

THE MOUNTAIN MONSTER

A Doc Savage Adventure by Kenneth Robeson

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THE MOUNTAIN MONSTER

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Chapter I. TERROR STRIKES

"THE MONSTER" came without warning. It came as Indian legend had said it would come, in the night and while a storm raged. It brought terror and horror to peaceful Arcadia Valley. It transformed an Alaskan paradise into a panic-stricken, fear-blanching hell.

Arcadia Valley had been chosen as the site for one of the government's settlement projects. The land was fertile, water was plentiful. Cabins sprang up swiftly as modern pioneers saw realization of long-cherished hopes almost within their grasp.

John Alden was one of the government engineers. His cabin was at the upper end of the long valley, his closest neighbor two miles away.

And it was there The Monster first appeared!

Rain hammered on the tin roof of the cabin. Thunder cracked in the near-by mountains. John Alden tossed on his cot.

Then came the scream.

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John Alden jerked bolt upright. The shrill echo of that scream rang in his ears.

Then it came again. It was high, sharp, not the scream of a man in pain, but the scream of a man whose nerves have given away.

The scream ended on a high note. It was cut off short, almost as if a giant hand had crunched about the throat from which the sound came.

Cold chills swept the engineer's long, lanky body. And then his straining ears caught another sound, a sound such as he had never heard before. It came like the splashing of boots in thick mud.

But it was more than that. It was as if some giant man or beast was taking huge steps, and not with two feet or four, but with many.

Somehow, John Alden found he had left the cot; his fear-numbed hands sought the rifle that hung over the door. He levered a shell into the barrel. A moment more and he had dashed from the cabin.

COLD rain whipped into Alden's face. Drenched and shivering in pajamas, the tall engineer crouched, all senses alert.

Those screams could have come from only one man. "Buck" Dixon, his partner, must be in peril. And Dixon was a former soldier, knew how to take care of himself.

Buck Dixon had gone down into the valley to call on some new arrivals. He must be hurt, possibly dead

John Alden strained his ears. The queer sounds he had heard vanished. Rain and thunder broke the stillness.

He found himself recalling the stories the Indians had told him of The Monster, the legend of a dread, foul beast that lived in the mountains.

And it was then Alden received another indication of the horror that was to come.

There was an odor in the air, an unclean, almost overpowering odor. It was sickening. It seemed like the scent of some animal.

And the Indians had said such an odor was always present when The Monster appeared!

John Alden's tongue suddenly felt thick. The odor had a peculiar, cloying sweetness that hung in the air despite the rain. It penetrated the brain, made him feel almost light-headed.

And it had another result as well: While his entire body shrank with distaste, although the odor was repelling, yet it had a queer fascination, an almost hypnotic pull.

While his mind cried out for him to turn and run, John Alden found that his muscles were not obeying. Instead, foot by foot, he was moving ahead into the darkness, where the scent became more powerful.

John Alden had never been called a coward. But he was afraid then.

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He knew that another force, stronger than his own, had taken possession of his body. That force was dragging him resistlessly onward.

He opened his own mouth to scream. No sound came from his lips. His vocal cords apparently were paralyzed. The dread odor grew stronger and stronger.

JOHN ALDEN broke into a run. A choking, bubbling sound came from close ahead, seemed to break the uncanny, hypnotic spell.

The sound came again, but John Alden was no longer afraid. There was nothing supernatural about that sound. It came from human lips.

The trail made a sudden twist. A dark object, sprawled doglike, loomed ahead. The queer, bubbling sounds came from it.

The sprawled figure tried to rise as John Alden came in view. Shrill words burst from it:

"I saw it! I saw it! It was a big monster, a huge, creeping shape with many legs. It almost got me. Then it went away. It jumped over the trees."

John Alden grabbed the figure by the shoulders, shook violently. "Buck! Buck! Snap out of it!"

Of all things that happened that night, what occurred next was strangest to John Alden.

Buck Dixon suddenly scrambled to his feet. His face underwent an amazing transformation. The fear and panic left it. It set in its usual hard, self-reliant lines.

"What are you doing out here with that gun in your hands?" Buck Dixon rumbled. Only faint embarrassment was in his voice. He grabbed John Alden by an arm, propelled him toward the cabin.

"Come on, we'd better get under cover before you take your death of cold."

John Alden gasped. He sniffed the air, hesitated. His eyes held an unbelieving, baffled look. That strange, overpowering odor had vanished. The air was clean and pure.

JOHN ALDEN and Buck Dixon did not tell the Arcadian colonists what had happened. In fact, John Alden had difficulty in making his stocky partner admit the next day that anything out of the way had occurred.

Outside, the sun was shining. The events of the night did seem improbable to John Alden, too. But he remembered the queer sounds he had heard.

A harried look came to Buck Dixon's face when the tall engineer told of those sounds. His hands trembled.

"It was huge, with enormous legs. A terrible smell came from it. It came right toward me. I thought I was a goner. Then it leaped over the trees," he whispered.

"There should be tracks," John Alden said.

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John Alden was right. They found tracks!

The tracks were curious. Both Dixon and Alden were woodsmen. They knew how to read signs. But they could not identify the marks they found.

Back-tracking, they found the first marks near the mountains, three miles away. The tracks came almost in a straight line toward the cabin. They were widely spaced, sometimes as much as fifty yards apart.

And they were the marks of an eight-legged beast!

The marks disappeared just before the line of trees that surrounded John Alden's land. They did not reappear on the opposite side.

A frown creased Buck Dixon's square face. He shivered, despite the heat.

"I think we're up against something too big for us, something I don't want to go up against. I'm scared," he said at last. "But there's a man I've heard of who could figure out the answers for us. I think we'd better go to him."

"And who is that?"

"Doc Savage," said Buck Dixon, and there was awe in his voice.

Doc Savage! The bronze giant, who, with his five aides, had become world famous, whose name was as well known in the far regions of China and the jungles of Africa, as in the skyscraper district of New York.

There were stories of Doc Savage's almost incredible strength; of his amazing scientific discoveries and dangerous exploits. Doc Savage had dedicated his life to aiding those faced by dangers with which they could not cope. His name brought fear to those who sought to prey upon the unsuspecting. His name was praised by thousands he had saved.

John Alden paused. A dozen pictures flashed to his mind; his memory recalled a score of stories he had read.

Yes, John Alden conceded, Doc Savage could solve this problem. But the engineer thought of other things as well.

He thought of the scores of colonists who now called Arcadia Valley their home. To send for Doc Savage would be to spread word that there was something to be feared.

John Alden was not as old as Buck Dixon. He had the confidence of youth. He did not like to admit he was facing a problem he couldn't solve himself.

He made a mistake then.

"Let's wait until we have more to go on," he said. "After all, this may be something we can handle. I suggest we round up a few of the Indians, talk to them. They are superstitious, I know. But they may be able to tell us something that will help."

Buck Dixon made no reply. He merely raised a hand and pointed. John Alden looked.

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Tiny dots were moving on the far side of the valley. They were taking a trail that would lead them far from Arcadia.

The Indians were leaving.

THE MONSTER did not come again that night. John Alden and Buck Dixon stood watch. Neither got much sleep.

But the following night, the horror struck.

It began to rain shortly after dusk. The sky clouded over as the sun set.

John Alden stood guard first. At midnight, Buck Dixon relieved him. The husky man made no attempt to hide his nervousness. It was thundering again. A premonition of evil gripped John Alden as he went to the cabin.

For a moment he considered returning, staying with Buck Dixon until daylight. Then he changed his mind. He would have a cup of coffee first. He went to sleep with the cup in his hand.

Buck Dixon crouched in an open space, keeping his rifle under his slicker. He felt as he had when he'd first done sentry duty in the trenches.

The strange odor was his first warning. One moment the air was pure, the next, and his nostrils twitched with the fearsome, foul scent.

Buck Dixon might have saved himself. Had he run at once, he might have stood a faint chance.

But the burly veteran did have nerve. He hesitated. And almost instantly the peculiar smell became strong. It sent his brain racing.

He was able to scream once, tried to get his rifle out from under his slicker. His feet moved, his arms did not. The rifle dropped from his hands. He started to run toward the head of the valley.

Then The Monster came into view.

It was huge. It towered as tall as a two-story building. And it was racing toward Buck Dixon on long, spidery legs.

A huge spider! That was what the Indians had said. The Monster was a huge, bloodthirsty spider.

Its speed was amazing! It came across the mesa as fast as a racing car could move. Buck Dixon's mind told him to stop, to fall flat.

He could not. He rushed on toward the fate that awaited him.

The Monster was almost upon him. It slowed. Two enormous, pincerlike projections came from its mouth, reached down for Buck Dixon.

Buck Dixon opened his mouth to scream again. No sound came forth.

Chapter II. THE MONSTER KILLS

JOHN ALDEN came awake with his rifle in his hands. He had the impression that he was reliving a nightmare, that he was hearing again Buck Dixon's screams of two nights before.

Then he caught a faint whiff of the cloying, sickly sweet odor. He knew it was no nightmare.

A hysterical laugh came from him. Frantically he rushed outside.

He saw The Monster just as it grabbed Buck Dixon!

Later, John Alden tried to picture just what did occur. It was all over in less than five seconds. But at the time it seemed horribly slow, as if he were witnessing some fiendish scene in slow motion.

The Monster had come practically to a stop. Two weird twisted legs on the front of its loathsome body bent down, two pincers reached out, wrapped themselves about Buck Dixon's body.

The burly veteran was whisked into the air as if he were weightless. Then the monster paused for an instant, apparently savoring the feast ahead of it. Buck Dixon's arms and legs beat futilely. He was twisted about, disappeared into The Monster's maw.

The rifle came to John Alden's shoulder. Calmly, he pumped bullet after bullet at the hideous monstrosity.

The crash of the rifle was echoed by dull, vicious smacks as the bullets reached their mark.

Slowly, deliberately, the spiderous shape turned, ran toward John Alden. The foul odor freshened.

Then it was that panic seized the lanky engineer. He jammed fresh cartridges into the rifle. He pulled the trigger as fast as he could lever bullets into the barrel.

The bullets had no effect!

The rifle dropped from John Alden's hands, even as Buck Dixon had dropped his weapon.

The Monster towered almost above him. Once more the cruel pincers reached out.

The pincers waved in the air. They waved almost mockingly. The loathsome beast turned. Its legs spurted across the ground.

It headed directly for the ridge of trees. As John Alden stood frozen, the huge spider leaped into the air, vanished over the trees.

John Alden fainted!

IT was dawn when John Alden recovered consciousness. The rain had stopped. His head was clear, his brain alert. All sign of the hideous odor had disappeared. But close to him, not a dozen feet away, were the huge

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tracks of The Monster.

The lanky engineer scrambled up. And now he wished he had listened more closely to the story of The Monster.

The Indian who had told him the legends had gone into much detail. John Alden had laughed, had paid little attention. He was not laughing now, he was trying hard to recall what he had heard.

"For many years my people shunned this valley," the Indian had said. "Perhaps they should yet."

He had been an Indian educated in the States. John Alden had thought it strange at the time that a well-educated man could believe legends that must be based on superstition. That no longer seemed strange, either.

A monster lived in the mountains. It was a huge spider that lived on human beings, the Indian had related. When it had eaten its fill it would disappear, often for years. Then it would return.

The Indian who had told the legend had spoken seriously of mammoths and other huge creatures that once had roamed the earth. He had suggested the spider might be a relic of some such forgotten species.

John Alden was no authority, but he recognized that there might be a germ of truth in that theory.

There was little chance that Buck Dixon was still alive. In fact, John Alden did not believe that he was.

The lanky engineer was quite methodical. He went back to the cabin and changed into dry clothes. He got his rifle, oiled it, then filled his pockets with bullets.

Then he set out to follow the tracks. Once more they led directly toward the ridge of trees, vanished just at the edge. John Alden looked up, estimated the height that jump must have been.

And then he saw it a small object, clinging to the side of a tree, a tree against which The Monster must have rubbed.

John Alden did not want to believe the evidence of his eyes. But something was there.

As the lanky engineer climbed the tree, came closer to the object hanging there, a faint odor became apparent. It was dim, scarcely discernible. It was the odor that always accompanied The Monster.

The object hanging to the side of the tree looked almost like a cane. It was practically the same thickness, but not as long. It had snagged against a big limb. But it was not a cane, and it was not of wood.

John Alden forced himself to take hold of it. It felt repulsive, slimy. There were tiny pores along the side from which a thin, oily liquid oozed.

It was a giant hair! And the bodies of some spiders are covered with fine hair.

