now I can't go to the police!" he yelled. "Damn that fiend!"

One of the men with Logan shook his head. "Bench, if you ask me, you couldn't have done it, anyway."

"You mean because of that old murder charge?" Logan asked.

"Sure! What else?"

Bench Logan compressed his lips. "Listen, I had decided to take that chance. It was the electric chair for me—or life for all those people. I—Well, hell! What else was there for me to do?"

The man came over and put a hand on Bench Logan's shoulder. "Bench, you're a great guy. You're three hundred percent for our money. And we're for you."

Logan bit his lips. "Thanks, Pete. But I'm licked on that giving myself up."

"You sure?"

Logan cursed violently. "Of course, I'm sure. You see this advertisement calling me a madman? You know what the police would say if I gave myself up?"

The other frowned. "They might doubt your story."

"Might! Hell, they would!" Logan groaned. "That part about my parents dying in an institution would cinch it."

"Were they in an insane asylum?"

"Sure! But it wasn't anything they had that I could inherit."

"Maybe you could prove that."

"I'd have a devil of a time doing it. My mother and father went nuts worrying about my kid brother. At least, they were right on the verge of it when the kid brother got killed in a holdup. That cinched it. But nobody knows that about my kid brother. I've kept it quiet. You see, he had a wife and kid at the time, and I didn't want them to know."

A MAN—there were six men here in addition to Bench Logan, it appeared—came into the shack, walked over and tested the ropes holding Renny, Monk and Ham.

Monk tried to kick the fellow. Monk was a wide, stocky man with a coat of reddish hair that looked like rusted shingle nails. Monk's general aspect was that of an agreeable ape; in fact, he resembled Ham's pet chimp.

Ham had acquired the chimp, and named him Chemistry, for that reason. To irritate Monk.

Ham and Renny only scowled as the man jerked at their ropes. Ham was an extremely dapper gentleman, even in his present difficulty. He always looked well dressed.

"Bench, what are we going to do?" asked the man who was talking to Logan.

Bench Logan shook his head. "This whole story is so fantastic that the police will not believe me—not with this insanity thing planted in their minds," he said. "They would not even investigate it."

The other smiled grimly. "Well, we're not licked."

Logan looked around at them. "You're a swell bunch of guys," he said sincerely. "There's no dough in this for you. I've told you that. But I ask you for help, and you pitch right in like there was a hundred bucks a day in it for you." He grinned ruefully. "I happen to know most of you make that much dough when you work, too."

The other man laughed. "Not often," he said. "This soldier-of-fortune racket ain't what it used to be."

There was a silence.

Doc Savage studied Logan's associates. They were, like Logan, capable men, and hard. They were in good physical condition, lean-faced, showing no sign of owning such handicaps as nerves. Stamped with the mark of adventurers, each of them.

"Bench, what about Doc Savage?" the man asked.

Bench Logan spread his hands in a gesture of indecision.

"That's why I wanted to get hold of Savage in this," he said. "First, I place him as against me. But I think it over some more, and I'm not so sure."

Renny rumbled, "You fool! The reason Doc Savage is in this is to save those people. You say that's your reason, too."

Logan rubbed his jaw.

"You've said that before," he muttered. "You almost got me believing you."

"Look, guy," Renny said, "don't be a sucker."

Logan frowned. "You think I am?"

Renny said, "You've got the most high-powered help you could have right at hand, if you're sincere. I mean Doc and our organization. I don't know what is behind all this, but my guess is that Doc would be more help than the police. He can move fast."

Bench Logan hesitated.

"How about planes?" he asked. "We would need a heck of a big plane, one that could land on leads in the ice, on water. More than one plane, probably, although one big ship could do it, making several trips."

Renny said, "We've got planes."

"First, we'd have to take in food," Logan said. "They're starving by now. There was almost no food when I got away. Then we could bring them out a few at a time." He fell silent.

The man who had talked to Logan said, "He may have something there, Bench. I've always heard Savage was straight."

Logan grimaced. "If he is, I've made a prize jackass out of myself."

Renny asked, "What makes you think Doc is a crook, anyway?"

Logan hesitated. "I— Well, it doesn't seem logical that he would go to all this trouble that he's supposed to go through to help people, without a profit. It ain't reasonable. It has been my experience that when you run into something like that, there is a joker somewhere."

Renny said, "Doc doesn't need money."

"Don't kid me," Bench Logan said. "Everybody needs money."

"What I mean," Renny said, "is that Doc has a source of money—all he needs."

"Where?"

Renny shrugged. "Sorry, but I can't say."

(The source of Doc Savage's funds is, as far as the public is concerned, a secret. It comes from a remote Central American valley inhabited by descendants of the ancient Mayan civilization. It is furnished Doc Savage, in the form of gold, by the natives as an expression of gratitude for services they received from Doc during the course of an adventure related in the initial Doc Savage novel, "The Man of Bronze.")

Doc Savage got to his feet, walked around the shack, and entered. He paid no attention to the startled stares and the guns which appeared.

"Logan," he said, "I think we have identical aims in this matter."

Whatever Logan might have said to that, whatever his reaction might have been, remained a mystery because, from in the brush outside, a rifle smashed once; and Pete, the man who had been talking to Bench Logan, opened his mouth and his eyes to their extreme widest and fell on the floor. A lake of red grew under Pete immediately.

LIKE hot steel dropping into the utter silence that followed, Doc Savage spoke.

"You fellows have been surrounded," he said. "They saw me come in, and they are attacking. They are after me as much as they are after you. We had better work together."

He was, naturally, not believed.

Bench Logan seemed to trust the bronze man. But before Bench could speak, a man whipped up a pistol. Doc leaped for the fellow, got the gun. But by that time there was uproar, and lead coming through the thin planking of the shack like big bees.

Doc sprang to Renny, hauling out a pocketknife. He cut the big-fisted engineer's bonds. Then he freed Monk and Ham.

Monk, Ham and Renny knew about fights. They got on the floor instantly.

They did another thing; they protected themselves against tear gas. Each of them tore the lining of the outside breast pocket out of his coat. The pockets were actually elastic, rubberlike material that was transparent and merely basted in place. Like toy balloons, the elastic pockets would stretch. They pulled them over their heads, and the elastic snapped tight below chin level. The things were not comfortable. But they were transparent, and they would keep gas out of the

eyes.

The enemy rushed the shack.

Doc took a board off the wall with a shoulder, and went outside. He flattened in the brush instantly and did not again get to his feet.

Rain water had dug a ditch. He rolled into that. Renny and Ham were almost on top of him. Monk popped another board off the wall, to make a hole of his own, and came through.

Doc said, "This way!"

His primary idea was to get his men to safety. Then he would return and do what he could in the brawl.

The attack on the cabin was sudden, violent and short. It consisted of a flurry of tear-gas bombs, then a wave of men armed with guns, protected by bulletproof vests.

Bench Logan and his men were like sitting birds. They had nothing but great rage, intense desire to fight. It did not help them.

The attack ended abruptly.

The assailants gathered up those who were still alive and left.

It was like that. No waiting. No fooling around. Doc was surprised.

The bronze man wheeled back. "Wait here," he said. "That quick retreat may be a trap."

Monk and Renny both bellowed. Monk said, "Trap or no trap, it's about time I got my hands on somebody." They followed Doc.

Ham Brooks was too perturbed over a rip in the leg of his striped morning pants to speak. How Ham had gotten into morning pants in the middle of such excitement was a mystery, but it was typical of him. He bounded after them.

Ham dashed into the shack when they reached it. There was courage in the act, as it developed when a smoking fuse came flying out of the door like a thin gray snake.

Ham appeared in the door with two objects in his hands.

"They left a suitcase full of dynamite to destroy the evidence," he remarked, exhibiting the suitcase.

The other object was an innocent-looking black cane. Ham's sword cane, which had been taken from him.

Doc Savage said, "Ham, you and the others see if you can get any evidence here."

The bronze man went on, following the raiding party. He ran, but kept his eyes alert for trouble.

The dynamite might not be the only gesture the attackers had made. Nor was it.

He stopped suddenly, eyes on a black thread across the path. He followed it, found it a stout black silk bait-casting line attached to the pin of a grenade that was rigged to explode instantly. He threw the grenade off in the brush, where it let go with violence! Then he went on.

THEY were piling in cars. They were out of breath and sweating, and some of them were staggering from the weight of their bulletproof vests. One man had gotten into the tear gas and was being led by the rest. The gang had carried the prisoners.

Bench Logan was still fighting. They clubbed him repeatedly, but it seemed to do no good.

Snarling, Logan got a man by the throat.

The victim put a revolver against Logan's temple.

A man, the one in charge, leaped forward and struck up the gun.

"You fool!" he snarled. "Bench Logan is the only man who has the actual latitude and longitude figures."

