

THE DEVIL GENGHIS

A Doc Savage Adventure by Kenneth Robeson

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THE DEVIL GENGHIS

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Chapter I. A MYSTERY MOVING SOUTH

It was too bad the dog could not talk.

The dog came yelping and kiyoodling across the ice at a dead run. It was an Eskimo dog. The dog stopped in front of an igloo and had a fit.

The dog seemed to be trying to bite something in the air above it. It kept jumping up and snapping its teeth. For hours it just sprang high and snapped its jaws.

The Eskimos stood around and wondered what on earth.

Or maybe it would not have helped if the dog could talk.

The Eskimo could talk. It didn't help in his case.

The Eskimo was a hunter named Kummik. He could speak the Eskimo language, and he could also say, "Hello, baby, how about a nice juicy kiss?" just as plain as anything.

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An explorer with a certain variety of humor had taught him that, and told him it was the proper way to greet a white man. Kummik could also say, "By Jiminy, you're big and fat and as ugly as a mud fence!" The explorer had taught Kummik those words, also, and advised him they were the correct greeting for a white woman.

This Eskimo named Kummik went out hunting on the arctic ice.

It was not particularly cold. A white man, an inhabitant of Missouri, for example, would have thought it was pretty chilly; but in the estimation of the Eskimos, it was just good hunting weather. Only about fifteen below zero. It was cloudy and rather dark, for the six-months-long winter had begun. The wind, which was getting a running start up around the North Pole somewhere, blew hard and scooped up much snow and drove it along in stinging, stifling clouds, so that the effect was something like a western Kansas dust storm. Except that this was snow.

The Eskimo came back as naked as the day he was born.

He still had his spear.

if he had just been naked, and carrying a spear, the other Eskimos would not have been particularly shocked, although they might have done some wondering. These Eskimos lived farther north than any others, so no one bothered them, except a genuine explorer now and then – but only genuine explorers.

The drawing-room explorers never got this far, not only because it was a long way north, but because this spot in the arctic was surrounded by some very tough traveling. At any rate, the Eskimos had escaped the white man; so they had escaped modesty.

Hence the Eskimos did not have any modesty to be shocked when their fellow citizen named Kummik came galloping back to the igloo village without a stitch of clothes – rather, without a hair of clothes, since his garments had been made of furs.

There was plenty else to shock them.

THE spear Kummik carried was the short type of hunting spear called an oonapik. It was made up of a wood shaft – wood was very valuable here in the ice wastes – and a point of bone, which was not so valuable. The spear was used to harpoon ogiuk, the seal, was employed to stick nanook, the bear; and occasionally, it was used to give little innukr, the kids, a few chastising whacks.

Kummik was using his spear to jab, stab and belabor the air over his head.

Now Kummik had always been a sennayo. A sennayo is a good worker, a family man, an excellent provider. A sennayo is the equivalent of a good Missouri farmer who is on the school board. And Kummik was a sennayo.

It was unusual for a fellow like Kummik to be stabbing at the air over his head with a spear.

Moreover, there was nothing but air over his head.

It was so strange that a legend was at once made up about it, and will probably go down through time to puzzle and awe future generations of little innuks.

Kummik, the Eskimo, kept jumping around and wielding his spear. He fought a great battle right there among the igloos, surrounded by astounded Eskimos. He fought for hours. He seemed unaware of the other Eskimos,

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and he did not call on them for help. He went at it on his own. He would jab with his spear, leaping up. Then he would retreat, holding his spear ready, and suddenly stab again with all his might.

It was comical; but nobody laughed.

The expression on Kummik's face kept anyone from laughing. The expression was horrible. It consisted of rage, desperation and utter terror.

Kummik's fight was so real, but nothing was there for him to fight.

Kummik never uttered a word.

There probably is not a primitive people who do not believe an invisible devil drops around to haunt them occasionally. In the case of these Eskimos, this undesired fellow was an evil spirit called Tongak.

The existence of Tongak had been vaguely discussed at times by the Eskimos, and he'd been used as bogey man to frighten little innuks out of wandering off bear hunting with their toy spears.

But here was a grown man fighting Tongak, the evil spirit.

"What will we do about this?"

Decision was simple. Only Kummik saw Tongak, so the spirit devil must be after Kummik alone. Better let him have Kummik. Better stop Kummik from fighting the devil, before the devil got aggravated about it. Better cooperate with the devil, and please him, in hopes he would go away.

So the other Eskimos grabbed Kummik, tied him hand and foot, and left him.

Sure enough, very soon the Tongak got Kummik's spirit, and went away to Eskimoland again. At any rate, Kummik died.

An American doctor, skeptical about Tongak, would have said Kummik froze to death.

An American doctor would have done something with Kummik that was probably more terrible than what his fellow Eskimos did to him.

An American doctor would have put Kummik in an insane asylum. Like the English doctors did to Fogarty-Smith, for example.

Fogarty-Smith was an aviator, and a capable one, who had a reputation for brave flying, as well as being known as the man who at one time held the England to Australia speed flying record. He was a tall, quiet man, well-liked.

It was Fogarty-Smith's job to fly supplies to the English weather observing station on the arctic ice pack in the far north. There was currently an international epidemic of arctic weather observing, and the ice pack station was England's contribution. Fogarty-Smith flew food and fan mail up to the meteorologists.

One gloomy day, Fogarty-Smith took off from the ice pack weather station to fly back to England. He left in his plane. Fourteen hours later, Fogarty-Smith came back to the weather station – on foot.

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He had his clothes. He didn't have his plane. The behavior of Fogarty–Smith completely confounded and horrified the arctic weather station personnel, from head meteorologist to newspaper correspondent.

But then, the same kind of behavior had confounded the Eskimos.

There seemed to be nothing in the air for Fogarty–Smith to be fighting, either.

He had saved some cartridges for his pistol. He shot those away at nothing overhead. He began hurling his empty gun at whatever it was. He would throw the gun as hard as he could, then rim and get it and throw it again.

Fogarty–Smith never uttered a word.

They never found Fogarty–Smith's airplane.

The meteorologists turned seamsters and made a strait jacket in which Fogarty–Smith was taken to England, where he was confined to a padded cell while learned psychiatrists and doctors examined him, shook their heads, gave out statements full of technical multisyllabled onomatopocian nomenclature which didn't mean a thing.

The English believed that a man could suffer such shock and exposure that he would go insane.

The Eskimos had thought an evil spirit called a Tongak could get after a man.

One was as screwy as the other, in this case.

The mystery was moving south.

IN the south of France there is a pleasant spot known as the Riviera, a delightful stretch of seashore widely renowned as a spa, a watering place, a playground for grown-ups, a lovely section which probably is to Europeans what Florida or southern California is to those who live in the United States. If the alluring printed descriptions of the Riviera are to be believed, this balmy Valhalla combines the good qualities of both Florida and California, with some added. Here Europe goes to bask in the sun, to make love.

Park Crater was there to make love.

The sun didn't intrigue Park particularly, and certainly he didn't need it, because he always seemed to look as though he had a strikingly healthy suntan. Park had a little Latin blood in him. The Latins are reported to be great lovers. In Park's case, there wasn't any doubt.

No other lad had ever made the grade with Toni Lash.

Park Crater's business was making love. He didn't need to have any other kinds of business. A young man who had a father who'd drilled two thousand oil wells and struck oil with one thousand of them did not need to have any other business. Park Crater's father had done that.

Park Crater was so handsome that the other boys all threw rocks at him at school. Park threw just as many rocks back at them, and later practiced up until he was intercollegiate boxing champ. He was no sissy.

Park was a nice guy. He was many a mother's idea of first-class son-in-law material.

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Toni Lash liked Park Crater. Whether Toni Lash's feelings went any deeper, whether she loved Park, only she knew. It was certain that no one else knew, because Toni Lash was an unfathomable person.

Toni Lash was the current mystery woman of the Riviera. The reigning sensation. She was tall, darkhaired and – well, striking was the only word. She struck the men breathless. She made the other women, especially the married ones, feel as though they were being shot at.

"Great Jehoshaphat!" gasped Park Crater when he first saw her.

Cleopatra could take a back seat. So could all the current beauties of stage, screen and society, as far as Park was concerned. When Toni Lash smiled, every man in sight felt his toes curl; and Park discovered himself getting selfish and wishing that the toe curling could be confined exclusively to himself.

"Love!" exclaimed Park. "It must be love."

Park Crater and glorious Toni Lash had been seeing a great deal of each other for about six weeks.

One night Park arrived, carrying a club, unable to speak a word, and wearing an expression of indescribable terror.

Park was using the club to fight the empty air about his head. Toni Lash, with presence of mind, tried to quiet him, calling her servants to help, and later she summoned the best doctors. They tried holding Park Crater in a bathtub full of warm water for hours, a treatment which will usually calm the most violent cases of insanity.

But it was of no appreciable benefit in this instance. Park Crater went to the best Riviera hospital, with six strong men holding his arms and legs.

Toni Lash went into seclusion in her villa. After she had grieved two days, she had a visitor.

"Oh," she said. "I saw you last week. I thought you had gone away."

AS the young woman looked at her visitor, there was awe and dislike on her grieved face, but fascination, too, almost as though the visitor were a serpent and she a weakened bird.

The visitor did not have a snaky look. There was something about him that was a great deal worse. But it was hard to define. At first glance, the man just seemed to be a long sack of bones with a thin, poetic face and a pair of smoldering, compelling eyes.

Toni Lash said, "I checked up on the newspaper stories after I saw you last week. You are supposed to be dead."

Something strange and hideous appeared, as a brief flicker of emotion, on the man's long poetic face. It was as though his face had turned fiercely animal for a moment.

"Perhaps I am dead, and come back to haunt people," he said. Then he laughed grimly.

He wore solid gray. Every article of clothing on him was gray – shoes, socks, suit, tie, shirt, hat – all exactly the same shade of gray.

"You were wearing all the same shade of blue the last time I saw you," Toni Lash said. "You seem to –"

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"Let us not talk of small things," the long, sinister man said quietly. "I have heard of your grief."

Toni Lash bit her lips.

"You loved Park Crater, did you not?" the man asked.

Toni Lash nodded quickly, and tears came. "You should forget," the man said. The awful expression flickered on his face again. "will you do a job for me?"

"Is it dangerous?" the girl asked.

"Very," the man said frankly.

"I'll do it," Toni Lash said with a kind of desperation.

One day soon, the sun worshipers of the Riviera noticed that the windows of Toni Lash's villa were boarded up tight. Toni Lash had gone away.

The impression got around that Park Crater had gone mad – over beautiful Toni Lash.

The idea was as screwy as those about the dog, about Kummik the Eskimo, and about Fogarty-Smith the inventor.

The mystery had only moved southward.

Like something that had taken three great strides, the mystery had come south as far as the Riviera. Starting in the vicinity of the North Pole, it had left a grisly footprint at the Eskimo village, another footprint at the English weather station on the ice pack, and a third track on the Riviera.

It was gathering itself now, getting ready to spring all the way across the Atlantic and stamp with both feet on a man in New York City.

Chapter II. A MYSTERY IN GOTHAM

DARKNESS had fallen over New York City, the sky having turned into a murky mantle on which a myriad of pleasant stars were scattered, while the lights of the city, particularly those in the theatrical district along midtown Broadway, were so clustered and brilliant that they threw a soft glow high toward the night heavens. The streets were a happy rumble of traffic sounds, for this was the hour around eight o'clock in the evening when Gothamites went to the theater.

Clark Savage, Jr., rode through the city in a taxicab.

The giant man of bronze, who was better known as Doc Savage, was breaking a personal rule, doing something he almost never did. He was preparing to appear on a stage, before an audience, and exhibit one of his many abilities.

Now he rode in a taxicab, heading toward huge and famous Metropolitan Hall, where he was to stand on a stage and play a violin. Later in the program, he understood he was scheduled to "lick a licorice stick" and "send out with some hep cats," which was the current slang way of saying he was to play a clarinet with a good orchestra. He did not mind mixing classical music with popular "swing," because he had no false,

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highbrow ideas about what music should be.

Still, he would as soon not have done this.

There would be an audience – his appearance had been advertised in the newspapers – and among the audience might possibly be some enemies. A great many men would like to see an end to him, he knew. This was natural, because of his unusual career of righting wrongs which the law did not seem able to remedy.

He did not feel any special fear, for he had been in real danger too many times before. Also he had learned that fear was a bad thing to allow in the mind when one followed a career such as his. For the rest, he knew he would enjoy the program tonight, because he liked all types of music, although he rarely had a chance to enjoy it.

Doc Savage had not been able to enjoy many of the pleasant things in the life of a normal man. From infancy, he had been trained by elderly, learned scientists who had forgotten how to play; and sometimes he wondered if this unusual upbringing didn't cause him to unconsciously regard men and women with reference to the psychological classification of their minds and how many chemical elements their bodies contained.

Tonight, he would enjoy himself.

He was appearing in Metropolitan Hall because the proceeds were going to a really deserving charity.

His appearance was scheduled for late in the program, and he intended to find a quiet spot in the audience where he could sit unobserved and enjoy the early numbers.

He did not expect to be noticed. As a matter of fact, he had no public reputation at all as a musician, so he doubted very much that his name among the artists would bring anyone near Metropolitan Hall tonight.

As the taxicab drew nearer Metropolitan Hall, it began stopping with increased frequency. Traffic was becoming unaccountably thick. Finally, the cab became wedged in a traffic jam and could not move.

"Just what," Doc Savage asked, "seems to be wrong?"

His voice was deep and gave an impression of controlled power.

"There's umpteen thousand people," the taxi driver explained. "Lookit 'em! The whole block is packed."

This seemed to be a fact.

The taxi driver said, "Pay me, if you don't mind."

Doc paid him. The taxi driver then got out and slammed the door.

"I'm gonna go get a look at the guy, too," he said.

"A look at who?" Doc asked, surprised. The driver snorted at such ignorance.

"Doc Savage is gonna be here tonight," he said. "Who else d'you think that mob is waitin' to see?"

The driver left, hornning people aside with his elbows.

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DOC Savage sat in the cab a few moments. He made, unconsciously, a tiny trilling note which came from deep in his throat somewhere, a sound as weird and exotic as the call of a strange bird in a tropical jungle. This sound was an absent-minded habit when he was mentally perturbed.

He began to feel an attack of stage fright. During the taxi ride, he had looked forward to enjoying some music quietly. He was in a mellow, human mood, and it was a shock to find a packed, shoving throng hoping to get a glimpse of him.

Maybe the taxi driver was wrong.

Doc turned up his dark coat collar, pulled his black hat down, tucked violin and clarinet under an arm, and got out of the cab.

He accosted a man with, "Just what is going on?"

"Doc Savage is to be here," the man said. "Damn the luck! I don't think I'm gonna be able to get within a block of the door."

That was that.

Realizing that his height put him head and shoulders above the crowd, Doc assumed a stoop.

The crowd milled and shoved. Policemen blew whistles and were helpless. At the entrance to Metropolitan Hall, a battery of powerful mercury-vapor floodlights blazed so that motion pictures could be taken, and a number of movie cameras were visible, mounted on top of cars.

Doc's stage fright got worse. He had always been embarrassed by public attention, and right now the last thing he felt like doing was to run a gauntlet as this one.

He discovered himself retreating, toying with the idea of telephoning that he was ill, a thought he put aside at once. He had promised to appear, and he always kept a promise.

He turned and walked, unnoticed, into the back street which ran along the rear of Metropolitan Hall. It was dark here, and there was no crowd, because there was no door into the Hall.

There were windows, however. But the lowest one was at a height about equal to a third story, and between it and the sidewalk was naked brick, evidently the back wall of the stage. Apparently ingress here was impossible.

Doc examined the wall, particularly a point where the bricks were outset a trifle in a kind of old-fashioned ornamental corner-piece. He was pleased. Removing his belt, he used it to sling violin and clarinet cases over his back.

Then he climbed. An observer would have said it was impossible – incredible. But the observer wouldn't have realized the kind of strength a lifetime of training had given the bronze man.

Having mounted carefully, Doc swung over to the window, found it unlocked, and entered. He stood now on a catwalk beside the huge scenery curtains. An iron stairway led downward, and he descended.

He was greeted profusely by the charity organization officials.

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"So you came early and secluded yourself upstairs!" they exclaimed.

Doc let it go at that.

An usher was dispatched to the entrance to announce that Doc Savage had arrived, and that there was no more standing room, and that the doors would be closed.

The audience inside heard the announcement and broke out in applause.

One in the audience did not applaud. This person was a woman. She looked incredulous, then disappointed, and springing to her feet, hurried to the front of Metropolitan Hall and began trying the doors of offices used by the management.

Visitors on the French Riviera a few weeks ago would have recognized the young woman as Toni Lash.

The young woman found an unlocked door, stepped through it into an empty office. Her first glance was to see if there was a window. There was.

A small flashlight came out of her bag. She went to the window, got her bearings and centered her attention on a second-story window in the building across the street.

She began blinking her flashlight, spelling out words in code.

"You fools," she flashed. "He is already inside."

The building across the street was of brick, many stories high, the first floor being occupied by a used-car show window. Adjoining the showroom, and also a part of the used-car establishment, was a doorway through which cars could be driven across the sidewalk into the building – or from the building to the street.

The girl stopped sending.

A light flashed from the window of the used-car building which she was watching.

"He could not be," the light signaled. "We have watched the entrance."

The girl's light replied in a long string of flashes that meant nothing but rage.

"Keep watching," her light ordered. "We may be able to get him when he leaves."

"OK," the man signaled from the used-car building window.

He shoved his flashlight in a coat pocket. He was a squat man with long arms, a reddish face and a tangle of blond hair. He was very well dressed. The tips of all ten of his fingers were masses of scar tissue – they had been burned with acid sometime in the past to destroy his fingerprint identity.

"Now what do you know about that?" he said disgustedly.

He had spoken to himself; there was no one else in the bar room with him. The one door stood open.

The man ran a hand absent-mindedly over the military type of machine gun which stood, squat and blue and ugly on its spraddled tripod, on a low table in front of the window, the muzzle pointing down into the street.

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The ammunition belt of the gun was draped across the table like a snake of brown canvas with lead-and-brass striping.

The cartridges in the belt were "mercy" bullets, a type of slug consisting of a hollow shell which contained a powerful drug that would cause unconsciousness rather than death.

On the other end of the table lay a gas mask.

The blond man with the marred fingers picked up the gas mask and dangled it from one hand as he descended the stairs.

An armored truck stood inside the closed doors which led to the street. The truck was painted white. Lettered on each of its sides was:

AMBULANCE

The white paint and the name on the armored truck gave it enough resemblance to an ambulance to fool casual observers.

"What's the word, Cautious?" greeted one of the men in the ambulance-fortress.

Cautious scowled at the men. There were four of them, assorted sizes. They wore white coverall suits to disguise their clothing. Bulletproof vests made their bodies bulky. Gas masks hung ready from their necks.

"Savage got in the Hall, somehow," Cautious explained sourly.

Chapter III. BRONZE MAN TAKEN

THE four men in charge of the ambulance-fortress frowned at Cautious. They were nervous, on edge; they did not like the idea of things going wrong.

"Thought you knew this Doc Savage by sight?" one growled.

Cautious looked them over. Cautious had a mobile face and he could make his expression vicious.

"I've seen his pictures," he said. "He didn't go in the front door. And, buddy – just remember who's running this."

"We ain't in no army!" the other said sourly. Cautious took a flat pistol out of a pocket. "At a time like this, there's only one answer to argument," he said, hardly changing tone or expression.

The other man swallowed. It suddenly dawned on him that he should be frightened.

"I ain't arguin'!" he said hoarsely. Previously, he had known Cautious only by reputation. Cautious was not a gangster; as to just what Cautious was there seemed to be some doubt. Cautious had the habit of disappearing from New York for long periods, and was reputed to be something of an international gadder.

The four ambulance-fortress attendants subsided. Cautious had hired them, but they knew he was working for the girl, Toni Lash. They were to seize Doc Savage – a job they did not like, since they had heard a great deal about Doc Savage. That they had been offered a startling sum of money to help was all they knew. Why

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Doc Savage was to be seized was a mystery.

"You took this job," Cautious told them grimly, "and don't think you won't go through with it!"

They looked at his gun, then assured him they would go through with it.

Cautious put the gun away and went back upstairs to the window. Standing beside the machine gun, he watched the entrance of Metropolitan Hall with fixed intensity.

He could hear a roar of applause coming from the Hall.

The applause was filling the interior of the great hall with deafening volume. There was hand-clapping, whistling, stamping.

Doc Savage, on the stage, did not look nearly as ill at ease as he felt. He had been trained to conceal his emotions. And certainly the skill with which he had played his classical number on the violin left no suspicion that he was not perfectly at home. The quickest and loudest applause had come from the members of the audience who really knew music.

Now the bronze man played the clarinet number with the swing orchestra. The result was a joyful uproar. No one had to have an advanced education in classical music to know here was a number well done. In the vernacular of swing, the boys "sent gate," "slapped jibe on the dog house," "busted hide" and "gripped that git box." They went to town. The "jitterbugs" in the audience got up and danced in the aisles. It was a tremendous success.

Doc Savage, putting his instruments in their cases, and walking along a passage to the front entrance, was in a thoughtful frame of mind. Suddenly, he was realizing just how far from normal was the life he had lived, and was living.

The gobble of the machine gun across the street was a complete surprise.

The gun burst was short. Ten shots. Doc went down.

One moment, he stood at the top of the entrance steps. There was an open space around him – police were holding the crowd back. Then he was tumbling down the steps.

He landed loosely. His great bronzed hands gripped his legs. He'd been hit only in the legs. He started to get up. His knees buckled. He crouched, still gripping his legs.

Then he slumped, a giant limp form. Turmoil had the crowd now. Some surged forward. Others fled. Police were helpless. There was screaming, yelling, angry shoving and frightened scrambling. The surface of the throng became a storm-tossed human sea.

Into that bedlam came the armored truck that looked like an ambulance, moving slowly. It had been equipped with a regulation siren, and now this moaned steadily. The vehicle nosed the crowd aside, reached Doc Savage.

The attendants sprang out. Their white coveralls gave them somewhat the appearance of ambulance attendants. And they had left their gas masks inside. There had, as yet, been no need to use tear gas.

"Stand aside!" they yelled. "We've got to get him to a hospital!"

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Doc Savage's limp form was rolled onto a stretcher, lifted into the fortress-ambulance. The attendants got in. So did two cops. That was not so good. But nothing was said.

The ambulance rolled. The siren frightened a path through the throng. Gathering speed, the disguised armored car rolled north.

"Hey!" exploded one of the two policemen riding inside. "You're not going toward the hos –"

A blackjack blow over the ear put him to sleep.

Simultaneously, the other cop got the same kind of an anesthetic.

Cautious peered back through the bars which separated the driver's seat from the rear of the armored truck. Cautious had managed to get aboard, and was riding with the driver.

"There's two squad cars of cops followin'," he said grimly. "Lay a few eggs."

The "eggs" were tear-gas bombs. The men tossed out a few. One police car left the road and knocked over a telephone pole. The other one stopped, and a few bullets from police guns hit the armored steel sides of the truck harmlessly. Then pursuit was left behind.

"Slow up," Cautious ordered, "and dump the two cops cut."

This was done.

The ambulance-fortress drove north at high speed, turned left, entered a dark patch of woods, and the men transferred Doc Savage to an innocent-looking sedan. The bronze man was still limp.

"Everybody been wearin' gloves?" Cautious demanded.

They had. White gloves. No fingerprints had been left.

"Make sure Savage ain't dead," Cautious ordered. "Sometimes the dope in them bullets is strong enough to kill a man."

"He's still alive," a man advised.

"Swell. Let's get going with him."

