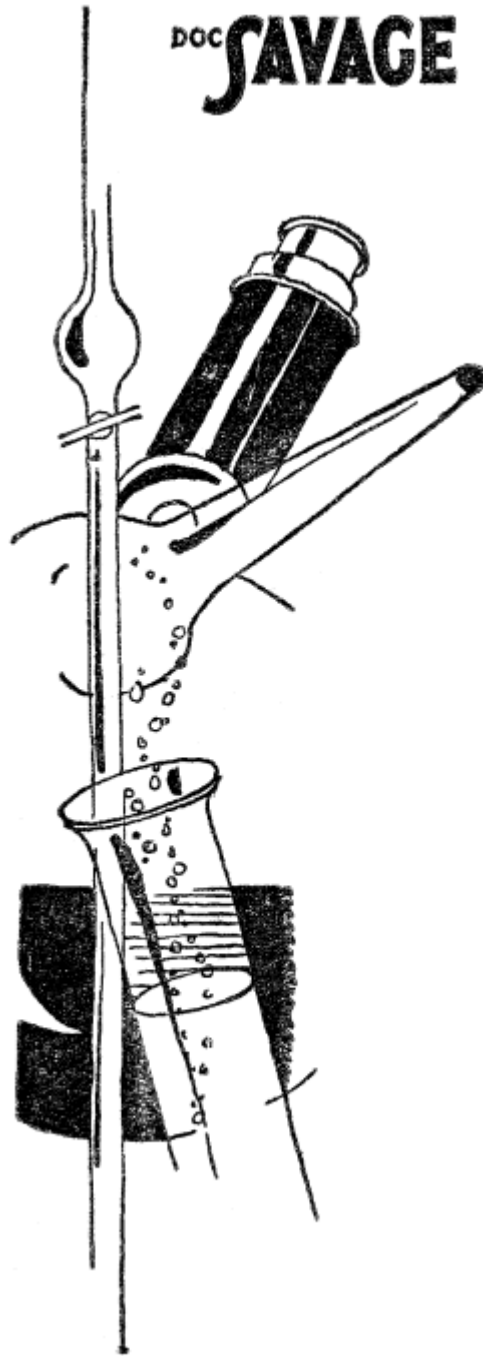


# TARGET FOR DEATH

A Doc Savage Adventure by Kenneth Robeson

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## TARGET FOR DEATH

by Kenneth Robeson

### Chapter I

THE mystery, really, began long before Lieutenant Treat checked into the hotel adjoining Waikiki Beach, which is in the suburbs of Honolulu. But Lieutenant Treat's arrival, strangely, set off the spark that started the fuse sizzling, and from then on the entire

thing became a deadly buzz-bomb of a thing that was going to be tossed in somebody's lap.

Lieutenant Treat had just signed the register of the famous beach hotel and was assigned a room.



*An innocent-looking note leads Doc Savage from a guileless Ohio town to humid, intrigue-ridden Pacific islands in his most perilous adventure.*

The clerk said, "Are you expecting any mail, Lieutenant?" The clerk was a good-looking young man and he put a smile on his clean features which made him even more handsome.

"Yes," said Lieutenant Treat. Then, in an almost tense, expectant manner, "Yes, I am! I'd appreciate it if you'd look for me—"

"Of course," offered the room clerk with more willingness than usual.

He disappeared beyond a rack alongside the marble counter. He returned in a moment. He shook his head. "Sorry, Lieutenant . . ."

"Phone calls?" asked the arrival hopefully. "There should have been one from a gentleman named Randall . . . Richard Randall?"

The young clerk again shook his head.

"There are no advance mail or messages of any kind, Lieutenant. Sorry." He beamed again. "I'll call you, however, if anything comes in. Right away."

"Thank you."

"It's a pleasure, Lieutenant."

Even before Pearl Harbor, no hotel clerk had ever gone out of his way to be so attentive. But then it wasn't every day that you met a girl as breathtaking as Lieutenant Treat.

The clerk, standing behind the counter, cupped his chin in his hand and, dreamy-eyed, watched Lieutenant Treat move toward the elevators. He liked the way she walked. He liked the trim, perfect fit of her navy nurse's uniform. She was really an extra-special kind of brunette with the most wondrous big brown eyes he had ever seen!

The Filipino bellhop attending her was loaded down with parcels that indicated the special brunette must have just completed a glorious shopping spree. That's right, the clerk recalled as he floated back to earth, she *had* mentioned it as she registered.

"Gosh, it's wonderful," Lieutenant Treat had sighed as she stood there, turning to glance out toward a wide veranda that overlooked Waikiki.

"Isn't it, though?" the young clerk had also sighed, looking at her wide brown eyes.

"Today's the day," she had added. "I'm out . . . finished . . . discharged." She had sighed again. "Gosh, it's wonderful. I'll be able to wear real clothes again!"

Women sure were funny, the clerk decided. What she was wearing right then looked perfectly swell to him. The uniform molded her small, shapely figure like a glove. The round, white hat made a halo for her beautiful, darkly shining hair. The white collar visible at her neck framed her charming, smooth throat.

The elevator doors closed.

In the wide, spacious, second-floor room, Lieutenant Treat waited until the native bellboy finished trying lights, opening the long French windows, adjusting the bamboo shutters. A fresh, pleasant breeze came in from the Pacific.

She stepped to the open doors. There was a balcony just outside, and in large flower boxes lining the rail flowers were a riot of bright colors. Beyond, through the palms, she could see Diamond Head. *It's all so wonderful*, she thought.

She could hardly wait until the bellhop had disappeared with his tip, the door closed behind him. Then, with a little cry of joy, Lieutenant Treat flung her cap on the bed, removed her uniform blouse and dived toward the array of parcels.

The dress, of course! Three years, now, since she had worn a dress. She took the dress from the box—a gay print—and rushed to the long mirror on the vanity, holding the dress up before her dainty figure.

She stared at her image in the mirror, cocked her head jauntily and said, "Hi, *Sally Treat!*" No more military stuff, no more tiring months of work. That was finally over.

Now there was just home—the Mainland—and there was just Rick!

The smile dropped from her face. She put the dress down and hurried to the telephone.

Funny about Rick Randall. Before she'd left Manila, a few days ago, to fly on here to Honolulu, she'd had the lengthy cable from Rick. All their plans were made. By the time she arrived here at the hotel, he'd said in the message, he'd be ready, to leave with her for the States. He, too, was finally getting his discharge. They'd fly back together.

Rick had known her plans exactly. He'd even said he'd be here at the hotel waiting for her, when she got in.

And now, the clerk said there was no message.

Oh, well . . . perhaps he'd been tied up at the last minute.

Nevertheless, because she was so anxious to see him again, she called the hotel information clerk. Yes, she'd just checked the desk to see if there was any mail or a message, but she was calling again to be certain. Had a Mr. Richard Randall telephoned her?

The information clerk reported no calls or messages. "We'll ring you immediately, don't worry, Lieutenant," the girl said.

Sally hung up. Well, she busied herself sorting out all the new things she'd bought. Surely Rick would be calling any minute.

There was a knock on the room door.

Sally Treat's heart jumped with expectancy. Rick! Who else? She flashed across the room and flung open the door.

The pleasant-faced room clerk in the white linen suit stood there.

"Oh," Sally said, her tone tumbling down the scale.

The tall young clerk held a long white envelope in his hand. The smile started to leave his face, but swiftly returned again as Sally caught herself and hid her disappointment at not finding Rick standing there.

"For you," the clerk said, handing her the envelope.

She saw her name and the hotel address written on the envelope, but it had not come via mail. It was not Rick's handwriting, either.

"But—" she started.

"I'm terribly sorry," the clerk offered.

"Sorry?"

"Yes, this letter was here for you all the time, but I didn't know about it. You see, it was in the safe."

Surprise widened Sally's big brown eyes.

"The safe?"

"The manager told me," said the young man. "He saw your name just now on the register, and then he got the letter and asked me to bring it up here personally."

"But . . . but why the safe?"

"It must be pretty important, I guess."

She was puzzled.

"Well—" She looked at the large envelope, then at the clerk. She gave him a sweet smile. "Well, thank you very much."

The clerk went back along the hall as if he were walking down an aisle to the tune of the *Wedding March*.

IN the privacy of her room, Sally ripped the envelope open. The handwriting on the envelope still puzzled her. Inside, she found a second, smaller sealed envelope around which was folded a large sheet of writing paper. The loose sheet contained writing in a man's firm, large hand.

The letter started, "My dearest niece . . ."

Sally quickly glanced down to the signature at the bottom of the page.

"Jonathan Treat" was the name she found there.

Her uncle! She hadn't heard from him in years. Why in the world wealthy Jonathan Treat would be writing to a poor relation like her. . . .

She started to read the letter. The last she'd heard of Uncle Jonathan, during the war years, he'd been living quietly in retirement in the old Treat mansion in the Ohio

River town so many, many miles from here. But now the words on the brief note puzzled her. It sounded as if Uncle Jonathan weren't there in Ohio at all. And just where he was seemed to be a question. As a matter of fact, the whole letter was puzzling. It read:

*I've learned you are leaving by clipper for Honolulu tonight. It is impossible for me to see you. Also, it would be too dangerous to try to deliver this letter to you here. It will arrive via special messenger in Honolulu.*

*I understand you are on your way home to the states. You're a very sensible girl, Sally, and the only person I dare trust. Deliver the enclosed envelope to Cousin James just as fast as possible. Tell no one you have heard from me. Do not mention this letter to a soul. Remember, this is important.*

*Be careful . . . be very careful, my child.*

*Affectionately,*

JONATHAN TREAT

Reading the letter for the third time, it became clear to her that Jonathan Treat must have been right there in Manila before she left. What was he doing there, and why had he been unable to see her?

The whole message made her uneasy. "Be careful," he warned. She couldn't understand it.

Sally looked at the second, smaller envelope, the name written on the front. "James Treat." She remembered the relative, a bachelor, much younger than wealthy Jonathan, a strange sort of person who had never mingled very much with the family. She hardly knew him.

She turned the envelope over, stared at it, placed it on the dresser and stood staring at it. And it was like staring at a gift marked "Do Not Open Until Xmas." You wanted to know what was inside. Curiosity took hold of her. She fingered the envelope again. No, she decided. No, that wouldn't be right. She shouldn't open the second envelope.

Sally left it there and continued changing from her smart uniform to civvies. She turned her thoughts back to Rick Randall. She could hardly wait to see him. . . .

Still he had not called when she had finished dressing. She even delayed before the vanity, fussing with her makeup, killing

time. She'd called the information desk twice again. They would begin to think she was desperate for a boy friend.

Disappointment was a nasty worm crawling around inside her. She'd felt so gay and carefree and wonderful in the new dress, new shoes, new everything. She wanted Rick to see her.

She was restless. She couldn't just wait here like this. She had to do *something*. At least, she could go downstairs and wait in the lobby. Picking up her new white purse she started for the door.

Heavens, the letter! She'd almost overlooked it. She started to lock it up in her traveling bag, then paused. "*Be careful . . . be very careful!*" Jonathan Treat had warned. Disturbed, she stood there biting her lip.

Finally she folded the small envelope carefully and slipped it down the neck of her dress. She'd carry it right with her, then she'd be sure.

Off the hallway outside her room, she found a wide flight of stairs that led to the lobby. She went down, bought an evening paper and sat there. She found that she couldn't read, however. She was too excited. Her gaze kept going from the desk to the main street entrance to the lobby.

Finally, feeling conspicuous sitting there as though she were all alone on an oasis, she got up and walked into the cocktail bar. She spent almost half an hour idling over a single cocktail. Then she went back to the desk.

The young, good-looking clerk had gone off duty. The shifts had changed, she quickly noted. Perhaps they'd overlooked informing her of any message. She gave her name and asked again.

No, she was told, there was nothing . . . nothing at all.

She felt miserable as she returned to her room. Unlocking the door, she moved inside, pushed the door slowly closed and stood staring into space. She simply couldn't understand about Rick. His plans, in the cable, had been so precise and definite . . .

Then she gasped.

Her room, literally, had been torn apart!

HER regulation service bag and new suitcase lay open on the bed. Clothes were strewn all over the place. Her new things, the packages, had all been torn open hastily.

Bureau drawers stood open. Even the closet doors.

One thing startled her as her wide-eyed gaze paused on the dresser. Jonathan Treat's personal note to herself—the note giving instructions about the sealed letter—was gone! Someone had found it!

Her first impulse was to call the manager and report the entrance to her room. She understood how easily the thieves had gained admittance. The open French doors leading to the balcony, of course. There was a stairway out there that led to the wide veranda below. She'd noted it.

She had even started to pick up the phone when she paused. The warning came to her mind. Jonathan Treat's warning: "*Tell no one you have heard from me.*"

The sealed letter, naturally! They'd been after *that*. Luckily she had carried it with her, and all they had found was the note written to herself.

She stiffened.

Whoever had been here in her room now knew that she had the letter on her person. The thought frightened her. Perhaps they'd return, or follow her. *Anything* could happen!

Rick Randall!

Rick was the one person she could tell. He'd know what to do. Sally decided to wait no longer for word from him. She picked up the phone and put through a call to Schofield Barracks. She stated that she wanted to speak to Captain Randall. It was very, very important!

She waited.

Finally, she was told: "We're trying to locate Captain Randall. Can we have him call you?"

She thought. She couldn't wait here. She was too nervous and upset. Quickly, she stated her name. "If you do find him, tell him I'm on my way out there. Have him wait!"

She hung up.

Looking uneasily at the open French windows, she went hurriedly across the room, closed the long narrow doors to the balcony and locked them. Then she went out and locked the room door securely behind her.

TRAFFIC was fairly heavy outside the hotel. Honolulu, even since the war, was packed with people from all over the world.

Taxicabs were at a premium. There wasn't a one in sight.

As she waited at the curb, searching up and down, a car pulled away from the opposite side of the street. It made a U-turn and stopped near her at the curb. The driver leaned across the front seat and spoke to her.

"Cab, lady?"

She hesitated. "Is this a taxicab?" She saw no name on the side of the cab.

The man said: "Private company, lady. There aren't enough regular taxis for Honolulu. Where'd you want to go? I charge a flat rate."

"Schofield."

"Okay. That's where I'm going." He no doubt referred to the two men already in the rear seat. They were Filipinos. "You can sit in the front. We have to double up nowadays."

He opened the door.

Well, she thought, there was nothing else to do. She might wait ages for an unoccupied cab. It was near dinner-time. They'd all be rushed right now.

She got in.

They drove down the street. She was thinking of the letter, and of Rick, and she was terribly upset. Sally still carried the evening newspaper in her hand. She had twisted it up into a round, tight roll.

Honolulu still had the funny boxlike traffic platforms at the busy intersections. A fat native policeman sat on each platform beneath a wide umbrella, directing cars.

Suddenly Sally gave a start. She'd been so busy thinking that she hadn't noticed. She looked sharply at the driver.

"This isn't the way to Schofield!" she said.

"Can't make a U-turn here, lady."

"You made one at the hotel!"

"Did I?"

A WARNING bell sounded in her mind. She swung to glance sharply at the two men in the rear seat. They looked at her woodenly.

Anger flashed in Sally Treat's eyes. "Stop this car!" she ordered.

One of the two men in the back seat spoke. "Take the turn up to the Pass," he said quietly.

Sally whipped around again. The man who had spoken was watching her closely,

leaning forward a little as he did so. He said, "You don't try anything, girlie. You don't act up and you don't get hurt."

He let his dark, quick eyes shift momentarily to his knees, and she followed the movement of his eyes, as he intended her to do.

The gun was in his right hand, held down between his knees so that it would be unnoticeable at a casual glance.

Her heart leaped.

"You see?" the man with the gun said.

She was terrified.

The car neared the next intersection. The driver started the turn left. There was one of the fat native policemen on his funny little platform . . .

The girl moved unexpectedly. She grabbed the steering wheel and gave it a mighty yank. At the same time, her left foot stomped down on the driver's right instep. She drove a sharp heel down upon the man's foot and forced it down on the brake pedal.

The car swerved, grazing the traffic stand, and stalled as the brakes locked.

A hissing sound came from the back seat. One of the men had jerked forward to grasp the girl. He seized her arm, struggling with her.