Alden scrambled down to the ground. He started to throw the hair away, then changed his mind. A shrewd expression came to his eyes. Clutching his rifle tighter than before, he ran on through the ridge of trees.

No tracks were there. John Alden did not appear discouraged. He made wide circles, scouting for sign. It was a mile from the ridge of trees before the next tracks came into view.

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The tracks were imbedded far down in the ground, showing the force with which The Monster had landed. The engineer broke into a trot, eyes on the ground.

A dark puddle appeared close beside the tracks. Hope died in John Alden.

The puddle was blood. And fifty feet farther on, he found what was left of Buck Dixon.

Buck Dixon's body was horribly mutilated. It had been torn open and ripped from end to end. Only the face was untouched.

John Alden wished he had not seen that face. Never had he seen such agonizing lines of suffering etched on human features. It was almost beyond description. It made him quite ill.

He went for a shovel, buried what remained of Buck Dixon. He took care to muss up the earth, to hide all trace of blood.

John Alden knew something of anatomy. And as he'd buried the torn remains of Buck Dixon, he'd realized something had been missing. That thought had recalled another detail of the Indian legend.

The Indian had said the spider was searching for just one thing that when it found that, it would leave the valley in peace forever.

It was searching for the heart of a bronze-haired man.

It had been the heart that was missing from Buck Dixon's body. Buck Dixon had not been bronze-haired.

But Doc Savage was!

John Alden laughed, almost hysterically. He would take the giant hair he had found, would rouse Doc Savage's interest.

Hurriedly, John Alden ran to pack.

Chapter III. PERIL PURSUES

JOHN ALDEN told no one where he was going, or why. That did not arouse comment from the colonists. The engineer had made frequent trips to the United States and to Washington since the homestead project had started. Nor did the absence of Buck Dixon cause more than idle gossip. Buck Dixon had slipped away before on hunting trips.

There was some talk about big tracks being seen in the upper end of Arcadia Valley. A majority merely shrugged when told about them. Others put them down to a hoax. The Indians had not been too pleased when the settlers came.

Before any real inspection could be made of those tracks there was another heavy rain. Practically all sign of The Monster was washed away.

Arcadia Valley was still in ignorance of the horror and terror in store for it.

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John Alden wanted to make all speed possible. But he did not want to bring suspicion by undue haste. He waited until he reached Juneau before he hired a plane.

When he landed at Portland, he rushed at once to a hotel. He needed a night's rest. He did not notice the big man who had been lounging around the airport.

This man questioned the pilot who had flown John Alden from Juneau. His questions were casual. The pilot never knew the part he played in what was to come, but he did look curiously after his departing visitor.

There was a reason for that. The big man looked like a prospector. He was sun- and wind-burned until his skin was dark. He had huge shoulders, and was as solidly built as a wrestler. One ear was cauliflowered. He had yellow hair that was almost bronze.

But it was his feet that made him outstanding. They were out of proportion to his body. They were downright gigantic! They dwarfed the rest of his body, and he was by no means small. Yet he moved easily and with unexpected swiftness.

He made his way to a telephone and called a long-distance number. When he got an answer, he said:

"This is Barge Deeter, chief. I got a report to make."

He spoke swiftly, some of the time arguing. Then he hung up.

When John Alden took a plane for San Francisco in the morning, "Barge" Deeter's huge feet were tucked only two seats behind him.

But John Alden didn't notice this. His conscience was bothering him. He had intended to merely arouse Doc Savage's interest, to let the bronze man fall a victim of The Monster and save Arcadia valley.

Now he knew he couldn't do that. He would have to tell Doc Savage the entire story, let him decide whether he would take a chance on meeting the huge spider.

Doc Savage had faced many perils, as John Alden knew, but he didn't think the bronze man had ever faced an enemy as loathsome as that spider, an enemy against whom bullets were harmless, and who could leap over trees and disappear without a trace.

The engineer stared unseeingly from the windows of the plane. He was faced with a desperate problem.

He had to take some action to save the settlers of Arcadia valley, but he couldn't let an innocent man face terrible peril without warning. But Doc Savage had to come, he had to save those colonists. No one else could do it.

AT San Francisco, Alden tried to telephone Doc Savage's office in New York. There was no answer.

John Alden's face became old and haggard. He did not see the big man with gigantic feet watching him as he left the telephone booth.

A newsboy thrust a paper into Alden's hands. He paid for it automatically. A sleeper plane for the East taxied up to the runway. Grabbing his bag, he darted for it.

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Behind him, huge feet covered ground with amazing speed as Barge Deeter trailed after him.

John Alden heard the sound of those feet. His face was white and shaken as he looked around. For an instant, the sound reminded him of the plop The Monster's feet made in the mud.

He was still shaking as he took his seat in the plane. He raised the newspaper to cover his confusion. Headlines leaped out at him:

CHICAGO MEDICS

TO HEAR TALK BY

CLARK SAVAGE, JR.

John Alden's heart pounded. Swiftly he read the story beneath:

Chicago, July 12 (DP) Clark Savage, Jr., the famous scientist and adventurer, has consented to address a meeting of the Chicago Medical Association here to-morrow afternoon, it was learned to-day.

Savage, one of the leading medical men of the world, although he is not an active, practicing physician, has promised to speak on the subject of "The Landular Theory of Super-Growth."

Leading medical men here to-day said they hoped to persuade Savage to reveal details of some of his latest experiments, which are alleged to have surpassed anything yet attempted.

The Medical Association was fortunate in obtaining Savage as a speaker, as he and his men have just returned, it was learned, from one of their trips of adventure.

Savage, it will be recalled, is more or less a man of mystery since he has never been persuaded to give a press interview on any of his amazing adventures. But it is known that he has won the gratitude of many nations, including that of the United States, for his exploits. He is a man completely devoid of fear, who brings to his work not only an amazing scientific knowledge, but also physical prowess that is said to have no equal.

Friends have explained that this is due to a rigid training regime that keeps him in perfect condition. Since childhood he is understood

John Alden's eyes gleamed. He was smiling as he looked up. Doc Savage was the man to combat The Monster. And he would be in Chicago to-morrow. Even the address of his hotel was given.

THE steady stare of eyes attracted the engineer's attention. He turned his head suddenly. Behind him, and across the aisle, was the man he had seen running after him at the airport. The big man with gigantic feet.

The big man's eyes dropped as John Alden turned, but the engineer's hands shook with a queer, unexplainable fear. He glanced down at the paper again, and received a shock.

The item was small. Metropolitan editors had been fooled too often to take chances. They gave this story only a small box, intimating to the reader that he was not to take it too seriously.

But John Alden took it seriously. He forgot all about the man with the big feet across the aisle. The item read:

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NEW MONSTER SEEN

THIS ONE IN ALASKA

Here's another "monster" story for those who like them this time from Alaska. Each year sea serpents and other fantastic reptiles are reported usually being seen near some tourist resort that needs business.

To-day, our yarn comes from Arcadia Valley, the government homestead project in Alaska. During a storm last night, two sober (?) colonists assert and aver they saw a huge shape swooping toward them in the darkness. They hid in a group of trees and swear the "monster" leaped entirely over the trees. To-day, of course, they insist they found the usual "gigantic footprints" that are always found. The only change from the usual run of monster stories was that the colonists said they smelled a terrible odor, but that it soon disappeared.

Barge Deeter watched John Alden's face with particular attention. Then he borrowed a newspaper from a fellow passenger and read it carefully.

John Alden noticed the move. He recalled that this man with big feet had been at the airport in Portland. He had been standing near the telephone booth in San Francisco.

It might be coincidence, but it didn't look like it. The engineer let his eyes drift over the other casually. There was a suspicious bulge under the big man's coat.

When the plane landed at Salt Lake City, John Alden acted quickly. He was the first out and the first to get his baggage. There was to be a short wait before the Chicago plane was ready.

He darted into the waiting room, moved toward the washroom, then slipped through a small door at the rear of the building. Running swiftly, he circled until he could look into a window.

The man with the big feet was inside, looking around anxiously. His heavy eyebrows were drawn down in a frown. He moved to the washroom, looked in, then came out with a slightly baffled look on his face.

It was early in the morning, but a sleepy newsboy dropped from a truck and came across the field. He was holding the papers so the headline could be read. The headline said:

MONSTER SEIZES TWO IN ALASKA!

John Alden's face went quite white. He found it difficult to get his breath. His eyes darted about frantically. Light flashed on a small sign advising passengers that here they could send telegrams.

The engineer stumbled into the room, wrote out his message with fingers that could hardly hold a pencil:

FLINT JONES

ARCADIA PROJECT

ARCADIA VALLEY ALASKA

AM ON WAY TO GET DOC SAVAGE STOP SURE HE CAN AID US STOP DO NOT DESPAIR

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He found another piece of paper and wrote rapidly. Then he talked persuasively to the telegraph operator. His lips were set in a thin, hard grin as he heard the call for the Chicago plane.

A majority of the passengers had copies of the newspaper and were reading the story of The Monster with deep interest. There were some exclamations of disbelief, but others were arguing that such a beast was quite probable.

The talk stopped suddenly as John Alden got on the plane. Nostrils twitched. Several of the passengers looked faintly sick.

A flush came to John Alden's features. He caught it also. Faint, but still strong enough in the close quarters of the cabin, he could smell the odor that always came from The Monster.

And it came from him, from his hands where they had touched the giant hair that had been concealed in his bag.

As motors roared, Barge Deeter jumped into the cabin. His face cleared as he saw John Alden there. He moved forward, dropped into his seat, just as the plane pivoted slowly, motors now thundering as it moved for the take-off.

Barge Deeter caught the odor as he was abreast of John Alden. For a moment the big man stood quite still. Then he shrieked. His shriek came even above the thunderous noise of the motors.

He turned, jumped back toward the door in the cabin. His features were fear-stricken. A startled stewardess caught his arm and pulled him back as he tried to thrust open the cabin door. The plane already was leaving the ground.

It was some minutes before the stewardess could quiet the excitement. The co-pilot came back and asked Barge Deeter if he had been drinking. Other passengers shrank back in their seats, more than half frightened.

"I just thought at the last minute of somethin' I forgot to do," Barge Deeter explained lamely.

John Alden was expecting it when Barge Deeter came forward a moment later and dropped into the seat beside him.

"Y—you've seen it? You've been close to it?" Barge Deeter whispered. His eyes were wide and round, he wet his lips feverishly.

John Alden nodded.

"I got the odor, I recognized it at once," Barge Deeter gasped.

The engineer looked at him keenly. "What do you know about it?" he demanded.

"I just came from up there," the big man said. "I saw it once myself. I knew you came from there, too. I found that out in Portland. All the time we been traveling, I been trying to make up my mind whether to ask you about it. I didn't want to scare you if you didn't know. But now "

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"I see." John Alden sighed with relief. The other's story was logical. That would explain why he had shown interest but had not spoken.

The big man shook his head. "I thought it was going to kill me. I was prospecting up in them mountains back of Arcadia when I saw it. I'm scared yet."

A hunted look came into the big man's eyes, he swallowed hard.

"It got two last night," John Alden said bitterly. He gestured with the paper he had in his hand. The details were few, but they were explicit.

Four Arcadia Valley men had been on their way home. The Monster had suddenly appeared. Two of the men had been seized. The others escaped. So far, no trace had been found of the men who had been caught.

"I'm going to get the government to work," the big man said solemnly.

"And I'm going to get Doc Savage!" Sudden enthusiasm was in John Alden's voice. "This is a case for him. No one else can handle it."

The big man looked at him thoughtfully. "Yeah, maybe. But that Savage guy don't go on wild-goose chases. He may figure this is just a newspaper story. The government won't. They got to protect those colonists."

"Doc Savage will believe me," John Alden said. "I've got proof."

"Proof?" The other was skeptical.

"I found a hair from The Monster's body," the engineer said.

Barge Deeter's mouth formed a big "O."

Little was said from there on to Chicago. Each man seemed intent on his thoughts.

As the plane circled for a landing, John Alden looked out with interest. Another plane was dropping to the airport. It was a big, speedy ship of unusual type.

John Alden didn't know it, but Doc Savage had just arrived to address the Chicago Medical Association. Nor did John Alden know that he was never to talk to Doc Savage, was never to tell him of the horror he had seen in Arcadia Valley.

But the engineer did see the bronze man. Doc Savage was standing beside his ship as the transport plane landed. John Alden dropped to the ground, started to run toward him.

A heavy, pungent odor, foul and sickly sweet, suddenly filled the air. It seemed to center about John Alden.