They went on in the sedan. Doc Savage made a considerable bulk on the rear floor boards, and they tossed a lap robe over him. The car traveled decorously enough so that no speed cops would be interested.

It had been a roadhouse. It was off the busy roads and patronized during the summer months by a certain type of clientele who did not care to be seen in the more popular places, but in the off season such as this there was not enough business to keep open. So the dive was closed.

"I'll leave this stuff here," he said, "so it won't get broke."

From his pocket, he drew a package, paperwrapped, which he placed on the table.

All the men disappeared into another part of the unused roadhouse.

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Doc Savage rolled over on the table and sat up.

The giant bronze man showed no indication of having been drugged, or of any other injury. Nor was he excited. His only emotion seemed to be an alert interest in what was going on. Listening, he could hear voices in a distant part of the roadhouse – Cautious was explaining how they would carry the box.

With movements that were astonishingly swift without appearing to be so, Doc Savage untied the cord around the package and removed the paper. A mass of cotton was revealed, and inside this, a hypodermic needle and a glass bottle containing a colorless liquid.

Doc uncorked the bottle, tested the odor of the contents at a distance, then at close range.

Swinging off the table, Doc went to the front door, moving with the practiced silence of a jungle thing. He emptied the bottle, dipped water from the rain barrel, rinsed the bottle thoroughly, then filled it with water and corked it.

Back in the roadhouse with ghostly silence and speed, he heard Cautious swearing at a man and accusing him of not lifting his share of the box. While that was going on, Doc whipped off the trousers of his dress suit.

The bronze man then removed a pair of undertrousers that somewhat resembled the lower portion of a suit of old-fashioned long underwear –except that this garment was made of a light, alloy chain mail that would stop a revolver bullet dead, and considerably discourage a rifle slug. It bore some smears where the mercy bullet had been stopped. Doc dropped the mail garment in the rain barrel.

It was a rambling, unlovely building which stuck on the side of a hill. There was a rain barrel under one eaves' spout. There were scrubby, wooded hills all around.

Cautious knocked open the door, and they carried Doc Savage inside and lifted him onto the table.

One of the men drew back, looked at the bronze man, and rubbed his jaw uneasily.

"I've heard a lot about that guy," he muttered. "If I thought half of it was true, a team of mules couldn't have pulled me into this."

"He's helpless enough now, isn't he?" Cautious demanded.

The other shrugged. "Just the same, the sooner I'm through and get my dough, the better."

Cautious laughed.

The laugh seemed to irritate the four men who had been hired to handle the ambulance.

"Just why," one demanded, "did we grab Savage?"

"Because you're getting paid for it, I thought," Cautious said dryly.

"I don't like your sass!" the man snapped.

"Suit yourself," Cautious moved his shoulders. "But why Savage was grabbed is something you'll have to take out in guessing. I'm not putting out."

THE DEVIL GENGHIS

There was some scowling, but Cautious had a reputation with a gun; furthermore, he was the man who was going to pay them, so the four hired men subsided.

"In the back room," Cautious said, "is a box. We'll bring that in."

"That box is damned heavy," one of the men complained.

"I'll help you," Cautious offered.

They all started for the door, then Cautious turned and came back to the table on which Doc Savage lay.

With his fingers, he broke his leg skin slightly in three places, just enough to make it appear that the mercy bullets might have damaged him.

He was back on the table, looking as unconscious as ever, when Cautious and his men came in, panting and stumbling with the weight of the box.

They put the box down where Doc could see it through narrowed lids.

The box was slightly less than eight feet long, over three wide, not quite as high, and made of oak. It had brass handles.

Cautious wiped off perspiration, came over, examined Doc Savage. He tested the wrist pulse, then felt the hardness of the bronze man's muscles, astonished.

"I'd sure hate to be in the ring with this guy," he muttered.

He tugged up Doc's trousers legs and examined the broken places in the skin which were leaking a little crimson.

"Never seen them mercy bullets work better," he said. "I had a guy fix 'em up for me one time when I had a contract to get some live animals out of Africa for a zoo." He laughed grimly. "That was when I had an attack of conscience, and made an honest living for a while."

Cautious stopped reminiscing and turned to the package, which Doc had rewrapped. After shaking the bottle, Cautious filled the hypo.

He emptied about half the contents of the small bottle into Doc Savage's cabled forearm.

One of the others asked, "What is that?"

"It's a drug," Cautious explained, "that will knock him out for about a week."

Cautious opened the box. It was perforated with ventilating holes. Inside was an ordinary cheap coffin, also equipped with ventilating apertures.

"Gimme a hand," Cautious ordered.

They put Doc Savage in the coffin. Then they began nailing the lid.

"He'll keep swell in there," Cautious declared, "and I'll take a look now and then to be sure he's all right."

THE DEVIL GENGHIS

There is something about being nailed up in a coffin that plays bob with the strongest kind of an intention. Doc Savage had resolved to play along with these fellows in hopes of solving the complete mystery of what it was all about. But if Cautious had not spoken assurance that they intended to keep their "corpse" alive, Doc Savage would probably have made a break for freedom.

It must have been six hours later when Doc Savage heard Cautious say, "OK, boys. Here's where he stays parked for the next week. I'll pay you off now."

In the six hours, the rough box and the coffin had been lugged out of the roadhouse, hauled some distance in a truck, unloaded, rolled around on a hand truck, and finally deposited with a thump, no way of knowing where.

Doc lay still, giving Cautious time to depart. To his ears, very faintly, came a deep moan. This sound repeated after a moment.

The bronze man shifted around, set himself, and began trying to break out. Coffins, fortunately, do not have locks. But the nails in the rough box lid were a different proposition, particularly since it was a matter of forcing all of them at once.

He turned over, arched his back against the lid, and mighty muscles coiled in bunches. The lid nails pulled out, squealing.

Doc stepped out of the coffin.

Darkness surrounded him, and it was rather smelly. Conscientious exercise had given Doc's nostrils a sensitivity equal to that of many animals, and he identified the odor in the air as salt water, bilge, cargo and tarred rope.

He appeared to be in a steamship hold. The moaning sound came again, a steamer foghorn.

Moving around in the darkness, exploring, he learned that the coffin was part of a general steamer cargo. He climbed over boxes and bales toward the glint of stars, reached a hatch.

He climbed out on deck. It was a large ship, apparently a passenger liner which carried only a small amount of cargo. The bridge stood gaunt and white in the murk, and cargo booms stuck up like great stiff wooden fingers beside the hatch.

The eastward sky had a ruddy, blushing tint that indicated the hour was near dawn.

Doc Savage swung hand over hand down a mooring line to the covered dock, and became a silent, moving part of the darkness.

Chapter IV. ESCORT FOR A COFFIN

LIEUTENANT Col. Andrew Blodgett Monk Mayfair had once been approached by a motion-picture producer who had assured Monk that he could make a fortune as a cinema actor. Monk, who had always had an eye for a pretty girl, thought of all the beautiful damsels in Hollywood, and grew rather enthusiastic about the idea. However –

"Why," the producer said, "you'd make Frankenstein and King Kong look like pets for babies."

THE DEVIL GENGHIS

So Monk grinned his homely biggest to cover his broken heart, and turned the film offer down, explaining that he already had made a fortune.

Monk was not really sensitive about his looks. In fact, his homeliness seemed to be an advantage with the fair sex. It hypnotized the girls, or something.

Monk already had the fortune, too, every nickel of which he'd made himself. He was one of the world's greatest industrial chemists, although he didn't look it, being almost as wide as he was tall, equipped with a bullet head, an oversized mouth, a coat of reddish hair, and other apish characteristics.

Monk also had a swell time out of life. He loved excitement.

He was an assistant to Doc Savage, so he got plenty of excitement.

Just now, Monk Mayfair was jumping up and down in Doc's headquarters, shaking both fists over his head, and roaring like a foghorn.

"You shyster!" he howled. "You've swindled so many clients you just can't get outta the habit!"

The man who confronted Monk was lean-waisted, rather handsome, with the large, mobile mouth of an orator. The striking thing about him, however, was his clothing. His garments were impeccable perfection. He carried a black cane.

This man was Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks, called Ham by people who thought they could outrun him, and by his very close friends. He was a noted lawyer, another Doc Savage aid, and did not like the nickname of Ham, which had arisen out of a distressing incident in his past that had to do with hogs.

Ham shook his cane at Monk.

"You gossoon!" he yelled. "I'm good at adding!"

"At adding insult to injury, maybe!" Monk roared. "I claim you gyped me!"

Monk normally had a small, childlike voice, but when he got excited, his listeners felt inclined to put their fingers in their ears.

"I paid close attention to the bill," Ham snapped.

Monk snorted his loudest. "There's only two ways of gettin' your attention," he barked.

"And what are they?" Ham demanded loftily.

"Flutter a skirt, or rattle money."

Ham flourished his cane.

"I am on the verge," he said grimly, "of whittling an arm off you!"

"Whittle away, ambulance-chaser!" Monk invited.

THE DEVIL GENGHIS

They had been threatening to slaughter each other ever since anyone could remember. Any small item in their lives was good for a rousing squabble. Just now, it was a matter of three cents sales tax out of which Monk claimed Ham had gypped him when they settled the restaurant check for their breakfast.

Since they were threatening to mangle each other over three cents, they were obviously the best of friends.

They suspended their quarrel to look at Doc Savage, who had just entered.

Monk pointed at Doc's legs.

"You fall down and tear your pants?" the homely chemist asked.

Except for being a little disheveled, Doc Savage was outwardly undisturbed. But there was a certain lively interest in his eyes. They were strange eyes, like pools of flake gold, and when the bronze giant was animated, the flake gold seemed to be disturbed by tiny winds.

"Evidently," Doc said, "you have not read the morning newspapers."

Monk shook his head. "We just got out of bed."

Doc Savage spread a morning newspaper on the inlaid table which, with the great safe, comprised the principal furniture in his headquarters reception room. Monk examined the newspaper. While he was reading, morning wind came in through the window and stirred the apish chemist's rusty-red hair.

Below the windows the city was spread, the tops of the skyscrapers blushing crimson in the morning sun. All the buildings seemed to lie below the window, for the Doc Savage headquarters occupied the top floor of one of the tallest buildings in the city. High up here, the wind was strong and pushed coolly against Monk's astonished face.

"Blazes!" Monk exploded, as he read:

DOCSAVAGE BELIEVED KILLED; MACHINE GUNNED AND BODY STOLEN

The headlines were all over the front page in black letters three inches high.

"Blazes!" Monk said again. He looked disappointed. "Daggone it! I've been missin' excitement!"

Rapidly and briefly, Doc Savage narrated the night's happenings, beginning with the machine gun blast when he walked out of Metropolitan Halt, and ending with his being deposited, encased in a coffin, in a liner's cargo hold

Monk swallowed several times, got his astonishment down

"Doc that's some story!" he gulped. "But on thing is missin!"

"What?"

"Reasons – why'd it happen?"

Doc said, "I never heard of this fellow, Cautious, before."

THE DEVIL GENGHIS

"Then why should he try to grab you?"

Doc did not answer.

Monk continued, "Where in blazes were they gonna take you in that coffin?"

"The liner is scheduled to sail to Mediterranean ports," Doc said.

The bronze man went into the adjoining rooms, a vast library, then into an amazingly complete laboratory. He began assembling the assortment of metal equipment cases which they usually took with them on trips.

Monk grinned, shadow-boxed around Ham.

"Gitcher extra shirt, shyster," he said. "The one you wear on a boat."

Ham had never gone anywhere equipped only with a mere shirt. A wardrobe trunk of the size of a piano box was his idea of a minimum wardrobe for an ocean voyage.

Ham had fourteen suitcases and two trunks sent to the liner. Then he discovered that they were to keep under cover, and he would have no opportunity to flaunt his wardrobe.

"Haw, haw!" Monk said.

Doc Savage visited the hold and placed a piece of apparatus in the coffin. The mechanism consisted of a storage battery which ran a motor that slowly opened and closed a bellows of a type used to blow smoke into beehives.

When the coffin was nailed up again, the bellows made sounds very much resembling someone breathing inside the box.

"But this Cautious," Monk ventured, "is liable to open the thing up to feed you. He's gonna be right disappointed to find that gimcrack."

"Chances are Cautious will not try to feed me for a day or two," Doc explained. "We will watch him. When we see him get food, I will accommodate him by getting back in the coffin."

The liner sailed at noon.

Doc Savage and his two associates concentrated on learning what was behind Doc being seized, drugged and taken abroad in a coffin.

As Monk remarked, "The reason is as hard to find as a lawyer's conscience.

The remark caused Ham to go around muttering to himself.

THE ship was the Maritonia. She was a new craft, built after the European nations had given up the race to see which could construct the biggest sea-going white elephant. The Maritonia was several hundred feet long, a well-made boat, and while she wasn't likely to gain the transatlantic speed record, neither did her aft sections shake like a carnival South Seas dancer while she was steaming.

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Ham had favored the royal suite, but there was a little cluster of three cabins, set apart by themselves, and the bronze man had engaged those.

They kept under cover the entire first day at sea. The next afternoon, Ham killed time by taking his wardrobe out and arranging it. There was plenty of time.

Doc stated, "We do not want Cautious to get scared, and have a plane come out and take him off the liner."

"You think we'll learn something by watchin' him?" Monk asked.

"He thinks he is taking me to Europe," Doc explained. "If we play along with him, we should learn something."

Monk spent the afternoon teaching Habeas Corpus new tricks. Habeas Corpus was Monk's pet pig. Habeas was not exactly a pig in age, for Monk had picked him up years ago in Arabia. But the vicissitudes of Habeas's youth – Ham insisted it was the hog's natural cussedness – had stunted him, and Habeas was pig-sized, with long doglike legs, and ears which resembled misplaced wings.

Ham, the dapper lawyer, also had a pet – Chemistry. Chemistry was a chimpanzee. At least, Ham insisted Chemistry was a pedigreed chimpanzee, although Monk called Chemistry the "What is it?" and other things. Monk didn't care for Chemistry; nor did Chemistry care for Monk, or for Habeas Corpus, Monk's pet. The four of them, Monk, Ham and their pets, all squabbling at once, was a bedlam worth hearing.

It was an extremely calm afternoon, with the ship hardly rolling, so it was probable most of the passengers would turn up in the dining room for their dinners.

Shortly before dinner time, a steward delivered a wheel chair to Doc Savage's cabin.

"What the blazes!" Monk said.

The reason for the wheel chair became apparent when Doc put on a white wig, a pokey-looking old hat, and wrinkled his face by applying a coat of colloidal substance which, as it hardened, he molded into wrinkles; then he applied ordinary theatrical make-up to get a natural enough effect. Disguised as an old lady, Doc sat in the chair, tucked the steamer rug in around his legs.

Doc rolled, in his wheel chair, to the dining room, where he sighted the man who called himself Cautious.

That night, Cautious haunted the bar, drank sensibly, attended the ship's movie, strolled the deck in the chill moonlight – and paid a short visit to the box in the hold. Around midnight, he sat in the bar and toyed with a nightcap, apparently making innumerable wet rings on the table with the glass. Then he went to bed.

Doc rolled his wheel chair past the table where Cautious had sat, but his trained eye picked up no trace of any kind of message.

"That's too bad," Ham said when he learned results of the sleuthing. "I drew the same thing, sitting here looking at Monk."

"Drew what?" Monk demanded.

"A blank," Ham said unkindly.

THE DEVIL GENGHIS

The following day was an innocent one for Cautious. He did the ordinary things – except for another short visit to the hold. That night, he again sat in the bar with his nightcap and made circles with the bottom of his wet glass; then he went to bed.

This time, Doc rolled his wheel chair to the table that Cautious had vacated. The table stood in a secluded corner.

Doc drew a bottle out of with the contents, wet a napkin with the contents, and blotted the table top, dampening it. Then he sat watching.

The bottle contained one of the common chemicals used to bring out secret writing. The stuff was much used by spy operatives.

Faint marks appeared on the table. Only chicken tracks at first; then they filled out and became a message. Doc read:

He's all right. Can hear him breathing in the box. Will meet you 2 A.M. in cabin D-27.

With the napkin, Doc wiped the message away. On the chance that Cautious had been using this method to leave a message for someone, Doc had provided himself with some of the chemical used to make the writing. With this, he replaced Cautious's message, imitating the handwriting.

He rolled his wheel chair across the room and waited.

WHEN he saw her, he felt the same thing that other men always felt. He was human, in spite of the training that had tried to make him a scientific product. And she was beautiful. She was probably, he thought, the most striking feminine creature he had ever seen.

She came into the bar quietly, and although she made no effort to be conspicuous, it was as though a magnet had come into the room. Every eye followed the girl—but only one drunk stared openly, because there was a regal air about her that said, "Kindly keep your distance."

"Who is she?" he asked a waiter.

The question was appropriate enough. Anyone would want to know the identity of such a girl.

"Her name," the waiter said, "is Toni Lash."

It was obvious that a number of others had asked the same question.

Toni Lash sat alone. Doc admired the way in which she brought out the message, and read it. Had he not known what she was doing, he would hardly have noticed.

"This woman," he said to himself, "has been an espionage agent. And she is very clever."

He watched, without appearing to do so, as she finished a glass of wine, paid her check and left. An unusual stillness had held the bar, but it was noticeable only by the sudden hum that was audible after she had gone. Low voices, murmuring in admiration about the beauty of that girl.

Doc Savage rolled his wheel chair to a dark corner of the deck, made sure no one was near, and shucked off his disguise. He left the parts of the disguise – the wig, loose frock, shawl, smoked spectacles, gloves for his

hands – lying in the chair, so he could don them later.

He went below and found cabin D-27. It was a cabin in a corner, corridors on two sides. Adjoining it on a third side was one of the passenger bathrooms.

A stateroom on the fourth side seemed the logical place to eavesdrop, providing it was not occupied. He listened. People who slept usually breathed loudly, and he could hear no such sounds inside. He tried the knob.

The door was unlocked and he went in silently.

Flashlight glare blazed into his eyes, blinding.

"I have a cautious nature, don't you think?" a feminine voice asked.

Doc remembered the calmness of that voice for a long time. He had known the girl was dangerous.

Toni Lash held a strange-looking weapon – a thing that had two barrels, one above the other, the lower one like an ordinary air pistol, the upper barrel fatter, the end closed by what appeared to be a seal of soft wax.

She moved her queer weapon slightly.

"Maybe you never saw one of these before," she said. "The lower barrel discharges a dart that will break your skin, and at the same time the upper barrel shoots a stream of hydrocyanic. It's complicated, but it will kill you almost instantly."

Doc said nothing.

The girl tapped on the cabin wall.

Cautious came in, gasped and popped his eyes at Doc Savage.

"Turn around," the girl ordered.

Doc turned.

"Handcuff him, Cautious," she directed.

Cautious handcuffed Doc Savage, using bracelets which the girl gave him.

Toni Lash looked at the bronze man regretfully.

"I'm afraid," she said, "that the world has seen the last of a very clever man."

Chapter V. CLOWNS ON A SHIP

MONK and Ham were bound to Doc Savage, if one excluded their intense admiration for the bronze man, by a common love for action. Both liked excitement. That was a liking held by all the bronze man's aids, including the three who were absent – Long Tom Roberts, Renny Renwick, and Johnny Littlejohn.

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There were only five men associated with Doc Savage, and each was a specialist in his profession.

Long Tom Roberts, electrical wizard, was at present in Alaska, laying out a hydroelectric project.

Renny Renwick, who was famous for his big fists and his engineering skill, was in France, serving as consultant in the establishing of a chain of ultramodern airports suitable for high-speed planes.

Johnny Littlejohn was in Egypt, indulging in his specialty, archaeology. Someone had found another ancient Pharaoh's tomb, and Johnny was showing them how to read the hieroglyphics therein.

That had left only two aids, Monk and Ham, available in New York for work on this present mystery.

And Monk and Ham were getting to the point where they didn't care for the whole business. Not enough action. No action at all, was more like it.

"Foocy!" Monk said, looking at Ham.

"My sentiments exactly," Ham agreed miserably. "If it wasn't for being cooped up with you, I could stand it."

"What's wrong with me?"

Ham surveyed his companion in misery at some length.

"I don't feel like writing a book," he said, "so I won't go into that now."

Monk was so disgusted by the lack of action that he refused to rise to the insult. He kept silent.

Ham asked, "How do you figure this mystery out?"

"I haven't figured it."

"Well, what do you think?"

"I ain't a lawyer," Monk said unkindly. "I can't even talk without thinkin'."

They eventually got a half-spirited quarrel going, and entertained themselves until three o'clock in the morning, when they gave it up as a bad job and crawled into bed.

The nonappearance of Doc Savage did not alarm them particularly. They took it for granted that the bronze man was merely keeping a vigil on Cautious.

Some of their unconcern departed when they awakened and found no Doc on hand.

By noon, they were frankly worried.

"This begins to get me," Monk muttered.

"I never expected anything but a zoo to get you," Ham said.

He did not manage to get much enthusiasm into the dig.

THE DEVIL GENGHIS

They sat there and worried. Doc Savage had advised them not to go about on the ship, because both of them were fellows who looked conspicuous enough to be readily recognized by anyone who had taken pains to learn the personal descriptions of the bronze man and his associates, and it had previously become evident that Cautious had done that.

They worried. And their worrying was probably mild to what it would have been had they known of the weirdly terrible thing that had happened to Kummik, the Eskimo hunter, or to Fogarty-Smith, the aviator who had been flying supplies to and from the weather station on the Arctic ice, or to Park Crater, the young American millionaire visiting the Riviera, who had made Toni Lash care more for him than she had ever cared for any other young man.

But Monk and Ham, as yet, knew nothing of the fantastic fate of those three men who had been victims, apparently, of a fantastic horror that came out of the polar regions in three long steps.

Still, by midafternoon, Monk and Ham knew they had better be doing something.

First, they did the natural thing. They went to the hold, listened to the box. The breathing sounds were audible inside, so lifelike that they were not sure whether they were made by Doc or the "breathing" gadget they had rigged, until they opened the coffin.

Doc was not there.

A note was. It lay on the gadget, and read:

You won't see me for'a while, but I will be all right. Don't worry. Get out and enjoy yourselves.

Doc.

"That's Doc's handwriting," Ham said.

"Yep," Monk agreed. "I'd know Doc's fist anywhere."

They did not know, then, that expert forgery was another accomplishment of the amazing girl, Toni Lash.

"Getting out and enjoying myself," Monk said gleefully, "is the thing I do best."

They returned to their cabin and Ham donned his most resplendent ship-going garments. Monk, just to be contrary, put on an old and extremely fuzzy tweed suit which, by no stretch of the imagination, fitted him.

"You look," said Ham disgustedly, "like you'd run through a flock of colored sheep, and some of their wool stuck to you."

Monk admired his woolly effect in the mirror.

"Betcha," he said.

"Betcha what?"

"I get a date with the prettiest girl on the ship," Monk offered recklessly, "before you do."

Ham dry-washed his hands delightedly. "What do you want to bet?"

THE DEVIL GENGHIS

Monk gave the subject deep thought, and ended up by cocking an eye on Chemistry, the pet chimp belonging to Ham. Monk had never cared for Chemistry, because he knew very well that Ham had acquired the chimp because of the startling resemblance the thing bore to him – Monk.

"If I win," Monk said, "I get to drown the what-is-it?"

"Drown Chemistry?" Ham exploded.

"Sure. The thing I've been lookin' forward to doin' for some time."

Ham swallowed, and he fell to eying Monk's pet pig, Habeas Corpus.

"And if I get the first date with the prettiest girl," he said, "I get to have Habeas for breakfast bacon?"

Monk winced, then nodded.

"Bargain," he said.

"Bargain," Ham echoed.

He started for the door.