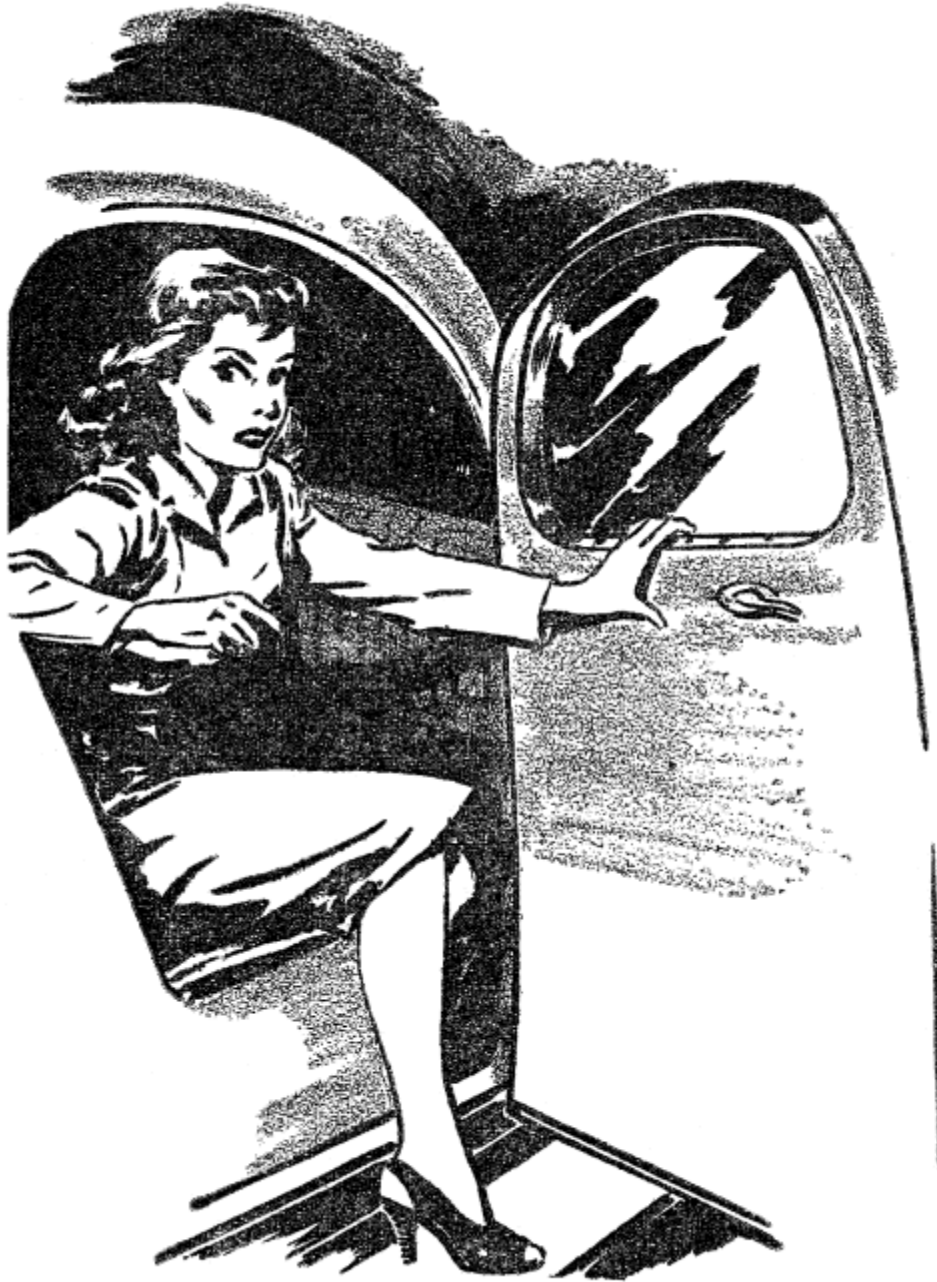
Sally Treat twisted around, using both hands to take hold of the man's arm and force it away from her. The man's arm, at the wrist, was sweaty. The touch of him sent a shudder through her body. She dug her nails into the wrist, and the man, muttering, yanked his arm back.

The fat traffic policeman was climbing down off his perch. The three men in the car looked abruptly worried. Sally opened the car door and leaped out.

The cop was moving toward the far side of the car, saying something to the driver.

Sally didn't wait. All she wanted to do was get away from there, away from those men. To stay would mean questioning and identification, and Jonathan Treat had requested that she talk to no one.

That was all she could think of as she ran across the sidewalk and darted into a department store doorway. The store was a busy shopping center open night and day to accommodate its business.



*Sally opened the car door and leaped out.*

She burrowed through the shoppers, zigzagged through various aisles until she reached an exit on a side street. From there she hurried back to the main street, a half block away from the intersection where the car was still being detained by the policeman.

Sally Treat lost herself in the sidewalk crowds. She made her way, via a devious route, back to the hotel. She didn't go to her room. She didn't want to be alone. There

were numerous people in the lobby. Surely she was safe enough there. She wanted time to think. . . .

She sat down, jumped up again, noting that there was a telephone operator around the corner from the main desk.

Sally went to the telephone desk and gave the name of the officer she had spoken to at the army base just a little while ago. She



also gave her own name. "I'd like to speak to him if you can reach him again," she said.

"Where will you be, miss?" the operator queried.

Sally indicated the lobby chair nearby.

The operator pointed out a phone booth nearby, said, "I'll call you when I reach your party. You can take the call in that booth."

SALLY went back and sat down. She found that she still carried the newspaper. Opening it, flattening out the rolled pages, she held it up before her. But all the time she was watching the entrance and the desk and the people moving back and forth.

She pretended to be reading the paper, glancing down at the front page, looking up sharply again for any sign of the three men from the sedan, watching the telephone operator.

Once, as her gaze slid across the newspaper, a name caught her eye. Her gaze went back to the item again. The item was captioned:

#### PAT SAVAGE VISITS CITY

Patricia Savage, lovely cousin of Clark Savage, Jr., famous international figure known as Doc Savage, the Man of Bronze, is now visiting in Honolulu. . . .

Pat Savage! The name recalled a scene to Sally Treat's mind. It had been a hospital in Manila. Pat Savage had visited there, and they had met for a moment. She remembered a tall girl with beautiful bronze-gold hair, and with the most amazing eyes. . .

Sally glanced at the item again. Pat Savage was staying at this same hotel. Sally Treat was remembering the stories you heard about Doc Savage, the reputation he had for righting wrongs to people and always punishing evildoers.

Maybe . . .

Maybe Pat Savage, his cousin, could help *her!*

Sally hurried back to the telephone operator's cubicle. "I'm sorry," the operator started to say, "I haven't been able to reach your party yet. They're trying to find him."

"Look," said Sally Treat anxiously, "there's something else. A Miss Patricia Savage is stopping here at the hotel. . . ."

The operator nodded. "That's right."

"I'd like to speak to her. It's very urgent."

Catching the tone in the brunette girl's voice, the operator looked at her thoughtfully. Then she said: "I'll see if Miss Savage is in."

Next, the operator was talking to someone. It was upsetting the way switchboard operators could speak into a receiver in a way that you could not hear what they were saying.

Finally she looked at Sally Treat and asked, "You're positive it's something urgent?"

Sally jerked her head.

"Tell her we met in Manila." She named the hospital. "Tell her my name again. I *must* see her!"

The operator was talking again. Then she broke the connection and said: "You may go up. It's Room 321."

Sally let out her breath with relief. "Thank you," she said.

She started to turn away when the operator asked, "What shall I do about the other call, miss?"

"Oh!"

Sally Treat thought swiftly, then asked, "Could you put the call through to Miss Savage's room if it comes in?"

"Yes."

"Please do that. Keep trying to reach them!" She hurried toward the elevators.

The man, the thin, unobtrusive-looking man sitting in the wicker armchair nearby, lowered his newspaper slightly so that he could watch Sally Treat's progress across the lobby to the elevator. He waited until the elevator doors had closed. Then he got up and strolled casually through the lobby.

His features were sharp and foxlike, dark, but he was not a Filipino.

He left the hotel. He walked fast now.

## Chapter II

DARKNESS was settling down. The typical Hawaiian night was cool and pleasant. From a room adjoining the bar there came the soft strains of a string orchestra. The music was good, and some couples were dancing. Later, the place would be crowded.

But in the bar section, near the front, there were only a few customers. The place

was done in bamboo and soft lights. It was a nice place to sit and drink or talk.

The man with the thin, foxlike features sat in a booth and waited. His drink before him was untouched. He waited for some time.

Finally the two men came in and headed straight for the booth. They glanced at the booths on either side, noting that both were deserted. They were the two who had ridden in the rear seat of the sedan.

They joined the thin, pinched-faced man.

"What the hell kept you?" he demanded quietly.

"We didn't want to take any chances. We turned that car in and rented a new one. That took a little while."

"How about that traffic cop?"

"Aw, that was easy. A fin took care of it. Those guys have their hand out."

The second arrival asked, "The babe still in the hotel?"

The thin-faced man nodded. His two partners might have been twins, they were so much alike. They were small, thin, neat, quiet-spoken men. They had the dark skin and hair of Filipinos. But they were not.

Because on one, white skin showed at the man's thin wrist. It showed as a smudge, as though something had rubbed the outer layer of darkness off.

The ratty-faced man noticed this. He said, "How'd that happen?"

"The babe—when she grabbed my arm in the car. The damn stain rubbed off."

"Why the hell weren't you more careful? She'll find that stain on her hands!"

"Maybe she won't notice it."

"The hell she won't!"

The second small man said: "Well, anyway, we found out about that Captain. That's what kept us. He took the evening Pan American plane to San Francisco."

"He got the fake message, then?"

One of the small men grinned. "I told you it'd work. He thinks the babe went right on through to 'Frisco. So he hopped the first plane he could get and followed. That eliminates him. Now we can get to the girl without any trouble. It was just too bad this afternoon, is all."

"Not half as bad as it's going to be," said the third man. Something about the way he said this disturbed the other two. They looked at him narrowly.

"Why?"

"She's with Doc Savage's cousin. Ten to one she's shooting off her mouth. Right now. She must have heard around the hotel that Doc Savage's cousin was stopping there. Dammit!"

"But what could *she* do? Doc Savage is in New York."

The ratty-faced man grimaced. "Look," he said patiently. "That associate of Savage's—the one called Renwick, the engineer—he was in Manila, wasn't he?"

"Sure, but—"

"Well, *why*?"

"What do you mean—why? You saw the writeup in the papers, didn't you? It said Renwick was there on some government project . . . an advisor on new postwar reconstruction work. The papers said that."

"Sure. But how do we *know*? You never can tell."

One of the small men made a gesture with his hand. "Oh, hell, you're just imagining things. Renwick doesn't know a thing about it."

"Maybe not. But now things are going to pop sure as hell. Maybe that Pat Savage knows where he is. Who knows, the guy could be right here in Honolulu. Okay, what does she do? She'll run right to him, that's what."

The two men across the table from the speaker thought that over. None spoke as the waiter brought over a round of drinks.

Then one of the men said: "What makes you think the Savage dame will go to him?"

"Look," said the third man. "The Treat gal is scared, see? Yet she doesn't run to the police. First, she tried to reach her boy friend, this Captain. Then she hears about the Doc Savage babe in the hotel and asks to see her. I was right there, not ten feet from her. I heard it all. She's with the Savage dame right now."

The other two men gave this some thought.

Then one asked: "Well, all we do now is get them separated. Handle them one at a time. *One* of them'll have it!"

"That's right."

"Have they left the hotel?"

The pinched-faced man shook his head. He moved his chin slightly, indicating the shutters at the wide windows directly across from the booths. Entrance to the hotel

was clearly visible. Though it was dark now, boulevard lights illuminated the entrance to the hotel.

"We got the car outside," said one of the small men. "Maybe we'd better wait there—just in case."

"You think this guy Renwick might be in Honolulu?"

"I wish I knew. Anyhow, we've got to do something about those two across the street in the hotel. Soon! We can't fool around."

"All right, what'll we do?"

"I'll think of something in a couple of minutes. We'll wait in the car. Let me think about it."

The man with the foxy face paid the check, and they went out.

PATRICIA SAVAGE, cousin of Doc Savage, was a striking girl. Tall, soft-spoken, her smooth features contained an unusual bronze hue. The eyes, too, when you saw them closely, were of an unusual flake-gold coloring. Close friends called her "Pat."

Pat Savage sat on the divan in her small suite and watched the varying degrees of emotion displayed on the pretty brunette's face. Pat listened attentively until Sally Treat told her story fully.

Then, for a full moment after the girl's words ended on a breathless note, Pat sat silently and thoughtfully. There was mystery enough in Sally's story to intrigue her. There was the promise of high adventure.

And danger. But the danger part of it didn't phase her in the least. For Pat Savage was a girl who liked excitement and action. There was much of the daring of Doc Savage in her makeup.

The only trouble was, her search for thrills was often frustrated—by Doc Savage himself! Many times Pat had tried to worm herself into some of the excitement continually followed by her famous cousin and his associates. A few times she had been successful in partially climbing on the band wagon.

Then—darn! Doc or one of the others would find out about it and she'd be sent home like an unruly child. They'd say the mission was far too dangerous. They'd tell her it was no sort of thing for a girl.

Well, now, Pat thought with a catch of interest, right here in her lap she had a chance to help out someone in trouble . . .

the same as Doc himself oftentimes became interested in someone's problem.

And it was all her own. For once, Doc didn't even *know* about it. Here was an opportunity to show her illustrious cousin that she was darned clever, too!

She turned and looked at pretty Sally Treat.

"And the letter?" prompted Pat Savage.

The brunette removed the small, folded white envelope from the front of her dress.

"It's this," she said tensely. "I don't have any idea what's in it. I can't understand why so much has happened concerning it."

"Why not read it and find out?"

The girl's eyes flew wide.

"Do you think I *should*?"

Pat said frankly, "Under any other circumstances, I guess it wouldn't be nice to read your uncle's personal letter to someone else. But this is serious. You're in danger. If there's any way of finding out what's causing that danger, I think we should do it immediately. The contents of the letter might be the answer."

Sally Treat nodded.

"I . . . I hadn't thought of that." She came to a decision. "Yes, I guess we'd better read it."

They opened the letter and read the contents together. Like the note to Sally herself, this one was also brief. It said:

*Dear Cousin James:*

*It might be some time before you hear from me again. Remember what you asked me to do? That has been taken care of exactly as you requested. I know you'll understand.*

*Yours,*

JONATHAN

Pat Savage was frankly puzzled. The letter was in a heavy handwriting, written with a pen with a very blunt point. Even the periods at the ends of sentences were heavy black dots.

"What do you make of it?" asked Sally Treat, her eyes going to Pat's. "Surely, there's nothing here that should cause so much mystery."

"Hardly," agreed Pat.

She wished she were more clever. Like her cousin, Doc Savage, for instance. Doc Savage could probably look at this letter and get something out of it. But for the life of her

Pat saw no slightest clue to the menace that threatened Sally Treat.

They replaced the note in the envelope and Sally held the thing, looking at it uncertainly. "It's written to another uncle of mine. James Treat lives in that same small Ohio town." She had already told Pat something about the various distant relatives of her family who lived there. "Nothing ever happens in that place. They've lived there for years. I can't understand this . . . this crazy business of people following me."

She stood up, walked nervously up and down the room. She stopped and stared at Pat Savage. "And I'm afraid . . . terribly afraid! I'm afraid to go out. I'm afraid to stay here in the hotel. I . . ."

The telephone rang.

Pat answered it, listened a moment, then handed the instrument to the trim brunette girl. "For you," she said, smiling. "I hope it's your friend Captain Randall."

Sally had already told her about trying to reach Rick Randall at the army base.

Her face brightening, Sally Treat grasped the telephone.

IT was the officer she had talked to earlier. The man said, "There seems to be some mixup, Lieutenant," he started.

Sally tensed.

"I don't understand?"

"I mean, your calling earlier this evening. You said you were anxious to get in touch with Captain Randall . . ."

He paused, then: "Well, miss, Captain Randall had already received your note at noon today. That's why he left."

She jumped.

"My note? Left for *where*?"

"Didn't you send a personal note out to him via messenger this morning, miss?"

She gasped. "Heavens, no! I wasn't even *here* in Honolulu until afternoon! That's when the Clipper got in."

"It's funny," said the voice on the phone.

"How—"

"You see, I've learned Captain Randall received a note apparently from you. It took me a little time locating a friend of his who just told me about it. He was under the impression you were flying right through to the States. He said you had asked him to follow as soon as possible. So he got the first Pan

American plane out for San Francisco. He's gone. . . ."

"Gone!" Her heart thudded. "You really mean—"

"I'm sorry, miss. I don't understand about that note myself. I don't know who could have sent it to him."

"Thank . . . thank you," murmured Sally Treat dully, and she hung up.

She explained it to Pat Savage.

Pat's amazing golden eyes sharpened. "There's a fox loose somewheres," she decided. "He knew you were arriving here. He also knew about Captain Randall. So he got him out of the way."

Sally was still holding the letter. She handed it suddenly to Pat Savage. "Keep it," she said. "Keep it until I decide what to do. No one knows I've met you or that I know you. If anything . . . does happen to me, then they won't find it."

"Nothing's going to happen to you," Pat tried to reassure her.

"I'm frightened!" said the brunette girl.

There was an expression in tall Pat's eyes which said she was considering something. She didn't speak for several moments. Then, on a sudden impulse, she moved toward the telephone stand.

"I really shouldn't do this," she said. "Doc Savage will be furious."

The brunette girl asked, "You mean, you're going to call Doc Savage in New York?"

Pat shook her head.

"No-o," she said slowly. "I don't have to tell Doc anything about it. . . ." She looked at the girl again, decided to tell her something. "You see, one of his associates is right here in Honolulu. Why, I don't know. His name is Renny Renwick, and he must be on some business of his own. I happen to know where Renny's staying."

She thumbed through the telephone book a minute, then gave a number. She waited.

Then she was talking.

Sally Treat could hear a great booming voice coming clearly from the receiver. She heard the man say, "Now, Pat, just forget you know I'm in Honolulu. Forget it, see? I'm on something special and I don't want it nosed around. I simply can't see you. . . ."

"Renny," Pat said in a voice that would have raised Charles Boyer's blood pressure fifty points. "Renny, please!"

Renny listened. And Pat talked. Fast and convincingly. She told Sally Treat's story, finished with, "I've got to see you, Renny. Right now. Were coming over . . ."

The voice boomed on the wire. "Wait! Someone might be watching that girl . . ."

But Pat hung up on him.