The man lowered the gun. "But I thought—"

"Sure, the boss has the figures, but he's not sure they are correct. He left the place in a hell of a hurry, and he's not sure about its location. Bench Logan is sure. He's a navigator, and he had a sextant when he was picked up by the steamer Oscar Fjord."

The man put his gun in his pocket. He helped wrestle Bench Logan into the car. Then he turned to the spokesman.

"Say, you say we're going up there with bombs and knock off all those people?"

"Sure!"

"That's a hell of a thing."

The other scowled. "You squeamish?"

Shrugging, the first man said, "I did the same thing in Spain and Ethiopia for less money. No, I'm not squeamish. But I do wonder what in hell is behind it."

"The thing behind our part of it is the money we get paid. I don't think it's too smart to wonder about the rest."

"I ain't smart. I wonder."

The straw boss chuckled.

"So do I," he said. "We're to take off in planes with bombs and find these two hundred and fifty people in the arctic. If we can't find them, we're to make Bench Logan tell us where they are. Then we're to bomb and machine gun them until not a one is left alive."

He was silent a moment. Then he grimaced, shuddered, said, "All right. Let's get at our work."

They climbed in the cars and left in a hurry.

Chapter X. RACE

DOC SAVAGE lowered his small telescope. He was a lip reader, and he had deciphered most of what the two men had said.

There was nothing he could do about it at the moment. No earthly thing. There was open ground all around the cars, and the men were armed. They would have seen him. His bulletproof undergarment might have helped, but they would soon have cut his legs from under him.

He noted the direction taken by the cars—a bit of information which would probably have no value. He went back to the shack.

"Any evidence?" he asked.

"Two of them," Ham said wearily. "But, unfortunately, both are dead."

Monk scowled at Ham and demanded, "Listen, was that supposed to be humor, you shyster?"

Ham frowned. "What are you trying to do—get yourself skinned alive, you mistake of nature?"

Renny rumbled, "Cut it out, you two!"

Doc Savage's gaze sharpened. Monk and Ham were in the habit of conducting a kind of perpetual quarrel that ran various scales of violence, practical jokes and plain insults. Always in good fun, and in secret glee, although a stranger would think they were on the verge of homicide.

But this time it was a little different. Renny, for instance, was trying to keep them apart.

Monk glowered, and the hand in which Ham clenched his sword cane trembled slightly.

Doc Savage said, "Renny is there anything to be done here?"

"Nothing that I can see," Renny rumbled.

"There is a boat at the dock," the bronze man explained. "We can return to the city in that. Or is your car handy?"

Renny glanced quickly at Monk and Ham. "The car isn't handy," he said.

Monk, staring at Ham, said, "I'll say it isn't!"

"Lay off me!" Ham grated.

They moved toward the inlet, Monk and Ham obviously on bitter terms.

Doc Savage dropped behind with Renny, and asked, "What happened?"

Renny grinned without humor. "You know the way Ham likes his clothes. Changes three or four times a day. Morning suit, afternoon suit, dinner jacket—a regular routine."

"Yes."

"Well, you know how Monk always ribs him about it."

"Yes."

"Bench Logan and his men caught us," Renny said, "because Ham stopped to put on his morning suit. Monk and Ham were having one of their usual quarrels, and Ham got reckless and went back to the car for the suitcase containing his morning suit. I think he was doing it as a gag, to rib Monk. But Bench Logan's man was watching the car, and the first thing you know, they had us. So Monk came out and told Ham that he was responsible. Ham doesn't like it."

Doc Savage was patiently silent. When something like this happened, he invariably said nothing in criticism, no matter what piece of foolishness had caused the trouble.

His aides were efficient. Monk was an eminent chemist and Ham was a great lawyer, although the two of them together frequently seemed more like a clown act.

Renny said, "They ran our car in the bay."

THE cabin cruiser ran toward the city with a rag of foam in its teeth.

When they were passing under Queensborough Bridge, a police launch drew alongside. The officer in charge knew Doc Savage, because the patrol boat covered a beat past the big hangar and boathouse which Doc maintained, disguised as an abandoned warehouse, on the Hudson River water front.

"That boat you're using," said the police-launch skipper, "is a stolen one. It was taken from City Island this morning."

Doc suggested, "Run down to the midtown piers with us, and we will turn the boat over to you to take back to the owner."

Renny got out a handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

"It's lucky we have special police commissions," he said.

Monk Mayfair remarked, "Bench Logan must have stolen this boat. You know, that guy is a strange combination of mighty tough egg and soft heart."

They took a taxicab to headquarters, after putting the boat in the hands of the harbor police.

Monk and Ham and Renny met Thomas J. Eleanor for the first time.

Monk was impressed by the fat man's size, and Ham was impressed by the tailoring quality of Eleanor's business suit.

"I've heard a great deal about you," Ham told him, shaking hands.

"Well, I have certainly heard of you, too," said Thomas J. Eleanor. "I am becoming astounded by your associate, Mr. Savage."

Pat Savage looked at Doc and moved an eyebrow around in a way that meant a signal. She moved into the laboratory. Doc followed.

"I found the car with a peculiar odor," she said. "I did not dream it would work this fast. A

newsboy noticed it when he was making his deliveries. I had the delivery and circulation departments of the newspapers check on their newsboys, as part of my hunt."

Doc asked, "Have you said anything to anyone about finding the car?"

"No. I haven't even told Johnny and Long Tom. They have been talking to Mr. Eleanor."

"They learn anything?"

"Eleanor is in an uproar about a half-page advertisement in the newspapers—that one offering a reward for the capture of Bench Logan and stating that Logan is crazy."

"Did Eleanor insert those advertisements?"

"He says he did not."

"The newspapers say that he did," Doc replied.

"So he found out, when he telephoned them." Pat grimaced. "You should have heard Eleanor blow up when he found that out. He threatened the poor newspapers with all kinds of libel suits."

"What are the newspapers going to do about that?"

"They say they took reasonable precautions by telephoning Mr. Eleanor's home to get corroboration of the advertising copy. They say a voice which said it belonged to Thomas J. Eleanor, and from Eleanor's home, assured them everything was all right and to go ahead and insert the advertisements."

"How does Eleanor explain that?"

"One of his servants on the telephone—a crooked one."

Doc Savage went into the reception room.

"You fellows," he told his men, "had better be getting our big plane ready. Load it with plenty of concentrated food, enough for emergency rations for two hundred and fifty people. And put aboard ample fighting equipment."

Thomas J. Eleanor heaved upright. He looked eager. "You have found the location of those people?" he asked.

Doc Savage shook his head slowly. "Mr. Eleanor, have you the least idea of the whereabouts of this tropical island on which you were told these people were marooned?"

Eleanor hesitated. "Not . . . well, not very accurately. Not within four or five hundred miles." Renny rumbled, "Holy cow! If we know within four or five hundred miles of where an island is, we can find it."

"Get the plane ready," Doc Savage said.

He beckoned to Pat, and she followed him out into the hall. Big-fisted Renny trailed along behind.

"Hey, Doc," Renny said. "What's this tropical stuff? I thought we were heading for the arctic. Which is it? It'll make a lot of difference in the equipment we take."

"The arctic," Doc said.

PATRICIA SAVAGE touched Doc's arm, then ordered the cab in which they were riding to continue to the end of the block and stop.

"Yonder," said Pat, "is the number of the house where the paper-delivery boy reported a car with a funny odor."

Doc said, "That is the car, standing in front of the garage at the rear of the house."

Pat smiled. She was in good spirits, highly pleased by the increasing excitement and mystery of the affair in which they were involved.

They approached the house from two directions. Pat drew a shawl over her head, hooked a basket over one arm, stooped her shoulders and walked like an old woman to the door. She knocked.

Simultaneously, Doc came to the house from the rear. He put an ear against the back door. There was the sound of Pat's knocking, but nothing else. Only silence.

He worked on the lock of the door for a few moments, then entered.

He made, as soon as he was inside, the low, exotic trilling sound which was his absent-minded habit. He walked through the house slowly, eyes busy.

Pat came in quickly when he opened the front door.

Pat exclaimed, "Say, isn't anybody—" Her eyes flew wide. "What's happened in here?"

Chairs were upset. Rugs were askew, lamps broken, a radio kicked over.

Doc Savage picked up a coat with one sleeve torn half off. A woman's coat. He said, "Nicky Jones was wearing this, was she not?"

"Yes," Pat said. "That means Nicky came here after she skipped. And someone raided the place and grabbed her."

The bronze man gave the house a rapid search. He found that the place was occupied by the fat girl—whose name was really Fern Reed—and that she had been living alone for a week, her parents being in Ohio on a visit to relatives.

"They must have kidnaped the fat girl, too," Pat said.