"Where you goin'?" demanded Monk.

"To find which cook can butcher a hog," Ham said enthusiastically.

They were quite elated over the bet. Whoever lost would naturally refuse to pay off, so they would be supplied with ammunition for weeks of argument.

TONI Lash was inevitable.

Monk and Ham merely asked a first officer, "Who's the prettiest girl aboard?"

"Toni Lash," the officer said.

And so they lost no time heading straight for trouble.

Their first sight of Toni Lash brought an argument about who was to approach the woman first. They were entranced by her beauty.

"Oh, boy!" Monk said. "Me first! It was my idea."

"You first – nothing!" Ham gritted. "Over my dead body, you'll be first, you missing link!"

"Afraid of my power over women, eh?" Monk asked loftily.

Ham managed a violent sneer.

"I don't want her scared into a nervous wreck by seem;' you around," he said. "I want her healthy, so I can enjoy her company."

THE DEVIL GENGHIS

"Toss a coin for first?" Monk suggested.

Monk put one hand in his right pants pocket, the other hand in his left pocket, and felt for a coin.

"Heads or tails?" he asked.

"Heads," Ham said unwarily.

Monk took the coin out of his right pocket. That one had tails on both sides. The coin in his other pocket had heads on both sides.

"Ouch!" Ham groaned when tails came up. "Oh, well, I'll go tell the cook to have scalding water hot for that hog!"

Monk had learned very early in life that, being so astoundingly homely, he must use a technique on femininity that was different from the common approaches used by the good-looking fellows. Monk had worked out a system. Habeas Corpus, the pig, was part of the system.

Toni Lash was reclining in a deck chair, reading a book.

Monk walked past her, apparently unaware of her presence. At Monk's heels trailed Habeas Corpus, the pig.

In front of Toni Lash, Habeas stopped, sat down. The pig had done this often enough to learn his part of the act.

Habeas said, "Oh, gracious me!"

Or at least, it certainly sounded like Habeas spoke the words.

"Come on, Habeas," Monk said.

"I can't," Habeas said. "I'm hypnotized."

"You're what?" Monk demanded.

"I'm helpless," Habeas explained. "I never saw such a pretty girl in my life, and I'm helpless."

"You tramp," Monk said, "you've got no manners!"

"Scat. Go roll your hoop." Habeas looked at Toni Lash. "Say, baby, how about a little walk around the deck."

Toni Lash smiled slightly in spite of herself.

"Sir," she told Habeas, "I'll have you know I'm a lady."

"I know it," Habeas replied. "If I intended to walk with a man, I'd stay with this big hooligan I'm with."

Toni Lash broke out in laughter.

"Look, baby," Habeas said, "I'm afraid I'm gettin' stuck on you."

THE DEVIL GENGHIS

"So I suspected," Toni Lash smiled. "I noticed your eyes had been glued on me for some time."

Then the ravishing beauty looked at Monk, and burst forth in more laughter.

"You're quite a ventriloquist, aren't you?" she asked delightedly.

Monk looked around and was very pleased to note that Ham was exhibiting traces of an impulse to tear his own hair out by the roots.

Monk was more tickled than he would have been in a barrel of feathers. The old system had worked. It never failed.

Monk sank into a deck chair at Toni Lash's elbow.

"Hey, you homely gassoon!" Habeas said. "I saw her first!"

Monk indicated Habeas and remarked to Toni Lash, "Don't you pity me, having to put up with a heckler like that?"

"I certainly do," the young woman laughed.

"Pity me enough to give me a date for the dance tonight?" Monk asked.

Monk was nothing if not a quick worker.

"I guess so," Toni Lash said, still laughing.

Habeas eyed Monk.

"You viper," the pig said.

Fifteen minutes later, Monk escorted the exquisite Toni Lash up to Ham.

"Mr. Brooks," Monk said cheerfully, "this is Miss Toni Lash, with whom I have a date for the dance tonight. Miss Lash, this is Ham Brooks, a lawyer" – Monk almost forgot to add the falsehood he always told pretty girls about Ham – "who has a wife and fifteen children at home."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Brooks," Toni Lash said.

"The wife and fifteen brats," Monk added maliciously, "probably explains that vinegary expression on his face."

"Don't you think," pretty Toni Lash asked, "that Monk here, is the most delightful ventriloquist?"

Ham made a series of strangling sounds, and ended up by whirling and rushing off down the deck.

"Why, where can he be going?" Toni Lash asked wonderingly.

"Probably to find a fire hose," Monk explained, "and turn in on himself to get cooled off."

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THE entire afternoon passed before Monk managed to wrench himself away from the hypnotic company of Toni Lash. He found Ham in their cabin. Ham gave him a glassy-eyed glare.

"I trust," Monk said cheerfully, "that you had a pleasant afternoon."

Ham said, "I looked for some trace of Doc Savage."

Monk's homely face sobered. "Find anything?"

Ham frowned uneasily. "I found the wheel chair Doc was using; also the white wig, shawl, the rest of his disguise – but no Doc."

Monk sank down on the bunk and pounded one knee anxiously with a large, furry fist.

"I'm worried about Doc! Still, that note did say he would be all right."

"I guess," Ham said, "there's nothing we can do." Monk sighed, got to his feet and assumed a cheerful look.

"There's somethin' I'm gonna do," he said.

He took a lead sounding weight out of a coat pocket, along with a length of cord. He hefted the lead, testing its weight.

"You think this will sink the what-is-it?" he asked.

"You're not gonna drown Chemistry!" Ham yelled.

"I won the bet, didn't I?"

They discussed that warmly through dinner, and desisted only when Monk took time out to dance with Toni Lash. The young lady danced exquisitely, and there was no question about it – she was the most consummate bit of femininity aboard.

Monk was spending one of the most glorious days in his life. He had thwarted and confounded Ham at every turn, and had met the most sublime girl of his career.

However, about eleven o'clock that night, a fly came buzzing around the candy bowl.

"I think your friend Ham should join us," Toni Lash said.

"Aw!" Monk groaned.

Thirty minutes later, Ham had joined the party, and he and Monk and Toni Lash were headed, chatting and laughing, for the young woman's cabin. She was going to show them a frock she had designed.

Toni Lash had explained that she was a fashion designer employed by an exclusive Park Avenue shop.

Monk was disgusted. Ham's interest in clothes was giving him something in common with the young woman.

They entered the young woman's cabin.

"The model is ill this cabin, here," she said.

She went over, opened the closet door, stepped back.

Cautious came out of the closet. In each hand, Cautious held a single-shot pistol of large caliber, equipped with silencers.

"We're playing for keeps, boys," Cautious said, ugly-voiced.

Toni Lash went to a drawer, got out her hydrocyanic gun, and explained to Monk and Ham what it was.

"Luckily," she said, "I took the trouble to learn descriptions of all Doc Savage's men."

CHAPTER VI. THE FIRE ALARM

TONI Lash saw Monk and Ham handcuffed, wrist and ankle. To discourage picking handcuff locks, she taped their fingers together with adhesive tape, made wads of tape around the locks. She also plastered tape over their mouths.

"Cautious," she said, "you can get their pets."

Cautious showed no elation. "Aw – you mean the runt ape and that pig?"

"I think I would rather like to have them," Toni Lash said. She added sharply, "Go get them!"

Cautious, with no love for the assignment, disappeared from the cabin. He was gone fully a quarter of an hour, and came back looking as though he'd had a disagreement with several tomcats. He carried two suitcases from which came, respectively, pig grunting and chimp chattering.

"Dang it!" he complained. "I hope somebody else has to catch 'em next time."

The girl ignored his remarks. "You hold down the situation," she directed.

She left Cautious in that cabin to watch Monk, Ham and the pets, and walked down the corridor to another cabin, which she entered, closing the door behind her and switching on the lights.

Doc Savage lay on a berth in the cabin. Handcuffs secured his wrists and ankles, as well as great masses of adhesive tape. The mattress had been removed from the bunk, and he was lashed to the bunk stringers by many turns of rope.

He could roll his eyes, but that was about all the motion he could manage.

Toni Lash went over, tested the bronze man's bonds, satisfied herself as to their tightness.

"Hooray for our side!" she said dryly.

Doc Savage's flake gold eyes appraised her with intense interest. The more he saw of this unusual girl, the more amazed he became.

Toni Lash drew a chair near, seated herself, lighted a cigarette.

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"I had a suspicion," she said, "that you weren't alone."

She took the cigarette from her lips, looked at the glow, and blew ashes off it.

"Monk and Ham," she said, "are rather entertaining fellows."

The smoke crawled up and made tiny, wriggling gray ghosts above her cigarette.

"Unfortunately," she said, "we don't need them."

Doc Savage's flake gold eyes fixed. They asked a question which, being gagged, he could not ask any other way – Did she mean that Monk and Ham were to be –

She understood.

"I don't know," she said. "Whether or not they die, will depend on the word from the higher up."

TONI Lash had told the truth. This was evident when she went to the radio room and dispatched a message in code.

Three hours later, an answer came. The girl, reading it, bit her lips. Tears came into her eyes. With a pencil, she wrote a translation of the code message on the lower part of the blank. She carried this to Doc Savage, held it before his eyes.

Doc read:

Want only Doc Savage. Drown the other two, but be careful.

"I'm sorry," Toni Lash said.

She was crying.

After she had left the cabin, Doc Savage lay in grim immobility. He would have to change his plan – and he had been following a plan, even lying here bound and gagged to log helplessness.

Doc was still adhering to his first purpose. That was to find out what this was all about by letting himself be taken, as a prisoner, to wherever he was to be taken.

The bronze man made a mental inventory of possible methods by which he might escape. The list was not encouraging. If he had been wearing his own clothing, it would have been easy, for he always carried gadgets. But Cautious had taken his garments, giving him in return a pair of grimy, blue denim overalls and a jumper.

Doc had been working his fingers. Now, twisting and wrenching, he got the fingers of his right hand free of the tape. He was still manacled, lashed with ropes, could not move the right hand except below the wrist.

The lashed hand was close to his side, near the side buttons of the overalls. He got hold of a button, tore it off. It was a large metal button, as heavy as a marble.

Doc got the button between thumb and crooked forefinger, marble–shooter fashion, turned, took careful aim.

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His target was in the center of the ceiling. Not the light – it was the little ceiling doo–dad of the liner's automatic fire–alarm system. The device consisted of two spring electrical contacts held apart by a transparent marble–shaped thing, which would burst when the temperature reached a certain height.

Doc shot the button at the marble. He missed.

He tried again. Another miss. There were three buttons on that side of the overalls. He couldn't reach the other side. This time, he had better hit. He did.

There was a hissing sound. Water showered into the room from the automatic pipes. Somewhere an alarm bell rang. There were calm orders. Men running. The door burst open.

"I'll be darned!" somebody said.

THEN Doc Savage was cut loose. Trying to stand up, he fell, arms and legs stick–stiff. Even his trained muscles had become stiff. He kneaded himself, eventually managed to get on his feet.

"The captain wants to question you," he was told.

Doc Savage made known his identity.

The officer was not impressed. He seemed to consider Doc some kind of crook. So they went to the bridge and saw the captain.

"You're being very silly, mister!" the captain told the officer. "This man is Doc Savage, and he probably has more real influence than any one man in the world."

The bronze man glanced around. There was warm air whipping across the bridge, and the night was very dark. The heavens were full of stars that were like sparks, and out behind the ship the wake stretched, a widening swirl touched with phosphorescence.

"Where are we?" Doc asked.

"We've just entered the Mediterranean," the captain explained.

Doc Savage nodded grimly.

"A girl named Toni Lash," he said, "is holding two of my friends, Monk and Ham, and is planning to kill them. We have got to find them."

The captain swallowed. "I'll assign you a searching party."

Doc Savage left the bridge.

The captain bit his lips, got out his pipe, stuffed it and lighted it. His hands shook. He seemed to be having a violent inner debate with himself.

"She's too lovely a girl," he muttered. "He can't be right!"

The captain went to a telephone – the boat was equipped with a telephone system to all cabins – and called Toni Lash.

"A man named Doc Savage is hunting you," the captain said. "He's accusing you of a terrible thing."

Toni Lash's voice was apologetic, concerned.

"I'll come and see about it at once, captain," she said.

The young woman hung up. But she made no move toward going to the bridge to see the captain.

"Doc Savage is loose," she said.

Cautious jumped up, looked as though someone had shot at him.

"Huh?" he croaked.

"He's started to search the ship," Toni Lash explained.

"But—how—uh—ugh—" Cautious, trying to speak, ended up with a string of noises.

The girl wore a faraway look. She contemplated her fingernails, polished one of them thoughtfully on a sleeve, and seemed wrapped in abstract thoughtfulness.

Cautious recovered, barked, "We're trapped!"

The girl, looking at him, shook her head. "No," she said.

"You're crazy!" Cautious gritted. "They will find us? They will find Monk and Ham! I tell you, we're sunk!"

The girl shook her head again.

"No," she said. "I have an idea."

She went to the two prisoners, Monk and Ham, and bent over them.

"We'll have to work fast," she said.

Chapter VII. AT MONTE CARLO

DOC Savage was also saying, "We had better move fast on this."

They went first to the cabin which showed in the records as the one Toni Lash had engaged. It was empty. They tried other cabins – they went over the ship, the first time rapidly, covering the whole vessel.

They found nothing.

The second search of the ship was more systematic.

The third search missed nothing whatever.

Not a cabin, not a closet, not a single ventilator interior escaped their scrutiny. They took the dogs out of the kennels in the baggage hold and searched there. They opened flour sacks, probed into innumerable pieces of

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baggage and freight in the holds, and scrutinized every passenger closely.

Of Toni Lash, Cautious, Monk and Ham there was no trace whatever.

"Why, that's incredible!" the captain said. He meant it. He leaned on the bridge rail for a long time and contemplated the sea. His eyes were sad and his heart heavy. He was convinced that Toni Lash had gone overboard, had committed suicide to avoid capture. There seemed to be no other explanation.

Doc Savage, certain finally that his men and his quarry both escaped the ship, went to Toni Lash's room – the cabin she had engaged for herself. A guard had been left over this. The bronze man began searching the young woman's luggage in quest of a clue – any kind of a clue.

The frocks in Toni Lash's wardrobe were expensive. Doc probably knew less about such items than he knew about any other subject, but he was sure the stuff was exclusive.

For a long time, the search brought forth nothing that was of value. Then he found the envelope.

The contents of the envelope were puzzling at first. Why, for instance, should a girl like Toni Lash keep several stubs of theater tickets, a few menus printed in French, some pressed flowers of different kinds, and one note? The note was addressed to Toni Lash, at a hotel on the Riviera in France. It said:

Tonight at seven. Love you a lot.

Park Crater

Doc Savage realized suddenly that the articles in the envelope were souvenirs of some love affair. Some of the items, the note in particular, bore stains; and after he applied a chemical test that showed a saline content in the marks, he knew they were tear stains.

Toni Lash had shed tears over these pitiful souvenirs.

Doc Savage went to the Maritonia radio room, got a radio-and-line telephone hook-up to France, and began making calls.

It took him an hour to learn what he wanted to know.

"Can you put me off near Monte Carlo?" Doc asked.

"Yes, indeed," the captain said.

The captain of the Maritonia was in a state of mind where he wanted very much to get rid of this whole thing.

Doc Savage sent two radiograms. They were addressed to his two aids, Renny who was in France, and Johnny, who was in Egypt.

MONTE Carlo is a standing example of the axiom that a thing does not have to be large to be famous. The commonwealth of Monaco, containing Monte Carlo, is one of the smallest principalities in the world, yet few people have not heard of it.

The Asile Blanc is located on one of the steeper mountains. It is of stone. Once it was a castle; so it is high and grim. Steel bars have been placed over the windows, and the verandas and the edge of the roof are

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surrounded by high fences of steel bars, so that patients cannot leap to their deaths.

A low-slung, fast car went moaning up the winding cliff road and stopped in the afternoon sunlight that touched the barred gate of Asile Blanc.

Doc Savage swung out of the car.

A man jumped toward the machine. He was a big man, almost as large as Doc Savage; and he had a long, sad face and two fists which could hardly be inserted in quart buckets.

"Holy cow!" he ejaculated.

"Renny!" the bronze man echoed.

"I got your message to show up here," Renny said, "and here I am."

Renny was Major John Renny Renwick, famous as an engineer, also noted for his love of demonstrating how he could knock panels out of wooden doors with his fists. He was a Doc Savage aid.

Doc asked, "Any sign of Johnny Littlejohn? At the same time I radioed you, I also asked Johnny to come over from Egypt, where he's poking into a tomb."

"He's hardly had time to get here," Renny said.

He had a great rumbling voice that was something like the noises that might have been made by an angry lion that had fallen to the bottom of a deep well.

Renny boomed, "What's up, Doc?"

"Some unknown person hired a girl named Toni Lash to come to New York, seize me, and bring me to Europe," Doc explained. "We were playing along with her, but she outslicked us. She had a man named Cautious helping her. They seized Monk and Ham on the ship. Then all of them disappeared. Monk, Ham, the girl and Cautious – every one vanished."

"Disappeared – how?"

Doc Savage's metallic features turned grim.

"That," he said, "hasn't become quite clear."

"You're sure," Renny said, "that they didn't just hide on the liner?"

"Positive."

Renny knew enough about Doc Savage's methods to be sure that, if the bronze man said the missing persons were not on the liner, they weren't on it.

"Holy cowl" Renny rumbled.

That was his favorite ejaculation.

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Doc continued, "A search of the girl's cabin turned up some stuff indicating she'd had an admirer named Park Crater. And by radio-telephoning to the Riviera, it became evident that Park Crater is an American millionaire's son who recently went insane, and is confined here."

Renny looked up at the grim stone walls of Asile Blanc.

"I wouldn't want to be confined here," he rumbled.

Park Crater distended his mouth until all his teeth showed like fangs. He made his mouth a hole. In that hole, his tongue darted around like the head of an animal.

"Holy cow!" Renny croaked, and backed away. He didn't care about being around insane people.

Doc Savage said, "Will you remove Park Crater's strait jacket?"

The French specialist hesitated. The specialist knew Doc Savage by reputation, but this was the first time he had met this giant bronze man who was believed to be the greatest surgeon of them all; and he was awed.

"He is very violent," the specialist warned.

"So it would appear," Doc Savage said quietly. The specialist gestured to two attendants, and they began removing the strait jacket from poor Park Crater. Toward the last, they had to struggle mightily to hold the patient.

Park Crater sprang onto the floor. He seized a chair. Those in the room retreated hastily. But it was not to attack them that Park Crater wanted the chair. He wanted it to fight the air over his head.

He fought the empty air with wild ferocity.

Park Crater had not been incarcerated here in the insane asylum many weeks, but already he had changed from the handsome, dashing young man who played so furiously and made love so irresistibly. His healthy, tanned color was fading, his cheeks were sinking, and his eyes were like white glass marbles in black teacups.

"Does he fight something over his head all the time?" Doc asked.

The French specialist nodded.

"A weird case, M'sieu' Savage," he said slowly. "It puzzles me. I never saw anything like it. I even took a trip to England to examine the similar case of Fogarty Smith, but it puzzled me just as much."

"Similar case?" Doc Savage said.

"In London," explained the specialist, "at Admiralty Cross hospital."

Doc Savage turned abruptly to Renny.

"Renny," the bronze man said, "charter a fast plane and get to London as quickly as you can."

"London!" Renny boomed. "What can I do in –"

"Start guarding Fogarty-Smith twenty-four hours a day," Doc explained.

Renny rubbed his solemn jaw with one of his enormous hands.

"Holy cow!" he said. "Well – mm – I'm London bound, I guess."

CHAPTER VIII. MADMAN VANISHING

AFTER Renny had lumbered out of the room, the French specialist studied Doc Savage in bewilderment.

"I do not understand, M'sieu'," he said thoughtfully.

Unfortunate Park Crater continued to strike madly at something imaginary over his head. Blow after blow he swung with the chair, striving to make each one harder than the first. When the chair happened to hit the wall, it broke, and he stood there hitting the wall with what was left of the chair, knocking plaster loose.

"We had better put the strait jacket back on him," Doc said.

They had some difficulty doing that, the two attendants attempting it first, but finding themselves unable to hold the madman; so that Doc Savage took over that part of the task, leaving the pair to apply the strait jacket.

"Can you arrange a diagnosis room for me?" Doc asked.

The specialist nodded. "Tres bien."

Doc explained, "My bags containing the equipment necessary for a diagnosis of this young man's case are at an inn. I am going for them."

He was seating himself in his car – it was a machine he had rented – when a rattling taxicab arrived.

Out of the cab came a long head, a long neck, and a body that seemed to be of unlimited length. Probably the effect of extreme length was accentuated by the fact that the man was thinner than it seemed anyone could possibly be. Not only was he just a string of bones, but even the bones were thin.

This was Johnny – William Harper Littlejohn, who could look at a twelfth dynasty Egyptian hieroglyphic and tell how many years the man who wrote it had gone to school. His suit did not fit him. No suit would ever fit him.

Johnny was the other Doc Savage aid who had been abroad. Regarding Johnny's clothes, Monk often said that Johnny should try to wear a sheath, not a suit.

"An unprognosticable eventuation," he announced.

That was his other failing: big words. He never used a little word if he could think of a jawbreaker.

He could just have said that he hadn't expected what had happened.

Doc gave an outline of the mystery so far.

Johnny listened to the story in wide-mouthed Silence.

"I'll be superamalgamated!" he said.

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He fiddled thoughtfully with a monocle which dangled by a black cord from his lapel. Once he'd had defective sight in one eye, and had needed a monocle. But Doc had remedied the eye trouble, and Johnny still the monocle, although now it was really a pocket magnifier.

He was so confounded by the whole thing that he used little words.

"Does it make sense to you, Doc?" he asked.

"Not yet," the bronze man said grimly. "But a suspicion is beginning to form."

Johnny looked at Doc Savage sharply and demanded, "What kind of suspicion, Doc?"

The bronze man did not seem to hear.

"I asked you," Johnny said more loudly, "what kind of suspicion – "

He remembered, and did not finish the question. Doc had heard him the first time. This was the bronze man's habit, one of the few aggravating ones he had.

Doc Savage habitually did not voice his suspicions when they were only suspicions. Not until a theory had become a proven fact in his mind would he go into explanations. Until he wanted to talk, Doc would seem not to hear any questions on the subject.

"I'll be superamalgamated!" Johnny said.

"You go upstairs," Doc suggested, "and keep an eye on poor Park Crater while I go for my instrument case."

Johnny nodded, watched Doc Savage send his car down the steep cliff road with a speed that sometimes gave Johnny's stomach a suspended feeling. Then Johnny went into the Asile Blanc and mounted to Park Crater's room.

In two or three minutes, Johnny got enough of watching PkCrater. The young man's condition was so terrible that it gave Johnny creepy sensations;

Johnny backed into the other room, looked at an Asile Blanc attendant standing there.

"It's ultrainvidiously harassing," Johnny remarked.

"Eh?" said the attendant.

"I said," explained Johnny, "that the young man's condition distresses me."

The attendant was a tall, thick-bodied man with more than a slight cast of the Eurasian to his features. He did not, Johnny reflected, look like the kind of fellow one would expect in the part of a male nurse. Riding a shaggy pony at wild speed over some Asiatic steppe appeared to be more his style.

The attendant took a black gun from inside his white hospital coat.

"This had better distress you, too," he said, moving the gun menacingly.

He spoke with a distinct Asiatic accent.

"Wuh-wuh-" Johnny swallowed. "What on earth?"

"Turn around," the attendant ordered.

Johnny barked, "What does this mean?"

The large words had been startled out of him.

"Turn around!" snarled the attendant.