She swung to Sally, "Come on, honey," she said. "Now, we'll get some action. Wait till you meet Renny!"

### Chapter III

THEY were parked there in the car when the brunette and the tall girl with the bronze-colored hair left the hotel adjoining Waikiki Beach. They sat in shadows cast by full blooming bushes that grew between the curb and sidewalk.

The two men who looked like twins sat in the driver's seat. The third man, the one with the narrow, sharp face, sat alone in the rear.

"Wait," he warned. "I think they're going to take a cab."

Shortly an empty taxicab rolled up to the hotel entrance. They watched the two women disappear inside the car. The cab went away from there.

"All right," the man in the rear seat said. "And, dammit, watch yourself. Not too close!"

The driver turned carefully in the street. The taxicab was a block ahead now. The trailing car held at that distance as the cab moved toward the downtown area of Honolulu.

Before reaching the more congested area, however, the cab swung left and soon was going up into a hilly, residential area that overlooked the great, spreading city. Stores and hotels dropped behind. Tree-shadowed streets replaced the business section. Private homes were set well back on landscaped lawns.

The trailing car dropped still farther back, so as not to attract attention.

The cab abruptly disappeared down a side street.

"Careful!" warned the sharp-faced man in the trailing car. "That's a short dead-end street. Only a couple of houses, if I remember. Turn off your light, roll up near the corner where they turned off, and wait."

The driver followed the instructions carefully.

They rolled, without lights, past the intersection of the side street where the cab had turned off. They were just in time to see the cab stop at the curb at the end of the single short block. The night was so quiet they could hear the voice of one of the women saying something to the cab driver.

Then the taxicab was coming out of the street again. It swung into the through street and its red tail-lamp soon disappeared.

"Come on," ordered the lean, pinched-faced man.

The three men left the sedan parked in darkness and moved quietly up the tree-lined street. Their dark clothes, their quick-moving figures blended with the night shadows.

There were only three or four houses in the block. The last one was surrounded by a high thick hedge. It was beyond the hedge, along a narrow walk that led to the bungalow that the two women had disappeared.

The high hedge concealed the soundless approach of the three men. They paused close to it, listening. The night was quiet, the air motionless. They heard voices coming from the front porch of the small house. The two women were talking.

"He must be here," the one was saying. "Look, the door's unlatched. We'll go inside and wait." The voices faded.

One of the men hidden against the heavy hedge whispered, "Who're they talking about? Who lives there?"

The fox-faced man snapped, "How the hell do I know? But this is where we take them. Couldn't be a better spot. Quiet and all."

He nudged one of his two partners. "Take the back door. Wait there so nobody gets out the back way." He added softly, "Anything goes wrong, we meet at the usual place. Never mind the car if you have to get away fast. It's rented under a phony name, anyway."

One man moved off in the shadows. The hard-faced one and the other slid through the sidewalk opening in the hedge. They skirted a flower garden and approached the front porch. High bushes of flowers formed a lane right up to the porch. They padded up the four steps and reached the front door.

There was a light on in the living room, but the shades were drawn. One man's hand

rested gently on the doorknob, then started turning it soundlessly.

"All right," he whispered. "Now!"

Neither saw the towering figure that had detached itself from the high bushes alongside the front porch. But they heard the man's approach when the top step creaked under the big man's weight.

They whirled around at the sound.

A SINGLE stride brought the giant of a man across the porch. His arms swept out even as they turned to face him, both taken completely off guard.

Enormous hands seized the two smaller figures in a movement that sent the breath crashing from their lungs. Each found himself with his arms pinioned downward at his sides, as a great arm enveloped him like a steel tentacle. They were lifted off their feet.

The giant figure kicked the front door with his toe. The door rattled.

It shortly whipped open and Pat Savage stood there. Amazement was in her golden eyes. Then she moved back, making way.

"Close the door," the huge man said. He continued toward the living room, the two men struggling in his powerful long arms, but each was helpless.

The small, pretty brunette girl stood there, her face frozen at the weird sight. Pat Savage came up behind the giant of a man, and was saying:

"Sally, this is a bit informal, but I'd like you to meet Renny. Those in the Doc Savage organization have a way of doing things in an unorthodox manner. Renny, meet Sally Treat."

The big man glanced briefly at the girl, said something, then heaved the two men into a divan. He towered over them, his alert eyes watching them closely.

He said, without turning his head, "I tried to tell you, before you cut me off, not to come here. I was afraid something like this might happen. Especially when you said Sally, here, was being followed."

Sally Treat stared at the two men on the divan. Neither had moved. Their dark eyes were riveted on the big man.

She suddenly cried: "They're the ones. Two of them, anyway. They were in the car and they tried to kidnap me!"

"That explains it," said the giant of a man.

His voice boomed. It fitted the size of him. His name was Colonel John Renwick, and he was an accomplished engineer, but he looked more like a heavyweight champion. He was well over two hundred pounds, and his hands were massive. Just the appearance of him seemed to hold the two men gripped in terror.

Renny leaned down, wiped a finger across one of the men's faces. Then he looked at his finger. It was stained. The man cringed. "I thought so," said Renny. "They're not Filipinos at all!"

Sally Treat added: "I wondered about that. I found some of that on my hands after I had struggled with one of them in the car."

Pat Savage was talking. She filled in details of the brunette girl's story that she had left out when she phoned Renny.

"Find out what they want, Renny," she suggested.

Powerful Renny had already reached down to take hold of one of the men. He lifted him up off the divan as if the man were a sawdust-filled rag doll. Holding him clear of the floor with one hand, he frisked him. He found a small automatic and dropped it into his pocket.

Next he shook the man. He shook him until the fellow's teeth rattled.

He gave the other the same treatment. The second man carried no gun. Renny held onto the second man and said, "Tell me things, pally."

The fellow gritted his teeth.

Renny cuffed him. Redness showed through the stain on one cheek.

"I said, tell me things," said Renny again.

The fellow's eyes glazed. Sally Treat shuddered as she looked at the man's eyes.

RENNY dropped the man back on the sofa and picked up the other one. He whipped off the man's coat, searched the pockets, found nothing. There was a tightness around big Renny's mouth.

"All right," he said. "The ball's in your corner, pally. Let's have it. Fast!"

Renny was now holding the man with the lean, foxlike face. The man's eyes were as restless as marbles rolling around in a saucer.



*Powerful Renny shook the man until the fellow's teeth rattled.*

He said two words. The words weren't the kind used around women. Renny's face flamed. He cocked his arm, his hand held open, palm forward.

Sally, across the room, screamed.

"Renny! Behind you!" she cried in horror.

The big engineer spun, still holding the lean-faced man. In fact, the man spun

around with him, like a sack of meal suspended by a rope. His legs dangled.

The third man had arrived in the living room from the back of the house. He stood in the wide archway to the dining room. The long-bladed knife left his hand just as Renny turned around. The heavy knife was thrown in the way an expert hurls a knife at a target.

It came across the room in the instant of time it takes to blink an eye.

There was no chance for Renny to yank the knife's human target aside. In fact, he himself would have been struck had not the man been in front of him.

The heavy-bladed weapon thudded into the fellow's back with the sound a hand makes slapping against a leather cushion. A peculiar sound came from the man's lips.

Renny dropped him.

Sally Treat looked as if she were going to faint.

"Grab her!" ordered Renny, sliding past Pat Savage. He lunged after the figure that had been in the dining room doorway.

It was as though the man standing there for an instant had been a trick of the imagination. He was gone as swiftly as he had appeared. A door slammed in the rear of the house. There was the clatter of feet on a stairway even before big Renny reached the kitchen and yanked the door open.

The soft silence of the night was all that he found when he reached the topmost step. The long flight of steps led down to a rear yard that sloped away toward a wooded area at the end of this dead-end street. Also dropping downhill, at the end of the yard, was a driveway that led to garages behind the few scattered houses.

Renny listened. He heard nothing.

THEN, somewhere in the quiet night, a door slammed. The sound came from the front of the bungalow. The man he had left sitting on the divan! Renny plunged around the side of the house as he heard someone running.

But the fellow was smart. The only steps Renny heard were when the man crossed the front porch. Then the fellow must have taken to the front lawns of the houses along the short street. Grass silenced his steps. Trees, shrubs and hedges hid his fleeing figure.

Renny wondered if the man had gone up or down the hill. The logical route would be toward the city. So Renny started down the hill at a run, eyes alert, the small automatic in his hand now.

He didn't think the knife thrower would return. Pat and Sally Treat were momentarily safe. And Pat Savage was a girl who knew how to handle herself.

Halfway to the corner, Renny heard the car engine start up. Gears meshed. The dark bulk of the car moved across the intersection.

As it did so, he saw the man leap toward it. A car door opened and slammed quickly. Then the machine gathered speed and went away from there with a roar.

Renny drew up. They'd had the machine parked down there, of course. The two of them had escaped. Renny returned to the house before any neighbors could become curious and start asking questions.

There had not been any noise. The entire thing had taken place in only one or two moments, and no one else was outside on the quiet street.

Pat was bent down over the figure on the floor when Renny came back into the living room. Sally Treat stood a half dozen feet away, her face very pale, but nevertheless she was in control of herself.

Pat glanced up, said, "The other one got away. I tried to hit him on the head with a book end, but he ducked the moment you went out the back door." The heavy metal object lay on the floor beside her. Pat was calmly and efficiently searching the man's clothing.

"Dead?" asked Renny.

"As dead as he'll ever be!"

What a girl, thought the big engineer.

Pat stood up, saying, "There's not a letter, or card, or a single bit of identification on him. Even the labels have been removed from his clothing!"

Renny said: "These boys have been around."

"What do you mean?" Pat Savage's golden eyes held on Renny's somewhat gloomy-looking features.

"I think," said Renny thoughtfully, "this is where you two ladies came in. And it's high time you were getting out. Come on!"

Pat said, "Now, wait—"

Renny said, "You're getting out of here. The two of you! The faster the better. You let me handle this." He stepped to the hall door, locked it, motioned them toward the kitchen. Renny made certain that all the shades were drawn down tightly, turned out lights as they went through the small bungalow. At the kitchen door he fitted his key into the outside of the lock.

"But . . . but what about that man, in there?" Sally Treat asked tensely.



Renny told her, "I've got to get the police, of course. It so happens I know a few cops here. Maybe I can talk them into keeping it quiet for awhile. I hope so." He looked at Pat Savage and frowned a little. "It also means I'll have to give up this place here. It was a nice setup. Everyone thought I was a salesman for an automobile company in the States."

"What *are* you doing here in Honolulu, Renny?" prodded Pat Savage.

"Never mind. Just forget you even saw me. It's too bad you came here." He flicked off the kitchen light and urged them toward the door. "We'll pick up your luggage and things."

"Now, wait a minute—" Pat started to complain.

He hurried them toward the garage at the rear of the yard, where his car had been put away for the night.

## Chapter IV

THE trans-Pacific telephone call finally went through. Renny sat in the small hotel room in downtown Honolulu and heard Doc Savage's voice in New York. He felt some measure of relief. Probably only a few drams of it, for the mystery was still as puzzling as ever, but now, at least, he had Doc there in the States to handle a part of it.

Renny had already made arrangements with the telephone office to allow him an uninterrupted circuit for as long as he chose.

He gave Doc a concise, clear résumé of everything that had taken place during a night filled with events.

He concluded with: "So I took the girls back to the hotel. I made them both stay the night in Pat's room. I figured it would be safer that way. I spent the night sitting right there in the hotel lobby, just in case. Also I made arrangements to get them out of here on the first plane to the States this morning. I figured that was the best thing."

"Yes," came Doc's faraway voice. "Keep them out of it. You realized that, of course, when you heard Jonathan Treat's name first mentioned?"

"Naturally!" said Renny quickly.

"You didn't tell Pat?"

"Not a word."

"Good! That will leave you a free hand. What about the man who was stabbed?"

Renny explained, "The police will keep it quiet. We didn't learn a thing from him. He was careful not to carry any identification. . . . But, Doc, there's something I haven't told you . . ."

"Yes?"

"It happened during the night. She couldn't have come down through the lobby, otherwise I would have seen her. There's a balcony outside the second-floor rooms, and she must have slipped down that way and got away."

"What are you talking about?"

"The girl . . . Sally Treat. She disappeared some time during the night, while Pat was asleep!"

"I thought you said . . ."

"I'd made arrangements to put them on a plane this morning? I did! So I made Pat leave anyway. . . . Sure, she kicked up a fuss. She wanted to stay. But Pat's safely out of here now, and on the way to the States. Listen. . . ." He took out a notebook and consulted it. "She'll make direct connections in San Francisco for an eastbound coast-to-coast flight. That flight will arrive in Denver at 4 o'clock tomorrow morning. I figured that would give you time to intercept her. Denver would be a good place. Most of the passengers will be asleep at that hour. Pat has the letter with her."

"You're positive?"

"Yes."

"No trace of Sally Treat?"

"I'm working on that," said Renny.

"What have you got?"

"A Clipper left here during the night for Manila. I think the girl's on that. I think she's going back there."

"You're sure?"

"I'm not sure of *anything*," said Renny. "But I've checked the passenger lists. Several women were aboard. I've investigated all of them . . . hotels where they had been staying, names, stuff like that. One of them gave a fake address here. I think that's Sally travelling under an assumed name. I've got to return to Manila myself. Maybe I'll find her."

"Yes," agreed Doc. "It's important that you get back on the assignment at once. . . . We'll take care of Pat at this end." Then, there was an urgency in Doc Savage's voice. "What was in the letter?"

"That's it," said Renny, "not a thing, Doc . . . not a blasted clue to it. Pat showed it to me. She insists she's going to deliver it. That's why you must meet her there at Denver."

"Don't worry," reassured Doc. Then: "All right, we'll contact you in Manila. Same place. Within the next forty-eight hours."

"Roger," said big Renny. He hung up.

THE airliner was a 4-engine sky giant making stops only at Denver and Chicago, enroute from the Pacific Coast to New York. It had left San Francisco at five the preceding afternoon. It was a combination sleeper and daytime plane, for some of the transcontinental passengers preferred to "sit up and save," as the airline advertised it in their folders.

The quiet, mousy, inoffensive little man was one of the "sit-ups." He sat in a reclining seat across from the berths, which were made up and curtained for the night. Behind them, other passengers slept the miles away.

He had been reading most of the time. He hadn't pestered the stewardesses—there were two on the sleeper plane—as most of the passengers do when they become restless during a long flight. Right now he munched an apple, which he had taken from a brief case that he held on his lap.

He wore thick-lensed glasses, a heavy gold chain containing an elk's tooth, and he had a habit of continually rubbing the palm of his hand across his dark hair to smooth it down. The hair was already carefully combed, and there was no need for the smoothing process, but he continued to do it from time to time.

A few other passengers sat up. Most of them dozed. Lights were dimmed. An indirect, small tubular light shone down on the quiet, small man's magazine.

One of the stewardesses came back through the long cabin. She smiled as she approached the man who was still reading. She knelt down and spoke to him quietly.

"We'll be landing in Denver in a few minutes. Please fasten your safety belt."

As she spoke, his eyes, blinking behind the heavy glasses, went past her shoulder to the curtained berth directly across the aisle. He watched the curtains. They were motionless. The occupant was still sleeping, he was positive. He had checked carefully through the night.

He asked: "Will I have time for a cup of coffee?"

"Oh, yes," said the girl in the trim gray uniform and jaunty cap. "But if you'd like, I can get you some coffee?"

"I also want to make a telephone call," said the mousy man. "Would that be all right? Would I have time?"

"Plenty of time," assured the girl. "Don't worry. The loudspeaker will announce when we are ready to leave."

"It'll only take me a few minutes," said the man.

The girl moved off toward the rear of the plane.

Soon they were coming down for the landing at the big field. The plane taxied up near the main building and the engines stopped. A movable stairway bumped the side of the cabin and one of the stewardesses unlatched the door at the rear.

One or two passengers got off to stretch their legs. The man continued to watch the curtained berth for another moment, listening attentively in the soft quiet of the carpeted cabin.

No sound. No movement. The passengers still slept.

He got up and left the plane, hurrying into the waiting room of the airport station. He saw the stewardesses enter an office to make their report. In less than ten minutes he had completed the telephone call. He didn't stop for coffee. He hurried back to his seat.

The curtains of the berth were still closed tightly when he boarded the plane again. He sat down with relief and picked up his magazine. He smoothed his hair.

AT the last moment before take-off, there was some commotion.

Two new passengers came aboard. They seemed to be having an argument. They paused in the doorway, and the one man was saying in a belligerent manner, "Listen, shyster, don't give me that high-pressure courtroom kind of talk. I'm telling you he said to wait until almost take-off time, then come aboard. But he isn't here, and I don't think we ought to leave without him!"

The tall, well-dressed man snapped, "Never mind about him. He has his plans, and he'll handle things in the usual efficient way. You ought to know by this time that—"

"I know that he isn't here, is all! Where is he?" The speaker was short, very wide in the shoulders, and built like a man made for lifting five-hundred-pound weights. His face was so homely that it was interesting. His clothes were loud enough to have been made from a patchwork quilt.

His partner, on the other hand, was sartorial perfection itself. Dark, lean, square-shouldered, he was in a distinct contrast to his friend.

The dapper, tall man said, "He didn't exactly say he'd be here. He merely told *us* to be here. Can't you get that through your thick skull?"

"I think I'll flatten your ears!" growled the homely squat man.