THE plane was vast and shining, graceful even sitting on the Hudson River surface. It was the color of the natural alloy with which it was covered. Paint on a ship of such size would add hundreds of pounds of weight and give nothing but color, so paint had been eliminated in the

interest of efficiency.

Long Tom Roberts, Monk Mayfair, Ham Brooks, Renny Renwick and Johnny Littlejohn were loading the last supplies aboard.

Thomas J. Eleanor made an indignant jaw for Doc Savage's benefit.

"Really, now," said Eleanor, "the idea that I go with you is preposterous."

"You seem to be involved in this," Doc explained patiently.

"Only through my curiosity," snapped Eleanor. "I told you about that—how I became curious and interested in saving the lives of those people."

"Your interest in their lives has ebbed, then?"

"Of course not!"

"I see."

"No, you don't see, either," said Eleanor. "Maybe I did not make it clear, but I had no intention of rescuing these people myself. As soon as I found out where they were, I was going to hire the rescuing job done."

Doc Savage seemed satisfied. "I see," he said. "Then we will not press you to go along."

Eleanor relaxed. He extended his hand. "I hope you are successful," he said.

Eventually, the fat man took his departure.

Monk Mayfair watched him go and remarked, "You know, you can just feel that guy is like a powerhouse connected to big business. I never really understood what they meant by 'dynamic' until I met him."

Long Tom ambled over.

"Doc," said the pale electrical wizard, "we dug up some stuff on Eleanor. This is the first time I've had a chance to give it to you. It doesn't seem important, anyway. Just history."

"We might hear it," Doc suggested.

Long Tom nodded. "Well, the fellow is hard to get much on. When the newspapers call him a mysterious international figure, they sure call the turn. He's supposed to be mixed up in the European munitions business, and you know that is a throat-cutting game over there. He is supposed to have been asked to leave several countries. And in Monrovia, they will shoot him on sight. Or maybe they won't now that the dictator, Mungen, is dead."

Doc Savage showed marked interest.

"Mungen and Thomas J. Eleanor had a connection?" he asked. "What was it?"

Long Tom grinned. "The kind of connection that a lighted match and gun powder would have. Several years ago, Thomas Eleanor called the dictator, Mungen, the Mad Dog of Europe. That didn't make a hit with Mungen. One thing must have led to another—I do not know the exact incidents that led up to it—and Mungen ordered Thomas J. Eleanor arrested and shot on sight if he ever put a foot in Monrovia. There was a hullabaloo about it."

Doc remarked, "It was my impression that Thomas J. Eleanor always avoids publicity."

"He does. But Mungen didn't. You remember Mungen—a great hulk of a devil with a gold snake for a tongue. He never shirked publicity. In fact, he was the biggest limelight hog of the dictator crop."

"Mungen went out of his way, then, to draw notice to his hate for Thomas J. Eleanor?"

"Yes. But Mungen wasn't bashful about letting people know he hated them."

"I see."

"Mungen hated plenty of them, too."

Doc nodded.

Long Tom grinned. "But more of them hated Mungen. You remember what the population did to his body after he was killed—cut it up in pieces and fed it to the alligator in the Monrovia National Zoo, according to one story."

Long Tom was silent a moment.

"The most hated man in this century—that Mungen," he said.

THOMAS J. ELEANOR returned as they were on the verge of taking the air. The fat man came charging down the long cavernlike hangar-warehouse, waving his arms and bellowing.

"Wait!" Eleanor howled. "I'm going along!"

He reached them and stopped. He was white-faced, panting. His foreign accent was more pronounced.

"Those fiends!" he snarled. "You know what they did? They stole my plane! My big, new plane—the private one I use for transatlantic crossings."

Monk Mayfair stared at him. "You have a private plane for transatlantic crossings?"

"Of course," said Eleanor, as if it was nothing more extraordinary than dollar cigars. "And they stole it."

"Who did?"

Eleanor put back his head and swore some very expressive oaths in a foreign language.

"I seem to have had only two loyal servants in my employ," he said. "They gave me the information. One of them has been shot, trying to stop the theft of the plane."

Monk said, "I asked you who—"

"And I heard you," Eleanor snapped. "I keep the plane in a private hangar on the Sound. This raiding party appeared about an hour ago. It was led, as nearly as I can judge from descriptions, by

Bill Browder. Browder has a large gang of thugs working with him. He also had prisoners."

Thomas J. Eleanor paused dramatically, a habit he had in such moments.

"The prisoners," he said, "seem to have been Bench Logan, the girl Nicky Jones, her fat girl friend and some other men. All prisoners were taken along."

"It must be a big plane," Monk said.

Thomas J. Eleanor glanced at Doc Savage's ship. "Somewhat larger than this," he said. "In fact, it is a late-model European bomber which I . . . er . . . received as a slight gift of esteem from a certain government."

Doc Savage entered the conversation, asking, "And now you wish to go with us?"

"I certainly do," said Thomas J. Eleanor.

"Why?"

The fat man banged a hand into a fist. "I'm mad!"

Somehow that one word was an ample explanation, the way he said it.

Big-fisted Renny rumbled, "So they've got a plane as fast as ours. That makes it a race, doesn't it?"

Pat shuddered.

"A race with two hundred and fifty lives for the stake," she said.

Chapter XI. ICE TRAP!

THEY refueled in Nova Scotia, flying that far with minimum fuel load for what added speed this would give.

Long Tom, the electrical expert, rode the radio continually. He called every airport on the Atlantic coast north of New York, and inland, and what Canadian fields he could contact.

While a fuel barge was pumping high-test aviation gas into their tanks in a Nova Scotia port, Long Tom summarized his results.

"Nobody," he said, "has seen hide or hair of the plane."

Thomas J. Eleanor approached them. He had made a discovery.

"This is Nova Scotia," he said. "You're flying north. I thought we were headed for the South Seas."

Doc Savage said nothing.

"Have you the least idea where you're going?" Eleanor demanded.

"You recall the latitude and longitude figures mumbled by the man who was dying in Ark Street?" Doc asked.

Eleanor blinked. "You're seeing if there is anything there?"

"Yes."

The fat man frowned. "Where am I going to get some clothes fit for a thing like this? The North, I mean."

"We will make a stop in Greenland," Doc told him. "And another in Iceland, if the military authorities will permit it."

Doc Savage took the plane off the bay, set a course by the gyro compass, then turned the flying of the ship over to the robot-pilot apparatus. He went back to the radio room.

"Long Tom," he said, "establish a radio contact with the steamer Oscar Fjord."

"That is the vessel Bench Logan tried to stow you and Miss Jones away on," Long Tom remarked.

"Yes. Describe Bench Logan to the Oscar Fjord. Give them his name, but also describe him and the blue dog. Ask them if they can get us any information concerning both."

Long Tom nodded and went to work on the radio.

Thomas J. Eleanor had moved to their side in time to hear part of the speech. He walked gingerly, as if he was afraid the cabin floor of the plane might not hold his weight.

Eleanor said, "Did you know about the dog?"

"What about it?"

"The animal has been literally a trade-mark of Bench Logan's," Eleanor explained. "The blue dog is always with Logan. The beast is merely a freak coloration in a mongrel police dog. From its size, I suspect it is a cross between a black Dane and a shepherd. Logan and the dog have never been far apart for years."

Doc said, "Then you knew Bench Logan was near your estate when you saw the blue dog."

"That is right," Eleanor acknowledged.

"And so you used the story of the blue dog to have me—or rather, to have Bill Browder get me there. You wanted to find out if I were really working with Bench Logan."

"Yes."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"I thought," said Doc Savage, "that you might have some important information about the dog."

"Oh, no, it's not important." The fat man grinned slightly. "That dog is vicious and cunning. It has gotten Bench Logan into plenty of trouble. Once it bit the dictator of Monrovia, Mungen. The cur got hold of Mungen's . . . er . . . major anatomy, shall we say, and it took four of his guard to pry the beast loose."

Doc Savage asked idly, "You knew Mungen?"

The fat man laughed. Even his laughter was dynamic, forceful, like pistols exploding.

"Don't tell me you haven't checked up on me," he said. "I feel sure you are cautious enough to have done so. You know that Mungen and I were acquainted. I was No. 1 on Mungen's list of what he called Enemies of a Stalwart Europe. I am rather proud of the distinction. To be a rich man does not make me great. To be first enemy of Mungen, the dictator, does make me great."

He sat down carefully, wedging himself in one of the seats, and smoked one of his dollar cigars with much satisfaction.

TWO hours later, Long Tom Roberts handed Doc Savage a sheet of paper on which was typing. "Doc, here is what the skipper of the steamer, Oscar Fjord, was able to give us."