Johnny didn't turn. He pitched for the man. It wasn't as foolish a move as it seemed. The gun pointed at Johnny's chest, and he wore a bulletproof vest.

The gun banged. Johnny was twisting. The bullet missed him entirely, dug plaster out of the wall. Johnny got the gun arm, and went to work.

Johnny at work in a fight was something unique. He had the physical build of the type of spider called a granddaddy longlegs, and he was all bone and whipcord sinew. When he tied himself around an opponent, the foe immediately felt as if he had fallen into a tight-fitting cage of iron bars.

They hit the floor. The attendant lost his gun. He howled in an Asiatic tongue. It was very pained howling. Johnny rolled to the wall with him, began bumping the fellow's head against the baseboard. The man bleated.

Into the room came a young woman.

Johnny gaped at her. She was unquestionably the most exquisitely tall and slender young woman he had ever seen.

"Watch out!" Johnny shouted. "You'll get hurt."

He didn't want her to get hurt.

But then, men always felt the protective instinct when they first saw Toni Lash.

Toni Lash wound up like a soft-ball pitcher and hit Johnny over the right ear with a blackjack.

By some freak of the instant, Johnny happened to be looking at a clock on the wall just before his consciousness was knocked into a black pit of silence.

The clock said 3:00 –

JOHNNY, awakening, felt rather detached from reality, as well as confused, to say nothing of an unearthly aching inside his skull, and he looked around for something tangible upon which to fasten his attention – a kind of raft on the tossing sea of mental uncertainty to which he could cling until the storm blew over. He saw the clock.

The clock now said 3:30.

"I'll be superamalgamated!" Johnny mumbled.

Then he realized Doc Savage was crouching beside him.

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"Johnny," Doc said, "can you understand me?"

"I understand your words," Johnny muttered. "But darned if I savvy what happened."

"They got Park Crater," Doc said.

"Crater – "

"They took him," Doc repeated. "Carried him away."

"Huh!"

"Describe that girl," Doc requested.

Johnny gave, considering the circumstances, an excellent idea of the young woman's appearance.

"Toni Lash!" Doc exploded.

"But she was on the liner – and – " Johnny held his head. "How'd she get here? And what became of Monk and Ham?"

Doc shook his head grimly, then wheeled, ran out of the room, went down stone steps with long leaps and flung into his car. Down the cliff road, he drove. Such natives as he passed turned pale, stared after him, holding their breaths and waiting for the crash. But he astonished them and reached the bottom.

Park Crater, Toni Lash and her helpers had been gone when Doc returned to Asile Blanc with his instrument case. They had left, according to the asylum officials, in a fast car, after menacing everyone with guns.

Doc stopped at a police station, and made telephone calls. He spoke French fluently, and he soon had gendarmes watching roads, as well as circulating in cars, looking for the machine in which Toni Lash had carried off Park Crater.

The gendarmes were efficient. They found the girl's car. It stood on a quay, and offshore from the spot a fast seaplane was scudding along, in the act of leaving the water.

Bystanders explained that a girl and a big Eurasian in hospital garb had transferred a man in a strait jacket from the car to the seaplane.

The plane was lost in the cloud ceiling over the Mediterranean when Doc Savage reached the spot.

The bronze man drove back to Asile Blanc.

"Oo–o–o, my head!" Johnny complained.

"Fell better?" Doc asked.

"I don't believe the X–rays!" Johnny groaned. "They say my skull is not fractured."

Doc talked to the Asile Blanc officials for a while.

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"That Eurasian," Doc told Johnny, "was obviously posted here to watch Park Crater soon after the young man was confined."

Johnny felt of his blackjack souvenir. "It don't make sense to me."

"It makes this much sense," Doc Savage said gravely. "Park Crater was taken away so we could not have a chance to treat him."

"Which means – "

"It means," Doc said, "that he might have been able to tell us something if we had been able to bring him back to his normal mind."

Johnny pondered that.

"They've been telling me," he said, "about a man named Fogarty-Smith in London who had this same kind of insanity."

"Did you come from Egypt in your plane, Johnny? "

"Yes."

"Then we can use it to go to London."

"But what about Monk and Ham?"

"All we can do," Doc Savage said quietly, "is keep going on this madman mystery – and hope it leads us to Monk and Ham!"

JOHNNY'S private plane had been constructed after a design worked out by Doc Savage for his private use, being a low-wing, twin-engine job with retractable wheels and a body that was both a streamlined cabin and a pontoon for water landings.

It amused Johnny from time to time to notice the variety of furtive individuals who went to great pains to photograph his plane and take its measurements. His "spy magnet," he called the plane.

Over London there was a fog, for which the metropolis was noted.

To save time, they did not fly on out to Croydon Field, but dropped down and skimmed over the Thames River, high enough to clear the tower bridges.

"Use the black-light scanner," Doc directed.

Johnny did so.

The scanner was a contrivance, devised by Doc Savage, which utilized wave lengths of light outside the visible spectrum, light wave lengths which penetrated fog and smoke much better than ordinary light. To enable a man to see by this "invisible" light, Doc Savage had developed a type of scanning binocular, utilizing the principle of photofluorescent images mechanically displacing each other before the eye.

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With the contraption, Doc Savage and Johnny studied the river. The plane volleyed along, buffeted a little by air currents out of the city streets.

"Johnny!" Doc Savage said suddenly. "That plane – see it!"

Johnny swung his scanner to the left. He saw a plane, not a large ship, but one that looked fast. It was a seaplane, and tied alongside a dock.

Johnny said, "I see it, but – "

"It is Toni Lash's plane," Doc said.

The next instant the bronze man yanked the controls, and the ship skidded around in the air, nosed for the water. He set the big wing flaps, so they could land at low speed. The ship knifed through a choking cloud of smoke from a tugboat funnel, hit the water.

Doc and Johnny threw aside the infra-light scanning devices.

"Handle the controls," Doc directed. "Bring her in close to that ship."

Doc Savage gave the controls to Johnny, swung out of the cabin, ran along the wing, waited near the tip. Now that they were out of the air, the fog seemed less thick. The river bank loomed, and the dock, the other plane.

A man was standing half out of the other plane cabin, straining his eyes at the river, and listening. He had heard Doc's ship, obviously.

"You see that man?" Doc asked Johnny, low-voiced.

"Yes."

"That," Doc said, "is the man known as Cautious."

Chapter IX. LONDON GRIM

JOHNNY made an explosive, grim sound, and reached for a machine pistol. The weapon, resembling an oversized automatic, was capable of firing an astounding number of bullets in the course of a minute. It handled mercy bullets, explosives, gas shells and "smokers."

At that instant, Cautious recognized them. He hurled himself headlong into his plane cabin, came out with a rifle, lifted the gun, fired.

But Doc Savage was back along the wing – and down behind the motor of Johnny's ship. The big radial motor was the most effective kind of a bullet shield.

His plane moved steadily toward the one on which Cautious stood.

Johnny had pitched back, lay in the shelter of the other motor. This plane was not armor-plated, as were many of Doc's ships.

"What kind of a drum in your machine pistol?" Doc called.

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"Explosives," Johnny said. "I was shooting at sharks for practice crossing the Mediterranean, and never changed drums."

"Shake him up a little," Doc suggested.

Johnny aimed carefully; his machine pistol made a bull–fiddle moan – and that part of London was treated to a deafening uproar that must have reminded the inhabitants of World War bombing days. All bullets hit the water. A progressive geyser ran up to Cautious's plane, like a threatening monster. The plane pitched.

Cautious stumbled, went down, lost his rifle, but remained on the wing. He began bawling.

"Don't blast the plane!" he squalled. "Monk 'n' Ham are aboard!"

"I'll be superamalgamated!" Johnny howled delightedly. "Where's Park Crater?"

"He's on here, too!" Cautious shouted.

"Yeo–o–w!" Johnny yelled. "That's the plane they used to flee Monte Carlo! We got 'em cornered! Boy, what a break!"

Their plane droned toward the other craft.

Cautious, they suddenly perceived, was taking flight. He had kept down behind the cabin, crept out to the tip of a wing while thus sheltered, and with an agile leap, landed on shore. He ran.

Doc leaped to the controls of their own plane, changed its course, aimed it for the end of the dock. But it was slow. Moments passed. Then the bronze man leaped, got onto the dock.

Cautious had become a distant, speeding wraith in the fog. Doc flashed after him. He gained. Cautious turned right, around a corner.

A car engine snorted, began roaring. Gears rasped as they meshed, and tires whistled trying to get traction.

Doc reached the corner. It was fortunate he put his head around first, had the muscular agility to yank back quickly. Because an automatic rifle coughed out a clip of cartridges in one spasm. The bullets ate holes in the brick wall.

Cautious was riding in the back seat of the car. The man driving was bulky and appeared – it was hard to tell from that distance – to be some breed of Asiatic.

They got away. There was no other car in view, nothing in which to follow the pair.

Doc went back to the dock.

Long, bony Johnny was getting out of Cautious' plane.

"The liar!" Johnny grumbled. "The daggone prevaricator!"

Doc said, "Monk and Ham – "

"Not here," Johnny said. "Cautious just yelled that to keep us from shootin' at him!"

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Two London policemen in a patrol car arrived for the purpose of learning what had happened. Gun war on London streets was almost unheard of. Doc made explanations, identified himself, and borrowed the patrol car in which the two policemen had arrived.

The bronze man could borrow the police car, because he held an appointment to Scotland Yard, result of a service rendered in the past.

Gaunt Johnny sat back, watched Doc drive. Johnny happened to know the bronze man had not been in London for some time, but such was the trained retentiveness of Doc's memory that he took almost a direct line through what, to Johnny, was a confusion of streets. The fact that traffic took the left side of the street, instead of the right, as in America, led Johnny to repeatedly grab his hat in expectation of a collision.

"It looks," said Johnny, "as if this girl has the same idea we've got – get Fogarty–Smith."

Doc Savage nodded. "They flew straight here from the Riviera."

Johnny watched ancient, curious old buildings flash by. Antiques always intrigued him.

"I wonder," he muttered, "who that girl is working for."

Doc Savage, not answering, swung the car to the curb before a long, red brick building which had pleasing green boxes at the windows, and a general air of quiet comfort. A sign on the structure said:

ADMIRALTY CROSS HOSPITAL

"This is the place," Johnny said grimly, "where the French specialist said Fogarty–Smith was confined."

They entered, and in a moment the surgeon in charge was shaking his head slowly at them.

"Fogarty–Smith," he said, "is not here."

Doc Savage showed no visible surprise. His self control was excellent. However, he did make, for the briefest of instants, the tiny, exotic, trilling sound which was his unconscious characteristic in moments of mental shock.

Johnny had no such iron grip on his emotions. In the space of hours, he had been blackjacked, thought he had found Monk and Ham, been disappointed, and now Fogarty–Smith wasn't here.

Johnny wrenched off his hat, slammed it on the floor, kicked it. His teeth made sounds like two rocks being rubbed together.

"That girl," he groaned, "is getting my goat!"

The surgeon wrinkled his brow in perplexity.

"There must be a misunderstanding," he said. "Over a week ago Fogarty–Smith was taken to Modernage Hospital. They have more advanced methods of treating at Modernage."

Johnny looked embarrassed. "Then nobody snatched Fogarty–Smith?"

"Snatched?" The surgeon frowned. "I – uh – snatched?" The piece of American slang puzzled him.

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"Did Major Renny Renwick come here inquiring for Fogarty–Smith?" Doc demanded.

The surgeon said, "Renwick – you mean the man who had such large fists?"

"That was Renny," Doc said.

"He was here. I told him where Fogarty–Smith had been taken," the surgeon advised. "He left for Modernage."

Doc Savage was already leaving the room. Johnny whirled, legged after the bronze man. They landed in the car they had borrowed from the police.

"You know where Modernage is?"

Doc Savage nodded. "Not far."

At the end of the trip, Johnny was doubled over to keep from seeing things flashing by. He had perfect confidence in Doc Savage's driving ability, but still – a man sitting in a motion–picture theater, when he sees a comic cannon ball come toward him on the screen, knows very well he won't get hit, but he dodges anyway.

The Modernage Hospital was of white stone, as neat as a dice cube. The windows were round, like the pips on dice.

They walked through a door which had a modernistic chromium border.

Inside the door, a man lay on his back. His legs were rigid, and he was holding his head up and staring fixedly at a knife handle sticking out of his chest. The man wore a surgeon's garb, and apparently he was trying to figure just how much chance there was of the knife killing him.

"Don't try to pull it out!" Doc said sharply.

"I've got better sense than that," the man said, and bubbled a little crimson at his lips.

"What happened?"

"Upstairs!" said the surgeon with the knife in his chest.

DOC Savage directed Johnny. "Wait down here. You may have to cover the rear door."

The bronze man went up dark–blue steps covered with a dark–crimson carpet. At the top he landed on a noiseless cork floor. There was one door. He hit it. Metal – and locked.

Doc began struggling with the door.

Down at the foot of the stairs, Johnny sank beside the knifed surgeon. "How did it happen?"

"Heard a noise upstairs." The surgeon spoke slowly through his red bubbling. "A man threw a knife."

"A girl threw it, you mean?" Johnny asked.

"No. A man. Eurasian."

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At the top of the stairs, Doc hit the door. It held. He drew back, was pitching a shoulder at the door when it opened. He plunged into a room, twisting down and to one side. But that precaution was unnecessary.

The occupants of the room were obviously hospital people; about a dozen of them – doctors, nurses, internes and attendants.

They stood in a circle. A strange, silent kind of circle, around a chair. It was a shiny, chromium, modern chair, and on it sat a man.

The man on the chair was Renny. He sat very still, in an awkward position. His big hands were held, palms upward, fingers splayed, at about the level of his shoulders. His arms trembled a little with strain. It was as if his hands were supporting some tremendous, invisible, horrible weight. Renny gazed fixedly at the air over his head.

"Renny!" Doc Savage said.

Renny's lips parted, came off his teeth; he seemed to try to scream, but could not. Then suddenly he twisted off the chair.

He seized the chair with both hands, sprang up, began striking terrific blows at the empty air. Blow after blow he launched in a mad frenzy.

The hospital people scattered, getting away from him.

"That's the way we found him," someone told Doc Savage.

"Where is Fogarty-Smith?" Doc asked hoarsely.

"Carried off. We don't know by whom."

"When?"

"Not more than ten minutes ago."

Chapter X. THREE STEPS FROM THE ARCTIC

THE windows were open, and a cool gentle wind blew in and rustled the skirts of the nurses. Beyond the window was a park, with green grass and trees having leaves which had already turned the bright colors of fall.

The fog lay over the park, and the evening slanted down through the fog and gave it a sheen of bright silver. The city beyond was quiet with the stillness of approaching evening. Then there came from out in the city somewhere the slow striking of a clock which was not London's famous Big Ben, but a clock which struck slow, deep-throated notes that sounded very much like Big Ben.

When the clock ceased striking, there was silence in the room where Renny stood. Renny had stopped smashing at the air with the chair. He stood on stiffly widespread legs, watching cunningly. He was waiting for the thing to get close enough for him to hit it again.

There was nothing in the air. But Renny's watching, his sly waiting, his conviction that something was there,

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was all so very real that those in the room could almost see the thing.

One of the nurses was brave. She took a paper booklet from the pocket of her uniform, tore out four sheets of paper and made four little sail darts such as students make in classrooms. She sailed the darts, one at a time, through the air over Renny's head, sailing each dart through a different spot. Renny did not stir nor show by any sign that he was aware of the darts, and none of the sailing papers were interrupted in any way in their graceful arching flight.

"There's nothing – nothing – in the air," the nurse said.

Doc Savage spoke in a low voice to an attendant, and the man nodded and went out, returning in a few moments with a strait jacket of canvas and leather. Doc spoke again. The nurses got out of the room. All the male attendants surrounded Renny. The men took off their glasses and placed them where they would not get broken, and also removed their coats.

"Do not hurt him," Doc Savage said.

Doc's face looked, at this moment, as though it actually were made out of bronze. Each muscle seemed solidified by mental control so that it would not show emotion, lest horror, if it managed to set a single muscle quivering, might use that foothold to spring through the whole of the bronze man's great body, and his mind.

They closed in on Renny, seized him, and began the stupendous task of putting him in the strait jacket. Renny was a mighty man. The sheer brute force in his great sinews was enormous. And now, when his mind did not exert any mollifying control, each muscle put forth its fullest strength in each move. His strength now was the strength of an insane man. In his sane life, Renny had never been as strong as he was now.

They got down on the floor, a great mass of men who labored and groaned with their own terrific efforts. And finally they got Renny in the strait jacket.

"Can't you do something to help him, Doc?" Johnny asked hollowly.

Doc Savage, in a grim silence, carried Renny down to the car, placed him in the machine. Johnny also got in.

Johnny watched Doc's driving again, noted how frequently the bronze man took seemingly aimless turns. He realized Doc was throwing off possible pursuit.

They drew up, finally, before a little inn in a quiet section of the city, an inn which had a courtyard at the rear, accessible by car, so that their arrival attracted no attention.

Doc Savage was known at the inn. Apparently he had stayed there before. The proprietor was a large man, white-haired, pleasant of face, and sparing with his questions.

They carried Renny to a room. Renny had not spoken. But he heaved and strained against the strait jacket almost continuously.

"Watch him," Doc said grimly.

The bronze man drove, in the police car, back to the Modernage Hospital. The institution had quieted. The surgeon who had been stabbed was in the operating room, and the man nodded eagerly when he heard Doc Savage ask to handle the treating of the wound. The young man had read Doc Savage's surgical treatise – he

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knew that this giant bronze man with the strange, flake-gold eyes and the long-fingered, sinew-wrapped hands was probably one of the greatest living surgeons.

It was an hour before the bronze man said, "You will be as good as new in a few weeks."

"That's a bit of bally good news," the surgeon said. He was pale.

"Can you tell me anything more about what happened?"

"Only that the man who threw the knife was some kind of Asiatic. Mixed blood, I think. Eurasian."

Doc examined the knife. It was unusual. The blade was long, curved like a thin half-moon. The handle was of dark wood which had a knotty grain and was almost as hard as metal.

Doc took the knife. Apparently the raiders who had carried off Fogarty-Smith had gained access to the hospital by climbing a stairway that led up to a rear balcony, from which a window opened into the room where Fogarty-Smith had been confined in a strait jacket.

That room was the same one in which Renny had been found.

There was no other clue of value. Doc did follow a vague trail across a part of the park to a driveway, where he found a few drops of oil leakage, indicating a car had waited there.

The police had learned nothing. Doc returned the police patrol car which he had borrowed.

The bronze man returned to Johnny, who was watching Renny at the inn.

"Renny," Johnny reported grimly, "is not a bit better."

There was a haunted look on the long, big-worded archaeologist's face. During part of the flight from southern France, he had kept his head shoved out of the plane in an effort to see what was below, and as a result, his face had been reddened by the wind, except for the small saucer-shaped areas around his eyes where goggles had protected his skin. The effect this gave his face was ghostly, and the stark aspect was increased by the strain on Johnny's face.

"Doc," Johnny continued, "did you get any trace of whoever took Fogarty-Smith?"

"No."

"Then we're sunk," Johnny groaned. "I'll be superamalgamated! We're left without a single clue to the whole mad business. And it is mad."

Johnny spread his long, bony arms desperately.

"Mad, I tell you!" he continued. "A girl is hired to come to New York, grab you and bring you to Europe. Who hired her is a complete mystery. And why is also a complete mystery. Then you fight back, and the girl and her helper and Monk and Ham vanish off a liner at sea. How, we don't know. Then the girl turns up and seizes an insane man in France, then races us to England and seizes another insane man – and Renny – poor Renny – if that all isn't mad, I'd like to know what is."

The confusion of Johnny's words reflected the turmoil in his mind.

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Doc Savage went down to the little bookcase in the comfortable inn parlor and ran a finger over the books. He was looking for a book that is a part of every Empire-conscious Englishman's library – an atlas of the world.

Opening the atlas to a map of the arctic regions, Doc drew Johnny's attention to a spot well north of the Arctic Circle.

"That is the place," Doc explained, "where the English weather station is located. Fogarty-Smith left that spot in his plane. A few hours later, he returned on foot – and he was insane in exactly the same way that Park Crater later became insane, and in the same way that Renny is now demented."

"It don't make sense," Johnny groaned.

"Fogarty-Smith's plane was never found," Doc said.

Johnny loQked thoughtful. "I – but what – "

Doc Savage again indicated the spot on the arctic regions of the map.

"Johnny," he said, "it might be worth while if one of us went up there and looked around. It's dangerous country to fly over, so – "

"I'll go," Johnny said promptly. "You've got to stay here and doctor Renny."

Doc Savage nodded slowly. "All right. But – well, it will be dangerous flying." The bronze man took a pencil and drew a suggested route on the map. "You can arrange to get gasoline at the British weather observation station on the pack ice. My suggestion is that you use the weather station as a base for exploration flights."

"What do I look for?"

"Eskimos."

"Question them."

"I'll be superamalgamated!" Johnny said.

He was about as completely puzzled as he could ever recall having been.

THIS was how a plane came to drop like an aluminum bullet out of the gray arctic sky, circle the English weather station, and land on the ice. Johnny got out of the plane. He was expected. He had radioed in advance, and he was to use fuel stored here at the station.

"But just what kind of exploration are you conducting?" the meteorologists wanted to know.

"My lucubration thereon approximates pulverulence," said Johnny.

The long flight had calmed Johnny's mind enough that he had gotten back to using his big words.

There was a dictionary at the weather station, and consulting it, the meteorologists learned that Johnny had assured them he hardly had a particle of an idea himself why he was up here.

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Johnny blocked off territory on his chart, calculated visibility, and began a survey. Just to make sure he was not missing anything, he took aerial photographs and examined them later with a magnifying glass.

He did not need an aerial photograph to find the Eskimo village. To land there, however, he needed the skill of a magician, and the luck of an Irishman. He had both, and the Eskimos dashed into their igloos, under the impression a winged Tongak was arriving.

"Kileritse!" Johnny shouted in the Eskimo dialect.

The word meant food, but it also meant, "Come here" – the Eskimos having combined the two meanings under one heading for some reason or other.

"Chimo!" Johnny also yelled. That was the word for welcome.

He had a little trouble. Not violence, but reluctance on the part of the Eskimos to credit the fact that this long, skinny kabloonatyet, or stranger, who came from the air was a fellow with whom it was safe to associate.

Johnny spoke their language, for the branch of his archaeological work which had to do with the sources of the different races of the world, had made him proficient in the derivative tongues of the major languages. While he could not speak Eskimo well enough to fool an Eskimo into believing he had lived in a tupik and had grown up on seal meat, he could make himself understood. He produced a pail of hard candy and made it known that he wanted his friends, the Eskimos, to share it with him.

"Elarle! Elarle!" they shouted, which translated into something like, "Indeed, yes!"

On the good will built by that pail of candy, and another, Johnny Littlejohn got the story of the Kingmuk, the dog that had come back to the village and jumped and snapped at something in the air until the dog finally died.

And the story of Kummik, the Eskimo. That tale came out, too. Of how Kummik came back to camp as naked as the day of his birth, armed only with his oonapik, or short hunting spear, and kept stabbing and jabbing at something over his head, was the story that was told Johnny. The telling was done around a blubber lamp in an igloo, amid shadows thrown by the blubber lamp – so that the surroundings were spooky. Johnny got a case of the creeps out of the recital.

The body of Kummik, the Eskimo, had been sealed in an igloo of ice blocks, and when Johnny went there to have a look – not an Eskimo would venture within a mile of the place – he found Kummik as well preserved as the hour when he had frozen.

Johnny made sure that months and months had passed since Kummik's demise. The Eskimos said it had happened akkane, which meant last year in a general way, but whether one month ago or twenty-five was impossible to determine. Close questioning convinced Johnny that Kummik had been smitten more than six months ago, however.