"You might," suggested his partner acidly, "try the same treatment on those flippers attached to the side of your own head. In fact—"

He stopped saying that, stepped out of the doorway, pulling the stocky man to one side with him. He was suddenly all politeness and courtesy. "I beg your pardon, miss—"

The homely man turned. It was one of the pretty stewardesses. Immediately the shorter man's features beamed. "Hello," he said brightly.

The stewardess smiled. She consulted a passenger list attached to a clip-board in her hand.

"Mr. Brooks and Mr. Mayfair?" she asked.

The tall, dapper man said, "That's correct, miss," in his polite manner. His name, really, was Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks. A graduate of Harvard Law School, he had made a name for himself as a famous attorney. In the Doc Savage organization, however—of which he was a member—he was usually called simply Ham.

The other one, the homely one, was Monk—to his Doc Savage associates—and in the world of industrial chemistry known as Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Blodgett Mayfair. He had quite a reputation as a chemist.

The stewardess was motioning to two seats just ahead of the doorway. "Those are your seats, gentlemen," she told them pleasantly. "May I take your hats?"

She stepped across the cabin aisle to hang the hats in a small cloakroom opposite the entranceway. Instantly homely Monk swung toward his partner.

"You see? She didn't have his name on the list! I'll bet sure as blazes you've fouled up things. Maybe we oughta wait in the terminal—"

"Will you please," said Ham sharply, "close that rattle-trap? You make the noise an empty barrel makes rolling downhill. Sometimes—"

For the second time, he paused, moved aside as someone came aboard the big airliner. It was a pilot, wearing a first officer's smart uniform. He had to duck his head as he entered the doorway. The visor of his cap shielded his eyes.

Ham turned, started to open his mouth, closed it again and glanced at Monk, who was looking the other way. It appeared as though Ham were going to make some comment about the pilot's size, but he said nothing.

The pilot went directly up the cabin aisle, disappeared through the small doorway to the cockpit. Shortly another pilot came back, carrying his regulation pilot's pouch, and got off the plane.

The portable ramp was moved away from the plane and the door slammed. The motors started.

The stewardess said, "Gentlemen, would you mind taking your seats and fastening your belts. We're taking off in a moment."

HAM motioned homely Monk toward their double seat. He delayed an instant, said something to the girl which Monk could not hear. But from his seat, Monk turned, craning his neck, to look at Ham and the girl. He saw the stewardess nod toward a curtained berth right across from where Monk had seated himself.

Then Ham had come forward and sat down. They fastened their belts. A moment later the huge plane was airborne.

Monk waited until the props had been adjusted after the first climb off the runway. The terrific engine roar subsided and they settled down to quiet flight.

"What'd she say?" Monk then asked.

"Not so loud, you chump," Ham said softly.

"Well?"

Ham nodded in the direction of the curtained berth across from them.

"Pat?" asked Monk.

"Sleeping like a baby," Ham told him.

Monk grinned.

He said: "I just want to see her face when she wakes up in the morning and finds us!"

"I think," advised Ham, "we'd better stop talking about it."

They settled down.

Right in front of them, in the next double seat being used by only one passenger, the little unobtrusive man continued to keep his face buried in his magazine. Despite the thick-lensed glasses, he was compelled to hold the magazine close in order to read.

Or so it appeared.

Instead of reading, he was listening intently to every word said by the two passengers behind him. When the two men finally settled down for the flight, he relaxed a little.

He, too, was waiting for morning.

The flight was due in Chicago around eight o'clock. Most of the passengers were out of their berths and had breakfasted by seven-thirty.

But Ham and Monk still kept their vigil. As did the quiet man directly in front of them.

Monk said, "I think we'd better wake her up."

"Why bother?" said Ham. "Let her sleep. After all, she's ticketed through to New York."

"But it's funny she isn't up." Monk looked worried. "You don't think maybe something's wrong with her?"

"Of course not."

Then, after saying that, Ham looked startled. He abruptly stood up and walked back to speak to one of the stewardesses. Both were busy in the small galley. The berth across the way from Ham and Monk was the only one with the curtain still drawn.

One of the stewardesses listened to Ham's suggestion.

"Yes," she agreed, "it's time she was up. Besides, we make up the berth into seats for more passengers at Chicago. It won't give me much time."

She left the galley and went to the curtained berth. She spoke quietly through the curtain, waited a moment.

One of the pilots had entered the cabin. He lounged against the door leading to the pilots' compartment. He was watching.

The stewardess opened the curtain and put her head inside the berth. She swiftly withdrew her head. Her face was filled with amazement.

"There's no one in there!" she cried. "It's empty!"

The small quiet man with the heavy glasses came half out of his seat. Then he caught himself and quickly settled back again.

His hand patted nervously at his smooth dark hair. His eyes darted about the cabin and came to rest on the pilot, suddenly tense beside the door.

Monk leaped up and started bellowing. He glared at his dapper partner, Ham.

"Daggonit!" he roared. "It's all your fault."

Everyone was looking at them.

The pilot stepped hurriedly through the door into the control room.

## Chapter V

SOME passengers had heard Monk's excited voice. A murmur of conversation rippled through the long cabin.

Ham kicked his burly partner in the shins and said quietly, "Shut up, you fool. Perhaps Pat is in the ladies' lounge. I've got one of the stewardesses looking."

"Pat never left that berth all night," said Monk. "I kept watch."

The stewardess came up to them and said quietly, "She is not aboard the plane."

"You see?" demanded Monk.

Ham's eyes were thoughtful. He asked the girl, "Did everyone get off for a while at the Denver stop?"

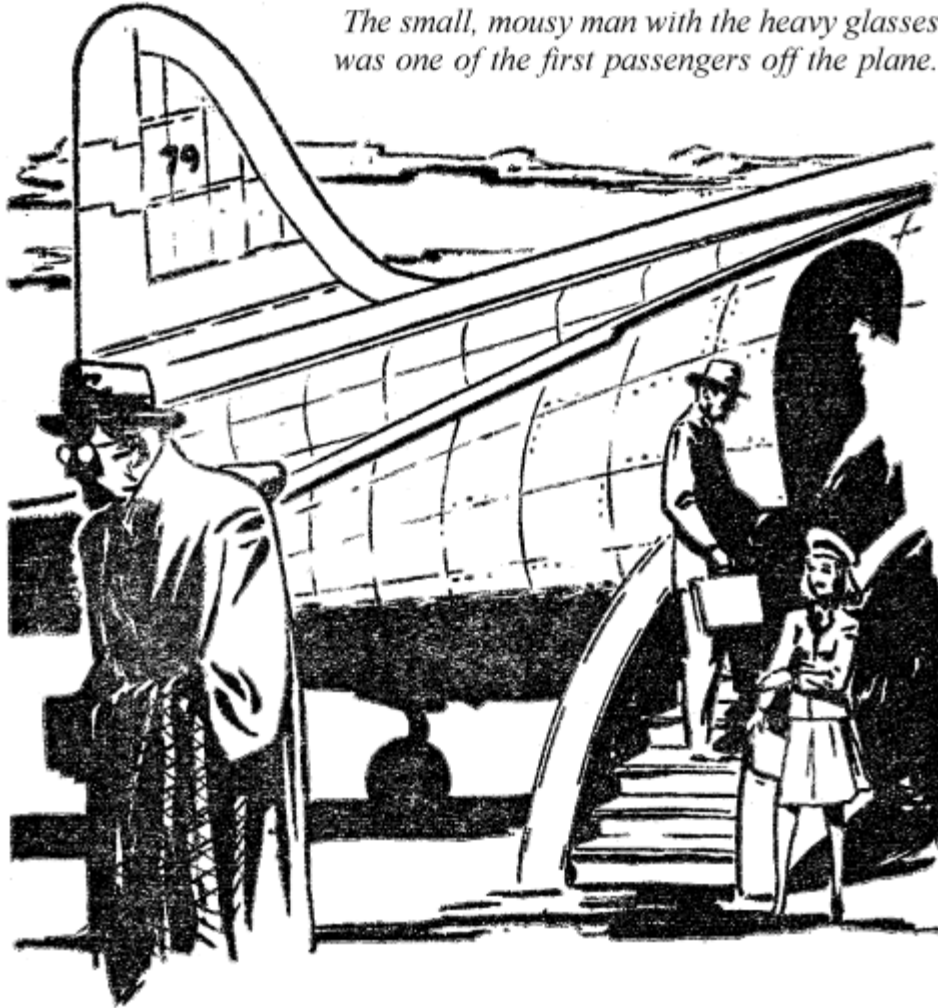
She shook her head. "Only the few who were awake. At least, that's what I thought. Miss Thompson and I had to go into the station for a few moments, however, to make our reports. She *could* have left while we were in there."

"She must have," said Ham.

Already the huge plane was circling the Municipal Airport at Chicago. Ham recognized the big gas tank south of the field. They crossed busy Cicero Avenue and came around to line up with the north-south runway. It was necessary for them to return momentarily to their seats and fasten their safety belts.

Monk squirmed. He could hardly wait until they had landed and taxied up to the main building. Then he was out of his seat again.

*The small, mousy man with the heavy glasses was one of the first passengers off the plane.*



"What are we gonna do?" he demanded.

"Wait a minute," said Ham.

Many of the passengers were getting off, some of them having reached their destination. The small, mousy man with the heavy glasses was one of the first. At the doorway, he said to the stewardess:

"I . . . ah . . . I am not continuing through to New York." He was somewhat pale. "I feel ill. Could I get a refund on the unused part of my ticket?"

"Certainly," said the stewardess. "See them at the ticket counter in the waiting room. I'm sorry you don't feel well. We have a first-aid room here at the field . . ."

"I'll . . . I'll be all right," said the man nervously, and he hurried off the plane.

Ham, standing nearby, had heard his remark. He glanced at the man as he got off.

THE plane was momentarily deserted while being refueled for the Chicago-New York hop. Only the stewardesses, Ham and Monk were aboard.

Monk was saying, "Blast it, I'm going to talk to the pilots!"

He went forward and banged on the cockpit doorway.

A tall, wide-set, tow-headed young man unlatched the door. He had friendly blue eyes, but at the moment they were sober and determined. He carried a chart of some kind in his hand.

Apparently he was an extra pilot, for there were three pilots in the cabin.

He said, "My name's Randall. I'm not the regular captain or first officer of this flight. I'm merely making a check flight."

"Listen," Monk said, "we want to know about a girl disappearing off this plane during the night. It's damned funny . . ."

The young man named Randall nodded toward one of the pilots, whose back was toward them. The pilot wore earphones and seemed to be listening to some message coming to him through the headset.

"He's the one you want to see," said Randall.

"The guy I want to see," rumbled Monk, "is the president of this blasted airline. I want to know why—"

He stopped.

"Say!" he exclaimed.

The first officer had removed the earphones and stood up. He faced them.

It was Doc Savage.

DOC said: "Pat got off at Denver. Apparently she ducked into the terminal while the stewardesses were away from the plane turning in their report. Randall here was outside when the stewardess discovered she was gone. He told me at once. I've just checked with Denver and I described Pat to them. She was seen by a porter at the field during the night."

"Where'd she go?" asked Monk.

"She made reservations for a later flight into New York. I wouldn't worry about her. I think she's perfectly all right."

"I'm positive she is," added the young pilot who had introduced himself as Randall.

Randall had appeared big standing in the cockpit doorway. Now, near Doc Savage, his size was somewhat dwarfed by the bronze man's presence.

For Doc Savage was almost a physical giant. This was seldom apparent when Doc stood alone, because his physique was one of perfect symmetry. Since early childhood he had been trained along specific physical and mental lines. He was a scientist. He was a doctor and surgeon. He was known as a mental marvel.

But Doc Savage himself would be the last to admit these qualities, though he had proved them many times over in feats of accomplishment.

Like Pat Savage, he had an unusual bronze hue to his features. His hair was of the same coloring. The eyes were clear, bright, stirring pools of flake-gold, it seemed.

A slight frown touched Ham's brow.

"Randall?" he mused. "Randall . . . haven't I heard that name somewhere?"

Doc Savage said, "Richard Randall . . . just returned from Honolulu."

"Ah," said Ham.

Monk's small eyes brightened.

Doc told them: "I mentioned Randall's name after Renny's phone call from Honolulu. I made a quick check on Randall, found out he was highly respected and located him through the Army. He was in San Francisco. I arranged for him to be aboard this plane out of Frisco, assuming the guise of a pilot making a check flight. He's working with us on this case."

"But . . ." Monk started, anxious to say something.

"I know what you're wondering," Doc interrupted, looking at the burly chemist. "I had to work fast to get him on the same plane with Pat. I figured Rick could watch over her until we arrived at Denver."

"But how did you get on?" Monk wanted to know.

Doc smiled a little. "Right under your nose, so to speak. I was the relief first officer who got on at Denver. That, too, was arranged in advance with the airline people."

Ham said, "Doc's one of the officials of this airline, you dummy. Or had you forgotten?" He glared at his homely partner.

"I'm gonna bop this guy yet!" mumbled Monk.

Rick Randall explained, "Miss Savage was worried. I introduced myself right after she boarded the plane in San Francisco. She had an idea she was being trailed by someone right on the plane. She didn't know who it was, but once she told me her berth had been searched just before she retired. She had stepped into the ladies' lounge for a few moments and she discovered it when she returned to her berth."

Suddenly Ham gave an exclamation.

"The little guy with the heavy eye-glasses!" he said.

Everyone looked at the smartly dressed lawyer.

Ham told them, "He sat in front of us. He was already aboard when we came on at Denver. He was ticketed through to New York, but I heard him tell the stewardess just a moment ago that he was getting off here. Said he felt ill." Ham's eyes narrowed. "And that was right after we discover Pat wasn't aboard. Looks queer, doesn't it?"

Doc showed interest.

"I think," he suggested, "we might take a quick look around the waiting room. Perhaps he's still there. I'd like talk to that fellow."

They hurried off the plane.

THE old Municipal Airport building was jampacked with people. Planes by the dozens were moving in and out, and inside the waiting room there was confusion as passengers tried to buy tickets or pick up "go-sho" seats on crowded planes.

The pilot, Randall, left them a moment to change from flight gear to street clothes. "I'll meet you here, by the ramp," he said to Doc.

"Arrange for a relief pilot for me from here to New York," Doc told him.

Doc and his two assistants checked the waiting room, wash rooms, restaurant and telephone booths. They went outside, where dozens of passengers were waiting to board airlines, limousines or taxicabs.

Ham could not find the small, prim little man who wore heavy glasses.

"The more I think of it," Ham said to Doc, "the more convinced I am that guy was a phony. I remember noticing he wasn't reading the magazine at all. He didn't turn any pages. And neither was he asleep. Funny he scrambled off this plane so fast when he found Pat missing!"

Suddenly Monk jumped.

"The letter!" he said. "Maybe that guy found the letter in Pat's berth!"

"The letter," Doc said, "is safe. Rick Randall has it. Pat turned it over to him as soon as she learned that he is Sally Treat's fiancé. He is going back to Honolulu to try to find Sally as soon as he can get a flight out."

Doc's eyes flickered. Then he went on thoughtfully, "I think we'll now take over. We'll handle delivery of the letter."

Ham looked at the bronze man. "You mean—Renny—the request he made?"

"That's what I mean," said Doc.

Near them, the short, hatless man glanced toward them once or twice. He was within hearing distance. His glance could have indicated that he was looking for a plane arrival.

He was quite bald, his smooth, round head shining in the morning sunlight as though it had been polished with wax. He had bright, alert, dark eyes.

Doc was saying, "First, though, we'll take one more look around for this man Ham described. Then meet at the airline personnel office near the ramp. We'll get the letter from Randall."

The three of them separated again, to make certain their quarry was not around.

The short, very bald man immediately went inside the building. He headed straight for the airline personnel office. He carried a briefcase.

Fifteen minutes later, Doc and his two associates converged at the airlines office. Each reported no trace of the mild little fellow with heavy spectacles.

Doc said, "Well, he seems to have disappeared. We'd better pick up Randall and get the letter. I've had a difficult time of it keeping him from rushing straight to Honolulu to find his fiancée. I managed to convince him Renny is out there doing his best to trace the girl, and that we needed Randall for the flight from San Francisco to Denver. But as soon as he has turned over the letter to me he'll make a dash for the Pacific."

In the office they were told that they would probably find Rick Randall in an adjoining building where the pilots changed uniforms. Locker rooms were located there.

They followed the fenced-off walk to the nearby building. The room must be on the second floor.

"Randall? . . . he must be that new fellow. Why he left here just a few moments ago with someone."

"Where did they go?" Instantly Doc Savage was on the alert.

"I really don't know," said the man who was in charge of the building. "A baldheaded man—he wasn't wearing a hat, that's why I noticed—came up here and asked for Randall, and they went some place. I don't think Randall knew him, but they left in a hurry, anyway."

Doc Savage was already moving toward the stairs.

When Ham and Monk caught up with him, Doc said grimly, "This thing is even more serious than I thought. It shows that you can't be careless for even a single instant. A baldheaded man was standing near us just a moment ago when I mentioned that Randall had the letter! He probably heard every word that was said."

"I wonder—" Ham started to say.

But Doc and Monk had hurried down the stairs.

## Chapter VI

IN the taxicab that followed busy Archer Avenue toward downtown Chicago, the small, friendly, baldheaded man removed assorted cards from his billfold. He handed them to Rick Randall, one at a time.

"This is my lodge card," he said pleasantly. "Dues paid until nineteen forty-seven. And this"—he handed over another—"is my local Lions Club card. Here's one that allows me to send Western Union telegrams collect and another showing my credit is good at Larson's Department Store, which is the largest store in our town."