The typing read:

Man you describe did not give us name of Bench Logan. Told us he was Hans Svenson, Canadian aviator forced down while ferrying plane across North Atlantic. We picked him up adrift in crude homemade sealskin canoe with vicious blue dog. Put him ashore in New York. He said matter of lost plane he was flying was military secret and asked us say nothing about it. We didn't.

Long Tom said, "It looks as if Bench Logan was picked up off the coast of Greenland. The skipper doesn't give the position where he was picked up, but the radio operator told me orally that it was off Greenland."

Doc said, "Go back and ask the radioman of the Oscar Fjord what condition Bench Logan was in when they rescued him."

The electrical expert departed, spent some time with the radio.

He reported, "Bad, the operator says. Very bad. The man was practically dead."

"From exposure?"

"And hardship." Long Tom frowned. "Here's another thing: The operator said they all figured Logan was a goner. There was a doctor on the Oscar Fjord at the time, he gave up hope of saving Logan's life. But the operator says Logan pulled through by main courage. The operator put it in these words: 'Logan acted as if the devil had given him a thing to do and he couldn't take time out to die before he did it.'"

"Was Logan delirious on the steamer?"

Long Tom nodded. "I thought of that. Yes, he was. He mumbled stuff about two hundred and fifty people dying. On the Oscar Fjord, they misunderstood that. They thought he was a naval pilot who had bombed a ship and killed two hundred and fifty people, and it was preying on his mind."

"What made them connect a ship with the two hundred and fifty people?"

"Logan kept mentioning a ship when he was delirious. He mumbled about the ship in connection with the two hundred and fifty people."

"The name of the ship—did you get that?"

"It was something like the Christine Gerry, they thought."

Doc Savage made, unexpectedly, his trilling note. He was startled.

"The Grin Gueterre," he said.

"Huh?"

Doc Savage looked thoughtfully at the sea that seemed to stand still beneath the plane, so high were they flying.

He said, "Long Tom, get hold of the Monrovia consul. It may be possible for you to contact the Monrovia government directly by short wave. The Grin Gueterre, or the Green Guard, as the name would translate, was a Monrovia vessel. Find out when it sailed and what happened to it."

THAT took Long Tom nearly two hours.

He reported, "The Grin Gueterre sailed four months and three days ago from a Portuguese port," he said. "The ship has disappeared. Not a thing has been heard from it since. It was believed a submarine victim, because of the war trouble over there."

"Four months and three days ago?"

"Yes."

"That was two days after Mungen, the dictator, killed himself," Doc said.

THE midnight sun was hanging in its interminable spot above the horizon when Long Tom thrust his head out of the radio cubicle again. He yelled, "Doc, you better listen to this!"

The bronze man hurried forward. Long Tom handed him a headset, explaining, "The signal is mighty weak."

Doc listened. It was radiotelephone; a voice. Bill Browder's voice, unquestionably. It was saying, "Our plane wrecked. Please send help. Position north-northwest of Iceland. Don't know how far. Several hundred miles. Edge of ice pack. Please send help."

Doc said, "Get a radio bearing on the voice. Then wait a few minutes and get a cross-bearing."

"It may be a trap," Long Tom suggested.

"Get the bearings," Doc said.

LATER, they took the two bearings, and Doc worked with the protractors, finally making a cross on the chart.

He indicated the spot. "Get there as fast as you can," he told Monk, who had taken over the controls.

Monk nodded.

Monk and Ham seemed to be on better terms, although their bad feeling had not entirely abated. Normally, they would have enlivened the trip by insulting each other repeatedly, but they had been almost polite.

They had brought along their pets, Chemistry and Habeas Corpus. The two animals seemed to be sharing the sour feelings of their masters. Usually they fought continually. But they had been ignoring each other.

THERE was a bay. It was a bay in pack ice. Thin haze lay over the place, so that they had to fly low.

They came in fast, riding the radio-compass bearing like a hound approaching a scent.

Patricia Savage cried out excitedly. "There—a wrecked plane!" She pointed.

The ship was not on the bay; it was almost a mile deeper in the pack ice.

Doc Savage, noting the direction of the winds as indicated by the waves in the bay, decided the plane had been making a circle in order to land on the bay against the wind, when something had gone wrong.

He told Monk, "Circle several times."

He used binoculars. The others did likewise. The wrecked plane was not badly damaged. It had skated over a level floe, digging up a great groove of snow, which had wiped out its undercarriage and buckled a wing against an ice pinnacle.

A man appeared beside the plane. He waved.

"Bill Browder," Doc decided.

They saw no one else.

"Land on the bay," Doc directed.

Thomas J. Eleanor wiped his forehead: "This may be a trap. I advise caution." He had put on an extra parka which Renny, the biggest member of their party, had brought along. It fitted him tightly, but would serve.

Monk put the plane down on the bay. The water was rough, and the plane hammered violently for a while. Then it was almost motionless, its multiple motors pulling it up to the ice.

Renny put a grappling iron on a floe, made the end of the attached line snug about a streamlined cleat. He yanked back the slide in the top of the pilot's compartment and stood erect. He stared around.

"No chance of anybody sneaking up on us here," he said. "You can see over the ice for half a mile."

Doc Savage pulled on a parka and changed his footgear to shoes with ice calks. He slung a portable radio "transceiver" over his back.

"Keep in continual touch with me," he said. "If there is more than one man alive at the plane, assistance may be necessary."

He climbed out on the hull snout, then to a wingtip. Monk gunned the motors and tramped on the rudder, and the wing swung slowly over the ice. Doc dropped on to the floes.

He moved rapidly, although the going was treacherous. The plane motors muttered contentedly behind him.

Soon the pack ice became more solid. It was piled up in blocks, ridges, pinnacles. There was the frequent, ripping, gunshot reports typical of pack ice near the rim.

He climbed a pressure ridge and after that it was like being in the Dakota badlands, only this was ice. He ran when he could. His steel calks left long ripping scratches down the slopes; ice particles showered his ankles.

Bill Browder was a hundred yards from the wrecked plane. Browder, trying to claw his way up an ice ridge, having helpless going of it, saw the bronze man. He released his grip and slid backward a dozen yards.

He stared at Doc. Then he held out his wrists, which were slashed.

"Twenty minutes ago," he said vacantly, "I was trying to commit suicide."

DOC grasped one of the man's wrists, then the other, and looked at them.

"They are not bad," he said.

Bill Browder seemed about to break into tears. "I had nothing to cut them with except a torn piece of the skin metal from the plane," he said.

"Anyone else in the plane?"

Browder shuddered. "Three," he said. He put his face in his arms. "They are dead. The crash."

Doc Savage went to the plane. It was a big ship, but of American manufacture. He went over it closely enough to learn that it was an airlines craft and had been recently in use for that purpose. The stewardess' locker was even stocked with the usual kit. The ship had probably been stolen.

He recognized the three men. They had taken part in the raid on the shack on the banks of Long Island Sound—the attack in which they had made off with Bench Logan and his men.

There was no life in them.

Bill Browder was sobbing when Doc returned to him. As always when a strong man cries, this was rather terrible.

"Poor Nicky," he moaned finally.

Doc went to a knee beside him. The man was trembling.

"What happened to her?" he asked.

Bill Browder shook so violently that speech failed him, as hysteria, nerves and the biting cold combined to cause a violent chill. Doc gave him tablets of quick-acting sedative and waited.

Finally, "They took . . . took Nicky with them. And Fern Reed," Browder said. "Fern Reed was the fat girl." Wetness filled his eyes again. "They're going to k-kill them . . . with the others."

"With the people on the steamer Grin Gueterre?" Doc asked.

Browder nodded. "I didn't know you knew about that ship." He licked his lips. "Tell me this—why are they so anxious to kill everyone who was on the Grin Gueterre?"

Doc Savage's metallic features were expressionless. "You know why, do you not?"

Browder shook his head. "No. It has puzzled me from the first."

Incredulity was in the bronze man's flake-gold eyes for a moment.

"Then why are you involved in it?"

Bill Browder looked ill. "A hundred dollars a day," he said.

"Paid by whom?"

"I don't know. Not by Thomas J. Eleanor, though. I thought at first that it was coming from him, but it isn't. They were just using Eleanor because—well, I think this whole thing started among Eleanor's bodyguards. He had five of them. Bench Logan was one, and there were four others."

The sedative was taking effect, allowing Browder's teeth to stop rattling, his voice to become more calm.

Doc said, "Give me your summary of the whole situation, Browder."

The man was silent, gathering his thoughts.

"Something is at stake," he said. "To get it, all those people on the Grin Gueterre will have to be killed. You see, the ship got into the arctic, was caught in the pack ice, crushed, and the passengers marooned. Bench Logan was aboard. He got away." He stopped.

"Logan got away, and was picked up by the Oscar Fjord?"