The engineer threw one hand to his throat. His tongue protruded as his eyes receded in his head. He tried to speak. He could not. It was as if the odor had stricken him dumb.

He took one step; two, before he crumpled. He was dead when the closest bystander reached his side.

Chapter IV. DOC TAKES CHARGE

BARGE DEETER was right behind Alden. The tan seemed to have left the self-styled prospector's face. He appeared pale. A crowd gathered quickly.

"Get a doctor!" some one shouted.

An attendant heard the cry. A score of doctors were on hand to greet Doc Savage. The attendant ignored them. He headed directly for the bronze man.

Doc Savage was already striding toward the group. It wasn't until he came close to other men that his immense size became apparent. When he was away from them the symmetry of his development, the perfect proportion of his build, made him seem of no more than ordinary height.

Doc was a giant of bronze. His corded muscles meshed under his skin in a manner which made their tremendous size scarcely noticeable, except for the tendons on his hands, which were like cables.

But the most compelling thing about the bronze man was his eyes. They were strange eyes, like pools of flake gold, hypnotically compelling in their power. They were stirred continuously, as if a wind were blowing within them. Bronze hair, only a shade darker than his skin, fitted close to his head.

The crowd parted as Doc strode to John Alden's body. Doc leaned over. He didn't use a stethoscope. His sensitive fingers could telegraph to his brain signs of life that even a stethoscope would miss. He ran his hands quickly over the body. Then he turned John Alden over.

Two physicians, members of the welcoming group, made an examination. One was using a stethoscope. Neither seemed to find anything that gave him information.

Doc Savage straightened slowly. Then there came an eerie, trilling sound. It welled up and pervaded the air, tuneful, yet tuneless. It was something Doc did, almost unconsciously, when he encountered a problem of great importance, or when he was surprised.

Doc's nostrils dilated. There was still the presence of that repulsive sweetness in the air. It was slightly less than when the plane first stopped. But it was strongest about the body of John Alden.

BARGE DEETER stood at the edge of the crowd. He had stopped dabbing at his nose. The crowd was so thick that Deeter couldn't have gotten to Doc if he'd wanted to. Anyway, he didn't try.

Deeter looked behind him. Airport attendants were going about their work. Two attendants were hauling baggage and airmail from the belly of the transport. They looked around them, sniffed into the baggage compartment. An odor like that which hung about the body of John Alden was there.

One attendant coughed. But he didn't say anything. He trundled a truck toward the administration building. Barge Deeter followed, his big feet shuffling along silently. He looked back once or twice, but Doc Savage had not moved. That seemed to satisfy Deeter. There was something like a smirk on his face.

All the bags were lined up at the door of the building. Barge Deeter worked fast. He handed the porter a stub and a ten-dollar bill. The porter was apparently so surprised he did not notice that the big man picked up two

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bags. One of them bore the initials "J. A." which certainly did not stand for Barge Deeter.

Barge lost no time. He walked toward Cicero Avenue with his deceptively swift gait. He looked behind him a couple of times. The first time there was a pleased expression on his face. The second time the expression was entirely different. Barge Deeter began to run.

An odd, barking roar welled up behind him. A beast came toward him rapidly, one that would have given an anthropologist a year of study. And still he would have been baffled.

The face was not unpleasant, if you go in for gorillas. To Barge Deeter, it looked like the worst traits of an ape, a chimpanzee, a gorilla and a baboon, all wrapped up in one furry body. The thing barked in apparent anger and raced along behind him.

Perspiration broke out on Barge Deeter's face. He almost dropped his bags. But not quite. He tore along, a wild look of fear in his eyes.

But the what-is-it could run faster than he. Barge Deeter breathed a huge sigh of relief then. The thing went right past him without so much as a glance. Barge Deeter slowed down to a walk.

That was a mistake. With a squealing grunt, the oddest-looking piece of porcine meat he had ever seen tore between his legs, headed for the ape. Barge went flat on his back.

He thought he was really going crazy then. There seemed to be a third member of this strange parade. A dapper, foppish-looking man, dressed up to the last minute of sartorial elegance, tore out of the administration building door. He was waving a sword in his hands and screaming about a side of bacon.

"I'll cut that carnsarned pig of yours into pork chops!" he yelled. "You better keep him away from Chemistry, you ape!"

"You touch a bristle on Habeas Corpus's back, you shyster, and I'll take you apart, brief by brief!" a high, childish voice yelled from behind the fashion plate.

BARGE DEETER rolled over and looked. Then he got up and began to run again. The newest arrival looked almost exactly like the ape. Only bigger. A tremendous array of large white teeth showed in a mouth that almost split his head in two.

The head itself seemed to disappear entirely behind the mouth. The small eyes were nearly invisible in deep pits of gristle. The man waddled rather than walked. He appeared momentarily on the verge of taking to all fours.

The apelike man in reality was Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Blodgett Mayfair, whose ability as an industrial chemist had put him very much at tops in the world of science. His friends called him "Monk."

The foppish-looking figure who preceded him was Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks, better known as "Ham," one of the most astute lawyers ever to be graduated from Harvard.

Monk and Ham were two of Doc Savage's most trusted aids. They seemed eternally on the point of mortal combat with each other. They had even adopted pets that added fuel to the conflict.

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Now Monk reached out arms that almost touched the ground, dived for the lawyer.

"Stick a pin in Habeas, will you!" he shouted. "Make him think Chemistry did it just to start something! Why, you ingrown process server, I'll "

Ham danced around, jabbing a sword, which really was the core of a dandified cane he carried. He appeared just about to nick the ape-like Monk. But Monk wasn't looking at him.

"Habeas!" he yelled. "Daggonit it, get away from those car tracks!"

Ham, stopping his dancing looked toward the street. In the chase across the traffic of Cicero Avenue, the pig, Habeas Corpus, had stumbled directly in the path of a street car. Chemistry, the ape, turned to see if the pig was still chasing him. Then the monkey did a strange thing.

Chattering in excitement, he raced back, scooped up the pig in his furry arms and leaped from the tracks just as the street car rumbled by. He lumbered back, still carrying the porker, chattering to it like a mother.

Monk sighed. "Okay," he said. "That danged ape does have some uses. Let's go find Doc."

Barge Deeter drifted from sight.

THERE was an excited group milling around the bronze man. Some of the men were physicians whose names were known all over the world. One of them tugged at his distinguished-looking goatee and shook his head.

"Most extraordinary," he muttered. "There is no apparent cause of death. It might be an ordinary heart attack, but "

He looked again at some of his colleagues. Their glances, too, showed bafflement. The contorted expression of fear and horror on the dead face of John Alden did not back up a theory of a mere heart attack.

The physician with the goatee had examined the body as closely as had Doc Savage. But Doc Savage did not seem baffled. He looked up as Monk and Ham approached.

"An autopsy should be performed," he clipped. "My two aides will stay with the body until after the meeting of the Merical Association."

A squealing grunt came suddenly from the ground near John Alden's body. Habeas Corpus stood there, his long, sail-like ears erect. The pig stared at the body, nose quivering. Then he squealed again, and fled. Monk raced after him. He had to carry his pet all the way back. There was something about the body that Habeas did not like at all.

Chemistry's reaction was just the opposite. He appeared fascinated. He lumbered over, sniffed avidly. He tried to pick the body up in his arms.

Ham pulled the ape away.

When an ambulance came, Ham gave the driver the address of a small, private hospital near the University of Chicago campus. It was an exclusive hospital, devoted largely to research cases. Doc was a member of the

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board of directors.

The ambulance roared from the field, down Cicero Avenue, turned east on Garfield Boulevard. Two taxicabs left the field directly behind the ambulance.

Monk and Ham were paying no attention to traffic. They sat in the back of the ambulance with the corpse. Habeas Corpus had kicked up such a fuss they had let him ride in front with the driver. But Chemistry stayed close beside the body, apparently fascinated by it.

"If he doesn't quit mooning over that corpse, I'm goin' to throw him out," Monk growled. "He gives me the jitters."

Ham snorted. "At least Chemistry knows enough to realize there's something screwy some place," he giped. "Too bad you don't belong to the same simian tribe."

Monk started to answer that one. But his gaze wandered to the back window of the ambulance. He stiffened.

"Trouble coming," he said.

Ham followed his gaze. There wasn't anything peculiar about the two cabs behind them. But there was a queer intensity of the faces of the men in them. Doc's aids had seen that kind of intensity on the faces before. Usually just before shooting started.

HAM noticed that the ambulance was pulling up to a red light.

The two taxicabs split. One rolled up on the right of the ambulance. The other stopped on the left side. A revolver shot split the air.

Monk howled; he always did when fighting started. Then the hairy chemist leaped out of the ambulance. As he moved, he whipped a queer-looking weapon from a specially constructed shoulder holster.

It resembled an oversize automatic pistol, fitted with an intricate drum magazine, perfected by Doc. The rate of fire was so rapid that the roar was like the hoarse song of a gigantic bass fiddle. The slugs it fired did not kill. They were "mercy" bullets, charged with a drug which brought only quick unconsciousness.

Monk hit the street running. Men were piling from both cabs. The chemist sprayed mercy bullets from his machine-pistol. Ham took the other side, cut loose with another machine-pistol. Hard-faced men whipped around, blazed away with heavy automatics.

The mercy bullets seemed to have no effect on the gangsters.

"Aim for their heads!" Ham shouted. "They've got bullet-proof clothing on!"

Monk raised his gun muzzle higher. But the men were piling into the ambulance. Suddenly the ambulance shot ahead into a snarl of traffic. It got across the street, whipped down the boulevard.

Monk and Ham stood startled.

A low, guttural noise came from nearby. Monk's big mouth dropped open.

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"Jumping Jehoshaphat!" he squealed.

The noise came from Chemistry. In the confusion, the anthropoid had climbed out the back of the ambulance. In his arms he held John Alden's body. The open door of one of the taxicabs offered a haven. So Chemistry had clambered into that.

A big cop was lumbering across the street. A lot of questions seemed in the offing. Ham jumped behind the wheel of the cab. Monk piled in the rear with Chemistry.

Ham jammed down the accelerator, shot down the boulevard.

The cop yelled and commandeered the nearest car. But he couldn't keep up with the taxi. He soon lost it.

"Well, we've still got the body," Ham said evenly.

"Yeah," Monk squealed. "But they've got my pig. We've gotta get those guys!"

Ham made it known the gangsters were welcome to the pig as far as he was concerned. Then he kept his mind on his driving. He had to concentrate to shut out Monk's opinion of all lawyers in general, and Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks in particular.

THE campus of the University of Chicago sprawls around the spacious Midway in a dozen or more groups of vine-covered buildings. On the outskirts of the campus, near the Cottage Grove side, was a building set apart from the rest. It was surrounded by large trees. It had an air of leisure and comfort.

Ham wheeled the borrowed cab into the darkened driveway. Apparently, they were expected. Doc would have called, anyway, to make arrangements. A very pretty, red-haired nurse met them at the door.

Monk immediately forgot his quarrel with Ham. He bowed sweepingly and grinned in a way he fondly hoped would win approval. The nurse looked only at Ham. Monk glowered.

Two attendants came from the door with a stretcher. They took charge of John Alden's body. Monk stood back, holding the door open for the nurse.

"We want this anthropoid psychoanalyzed," Ham said calmly, nodding toward Monk. "It probably is not safe to have him at large."

Monk's scowl grew darker. "Why, you shyster, you're a menace to everything in or out of a courtroom!" he shrilled.

"See," Ham said, "he has delusions all the time."

Monk didn't look very dangerous. The nurse smiled and went on ahead. Probably she was accustomed to peculiar cases in the hospital for research. In the corridor, she met another nurse. This one was evidently a supervisor.

"Mr. Savage phoned," she said. "He wants the body left in the receiving room until he arrives. I'm going in there now."

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Ham turned around.

"Where has Chemistry gone " he started.

A piercing scream interrupted him. The scream came from the receiving room. Monk and Ham plunged toward the door, raced into the room.

The supervisor lay on the floor. Otherwise the room was empty!

Monk grabbed a washcloth from a basin in the wall. Cold water quickly revived the nurse.

"T—that monkey," she moaned. "I saw him right in front of me. Then everything went black."

Monk and Ham rushed outside. They could hear an automobile speeding away. The body of John Alden was gone. And so was Chemistry.

Chapter V. SEEING DOUBLE

"THAT danged ape of yours has gone too far this time!" Monk howled.

Ham stopped and listened. "Don't be an idiot!" he snapped. "Chemistry can't drive a car. Even you know that much."

"He could have hauled the body to the gangsters' car," Monk countered.