He looked at the big pilot and said, "Now, young man, are you satisfied who I am?"

"How about your driver's license?"

"I don't drive a car, my friend." He sighed, but the pleasant, friendly expression remained on his face. "My goodness, you take a lot of convincing, don't you?"

"I'm not taking any chances," said the pilot. "I still haven't decided whether you're James Treat or not."

"Well, son, I don't blame you. But I can assure you I'm Jonathan Treat's cousin. But you do just like we decided. Come down to Richmond, Ohio, with me and be convinced. You meet all my relatives and they'll tell you. Then you can give me the letter."

"And you think I should not try to contact Sally?"

This was the subject with which the bald man had introduced himself at the airport. He had approached Rick asking if he were Sally's fiancé.

"Not right at the present moment," the bald man answered gravely. "To do so would only place her in greater danger. We must handle this matter carefully. Human lives are at stake."

"I don't feel right about walking out on my friends this way. I wouldn't have done it if you hadn't insisted that their investigations are placing Sally in an even more dangerous position. What is this business all about?" Randall asked.

"The letter," said the man, "probably explains it. If you will hand it over to—"

"At the proper time. When I'm absolutely convinced you are Jonathan Treat's cousin."

The baldheaded man shrugged again.

"At least," he said, "Sally's getting a level-headed husband."

When they reached downtown Canal Street, the baldheaded man told the driver to swing up to Madison. He named a hotel there. Turning to Randall, he said, "I'll pick up my bags and we can catch a train. It'll take us about six hours. We have no air service there."

The cab finally turned into Madison Street near the North Western Station. It was a neighborhood of flop houses, saloons and cheap restaurants.

Randall frowned as they entered the lobby of the hotel.

His acquaintance noticed the expression and said pleasantly, "We Treats are a thrifty lot, my friend. I only needed a room here temporarily."

The tile flooring in the small, narrow lobby was chipped and dirty. A man in shirt sleeves sat behind a small cubicle opening that served as the room desk, reading a morning newspaper and picking his teeth with a toothpick.

In a sagging lobby armchair a man snored loudly. That was about the extent of the activity at the moment.

The two men climbed three flights of wooden stairs. There was no elevator. The room was halfway back along a narrow, dark hall.

The small man fitted a key into the lock. "It'll only take me a moment to get my stuff together," he was saying. He spoke rather loud now, or at least it seemed that way in the bare, long hallway.

They entered the room. He flung a cheap valise on the bed, removed some clothing from a bureau drawer and stuffed it into the bag.

Randall stood just inside the doorway, watching him. He guessed, finally, the man was all right. The fellow had approached him there at the airport, identified himself, knew enough about Sally and her relatives to prove that he must be one of the family. But there had been one point he had insisted upon.

He wanted no others outside of Randall mixed up in it. "For Sally's sake," he had said.



But how had he found Randall so easily and known him to be Sally's fiancée?

The baldheaded man was busy strapping the bag. He had been talking in that too-loud voice. He stopped what he was doing and looked up at the big flier.

"Now, about that letter—"

"I told you," repeated Randall, "you'll get it at the proper time."

From the doorway directly behind him, the man's voice said, "Right now's the proper time, chum!"

A HALF block away from the rundown hotel, stocky Monk Mayfair climbed out of the cab and paid off the driver. "This'll do," he said, and started up the street.

There had been no time to locate Doc and Ham at the airport, when he'd suddenly spotted Randall getting into a cab with the baldheaded stranger. So Monk had quickly followed.

Now the trail had led here. He was beginning to wonder about Randall. Maybe Doc shouldn't have put so much faith in that guy. Doc should have got the letter right away.

As Monk entered the small lobby, the man in shirt sleeves looked up. He stared at the chemist with a sort of absent expression as Monk came toward the desk.

"A couple of fellows just came in here," said Monk. "What room did they go to?"

The man leaned back and continued to stare at Monk. His eyes did not change expression.

"Nobody come in here," he said. He continued to pick his teeth.

"It was a tall, big fellow," said Monk. "And a short man who—"

He stopped. The clerk was sitting there slowly shaking his head, not saying a word, calmly using the toothpick.

Monk got it, then. His lips clamped together and his fists knotted. Ordinarily, the chemist spoke in a small squeaky voice that was, strangely, not in keeping with his burly appearance. But when he was mad he belled like a foghorn.

He moved close to the desk and shook the rafters with his voice.

"Don't irritate me, pal! I said, where are the two fellows who just came in here?"

"And I said," snapped the shirt-sleeved man, "nobody come in here. Scram, see?"

The one man seated in the lobby had climbed to his feet and was walking slowly toward the desk. He was big, wide, and there were scars on his heavy features.

He said to Monk, "You heard what the man said. Get out!"

Monk hit him.

The chemist had unusually long arms for his size, he had speed, and he loved nothing better than a good fight. And when he was mad he was an explosive atomic bomb.

The bomb that was Monk's right fist landed on the bruiser's jaw and the big man landed on his back. He rocked like an oversized beer keg and managed to get to his feet again. He put a nasty look on his ugly face, pulled his head down into his thick shoulders and rushed the chemist.

Monk straightened him with a fast up-percut, jabbed him in the stomach so that he doubled forward again, smashed him in the jaw for good measure. When the fellow staggered around dizzily, Monk booted him in the rear with his foot and drove him down on a moth-eaten divan.

The man fell off the old couch, crawled slowly along the dirty tile floor on his hands and knees. He moved two or three feet, then decided he was tired of doing that and flattened out on the floor. He didn't move again after that.

The homely chemist spun back to the desk. The man in shirt sleeves had remained seated there, confident that this troublesome guy could be given the brushoff. Now things had occurred with such rapidity that he was slightly amazed.

He decided it was time to reach for the object he kept underneath the counter. He started to put his hand under there to grab the heavy blackjack.

But Monk's long, powerful arm went across the counter top faster than the clerk's hand could move. His hand grasped the man's shirt front and he yanked the fellow toward him. He cocked his other fist.

"You want some of the same treatment, pal?" growled Monk.

The man smiled stiffly.

"We don't want no trouble here, see?"

"All right," said Monk. "Which floor? Which room number? I'm in a hurry."

He straightened out his arm and the man went back hard against his chair as if kicked by a mule.

"Third floor," he said. "Room three nineteen. Now look, mister, we run a nice respectable place here . . ."

Monk disappeared up the stairway.

HE was moving up the flight of steps to the third floor when he heard a crash somewhere above him. A man swore. There followed a variety of thumping sounds as if someone were knocking down walls.

He took the last flight two steps at a time.

And he was in time to see a figure tumble out into the gloomy hallway. Monk squinted. Then he jumped.

The baldheaded man Doc had mentioned . . . the one Monk had trailed here with young Randall.

Monk bellowed, "Hey!" He leaped forward.

The man had just picked himself up. He shouted something to someone within the room, pointed—then streaked the opposite way along the narrow hall. A second figure appeared, from inside the room and followed, before Monk had reached the room doorway.

Randall, the tall towheaded pilot, stood inside the room rubbing his jaw. Monk paused long enough to ask, "You all right, kid?"

Randall stared. Apparently he was slightly dazed. Then his eyes recognized the chemist and he said, "I . . . I'm all right." He shook his head, as though it were difficult for him to think clearly.

Monk pounded down the hall. He saw a figure just disappearing across a window-sill. Above the window a red bulb glowed faintly.

By the time Monk himself was sliding across the windowsill, the two men were down the fire escape to the second landing. Monk bawled a threat at them and started clattering down the iron steps.

Already the two men were on the lowermost section of the fire escape, a section that swung down to the ground beneath their weight. They stepped to the ground just as Monk reached that balanced, movable section of the ladder.

Both men paused, heaved upward on the ladder, and it swung upward with Monk suspended halfway down its length. He almost lost his balance and fell.

By the time he was moving again, forcing the ladder downward with his weight, the two men had scrambled into a car parked in the alleyway behind the hotel. The machine went out of the alley with a roar.

Monk shook his head sadly as he reached the ground. He thought maybe he could have learned something for Doc if he had caught those two and worked them over a bit.

The balanced iron ladder creaked behind him. It had started to swing upward into position. Monk spun, grabbed it with his hand, pulled it down and started up the ladder again. He'd better see about Randall. . . .

A window in a tenement flat behind the hotel, across the littered alley, raised and a woman with soap suds on her bare, lumpy arms stuck her head out the window. She glared at Monk as he paused, halfway up the ladder again.

"Seems like the police oughta close that rat trap!" she screamed at the chemist. "I've a mind to . . ." She came to the decision before finishing the statement. Her cries rattled against Monk's ears.

"Police! Help! Fight!"

Monk hurried up the fire escape to the third floor and ducked inside.

He found Randall in the small bedroom. The pilot was stuffing clothing back into the cheap suitcase. A briefcase was also on the bed.

Monk said gloomily, "They got away." He looked at the things on the bed. "Find anything?"

Randall shook his head. "I'm sorry," he said.

"Sorry?"

"For being such a chump. I fell for that guy's line." He told about the baldheaded man identifying himself as James Treat, and of the lodge cards and stuff he had to prove it. "I should have consulted with Doc Savage. But I've been so worried about Sally I was ready to do almost anything to insure her safety."

MONK said: "A shady printing shop can turn out those cards for a dime a dozen. This thing is pretty serious. You'd better let Doc handle it."

"I know," Randall admitted. His shirt was torn. His jacket had been removed. There was a lump on his forehead and he

gingerly massaged another on the back of his head.

"I was standing there with my back to the doorway. I wondered why that guy seemed to be talking louder when we got up here to the room. It was the tipoff to his friend. He must have been in a room across the hall. He slugged me with a sap." He put on his suit jacket. "I guess I passed out for a couple of seconds. When I snapped out of it they were searching me. I—"

Monk cried: "The letter! They got it?"

The pilot patted his midriff. "Almost. I've been carrying it in a money belt inside my clothing. Lucky for me I did."

Monk felt relief. He looked anxiously toward the hall. "We'd better breeze out of here. A woman was screaming for the police, back there in the alley. Doc likes to handle things in his own way. If we get mixed up with the law, it's only going to slow things up. Doc never likes publicity, either."

He grabbed the cheap bag and brief case. "We'll take these along and Doc can look the stuff over."

They hurried down the stairs. The lump on Randall's forehead was red and swollen. Monk's loud necktie was askew and his hair was standing on end.

Just as they hurried down the last flight of stairs into the lobby, the patrolman walked into the front entrance.

Monk quickly nudged Randall and slowed to a casual walk down the stairs.

The cop was saying to the man at the desk, "You got a fight here? Someone made a complaint."

The man in shirt sleeves, behind the desk, sat there placidly munching on a toothpick. There was a tired look on his face.

"Trouble?" he asked. "No trouble, officer. We run a respectable place here."

The cop turned around. The big man with scarred features sat on the divan. He had been patting at his jaw with a handkerchief. He began blowing his nose loudly, half covering his features with the handkerchief.

Then the policeman saw Monk and the pilot. There was a flicker of suspicion in his eyes as he noted the lump on Randall's forehead.

"You been in a fight?" he demanded, staring at the big man.

"I beg your pardon?" said Monk in his small squeaky voice.

"I'm not talking to you," barked the cop. "I asked—"

Monk talked over the cop's voice. He addressed the wooden-faced man behind the desk. "Good-by, sir. Everything was just fine. We shall certainly return again sometime."

He kept moving toward the exit, urging Randall along.

The cop looked after them with indecision, and before he could think of something to say Monk and his friend were outside.

The chemist quickly flagged down a cruising cab. As the cab pulled in to the curb, Monk commented to Randall, "You'd be thrown in jail if you ever complained about the service in that flea trap!"

## Chapter VII

LATER, Rick Randall turned the letter over to Doc Savage.

The flier said, "I'm sorry I almost messed things up."

They had met Doc and Ham back at the airport, but now they were all gathered in a suite of rooms that Doc had rented as a temporary headquarters at a downtown hotel. It was afternoon. Doc had placed several trans-Pacific calls.

They all looked at the letter which the flier produced.

Ham was puzzled. Monk was puzzled. Randall himself shook his head.

"What do you make of it?" he asked.

Doc, for once, seemed puzzled also. "There's a hint of some secret here, yet the secret is not explained. This letter could have been sent through the mails as well as not. It would be meaningless to anyone reading it."

"Exactly," agreed Randall. "Then why has it proved so dangerous to anyone carrying it?"

"Frankly," said Doc, "I don't know."

A little later, leaving them to await any messages from either Manila or Honolulu, Doc went out. He was gone the remainder of the afternoon.

There were no long distance telephone calls.

Doc returned after dinner-time. He produced a number of Photostats, and each was a copy of the letter. He handed a copy to each of them.

"A matter of precaution," he explained. "If the real letter is lost or stolen, we'll have a copy just the same."

"Good idea," said Monk.

Ham wondered if that was the only reason Doc had had the copies made.

"Heard anything from Renny?"

Doc shook his head.

"I'm worried about that big lug," admitted Ham.

Doc retired to a room that he had set up as a temporary private office. The remainder of that evening he spent on the telephone. The local telephone company had immediately established through circuits when Doc Savage contacted an official he knew in the city.

At midnight, there was still no word from Renny or the girl.

They retired.

IT was raining, and there was a strong breeze, so that the curtains billowed into the bedroom. The rain whipped in also, driven by the gusts of wind. It splattered on the polished floor beneath the windows and big drops of it reached to the bed.

It was the rain that brought Doc Savage from deep sleep.

He lay there, feeling the rain, puzzled by the fact that it was so completely dark. He'd been dreaming he was driving along a highway at breakneck speed, racing the streamlined train that flashed across the countryside. Naturally it had been daylight, because he remembered waving to the train engineer. And it hadn't been raining.

He decided to get out of the car and see what was wrong. He fell out of the bed.

For a moment he could not move. His legs, arms, body . . . every part of him was strangely numb. His head throbbed as if a dozen little iron mallets were attacking it. His throat was dry and his tongue felt large and swollen.

He knelt there on the floor, putting out his hands, supporting himself because his arms felt like rubber. He became aware of the wetness beneath his hands. Wetness splashed against his face also, and brought him more fully awake.

He realized, then, that he was in his hotel bedroom. His mind cleared. He felt around, touched the metal base of a bridge

lamp, started to climb to his feet. He had to grasp a chair to keep from falling.

The heavy, sweet, cloying odor struck his nostrils. It seemed to be everywhere in the room. He wondered . . .

He managed, finally, to stand erect. His skull felt like as if it were going to burst. He snapped on the lamp.

Doc stepped to the window, let the rain and the wind pour over him, and drew in deep gasps of air. The terrible drowsiness started to leave him. His mind overcame the complete weariness of his body, which wanted only to go back to bed.

He sniffed the air.

*Chloroform!*

Instantly he thought of Monk, Ham and young Randall. They had separate rooms along the hallway that led through the hotel suite.

Doc flashed down the hall. He entered rooms, flinging the windows all wide open, every window he could find. The smell of the chloroform was everywhere he went!

He was in Monk's bedroom, the lights on. He shook the stocky chemist, dragged him from the bed, pulled him over next to the open window and sat him in a chair. He massaged his arms and legs, worked up the circulation, slapped the chemist sharply across the face.

"Wake up, Monk! Wake up!"

He ran into each of the other rooms and gave Ham and Randall the same treatment. He returned again to Monk.

The burly chemist was on his feet. He saw Doc through a fuzzy haze and swung at him. He fell.

Doc rushed through the suite again, shaking Ham and Randall, rousing them. They were stirring.

But as a matter of precaution he went to his own room and opened the medical case which he always carried with him. He selected a strong stimulant, one that could be injected intravenously. He gave each of the men a shot.

Doc himself now felt all right. His unusual physical strength had shaken off effects of the chloroform. Soon he had the others wide awake.

They discovered that the suite of rooms had been completely ransacked. A window in the kitchenette had been jimmied, and outside there was a fire escape. It was here that the prowler had made his entrance.

It was Ham who yanked open his closet door to search through the pockets of the suit he'd been wearing the evening before. He found several pockets turned inside out.

Then he was holding the Photostat of the letter written by Jonathan Treat. The letter had been right there in the inside pocket of his suit coat.

Puzzled, Ham exclaimed, "If that's what they were looking for, why didn't they take it? It was within easy reach."

Doc and the others each checked their own copies of the mysterious letter. And each found that he had not been robbed of the copy. Neither had anything of value been stolen.

"Just a minute . . ." Doc said. He looked at Monk. "Where is it, Monk?"

Ham and the big towheaded pilot looked at Doc.

"Where's what?" inquired Ham.

Monk was feeling well enough to grin again. He said to Ham, "Doc gave it to me last night, just in case. He figured someone might try to get the letter from him, so he gave it to me just to fool 'em."

Monk had stepped to his bed. He picked up a pillow, shook it free of the case. The grin faded a little as he looked inside the empty pillow case.

Then he quickly whipped off the case on the second pillow. He got down and looked around the floor.

Doc said, "Never mind, Monk. They got it."

The tone of his voice held each of them tense.

It was Randall who said, "I don't understand it. They passed up all the copies and searched until they found the original letter. What difference would it make?"

"That," said Doc quietly, "is what makes the entire thing so mysterious."

Ham said, "And for which we were all almost murdered!"

They thought about that. As a result, no one was in a mood for sleep. The time was four a.m.

At four-thirty the telephone rang. Monk answered it, then motioned for Doc. "For you," he said.