"Yes." Browder dampened his lips. His words drove short bursts of steam off his lips as he said,

"That's how it was. Then Bench Logan got to New York and interested the rest of Thomas J. Eleanor's bodyguards in going back and killing the passengers and getting whatever there is to get."

"Bench Logan is not working with them, now," Doc pointed out.

Browder nodded. "I know that. They quarreled. Logan developed a human streak and wanted to save the people instead of killing them. So the other bodyguards assembled more cronies as tough as themselves and went after Logan. Logan got together his own tough pals, and they've been going around and around ever since."

Browder lowered his face for a moment, then looked up. There was a proud expression on his face.

"I balked at the wholesale killing, too," he said. "That's why they left me here. They thought I would die."

"This plane was stolen?"

"From an airline," Browder said. "They have another ship, a tremendous thing. They stole that one from Thomas J. Eleanor." He looked at the twisted plane lying on the ice. "I caused that wreck," he said.

Doc Savage eyed him thoughtfully. "You caused it?"

"Yes, I ripped the oil lines loose on the motors. I thought they would land on the bay. But I miscalculated. They didn't make it to the bay." His lips compressed. "So they left me to die. The other plane picked them up."

"The other plane has gone on to where those people are marooned?"

"Yes."

"Do you know where that is?"

"Yes."

"Come on," Doc Savage said.

Chapter XII. HOPE BLACKS OUT

THOMAS J. ELEANOR met them at the plane.

"What happened?" he demanded.

Doc entered the plane. The others were sitting in the seats.

"They wrecked one plane and abandoned Bill Browder," he said. "They have gone on to commit their wholesale murder. There is no time to lose."

He moved forward to the controls.

"Put on your parachutes, everybody," he ordered. "There is no telling what will happen."

Monk compressed his lips. He looked at Eleanor, who was close behind Doc.

"You . . . you better fly this thing, Doc," Monk said. "I'm not sure I can handle it on this rough water."

Monk was an excellent aviator, but Doc made no comment. He got behind the controls. Thomas J. Eleanor took the other control-compartment seat.

"The tension is getting everybody jittery," he said.

Doc let the plane drift back away from the rim of ice, gunned the motors, ran downwind for a mile, then came about again. It was rough. Twice, the wingtips of the plane knifed into the surface. But he straightened the craft. Once it had speed, keeping it level was more simple. He heaved it off the surface, and the ice pack slashed past with hungry white fangs.

"Get Bill Browder up here," he said. "He has to point out the location of the marooned group." Browder came forward. He was white, but his hand was steady. He seemed to want to say something. But finally he jabbed a pencil at the chart.

"There," he said.

It was close—no more than twenty miles.

"All right," the bronze man told him.

Browder retreated. Thomas J. Eleanor squirmed uncomfortably on his seat-pack parachute. He was so very big that the seat did not fit him.

Ten minutes later—no more than that—the bronze man discerned the castaways.

They had put out a distress signal of some kind. He dropped the ship lower; discovered that they had built snow huts so that they spelled out for help, S O S. Tops of the snow structures had been darkened in some fashion.

Half a mile from the cluster of structures was an ice lead that was open, full of surging green water.

The plane was there.

Thomas J. Eleanor pointed, said, "There is the ship they stole from me, the devils!"

Doc Savage reached up, grasped Thomas J. Eleanor around the shoulders, and pitched backward. The plane—the bronze man had designed it for a military-type craft with a big hatch for pilot escape—lurched somewhat. Doc and Eleanor went out into space!

Eleanor screamed, and it was a squawl of plain terror. He had been brave enough previously. But to be suddenly seized and tossed out into space broke his nerve for a moment.

Doc Savage kept a grip on Eleanor. They fell, the air beginning to scream around them. Doc got hold of the rip-cord ring of the fat man's 'chute, and thrust it in his hand.

"Pull!" he said.

Eleanor pulled. Silk popped out, and the man was yanked out of Doc's grip.

Doc cracked his own 'chute. The difference in their weight was sufficient that Eleanor passed him, hit the ice first. But by only a few seconds.

The fat man showed knowledge of parachute behavior. The wind in the big mushroom hauled him over the ice, up ice pinnacles and down the other side, but he got hold of the shrouds and spilled the air. He was safe when Doc reached him.

ELEANOR stared at Doc. He seemed completely wordless.

"When did you get wise?" he asked.

"Not," Doc Savage said, "until a moment ago."

"What tipped you off?"

"No one particular thing. I noticed, of course, that everyone was pale and strange when I returned with Bill Browder. But I did not grasp it; I was too worried over the fate of these people on the ice."

Eleanor said, "They were hiding in the ice floes around the bay. They got us by surprise. They were in the back of the plane, waiting for you to take off. I think they wanted to attack you in the air, where there was no chance of your escaping. But you fooled them—unwittingly—when you put on a parachute." The fat man scowled. "That Bill Browder must have been bait in their trap."

Doc pointed upward.

"Then why did Browder jump, too?" he asked.

Eleanor stared at the blooming white disk of silk which was lowering a dark figure. It was Browder. He landed nearly two hundred yards from them, and was groveling on the ice when they reached him.

"My ankle!" he gasped. His eyes rolled up at the plane. "They were in the back of the plane—the washroom or whatever is in the back of the ship," he said. "They must have come aboard while you were rescuing me, Mr. Savage."

"When did you first realize that?" Doc asked.

"When you jumped. They all rushed out then." Browder groaned. "They'll kill your friends."

Doc said, "That is not likely." He sounded confident.

Bill Browder tried to get up. He bit his lips until his teeth sank in, and a ribbon of blood crawled down over his chin.

"Sprained." He gripped his ankle and groaned. Then he lurched to his feet by sheer nerve force.

"What are we going to do—"

His eyes twisted upward.

Fear made Thomas J. Eleanor put both hands to his cheeks, like a woman.

"Watch out!" he screamed. He made a running dive for the nearest ice crevice.

The plane was coming down at them like a dive bomber.

Doc landed beside Eleanor in the ice crack. Eleanor bellowed, "Scatter! If we're together, they may drop a bomb!"

"They have not had time to find bombs in the equipment," Doc said. "And it is doubtful if they carried anything but hand grenades aboard."

The plane pulled out of its dive. A few bullets chipped ice, but none were very close. The ship climbed, turning first north, then south, as if the pilot was puzzled as to just what to do.

Suddenly a figure toppled out of the craft.

"See!" Eleanor yelled. "They're throwing your friends overboard!"

A parachute bloomed over the dark, falling form.

IT was Monk. He spilled one side of his 'chute so as to land not far from them. The homely chemist disengaged the fabric harness, gave his trousers a hitch. He was wearing nothing but khaki pants and a gaudy sweater.

"I can't understand it," he declared. "Darnedest thing I ever ran into."

Eleanor grabbed him by the arm. The fat man was shaking.

"Oh, this is— What'll we do?" Eleanor gasped. "What'll they do? Are they going to kill—"

"Brother, you sure blow up fast," Monk told him. "You were as cool as cucumbers all along, and I said to myself, 'Monk, that guy is made of iron.' And here you are, more scared than an old maid in a barber college."

The fat man only gasped and shook.

Monk turned. "Doc, they have a proposition. They want to trade."

The bronze man was silent.

Monk added, "They kicked me out to tell you that, if you would promise to clear out and forget the whole thing, they would let us do that. But we are not to interfere with what they intend to do to those people on the ice, yonder."

Eleanor stiffened.

Doc asked, "You mean that they are offering to trade our lives for the lives of two hundred and fifty people?"

Monk shrugged. "I don't know what the trade is. It's got me bamboozled. But it's a sure thing that if we clear out, they'll polish off those people. They've got bombs and poison gas to do the job with."

"Poison gas!" The bronze man was grim. "That means they have been preparing to do this job for some time. You do not just step out and buy poison gas the way you buy a gun."

Monk's temper suddenly got the best of him. He waved his arms. "But what're they wanting to trade for? How do they think we can save that gang?"

Doc was silent again.

Words burst out of Eleanor.

"Accept!" he shouted. "Don't delay! It's a chance to save our lives!"

Monk glanced upward, then looked in the direction of the other plane. He also glanced toward the camp. Both plane and camp were concealed behind the ice pinnacles.

"I was to take off my shirt and wave it around my head if we accepted," he said. "They will land our plane down the shore a short distance, and leave it, with Pat and the others safe aboard."

Eleanor clawed at his clothing.

Monk stared at him. "What are you doing?"

"Taking off my shirt," Eleanor gasped. "I'm going to signal them."

Monk looked at Doc. Then the homely chemist stepped close to the fabulous Thomas J. Eleanor.

"Friend, I always like to hit a rich man," Monk said. "Keep that shirt on, or you'll think a mule got to you."

Eleanor gaped at him. "You fool! You are not suggesting we sacrifice our lives!"