Ham left the driveway, began to poke about in the bushes. "No," he insisted. "If Chemistry did steal the body, we'll find him around here somewhere."

Monk tramped through shrubbery on the other side of the drive. A sudden yell of surprise came from Ham. There was a frantic thrashing in the bushes. Monk started to race toward the lawyer. But Ham, indignant, met him in the middle of the driveway.

He held Habeas Corpus by his two large ears.

"He was going to bite me!" Ham shouted. "I'll cut him into pork chops right now!"

"Put him down, you tailor's dummy!" Monk roared. "His being here proves it was the gangsters who got the body. The same ones that stole the ambulance. Habeas was in the ambulance."

"It's time we notified Doc " Ham began. He broke off. A tiny light had flashed on within an opalescent ring on his finger.

The lawyer whipped a small earphone from the breast pocket of his coat. It was so small that it fitted inside the ear like a plug. The wire that ran from it was as fine as a silken thread. It connected compact pocket batteries with a miniature short-wave set.

"Monk! Ham!" came Doc's clear voice. "The police have reports of a large monkey riding on top of a speeding ambulance. What has happened?"

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Ham gulped. He hardly cared to give the report he had to make. But he fished out a tiny microphone, spoke swiftly.

"Get in the taxicab, drive west through Washington Park," Doc clipped. "Turn north on Wabash. You should overtake the ambulance. I will keep in touch."

Monk leaped to the wheel of the cab, it whoomed down the driveway into the street. The ride through the winding roadways of Washington Park made Ham's hair stand on end. They plunged into Wabash Avenue at a sixty-mile clip, headed north.

"The ambulance is now on Calumet Avenue, going north," came Doc's voice in the tiny earphone. They are apparently wait " There was an interruption. "Pedestrians report that the ape is no longer riding on top of the machine. He is driving it."

Monk had his own earphone set in operation by then.

"Something's wrong, radically wrong!" he howled. He poured all the power into the motor that the cab could muster.

The ambulance loomed ahead. Monk bore down on it like a streak. "Get ready to jump over and stop it!" he roared.

But it wasn't necessary for Ham to act. The ambulance suddenly swerved to the right, crashed into an electric-light pole. Ham and Monk were out of the taxi in a single leap. The dim form of Chemistry was slumped over the wheel. Ham gasped.

Chemistry's wrists were tied tightly to the steering wheel. He had no alternative but to sit in the driver's seat. The gangsters had ducked out, left the ape alone in the careening ambulance.

HAM untied the ropes that bound the monkey. Chemistry reeled to his feet groggily. Sirens screamed, two radio cars pulled up, cops pouring from them.

"Who was driving that ambulance?" a red-faced sergeant bellowed.

"Apparently that was," Monk said dryly, pointing to Chemistry.

The cop's face got redder, he swelled with rage.

Ham broke the tension.

"Wait!" the lawyer snapped. "Doc's calling." The red light in his opalescent ring had flashed. "Doc Savage wants us to come to the hotel right away, and bring the papers."

"Gee." The cop looked crestfallen. "I didn't know you were Doc Savage's men. We got standing orders to cooperate with you any time."

"Let's go!" rapped Monk impatiently.

"Chemistry!" Ham called. He looked around, and groaned in disgust. Chemistry had disappeared again.

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Ordinarily, they would have stayed to search for the ape. But Doc's voice had sounded urgent. They figured they could pick up Chemistry later. They jumped into the taxi, sped across town, stopping only to buy the newspapers Doc had asked for. Ham read them aloud to Monk. It was immediately apparent why Doc had said to get them.

City editors are pretty hard-boiled about freak-of-nature stories. They have been fooled too often. They had been hard-boiled at first about The Monster of Alaska. They weren't any more. There was a note of awe in the news columns:

"MONSTER" IN ALASKA

KILLS U.S. OFFICIAL!

Fairbanks, Alaska (Special) Stories of a weird monster, perhaps of prehistoric origin, appeared verified to-day in the killing of Flint Jones, government supervisor at Arcadia Valley. The body of Jones, horribly mangled, was found near his cabin. Beside the body were huge footprints of a type that defied classification.

Neighbors of Jones said they believed they heard a scream about midnight, but were not sure because it was storming. Later, some asserted they smelled a strange odor at about the same time.

Two other discoveries have the authorities baffled. One was a telegram found in what was left of Jones's clothing. It was from one of the government engineers who have been at Arcadia, John Alden, and was sent from Salt Lake City, Utah. It said Alden was on his way to see Doc Savage, the famous scientist and adventurer.

The other discovery was the mangled body of an engineer named Buck Dixon. Dogs discovered his body, terribly torn, in a crude grave. At first it was believed Alden might have murdered Dixon, who was his partner. Credence is now given to the theory that The Monster also killed Dixon.

"Goshamighty!" Monk said. "I'll bet that's what Doc wants us for. We're going to fight The Monster."

NOT so many blocks away, another voice, as childlike as Monk's, also was speaking. In fact, the voice sounded exactly like Monk's. The speaker had been practicing for some hours to get just that effect. He appeared an exact counterpart of the hairy chemist.

"I wonder what that Doc Savage has found out," he shrilled.

Beside him, a wasp-waisted fashion plate leaned over a tiny radio. Even a close acquaintance would have taken him for Ham. He spoke in the cultured tones used by the dapper lawyer.

"Don't let it worry you," he said. "The boss is smart. He even figured Doc would be talking to them by radio. That's why he had us ready."

The two went into the corridor. Doc, they knew, had taken a large suite two floors above. They were in a big, fashionable hotel overlooking Lake Michigan. They walked up, instead of taking the elevator. When they got on Doc's floor, the one who looked like Monk began to yell shrilly.

"Why, you skinny imitation of a law book, when I get that pig back, I'm going to let him use your wardrobe for a sty!"

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"Shut up, you missing link!" snapped Ham's double. "Whoever's got him has had him past one meal time already. I'll bet they've got indigestion."

The imitation was perfect. "Monk" turned the knob of Doc's door without hesitation. He did just as Monk would have done.

A faint, sweet, cloying odor came to their nostrils as they entered the room. It wasn't strong, just persistent. It seemed to come from a slender, oblong box on a table. Doc was standing by a window. He turned as the two men came in.

The fake Monk yelled excitedly. He pulled one hand from a pocket, hurled the contents of that hand directly at Doc. A thin, white powder covered the bronze man's face.

Doc seemed to jerk erect. His flake gold eyes whirled peculiarly. He took a slow step forward. Then he fell. He went down on his face.

"Ham" laughed triumphantly. He grabbed the oblong box from the table and raced toward the door where his companion stood waiting. They flicked off the light and opened the door.

The real Monk and Ham arrived at that moment.

MONK'S hand was already on the doorknob when the door was snatched open. He was lumbering forward at the time, and plunged on into the room. He collided with moving bodies.

The hairy chemist was far from slow-witted. He knew instantly that something was wrong. He yelled loud and lustily and swung with both fists. The more noise Monk made, the better he could fight.

Ham's sword cane came out. He leaped into the darkened room, jabbing carefully, afraid he might nick Monk, as the end of the sword was tipped with a sleep-producing drug.

He tripped over struggling feet, went to the floor. The sword cane dropped from his hand. Ham muttered to himself. Fighting in the dark was not his idea of fun. He wiggled back, leaped up and flicked on the lights.

The look of amazement on Monk's face at that instant was something Ham long remembered. Monk was so surprised he forgot to fight. For it looked to him as if he was fighting himself.

The fake Monk grabbed for his pocket again. A second time white powder flared out. It caught the hairy chemist squarely in the face. He dropped as if he had been shot.

Ham had tangled with his own counterpart. And the counterfeit lawyer was putting up a good scrap. Ham would have won, but a hand came around his face from behind. White powder was held over his nose. He, too, went down.

The masqueraders did not hesitate. They were breathing heavily, eyes frightened. They had not bargained on a general battle. The fake Ham holding the oblong box carefully, the men raced away.

Doc rose calmly from the floor.

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He had not been unconscious at any time. He had detected the falsity of his visitors, had popped an oxygen tablet in his mouth, expecting them to use gas. They hadn't used the ordinary type of gas, but the powder was merely another form. But, peculiarly, he had let the battle go on.

Now Doc gave Monk and Ham a whiff of oxygen from a tiny tube. They regained consciousness almost instantly. Monk struggled to his feet, his tiny eyes red with rage.

"Where are they? Let me at 'em!" he bellowed.

Doc shook his head.

"But why?" Monk wailed plaintively.

Habeas Corpus, who had followed Monk and Ham into the room, squealed suddenly. He had approached a closet door. Now he turned, raced frantically from that door, the bristles on his back quivering.

Doc opened the closet door, took out a package. It appeared identical with the one seized by the invaders.

"I think this is what frightens Habeas," he explained. "It has the same odor about it that was about the man at the airport. Also, this is what our visitors were after."

"But what " stammered Ham.

"As you may have guessed," the bronze man went on, "John Alden was the man killed at the airport. He was on his way to see us, coming from Arcadia Valley, where a monster has been reported. He evidently feared he might be killed, so he wrote me a letter from Salt Lake City, telling me what he knew. He also sent this package."

Ham's face lightened. "So you let those men have a dummy package, to fool them into believing they had what they'd been sent for."

"They were merely dupes, and probably did not even know what they were after," Doc said. "When the one who sent them finds they have failed, he may come himself, and we may learn what this is all about."

Monk nodded sagely.

"But what is in the package, Doc?"

"A hair, evidently from The Monster," said the bronze man quietly.

Ham's breath came in sharply. "Oh, boy!" he said happily. "Let's hope it draws more visitors. I want to know why any one here should want that hair."

Chapter VI. A TRAP

HAM would have been surprised to know just how soon his wish for visitors was to be gratified. As Doc explained the contents of John Alden's letter, two sets of visitors appeared in the lobby below.

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The first visitor was alone. He was remarkable particularly for the amazing size of his feet. Barge Deeter timidly asked the clerk if Doc was registered at the hotel. The clerk nodded. He had been instructed to admit any visitors who might call.

Barge Deeter seemed exceptionally nervous. He had the air of one who feels he is being watched.

Then the other visitors arrived. They came even before the clerk could call Doc's room. There were three of them. They were hard-eyed, typical gangsters.

"Doc Savage here?" snarled the leader.

Barge Deeter whirled at the voice. His sun-tanned skin seemed to pale. He ducked low and began to run.

A startled shout came from the gang-leader. He pulled out a gun. His companions did the same. They took out after Barge Deeter. The man with the big feet was dancing behind huge pillars in the lobby, desperately seeking cover.

The clerk grabbed a phone, got Doc's room. He stuttered a description of what was happening.

The sound that came to the clerk made him think he hadn't gotten his connection. It was a weird, trilling sound, that didn't seem to come from the phone at all.

Guests were scurrying in all directions in the lobby. Barge Deeter was using some of them as shields. So far, he had managed to keep from giving the gunmen a fair shot.

The clerk expected Doc to appear from the elevators. His eyes suddenly tried to pop from his head.

With Monk and Ham at his heels, the bronze man dived in through the front door. He made directly for the gangsters.

The clerk never did know how Doc did it, but the explanation was absurdly simple. He had expected the elevators to be watched, had thrown a long, silken cord out his hotel window. The cord had furnished speedy transportation to the street.

The gangleader was the first of the visitors to spot the bronze man. "Damn," he shouted, "that devil is here already!"

Guests dropped to the floor. The gangleader squeezed the trigger of his gun as rapidly as he could. Doc drifted across the marble floor as if he didn't notice the shots. His flake gold eyes whirled strangely.

"I got him, Doc!" a hard voice said from behind the gangster.

The gangleader spun. He either didn't know Doc's ability at ventriloquism, or he had forgotten it. The turn was fatal. Doc was upon him; one hand floated out, snapped against the back of the other's head, paralyzed nerve centers there. The gunman went down.

Doc whirled toward the clerk, signaled. The clerk nodded. The lights went out.

Monk was behind a pillar, almost on top of a second gunman. He lunged forward, huge fist swinging. The man turned end over end. Ham had circled the third killer, grinning as he jabbed with his sleep-inducing sword cane. The sword cane struck its mark.

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When the lights snapped back on a minute later, the three gangsters had disappeared. So had most of the guests. But cowering back in one corner, was Barge Deeter.

"D—did they get away?" Deeter asked.

"They won't bother you any more," Doc said. He didn't explain that the three thugs were bound and tied in another room. They would be unconscious for several hours. When they recovered, they would be on their way to a private hospital in Upstate New York, known as Doc's "Crime College." There they would undergo a delicate brain operation. They would forget their criminal tendencies, return to the world as normal men.