Johnny borrowed Kummik's body and flew back to London with it. He did not relish any minute of the time he had to sit in the plane with a frozen Eskimo. He was convinced his short neck hairs stood on end the entire trip.

Doc Savage said, "What you have accomplished, Johnny, is more valuable than anything that we have done so far." And it was obvious that he meant it. He never made statements for the mere purpose of praise, but this time he sounded especially sincere.

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"I thought," Johnny explained, "that an examination of the Eskimo's body might show what is wrong with Renny, Park Crater and Fogarty-Smith."

"It will," Doc said, "if anything will."

Johnny sat down and polished his monocle-magnifier while he thought.

"Doc," he said, "it begins to look as if this might make sense."

"The mystery came out of the arctic in three steps," Doc said.

"That's what I mean," Johnny agreed.

"A dog was the first thing stricken," Doc said.

"The dog was food, but it got away. Perhaps the mystery needed food."

Johnny tucked his monocle in the vest pocket of his coat, then took it out again.

"I'll be superamalgamated!" he said.

Doc said, "And the Eskimo's clothes were taken, Let us say the mystery needed clothes."

Johnny pulled his necktie. "Uh – "

"And the mystery moved south a hundred miles, where it got Fogarty-Smith's plane. Let us say the mystery needed an airplane."

Johnny made a platter of his left hand, a fist of his right hand, and smacked the fist into the platter.

"Yes," he said, "but what did Park Crater have? What did the mystery take from Park Crater?"

"Park Crater had Toni Lash."

"The girl?"

"Toni Lash had become convinced she was in love with Park Crater. The mystery wanted to hire her to come to New York, seize me and bring me to Europe. Intending to marry Park Crater, Toni Lash would have refused. The mystery could see that. So the mystery made Park Crater insane."

Johnny ran fingers through his hair. He insisted on wearing his hair at scholastic length.

"Now the mystery," he said. "What is it?"

"I'm afraid," Doc Savage said, "that the answer is becoming obvious."

Johnny started.

"I'll be superamalgamated!" he exploded. "What's Obvious? Name me one obvious thing about it!"

"John Sunlight," Doc Savage said.

Johnny's mouth worked without making words.

"John Sunlight!" he managed at last, incredulously.

Moving as stiffly as a medical skeleton with wired joints, he backed to a chair, folded down into it. His face was stark.

"But John Sunlight is dead!" he said hollowly.

Chapter XI. JOHN SUNLIGHT'S GHOST?

THE devil had walked into that room. The door had remained locked, the window screen was fastened, and outside the window a bird went on singing merrily, unfrightened by anything. But inside the room, a Satan stood; and he was as vivid to Johnny Littlejohn as if he stood there in reality, surrounded by the odor of brimstone, and leaning on his thin, three-tined pitchfork, his long tall with the spike on the end looped over his arm.

Two words had conjured the devil: John Sunlight.

Johnny Littlejohn had never seen John Sunlight. He had missed the grisly adventure of Doc Savage's fight with John Sunlight. That had been months ago. That was when Johnny had first gone to Egypt, and he had been there doing archaeological work throughout the frightful days when John Sunlight had descended on New York.

Johnny had missed the incredible incident of the Fortress of Solitude.

But John Sunlight was supposed to have died in the Arctic those many months ago. There was sound of an automobile horn out in the street. Doc Savage went to the window and moved the curtain back.

"There is an ambulance down here in the street," the bronze man said.

"What – oh!" Johnny yanked himself together. "Oh – that – that must be Kummik!"

"Kummik?"

"Kummik, the Eskimo. His body, I mean. I asked the airport officials to engage an ambulance and send the body here."

"You gave out word of where I am staying?"

Johnny shook his head quickly. "No. I said I had not seen you in some time. I said the Eskimo was a mummy, an archaeological specimen I was bringing in from Africa. I didn't even mention the arctic."

Johnny went downstairs, and shortly returned, followed by four strong men carrying an Eskimo kayak, or small skin boat, around which canvas had been wrapped.

The four men deposited the kayak on the floor and left.

"I put the body in a kayak," Johnny explained, "because it was the next thing to a coffin."

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He began untying the walrus-hide thongs, and lengths of airplane piano wire which held the canvas wrapping around the midships area of the kayak.

"Wait," Doc said.

"Eh?" Johnny stopped untying knots.

"You tie those thongs yourself?" Doc asked.

"Why – yes."

"You tie a regulation sailor's square knot, do you not?"

Johnny examined the knots. He looked a little queer.

"These aren't square knots," he said. "They're grannies. They've been changed."

IT was evening, and although they had not realized it, the sun had gone down and twilight had fallen. And now, suddenly, twilight became darkness, for a bank of clouds must have moved up in the west to cut off the remaining illumination from the sun.

London, a vast city around them, was making the low, contented traffic sounds of a metropolis. The bird had continued to sing merrily outside the window, but now it suddenly stopped. And the blackening night was very still for a few seconds. Then the bird flew away, flew with a wild hastening flutter of wings. After that, there was stillness again. It seemed tense.

"Doc!" Johnny blurted. "I feel – I feel –"

Inside the kayak, a whistle blew. It was a police whistle, piercingly loud even through the skin hull of the kayak.

Johnny jumped a generous yard. If an Eighteenth Dynasty mummy had sat up and thumbed its nose at him, he would not have been more astounded than he was to hear the police whistle blow inside the kayak, where the body of Kummik, the Eskimo, was supposed to be.

"Doc!" he exploded.

A door caved in crashingly, downstairs.

A rounded metal object hit the window, broke out enough glass to come inside, hit the floor, made a popping noise and began to smoke. A tear-gas bomb.

Someone inside the kayak began trying to get out. Johnny said, "It looks like Fourth of July is coming."

He took a machine pistol out of an underarm holster.

"They got a line on us from the airport," he added. "And that was my fault."

He caught a tiny, compact gas mask as Doc tossed it to him. The bronze man was already at an equipment case.

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Doc Savage then caught Johnny's arm, yanked him back into the second room of the little suite they had engaged.

"Any smokers in that machine pistol?" Doc asked.

Johnny nodded. "Half a drum."

"Shoot them out the window!" Doc ordered. "Make as much smoke around the house as possible."

Johnny nodded.

He exploded his first smoke pellet against the window silt. Instantly, a black wad of smoke appeared around the window. That concealed Johnny from view as he knocked out a glass windowpane, shoved his machine pistol through the window, held the trigger back, and switched the gun briefly. The gun made a deep, bull-fiddle moan, sprayed bullets as a hose throws water.

That side of the inn became enveloped in smoke.

Whirling, Johnny saw that Doc Savage was back in the other room. He leaped to help with whatever the bronze man was doing. He could hear the raiders coming up the stairs.

Doc Savage had put on his gas mask-nose clip, breath purifier and goggles.

The bronze man stooped, picked up the kayak and whoever was kicking and pounding inside, trying to get out. He carried the kayak to the hall door, knocked the door open, shoved the kayak through.

Bullets arrived, three or four. One slug spanked through the kayak. And inside the kayak, a bull-voiced Asiatic began squalling.

"Don't shoot me, you fools!" howled the man in the kayak. He said it in his native tongue first, then in English.

No more shots came.

But charging men reached the stairs. They were big, ugly fellows, thick through the cheeks, with slanting eyes.

Johnny – he had donned his gas mask – smashed a dozen smoke slugs in their midst. They turned, dived back down the stairs. They must have thought the smoke contained poison gas.

Doc gestured at the hall windows. Johnny could reach them now with safety. He ran to them, and a moment later, that side of the inn, and the ground for fifty yards away, was under a rolling, tumbling, growing blanket of black smoke.

Doc carried the kayak and the man inside back into their rooms – into the innermost room where the tear gas was not so bad.

Having dropped the kayak on the floor, the bronze man jumped around, shouted, knocked over furniture – fight noises. Then he ran to the window, and came back on his tiptoes, silently.

He barked harsh words in the Asiatic tongue which the man in the kayak had spoken.

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"They got out the window!" he rapped. "After them!"

He had faked a capture of the room by the raiders for the benefit of the man in the kayak.

Doc removed the remaining walrus-hide thongs, untwisted the piano wire and removed the canvas covering from the kayak. It was wise that he had deceived the man inside into thinking he was in the hands of his friends. The fellow had a gun.

Doc's fist made metal-on-flesh sound, and the big Eurasian lay back senseless in the kayak.

JOHNNY sent another dozen smoke pellets out the window. He ran into the other room, closing the door to keep out the tear gas, and sprayed the hall and more windows.

Downstairs, a voice was saying many profane things in the Asiatic tongues. Johnny didn't need to understand the tongue to know the voice was urging a charge.

It was a safe guess that this raid had been staged on the assumption that the Eurasian substituted for the Eskimo's body in the kayak would get Doc and Johnny covered with a gun. Failure of that scheme had thrown the raid out of kilter.

Johnny leaped back into the room where he had left Doc.

The bronze man was heaving the senseless Eurasian up through a small attic trapdoor in the ceiling.

Doc got the fellow out of sight, set the trapdoor back in place, dropped to the floor.

"Get Renny," Doc rapped. "Put him by the window.

Johnny lunged to the bed which stood in the room. Renny lay on the bed, incased in a straitjacket, his huge fists jerking inside the stout canvas as his disarranged mind still sought to fight something in the air over his head.

Doc was in the kayak. The kayak was not a dozen feet long, very narrow, and there was little room. Doc lay flat in the thing, squirming.

"Replace the canvas and tie it," he directed. "Then take Renny and do your best to escape with him."

"Leave you here in the kayak?" Johnny exploded.

"Make it fast!"

"But – "

"Quick! Tie the piano wires so they can't be untied. They won't have pliers. They'll have to leave in a hurry because of the police, and they'll take me, kayak and all!"

Johnny grew pale.

"That's a frightful risk!" he croaked.

"We've got to find their hide-out some way," Doc said.

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Johnny rolled the canvas around the kayak, tied the walrus-hide thongs, knotted the piano wires so tightly they could never be untied without pliers. Knives would not cut that wire.

"Luck!" he said grimly. "You'll need it!"

"You will need some yourself," Doc said from inside the kayak.

Johnny gathered up Renny. The big-fisted engineer was a burden. Johnny had been flying many hours, and had not rested; so he was tired. He gasped a little, swung a leg over the window sill, balanced himself and the strait-jacketed Renny.

This was a second-floor window.

The whole world seemed black. The smoke from the little bullets had risen, spread. The attackers would never see him, if that would help. He hoped it would.

Thinking of something, Johnny changed drums on his machine pistol. He put in a drum of mercy bullets.

He hung by one hand, held Renny with the other hand. He was convinced the weight stretched his bony arm a foot. He dropped – and landed on a man.

It was a very hard-bodied man. The fellow was waiting there for someone to try to escape by the window. He had a gun. It banged. Johnny clubbed with one fist, knocked the man away. There were shouts. Other men were near.

Johnny crouched, clamped down on the firing lever of his machine pistol, and swung a complete circle as quickly as he could, while the gun hooted. The weapon could spew slugs faster than a military machine gun, some of which fired as many as six hundred bullets a minute. He had to turn quickly, before the ammo drum ran empty.

His burst of mercy bullets got a satisfactory chorus of howls. Gathering up Renny, Johnny ran. His direction sense was confused. He banged into the house wall. Straightening himself out, he headed away from the inn. If he could just find the alley. He found the alley, turned down it, put on speed.

He was out of the smoke now, and he snatched off the gas mask. He needed all the air he could get. He made a grim resolution, if they ever got out of this mess, to suggest strongly that Renny go in for reducing. The big-fisted engineer seemed to weigh tons, and was getting heavier.

Staggering a little, Johnny came out of the alley. "The side street looked clear. He turned right, because the nearest corner was in that direction, and ran.

He rounded the corner.

A car was standing there. A man got out of the car quickly and pointed a pistol at Johnny. The man was squat, had long arms, a reddish face, tangled blond hair. His fingertips were masses of scar tissue where acid had removed his fingerprint identification.

Johnny stopped. The man said, "I'm the one they call Cautious." Johnny looked at the gun.

"Put the guy with the fists in the back seat," Cautious ordered. "Then I'll let you ride with me."

Johnny obeyed. He was glad to do so, in a way. He had been sure he would be shot.

Chapter XII. SKY PASSAGE

"I'll be superamalgamated," Johnny said.

Cautious grinned over his gun, and slid behind the car wheel. The machine was a sedan.

"Yeah," Cautious said, "I figured you for that one."

The starter growled like a disturbed bulldog, then the motor began purring. Johnny sat over as far as he could on the same seat with Cautious and watched the latter's gun.

What one?" Johnny asked.

"The one with the words," Cautious said.

"Oh."

The car began moving. Johnny kept his eyes on the other's weapon.

"You're fixin' to get a job digestin' lead," Cautious said, "the way you're watchin' this gun."

Johnny said nothing.

"You roll down that window and hang your head and shoulders outside," Cautious ordered. "It'll be better for your health."

Johnny complied with the request. The man was right. He was in a state of mind where he would consider doing anything.

The night had not yet arrived with enough darkness to make automobile headlights necessary, nor was it light enough to do without them; but rather the twilight was at about that stage which leads motorists to switch on their lights, then because of the apparent inadequateness of the beams, wonder if they do not need new bulbs.

The car traveled slowly around the block and stopped before the inn. None of the inn was visible, being hidden in the black smoke screen.

Four automobiles stood in the street. Big men with high cheek bones and slant eyes were getting in the cars. Johnny saw them load the body of Kummik, the Eskimo, into one machine.

More men ran in and out of the smoke. They shouted, swore. There was some kind of dilemma inside the inn.

Cautious poked Johnny in the ribs with the gun. "Just keep your head out of the manger!" he said.

Cautious drove up before the inn and stopped. Two big Eurasians dashed up to the machine.

"Hoon mooshkeleman choon!" one of the Eurasians gobbled.

"Aw, now," Cautious said, "you know I don't sabe that lingo."

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"I am in fix," the man translated.

"What kind of a fix?"

"Our man in skin boat – we no get him out chopchop," the other explained.

"Bring boat and all," Cautious ordered.

The Eurasian tore back into the house. A moment later they came out with the kayak, placed it lengthwise on a touring car which had the top down. The cars all moved. Men held the kayak in place.

Johnny watched the inn drop behind. He could hear police sirens yammering in the distance, their sounds making him think of the coyotes that he had heard on the Wyoming range. The night was no darker, which did not seem reasonable, for Johnny had the feeling that hours had passed since the attack began. Actually it had only been minutes, because everything had happened with blinding speed.

Cautious had been listening to the police sirens. He shook his head, clucked uneasily.

The cars, the entire procession of them, had a definite destination. They lost no time in making for it.

The machines all stopped in a bit of grassy woodland which seemed to be a park. It was too dark to tell the exact nature of the place, but there were no lights of houses visible.

A flashlight blazed against Johnny's face.

"That's one of them," Toni Lash's voice said. "But where are the others?"

Cautious made a sour noise.

"Doc Savage got away," he advised.

"How?"

"They made so much smoke around the place that the whole Chinese army could've escaped!" Cautious explained. "But we got this Johnny, and the big-fisted engineer called Renny." He was silent a moment, listening to the caterwaul of police sirens. "And we got trouble, it looks like. Hear it?"

Someone came up and issued orders. The speaker was a Eurasian, wider and taller than any of the others. He seemed to be in charge.

"The planes," he said in English. "We get in planes."

The girl was obviously surprised. "But I thought – "

"We leave England now," the Eurasian said.

The girl stamped her foot.

"I thought we were to stay until we got Doc Savage," she said.

The big Eurasian shook his head and scowled. "Order say leave."

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"So you're going to give up trying to get Doc Savage!"

The big Eurasian shook his head and scowled.

"I get order by radio from Genghis," he growled. "Order say leave."

"So you're going to give up trying to get Doc Savage!"

The Eurasian shrugged.

"Chalo!" he said. "Let us go."

The girl was startled. A visible tightness came over her. "I'm not going!" she said.

The Eurasian looked at her with slant-eyed inscrutability.

"The Genghis," he said, "orders you brought along."

The Eurasian was either a man of few words, or the increasing nearness of the police sirens chased away his patience. He barked orders, and more of his men appeared and also produced guns.

Toni Lash and Cautious walked away from the car. The Eurasians herded Johnny along, and more of them carried Renny's big form. The route led down a gently sloping bank to water, evidently a lake.

Little waves sloshed in the reeds that lined the bank, and a few yards offshore, the waves slapped against the thin metal skins of big amphibian planes. There were three of the planes, all large, modern, fast.

There was a great deal of splashing as everybody waded into the lake up to their waists and climbed into the aircrafts.

Cautious got a chance to whisper to Toni Lash.

"What the blazes has this turned into?" Cautious demanded

The girl shook her head. She seemed frightened. "It don't look so good," she admitted.

"It looks like you have been demoted."

"The Genghis," she said grimly, "must be peeved about our repeated failures to get Doc Savage."

"In that case," Cautious said, "woe is us!"

The mixed crew of Asiatics and Eurasians were having trouble with the kayak containing, as they thought, their comrade. Inside the kayak, the "comrade" was abusing them in their native language.

"Toonkaman putavo!" he howled. "Hurry up! Get me out of here!"

Johnny decided Doc Savage was doing a very good job of acting inside the kayak.

By kinking the kayak in the middle with main strength – Doc Savage did a lot of roaring at that – they got the Eskimo's skin boat into a plane cabin. The planes took off.

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JOHNNY, to his profound disgust, was confined in a different plane from the one which took off with the kayak. Renny was with Johnny.

Cautious was in the second plane.

Toni Lash rode in the ship which contained the kayak. Also in the craft which the young woman rode was the body of Kummik, the Eskimo.

The young woman saw this as she looked around. One of the Eurasians had propped Kummik up in the seat. Kummik had thawed out, but he looked like a very recent fatality, thanks to the preserving qualities of the arctic cold.

The girl shuddered, and dropped into a seat. She fell to watching the kayak.

She saw a man kick the kayak, make the tight skin covering of the thing thump like a drum.

The voice inside the kayak bellowed a protest.

"Let me out of here!" the voice snarled.

The man kicked the kayak again.

"You fool!" he said. "You failed to hold Doc Savage at the point of a gun. It was because of you that he escaped."

The voice inside the kayak promised to take the other man's ears and tie them together under his chin – once he got out of the kayak.

The other laughed and flung himself in a seat. They had decided to let their associate stay in the kayak as a measure of punishment for his part in the fiasco at the inn.

Toni Lash fell to staring out the window. The plane had been climbing through the fog, and now it came out above the fog, into a brilliant silver moonlight which made the surface of the fog appear as an expanse of snow that spread for countless miles.

The plane climbed, and the motors moaned steadily. The ship gave a sharp little dip to the left as a down current caught that wing. The pilot leveled off again. Later, and at intervals for hours thereafter, the plane kept hitting air bumps, and the sensation was something like being in a car which was running into low ridges of soft sand that had drifted across a smooth highway.

The other two planes climbed up and flew abreast of this ship, and the three craft went roaring across the English Channel and across Europe like big metal geese.

The voice inside the kayak had fallen silent.

Some hours later, another plane came up and buzzed around them. It was a small, fast, military pursuit ship which carried on its wings and fuselage the insignia of the Soviet army. The pilot made signals for them to descend, and fired a warning burst of tracer bullets.

Toni Lash knew they were flying over Soviet territory forbidden to planes, and she held her lower lip tightly with her teeth, wondering what the warplane would do.

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The little fighter gave up the chase, dropped away, and was lost in the night.

After that, Toni Lash sat with her shapely chin cupped in a palm. She was thinking. It struck her that this was the first time recently that she had really been able to think. All the rest of the time, she had been hypnotized, in a sense, by the excitement of doing things. She liked excitement, or had always liked it in the past. But now she was beginning to wonder. She thought of Park Crater, of how pleasant he had been during those days on the Riviera.

Park Crater, she knew, was in one of those three planes. Which one, she did not know. It might even be this one. There was a compartment in the rear.

She was very still, thinking of Park Crater – she slowly grew tense, and her fingers bit fiercely at her cheeks; then realizing what she was doing, she took her fingers away and rubbed the small aching pits which her fingertips had pressed into her cheeks.

Suddenly she stood up, intending to go back and see if Park Crater were aboard this plane.

But a big Asiatic heaved up and scowled. The fellow's head was like an ivory cannon ball. He had a beard, but it did not appear to consist of more than twenty hairs, and each was about two inches long.

"Uhin ruho!" the Asiatic said. "Stay here."

TONI Lash had a magnetic power, an ability to dominate. It was, she had always hoped, something in addition to her amazing beauty. There had been few times in her rather remarkable career when it had failed her.

"Bus!" she said sharply. "That will do!"

The man scowled.

"The Genghis," he growled, "said you were to be brought to him."

The girl showed scorn with her chin.

"Somewhere there is a donkey who has no brains," she snapped, "because he gave them to you."

The man shrugged. "A donkey that is hitched to a cart knows what will happen if he stops pulling."

"I also work for the Genghis," Toni Lash pointed out angrily. "He gave me a great mission. All he will ever hand you is a sword. Who are you to give me orders?"

The Asiatic was not as impressed as he should have been.

"With the sword handed me, I am a success," he growled.

Toni Lash stamped a foot.

"You let Doc Savage escape!" she retorted. "You and the others at the inn. The bronze man got away from you. When that is known, do you think the Genghis will stroke your long ears and turn you out to graze in donkey heaven?"

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That gave the sparse-bearded Asiatic something to think about. He hitched at his belt uneasily.

"Muhesh!" he exploded. "It was a wise man who said that thorn bushes and women grew from the same seed."

He made some faces, and came out loser in a staring match with Toni Lash, after which he felt a need of something to divert the young woman's anger from himself.

He decided to open the kayak and release the comrade he supposed was inside.

He went forward to the pilot's compartment, got a pair of pliers from the tool kit, and came back to cut the airplane piano wire which Johnny had tied so tightly around the canvas and the kayak.

Inside the kayak, Doc Savage made a snarling noise. He was still imitating, as exactly as he could, the voice of the man who had originally occupied the kayak.

"You will behave yourself when I release you," warned the voice of the man who was freeing him.

"Na!" Doc said explosively. "For keeping me in here, you shall have the pleasure of eating your own ears."

Doc was in a very tight spot. He knew that. He had no desire to be released just yet. So he made the threat sound as real as he could.

But the man outside either wasn't scared, or felt he had to show Toni Lash he was not afraid.

There was a metallic click.

"I have in my hand a gun," the Asiatic's voice said. "It is a wise rabbit which can recognize a – wolf."

The canvas moved as the Asiatic started to whip it off.

Doc Savage came up with the canvas, trying to keep behind it, taking the long chance that he might fall upon the other man and the fellow would not shoot one he thought a comrade, before Doc got his gun.

Whether the man would have shot or not remained forever a mystery.

There was a gasp. A jar as the Asiatic fell. A shot.

Doc Savage got clear of the canvas and saw that Toni Lash had shoved the Asiatic, had pounced upon him, and had snatched his gun.

The girl leaped to her feet with the man's pistol.

"I thought it was your voice!" she gasped.

She offered the gun to Doc Savage.

Chapter XIII. THE STOP-OFF

THERE was one thing that Doc Savage had always known he could not do, and he had never tried to do it,

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and right now he was glad he had never tried. He couldn't figure how a woman would act next.

He said, "Keep the gun."

Then he went forward, his destination the pilot's cockpit – the heart and brains of the plane.

There were six more men in the cabin seats, all of them Asiatics. He went plunging past them – they began leaping up and clawing for weapons – and hit the cockpit door. The pilot's compartment was closed off from the cabin, after the fashion of an airliner. He got the door open, dived inside.