Monk gave his pants another hitch. He was turning blue from the cold. He looked at Doc Savage.

"Doc, shall I tell this guy what I think you're thinking?" he asked.

The bronze man nodded almost imperceptibly.

Monk shivered, flapped his arms.

He said, "For some time now, we have made a business of righting wrongs and punishing evildoers. It sounds kind of silly when you say it in so many words, but we haven't found it that way. In fact, we're proud of what we've done; we're proud of Doc Savage and glad we have had the privilege of working with him. We've liked taking chances, and we've taken plenty of them. We've always known what we were doing. We haven't gone into anything blindfolded. Puzzled, maybe, but never without knowing that there would be risks. We have accepted those risks as part of the game."

Monk glanced up at the grimly circling plane.

"Always in our minds, I think, has been the knowledge that we would have to accept death sometime," he continued. "And I think we will do just that without hesitating. I know that's the way

I feel, and I know the others see eye to eye with me. You take Ham, up there; Ham has insulted and browbeaten me, told my best girl the awfulest lies, and we've had our spats. But I wouldn't be afraid to have Ham speak for me, even if the word was death. I know I can speak for Ham the same way. And for the others, as I say. And so I'm saying for them—we ride straight ahead! There are two hundred and fifty people yonder on the ice. We may save them; we may not. But we will try. The trouble Pat, Long Tom, Renny and Johnny and Ham are in, up there in the plane, and the trouble Doc and I are in down here, is all part of the bargain. We won't welsh. So—and maybe I should have just said this and nothing else—to hell with any trade for our lives."

Doc Savage had remained silent through the speech, which was one of the longest Monk had ever made.

The bronze man extended a hand. There was a hint of dampness in his eyes.

"I am glad you made that speech," he said.

Monk snorted. "It's what you'd have said, isn't it? Maybe you'd have used less words."

Doc nodded.

Thomas J. Eleanor lowered his head, his arms.

"What a pack of fools you are!" he said. "But . . . but there is something in what— Well, I'm ashamed of myself."

Chapter XIII. FEAR ON THE FLOES

MONK MAYFAIR watched Doc Savage strip off his parka and say, "Better put this on, Monk." Monk took the parka, but muttered, "Oh, I'm not cold."

Saying he was not cold was the largest lie Monk had told recently. He felt he was getting so cold that, shivering as he was, he would soon shatter into pieces like a chunk of ice. He put on the parka.

As a matter of fact, Monk knew the weather was quite mild. Not below freezing more than a few degrees. The wind, however, was like a million animals with sharp teeth.

Doc said, "Monk, you had better go warn those people on the ice." The bronze man stooped, removed his shoes—sheep-lined pacs of the arctic type—which had the ice calks. "Here, wear these. We will swap shoes."

Monk said, "Oh, I can make it all right."

But after he had gone a hundred feet over the ice, he came back and changed shoes with Doc. The calked pacs were tight on Monk's feet. He had a hunch Doc would be able to step out of his own fleece-lined flying boots without unzipping them, if he wished.

Monk pointed. "I think that camp on the ice is in this direction. That right?"

The bronze man nodded.

Monk set out. The calked footgear helped a lot. He galloped along at the best speed he could manage.

He glanced back. Doc Savage and Thomas J. Eleanor were standing on the ice, watching him.

"THAT big baby!" Monk said, meaning Eleanor.

Monk had—the impression had been growing on him the last few minutes—the feeling that Doc Savage was working out some deliberate plan aimed at securing safety.

Monk shuddered. The situation looked hopeless to him.

The plane suddenly ended its circling and came down in a whistling dive. There was a sound as if several big, invisible dogs were galloping around Monk.

The homely chemist took a run, a dive and did his best to disappear into a snowdrift. He was intensely grateful for the parka, which was white and would help hide him against the snow.

Bullets continued to make the sound of big dogs, but they were not close, now. From a diving plane armed only with rifles, a single man dressed in white on a snow background was an almost impossible target.

The plane pulled up, its motors an angry roaring which jumped against the ice and back.

Monk leaped out of the snow and sprinted. He covered some distance before the plane came back again.

He sparred like a chicken trying to escape a hawk, until the line of huts came into view.

He felt an enormous pity for the people who met him.

There was on their faces the mark of incredible suffering. Of hunger, privation, of fear and cold, courage and hopelessness. They did not have arctic clothing, except that they had improvised it after a fashion of rags and untanned sealskins, here and there a bearskin.

He came upon them unexpectedly. Four men, hatchet-faced from privation, stood up in a snowdrift.

One said, "You had better get down, my friend. Those are real bullets from that plane, even though they are badly aimed."

Monk slid feet-foremost into the snow, so that the flakes covered his dark khaki trouser legs.

"Warn the others!" he exclaimed. "The guys in those planes are going to bomb and machine-gun them to death."

The man with the wan face nodded.

"They know that," he said.

Monk was startled. "They do!"

The other nodded.

"We have been fearing something of this kind for months," he said.

Monk stared at him. The fellow seemed to be on the last stretch of starvation.

"How many of you are left?" Monk asked.

The man smiled. There was a trace of pride. "Two hundred and fifty-three of us, still. It is a miracle, my friend. A miracle—and a herd of seal which came."

"Did you save much from the ship?"

"From the Grin Guetterre?" The man shrugged. "So pitifully little that it is not worth mentioning. You should guess that."

Monk was puzzled. "Why should I have guessed it?"

"Did you not know we were first driven off the Grin Guetterre? Driven ashore to die?"

"I didn't know that," Monk told him. "I just supposed the ship smashed up on the rocks, and you got on to the ice where you were marooned. I supposed Bench Logan got away and reached New York, and then—" He stopped.

"And then what?" prompted the other.

"And then I got kind of puzzled," Monk admitted. "Bench Logan wanted to get help to you, but he could not come out openly and ask for it because he was wanted by the police on a murder charge. As sure as Bench Logan had come out with such a fantastic story, he would have been investigated and arrested for murder. Moreover, they got out a story that Bench Logan was insane, in order to discredit the story if he did tell it."

"They?"

the man said.

"Yeah, they," Monk replied vaguely.

"You do not sound as if you know who they are."

"I don't."

"It isn't they. It is one individual."

Monk said, "Right now would be a good time—" and stopped. He looked up. "No, it wouldn't."

The second plane had taken the air. It climbed in a purposefully straight line, heading for the castaway camp on the ice. In moments, the ship was overhead, and high.

MONK was watching the craft, but he did not see the two bombs until they had detached and were almost on the ice pack. He barely had time to fall flat.

The ice jerked under him, jarred by the devastating rip of modern high-concussion bombs! Shattered ice, smoke and snow climbed upward. They could hear and feel the uneasy cracking of the great pack under them.

It dawned on Monk that the bombs had missed the nearest snow hut by nearly two hundred feet. Yet, the blast had been sufficient to topple down several snow walls.

The plane swung in a circle, went back to the ice bay from which it had taken off and landed.

"Just shaking their fists," Monk decided. "They could have come a lot closer than that with those bombs. They're just showing us what they can do."

The four emaciated men were staring at Monk.

"Who are you?" asked the spokesman. "Perhaps it would ease our minds if you told us."

Monk started. "Oh, I overlooked that."

He told them who he was, who Doc Savage was, and sketched briefly the course of events. He finished, "I have a hunch Doc knows what is behind it all, but I'll sure say I don't. Those guys seem to think that all of you people have to be killed, but I can't see why."

They looked at him queerly.

"Would you care to look over our camp?" one asked. "Perhaps you can suggest a defense."

Monk nodded. They walked among the huts. The workmanship of these, considering that they had ice and only a few bits of wreckage with which to work, was good. But they were not bomb shelters.

Condition of the castaways moved Monk to pity, almost to tears. And he was a grizzled fellow who did not cry easily. Everywhere was evidence of the most gruesome suffering. Bodies that were emaciated to skeleton thinness. In one hut, where they were cooking a kind of communal meal over a pitiful flame of blubber, he got the grisly impression that the principal ingredient of a stew was a pair of shoes. He had heard arctic explorers speak humorously of eating their shoes; it was the first time he had run into the real thing. It was not pleasant.

He said, "It is incredible to me that you did not save more stuff in the shipwreck."

The spokesman said. "We were off the ship before it was wrecked. We were put off."

Monk frowned. "You mean you didn't have to desert the ship because it was wrecked."

"No."

"Then why?"

"We were prisoners on the steamer Grin Guetterre for weeks before we were put ashore here. Or rather, marooned on the ice to die. And then, as the ship was attempting to leave after it marooned us, it struck an iceberg and sank."

"What about the crew who was on it then?"

The man's lips became thin. "They got away safely in a power launch, after hanging around and sinking every lifeboat and making sure no wreckage drifted to the ice pack where we could get it."

Monk scowled. "They got away, eh?"