"You wish to see me?" Doc asked calmly.

Barge Deeter gulped. Events had moved almost too swiftly for him. "Y—your room," he whispered. "I—I'll talk then."

And the man with big feet did talk. He babbled a story of seeing The Monster in Alaska. He said he had been afraid to come forward after John Alden had been killed.

He said he overheard the address of the campus hospital and had gone there. When the gangsters stole the body, he had followed. He quit following the ambulance when the gang had taken the body out in a dark part of Calumet Avenue.

"And what was your interest?" Ham put in quietly.

"There's something strange, something queer," Barge Deeter shrilled. "Why should John Alden be killed here? How was he killed?"

Doc said nothing. Monk shifted slightly. "If the body hadn't been stolen, we would have at least found out how he was killed," he said.

"There was that odor at the airport that I smelled when I saw The Monster once in Alaska." Deeter shuddered. "It was the same thing. I can't understand it."

"As if," Ham filled in, "The Monster had reached clear to Chicago to claim a victim."

Barge Deeter nodded. "Exactly. For that reason I knew the body was important. I knew if Doc Savage could examine it, he might learn something vital that might help those still in Alaska."

"I think that is probably correct," the bronze man said.

"And so " prompted Monk.

"I know where the body was taken," Barge Deeter said simply.

"We will go there," Doc decided.

MONK placed the oblong package in his pocket before he left the room. Doc had said it was important, that it might bring visitors. The chemist did not intend that it be lost.

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A girl started to enter the hotel just as the four men left it. Only Monk appeared to notice her. Monk always noticed girls, particularly if they were pretty.

She was blonde, and not large. But she had curves in the right places, and features that would have sold extra copies of any magazine. She seemed interested in the four men.

Monk soon forgot her. Barge Deeter was leading them over a stretch of wasteland that bordered the lake, and the going was rough. It was a weed-tangled section. In the center of it there was a ramshackle frame building. The group stumbled over the uneven ground in the dark.

"There's one light on," Ham whispered. "See? There's a guy sitting at a table."

Ham turned to see what Doc's reaction was. Doc was gone. Barge Deeter, in the lead, did not notice.

Cautiously, the group crept to the house, peered into the lighted room. Neither Monk nor Ham had ever seen the man sitting at the table. Barge Deeter said he had never seen him either. Monk tried the door. It was not locked. The room in which they had seen the light was just to the right of the hallway. A faint, scraping sound came from behind the door.

Silently, the hairy chemist turned the knob, opened the door a crack and peered in. He grunted. The room was vacant.

But about halfway across the room was a huge mirror. It was canted so that anyone looking through the window would think he was seeing a man sitting in the room. Actually, the man was in a room farther to the right.

The man was still sitting at the table. His back was toward them. Inch at a time, Monk eased the door open, crept in. Ham followed.

The man at the table whirled suddenly. He had a submachine gun in his hands.

A yell came from Barge Deeter. "Wait, Slingshot!" he half screamed. "We got to get the other guy in yet!"

A howl came from Monk. The meaning of Deeter's words was quite plain. Barge Deeter had led them into a trap!

Barge Deeter had just noticed Doc Savage's absence. A queer expression was on his face. He held a gun in his hand.

Then Barge screamed again, and the gun dropped from his hand. The man in the other room had moved forward now; his features could be seen clearly.

It was Doc Savage!

In the room with the bronze man was a bound figure. It was that of "Slingshot," the gunman Barge had expected to find waiting. Doc had suspected a trap, had slipped on ahead to investigate.

"You gave yourself away several times, Deeter," the bronze man said quietly. "The attack on you was too obviously a fake to gain our confidence. And you said you heard the hospital address at the airport. You had left before the hospital was mentioned."

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Barge Deeter gulped.

"I permitted you to lead us here in the hope we would find some answer to the problem that confronts us. Now talk."

Doc's hypnotic eyes stared hard at the man. Barge Deeter bobbed his head, swallowed hard. He knew he would be forced to talk if he continued to look into Doc's eyes.

A strangled yell came from him. He jumped back, pressed a button at the side of the door.

The floor went out from under Doc and his aids. And as the floor dropped open, a strange sight came into view.

There was a cement room below, like a tank. It was brilliantly lighted. And around the walls, peering through peepholes that could be closed, were a dozen thugs. All had guns ready.

Barge Deeter had laid his trap well.

Br-r-r-r-r-r!

The submachine gun in Doc's hands spoke even as he was falling. It blasted out the lights, threw the tank room in darkness.

Ham and Monk landed with mercy pistols in their hands.

The floor closed to above them, while the cellar rang with the blast of many guns.

But Doc was not there. He had sprung upward, even as he had landed, had caught hold of one edge of the floor, drawn himself up. The next moment and he had reached Barge Deeter. His powerful arms shot out.

Deeter was big, and he knew how to fight. But he had no chance. He went limp, almost at once. Swiftly, Doc bound him, dragged him into another room, rolled him into a closet.

Then he dived back to the scene of battle. Monk and Ham had to be saved.

MONK and Ham were having a busy time of it. They knew they were in a tough spot. Their bulletproof underwear had saved them from being shot, but they faced another peril now.

Water was creeping up in the tank room.

The death trap was a clever one. The hidden gunmen had hoped to mow down their victims, while well concealed. But even if that had failed, they had a second trick and that was the water.

By closing the slots through which they had fired, they made the room waterproof. Any one caught in it would drown.

Laughter was coming from the concealed killers. That laughter stopped suddenly.

A bronze thunderbolt hit them from behind. Doc had found the passageway that led to where they were.

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Howls of pain came from the darkness. Gunmen dropped, woodenlike, as iron fists crashed into their jaws, and steel fingers gripped their necks. They did not dare to fire, for fear of hitting each other.

And they could not locate their opponents. Doc moved like a silent wraith, and a relentless one. Man after man went down.

The few remaining on their feet tried to run. Some got away. Others ran into Doc.

Silence came suddenly. The bronze man flicked on a small torchlight, shut off the Lake Michigan water that was pouring into the tank room.

And just in time. Monk and Ham were floating on the surface of the water, near the floor.

Monk's face wore a look of childlike confidence as Doc opened the floor so they could escape. "I knew you'd get us out," he said.

"The darned monkey actually seemed to enjoy it!" snorted Ham.

Doc said nothing. He led the way to the closet where he had placed Barge Deeter.

The bronze man threw open the door. A weird, tuneless trilling sound came.

Barge Deeter wasn't there! But some one else was.

Bound and gagged, just as Doc had left Deeter, was a girl. She was petite and beautiful. It was the girl Monk had noticed as they left the hotel.

Chapter VII. CHEMISTRY PLAYS GUIDE

THE girl's eyes were closed. Doc took the gag from her mouth, while Monk rumbled forward and rubbed her wrists. The hairy chemist grunted when he noticed how easily the ropes came loose from around her hands.

A frightened look came to the girl's face as her eyes opened. "What are you doin' here?" Monk piped angrily.

The girl gulped. "I I'm a reporter," she said.

"Yeah?" Monk was frankly skeptical.

"How did you come to be here?" Doc asked, not unkindly.

The girl swallowed hard.

"My my editor assigned me to work on Chicago angles of the Alaskan monster case," she said. "There seemed a definite connection to us between the monster and the killing of John Alden."

"Humph!" Monk snorted.

The girl ignored him. She focused her attention on Doc and Ham. "I heard that Barge Deeter came on the

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same plane with Alden," she said with dignity. "I knew of him; he's supposed to have been connected with gangs here, so I went to look for him."

"Playing around with gangsters," Monk complained.

"I followed a tip, and found Deeter just as he came out of the hotel with you three," the girl went on. "I recognized Mr. Savage, and thought I might get a better story if I trailed along."

"What is your name?" Doc asked quietly.

"Barbara Hughes. I work for the *Blade*."

"But that still doesn't explain how you happen to be *tied up* here," Monk put in. He emphasized the word "tied."

A flush crept over the girl's features. "I came in while you were all fighting," Barbara Hughes continued. "I found Barge Deeter tied up in the closet. I still didn't know he might be connected with any of what was going on. I thought he had been taken prisoner by some of those you were fighting."

Doc said nothing.

"I took the gag from his mouth, and he promised to tell me the whole story if I would release him. I did."

"You sure did," Monk complained.

"He hit me. He knocked me unconscious," the girl said with some spirit.

Monk started to reply. He didn't. There was a sudden diversion.

HABEAS CORPUS also had trailed along behind Doc and his aids. He had slipped into the house when the girl entered. Now he raced to the front door, squealed loudly.

Monk looked up curiously. Sometimes, Monk thought Habeas could almost talk. It was plain to him now what the pig wanted. He went over, opened the door.

Chemistry bounded in. The ape appeared badly battered, his fur was torn, but he seemed well pleased with himself.

"Just the ape!" Monk snorted.

"Just the ape' nothing!" Ham yelled. "Remember where we saw that ape last? He was trailing John Alden's body. If he shows up here, it must mean that body is near."

Chemistry clawed at Ham's coat. He was making a pleading, whining sound.

"Come on!" Ham shouted happily. "I'll bet he's trying to tell us where that body is."

"We will follow him and see," Doc decided.

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Barbara Hughes looked on amazed. Apparently Doc and his aides forgot her. They didn't look her way. She hesitated, then went along.

Others were interested in Doc, too. His room at the hotel was the center of much activity.

People were still investigating reports of the rumpus in the lobby, when shooting started on the fourteenth floor. A hotel detective had seen a man slip into Doc's room. He'd tried to nab him.

Shots had come from a dozen points. The hotel detective was killed almost instantly. Then the radio police went into action. The hotel floor then became a battlefield.

When the shooting was over, three gangsters had been killed, one policeman was dead and several others were wounded. The rest of the gang fled.

But Doc's room had been thoroughly searched. Papers and clothing were thrown all over the floor.

Doc didn't know this. With Ham and Monk, and Barbara Hughes trailing in the rear, he was following Chemistry.

The hairy ape took a direct course across the rough ground, trotted along as if he had been born in the section. He led them west to a block on Drexel Boulevard that had once been an exclusive part of Hyde Park. This block had changed; it was filled mostly with cheap boarding houses.

Only one old mansion remained of past glory. It was set well back in a huge expanse of lawn and shrubbery. Chemistry turned in at the gate without hesitation.

Doc Savage slid past him, reached the porch of the mansion silently. Monk, Ham and the girl were close behind him. Monk nudged Ham and pointed toward the ape. The ape's nostrils were quivering, he was jumping up and down in excitement.

Barbara Hughes examined a brass name plate on the door post. She uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Soug Percill!" she cried. "He's a queer one. An anthropologist of some sort. He goes in for prehistoric animals. Lectures about them."

Monk and Ham exchanged sharp glances. Doc reached for the bell.

THE door opened. It opened even before Doc's fingers had touched the buzzer. A slant-eyed Oriental stood before them. A look of welcome faded from the Oriental's face; his expression changed to one of surprise. Apparently he had been expecting a guest.

But just as apparently he hadn't been expecting Doc Savage.

"We would like to see Mr. Percill," Doc said calmly.

The Oriental's eyes became expressionless. He tucked his fingertips into his coat sleeves and bowed. He chanted something in singsong Chinese. It might have been a greeting. Then he spoke in English.

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"Step light in, please." He backed up, bobbing up and down as if actuated by strings. He backed the entire length of a huge reception room.

"Gentlemans here, Master Soung," he hissed sibilantly.

A man appeared suddenly. He did not seem to walk into the room, he appeared just to materialize. He moved across the floor with a smooth, gliding motion. Brilliant eyes stared from behind a forehead so high it gave the impression that he was growing bald. But he was not.

The eyes were black and inscrutable. The face had a queer, sallow paleness.

"You are from the police, no doubt," he said. It was more of a statement than a question. His voice, also, was smooth and soft, with just a hint of some unusual accent.

"No," Doc said quietly. "We are not the police. My name is Savage. Did you want the police?"

Soung Percill leaned forward slightly. His thin eyebrows arched.

"Ah. I should have recognized you, Mr. Savage. Only the light is so dim."

There did not seem to be quite the right amount of surprise in his voice.

"Yes," he continued, "I was expecting the police, but I am more than glad you are here. And I think I know what brought you."

Doc's flake gold eyes stirred restlessly. "We came to inspect the body," he said, without expression.

Soung Percill bowed. "As I expected," he said. "My man, Sing Lee, found it on the lawn less than half an hour ago. I wanted the police to investigate."

Doc said nothing. His flake gold eyes were taking in every detail of the room they had entered.