The pilot was a beefy White man. When he turned his head, his teeth were showing. They were big, white false teeth. In each of the pilot's cheeks was a bullet scar which explained why he had to wear false teeth – his original teeth had been shot out of his mouth at some time in the past.

Doc clamped hands on the man, yanked him out of the seat. The fellow was strong. They fought, got down among the controls, broke some glass dials out of the instrument panel. Doc was stiff from being in the kayak so long.

Then Doc got the pilot's gun out of a belt holster and hurled the flier back into the cabin. The man went staggering, fell flat on his back.

The plane nosed down and went bawling for the earth.

Doc yanked at the control wheel. The plane's nose came up. Centrifugal force jammed the bronze man down in the pilot's seat. Strain made the plane wings bend. Then earth and sky had changed places, and the plane lay on its back, almost motionless.

Back in the cabin, there were howls and thumps – and the human cargo landed on their heads on what had been the ceiling.

Doc looked back. The cabin lights were on. He saw a hand sticking up, holding a gun. He fired once, hardly seeming to aim. The gun flew out of the hand, and the hand looked different.

The plane fell off, began a tailspin. Doc helped the spin along with the controls, the motors. Over and over, around and around, the ship gyrated. In the cabin, the Asiatics rattled around like whatever it is that makes the noise in a Spanish dancer's castanets.

Then he pulled out of the spin, put the nose of the plane straight down. Men came tumbling forward in the cabin, and three parachute packs and a man landed in the cockpit.

Doc clubbed the man with a fist. He came back on the wheel, and the big plane stood on its nose; men went piling toward the cabin rear, parachute packs hopping after them like playful pups.

A few shots had sounded, but had done nothing but make holes in the cabin.

The chutes gave Doc an idea. He could not go on with this forever.

He leveled the plane suddenly, and turning with the pilot's pistol, broke two arms deliberately.

"Put on the parachutes!" he shouted. "Jump!"

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PROBABLY a combination of things made them take the order. These Asiatics were fierce hill fighters, at home on the back of a war pony, and the air was not their element. They had been treated to enough gymnastics from the plane to scare them badly.

Toni Lash stood erect in the rear of the cabin. She was disheveled, but she still had her gun. She pointed the weapon at the cabin occupants.

"Get the chutes on!" she ordered.

Her voice carried to the bronze man. The cabin of this plane, like the modern ships, was soundproofed.

A menace at either end of the cabin, and one of the menaces in control of the plane, decided the Asiatics and the beefy white pilot.

They put on the parachutes. There seemed to be enough chutes to go around.

At that point, Doc Savage made mental note of a rather surprising fact. The Asiatics all knew how to don the chutes. Not only that – it was evident they'd had training in parachute jumping.

That seemed a little unusual.

Out of the plane door they went, one after another. Doc watched them; realized that every man counted the exact regulation ten before he yanked the rip cord. Yes, they'd had chute training.

Eight white mushrooms floated below in the moonlight. That accounted for all the men, including the pilot. Toni Lash came forward and fell into the copilot's seat. She pointed. "It isn't over yet!" she gasped.

It wasn't. The other two planes – they had been circling, puzzled. But now their pilots guessed the truth, and they arched around, came diving.

Red whiskers of tracer bullets stuck out from machine guns in the ships. Six red whiskers from each ship. They were heavily armed.

Doc rolled his ship. Huge as it was, it handled easily. This was a warplane.

Phosphorus-laden tracers rattled on the right wing, mixed with yammering lead. Probably every fifth bullet was a tracer; the others plain, jacketed lead killers.

The yammering stopped. They were clear. Up and over went the big ship in an Immelmann turn – and the other two planes banked wildly to get Doc's ship back in their crossed sight wires.

Toni Lash sat tight in the other seat.

Doc felt for the Bowden trigger controls of his own guns, squeezed them briefly. The guns gobbled loudly. He fired only a short burst, to warm the weapons, soften the oil in their actions.

"You'd better be good," Toni Lash said grimly. "The Genghis has hired the best fighting pilots in the world. He pays them a thousand dollars a week, cash."

Doc had already realized he'd better be good.

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RED yarns of tracer bullets stretched for them again. After the tracers passed, and went on ahead, they looked like fleeing red stars. Doc watched them.

He whipstalled. Brought the plane up, hung it by its baying nose, until the stars stood still in front of their eyes. Just before the big ship stalled, he let it reel off on one wing in a steep bank.

Now the other two ships were almost upon them. Doc took his time, got his ship turning slowly, aiming – then he came down on the firing levers. His guns clamored. He corrected a little by the tracers. His lead began eating holes in the right wing of one of the other crates.

The pilot rolled, got clear – then the ships were past. This fighting was done at well over two hundred miles an hour. It was lightning-fast business. Stab and go.

Doc wrenched the wheel, stamped the rudder, knocked the throttles wide. He got the tail of the plane to the left. Tracers raced at him. The other thing was a flying fortress.

There is a saying among combat pilots that the plane has never been built which does not have a blind spot, and Doc knew the design of these ships. He found it, hung on, kept batting the throttles with a palm to get them open their widest. He gained.

He drove a stream of lead into the streamlined cowling on one of the other ship's motors. Only a momentary burst. Then the other plane jumped up in a tight loop. But it scared the pilot.

In his present position, the bronze man could hang onto the tail of the other ship until gas gave out. But there was another enemy plane – and its lead began hammering at the cabin.

Doc banked away, as if seeking safety, then executed half an Immelmann and a wingover, and was, instantaneously, it seemed, nose to nose with the attacking ship.

Like fighting eagles, the planes charged head-on. Toni Lash suddenly covered her eyes.

There was a jar. A report, really. Objects striking at four hundred miles an hour hit fast. And the combined speed of both planes was near that.

Doc looked back, wrenching open the cockpit window to do so, and examined his tailskid wheel. It was gone. Then he glanced at the other plane. There was a great rent in one of its wings where the tailskid had struck.

The three planes arched far apart in the sky.

Suddenly, a Very pistol ball climbed from one of the planes, burned red. The two pilots evidently had their code of signals, for both gave up the fight.

The two planes turned, pointed noses downward, and dived for safety.

Clouds were spread over the earth, a solid expanse, and these vapor masses swallowed the two planes.

Doc knew enough about flying to realize the uselessness of trying to follow them.

The bronze man flew back, scanning the modules masses of cloud. He was seeking the spot – he had marked it by an upflung formation on the cloud surface, where the men in the parachutes had gone overboard.

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Locating the spot, he went down. The clouds took him in, and it was very dark. He watched the altimeter.

"Know where we are?" he asked.

"Somewhere near Afghanistan, I should judge," Toni Lash said.

That did not help. There might be mountains below. The altimeter read sixteen thousand, but there were mountains in Asia higher than that.

Doc searched in the cockpit compartments, and found a parachute flare. He put that over the side, and followed it, spiraling slowly. The flare made a gray blur, and he kept above it.

Abruptly the light of the flare spread over a great area. It had dropped below the clouds.

There were mountains down there. Mountains that looked like the magnified animals tracks in the dried mud around a jungle water hole. No place down there for a landing.

"We'll have to let the fellows who used the parachutes take their chances with the natives," Doc decided.

He climbed the plane back through the strata of clouds. The moonlight hit the plane with rich silver when they came above the clouds, and the bronze man leveled. The compass dial had been broken during the fight. He consulted the heavens, spotted the Dipper, then Polaris, the North Star.

"What direction?" he asked the girl.

"East," she said.

The plane engines seemed to make a little more noise, but that was probably due to the bullet holes in the cabin. Also, out on one wing, a strip of metal skin fabric, bullet loosened, whipped in the wind and vibrated until it tore loose. The roaring rush of air got under edges of the rent, and there was violin-like humming. Suddenly, with a ripping report, another section of skin fabric came off.

"That is the trouble with metal covering on modern planes," Doc Savage said.

He decreased their pace to bare flying speed, kept an eye on the clouds below, watching for a gap in the floor. Sensible thing to do was to land, check over the plane.

Off to the west, he discovered the cloud field ended. He sent the plane in that direction, slid over the edge of the clouds and spiraled down.

There was desert, floor-smooth. He flew close to it, dropped a flare, and cranked down the retractable landing gear. His landing was good, for the sand was amply hard and the missing tailskid wheel did not bother.

Doc began looking over the plane.

Monk and Ham, gagged, lay in the rear compartment. They were incased in strait jackets.

Chapter XIV. THE GENGHIS

MONK and Ham, in the strait jackets, looked like two stuffed canvas sacks – Monk a wide sack, and Ham a slightly longer and much thinner sack. Their gags were the most effective type, a dozen or more strips of adhesive tape which held wads of cloth in their mouths.

Doc Savage, looking at them, was suddenly tense with worry.

Monk and Ham were heaving with their arms, and it was very much as if they were striving to strike out at something unseen in the air above them.

The desert sand around the plane was almost as white as chalk dust, and the brilliant moonlight enhanced this whiteness. There was a wind, and it blew the fine sand along in little whirls that sometimes looked like white animals scurrying. The sand brushed against the metal of the plane with a ghostly whispering, and slowly filled the long, strange-looking marks made by the plane's two fat tires, and the dragging, wheel-less tail. In the east, a mile or two away, the clouds, over which they had been flying, lay like a herd of black sheep in the sky.

Except for the night wind and the whispering sand, there was everywhere the strange, breathless silence of deserts. A lifeless, abysmal quiet, depressing and unnerving.

When Doc Savage banged a plane door open to lift Monk and Ham out on the sand, still in their straitjackets, the noise the plane door made seemed to go a long distance and come back, in echoes, as of several plane doors banging open.

The bronze man somehow seemed larger than usual, an effect that came probably from the fact that he was in shirt sleeves. He wore dark trousers, a black shirt and black house slippers – the garb he had been wearing when surprised in the London inn.

Monk and Ham, when they were lowered on the sand, flounced about in the strait jackets.

Toni Lash got out of the plane. She watched Monk and Ham steadily, and there was horror on her face. She stood with her back against the side of the plane, her arms down rigid at her side, her lips parted slightly, and continued to watch Monk and Ham.

Doc Savage plucked off the gags.

"You mighta let us loose," Monk said indignantly, "so we coulda got in that fight!"

"Oh!" Toni Lash said.

She folded down on the sand in a faint.

Doc Savage released the two men; they got up, but sat down again quickly, finding that confinement in the strait jackets had more or less ossified their muscles.

"Blazes!" Monk squeaked. "My legs have been asleep for a week."

Ham pointed at the girl. "What keeled her over?" he demanded.

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"She was afraid you were insane, Doc explained.

Ham thought back over the incidents leading up to their downfall on board the liner Maritonia.

"I'm not surprised she should think Monk was nuts," the dapper lawyer said.

"How long have you been in the strait jackets, and gagged?" Doc asked.

"Ever since we downed ourselves into being captured on the liner," Monk explained. The homely chemist eyed Doc Savage. "What did you mean – she thought we were insane?"

Doc Savage gave a clipped but complete description of what had happened. He told them how the trail had led to Park Crater who was mad, and who had been seized; of how the next clue was Fogarty-Smith, who had also been whisked away.

"That's all news to us," Ham said grimly. "They kept us tied up. In dark rooms most of the time."

"Did you overhear anything of value?" Doc asked.

Ham shook his head. "Nothing."

Doc Savage's metallic features were thoughtful in the moonlight.

"How did the girl manage to get you off the Maritonia?"

Ham grimaced, shook his head again.

"We don't know," he said. "She made us drink something that put us to sleep. When we woke up, we were in a dark room on dry land."

"That part sure puzzles me," Monk complained.

Doc Savage went to the girl, who was stirring a little. He rubbed her wrists to help the reviving along. She sat up finally, coughed a few times weakly, then buried her face in her hands and remained in that position for a time.

"I believe," she said quietly, "that is the first time I ever fainted."

Doc Savage had been thinking, and he had evolved a theory which might explain the way the girl had turned to his side.

"It was just beginning to dawn on you," he said, "that the Genghis made Park Crater insane.

The girl looked at him strangely, then nodded.

"Yes," she said. "Sitting there in the plane tonight, that came to me."

"Give us your story," Doc directed.

The girl nodded. "There's not much to it," she said in a low voice. "I was on the Riviera. I guess I was in love with Park Crater. I met the Genghis, but that first time we met, he didn't suggest that I work for him."

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"The Genghis," Doc said, "is clever."

"Very clever," the girl agreed grimly. "He must have seen that I liked Park Crater, and intended to marry him – Anyway, Park Crater went – well, insane. I was grief-stricken. And when the Genghis offered to hire me, I took the job."

"And the job?."

"Was to come to New York, seize you, bring you to a Mediterranean port and turn you over to the Genghis' men. I hired Cautious to help me, and he engaged those other men in New York."

"What gets me," Monk put in, "is how you got us off that liner."

"I'll get to that." The girl looked at them, then dropped her eyes to the sand, and picked up white sand with both hands and let it sift through her fingers. "I've been an international spy for years. I have – " she grimaced a little – "rather a reputation as an espionage agent. Cautious had worked for me in the past. That was why I hired him." She looked up grimly.

"It was while doing espionage that I first met the Genghis," she said.

Doc Savage spoke quietly. "John Sunlight, you mean?" he said.

"Yes – John Sunlight is the Genghis."

Homely Monk came up off the sand as if dynamite had exploded in his hip pockets.

"John Sunlight!" he yelled. "But he IS dead!"

Doc Savage shook his head.

"John Sunlight did not die on the arctic ice that time."

They were all very still. The desert wind swept the white sand against them with gentle whisperings. The moonlight suddenly faded, for the cloud bank had crept closer and edged between the moon and themselves, and the clouds were not like dark sheep now, but seemed to have become huge, skulking monsters.

They were thinking, Doc Savage and his two men, of John Sunlight.

John Sunlight was one of the strangest, most sinister men they had ever encountered. Whether his real name was John Sunlight, no one knew, just as his past had always been more or less a mystery. He was a schemer, a plotter, a creature with a diabolically inhuman mind. The world knew that. A fantastic man, gaunt and bony, with the face and eyes of a poet, the ambitions of a Napoleon, the principles of a fiend. A man who liked to wear fantastic costumes of solid colors, changing them several times daily. A man who looked weak, but who had the strength of a Sandow in his hands. A man who liked to destroy souls, but who never destroyed a body – John Sunlight never killed a man if he could help it.

John Sunlight did not kill – he did the kind of things to his victims that he had done to Renny, Park Crater, Fogarty-Smith and Kummik, the Eskimo.

The world had first heard of John Sunlight when Soviet Russia sent him to a Siberian prison, from which he escaped with others in an ice-breaker which drifted across the polar regions with the arctic ice – and was

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wrecked on the island where Doc Savage had his Fortress of Solitude.

It was unfortunate that John Sunlight was the man who found Doc Savage's Fortress of Solitude. The Fortress of Solitude was unusual. It was a sanctuary which Doc Savage had constructed for himself in the arctic. It was where the bronze man went to study, to work out scientific experiments.

But most unfortunate of all, it was in the Fortress of Solitude that Doc Savage had stored inventions which were too grim to be in the hands of men.

War machines, death rays, hideous gases, fantastic weapons against which there was no defense – these were the kind of things he had stored in the Fortress of Solitude. For the place was remote, and no one had known of its existence except the bronze man, himself, and a few Eskimos who served as attendants.

Armed with the fantastic weapons he had found in the Fortress of Solitude, John Sunlight had descended upon New York. The fight that had followed was one Doc Savage and his men would never forget, and it ended – they had thought – when John Sunlight had been driven back to the arctic and his followers overpowered, and the master fiend himself had fled into the polar ice wastes.

There had been almost undisputable evidence that John Sunlight had died. They had trailed him, and on the ice beside an open lead of water, they had found where a polar bear had set upon John Sunlight. There had been gore, scattered fragments of John Sunlight's clothing. They had thought John Sunlight had died there.

Monk broke the long, unpleasantly thoughtful silence.

"What gets me," he told Toni Lash, "is how you got us off that liner?"

"I radioed the Genghis' planes where to pick us up," the girl explained. "Then we went overboard with life preservers and a Very flare pistol with which to signal the planes. They picked us up."

Monk sat down on the sand again and treated himself to a belated shiver, thinking how large the Mediterranean was, and what would have happened if the plane which the girl summoned had not found them.

Doc Savage's flake gold eyes were steady on Toni Lash.

"What is John Sunlight – or the Genghis – trying to do?" he asked.

The girl shook her head miserably. "I do not know."

"He has those Asiatics helping him," Doc reminded.

She nodded. "He has established headquarters in the mountains beyond Afghanistan. That much I know. And those Asiatics – they are fierce, cruel warriors – obey his orders implicitly."

"The planes?"

"He has bought at least fifty of those big war planes, and hired skilled war pilots to fly them. I told you that."

Ham had been listening with the attentive interest of a lawyer hearing the opposition outline an important case, at times giving his disheveled clothing a regretful examination. Rarely did a predicament become serious enough to make him forget his clothes-consciousness.

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"As I see it," Ham said, "there are three things to be cleared up."

Ham held up one finger. "First, what is John Sunlight up to?"

He held up a second finger. "Second, what did John Sunlight do to Renny, Park Crater, Fogarty-Smith and Kummik, the Eskimos?"

Up went a third finger. "And why did John Sunlight want to get hold of Doc?"

Monk snorted.

"As far as I am concerned, there's not enough fingers in the crowd to illustrate the things I don't understand."

Doc Savage walked slowly around the plane, as though he wanted to think, to assemble the situation in his mind and analyze it. His metallic features were grave, and he made his tiny, exotic, trilling sound that indicated mental stress. The note had a tense quality.

The bronze man came back to the others. His flake-gold eyes went to Monk and Ham.

"You remember," he said, "the other trouble we had with John Sunlight?"

Monk pulled his homely face into a wry shape.

"I'll never forget!" he grunted.

"After it was all over, and we thought John Sunlight was dead, and when we searched the Fortress of Solitude – the bronze man spread both hands palm upward – "we discovered that John Sunlight had removed many of the deadly inventions stored there."

"Sure," Monk agreed. "He'd been sellin' 'em to Balkan nations to raise money. But we put a stop to that."

"But we never did find many of the missing inventions," Doc repeated.

Ham had been rubbing his jaw; now he looked startled and took a step forward.

"Doc!" he yelled. "You mean that John Sunlight escaped from the arctic, went back and got the inventions from some place where he'd hidden them?"

"It begins to look that way," Doc admitted.

"In that case," Ham said grimly, "I can see where we're in for plenty of trouble."

Monk muttered, "We gotta get Johnny an' Renny away from that devil Genghis, or whatever John Sunlight calls himself."

Toni Lash went to Doc Savage. She put both hands on the bronze man's arm.

"May I ask something?" she said in a low voice.

Doc nodded.

"Let me help with this," the girl requested in a tight voice. "It was because of me that Park Crater is – well, I owe it to him to help all I can."

"We are going to need plenty of help," Doc Savage said quietly.

"Have you any kind of plan?" the girl asked.

"It might not be feasible to fly directly to John Sunlight's headquarters."

She shook her head sharply. "Suicide! He has thousands of Asiatic hill warriors as followers."

"Then there is another scheme we might try," the bronze man said.

Chapter XV. THE RIVAL GENGHIS

IT is said that the first principle of civilization is to live in peace with your neighbor – that every great war sets civilization back fifty years.

If this be, then there exists a region in Asia where civilization has a hopeless handicap. This spot is located in a mountainous section not far from Afghanistan – which is not exactly a land of peace itself – and also not distant from Tibet, where every man carries a rifle and, if he be true Tibetan gentleman, shoots at every stranger on sight.

In the section, civilization probably gets its fifty-year setback on a fortnightly average.

It is a mountainous district. A sheer five-thousand-foot cliff calls for no more comment than a cutbank beside a creek in Missouri. These mountains are bare, the principal vegetation being a scrubby sage called tushkin, and much of the year there is snow. They are great brown-and-red mountains, resembling Arizona, except for the almost perpetual snow. There is little game, except for ram chikor, the snow partridge which clucks and whistles high on the stony steppes.

There are no roads, hence no automobiles, and one rarely encounters an arabas, or the lighter type of two-wheeled cart called mapas. Almost all traveling is done on the backs of wiry little Himalayan ponies called tats, or astride sure-footed yaks.

Two yaks and a pony were wallowing through the snow which choked a high mountain pass. The three animals crossed the pass and labored down into a deep jilga, a narrow and rocky valley.

The two yaks were ridden by men. A woman rode the pony. The men wore pushtins, the voluminous fleece-lined leather coats of Russian style, as well as felt boots, and they were wrapped in the yak felt coverings of yurts, for it was very cold. The woman wore a burkha, the long garment worn by the women of India – styles had a way of traveling here, too – under heavy, fur outer garments. Her face was veiled.

As a protection against sun reflection from the blinding snow, the two men had tied strands of horsehair over their eyes, to shut out the glare. Snow blindness was a terrible thing here in this fierce land, where a man might need his eyes at any instant to look over his gun sights at an enemy.

The man riding the yak had been having his difficulties. He did not like yaks, and apparently the yak returned the sentiment.

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The man resented the yak's natural gait, which seemed to consist of a trot with the front legs and a walk with the back legs.

"I been on these things before!" the man complained in a squeaky voice.. "And I don't like 'em no better'n the first time!"

At this, the yak stopped. The rider drummed the creature's ribs vainly with his heels then tugged on the rope attached to a ring in the yak's nose, but the yak's nose only stretched like rubber.

The rider rested both feet on the yak's horns, which stuck out like handle bars.

"By rights," he said, "Ham oughta be ridin' this mountain-climbin' buffalo."

"Monk, you matched him to see who would get the other pony," remarked the man riding the other yak, "and you lost."

"I know, Doc," Monk grumbled. "But I'm still tryin' to figure out that gleam Ham had in his eye when we was matchin'. I think he flimflammed me. I wonder if he used a trick coin?"

The woman spoke. "I don't believe he did."

"What d'you mean, Miss Lash?" Monk asked.

"Well, I saw Ham slip two coins out of your pockets, and I think he used one of them when you matched to see who would ride the yak."

Monk groaned.

"Them coins was my phonies!" he yelled. "I been rookin' Ham for months with 'em! Wait'll I get my hands on that shyster! Robbin' me like that!"

DOC Savage, Monk and Toni Lash camped that evening in a nuilah, a point where two canyons intersected. Monk unlashd a bundle of sticks – wood was almost as scarce here as it was in the arctic – and tied the sticks together to make a framework over which they stretched the felt coverings to form a yurt.

All three of them were disguised as Kalpaks, the fierce warriors of the north who were of Mongol descent. They hoped the disguises would suffice, and had reason to believe they would, judging from their success with such natives as they had encountered.

Monk drew a short sword, began to cut tushkin to make a fire. All of them carried so many weapons that they resembled armament salesmen traveling with samples.

"This scheme we're tryin'," Monk grumbled, "seems kinda slow to me."

Doc Savage nodded. "True. But we're four people against John Sunlight and thousands of men who have made a life business of fighting."

"As I said," Toni Lash put in, "it would have been suicide to fly in and try out-and-out fight."

Monk jerked at a stem of tough sage.

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"This Genghis, as John Sunlight calls himself, is hirin' combat fliers," be pointed out. "We coulda qualified, an' maybe got jobs with him."

Doc said, "He is clever enough to suspect that is exactly what we would do."

"You don't think he'll suspect this scheme?"

"Let us hope not." Doc Savage fell to studying the yaks thoughtfully, then changed the subject by reminding, "We get part of our supper by milking these yaks."

Monk grinned. "Well, Doc, since you're an old yak milker, it's up – "

"On the contrary," the bronze man said, "I never milked a yak in my life."