The man pointed at the plane in the air, at the spot where the other plane had landed.

"Those," he said, "are the men who marooned us!"

Monk hitched at his pants, the way he habitually did when he was mad.

"Look, we better scatter these people over the floes," he said. "That way, they won't make targets. Those fellows may get a few, but it won't be easy. All bunched up in these huts, it'll be like shooting sitting birds."

The other winced. "I am sorry."

"What do you mean—sorry? Why not do it?"

The man beckoned. "Come to these other huts," he said.

Monk followed the man and was shown one hut after another. Horror grew inside Monk. And hopelessness.

These people, he realized, could not go out and scatter over the ice pack. They did not have enough clothing. They would freeze to death.

"You see," the man said, "we four are more warmly dressed than any of the others. They have contributed their clothing, all of these people, to dress a few hunters who venture out in quest of the few seal and walrus that are to be found."

Futility crowded Monk's voice as he snarled, "This is a devilish thing! What is behind it, anyway?"

Without a word, the man entered a hut. He was gone only a moment and had a picture in his hand when he reappeared. It was a poster, a photograph, with a legend below it.

He handed the poster to Monk.

"Does that explain things?" he asked.

Monk stared at the thing in unbelieving astonishment.

"Great grief!" he muttered finally. "Do you mean to tell me that these people here are the only ones who know this?"

"We are the only ones who know it and would tell the world," the man said. "That is why we have to die."

Monk glowered at the poster. "And I thought there was a treasure behind this thing!"

"There is," the man said. "Quite a sinister treasure, don't you think?"

Chapter XIV. WHITE STRINGS TO DEATH

THE great international financier, Thomas J. Eleanor, beat his arms against his sides for warmth. "The situation seems to be stalemated," he said. "What can we do? What can they do? And why don't they do what they came up here for—kill those people? I don't understand that."

Doc Savage had climbed an ice pinnacle. Twice, a rifle had cracked at him from a distance, but the bullets had gone wide. He had been able to look around.

Now he slid down the sharp slope of ice.

"Mr. Eleanor," he said, "will you stay here? Position yourself on a high spot and keep a lookout. If you hear or see anything suspicious, if they should send out a party to hunt us down, give an alarm. Browder, you stay with Eleanor."

Eleanor said, "They are not likely to send out a hunting party for you. I think they have a great respect for your fighting ability, Mr. Savage. Meeting you at even terms on the pack ice is not something they are likely to try, except as a last resort."

Doc made no comment on that.

He did say, "In case you wish to give an alarm, do it with a very long shout. A long shout will carry, whereas a short yell might be mistaken for grinding noises of the ice pack or the barking of a seal."

Eleanor muttered, "I'd rather go with you."

Bill Browder said, "I can watch. My ankle is jammed, but I can watch."

"It is necessary for someone to keep a lookout so that I will not get into a trap. And Browder may need help."

Eleanor scowled.

"All right, I'll watch," he said. "I'll stay with Browder."

Doc Savage then went away. He walked upright, and seemed to take no precautions to conceal himself; yet he was suddenly out of sight of Eleanor.

Eleanor stared at where the bronze man had been, rubbed his jaw indecisively and finally took a position on a high point of ice, where he remained, as he had been bidden.

Doc Savage traveled rapidly, acting like a man with definite ideas and specific things to do.

First, he got a distant survey of the little bay in the edge of the ice pack where the planes were landing. Both planes were now on the water. Their crews had gathered on the ice, apparently for a war conference.

Some distance from them, a hundred yards but no more, stood another group. Doc could identify them. These were Long Tom, Ham, Pat, Renny, Bench Logan, Nicky Jones, the fat girl Fern Reed, and

Bench Logan's friends.

These prisoners were alive, and possibly battered, but at least under their own motive power.

They were being watched by men with rifles.

One of the planes—Doc Savage's ship—had been pegged to the ice, like a chicken tied to a stake.

The other ship was ready for the air, because its motors were turning over. The motors on the first ship, however, had been shut off; and canvas weather covers for heater units were being fitted over the motors.

It seemed obvious that they planned to use only the big plane they had stolen from Thomas J.

Eleanor for whatever their plans contemplated. The craft was probably loaded with bombs and weapons.

Doc proceeded with his plans.

THE bronze man went to the parachutes which he, Eleanor and Monk had used. He gathered up all three of them, then went to work with his pocketknife.

First, he cut loose some of the shrouds, but not all of them. Then he ripped up one of the parachutes in squares about the size of bed sheets.

These preparations over with, he carried the parachutes, the shrouds and the sections the size of bed sheets and walked northward.

He had difficulty going because he wore Monk's shoes, and they not only did not fit him but the soles did not offer much grip on the ice.

He came to what he had noticed earlier. He had seen it first from the air, when coming down by parachute, and later he had checked its existence from an ice pinnacle while making his survey. It was a stretch of pack ice level enough for a plane to land.

The ice, in fact, was as level as a floor and carpeted with firm snow. It was a lead, a great crack which had opened in the floe, then frozen. It was shaped somewhat like an hourglass, or a figure 8, with a narrow spot.

Drawing near the stretch of level ice, Doc Savage apparently took time off from the serious business at hand to chase a seal. He stalked the seal with great care.

By wrapping the white parachute fabric around himself to get the coloration of the snow, he managed to approach close to the seal. He sprang upon the startled animal and, avoiding its teeth, overcame it.

He tied the seal's jaws together in such a way that it could not bite through the silk cord.

Then he picketed the seal to the edge of the hole in the ice where it had been loitering.

Doc examined the hole in the ice. It was not as large as he wished, so he laboriously enlarged it with the sharp hooks of the collapsible grappling iron which he always carried.

The seal floundered around at the end of a parachute cord, which Doc had anchored by tying it to a small bundle of parachute fabric, wetted and frozen into a depression in the ice.

All of this took time. Though the temperature was below freezing, the freezing of the seal anchor was by no means instantaneous.

Doc Savage showed no impatience. He wetted the sheet-size pieces of parachute fabric which he had torn. He let these freeze in the form of long, thin stakes, which he fashioned by rolling the wet sheets.

He carried these white stakes—they were somewhat over eight feet in length—with him. He also took along water in a bundle which he made out of parachute fabric.

At the narrow part of the figure 8, or hourglass-shaped patch of smooth snow, he erected the stakes he had made by freezing.

He put them in a line across the narrow neck of the hourglass. He used as few of them as he could.

Then he rigged the parachute cords the way he wanted them. The cords were almost as strong as piano wire. He spent a long time on his contraption, arranging it to his liking.

The picketed seal made indignant muffled noises at him as he passed it in leaving.

THOMAS ELEANOR looked indignant, and Browder relieved, when Doc Savage returned.

"We thought something had happened to you," Eleanor snapped.

Browder said, "Your man, Monk, came back. He says those people in the camp are incapable of defending themselves. He says, furthermore, that they won't talk to him; they won't tell him anything."

Doc Savage's flake-gold eyes showed interest. "Monk said what?"

"That these castaways won't co-operate. They are suspicious of him."

Eleanor snapped, "That's fine thanks we get when we come all the way up here to rescue them."

Doc Savage frowned.

"We are without food," he said, "but I have found a seal. I think, if you will help me, Mr.

Eleanor, that I can seize the seal. I believe we should do that. Food may become very necessary."

The fat man nodded. "I'm hungry, now," he said. "And freezing to death, too. Don't they get heat out of seal blubber some way?"

"Come on," Doc told him.

The bronze man conducted Thomas Eleanor to a spot from which they could see the seal. Due to the

poor light, the loose snow blowing along the surface of the ice, and the general haziness, there was no indication whatever that the seal was already a captive.

"Here is the plan to catch that seal," Doc Savage said. "You wait here, and I will go around to the other side. Then you show yourself. You will distract the seal's attention, and I will creep up on it. I have a piece of white parachute silk which I can wrap around myself, so the seal will be less likely to see me."

Eleanor said, "All right. Wave your arms when you are ready to have the seal distracted."

It did not take many minutes for Doc Savage to work his way around to the opposite side of the seal. He waved his arms. The fat Eleanor immediately showed himself.

Since the seal was already staked out, it was not difficult to approach it.

Doc Savage made a headlong dive and grabbed the seal. The seal naturally struggled. In the struggle, Doc lost his footing and slid into the seal's hole! He went through the ice into the sea below.

THOMAS J. ELEANOR stood stock-still and stared. Obviously, he was astounded at the turn of events. It seemed impossible that Doc Savage, so capable, could have met with an accident. Eleanor dashed forward, and stood beside the seal hole, waiting for the bronze man to reappear.

But Doc did not come up.

The fat man looked completely blank.

Then he began to smile. He tried not to smile at first, but finally—as he became positive Doc Savage had drowned in a fantastic accident—he did not hold back the grin. He gave way to it. He burst into laughter.