Books and manuscripts were everywhere. But it was on newspaper clippings on the table that Doc's gaze seemed to center. There were dozens of them.

All were about The Monster in Alaska.

Habeas Corpus squealed suddenly. He turned, tried to run from the room, almost upsetting Ham. The dapper lawyer waved his hands frantically to catch his balance.

"That blasted pig!" he barked.

Soung Percill turned, his face as impassive as always. "Perhaps he does not like the odor that seems to be associated with the body," he said. Then he noticed Doc's attention on the clippings. For the first time his face showed animation.

"That is why I am glad you are here, Mr. Savage," he said. "I wanted to talk to you about that case."

"And your reaction?" Doc asked.

"I believe it quite possible," Soung Percill said with conviction.

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He spoke swiftly, and at length. Monk stirred uneasily. Soung Percill was an educated man. That was apparent. But the hair on the back of his neck was rising. There seemed no danger, but still

The hairy chemist thought of the package suddenly, the package that had been sent to Doc. He rammed a hand in his pocket. The package was still there.

Soung Percill ended his discourse. Doc replied gravely.

"Now I will take you to the body," Percill said. "If it is that of John Alden, as I believe, and is connected with the Alaskan monster, we may learn "

"You'll learn nothing!" a voice said harshly.

BARBARA HUGHES gave a scream. There was a crash of glass and a rush of feet. Men appeared at the windows, and at every door.

Doc leaped to one side. Monk and Ham yanked out their machine-pistols. The bullfiddle roar of the superfirers crashed out. The attackers did not pause.

"Bulletproof vests again!" howled Monk.

Doc suddenly moved. He left his feet, dived straight through an open window. Monk grinned. When odds were heavy, Doc sometimes thought it best to get away, knowing he could rescue his men later.

Barge Deeter knew that, too. Barge was waiting outside the window. A dozen men were waiting with him. Had Doc been permitted to land on his feet, the end might have been different.

But blackjacks swung while he was still in the air, caught him over the back of the head. Other men grabbed his flying feet. He was brought down much as a football player is tackled. Barge Deeter led the charge in jumping on him.

Monk and Ham were finding the odds too great, also. Men had seized them from behind, knocked the machine pistols from their hands. Chemistry fell before an onslaught of four big hoodlums. Habeas Corpus was kicked aside.

Despite the men on him, Doc struggled up. His arms swept out. Attackers reeled back.

Barge Deeter looked in the window. He saw men with guns held at the back of Monk's and Ham's heads. He saw Soung Percill, crouched in a corner, hands high.

"Surrender, Doc Savage, or we'll kill your men!" Barge Deeter bellowed.

Doc stopped fighting. There was nothing else to do. Even then, he might have escaped himself. But bullets would get Monk and Ham. Their heads were not protected.

Barge Deeter chuckled mirthlessly. Monk and Ham were tied with heavy cords. Barge didn't think that would be enough for Doc. Steel-riveted bands were jammed around his body. They were forced into place until they fitted like hoops on a barrel.

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Soung Percill was being bound, also. His face had again become impassive.

Only Barbara Hughes was not molested. Barge Deeter threw one arm around her shoulders. "I'm some guy, huh?" he chuckled.

"What a story!" the girl breathed. "If I could only print it!"

Barge's chuckle grew deeper. "Wait a while yet, baby," he advised. "You ain't seen nothing."

Barbara Hughes paled. "You mean that "

Barge looked at her, laughed loudly. "Sure, baby. You know what I mean."

Chapter VIII. DEATH CHAMBER

A FUNERAL was under way. Two of them evidently, since there were two hearses.

Bystanders did not know who was to be buried, but they did notice vaguely that there were more mourners than usual. At least a dozen cars trailed behind the hearses. All the occupants were men.

But there was one girl along. She was in the front hearse, but not in a casket. She sat between two caskets. She was blond, and beautiful, although now her features appeared strained.

There were two caskets in the rear hearse, also. Doc and Soung Percill occupied those in the front car. Monk and Ham rode behind them. Jammed in with them were Habeas and Chemistry.

The lids of the coffins had been removed. But Monk and Ham could not talk. They were too firmly gagged. Nor could they move.

So they continued some experiments in thought transference and telepathy they had begun back in New York. The results were pretty good. Ham almost choked on his gag at the insults Monk was hurling at him. Occasionally the hairy chemist strained at his bonds, as if he wanted to get in at least one more good punch.

Then Ham made his mind a blank. Monk would have said that wasn't too hard. It served to infuriate the dapper lawyer more than ever.

Ham realized they were in a tough spot. Horseplay kept him from thinking of it. Barge Deeter undoubtedly had trailed them from the old house, had gotten reinforcements and attacked. The attack had been too successful.

Ham was wondering what was in store for them. Barge Deeter undoubtedly had something unpleasant in mind. But he was puzzled as to what connection Deeter might have with the Alaskan monster. Possibly he didn't have any. But he certainly had wanted the hair that came from The Monster. He had taken that from Monk at once.

Ham relaxed. There was no use worrying about it. Doc would figure a way out.

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AND the bronze man was busy. The funeral procession was rolling out toward the city line in the direction of suburban Melrose Park.

Doc stared in concentration at the roof of the hearse. It was highly polished, it served the bronze man as a mirror. He could see that Soung Percill was moving stealthily.

Doc was wiggling, too. Not perceptibly. He expanded and contracted muscles slightly. It was sort of like an eel wriggling.

His flesh rippled and slid the iron hoops down a fraction of an inch at a time.

But Soung Percill did not have so much of an obstacle to overcome. Apparently he had a razor blade hidden in the lining of his coat. He found it and slashed his bonds.

Cautiously, Percill removed the gag that was in his mouth. He raised himself, inch at a time, and leaned over toward Doc.

"I'll help in a minute," he whispered.

Percill did not speak loud. But his voice had a thin, carrying quality. A guard sitting at the foot of the coffin heard him.

The thug whirled, yanked out his gun.

Soung Percill could not help Doc then. He screamed, dived toward the back of the hearse. The girl was in his way. He thrust her out and back, jumped to the ground, just as the thug fired.

Brakes went on. The thug piled out the rear of the hearse, his gun still flaming.

Doc pulled himself up. The attempt to escape was right in his line of vision.

There weren't any houses in this part of the city except a bit of wasteland where gangsters liked to leave their victims.

Soung Percill streaked across a weed-grown marsh, pulling the girl with him. He stumbled once, got up again.

Then a submachine gun spoke. Soung Percill reared erect, then dropped and tried to crawl. Barge Deeter got down from the driver's seat of the first hearse, drew his gun and fired once.

Soung Percill lay still.

A gangster grabbed Barbara Hughes, pulled her back toward the hearse. "I thought yuh was in on this!" he snarled.

"Percill pulled me with him!" the girl gasped.

Barge Deeter was smiling thinly. He looked in the rear of the hearse. Then he yelled in amazement.

"The bronze guy's gone!" he shouted.

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MEN poured from the "mourners'" cars, dozens of men, heavily armed. Spotlights went on in every car, made the scene as light as day.

Fog appeared suddenly, a thick, heavy fog. It seemed to come first from the hearse in which Doc had been prisoner, but no one noticed that. The fog spread too rapidly.

In the space of seconds it had completely covered the procession of cars. The searchlights were useless. Men bumped into each other, swearing. Guns barked, only to stop as the gangsters realized they might shoot each other.

The fog did not last long. It hung in the air only for a few seconds, then it lifted. A shout came up from one of the gunmen.

"Barge's got him!"

A big man grunted. Under one arm he held a huge, bronze figure. Steel bands encased the victim until he could hardly move.

Without a word, the big man carried his victim back to the hearse, dumped the other into a coffin.

"What a guy!" one of the gunmen muttered. "All by yourself, too!"

"Yeah," Deeter's voice bragged. "He ain't so much."

The gunman looked into the coffin. The figure there wore Doc Savage's clothes but not Doc's shoes. The gunman did not notice the huge, oversize feet of the man encased in the steel bands.

The procession got under way again. "Deeter" drove slowly. It was not difficult to make the thug beside him suggest the proper turns.

Doc had wanted to rescue Monk and Ham. But he knew the artificial fog he had created would not last long enough, so he had done the next best thing: He had traded places with Barge Deeter.

"Seems longer than usual," he said in Deeter's voice.

"Yeah," the thug said. "We're driving slow. There she is now, though. Won't be long."

A narrow road led to what looked like an ancient incinerator plant. It had been once.

The thug was garrulous. Slight suggestions from Doc brought out the story.

Once an incinerator for disposal of stockyard refuse, gangsters had purchased it to use as a crematory. It was just on the city line. They even had a permit. It made an ideal place for disposing of bodies.

Doc pulled the hearse up in front of the crematory. He said nothing and stepped from the hearse, walked with Deeter's quick, shuffling stride toward the second hearse.

There was an observation room on the second floor of the crematory. A man was peering through a small window. His eyes flickered suddenly; he pressed a switch.

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Light flooded the scene below. The man started. He jumped to a microphone.

"Look at Deeter's feet, you fools!" he shouted. "You've been tricked. That's Doc Savage, not Deeter!"

THE voice thundered through loudspeakers. Gunmen were frozen with surprise. Then they went into action.

But Doc Savage had not hesitated. He had gone into action first.

A dozen men, heavily armed, were about the hearse containing Monk and Ham. Others would be there in a second. It was impossible to rescue them for the moment.

The bronze man turned and ran. And as he ran, fog flared out behind him. Doc broke tiny capsules in one hand. A chemical came from those capsules. Moisture in the air struck the chemical, created the fog effect.

The bronze man fitted queer goggles over his eyes. With them on, he could see plainly in the fog.

A huge car was at the side of the building, a long open car of expensive make. Doc raced to its side, looked in. The car was locked. For a moment the bronze man was beside it. Then he turned.

He raced directly into the crematory.

The artificial fog lifted just as he moved through the door. The man in the observatory above him saw him. Orders roared through loud-speakers. Dozens of men rushed into the building.

Doc dived down steps, reached what looked like a huge boiler room.

It was only seconds later that his pursuers arrived. They found Doc curiously examining the control gadgets.

"Get him, he's trying to put it out of order!" Barge Deeter's voice howled. As soon as he was freed, the big man had run up. He was still peeling make-up off his face, make-up Doc had hastily applied.

The gunmen leaped forward. Doc waited calmly. He made no effort to escape. Resistance would have been useless.

Barge Deeter's eyes gleamed. "Got you, Savage!" he gloated.

"A fairly complete place," Doc said quietly.

Deeter sneered. "It's more than complete it's hell!" he snarled. "The temperature inside is four thousand degrees. You just get on this belt and ride through double doors. If we didn't have those double doors the heat in here'd be enough to fry us, too. There's an eight-foot air space between them doors."

Doc appeared only mildly interested. More men were bringing in Ham and Monk. Behind them, squealing and struggling, were Habeas and Chemistry.

Monk's face fell when he saw Doc. He had hoped the bronze man had escaped.

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BARGE DEETER gave a crisp order. Men pushed Doc and his aids forward. They found their eyes pressed against peepholes.

"Just on the chance you jammed this thing, I'm going to use another body first," Deeter rasped. "Besides, I want you to watch; I want you to know the hell that waits you."

Gangsters grinned. One brought the body of John Alden. Swiftly the body was fastened on the endless belt that ran inside the furnace.

The roaring heat of the crematory fires sounded dully. Machinery began to rumble, the belt began to move. The outer door opened automatically. John Alden's body slid from sight.

The peepholes gave onto a hollow tube that ran into the chamber of fire.

Slowly, John Alden's body came into view. As the outside door closed, the second door opened. Flames leaped out. John Alden's body dropped into those flames. It disintegrated in the heat.

"At least," Ham said, "it's quick."

Barge Deeter gave a quick signal. Four men seized Doc, carried him toward the moving belt.

Doc Savage said nothing. His face was grim. Behind him there was a choked cry. Barbara Hughes had descended to the furnace room.

"It. 'it's too awful," she sobbed. "I I knew this place was here, but I "

"Shut up, baby!" Barge Deeter rapped.

Monk struggled at his bonds. He'd hoped to the last that Doc had some trick, some way of escaping. The destruction of John Alden's body had destroyed that hope.

"Doc! Doc!" he shrilled. "Don't let them do it! They can't do it!"

Ham, also, was fighting futilely; streams of perspiration bathed his face.

Doc looked at them. He said nothing.

Then he was tied to the asbestos belt. Again the machinery began to move. Slowly, Doc disappeared into the outer door.