"Match you."

"Right."

They matched, and Monk lost. The homely chemist set about his yak milking. In a chemical laboratory, Monk could extract a very creditable imitation diamond from a lump of coal, but at the end of half an hour he had more yak milk on the ground and on himself than he had in his bucket.

"Fooy on this goin' native business!" he said disgustedly.

They ate raisins, dried apricots and the kernels of apricot stones which tasted like almonds, and brewed the buttered tea which was a staple of this section and of Tibet.

A small bevy of rifle bullets arrived during the last course.

Monk spilled hot buttered tea down the front of his pushtin, went over backward, hit the ground and came up with his rifle. Monk's rifle had been acquired for purposes of reality, and it was a huge thing, a muzzle loader with an octagon barrel that had a slight twist instead of rifling, and was so heavy that a pitchfork-shaped rest for the barrel was accessory equipment. Monk had not yet fired the blunderbuss, but he had been looking forward to it, he'd explained.

He raked a smoldering stick out of the fire. You had to have one of these, or a cigarette, to fire Monk's gun.

More bullets hit. The slugs glanced off stones with Violinlike noises.

"In them rocks yonder!" Monk grunted.

In the dusk, they could see the rifle flashes. The scarlet tongues were jumping from a clump of boulders about two hundred yards distant, higher up on the slope.

A volley of fierce yelling sounded from the men who were doing the shooting.

"Do we shoot back?" Monk demanded.

"That seems to be the custom here," Doc advised.

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Monk wriggled around with his gun, placed the forked rest for the barrel, aimed the piece, and fanned his smoldering stick to get the end glowing red.

"This is the way our ancestors fought the Indians," he explained.

He jammed the hot end of the stick in the match hole of his blunderbuss. Promptly, there was an earsplitting roar, and a cloud of powder smoke which enveloped the camp. The wind blew the smoke away. Monk and his gun were lying some distance apart.

"Who done that?" Monk asked feebly.

Either Monk's blunderbuss, or the slugs which Doc Savage and Toni Lash were driving from ancient Chinese military rifles, had an effect. The firing from the boulders stopped.

There was a piercing yell. To Monk, who did not understand the language, it sounded as though a wolf were howling.

"They want to come down and have dinner with us," Doc explained.

"They picked a fine way of openin' negotiations for dinner," Monk grunted.

"Oh, that is the custom of the country? They were just shooting in hopes of making us run off and leave our belongings. Now that they see we did not run, they consider us brave enough to be worth visiting."

Monk said something under his breath.

"I see I'm gonna like this country," he said skeptically.

Then he thought of something else, and turned suddenly anxious.

"I hope Ham makes it all right with his part of this job!" the homely chemist muttered.

THE hill fighters now arrived. They had mounted their ponies and rode up at a dead run, screeching at full lung capacity, so that the effect was about the same as that of the Indians coming into the big top in a Wild West show. Except that these fellows looked rather deadly.

Around and around the camp, the hulmen galloped, still screeching. They stood erect on their racing horses, did headstands on the animals, crawled under them, swung off and hit the ground with their feet, and bounced over the beasts and hit the ground on the other side. It was spectacular horsemanship.

"I hope," Toni Lash said nervously, "that this circus is not for my benefit."

She was obviously uneasy about attracting the amorous attentions of any of these gentlemen.

"I understand," Monk said dryly, "that it's O.K. here for a woman to have six or eight husbands."

"Oi-oi-oi!" the riders squalled.

Suddenly, they all reined to a dead stop. One man alighted and gave the accepted greeting – a deep bow with both arms folded across his stomach.

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Next, the man stuck out his tongue. Doc stuck out his own tongue in return. All the riders stuck out their tongues.

"Out with your tongue, Monk," Doc directed.

"Huh?"

"The local equivalent of a handshake."

"Oh." Monk began putting out his tongue at the visitors whose looks he didn't like, which included practically all of them.

The guests gathered about and explained that they were a hunting party, then asked what Doc and the other two were doing and who they were.

"We are on a mission," Doc explained.

They were obviously curious to know what the mission might be, but when Doc Savage did not explain, they postponed further questioning about that.

The hillmen were eager for news from the outlying regions. Doc Savage, knowing that these people were inveterate gossips, had supplied himself with all the latest, which he related.

Monk, who could not understand a word that was being said, squatted beside the fire and fell to preparing buttered tea for the guests. When spoken to, he replied with surly grunts.

"My companion," Doc Savage explained, "is a fellow with an evil temper."

The bronze man then inquired for his share of the gossip. As he had suspected, these men were followers of the new Genghis. It had developed that they had never seen the new Genghis; however.

"Why do you follow the new Genghis?" Doc demanded.

"He is to rule," the hillmen replied. "The Powerful Ones have given signs."

The "Powerful Ones" would include, Doc Savage knew, whatever assortment of fakirs and medicine men who happened to be most influential at the moment.

"What kind of signs?" Doc inquired.

The hillmen looked at him in astonishment.

"Why," the spokesman said, "there were many signs. The Powerful Ones said so."

"Did you see any of the signs?" Doc persisted.

They shrugged. Of course, they hadn't seen any signs. This business of seeing signs was an activity confined exclusively to the Powerful Ones.

And anyway, they continued, what did it matter whether anybody saw any signs or not, in view of the fact that this new Genghis was going to lead them to victory in such a vast war that every man in the land would

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wind up as a prince at the least.

"War?" Doc Savage said. "The Genghis plans a war?"

"Aye," they explained. "A war in which he will use his magic. He is a man of great magic, this Genghis. His magic will overcome that of any man. The Powerful Ones have said so."

That made the immediate plan of John Sunlight clear. He had always been power-hungry, this John Sunlight, and his whole life had been one vast scheme to start out in a small way and become a conqueror.

Once John Sunlight had longed to emulate Napoleon. Now it appeared he had lifted his sights a little, and was hoping to follow the tracks made by the war boots of the Genghis Khan, that greatest conqueror of them all.

"Speaking of signs," Doc Savage said, "I have seen a sign."

Now there were liars in this land, just as there are liars in every country, and Doc's remark first got a silence, then was the cause of a burst of skeptical laughter.

Doc Savage had a good idea of the psychology of these bushwhackers of the steppes; so he sprang to his feet, seized the hillman who laughed loudest, and hurled him at the others, knocking altogether half a dozen men sprawling head over heels.

They stopped laughing.

Playing the part of an offended hill fighter, the bronze man glared at them, fists jammed on his hips.

"I have seen a thing in my mind," Doc Savage said. "It is a strange thing I saw that if I went to a certain spot, and found a rock that was as fire in the night, and smote this rock with a sword, I would release an All Powerful One who will be a savior of my people."

The listeners thought this over. Their general expression was something like that of a crowd on a Kansas City street corner listening to someone trying to say the earth was flat.

But nobody laughed.

"A rock that glows as fire in the night," one man said cunningly. "And you smite it, and an All Powerful One comes forth?"

"Ha," Doc Savage said. "Yes."

The men looked at each other slyly.

"We should like to see that," one of them said.

Doc Savage shrugged. "I have no objections. You go with me, and tomorrow night we find the rock."

The idea intrigued the hillmen.

Chapter XVI. GENGHIS MEETS GENGHIS

BY the following afternoon, Doc Savage's party had increased to more than fifty. It seemed that the word had gone around. The abrupt growth of the group as curious hillmen flocked in, was somewhat surprising, because the country normally appeared to be almost uninhabited.

The affair had turned into a holiday. Around the evening campfire were pitched a number of felt yurts. Hillmen showed off their horsemanship, or wrestled with each other, or held foot races.

Monk, who could not speak the language, and Toni Lash, who could speak only a little of it, feigned bad tempers and managed to keep from talking.

Night came. It was cold.

The hillmen gathered around and suggested that Doc had better produce on what he had "seen in his mind." They had a strong suspicion that the whole thing would turn out to be imagination. Still, they were not too sure about that. They were superstitious, like all primitive people.

Without a word, Doc set out. He had his fingers crossed. He had better produce. Everything depended upon it.

In a long column, the party climbed a steep tekree, and high on the rocky slope, Doc Savage quickened his pace. He ran. The others tried to keep up, but in a short time they were outdistanced.

They yelled derisively, thinking Doc was trying to run away from his own lying.

Actually, the bronze man wanted to be sure that everything was set.

Unexpectedly, the hillmen caught up with Doc. They stopped. Mouths fell open.

"A shoon che!" a man croaked. "What is this?"

It was a rock that glowed like fire. No question about that.

What the hillmen didn't know was that it was a rock coated with a phosphorescent chemical.

"You see," Doc Savage said impressively. "It is as I saw in my mind."

If any hillman was breathing, the sound was not audible. Here was the totally unexpected. A miracle actually before their eyes. A miracle such as only the Powerful Ones were in the habit of seeing.

"In the future, I live a better life," a man muttered.

Doc Savage drew his sword.

Breaths were exhaled, they held again. Doc was to smite the flaming rock, and the new "All Powerful One" would materialize.

Doc lifted the sword, struck the rock.. Following events were up to everyone's expectations, including Doc's.

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First was the flash. It was an incredibly brilliant flash, all the world seeming to turn into utter flame. Every hillman was completely blinded.

What the hillmen did not know about the flash was that it had been produced by nearly twenty pounds of super-flashlight powder of photographic type.

As their eyes were able to see again, they perceived that the new All Powerful One had indeed appeared.

The All Powerful One had a gold body, but no face.

THE All Powerful One was a man, not a particularly large man, and one who had a thin waist.

Most striking, however, was the lack of a face. Where the face should have been, there was only smooth golden flesh.

"I am the All Powerful One," this apparition said. The voice, amazingly, seemed not to come from the figure, but to emanate from the air above its head. It was an eerie voice.

Doc spoke.

"The All Powerful One has no face with which to speak, so he has the winds speak for him," the bronze man explained, adding, "I see this in my mind."

The All Powerful One nodded with dignity.

"I shall show the power of my magic," the voice overhead said.

The All Powerful One then leaned over and touched the stone which glowed, and there was a sudden hissing and an intense bluish flame, and the rock slowly melted before their eyes.

Doc Savage, glancing around while the rock was melting, decided that none of these hillmen had ever heard of Thermit, the mixture of powdered aluminum and metallic oxides which burned with terrific heat.

Doc spoke again.

"The All Powerful One has no face," he explained. "He has lost his face because an imposter has come among you, his people. The impostor is the one you call the Genghis. Because you have accepted the Genghis as your ruler, you have helped the All Powerful One lose face. All this I see in my mind."

Again the All Powerful One nodded with slow dignity.

"It is as said," stated the voice from the air. Doc Savage suddenly prostrated himself.

"I see in my mind that the All Powerful One is angry with us all!" he shouted.

The All Powerful One's nod was slow and wrathful this time.

"I shall shake the world a little to show my rage," the ethereal voice said.

Slowly the All Powerful One's arms lifted, and remained on high. Moments passed. The teeth of a few hillmen could be heard clicking in fright.

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Then the earth shook. In fact, it gave a perceptible jump. And there was a great roaring, and a landslide down the steep slope.

A large dynamite charge, carefully time-fused, took care of that part of the demonstration.

That was enough. The hillmen were not only impressed; they were scared witless. This was a land where spooky stories were told around campfires, but here was the real thing, only worse than any current ghost yarns.

"I shall rest," said the All Powerful One's wind voice. "Later, I shall see what can be done about regaining my face by ridding the earth of this Genghis fakir."

The upshot of this was that Doc Savage, Monk and Toni Lash were shortly resting inside their yurt with the All Powerful One.

"Doc, this gold-colored varnish, or whatever it is that you had me smear on myself, is making me itch!" complained the All Powerful One in a Harvard brand of English.

"It's probably your conscience makin' you itch, you shyster," Monk suggested.

The All Powerful One glared at Monk.

"The first thing I do when I start running this country is start a campaign to eliminate chemists," he declared.

"You hornswoggled me into ridin' that yak!" Monk gritted. "I'll never be the same after that yak ride."

"Then you'll be improved," snapped the All Powerful One. "Any kind of change would improve you."

"Listen, you ambulance-chaser!" Monk squeaked. "Don't get to thinkin' you're such an All Powerful One. To me, you're just Ham Brooks, the pride of Harvard law school."

And so on into the night.

Dawn. They put their heads out of the yurt. "Blazes!" Monk gasped.

There was not a hillman in sight. Every man, pony and rifle had vanished, and the cold, reddish-brown mountains were naked of life.

"Doc, maybe we put on too good a show," suggested the All Powerful One uneasily.

"It is hardly likely, Ham," the bronze man replied quietly. "They have scattered to spread the news. They will return, bringing their friends."

Ham rubbed his featureless, golden face uneasily.

"You stick close to me when they come back," he requested. "Without that ventriloquial voice of yours I'm sunk. I can't speak their language."

Ham then retired into the yurt to adjust his faceless make-up, which consisted of a substance developed in Hollywood, a material that was applied as a semi-liquid and molded as it hardened. Ham's breathing was done through a tube, and he wore goggles behind the make-up, which was applied thinly over the lenses, and

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being transparent, enabled him to see about as well as he could have with very dark-colored glasses. There was always brilliant sunlight in the daytime here, so the matter of vision would not bother him. It was the voice business that worried him – he had to have Doc Savage around, or he couldn't speak.

Doc's guess was correct.

Hillmen began swarming around the place all that day.

That night, the All Powerful One melted another rock, and also made some stars burn up in the heavens – the latter feat being accomplished with the aid of Monk, who fired a Very pistol star-shell from a distance.

The next day they moved toward the Genghis' headquarters. And by that night, there were at least five hundred hillmen following and staring at the All Powerful One in awe, frequently muttering, "O mani padme hum!" which was the local equivalent of, "Forgive me my sins!"

The All Powerful One spent three more days impressing the countryside. By that time, Doc Savage judged that word of the All Powerful One's presence had penetrated to every region.

But Ham was impatient.

"This Genghis has Renny, Johnny and Park Crater, if he hasn't killed them!" Ham groaned.

"He hasn't killed 'em," Monk growled. "Not if I know my John Sunlight. He's crazy, but he don't kill people."

"But what he does to them is worse!" Ham retorted miserably.

"And what about our pets, Habeas Corpus and chemistry?" Monk contributed.

The matter of the two pets had been frequently discussed. Toni Lash had explained that she had taken them along when they dropped overboard from the liner, and she was sure that the two animals had been in one of the three planes which had taken off from London. But further than that, she did not know. It was recalled, however, that John Sunlight had been fascinated by the two unusual pets during their previous encounter with him in the matter of the Fortress Of Solitude, so it was possible that the animals were still alive.

"We will wait," Doc Savage said. "As soon as John Sunlight hears of the All Powerful One, he will send men to see him."

"Not to kill Ham!" Monk exploded.

Considering that he had spent most of the previous night explaining in detail how he was going to yank Ham's arms off, once they were clear of this mess, Monk's anxiety seemed inconsistent.

Doc said, "John Sunlight is clever enough to see that his best plan is to proposition the All Powerful One to throw in with him."

Monk blocked out his furry fists.

"Boy!" he muttered. "Just wait'll I get close enough to put my hands on this John Sunlight. He'll wish that polar bear had got 'im in the arctic!"

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The messengers from John Sunlight arrived the next day. Ten of them. They were dressed in brilliant yellow – yellow boots, skin-tight trousers, neat jackets and skull caps. They rode horses equipped with yellow saddles and bridles.

The color scheme was effective.

They did their best, not to seem impressed by the strange, golden, faceless All Powerful One. They did not quite succeed.

The Genghis would like to interview the All Powerful One. That was the gist of what they had to say.

The eerie voice came from the air around the All Powerful One.

"It is said that a worm remains a worm because he has no voice with which to ask forgiveness," it stated malevolently.

The men in yellow looked puzzled.

One of them said uneasily, "We understand you not."

"You follow the Genghis!" accused the voice from the air. "You are as the white sheep that follow a black one. It is not your fault, because your minds are as weak as buttered tea without butter."

Doc Savage, standing nearby and creating the All Powerful One's voice with ventriloquism, studied the yellow-clad men. They were uneasy. Obviously, they had heard enough about the magic of this All Powerful One to be impressed. That was excellent.

The fact that the Genghis' personal soldiers were impressed was an indication that the All Powerful One was having an influence over the hillmen – was making them wonder if they weren't walking the local equivalent of the road to hell, when they followed the Genghis.

"Even the lowly worm," said the ethereal All Powerful One's voice, "knows enough to crawl away from the sunlight before it is withered. O fools! Kneel for forgiveness!"

The men in yellow hastily got down on their knees.

In the background, Monk whispered to Toni Lash, "It looks like we're really underminin' John Sunlight's influence."

The march for John Sunlight's headquarters started. The horsemen in yellow rode in advance, forming a guard for the All Powerful One, and hillmen brought up the rear.

The cavalcade grew in size as it progressed. The way led upward through steep mountain passes, and each foot of altitude seemed to bring a dozen or so additional horsemen. It developed that the hillmen were concerned.

Finally, a fierce mountain fighter approached the All Powerful One. His attitude was awed, but also anxious.

"Teno mijaj thekane nuthee!" the man said uneasily.

Ham had no idea what the words meant, but Doc was fortunately close enough to overhear. The hillmen was explaining that the Genghis was in a very bad humor.

Doc replied with the ventriloquial voice.

"The fire that can burn stones does not fear the fire that can burn only a stem of dry grass," he said.

The hillman swallowed nervously.

"There have been mere men who desired to fight the Genghis," he muttered. "And the Genghis dispatched one of his own many spirits as a warrior to linger forever in the air above the victim, so that the poor man must fight always for his life."

"Make thyself clear, O man who surrounds his meaning with mud," the wind-voice requested.

The hillmen then gave a graphic demonstration. There was no mistaking what he meant. The Genghis John Sunlight had been driving his enemies crazy, setting them to fighting something invisible in the air over their heads. The same fate that had befallen Renny, Park Crater, Fogarty-Smith and Kummik, the Eskimo.

"The Genghis," reminded the wind-voice, "is only a flame that can burn dry grass."

Chapter XVII. SINISTER MOUNTAIN

THE mountain looked, from a distance, like a steep volcanic cone that had a great white cork driven into its crater.

The cork apparently stuck up above the crater, in places as high as a hundred feet. However, when approached to within a mile or so, it became obvious that what seemed to be a white cork was actually a great castlelike building on top of the conical mountain. Or perhaps the building was not as much like a castle as it was like the lamaseries which stood atop many a mountain in this land and in neighboring Tibet.

Doc put a low-voiced question.

"Aye," he was told. "It was a lamasery before the coming of the Genghis."

"And that is headquarters of the Genghis?"

"Aye."

They sat their horses and their yaks a few hundred yards up the winding, steep trail that ran, like a coil bedspring, up the side of the cone. Doc studied the place thoughtfully. It was obvious that this trail could be covered, every foot of its length, by machine guns from the top.

There was a great deal of activity. Horses and yaks, burdened with great loads of merchandise brought in from the outside world through Turkestan, Afghanistan and Mongolia, were thick on the trail.

On the top of the cone, there was a sudden roaring, and plane after plane appeared, taking the air from what must be a landing field on top of the cone. The planes arched up in the rarefied, chilly air, and began to do practice formation flying.

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John Sunlight had hired the best war pilots, and it was evident that he was making them practice regularly.

Doc Savage turned in the saddle to look backward.

Their retinue of hillmen had stopped at the foot of the cone. Seen from this vantage point, the actual number of the followers became apparent. There must be a thousand, at least.

Monk muttered, "Doc, you reckon they'll fight on our side if it comes to that?"

The bronze man was thoughtful.

"At least," he said finally, "we have started them doubting that the Genghis is any kind of a supernatural leader. How far they will carry that, we cannot tell, as yet."

They rode on, reached the top of the cone, and passed through an arched stone gate.

They found themselves between two long columns of uniformed men who were well-trained, and stood at attention.

"Tryin' to impress us!" Monk grunted. Then the homely chemist thought of something else. "Doc, all this costs money. Where in blazes did John Sunlight get the money?"

"You remember that he stole war inventions from the Fortress of Solitude and sold them to Balkan countries?" Doc reminded.

"Yeah."

"Well, he got many millions for them. Doubtless that is where the money for this came from."

Monk sighed. "It's lucky that John Sunlight sold those war devices in a way that kinda balanced. He'd sell one country something, then turn around and sell its neighbor something else, so that each was afraid to start fightin' the other." The homely chemist grimaced. "It was kinda like givin' both me an' Ham a gun. Neither of us would care to start shootin' because he knew the other had a gun."

Toni Lash said, "I'm afraid we're going to wish we had something stronger than guns before we get out of this."

THE buildings, contrary to the impression that distance gave, had been constructed around the edge of the flat cone top, low enough that their roofs were about level with the plateau. On this level area a landing field had been cleared, one that was large enough for the modern high-speed planes. There were many hangars.

The All Powerful One, accompanied by Doc Savage, Monk and Toni Lash, was led past the hangars and into the most impressive building on the cone top. Around them were walls intricately carved and gaudily painted. And abruptly they found themselves walking on thick velvet, passing through another door.

"These are your quarters, as guests of the Genghis," their escort advised them with dignity.

To their astonishment, they were left alone.

"I don't get this," Monk breathed.

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"Sh-h-h," Doc warned.

They now stood in what proved to be a suite of great rooms with vaulted ceilings. The carving was artistic according to the local standards, and there were inlays of colored woods, mother of pearl, and semiprecious stones. Deep rugs from Turkestan lay everywhere, and subtle perfumes were in the air.

"Lovely," Toni Lash admitted.

"I ain't in no state of mind to appreciate it," homely Monk muttered.

Ham contributed his bit, grumbling. "Brothers% what I think of this All Powerful One disguise by now would melt these rock walls if I repeated it."

It appeared that they were to wait for some time. Hours dragged past. An attendant brought food, and they eyed it longingly, because it was much better provender than the native diet on which they had been subsisting. But they passed it up.

"Drugged, possibly," Doc pointed out.

The bronze man went to a narrow slit of a window. The steep slope of the mountain stretched below, and on the trail pack animals still moved. The sun was dropping behind the snow-capped mountains.

Monk came and stood looking over the bronze man's shoulder.

"The more I see of this country," the homely chemist muttered, "the less I care for it."

"Is there a guard at the door?" Doc asked "Yep. Two of 'em."

"Big?"

"I'll say."

Doc Savage said, "We could do some exploring if we had a pair of those yellow uniforms."

"Now," Monk said, "you're talking."

The guards were big, as Monk had said. Their yellow uniforms were neat and new, but they had detracted from the effect by shoving their belts full of pistols and knives, after the local style.

Doc Savage carried a tray of food to the door

"We think this may be poisoned," he said grimly in the native tongue.

The guards looked at him and laughed. They proceeded to help themselves to the dishes. It was good food, and Doc had to retreat with the tray to prevent them from consuming everything.

The bronze man put the tray on a table.

"The food does not seem to be poisoned," he said. "We might as well eat."

Ham reached for the tray which the guards had sampled.

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"Not that one," Doc said. "But, the rest of the food is probably good."

"Aw, what'd you tell 'im for?" Monk explained.

Ham scowled, puzzled.

"We put sleeping powders in everything on the tray," Doc explained.

They busied themselves eating and shortly heard the two guards begin snoring. Hurrying to the door, they dragged the two watchers inside.

They began stripping off the yellow uniforms.

"We better take 'em in the back room, I guess," Monk said, glancing at Toni Lash. "They don't seem to be wearing any underwear."

Doc and Monk dressed in the gaudy yellow raiment. Doc's outfit fitted him much too tightly, and Monk had at least a foot too much length in his equiptage.

Doc handed Monk one of the guard's rifles.