The operator said to Doc Savage, "I am ready on your call to Manila."

## Chapter VIII

RENNY cursed the heat of the city, and inefficiency of the local telephone company . . . especially the delay before finally letting him know that Doc Savage had been trying to reach him. In this part of the world you just had to figure it took twice as long for anything to be accomplished as it did back in the good old States.

He held the phone in his hand and waited. He heard the mingle of voices as the connections were made across the thousands of intervening miles. He had not slept in hours. He had not shaved. He wiped sweat from his brow with the crook of his arm. The telephone was practically lost in his massive fist.

Then, his gloomy features showing relief, he was saying, "Doc? Doc, this is Renny!"

He immediately gave a report of his activities. He was saying, "Yes, Doc, she's here in Manila. I know that for sure, but I haven't yet caught up with her. I've got something, however, that might be the break we want. Listen, I want you to get me the exact description of this man called James Treat, the cousin of Jonathan Treat there in Richmond. That's the one to whom the letter was . . ."

Doc said, "I can give you that information right now, Renny. I was in contact with authorities in Richmond yesterday afternoon. Here . . ." He seemed to be reading from something. "James Treat is a tall, thin, gangling man of about forty. Black hair, black mustache, weighs one hundred and seventy pounds, has a habit of squinting his left eye as he talks."

"That's him, Doc!" exclaimed Renny. "He's right here in Manila. I've tracked him to a nearby hotel. Now that I'm positive, maybe we can locate the girl through him."

"Or Jonathan Treat," said Doc.

"Yes!"

Doc then brought Renny up to date on what had happened there in the States.

"You can reach me here," advised the bronze man.

"It should only be a couple of hours," Renny said with renewed vigor. "I'm going right over there now. I'll call you later."

He hung up.

James Treat! He knew right where he could lay his hands on the man. At last this

riddle would be solved, and more than likely he would find the girl, Sally, also.

He hurried out.

IT was still early evening. People of about every nationality moved through the war-scarred city. The air was humid and hot. Huge Renny followed a narrow street that led uphill from the Bay.

The hotel had been restored almost to normal. It was one of the better places in a city that catered to everyone from millionaires to the world's worst villains.

American military police and S.P.'s patrolled the streets. Servicemen were still here on duty.

Renny went directly to the desk in the wide, busy lobby of the hotel.

"Mr. James Treat," he said to the clerk.

The Filipino looked at him quickly. Renny wondered why.

"You said . . . James Treat?"

"That's correct."

"Just a minute, sir."

The clerk glanced at him in that sort of curious way again and stepped out of sight behind a partition. He was using a telephone, but Renny could not hear what was being said. Then the man appeared again.

"You may go up," he said politely. "Room 212, sir."

Renny walked up the wide staircase that led to the second floor. White doors with shutters faced on the long hallways. The door he sought was the entrance of a corner suite. He was familiar with the layout of the hotel, for he had been here in the past.

He knocked.

He imagined he'd heard someone talking, but he must have been mistaken, for only one man was in sight when the door was swung open. The voices probably came through the shuttered doorways of nearby rooms.

Caution instantly took hold of the big engineer when he saw the man who opened the door. The fellow wore a khaki uniform and a holstered gun.

He was one of the local police.

"You wish to see Mr. James Treat?" the officer asked.

Renny nodded. He watched the man. He said nothing.

"This way, please."

Renny followed, still alert.

They entered an adjoining room of the corner suite. Three more police officers stood there, and all were watching giant Renny's entrance.

The dead man had been placed on the bed.

The man had died on the floor. You could see the dried blood, and the police had marked off the spot. But now they had placed him on the bed.

The man had been stabbed in the back.

The officer who had admitted Renny to the suite rolled the corpse over on its back.

"Ever meet this man?" he asked.

Renny shook his head.

The dead man, alive and standing on his feet, would have been tall, lean and gangling. His hair was very black. He had a heavy black mustache. His weight would be about one hundred and seventy pounds.

"Do you know who he is?" continued the officer.

"James Treat."

"You said you'd never met him?"

"That's true. I was coming here to meet him for the first time tonight. I had his description. That's how I know he is James Treat."

The officer considered that for a moment. The three other men remained silent, watching big Renny.

"Well," the officer said finally, "you're right. We found a passport on him. But nothing else. Apparently robbery was the motive, for everything else on his person was missing."

Then he said: "We think we have the one who stabbed him."

Renny's eyes raised a little.

"We received a telephone call from someone here in the hotel. We came here and found this second person lying dazed in the room. We realize this second person could have been framed. Then, again, this person could be pretending, in order to appear innocent."

Renny tried not to show his sudden interest. The officer said James Treat had been robbed. That meant whoever had killed the man had carefully removed anything that might give Renny a clue to the mystery.

Perhaps the person the police were now holding knew the answers!

Renny said: "Whom are you holding for the murder?"



*They brought the dazed girl in; she had been crying.*

The officer nodded to one of his assistants. The man stepped to a door and opened it. It was a third room of the corner suite.

They brought the girl in, an officer guiding her by an arm. She seemed dazed. She had been crying, and her face was very white against the dark background of her brunette hair.

It was Sally Treat.

EACH officer in the room had glanced toward the trim brunette girl as she was led into the room. Momentarily their eyes were off Renny, the engineer.

His mind juggled the situation with great rapidity in the moment he saw the girl. And she was staring directly toward him as she was brought in.

Renny made a swift, decisive gesture with his head. The movement said, "You don't know me. You've never met me!"

He wondered just how Sally Treat would react. Would she string along, trust him?

The officers had looked back again. Renny's head shake had been missed.

The girl's dark brown eyes lowered. She said nothing.

The officer in charge spoke to Renny again.

"Do you know this woman?"

Renny shook his head. "Never saw her before."

He thought Sally Treat winced, but it was an imperceptible thing. Renny had never felt so much like a heel in all his life. But he had a plan. . . .

"She claims," the officer in charge was saying, "that she, too, was robbed . . . that she came here to the room, and when someone answered she stepped into darkness. She insists there was a struggle and that she was dazed for a while. When she revived, the person was gone and she was alone with the victim." A tight smile played across his thin, dark face. "I don't like her story, sir."

"Then you're charging her with murder?"

"We're taking her to headquarters. We're merely holding her on suspicion. There is no charge—yet."

He said the last carefully, then studied Renny's face for a moment. "In fact," the officer added, "I'm not completely satisfied about you."

Renny slid a hand into his inside pocket. "Allow me to identify myself," he offered.

He handed over the papers . . . identification papers that had been issued in Washington, D. C. The papers showed that he was here on a government reconstruction project, and that he was a renowned engineer and was to be given *carte blanche*. This was a part of Renny's mission in the Pacific—or had been, until Doc Savage had first contacted him about the other thing.

The officer in charge read the papers, passed them to his associates. Instantly a complete change took place in their attitude. They all smiled. They were gracious. One said: "You understand, Mr. Renwick, you were not under suspicion for one instant!"

Renny nodded. He was looking at the girl. "She is an American, is she not?"

"Yes, sir."

"You know," he said thoughtfully, "I really should come to her aid. Perhaps I can find a lawyer to represent her. Momentarily, I'd like to act as her advisor. May I have a moment alone with the young woman?"

That stopped them. The procedure was unusual. But this man Renwick was a very important person. The officer in charge decided he'd better grant the request.

"Of course," he said.

Renny nodded toward the adjoining room. "I'd like to talk to her alone for just a moment or two."

"Certainly."

When the door closed behind them, Renny held the girl's arms and looked down into her troubled, lovely face. He spoke softly.

"What happened?" he prompted.

"It was . . . just like I told them," she whispered tautly. "I'd located James Treat. I knew he was here in Manila. I had an appointment to come here to his room tonight to find out about Uncle Jonathan Treat. Then . . . someone opened the door here. The place was dark. A man grabbed me . . ."

"Do you know who it was?"

"I haven't the slightest idea. He tried to strangle me with a pillow. I lost consciousness for a little while."

"You found nothing at all?"

She shook her head. "Even my own purse was gone. The police arrived almost immediately."

Renny thought a moment. "Kid," he said tensely, "what I'm doing might not seem very chivalrous. But it's for your own safety. This thing is coming to a head fast and more people are going to get hurt. I've got to be on the move. I won't be able to look out for you. But there's one place where you *will* be safe. Jail! Please try to understand."

He waited.

She looked frightened at first. He talked some more. He convinced her. "Don't worry," he explained, "it will only be temporary. I'll see to it that *no one* is allowed to visit you there."

"All right," Sally Treat agreed.

"First tell me," he said. "Why did you run away from Honolulu? Sneaking away in the middle of the night without telling Pat?"



"I'm sorry about that," she said unhappily. "But, after Pat had gone to sleep I heard a slight noise outside in the hall. I went over to the door to investigate. I was afraid to open it, so I whispered, 'Who is it?'"

"There wasn't any answer, but an envelope was pushed under the door. I took it over to a small lamp which I turned on. The note was addressed to me, and it was signed 'Uncle Jonathan.' It said for me to return to Manila at once, telling no one I was leaving. It said to bring the note addressed to James."

"But I couldn't find the note. The one to James. I thought Pat might have given it to you. So I left without it, thinking that if Uncle Jonathan wished the note returned to him I could phone or cable Pat."

WHEN they took Sally away, Renny was still worried. Would the person behind this mystery try to reach her in the jail?

Dammit, Renny decided, there must be *something* in that confounded letter. He'd call Doc Savage immediately. The letter should be in Doc's hands by this time.

Renny returned to his hotel and made his call, informing Doc of all that had taken place.

## Chapter IX

THE town, nestled along the banks of the winding Ohio River, looked as if nothing had disturbed its serenity for several decades. Huge old elms and willows lined the bluff which rose up above the river, and here and there through the trees you could see a house, or a small quiet park, or a church steeple rising up through the trees.

There was a hotel of sorts just off the village square. Its wide old porch faced along the main street. Townsmen gathered there, sitting with their feet up on the white railing, and talked. Some just sat. It was a warm afternoon.

From time to time a villager either entered or left the hotel. There seemed to be an urgency in the way each came and went, not pausing to pass the time of day, going immediately inside.

One of the old porch-sitters remarked, "Danged funny, if you ask me!"

"Yep," agreed the only crony who sat next to him.

"Every one of them's been one of the Treat family."

"Yep."

"Each one of them's visitin' that stranger in town. Big guy. Biggest man I ever seen. Looks like he's been in the sun a lot. Bronze-like."

"Yep."

"I heard he's questioning each one of them. Wonder why?"

"Dunno."

"Danged funny," the first man repeated. The afternoon wore on lazily.

Night finally came, folding over the town as if moving on tiptoe.

Monk and Ham returned to the hotel and went directly to the rooms that had been rented by Doc Savage. Doc was waiting for them.

"Well," Monk reported, "we shooed in every one of the Treat relatives we could find. The woods are full of them. One owns a livery. Another's an undertaker. One old guy's a judge. They show up, Doc?"

The bronze man nodded. He checked a sheet of paper on the table in front of him.

Ham said, "We gave each one of them a Photostatic copy of the letter, as you instructed. Any results?"

Doc sighed somewhat wearily. "Not a thing. I thought it might stir up something. But it hasn't. Not one of them could explain the letter."

"Had any of them heard from Jonathan Treat?"

Doc shook his head.

Ham said, "We were out there to the place where Jonathan lives when in town. What a mansion! Sets up on a hill on the edge of the village. It's boarded up right now."

"I was there," said Doc.

He consulted the list of names again. "There's one left," he told them. "One member of the family we have not seen. It appears he is a recluse who will have nothing to do with the others. They say he disappears for months at a time. He has a camp somewhere back in the hills, but no one knows exactly where it is. His name is Tod Treat."

"A guy like that," said Monk, "probably doesn't know the war's over!"

"We can't leave a stone unturned," Doc pointed out.

"But how are you going to locate a character like him?" asked Ham.



*Doc consulted the list of names. "There's one left," he said.*

"News oftentimes travels fast in communities like this," explained Doc. "I've dropped a word here and there about him. Maybe he'll show up."

Doc's statement proved correct. At ten that night Tod Treat walked into the hotel.

HE was a small, wiry sort of man with bright, alert eyes. His hair was bushy and

gray, and stood right up on end, as though he might have been scared by a ghoul. As he talked, he patted at the unruly hair from time to time as though that would make it stay down. He could have saved the energy. He wore old slacks, sneakers and an open brown shirt.

"What do you make of it?" he asked without any sort of preamble.

Doc's eyes flickered.

"To what are you referring?"

"The letter, naturally!"

Monk gulped. Ham jabbed him in the ribs.

"You know . . . about the letter?" Doc asked carefully.

"Certainly," said Tod Treat in his abrupt manner. "And it don't make no sense to me at all. That's why I come to you. I hear you're in the village, and trying to find out about that letter, so here I am!"

Doc said: "Just how did you get hold of it?"

"Elmer brought it."

"Elmer?"

"He's an old friend of James Treat. He says James is in trouble and maybe I ought to have the letter. James is over there in the Pacific somewheres looking for Jonathan, so Elmer brought the letter to me. He doesn't trust the rest of them Treats."

"Did Elmer tell you exactly how he obtained the letter?" prodded Doc. He remembered how they'd almost been murdered in their sleep the night before last.

"Nope," said Tod. "And I ain't one to poke into a person's affairs. Live and let live is my motto. Here!"

He pulled the letter out of his shirt pocket and handed it to the bronze man. Doc inspected it carefully. It was the original letter, he was convinced.

"Where," continued Doc Savage, "can we locate this fellow named Elmer?"

"Ha!" said Tod. "That fellow is as restless as a terrier with worms. He's gone again."

"Gone where?"

"Don't ask me!"

That seemed to be the extent of the information Tod could give them.

Doc turned to Monk. "Call the Cincinnati police crime laboratory. Ask them if we could use some of their equipment tonight . . . mainly their infra-red equipment and enlargement cameras."

Cincinnati was less than an hour's drive away.

Monk used a phone in an adjoining room. Doc was still talking to Tod Treat. The man with the unruly, standing-on-end hair was saying:

"So if it's okay, I'd like to come with you. Anything I can do to help locate Jonathan, I'll do."

Doc said, "Turning this letter over to us is mighty helpful. You've certainly been cooperative. Yes, why don't you come along?"

Monk came back into the room to report that the Cincinnati police were more than willing to place their laboratory equipment at Doc's disposal. "I also made arrangement with the local jitney service to have someone drive us in," said Monk.

Within a few minutes they were started.

The crime laboratory was located in a building behind the city's general hospital. It was one of the most modern anywhere.



*Doc put the letter under the infra-red lamp and checked for secret markings.*

First, Doc put the letter under the infra-red lamp. He checked for secret markings or writing.

And found nothing.

Ham said, "it looks like we're sunk, Doc."

The bronze man was thoughtful. His strange flake-gold eyes were restless. "I'm not giving up yet," he said grimly.

With Monk's assistance, they made enlargements of the letter. Doc studied the enlargements with a magnifying glass.

He still found no secret writing or markings of any kind. Yet he seemed to be searching for something.

"I'd like to take these enlargements and blow them up to still larger size," he said to the chemist. "I want the largest reproductions possible."

Monk thought. "There's a Photostat house here in the city that has one of the biggest enlarging cameras in the country. If we could get somebody to open up their plant tonight—"

"What's the name of the owner?" asked Doc.

Monk gave it to him. Doc placed a call. He offered a high figure for use of the equipment. A half hour later they were at the Photostat house downtown.

THE enlargement was finally ready. It was as high as an ordinary room and almost as wide. Then began Doc's tedious task of going over the thing with the magnifying glass. The others waited.

"Monk!" Doc said finally, and there was something in the tone of his voice.

He handed the chemist the glass. "That period at the end of the second sentence in the letter. What do you see?"

Monk took the glass, climbed up on a chair to study the middle of the huge Photostat. He became excited.

"Writing, or a drawing of some kind, protruding from around the edges of the period!" cried the chemist.

Ham looked also.

Tod Treat watched them in amazement with his mop of gray hair standing on end.

Monk got down off the chair, picked up the original letter, looked at it thoughtfully. He turned to Doc Savage and said:

"The process was developed by the Germans during the war. But only recently was it made available for general use, after the Allies picked it up. In a way, it's similar to the microfilm process that was used to send letters to service men overseas via V-mail. With microfilm, you can take a whole letter and reduce it to small size on microfilm."

Doc nodded.

Monk went on: "Only with *this* method, you go a step farther. You can take an entire letter, or message, and reduce it to pin-point size!"

"And," finished Doc, "so microscopic that the reproduction can be hidden beneath the period at the end of a sentence, for example."

Ham stared. "You mean to tell me," he said, "underneath an ordinary period in that letter, a message can be hidden?"

"That," said Doc tensely, "is now what we're going to find out. *Something's* there. This huge enlargement shows it!"

## Chapter X

MONK took over. Working with a tiny jeweler's glass and chemicals that loosened the ink on the original letter, Monk displayed his ability as a technician. Infinite skill was needed. A strained half hour passed.

Finally, Monk placed a small glass slide beneath one of the powerful cameras in the laboratory. There was a tiny spot of a thing on the slide—the thing that had been beneath the period in the letter.

He made the first enlargement. They studied it. They were becoming tense with excitement.

"It looks like a map," said Monk.

Doc nodded.

"We'll enlarge *this* enlargement," said Doc.