Monk's face was pressed close to a peephole. Until the last, he would not give up. The outer door closed. Then Monk sobbed aloud. His huge shoulders sagged. He twisted his face away. It was lined with agony.

"I SAW him, Ham!" he choked. "Saw his body drop into the fire. Nothing is left but ashes."

Ham tried to speak, but could not. He had seen, also. His lips worked strangely. He was afraid to trust himself to words as Monk was tied to the asbestos belt.

"Good-by, you missing link," he managed at last. And turned his head away.

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Barge Deeter kept his eye at a peephole. He grunted with satisfaction as Monk dropped into the fire. Ham was next. He went without a word, face fearless. Chemistry put up a good fight, but a useless one. Habeas was tied into his arms. Together, they made the ride.

"A complete job," Barge muttered. "Now we got nothin' to worry about. Let's go."

Barbara Hughes was crying. But as Barge Deeter looked at her, she made an effort to stop her tears. She tried to smile.

"You're going now?" she asked. "Then take me with you."

"I ain't goin' to do nothin' else, baby," Barge Deeter said.

They left the room. Behind them, the fire raged on unchecked.

Barge Deeter was jubilant as he got into one of the touring cars. "I never thought the big bronze bum would be such a push-over," he chuckled.

The gunman with him grinned slightly. "He was no pushover," he said flatly. "He just ran up against someone with more brains than he had."

Barge preened himself, reached down and flicked a speck of dust off one of his huge, oversize shoes. Others might kid him about the size of those feet, but secretly Barge was rather proud of them.

"I did do rather good," he said modestly.

His companion snorted. "You, hell! You got licked once to-night. Lucky we came along and helped or you might have been outsmarted a second time."

Barge Deeter's expression didn't change. He brought his right fist over in a looping right. The man's jaw cracked, he slid down in the seat of the car, unconscious. Calmly, Deeter tossed him out.

Barbara Hughes's features were still strained and white. "I you " she started.

"Get in here with me, baby," Barge Deeter smirked. "No one can't say I got no brains."

The girl slipped into the car. She managed another smile. "You're awfully smart," she said. "And you're really going to take me with you?"

Deeter started the car, sent it roaring down the road. "Sure, baby, don't you worry about that." His smirk became a wide grin.

The girl snuggled down into the seat. "I do wish you hadn't killed Soung Percill," she said. "I rather liked him."

Barge Deeter scowled. "You ain't goin' to like nobody but me," he said firmly.

"But but that was so useless," the girl argued. "I can understand why you wanted to kill Doc Savage. He might have interfered with your plans, but Percill "

"Was just an Eurasian," Deeter said. "I didn't like him."

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He wheeled the car into a small airport. It was a private field, not equipped with night lights, but he seemed to be expected. Other men drove up.

A big transport plane was near a hangar, motors idling. Men piled out of cars and went toward the plane without a word.

Barge Deeter was happy. Doc Savage was dead. The big boss was going to be pleased. His reward would probably be a big one.

He chuckled. The girl looked at him inquiringly.

"I was just thinking, baby, how smart the boss really is," he explained. "If anybody had any idea what he was doin', how big a thing he's behind " He chuckled again.

The girl frowned. "I really should call my paper. If I don't, my editor will be anxious, perhaps have the police and Federal men looking for me."

Barge's jaw dropped. "I'd forgotten that," he grumbled. "But I'll do the calling."

"Then just tell him I'm after a big story, and and that this is thirty from me."

"Thirty?" Barge scowled suspiciously.

"My own number," Barbara explained. "If you didn't say that, he might not believe you."

Barge shuffled off, grinning. He was still grinning when the big plane took off five minutes later.

"You're goin' to see things, baby, things that will make you think you're dreaming. But you won't be. They're real."

The girl's face whitened slightly. "You you mean The Monster?"

"I mean The Monster," Barge affirmed. "Too bad it couldn't have killed Savage, but he sure knows what hell felt like."

Chapter IX. BACK FROM HELL

BARGE DEETER had spoken truly when he had called the crematory furnace a hell. It was. Nothing human could withstand the terrific heat generated in the blast pit.

Doc did not go into the pit. He had had a few moments alone in the furnace room before the gangsters arrived. In those moments he had made his plans, had acted.

He lay quietly as the outer door opened and he went through into the eight-foot tunnel between that and the door to the inferno. The tunnel was narrow, and the temperature seared the lungs. But it was bearable.

Doc's shoes seemed to go on toward the second door. That door opened. A form slid slowly along, dropped into the pit. The door to the blast room closed.

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But Doc was free, inside the eight-foot tunnel between the two doors.

Freeing himself from the ropes had been easy. Razorlike false finger nails had capped his own when he had permitted himself to be seized in the furnace room. Those razors had severed the ropes around his wrists. He had merely used his exceptionally limber and facile feet to slip out of his shoes.

The angle from the peephole was such that Barge Deeter could not see the top of Doc's body when the feet came into view. Doc slipped from his clothes, drew himself back, letting the clothes follow the shoes on toward the fire.

Waste rags he had stored inside the furnace door padded those clothes, made it appear they covered a body. Just as the second door opened, he made a small cloud of smoke.

That smoke dimmed the vision of the watchers only a little, but it was enough.

Even Monk, well as he knew Doc and his tricks, had been willing to swear the bronze man had gone into the fiery pit.

Doc timed his actions to the instant. He knew Barge Deeter would look away, would seize another of his men. He dived down the narrow tunnelway, directly toward the second door.

The tunnelway was of tin. The razor-sharp false finger nails slashed down through one side of it like a can opener. Almost instantly he cut away a small section, rolled through. He was still between the two walls of the furnace, but he was no longer in sight of those at the peepholes.

Monk's body came along on the asbestos belt. The second door opened to receive him. Again there was a faint cloud of smoke. Doc's hands reached out, cut the ropes about Monk's feet, guided them through the opening he had made in the tunnel.

But through the peephole it appeared that Monk went directly into the open door, directly into the open fire there. That was an optical illusion.

The trick Doc used was an old one. He had arranged two mirrors in such manner as to make it appear Monk went one way, when, in reality, he went another. The mirrors had come from the compact kit he carried around his waist.

"My gosh!" Monk breathed. "I really thought I was a goner." Rivers of perspiration poured from his body.

Doc had no time to answer. Ham's form was coming along the asbestos belt.

Ham opened his eyes cautiously, saw Monk and Doc. He sighed. "Dying was easy," he said faintly.

Habeas Corpus and Chemistry came through the slot in the side of the tunnel. Fur was singed on the ape, and Habeas was close to being the roast pig Ham had often threatened to make him.

But they were alive. Doc again had rescued his friends.

The crematory had been built from the old incinerator. Mortar between the bricks was loose and chalky. Doc handed his aides narrow pieces of steel from his kit. They went to work on the mortar.

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IN Alaska, The Monster had claimed another victim. Barge Deeter and a plane loaded with gunmen were headed North. More hell was soon to break in Arcadia Valley.

Doc and his men did not know why Barge Deeter was so interested in The Monster. They did not know why he had gone to such desperate lengths to regain the hair John Alden had mailed, and to destroy John Alden's body.

And they did not know why The Monster was wreaking such terrible havoc.

But of one thing they were sure: And that was that the horrible menace that hung over Arcadia Valley was still there, that it was up to them to solve the mystery, to try and save the lives of the colonists.

And now they had one thing on their side. Barge Deeter believed them dead. The big-footed killer did not know they were still on the trail.

DAWN was just breaking when Doc and his aides finally made their way through the side of the furnace.

Chemistry romped around for a moment, put his arms lovingly about Monk. The hairy chemist roared, wrestled free.

"If you don't keep that ape off me," he howled, "I'll tear him limb from limb!"

Habeas Corpus shied away, rubbed against Ham. The dapper lawyer exploded. "And I'll put this pig back in the furnace and really enjoy roast pork," he shouted.

Habeas and Chemistry darted for the open air. They wandered down the drive to the highway.

Monk and Ham were busy rubbing oil on their scorched skin as Doc searched the crematory. The observation room was empty. Nothing had been left behind except some old clothes. Doc donned those. He needed them.

Then he turned to a telephone. He made two calls. The first was to the Chicago police.

"I'll say I do know something about some strange radio static!" roared the sergeant at the other end of the line. "We got a blast some time ago that almost put our radio cars out of business. It was right on our wave length. Why? Do you know something about it?"

"I may be able to aid you later," Doc said smoothly. "Did you discover the cause?"

"I think we did!" the sergeant barked. "We put our directional finders at work, and found the static came from a car that drove to a private airport. The men in the car took off in a plane, heading north."

"Thank you," said Doc. Whirls showed in his eyes. He had attached a static-making cylinder to the ignition wires of the car that had been outside the crematory. The results had been as he had expected.

He knew now that Barge Deeter was heading toward Alaska.

Then he made a second call. He had some difficulty before he reached the city editor of the *Blade*. The editor had gone home and was sleeping. Doc asked him just one question.

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A strange, trilling sound came as he received his answer.

Monk and Ham grumbled. Walking was not their idea of fun. But no cars had been left behind. They had started to hike back toward the city.

A short distance ahead of them, however, they came across a truck in front of a road stand. Doc handed the stand owner a ten dollar bill and climbed in behind the wheel of the truck and drove toward the city.

DOC and his aides left the truck at a busy corner in the city. Then they took a cab, and Doc gave an address. Ham looked puzzled. He looked more puzzled a few minutes later. The cab turned on the street where Soung Percill had lived.

Percill's mansion was gone. Plenty of police and firemen were about. The house had been burned to the ground.

Doc stopped and asked questions.

"Arson," grunted one of the firemen. "We found a body in there, also. The body had a bullet wound in it. Looks like somebody killed Percill, then set the house on fire to hide the crime, but it didn't work.

Ham whistled. Doc's flake gold eyes narrowed.

"Our friends are thorough, at any rate," Monk said.

What had happened seemed clear. The gangsters had brought Percill's body back, then burned the house. They hadn't expected to hide the fact that Percill had been murdered. But they preferred that to having anyone find his body near the crematory.

An investigation might have been made then that would have revealed the fact that Doc and his men had been killed. As it was, everyone was accustomed to the bronze man disappearing for long periods of time. If he and his men vanished alone, nothing would be thought of it.

"At least they don't know we're still alive," Ham said with satisfaction.

HAM was in error there. As the cab turned on toward their hotel, a man came from one of the rooming houses nearby. He looked as if he had been seeing ghosts. He got into a small roadster and trailed the cab.

Doc and his men left the cab at their hotel. The man in the roadster saw them plainly. He licked dry lips, then stepped down hard on the accelerator. He went to a night club.

The night club appeared deserted. It was long after hours. But the man knocked on a rear door, gave a signal. The door opened.

Without wasting time, the man ran down a flight of steps. He entered a room that the patrons of the night club had never seen. It was a radio room. An operator was lounging back in a chair, reading a copy of *The Shadow*.

"Quick! Get Barge Deeter! Doc Savage is still alive!" gasped the messenger.

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The operator galvanized into action. He grabbed a set of headphones, reached for a key.

Miles away, an operator in a plane received the news. His face paled as he interpreted the message.

Frantically he scrambled back, gave Barge Deeter the paper covered with sprawled words. Deeter's big feet were propped out comfortably in front of him. Barbara Hughes sat close by.

The big feet came down with a bang.

"It ain't possible!" Deeter gasped. "Nobody could 'a' got out of that furnace!"

"He did," the operator said laconically.

Deeter pulled himself up with sudden decision. He issued crisp orders. The operator grinned.

The man who had trailed Doc, grinned also as the orders came over. He went to a telephone, relayed the message to someone at the other end of the wire.

Then he went to the street. An extra was being hawked by the newsboys. It was all about another killing by The Monster in Arcadia.

"You'll have another extra to sell before long, that really will sell papers," the man said under his breath.

Chapter X. ARCADIA VALLEY

DOC and his men did not know of the mysterious message. Monk and Ham already seemed to have forgotten their close escape from death. They were ribbing each other as usual when they arrived at the airport where Doc had left his plane.

"I'd just as soon that bunch of monkeys thought we were goners, anyhow," Monk rumbled. "They won't be expecting us then."

"Monkeys ought to know that apes are hard to kill," Ham said sarcastically.

"Doc, tell this shyster to lay off me," Monk wailed. "All he does is just "

"I don't fall for the wrong girl, anyhow," Ham put in quickly.

The hairy chemist's face fell. "Doggonit," he moaned. "I'd almost forgotten her. She sure led us into something. But I didn't fall for the dizzy blonde. For once I guessed right. I knew she was a crook."