Then he began to run toward the distant planes. But the going was tough, so bad that he looked at the level stretch of ice and changed his mind.

Eleanor climbed to an ice pressure ridge, produced a match and a small flare; the flare proved to be inside one of his big cigars. He simply stripped off the tobacco wrapper, and there it was. He lighted it. He waved this signal, which gave off smoke and a distinctive red light in the hazy half-darkness of the midnight sun.

Soon, one of the planes took the air. It was the ship which Eleanor had complained about being stolen from him.

The craft circled overhead.

Eleanor made imperative gestures with his arms. The signals he gave were orders. As soon as those in the plane understood the commands, they obeyed them.

The plane prepared to land.

In order to land with any degree of safety, the ship had to come down against the wind and pass through the narrow part of the hourglass with its hull already on the snow. The craft was an amphibian, with wheels, and the snow was not so deep but that it could land successfully.

It made this type of landing, and hit the parachute cords which Doc Savage had stretched across the neck of the hourglass. The cords, being white, were invisible in the haze and thinly blowing snow.

Results were astounding. In a fraction of a second, the big port motor was enwrapped in a flying devil of silk. All three parachutes, or what remained of them, were tangled about the engine and the landing gear.

The ship was thrown sharply to the left, hit the rough ice, took a fantastic jump, a great hop, came down on its nose. And the earth seemed to blow to bits!

The load of bombs had exploded.

Eleanor lay where he had fallen on the ice, staring in horror at fragments flying around in the air and falling back into the blue-green water which boiled up through the broken ice. Then he got up and ran away, making low noises that were just sounds.

Chapter XV. WHO WAS MUNGEN?

DOC SAVAGE was not far from the plane that survived when the explosion came.

Rough ice at this point extended close to the water, and it was his hope to enter the water—which was possible, if not comfortable—and swim to the plane, then take it over during the excitement.

But, when he endeavored to use the tiny gadget which supplied enough oxygen for a few minutes under water—the "lung" which he had used after he went through the seal hole—he found the thing frozen. It would not work. There was no time to thaw it out.

The "lung" contrivance also doubled as a gas mask, which was why Doc happened to carry it as one of his regular pieces of equipment. But it was useless, now.

So he took a chance. He kept as low as he could, ran forward and charged the man with the rifle who was guarding Bench Logan and the other prisoners.

The rifleman saw him while he was still a few yards distant. But the fellow's wits were so embroiled, what with the ripping echoes of the explosion booming across the ice and the visible evidences of terrific destruction of the doomed plane, that he was too slow. Doc Savage got to him. Doc hit him, grabbed his rifle and tossed it to Renny, who was nearest. Renny, so smoothly that they might have rehearsed the thing for weeks in advance, swung the rifle and shot a man in the leg,

shot another in the shoulder, drove the rifle out of a third's hands, then discovered the gun was empty. So he went into action with a club.

What really saved the situation was that Doc had realized, before he tried his reckless tactics, that none of the prisoners were tied because of the cold.

At least, he thought they were not tied because of the cold, at the time. Later, he discovered it was no such humanitarian reason. It was simply that there had been nothing in the planes with which to tie them effectively. So they had been allowed to stand free.

The others were in action, now. Ham went down with a man who had a pistol, and they grunted, strained and scuffed up snow.

Johnny tied himself up with two others like a bundle of sticks.

Long Tom tried to box bare-fisted with a man. The man hit Long Tom between the eyes. Long Tom sat down on the ice and remained sitting there. He said afterward that it was fifteen minutes before he understood just what had hit him.

Doc Savage rushed another man. But Pat and Nicky Jones got there ahead of him. Pat put a finger in the man's eye, Nicky kicked him in the shins so that he upset. And Fern Reed, the fat girl, fell on the man, thereby injuring him more seriously than any of the others.

There was no one left.

IT took them a bit more than five hours to distribute the emergency rations among the marooned unfortunates. They had trouble in some instances because of hunger craze. And there were more than a dozen cases of outright insanity—curable, Doc Savage believed—brought on by the hardships. They loaded the worst cases in the plane; and, with Renny at the controls, the ship took off for the nearest American base in Greenland. It would bring back emergency food, which had been ordered by radio.

Monk watched the plane become nothing in the distance. He crossed his fingers.

"I hope Renny has no accidents," he said. "I wouldn't hanker to stay here."

It was the first time Doc Savage had had an opportunity to speak privately to Monk.

"Monk, that was clever of you not to give the situation away," he said. "I mean, when you told Eleanor and Browder that these people were suspicious and would not talk to you."

Monk grinned. "They had talked to me, of course. I knew the whole story. But I got to thinking about you, and it dawned on me you must have known the story for some time. You know what tipped me off that you did know?"

"What?"

"I got to remembering back," Monk said, "and I couldn't recall your ever having turned your back on Thomas J. Eleanor."

Pretty Nicky Jones approached them. "Mr. Savage, I want to thank you for what you did," she said.

"Thanks aren't much, unless you feel them the way Bill Browder and I feel them."

"You and Bill have made up?"

"Bill just got mixed up in it because there was so much money to be made," Nicky said. "When he found out there was to be killing, he backed out. Bill is all right. He won't be so money hungry in the future. He's going to take a job operating a filling station after we're married."

Doc asked her, "Why were you and Fern brought along?"

"Oh, I found out the truth about Eleanor," Nicky said. "And I ran and told Fern. We were talking about it when Eleanor's men showed up and overheard us. They had to either kill us or take us along. So they brought us. They were going to murder us up here, where we would never be found."

Monk said, "They went to a lot of trouble."

"I think they thought that if I disappeared, you fellows might think I was guilty and waste time looking around New York for me," Nicky explained.

"That's probably the reason," Monk told her.

"Where is Bench Logan?" Nicky asked.

No one answered.

Pat spoke up, saying, "Why, I saw him right after the fight ended. He was heading off into the pack ice."

"What did he say?" Monk asked sharply.

"Said he was going to rescue Mr. Eleanor," Pat explained. "Said he did not want any harm to come to Mr. Eleanor. I thought that was very thoughtful of him."

Monk stared at her unbelievably. "Holy cow—as Renny would say! You're serious."

"Why not?" Pat asked. "It seemed nice of Logan to want to save Eleanor—"

"Don't you know the story behind this?" Monk demanded.

Pat frowned.

"No," she said. "And I think it's time somebody told me, too."

MONK took a deep breath. "You remember Mungen, the dictator of Monrovia?"

"That fiendish fellow who committed suicide when his people rebelled?"

"He didn't commit suicide, Pat," Monk told her. "The guy who got killed was just a guy who looked like Mungen. Mungen arranged that. Mungen got away."

"Got away?"

Monk nodded. "This Mungen had stolen millions and millions of dollars while he was dictator, and he built up another identity. It was as this other identity, in masquerade, that he fled. He got on the steamer Grin Guetterre, with his bodyguards—plenty of them.

"Bench Logan was one of the bodyguards, but he didn't know he was working for Mungen. He had never known it before. Logan hated Mungen, because of something that Mungen had done to a girl Logan loved.

"Logan found out that his boss was the notorious Mungen. This happened while the steamer Grin Guetterre was in the Atlantic. Bench Logan wirelessly alerted the Monrovia authorities about it, and they sent a warship to get Mungen. The warship chased the steamer up here into the arctic, and lost it." Monk grimaced. "By then, everyone on the steamer knew who Mungen was. So he had to get rid of them all to protect the identity he had built up as someone else—and to protect the wealth he had amassed in the name of that identity. So he marooned everyone. Then he accidentally wrecked the ship getting away, but he reached safety with most of his bodyguards." Monk spread his hands. "You know the rest: How Bench Logan got to New York, what he tried to do, what he had to do because he couldn't go to the police with a murder charge hanging over him."

Pat stared fixedly.

"So he was Mungen," she said.

Monk fumbled in a pocket and produced the poster which he had been shown when he first visited the refugees on the ice. He showed this to Pat. "Notice the likeness," he said.

Pat examined the picture. She nodded. "Take off the trick mustache and whiskers, make the hair darker— Yes, Thomas J. Eleanor is Mungen!"

The homely chemist snorted.

"Whether Eleanor is or was Mungen, will depend on how Bench Logan has gotten along with his rescuing, I bet," he said.

Pat put a hand to her lips. "Logan went out to find Eleanor—or Mungen—and kill him?"

Monk, whose sensibilities on a point like this were about as calloused as the heel of his foot, only grinned.

LATER, when Bench Logan came back, battered and showing signs of having been in a terrific fight, Monk greeted him casually. "How did the rescue go?" asked Monk.

"Satisfactorily," said Bench Logan.

And that was all he ever did say about it.

THE END