The procedure was repeated. It was necessary, finally, to take sections of the enlargements and blow these up in size. Then they fitted the segments together. Finally the entire thing was complete.

They stared at the drawing.

Small Tod Treat scratched his head. "Looks like something on an island!" he said.

"Pacific island," added Ham.

Doc read notations on the huge, enlarged map. He did some quick mental figuring.

"The island," he said, "is somewhere south of Manila. It is one of those that was taken over by the Japs during the war . . . or, at least, it is in a group of islands that were invaded."

He turned to energetic little Tod Treat. "What connection, if any, would Jonathan have with that place?" Doc noted other de-

tails about the map, but he made no comment.

"I dunno," said Tod.

Doc consulted the sheet on which he had made notations concerning each of the Treat relatives. He recalled there had been two brothers of Jonathan who seemed more helpful than the other relatives.

Checking one of the names, he put through a call to the town up the river. He got the man out of bed.

Doc told what had been discovered. He described approximate location of the faraway island in the Pacific.

The man to whom Doc was talking was named Alvin Treat. Doc caught an undercurrent of excitement in the man's voice.

"Wait a minute," Alvin said. "Let me consult my brother. He's right here . . ." He left the phone for a few moments.

When he returned, he said: "Just how soon could you leave for that place in the Pacific, Mr. Savage?"

"As soon as we can get a plane out of Cincinnati."

"We're joining you. This is something that involves the entire Treat family. We'll tell you about that place just as soon as we see you. We're leaving almost immediately. We'll come directly to Lunken Airport."

He hung up.

DOC turned to Tod Treat. "What about you? You're hardly prepared to start such a long journey . . ."

"The hell I ain't!" said Tod with determination. "I got plenty of money, too."

He pulled a roll from his worn pants pocket.

Monk whistled. He looked at Ham and commented, "You'd think the guy was a bookie."

Dawn was breaking when they gathered at the airport beyond a levee of the Ohio River. Doc had arranged for a charter airline to fly them to Chicago, first leg of the long journey to the Pacific. In Chicago, they would see Rick Randall again.

"Huh!" was the comment little Tod made when Alvin Treat and his brother joined them.

They were big men, dark, and they operated a large farm outside the town where other members of the family lived. Their

hands and features showed the result of years of hard work.

One was named Alvin. The other was Lemuel. They looked almost alike.

Alvin frowned when he saw little Tod and said, "Are we going to be pestered with *him*?"

Doc told him, "He has been helpful. He found and returned the letter, which has given us our first lead to Jonathan."

The information seemed to bother the two brothers. Doc wondered about it.

They boarded the waiting plane. With them, they carried the sections of enlarged map, which had been dismantled and placed in a square, flat box.

They'd be in Chicago in less than two hours.

As they settled down for the flight, Doc said to Alvin Treat, "Now tell me everything you can about Jonathan and why he went back to the Pacific."

The two brothers looked at Doc Savage. They were both thoughtful, quiet, deliberate men.

Alvin said, "First, we'd like to know something. How is it you are so interested in Jonathan, Mr. Savage?"

Doc had wondered why the question had not been asked long before this. Now he figured it was time to reveal it.

"Two months ago," he said, "Jonathan Treat contacted me at my New York headquarters. He was returning to the Pacific now that the war was over. He had some business there."

The two brothers nodded in unison.

"A few years before the war," continued Doc, "I met Jonathan Treat. Once, he did me a great favor. I've always felt obligated to repay that favor. Well, his only request when he contacted me was that, should there be any interruption in the arrival of a brief weekly report saying that he was all right, I was to investigate."

Doc paused.

"And?" one of the brothers asked.

"Three weeks ago the reports stopped coming to me. One of my associates, a man named Renwick, was out there in that area doing some work. He started investigating. Then, he ran into this letter business."

The two brothers said nothing for a moment. Something seemed to be bothering them. Then one said, "Mr. Savage, do you

mind if Alvin and I speak to each other alone a moment?"

Doc shrugged.

The two men retired to the rear of the large cabin. They sat down and talked quietly. After awhile they returned forward.

Alvin said: "For reasons which we cannot yet reveal, we cannot tell you anything further about Jonathan. At the proper time, we'll explain everything."

It was outspoken little Tod who snorted, "Well, I'll be damned!"

Homely Monk had been ready to make a similar comment in slightly stronger language. And he was even more amazed when Doc spoke.

"There is no hurry at all," said Doc.

## Chapter XI

THEY were in Chicago before eight o'clock that morning. Doc had held the hotel suite. He was still awaiting word from Renny.

Back at the hotel Rick Randall was out when they arrived. They would have to wait till he returned to know if there were word from Renny.

Tod Treat wanted to know, "Ain't we starting right out for the Pacific?"

"There are a few details to be completed first." That was the extent of Doc's explanation at the moment.

"Shucks, then I guess I'll go out and buy me some duds," said Tod.

He disappeared for awhile.

It was only a few moments later that the big, quiet brother named Lemuel came to Doc and said, "We've decided to tell you."

Doc's eyebrows raised a little.

"Yes?"

"About Jonathan, we mean," continued Lemuel.

Doc waited.

"Brother Jonathan, you know, is a millionaire."

"He is one of the richest men in the country," added Alvin.

"I know that," said Doc.

"He made his money discovering copper and tin and stuff on those Pacific islands. Then, just before the war, he found something else."

"What did he find?"

"He has never told anyone," said Lemuel. "But when the Japs moved in, he

barely escaped with his life. Jonathan came home. He never talked about it. But we think Cousin James knew. That's why the letter was sent to him."

"James is dead," Doc told them.

"We suspected that. We warned him not to follow Jonathan."

Doc asked, "You have no idea what it is Jonathan has discovered out there?"

Both brothers shook their heads. "We think," said Alvin, "it is something that will make him even wealthier. And now Cousin James is dead. That leaves only ourselves, Tod and Herman."

"Herman?"

"Herman," said Alvin, "disappeared several weeks ago. He is a brother. We believe he is dead, too. So that only leaves the three of us."

"Leaves you what?"

"We are the only remaining three in Jonathan's will. Other relatives in the family never got along with Jonathan. They are not mentioned in the will."

"You are positive?"

"Yes. Now do you see why we must be so cautious? Tod has no sense. It is up to us to help you in any way possible. We pray that Jonathan is alive. If not, our own lives are in grave danger."

"I can appreciate that," commented Doc.

A little later he was alone with Monk in the room that he was using as an office. He was waiting for a trans-Pacific call to go through.

Monk said, grimly, "I wonder just how hard those two brothers are praying for dear Jonathan?"

"I wonder," said Doc.

Rick Randall arrived.

HE immediately announced, "I'm going with you. Since you've held me here this long, I may as well travel with you rather than dash ahead by myself. Now that I realize Sally is comparatively safe."

Doc looked at him.

"Now that Renny has assured us that Sally is protected, you can be more useful in another way than you would be by going with us," he said. "That is, if you really want to help. . . ."

"What?" asked the young man.

Doc explained the mission he wanted done in the small Ohio town where the Treats lived. "Get every bit of information you can, then contact me or Renny in Manila."

The big towheaded pilot thought it over. "You really need this information?"

Doc nodded.

"All right," Randall said.

Doc sent Monk and Ham out for specific supplies that might be needed. They were to arrange to have the airline fly them to the West Coast. Doc decided they would wait until no later than six that evening to hear from Renny, then they would begin the journey.

Little Tod Treat returned. He carried a large suitcase which apparently was stuffed with things he had bought, for he staggered under its weight.

"Now we can stay till hell freezes over!" he announced. He patted at his unruly hair. It stuck up in the air like dry brush.

Doc became restless as the afternoon wore on and he was unable to contact Renny. Perhaps he should not have assigned Renny to the job alone. . . .

The telegram arrived from Pat Savage. Reading it, he smiled a little. Also, he felt relieved that Pat was out of this and safe in New York.

The wire read:

I THINK YOU'RE A BUNCH OF  
STINKERS

LOVE

PAT

At five o'clock there was still no word from Renny. Doc decided they could wait no longer. They were on a six o'clock last flight to the Coast. Ham and Monk had completed all arrangements. They barely had time to catch the limousine to the airport.

Sometime during that night, the fog grounded the plane at Salt Lake City.

THERE had been a storm, and afterwards humidity and heavy, thick fog that was as motionless as death. They barely made a landing at the field before the fog closed in. It was decided to ground the huge airliner, for Salt Lake had always been a danger point on coast-to-coast air routes. Mountains rose steeply nearby.

The stewardess told the passengers, "We might have to sit here for several hours. Arrangements have been made at a hotel in town where you may stay. Each of you will be called in plenty of time before we depart again."

Restless Tod Treat immediately prepared to leave. "Me," he said, "I'm going to get some sleep in a comfortable hotel bed." He insisted on carrying the heavy suitcase with him.

"I hope he breaks a leg," said Alvin.

They had berths on the sleeper plane, and the two Treat brothers decided to stay aboard.

Doc, Monk and Ham went into the terminal building. Doc said, "I think I'll wait in the operations office for awhile. I'll see what the weather reports say."

He was restless, the two aides knew.

Monk and Ham discovered there was a pretty waitress in the coffee shop of the terminal. They were each on their third cup of coffee—it was a half hour later—and were making progress with the blonde waitress, when one of the stewardesses from their plane hurried into the doorway of the coffee shop.

She saw them and made a quick motion with her hand. She appeared worried. Monk and Ham paid their checks and hurried out.

"It's about one of your friends," the attractive stewardess said.

"Who?" Ham asked.

"The one named Lemuel Treat. His brother is terribly worried about him!"

"Why? What's wrong?" Ham stared at the girl.

"A man came aboard the plane and asked for him. They started toward the terminal and that's the last anyone has seen of either of them. His brother has searched everywhere."

"Perhaps they went into town to the hotel," suggested Ham.

The stewardess shook her head. "We checked there. And we've questioned the limousine drivers. No one left here after the first limousine load that went in after we were grounded."

"Did you see the fellow Lemuel Treat departed with?"

"The other girl did. She can tell you."

They hurried back to the plane, parked near the ramp at the edge of the field. Fog

crawled around them, and in the motionless, wet gray mist the great spreading wings of the mammoth plane towered over them.

They found Doc Savage talking to the other stewardess aboard the plane. Tall, rawboned Alvin Treat was with them.

"The man who stepped aboard for a moment," the girl was saying, "was rather small and unassuming. I remember he had very black hair and I don't think he could see very well. He wore heavy-lensed eyeglasses. He—"

Ham gave a start. He looked at Monk. The chemist said, "And I'll bet he wore an elk's tooth on a heavy gold chain!"

"Yes! He did!" said the girl.

Ham swung toward Doc and said, "The fellow who was on the plane the other morning on the way to Chicago! Remember, he disappeared there?"

Monk cried, "But how in blazes did he get *here*, tonight? He wasn't on the flight out. Doc carefully checked every passenger!"

No one had an explanation.

AT five that morning there was no trace of either man. And near dawn a wind sprang up. The fog quickly lifted. Soon they were given clearance. Little Tod Treat had been called at the hotel and was now aboard. News of the disappearance did not upset him.

"I wish they'd *both* disappear!" said Tod. "Those guys!"

Monk said to Ham, "What a family!"

Doc consulted with Alvin Treat. "What do you want to do? Wait here?"

The big, gangling man shook his head with determination. "I'm not worried about Lemuel. He knows how to handle himself. You can rest assured he'll follow and join us later."

They continued the flight westward.

And even before that day was ended, they were on the Clipper and over the endless Pacific. They were an hour out of San Francisco when the stewardess came back and spoke to Doc Savage quietly.

On the Clipper they had a small compartment to themselves. Doc excused himself and went forward to the pilots' cockpit of the ship.

Shortly he returned. He held a slip of paper in his hand. His face was set in tight lines.

"It isn't good news," he said to Alvin Treat. "This is a message from the police in Salt Lake. I left word with them before we left there this morning."

Alvin put out his big, bony hand. The report said:

MAN YOU DESCRIBE FOUND MURDERED BRUSH NEAR AIRPORT THIS MORNING. DEAD SEVERAL HOURS. NO CLUES.

Slowly, Alvin handed the message back to Doc. The bronze man passed it to the others. No one spoke.

Finally Alvin Treat said: "That's one less. I wonder who will be next?" His voice trembled.

## Chapter XII

SEVERAL hours before the trans-world Clipper was due to land in Manila, Renny received the long-distance telephone call from Rick Randall.

The big engineer had been keeping a nightly vigil near the small jail where Sally Treat was being held in custody. One thing worried him. The man who had stabbed James Treat to death was still at large. There had been no clue to his identity. Would his next victim be the girl herself?

Renny had been uneasy about this right along. If anything happened to her . . .

And so he had kept the vigil for three nights now. There was only a single jailer on duty throughout the night. A clever man, a murderer, might get away with anything.

Darkness was falling and Renny was preparing to leave for the jail when Randall's call came through. It was from the small Ohio town where Doc Savage had sent the young flier.

He told big Renny, "I've tried to reach Doc Savage. But he and the others are somewhere over the Pacific and we can't get a message through." He had learned when the Clipper was due at Manila and passed this information on to the engineer.

Then he told of Doc's request, and of the investigation he had completed for the bronze man.

"You can tell him," said Randall, "that Alvin and Lemuel Treat spoke the truth.



They, and the one named Tod, and another brother called Herman are the only ones named in the will. James was the fifth one, but Doc says James is dead."

"That's right," said Renny.

Neither knew, of course, about Lemuel Treat's murder also.

"But here's something important," continued Randall.

"Yes?"

"The one named Herman disappeared several weeks ago. They thought he was dead too. But I've traced his movements and he was last heard of in Manila!"

Renny clutched the phone. "Can you describe him?"

"A big fellow. Dark, heavy set, in his forties. Looks like the other brothers. Tod, apparently, is the only one who doesn't look like them."

"Anything else?"

"How's Sally?"

"Fine," said Renny. "You needn't worry about her at all. I'm watching over her." And he felt no conviction in his own statement. A brother named Herman, here in Manila.

Renny lost no time getting started after Randall had finished his call. He went directly to the small jail. Maybe the one named Herman, too, knew of Doc Savage's plans to arrive in the city within a few hours.

RENNY located the officer who had been in charge the night of James Treat's murder. Renny put on a little pressure this time. Mention of Doc Savage did the trick.

At ten that night, unknown to anyone except Sally Treat and the jailer, he was inside the small jailhouse. He had left specific orders.

"Leave only the one regular man on duty, as you always do. Any change in routine might scare this fellow off. But if he's ever going to make his move, he'll do it tonight."

There was a small section of the prison set aside for women. It consisted of two plain, single rooms. Sally, at the moment, was the only prisoner. There was a short hallway, ending in a barred door, that connected with the other section of the jail.

A small closet in Sally's room was big Renny's hiding place.

First, however, he talked to the girl. He told her, as much as he knew of it, what had

happened, and of Doc's impending arrival within a few hours. They talked for some time and it was getting close to midnight. Quiet had settled over the city.

A little later, they both heard the drunk being brought in. They listened as the sound of voices carried through the bare-walled interior.

Two patrolmen, from what Renny could hear of the conversation, had found the drunk nearby and had decided a little sobering-up process would save them trouble. They turned the drunk over to the jailer and departed. An iron door slammed.

The jailer was having some trouble with the man.

Renny could hear the fellow stumbling up against things. The jailer cursed him. He sounded as if he were trying to assist the drunk to a bunk in one of the small cells.

Abruptly the sounds stopped. There was heavy silence. The thing was too sudden to be natural.

Renny made a quick motion with his hand in the half light of the girl's room, warning her not to speak.

They strained their ears, listening.

Someone fell. A man groaned. Then—silence again.

Renny moved silently toward the open closet doorway. He motioned the girl to sit down on the small iron cot that served as her bed in the room. He whispered softly, "Play this thing through with me. Don't worry."

His giant, powerful figure reassured her. She sat down and waited.