"You stay at the door," he directed.

"Huh?"

"Guard. Look better if there was a guard."

"Aw, blazes!" Monk was disappointed.

Doc Savage sauntered down the stone corridor. He moved quietly, but without appearing furtive. He turned corners, glancing into rooms, seeing native soldiers and a few white men – probably the latter were the hired pilots – but no trace of the Genghis, John Sunlight.

Unexpectedly, a man came up behind Doc.

"One side, you!" a voice growled. "Make way for the Genghis' supper."

Doc stepped against the wall, watched a fat native pass, followed by a file of men carrying trays.

The bronze man fell in behind the cavalcade. They tramped down passages, around corners, and walked through a door. Doc went on past the door, gave a quick glance inside.

John Sunlight – he sat at the head of a table at which were at least a score of others. John Sunlight! Doc knew that face. That gaunt and bony frame, the face that was the countenance of a poet, the hands that were so long and slender – Doc knew them all. They had not changed.

Only John Sunlight's hair had altered. It was white now, every hair of it. It must have turned in the arctic, when he had undoubtedly undergone incredible sufferings on the arctic pack ice.

John Sunlight still had his liking for strange costumes of solid colors. He wore white now, a bizarre outfit of white sandals with turned-up toes, white tights such as acrobats wear, and a loose blouse of white silk with

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voluminous, flowing sleeves. The white costume, with his white hair, made him striking.

Doc wondered, walking on, if John Sunlight's hair actually turned white; or had he dyed it white to match his fondness for one solid color in his dress?

THERE was another door. Doc doubled into it quickly, after noting no one was in sight.

He knew that he stood in John Sunlight's bedroom. Everything in it was white. Walls, floor, ceiling, furniture, rugs, coverings on the bed –everything was the hue of snow.

There were other doors. One of them was a closet. Doc examined it, saw that it contained dozens of riding suits, each a different color. The bronze man entered the closet. John Sunlight was not likely to examine his riding suits before he went to bed.

The bronze man sat there in the darkness. After about an hour, he heard a man stirring in the bedroom. The noises stopped.

Doc let another two hours pass. The building was quiet by now. He eased the closet door open.

The room was gloomy, a single candle in a far corner shedding light. Long, vague ghostly shadows climbed up and down the white walls, or darted from side to side as the candle flame guttered.

The white bed with its white covering was like a block of white marble, with a long ridge lying in the center. At the head of that ridge was a face, long, poetic, giving little hint from its shape of the sinister brain that lay behind it.

Doc Savage went forward swiftly and silently, and when he was over the bed, he leaned down and took hold of the neck below the poetic face with both sinew-cabled bronze hands.

Then he could tell – the knowledge was like lightning striking – that the head and neck were made of wax.

After that, the lights came on.

John Sunlight said, "the moment you let go of that thing you are holding, you will die."

Doc Savage looked at the wax likeness which he was gripping, holding a few inches off the white bed.

"It is wired to a device," John Sunlight's voice said. "Drop it and the device will kill you."

Chapter XVIII. A ROOM FULL OF DREAM

DOC Savage turned his head slowly toward the voice, but he was careful, also, not to let go of the wax dummy which he held, because among all of John Sunlight's erratic, mad traits, there was one that could be depended upon – and that one was the fact that the fellow did not bluff.

John Sunlight did not have a gun. He stood, a lean tower, with arms folded. His garb was blue now, blue after the fashion of a sheik, with voluminous trousers, a loosely gathered robe, and a blue turban almost as large as a bushel basket, on the front of which scintillated a single blue jewel.

He was on the far side of the room, and there was no door near him.

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He spoke again.

"One who lives by the sword comes to respect swords," he said.

His voice was deep, resonant and macabre. He was being calm and triumphant now; and the evil spell of him was going out into the room. Doc Savage, watching him, knew that the man was a student of hypnotism.

"In other words," John Sunlight continued, "he who uses his wits comes to be careful of the wits of others. Hence the trap, the trigger of which you are now holding."

Doc Savage said nothing. He was eyeing the wax figure which he held. Bending over, but still holding it up off the bed, he glanced under it, and the pale candlelight was sufficient to show him the thin, stiff steel rods that must run down to some kind of a firing mechanism contained in the mattress. He held the wax thing up with one hand, pressed the mattress with his other hand. It was hard.

"The mattress is one great shrapnel shell," John Sunlight advised grimly. "I dislike taking a life. But when an enemy tries to kill, one kills in return. That is the first law of nature."

The man had been speaking the hill dialect.

Doc answered in English, using his natural tones. His words were a criticism of his own impulsiveness that had gotten him into this predicament.

"Dogs who try to gulp bones," he said quietly, "are the dogs who become choked."

John Sunlight recognized Doc's voice instantly. This man whom Monk had called the Devil Genghis must have been haunted by that voice through many a nightmare, to know it so swiftly. John Sunlight fell back a pace, and his hands – he wore blue gloves – jerked up as though to fend a blow. He fell to trembling and biting his lips, then pulled a great sob of air into his lungs and got control of himself.

The shaking of John Sunlight's arms and legs continued, but it was joy now. Utter, unrestrainable delight. So pleased he was that he tried several times to speak before he got anything more than an incoherent gobble.

"Doc Savage!" he chortled finally.

Doc nodded.

John Sunlight looked at his shaking hands, then folded them.

"I am as a tree that shakes with joy in a balmy breeze of spring," he said.

Doc remained silent.

"While you stand there with death in your hands," John Sunlight continued, "I am going to show you how to keep life about you."

The strange white room was as silent as frozen eternity, and the candlelight shadows cavorted on the walls like the shades of a past that might have come from John Sunlight's dark mind, come forth to dance in joy at another triumph in the twisted passages of the brain wherein they dwelt.

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"You know, by now," John Sunlight said hollowly, "that I escaped from the arctic. You probably thought a polar bear killed me on the pack ice." He glanced down at his long-fingered, strangler's hands. "Believe me or not, but I tell you that it was I who killed the bear, with my bare hands and a knife."

He pulled air into his lungs and let it out. "You will never know my suffering on the ice. No man will ever know that, nor could any ordinary mortal understand the full frightfulness of it."

Doc Savage said, "We have found out all that. We know how you took the clothes of Kummik, the Eskimo; took the plane of Fogarty-Smith; and took Park Crater away from Toni Lash so that she would be willing to work for you – to come to New York and seize me. We know what you did to all those men."

"You know what I did?" John Sunlight barked.

"It was hypnotism, aided by a drug," Doc Savage said. "You seized each of those men and treated them with a drug that paralyzed their minds. A drug that stopped their minds on one thing, as it were. And while the drug was taking effect, you used hypnosis as well, fixing in their mind the hallucination that they had to go on fighting silently against you as you stood over them."

John Sunlight shook his head in a slow, puzzled way. "You knew that – how?"

"Simple diagnosis," Doc said.

"But you had possession of your aid, Renny, who was afflicted, and you could not cure him!"

The bronze man admitted that. "There was no time," he explained, "to find the nature of the drug you used, or to perfect a treatment for it."

John Sunlight laughed fiercely, triumphantly.

"You are right, if it pleases you to know," he said. "There in the arctic that time, I intended to use the combination of drugs and hypnosis upon your men – and I had the drug in my pockets when I escaped from you and your Fortress of Solitude."

Doc Savage nodded carelessly.

"Now that we have it cleared up," he said, "when do you try to kill me?"

John Sunlight shook his head quickly.

"Do you know why I had you brought from America?" he asked.

The candle flame squirmed like a little scarlet goblin doing a jig on the tip of the long white candlestick, and all the evil elfin shadows around the white room sprang up and down and shuttled from side to side with unholy vigor.

"You have inventions stolen from my Fortress of Solitude," Doc Savage said.

"True," John Sunlight admitted.

"Some of the inventions," Doc continued, "are too complicated for the understanding of any scientist who could be hired by a man as vicious as yourself. You needed someone to make the death machines work. You

plan a war upon mankind, and you need those infernal machines; so you hit on the idea of seizing me, bringing me here and forcing me to work for you."

"Not forcing you," John Sunlight said.

The wax form was a thing as still as stone in the bronze man's hands. It hardly moved, for Doc was holding it tightly, convinced that any major downward movement of the thing would shove down the thin rods and probably close an electrical contact which would detonate the shrapnel trap in the mattress.

"Not forcing you," John Sunlight repeated.

Doc remained silent.

"Because we have the same aims in life, you and I," John Sunlight said.

Doc Savage looked incredulous.

"The same aims, you and I!" John Sunlight repeated. "You strive to right wrongs. And I – I am trying to right the greatest wrong of all."

John Sunlight paused for emphasis.

"The wrong I am going to right," he said impressively, "is the fact that mankind lives under different flags and speaks different languages."

His voice became louder, acquired a kind of burning fervor. There was fanaticism in the voice.

"I am going to conquer the world," John Sunlight said.

He threw up his jaw.

"Then I shall disarm all of mankind," he announced. "I shall take every rifle, revolver, cannon and machine gun, and I shall make it a death penalty to own a firearm. Mankind has advanced far enough that it does not need firearms."

John Sunlight lifted both arms dramatically.

"Next, I shall make every person in the world learn to speak English," he shouted. "English shall become the common language of all mankind."

He shook his fists.

"I shall wipe out every state and national boundary. I will make all mankind of one nation, one language, and without arms."

He paused, lowered his arms and smiled.

"There will be no more wars," he said, "because there will be nothing left to cause wars."

There was a still moment in the strange, vaulted white room, and all the candle shadows seemed to stand motionless in awe on the walls. Outside, somewhere, there was a rattle of a sword on a stone wall, and the

sound was a grisly intrusion into that moment of stillness in the white room, where Doc Savage and this fantastic being called John Sunlight stood alone with the echoes of the most Utopian of dreams that ever occurs to conquerors.

"A dream," Doc Savage said suddenly, "that many men have had."

"Eh?" John Sunlight scowled.

"It will not work."

John Sunlight drew himself erect. "You are mistaken. With these weapons which I took from your Fortress of Solitude, I can conquer, beyond a doubt. With your help, I cannot fail. You will help me. I'll return, I will bring your man Renny, as well as Fogarty-Smith and Park Crater, out of the drug-hypnotic spell. It is not difficult to revive them, when you know what antidotes to use."

Doc Savage shook his head slowly.

"Your plan," he said, "is unworkable. Millions would die, and violence is not the way to accomplish anything lasting. Look, for example, at the World War. Did it settle anything? No. The nations fought until they were exhausted, then were quiet only while they rested. Now they are getting their strength back – and the same hatreds."

"You won't help the world?"

"Only as much as it can be aided by eliminating John Sunlight," Doc Savage said grimly.

He grabbed a pillow off the bed and jammed it under the wax figure, to prevent the thing dropping back to the bed and firing the shrapnel trap.

Chapter XIX. DEATH IN BLACK

WHEN Doc Savage went away from the white bed – he did it in a long leap in case the pillow didn't work – there was no explosion.

He made for John Sunlight. He had both arms out ahead, and when he hit an upright partition of plate glass, he was not surprised. John Sunlight, for a man of cautious nature who never took chances, had been standing there too boldly.

Doc hit the glass wall hard enough to know that the stuff was bulletproof, in spite of its unusual transparency which had made its presence practically undetectable.

John Sunlight moved. He took off like a blue heron that had been hit with buckshot. He made a bleating noise of astonished terror. Rugs skidded under his churning feet, but he gained a door, sloped through.

Doc ran along the glass partition, jumping, exploring with his hand. No opening. No way over the top. He raced toward the door, scooping up a chair en route.

At the door, he turned, flung the chair at the pillow under the wax dummy on the bed. He got through the door before he saw whether the chair would hit the pillow and dummy or not. But it hit. And there had been a shrapnel charge in the mattress. It exploded. The roar was ear-splitting, and a small shower full of shrapnel

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stormed out of the open door.

Doc went back into the room. It was gorged with smoke, reeked fumes. The bronze man felt along the bulletproof glass again. The panel was easy to see now, because it was festooned with the small spider-web cracks that come into a nonshatter windshield when it is hit by a rock. But the glass partition still held, and it was too strong for the bronze man's strength to smash.

Back out of the room, Doc flung. He tried doors; they were all locked. Big, strong, unbreakable doors. He raced down passages.

Men had appeared. They ran, shouted, did not suspect Doc's identity because he wore the yellow uniform and the disguise which made him seem a hillman.

"What-what-"

They meant the explosion.

"The Genghis," Doc shouted, "is trying to kill the All Powerful One."

That was true. And it would give them something to think about. The word spread.

"G.enghis killing All Powerful One!" they relayed. From mouth to mouth, it went.

There was angry growling.

"I want no more of this Genghis!" a man shouted. "He is not of our people!"

Another man struck that one, knocked him down. The striker was floored by a third man, and a fourth took up the cudgels; and there was a free-for-all in that part of the Genghis castle.

Doc Savage reached the rooms where Monk, Toni Lash and Ham – the All Powerful One – were waiting.

"Fireworks have started," Doc said.

They raced out into the corridor. There was shouting and cursing and fight noises, and men running all through the great building. Bedlam. Revolution.

"Boy!" Monk said. "At last, I get a fight!"

A man ran up yelling, brandishing a short sword, and Monk jumped in, ducked, swung a big fist, and dropped the fellow.

"Wait!" Doc said.

The man Monk had hit lay on the floor. Doc seized the sword the fellow had dropped, stood over the man and held the point at the victim's throat.

"Words will keep steel out of your throat!" the bronze man rapped.

"Na!" the man screamed.

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"Where is the prisoner with the big fists – the one who fights things in the air above?" Doc demanded.

He said the words in an ugly voice, with as frightful a facial expression as he could manage. The man on the floor was frightened into thinking he'd better talk to save his life.

The man spouted directions in the local dialect.

"Come on," Doc said.

It took them about four minutes to reach Johnny, Renny, Park Crater and Fogarty-Smith. Three of those minutes they spent fighting, the other minute in running.

The door was big and iron-studded, also partially ajar. Knocking it open, they went in and joined another fight.

Men must have been sent by the Genghis to knife Johnny and Renny to death, and they had received a surprise – for Renny had suddenly stopped acting insane and had flung upon them.

There had been six in the execution party, and two of them were down, the lower part of one's face changed by contact with Renny's great fists. The other four were tangled with Renny on the floor, and Johnny was yelling big words and little ones and trying to get out of a set of rope bonds.

Doc leaped, got a knife wrist with both hands. The wrist broke almost as soon as he took hold of it.

Monk came in and hit one man and kicked another – seeming to do both things at the same instant. There were not many rules in Monk's fights.

Renny took care of a third man.

Doc gathered up the survivor and held the fellow with one arm around his chest, and grasped the back of the man's neck firmly with the other hand. The bronze fingers worked, as though feeling for something, on the victim's neck. The man went senseless. Doc dropped him.

Renny got up.

"Holy cow!" he rumbled. "I began to think you fellows were never gonna show up!"

Monk said, "But I thought you were supposed to be crazy?"

Doc explained, "I was treating him in London. I had given him chemical antidotes for John Sunlight's drug, but it had not had time to work when he was seized at the inn."

"It worked," big-fisted Renny said. "I didn't see any need of lettin' John Sunlight know it had, however."

"I'll be superamalgamatedi" Johnny yelled. "Somebody turn me loose!"

Monk began cutting Johnny free of the ropes which festooned him somewhat as though a granddaddy longlegs had gotten tangled in a spider web.

Doc drove a question at Renny.

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"The inventions John Sunlight stole from the Fortress of Solitude – do you know where they are?"

"Holy cow!" Renny rumbled. "Come on an' I'll show you. But if you're figurin' on usin' any of 'em to help us outa this fight, it ain't no use."

"No use?"

"John Sunlight kept me locked in the room with them inventions," Johnny said. "I was chained, and he thought I was crazy. But I picked the locks, and put every darn one of those inventions out of order."

"Ruined the death machines John Sunlight stole from the Fortress of Solitude?" Doc demanded.

"I sure did," Renny said.

Johnny got loose of the ropes, sprang to his feet, took a number of stiff jumps to get limbered up, then pointed both long bony arms at Ham, who was still faceless and in gold paint.

"Who the – the – superamalgamated – is that?" Johnny demanded.

"That," Monk explained, "is the All Powerful One."

"He looks like a guh–gilt–edged guh–goblin to me!" Johnny said.

They ran out and joined the fighting. Doc Savage, crowding close behind Renny, got in another question.

"Park Crater and Fogarty–Smith?" he asked.

Renny thundered. "They can be cured the same way I was."

Doc glanced at Toni Lash to see if she had heard. She had. She nodded gratefully.

A man came in, whirling a sword, and Doc went down and forward, feet first. His feet hit the swordsman's ankles. The man upset, slamming his sword down on the stone floor so hard the blade broke.

"Wedge!" Doc said.

They formed a wedge, fought on. Men swarmed about them – and helped them fight. They packed closely, these men who helped, around the All Powerful One.

Doc gave a little moral assistance with the All Powerful One's wind–voice.

"The Genghis must be captured!" said the voice. "And those who follow him must be defeated!"

They got through to the doors of John Sunlight's chambers. Monk had acquired a sub–machine gun somewhere, a weapon of Chinese manufacture, but efficient. He turned the gun on the door, cut the lock away. The door caved open.

John Sunlight was in the room. The man called Cautious, too. And some white pilots. They opened up with guns. Doc threw the sword he was carrying, hit the cluster of candles which gave the only light. The candles scattered, went out, and there was intense darkness – and less danger from the guns of Cautious, the white fliers and John Sunlight.

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Monk claimed later that the fight that followed in that room was the all-time high in fights. There just couldn't be another like it. Then there was no action, only groans and labored panting, and someone struck a match to see who had won.

Doc Savage's strange trilling sound came into being) a brief, startled note.

For John Sunlight was not in the room.

Leaping, Doc reached a door that stood open. It led into the white bedroom, into the part of it that was behind the bulletproof glass partition.

There was a window. The white draperies which had covered it earlier, shutting out every vestige of light, had been yanked back, uncovering a narrow slit of window.

John Sunlight's legs were just slipping out through the window.

Doc flung to the window, clutched, got an ankle. He set himself to yank. Outside, John Sunlight twisted up and saw who it was. He made a snarling sound, and fought.

They had always known that John Sunlight had a physical strength as unbelievable as his mind. But Doc had, even then, underestimated. For John Sunlight, wrenching and twisting, got free of the bronze man's hands.

John Sunlight had only a few feet to fall, and landed on the rocky earth at the edge of the great landing field which he had made for his airplanes.

He got up and ran toward a plane.

OTHER men were trying to reach the planes. The white fliers hired as war pilots. Some already had secured planes, were in the air. Roaring motors made a bedlam. Planes with exhaust stacks moaning and slobbering flame dipped, diving and machine-gunning the crowd on the field. But it was too dark to do much good.

The mob boiled on the flying field. Hundreds of them. Some flung themselves onto plane wings and broke the craft down by sheer weight. There were scores of private fights between followers of the Genghis and those who believed in the All Powerful One.

John Sunlight doubled low, tried to get through the mob. A man saw him.

The man stuck at least a yard of sword through John Sunlight's midsection.

"Jovoon!" the man screamed. "Look! He dies! Like an ordinary mortal, he dies!"

There was a roaring, a surging about the fallen Genghis. Men rushing in, waving swords, fighting with each other to be one of those who put sword to the Genghis.

"Forgiven are those whose blades enter his body!"

That cry got started somehow, and spread, and there was not enough of John Sunlight's body in that one place for all the swords to find it; so that suddenly it was in a dozen sections all over the flying field, where it was available to more swords.

Doc Savage, at the window, turned quickly and got the others back, particularly the girl, Toni Lash.

Monk rubbed the side of his homely face with a hand.

"The polar bear," he said, "would have done a kinder job on John Sunlight."

Chapter XX. BACK TO FIRE

IT was two days later. There were four thousand hillmen crowded on the flying field. They stood, for the most part, in awed silence. A few had climbed onto the metal skeletons of burned planes, the better to see.

On a small veranda, high enough that all in the crowd could see him, stood the All Powerful One.

The All Powerful One stared with his featureless face, and lifted both arms slowly to command silence. The stillness could not have been greater.

In a moment, the strange voice of the All Powerful One drifted over the throng.

"You are my children," the voice said impressively, "and I am proud of you."

There were a good many sighs of relief at that. So many of them that a low whispering swept across the throng.

The All Powerful One's voice spoke again.

"The Genghis is dead," it said, "and so I have regained my face. I shall turn again into a rock, and when I have become a stone, I will put my face on again and sleep in peace, feeling confident that you can now carry on very well without me."

The crowd could not see into the shadowy doorway behind the balcony, where Doc Savage was speaking, perspiring a little with the effort of making the ventriloquial voice loud enough to reach the entire crowd.

Monk stood beside the bronze man, listening and hanging onto the pets, Habeas Corpus and Chemistry, which had been found safe.

"Doc," Monk breathed, "you'd better fix it up so we can get outa this place with Park Crater and Fogarty-Smith."

"Coming up," Doc explained.

The stillness of the crowd was broken again by the voice of the All Powerful One.

"I am going to show you my magic again," it said. "Bring to me the two who are insane."

This was the cue for Monk to drag Park Crater and Fogarty-Smith out on the balcony.

The pair had been treated by Doc Savage, and now were perfectly sane; but they went through all the motions of their previous condition, fighting the empty air furiously.

The All Powerful One leveled an arm at Park Crater and Fogarty-Smith.

"You are well," he said.

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So they became well, and bowed, and backed off the balcony, still bowing.

"Later," announced the All Powerful One's voice, "all the others who have been made mad by the Genghis will recover."

They were fairly sure to do so, because Doc had treated them also. The crowd did not know that.

"Now," rumbled the voice of the All Powerful One, "I am going to leave you. I have sent the two men and the girl who were with me when I came here, and all of the white men, away on a mission from which they shall never return. It is my command that you let them go in peace."

"It is also my command that you do no more fighting with each other, except with your bare fists."

THERE followed a series of commandments which Doc Savage had improvised, in hopes of making the region a little more civilized in the future. They were workable commandments – the fighting with the fists instead of guns, for example. These people were exuberant souls who just had to have a fight, and fistfighting was probably the least disastrous form of Scrapping in which they could indulge.

Explorers penetrating the area in later years, often remarked on what an amazingly workable set of commandments had been given these people by a vanished personage they referred to in an awed way as the All Powerful One.

"Now," ended the voice of the All Powerful One, "I come to my parting. But first, you will find a man in a dungeon under this building. Release him. He is a white man, a lawyer named Ham Brooks, and he will go on the mission with the other men and never return."

The All Powerful One lifted his arms.

There was a blinding flash, and an enormous mass of white smoke that puffed up around him and hid his figure and the entire balcony.

Under cover of the smoke from the flashlight powder Ham ducked off the balcony, hurried down to remove his disguise and place himself where he could be found in the dungeon.

They had thought this the best means to account for an addition to Doc's party.

The smoke blew away.

Where the All Powerful One had stood lay a stone, a large stone, black and hard.

Johnny, the big-worded archaeologist and geologist, had done much nocturnal prowling the two previous nights, in search of a stone sufficiently impressive to become the All Powerful One.

AND so thereafter was in existence another sacred stone in another lamasery high in the hills of a land bordering Tibet, a black and hard stone which was kept resting on a dais of solid gold, and before which men came on festival and sacred occasions to salaam and ask in muted voices for favors in love and success in business. A stone that served, in its dark, inanimate way, as a warning to evildoers and an encouragement to those who lived righteously.

Altogether, everyone seemed satisfied, except Monk.

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"It's too bad," Monk complained, "that Ham didn't really turn into a rock."

He advanced this opinion shortly after Toni Lash married Park Crater in New York City.

THE END