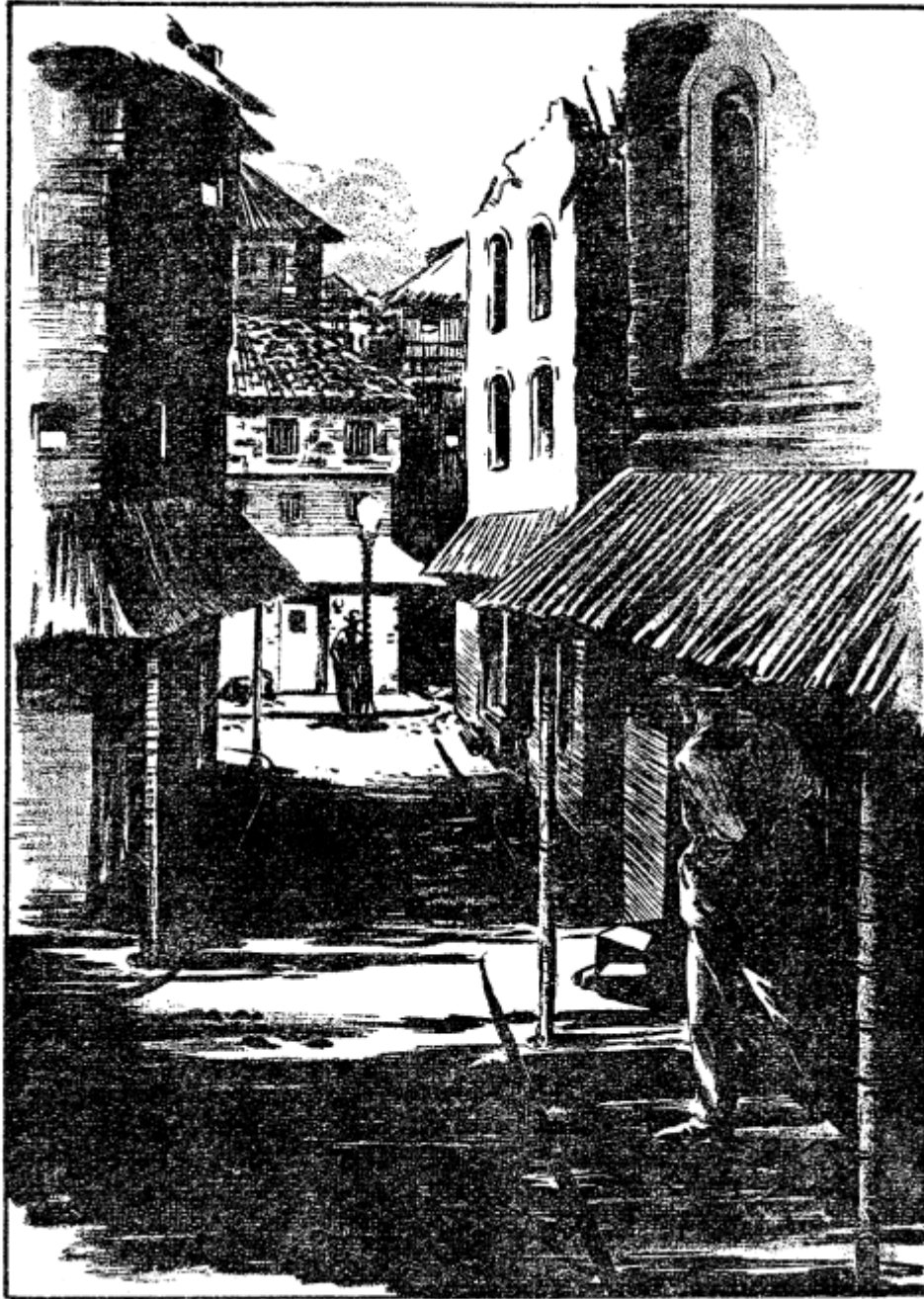
Tense moments passed. Renny thought he heard a whisper of sound in the hallway outside the room. Vague light came through the barred window from the street outside, but did not quite reach to the hall door. He, himself, was concealed in blackness, though the door to the closet was open. He watched the hall door.

"Sally?"

THE word was softly spoken. It electrified Renny. The figure was standing there in the small room doorway and the engineer could not even see him.

"Ye-es?" the girl said.

"It's Herman . . . Herman Treat, remember? You were pretty young the last time I saw you. Jonathan's brother, remember?"



*Renny went directly to the small jail.*

A soft gasp came from the girl's lips.

"What . . . what are you doing here in Manila?" she asked.

The man stepped further inside the room. Renny could see him now. He was a big man, solid, dark-haired. There was the reek of alcohol about him, but his voice showed that he was cold sober.

"It's about Jonathan," said Herman.

"He's in great danger, as you know. *Both* of us are in danger of our lives, Jonathan and I. That's why I haven't contacted you. I had to be very careful . . . because of Jonathan."

"Where . . . is he?" the girl asked.

"The letter will tell us," said the big man. "What happened to the letter? I must

find it. That's why I took a desperate chance and came here. Tell me!"

For a long moment the girl did not speak. The man came closer, looking down at her as she sat stiffly on the edge of the bed.

Then she said: "How did you know . . . I was here?"

"I—"

The words came out before she could stop them. "You killed him! *You* murdered James!"

Renny could see the expression of hate that dropped like a curtain across the tall man's face.

"Damn you!" Herman snarled, and he lunged forward. His hands were reaching for the girl's throat when Renny came out of the closet doorway and hit him. His fist drove the big man backward against a wall.

But Herman was hard-muscled, quick-moving. He came back off the wall and lunged at the engineer. His fists smashed toward Renny's face.

The girl cried out.

Renny hit him again. His huge fist sent the man reeling out to the hallway. Something flashed. A knife! Renny grabbed the wrist of the hand that held it, twisted, heard the man curse with pain.

The knife clattered on the stone corridor. The man bent down as though to retrieve it, then butted Renny in the stomach with his head. It was a driving lunge, and Renny went staggering backward into the room.

A door clanged shut. The iron door that separated this section from the rest of the jail. Renny was leaping down the hall as the key grated in the lock. Herman must have taken the keys when he knocked out the guard.

He was gone!

Then—there was the sudden blast of a shot out there in the main jail room. A man screamed with pain.

Sally Treat ran out into the hallway sobbing. "Renny—" she said in horror.

He grabbed her. "I'm all right, kid," he said quickly. They listened. Steps came toward them. He pushed the girl behind him. . .

It was the jailer. The man carried the keys and he unlocked the door. He was massaging his throat. The gun was in a big holster at his side.

He said: "If you want to talk to him anymore, you'd better hurry!"

As he led the way back, he said, "He grabbed me and choked me when I was trying to lead him to a cell. I thought he was just another drunk. I came to and I heard him in here talking. Then he made that break for it. I let him have it."

Herman was lying on the floor of the square room surrounded by several small cells. He was dying. The shot had entered near the heart.

Renny bent down over him. He said grimly, "Who's the other one? You covered things here while someone else worked back in the States. Who is it?"

The big man knew he was dying. The viciousness had gone out of him. He was probably afraid. He was losing consciousness so fast that Renny had to bend close in order to hear his whisper.

Herman was saying something. Renny missed the first part of it, and he knew that if he had heard the words they would have been very important. A dying man usually speaks the truth.

Then, barely audible, he heard the last part of the statement. Herman was saying:

". . . man with . . . bald head . . ."

That was all. The man had stopped breathing.

Renny stood up. He repeated quietly, "Man with a bald head. I wonder what he meant."

## Chapter XIII

THE sun beat down on the calm, motionless sea and gave it a coppery, blinding glow. The sleek, powerful boat rode up on the step and sliced the water into segments like a knife. Its engines, diesels, throbbed with only partially unleashed power.

Doc Savage was at the wheel of the former navy PT boat. He stood on the heavy rubber matting of the windshield-protected bridge. An Admiral Halsey type peaked cap protected his eyes from the glare of sunlight on smooth water.

Big Renny stood beside him, the navigation chart spread out before him, high-powered binoculars held to his eyes.

"It's *something* out there," said Renny, continuing to watch through the glasses.

"Holy cow! Why don't they chart all these scattered islands, anyway!"

Doc held the craft on course. He said, "Considering that a number of these thousands of islands are uninhabited, I think the charts are exceptionally good. During the war the navy discovered several others that were not on the maps."

Doc had arranged with certain navy officials for use of the fast, high-speed craft. Much of the former wartime equipment was still aboard.

Monk and Ham were in the cabin now, looking it over. Little Tod Treat sat on a bunk, looking somewhat green.

"I think I'm going to be sick," he complained.

Monk grinned.

"Brother, this ocean is a mill pond right now. Wait until she really kicks up!"

The remark did not seem to help Tod.

Tall, gangling Alvin Treat said nothing. He sat on one of the compact bunks and watched Monk and Ham.

Monk had removed the sub-machine gun from a special bulkhead rack. He was oiling and cleaning the weapon. He said to Ham:

"Might have some use for this thing, who knows!"

Ham tried to think of something to say to start an argument. He was bored. They had been at sea now for many hours.

Monk finally finished cleaning the deadly weapon. He inserted a reel of fresh cartridges into the machine gun and carefully replaced the weapon in the rack. He patted the smooth metal.

"Baby," he said, "maybe we'll drum up a little trade for you."

Ham had dozed off.

Doc came down into the compact cabin. He picked up the sections of map that had been enlarged from the hidden spot in the letter. Doc seemed unusually alert. He checked lines and figures on the map, went forward, called up to Renny.

"I think we've hit it right on the nose."

Tod shouted through his pale lips, "You've found the island?"

Doc nodded.

Monk kicked Ham and woke him up. "Come on, shyster, this is the end of the line!"

Everyone went to the small bridge.

IT was a tiny speck of an island set down in the middle of the vast Pacific. It was probably a mile long and half as wide. From the shore, the island rose inland to a height of perhaps two or three hundred feet. Everywhere there was nothing but heavy green foliage.

Doc Savage was still consulting the enlarged map section. He had turned the wheel over to Renny. "There's a spot marked on the far side of the island," he said. "Go around."

Also, from coloring of the clear water, he had noted dangerous reefs. There was no place for a landing here.

They skirted the island slowly. Noise of the engines came back off the land as though it were a sounding board.

Renny said abruptly, "Isn't that a dock of sorts up ahead?"

Doc watched. He nodded.

"Then someone's been here!" boomed Renny.

"Naturally," Doc replied.

They eased in through shoal water. They found a clear channel. The piling of the dock was weathered and battered, but they managed to pull alongside.

Monk leaped ashore and made the boat fast.

"Come on," he yelled at Ham. "Let's have a look!"

Ham said, "Careful, you dunce."

Doc told them, "I don't think there's much danger."

They wondered what he meant.

Doc pointed down along the shore. They saw the other boat that had been pulled up on a runway that led down into the water. There was a winch device that had been used for handling the boat.

"That craft isn't large enough to have carried many people," Doc pointed out. Then he added, "I rather believe there's only one man on this island."

Alvin Treat was watching Doc Savage.

"Jonathan?" he asked.

Doc nodded.

They started ashore.

But Tod Treat decided he was too ill to join them.

"I'll wait," he said. He was very pale.

He lay down on the narrow deck and lost interest in everything.

They moved inland through the trees. Doc carried one particular section of the

enlarged map with him. He located a trail, said, "This seems to be the route to the place."

"What place?" asked Alvin.

"We'll see," was all Doc said.

THE route trailed around the edge of the island. It kept to the low spots of the land. Shortly, they came upon the deep trench that had been dug in the ground. The trench was filled with water from the sea.

Ham said, "What would that be?"

"We'll follow it," said Doc.

The water-filled trench led back through a narrow ravine. Shortly they came upon the metal shack built deep in the woods. There were tools and equipment, rusted with age. Nearby there was an odd-looking structure.

It appeared like the diggings found at the entrance to a mine shaft built inside a hillside. The deep, water-filled trench led right up to it.

"Danged if that doesn't look like a mine!" exclaimed Monk.

"It is," said Doc. "And someone built this trench and flooded it with water from the sea, so that it would be temporarily useless."

"Say!" cried Monk. "I remember reading how the Japs pulled that trick in some of the islands they invaded early in the war. Some of them were even gold mines!"

"That," Doc Savage said, "appears to be the secret that Jonathan Treat has been protecting so carefully."

They made an attempt to enter the diggings. They did this by walking, like burros, along a narrow edge of the trench that was filled with water. They managed to move partway underground, striking matches to light their way.

Then Doc said, "We can't make it. The shaft is dropping slightly downgrade. It will be filled with water."

Renny thought a moment. "You know," he said, "given the proper equipment, this water could be pumped out. And this trench leading in from the sea could be blocked off."

"I've been thinking of that," Doc said.

They started back toward the entrance to the shaft. Doc was at the head of the narrow, slow-moving line.

He had just reached the exit into the open when the rifle cracked out. Lead

slammed into the wooden post near him. He leaped back.

ANOTHER shot followed shortly. Doc's sharp ears caught a sound in the stillness that followed the report of the shot.

He said: "Whoever it is, is using a single-action rifle. It means he has to spend a moment between each shot to pump another shell into the chamber. Immediately after he fires again, I'm going to make a break for it. Everyone wait inside here!"

Alvin Treat said fearfully, "Doc'll never make it."

"You don't know how fast he can move," said Monk. They waited. The bronze man was crouched down just inside the shaft entrance. The nearest trees were a dozen yards away.

The shot came. It splintered woodwork above their heads.

Doc was gone. He moved with blinding speed. Another shot came fast, but not fast enough. Doc was safe, and they could not see him at all.

Silence followed.

Silence that stretched into long minutes. There was no sign from the woods, no indication of Doc Savage's whereabouts.

"Dammit," muttered Monk, "why didn't I bring that machine gun?"

"Because," Ham told him, "maybe Doc didn't *want* any shooting. He knows what he's doing."

Almost an hour passed. Ham had to restrain his restless partner from trying to escape.

Suddenly they all heard the shout.

It came again.

It was Doc.

They hurried from the protection of the shaft. Doc was accompanied by a big, gray-haired figure. The man looked to be about sixty, but he was solidly built, walked with a springy stride.

They saw that Doc carried a rifle now.

The big, gray-haired man had not shaved for many days. His features were burned from the sun.

Coming up to them, Doc said, "Here he is, Alvin."

Alvin Treat rushed forward. He flung his arm around the older man's shoulders.

"Jonathan!" he cried. He was trembling with emotion.



WALKING back toward the boat, Jonathan Treat told them, "I thought I was pretty good at stalking anything on this island. Luckily, though, Doc Savage, here, stalked *me*. He nailed me completely off guard." He looked relieved. "Thank heavens he did. I might have killed you all."

Doc said quietly, "A man who has been a target for death as long as you have, becomes quite primitive in his instincts. I don't blame you."

Apparently Doc had already explained a part of what had happened in the States, for the millionaire said, "When I knew I was

marked for death, I tried to get that message through to James. Then I came here alone. It was the only safe place I knew of. I had a feeling Doc Savage would investigate when he didn't hear from me. I've been biding my time."

It was Alvin who asked, "What's in the mine, Jonathan?"

"Gold!" the gray-haired millionaire said. "I discovered it just before the war. I've worked these islands all my life. I knew that someday I'd strike something like this. There is a solid, heavy vein of gold running straight through the island." They had reached the shore. Tod Treat was sitting there on the edge of the PT boat, his legs dangling over-side.

Monk remarked, "That little buzzard must be feeling better, otherwise he'd sure as hell fall overside!"

Jonathan Treat drew up short as they approached a narrow string-piece that was the dock leading out to the craft. Seeing Tod Treat, he called out to the man with the wild-looking hair, "Hello, there, you old coot! Still trying to fool the world with that hideous wig, I see. You look a lot more natural bald."

Unobserved by anyone else, Doc Savage had been watching the millionaire closely as they approached the boat. Now Doc quickly put out a hand and detained the millionaire from moving forward. He said something quietly.

Jonathan Treat exclaimed: "Hell, yes! Bald as a bat!"

Renny heard the comment. He jerked around and stared.

The little man on the boat heard it also. He leaped to his feet, dashed into the cabin.

Doc Savage shouted. "*Look out! All of you!*"

Little Tod Treat reappeared almost immediately with the sub-machine gun in his hand. He screamed at them:

"And now, my friends, I have *all* of you! Here's where I finally take over!"

Doc's arm flung out in a long arc just as Tod brought the weapon up to firing angle. Something flew through the air. At the same time the gun started chattering.

Everyone had flung himself to the ground. There was a sound like a small explosion. A great black cloud billowed over the deck of the boat. It completely enveloped Tod Treat.

His shooting, as a result, was wild. He was completely confused by the blackness that choked and blinded him.

Doc Savage was able to capture him before he shot anyone.

LATER, Doc told them, "We've always wondered who the bald-headed man was. He appeared once, briefly, at the airport in Chicago." He turned to Renny. "But that was Tod. He was on the flight in from Denver. He wore the black wig and the heavy glasses. I found them in the suitcase that Randall brought back from that shady hotel."

Alvin Treat said, "And at Salt Lake, when we were grounded! No wonder Tod carried that suitcase with him when he said he was going to the hotel for the night. He merely waited a bit, took off the fake gray wig, put on the black one, came back and got brother Lemuel and murdered him. Then he hurried into town and stayed at the hotel. That was his alibi. Lemuel probably wondered what it was all about when he saw Tod with a black wig and went with him out of curiosity."

Doc nodded. He said:

"When Tod had eliminated all of you, and finally reached Jonathan himself"—he turned and looked at the gray-haired millionaire—"he would have come into the fortune. He was the last one left in the will. Isn't that correct, sir?"

Jonathan said, "That's correct."

And later, the millionaire told them, "I hardly ever knew that child Sally. So she's marrying this fellow named Randall, eh?" There was a bright twinkle in his eyes. "She must be a wonderful girl. I think a nice wedding present is in order, don't you?"

Monk said, "She'll probably scratch our eyes out if we don't hurry up and get her out of that jail."

THEY landed at Manila the next morning. Monk and Ham immediately went on ahead to arrange about release of the girl. Little Tod Treat was turned over to the local authorities. It would only take one murder to hang him, and he had already confessed working with Herman Treat in the death plot.

Ham had remarked, "He probably even planned to do away with Herman after he had served his purpose here in Manila."

The two aides hurried to the jail.

Sally Treat turned out to be a vision that set their pulses tingling. And their thoughts to scheming.

Monk told her, "Ham has some errands to do, so I'll accompany you to the hotel."

Ham said, "Liar! Don't believe him, Sally! Don't have anything to do with him. He's married and has thirteen homely kids!"

Sally Treat arrived at the hotel where Doc and the others were staying. She arrived alone. She went directly to the bronze man.

"I think," she said worriedly, "you'd better do something about Monk and Ham."

"Why?"

"They got into a fight," said Sally.

"Fighting is one of their pastimes," Doc said, smiling a little.

"Just the same," said the girl, "you'd better do something. They're locked up there at the jail. They're being held in separate cells!"

THE END