Doc began watching the skies. He gave a small sound of satisfaction. A speedy scout plane suddenly dived down from high overhead, motor screaming, and came to a perfect landing.

A thin man with pallid, unhealthy-appearing complexion, stepped from the plane. He was not very tall, and seemed a physical weakling. That appearances were deceitful, those who had come in contact with Major Thomas J. Roberts knew to their sorrow.

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Called "Long Tom" by his friends, he was a wizard with electricity. He was another of the bronze man's aides. Long Tom yanked parcels from the cockpit of the scout plane. "Think I got everything you asked for, Doc, even though time was short," he said.

The bronze man made a swift inspection. "All here," he said briefly.

Monk and Ham looked at each other in faint surprise. Some of the objects Long Tom had brought were familiar, but others they had never seen. And, too, they wondered how Doc had gotten in touch with Long Tom. But if he didn't say, they weren't going to ask.

A reporter and cameraman came running up as Doc and his men loaded the stuff Long Tom had brought into the big transport plane. Unobtrusively, the bronze man vanished. Monk and Ham also slipped inside the ship.

"Where's Doc Savage? Is he going to Arcadia?" the reporter demanded.

Long Tom looked dumb. "Who? Where?" he asked stupidly.

Motors of the big transport plane roared into life. The reporter sputtered futilely. No one noticed the touring car that raced suddenly across the field.

"I got to be goin' now," Long Tom said. He jumped into the plane. The photographer lifted his camera for a swift shot.

Br-r-r-r-r-r!

THE cameraman gave a faint gasp. His camera dropped from his hand as he crumpled to the earth. The reporter had heard submachine guns talk before. He did not hesitate. He dived to his face.

The gun had not been aimed at the reporter or cameraman. It had been aimed at the plane. It had been the cameraman's misfortune to get in the way. Lead hammered up toward the motors of the ship. Those motors, four of them, howled loudly. The plane spun, headed directly toward the oncoming touring car.

The men in the car ducked, the driver swerved, but the Tommy gun roared again, bullets glancing harmlessly off the metal of the wings.

There was a faint thud. A small object, like a tin can, spun from the front of the plane, landed directly in the touring car. A cloud of gas arose as the can landed. The driver let go the wheel, clawed frantically at his nose and eyes. Then the car overturned, spilling gangsters on the field. Some did not arise again.

There was a police car near the field. Cops got out of it, guns in their hands, and advanced toward the crooks.

The big transport plane lifted easily, circled once more, then headed north.

"Evidently our foes know that we were not cremated," Doc said quietly.

"Some of them sure know it now, at, any rate," Ham said dryly. He was watching the scene on the landing field. The gunmen, still blinded by the gas bomb hurled at them by Doc, were trying to rise and fight.

Police guns barked briefly. The gangsters went down.

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All Doc's men were experienced pilots. They alternated at the controls, pushing the giant plane along rapidly. Already they feared they might have been delayed too much, that more of the Arcadia colonists might have fallen victim to The Monster.

"What can it all be about? Could there really be such a beast?" Long Tom asked wonderingly.

"If we only had that hair, maybe we could tell something about it," Monk grumbled.

"You were going to guard it," Ham reminded maliciously. "If you could only keep things "

He broke off, appeared startled. Chemistry, looking quite proud of himself, had waddled forward, placed one hand in Monk's coat pocket. He brought out the oblong package the package that had contained the giant hair.

"W-what! H-how?" gulped Monk.

Ham laughed delightedly. "Chemistry did it!" he shouted. "He got it!"

Monk turned blankly to Long Tom. "T-that wasn't there. Barge Deeter took it. That ape's playing tricks!"

"No," Ham said modestly. "I merely taught him to pick pockets. I know what happened. He liked that thing; he swiped it back from Barge, probably hid it in the furnace room. When we got out of that oven, he put it back in your pocket."

Long Tom opened the package, examined the hair with deep interest. "Truly, it must have come from a beast of gigantic stature," the electrical wizard mused.

Monk lumbered forward, relieved Doc at the controls.

The bronze man gave his low, trilling sound when he saw the hair. He issued instructions crisply. Ham and Long Tom opened several of the packages Long Tom had brought from Doc's offices in New York.

In the rear of the plane was a small laboratory. It was compact, and as near complete as space permitted. Doc vanished into this, taking the hair with him.

Ham nodded with satisfaction. "Now we'll have something to work on," he predicted.

A sharp cry came from Monk. The plane lurched as it made a sharp turn. The motors roared with suddenly increased power.

Long Tom dived to a window, looked out. One look was sufficient.

Four small, speedy planes were diving toward them. At the same moment the four motors of Doc's big transport ship stopped as completely as if the switches had been turned off!

MONK'S cry attracted Doc's attention. The bronze man appeared from the laboratory, took in the situation at a glance. With smooth speed he darted to the front of the plane, dropped into the co-pilot's seat.

"They've got an electric ray, one that has paralyzed the magnetos in our motors," Long Tom muttered.

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Doc nodded, his bronze face impassive. A worried look was on Monk's homely features. Even Ham had lost some of his usual aplomb.

Their plight was desperate. Monk had pushed the controls forward, had thrown the plane into a slight glide. Behind them, the pursuing ships were overhauling them rapidly.

For a moment the combat planes were holding their fire. Hard-faced pilots were sneering, fingers ready on the triggers of their machine guns, ready to blast their helpless prey.

Doc took the controls. The hairy chemist surrendered them willingly. He was an expert pilot, but here was a job he knew only Doc could handle.

Even if they could dodge their pursuers, a landing with dead stick would be impossible. Trees and rocky crags were beneath them. The plane would be shattered into a thousand pieces.

"Tighten your belts! Hold on!" Doc's voice was not raised, but his aides obeyed instantly. The worried look vanished from Monk's face, to be replaced by a childlike air of confidence.

Behind them, the pilot in the leading pursuit ship raised his arm. Four fingers tightened on the triggers of four machine guns. A rain of lead poured toward the helpless transport plane.

In the same instant, Doc Savage leaned forward, pressed two small buttons.

And then an amazing thing happened.

There was a crash, as if from a terrific explosion. The transport plane dived sharply, then literally shot almost straight up into the air. It traveled at an incredible speed.

Bullets aimed at it from behind passed harmlessly through the spot the plane had occupied a moment before.

Blam!

A second explosion came. Doc's plane smashed up through a thick layer of clouds, came out in the sunlight thousands of feet above the pursuit ships.

Monk gasped. He had been slammed back hard against the back of his seat. The wind had been knocked from him.

"What the " he muttered.

"Merely two powerful rockets, built in the tail of the plane," Doc explained quietly.

The hairy chemist gulped, and nodded. Doc, he knew, had experimented with rocket ships.

The rockets had shot the plane far out of range of its pursuers, had saved Doc and his men from what had seemed certain doom.

There was a sudden roar. The four big motors went back into action, brought the big ship back under control.

"We are now out of range of the electrical equipment which temporarily disabled our motors," Doc said simply.

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"This is screwier and screwier," Monk complained. "If that Monster is on the level, why are so many efforts being made to keep us from getting to Arcadia?"

BEHIND, and far below them, were four men who might have answered Monk's question had they wished. But they were far too startled to think of anything except the strange sight they had just witnessed.

The pilot in the lead ship wagged the wings of his plane, turned north. He was following the course that Doc's ship had taken, but he had no expectation of overtaking it.

He shrugged, reached out and touched a small radio key, tapped out a message. He sent in code, and in a strange language.

Miles to the north, a man with huge, oversize feet read that message, handed it to his companion.

"T—they failed!" he said hoarsely.

The other's expression became malevolent, his eyes sparkled dangerously. "I suppose I should have expected it," he said. His voice was queer, almost lisping.

"What are we going to do, boss?" Barge Deeter frankly showed the worry he felt.

A thin, mirthless grin crossed the other's face. "Two things. First, Barge, send the men we selected to the colony. They know what to do there. Send that other messenger to the Indians. They will lay the groundwork. And then "

"What then, boss?"

"The Monster has been searching for a bronze-haired man, Barge," said the others.

"It can't fail!" Barge exulted. "You're right. The Monster has been searching for the heart of a bronze-haired man and that fits Doc Savage. Not even that bronze fiend can cope with The Monster."

BARGE DEETER might not have felt quite so sure, had he been watching the bronze man just then.

Doc Savage was studying a test tube, a peculiar expression in his eyes. In that test tube had been placed fine residue from the hair of The Monster. Other chemicals had been added with it.

The bronze man nodded, and worked swiftly. He made a compound of a strange powder. This compound he coated on several small objects, approximately as big around as pencils. But they were not solid, as are pencils; they were very porous.

The plane nosed down. Doc left the laboratory.

"We're at Arcadia," Ham announced. The bronze man nodded.

Below them was the fertile valley that the modern pioneers called home. The day was bright, the weather fine.

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But for a homestead project, the fields beneath them presented a strange appearance. They should have been filled with working men and teams. Children should have been playing around the cabins.

Just the opposite was true. The fields were deserted. No one was outside the cabins. Only the fact that smoke rose from chimneys showed that the valley was still inhabited.

The Monster had laid the cold hand of fear on the very heart of the colony. Few moved about even in daytime. Not even brave men could be persuaded to leave their homes at night.

Monk's face was beaming. There should be fighting ahead.

"But I still don't think there is such a thing," Monk told Long Tom. "It's just some trick. Now that we're here, everything will be all right. I'd like to meet that Monster myself."

It was just as well that Monk could not look into the future, that he did not know just how soon his wish was to be granted and what the result was to be.

Chapter XI. A COLONY OF FEAR

SOUND of the roaring plane brought a few heads out of cabin doors. Then the plane swept down, and its markings were identified. The result was amazing.

People seemed to pour from all sides. There were women with fear-lined faces. Children clung to their hands, tried to hide behind their skirts. Men, with stern features and shaking hands, some carrying guns, rushed forward.

As Doc eased the plane to a landing on a broad meadow, their shouts came even above the shattering burst of the engines.

"Doc Savage! Doc Savage! The bronze man is here! We are safe! Safe!"

Doc rarely showed emotion. But he showed it now. Compassion was in his flake gold eyes.

A tall, bearded man, whose white hair hung almost to his shoulders, grabbed Doc by the hand, wrung it hard. He seemed to find it difficult to speak.

"We are glad, sir, glad you are here," he said at last. "We know you can save us, and can save what we are working for."

"We are here to try," Doc said quietly.

Monk and Ham moved the plane to a shelter of several large trees, where they could anchor it firmly. Doc, accompanied by the man with the white hair, made a short inspection of the colony.

"My name is Dwight, sir, Herb Dwight," the old man said. "We were happy here until this this Monster came. We want to stay here, we love it here."

Doc's eyes missed nothing. Modern cabins had been erected. The farm machinery was of the best kind, and

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the soil was fertile. Where crops had been planted, those crops were coming up rapidly.

Some of the colonists were from cities. Others had come from farms where the soil had worn out. The experienced ones had helped those not so experienced.

It was easy to see what a happy spot Arcadia Valley must have been before the terror of The Monster wiped laughter from the hearts of its inhabitants.

Dusk was falling, clouds were appearing in the sky, as Dwight led Doc toward his home for supper.

FROM a fringe of trees, half a mile from the main colony, three men crept forward. In appearance, they were colonists. They also wore overalls and flannel shirts.

But they were not colonists. And their errand was a grim one.

However, despite whatever their errand was, fear was forgotten by the people for a moment.

Habeas Corpus and Chemistry had made an immediate hit! The pig and ape were surrounded by curious children almost as soon as they came from the plane, and made friends at once.

One small boy even got on Habeas Corpus's back, while the pig squealed and ran in mock fright. For the first time in days, the children laughed naturally. Even their parents looked amused.

Chemistry brought laughter when he cornered an inquisitive youth, held him solemnly with one arm, while with his other fist he pretended to pluck lice from the boy's head.

"Looks like you're making a hit, Monk," Ham said maliciously.

"Yeah, well, at last they're not riding me," piped the hairy chemist.

The bronze man's aides had a dozen invitations for dinner, but they joined Doc at Dwight's cabin. Mrs. Dwight, small and motherly, brought pleased grunts from Monk as she heaped the table with fried chicken, hot biscuits, mashed potatoes and gravy.

"We all know, now that you boys are here, we will have nothing more to worry about," Mrs. Dwight said with conviction.

"Doc'll take care of it okay," said Monk, and filled his plate for the third time.

"If he doesn't do it fast, you'll eat everybody out of house and home," grinned Ham.

Rain pattered faintly on the roof, then ceased. Mrs. Dwight shuddered. Involuntarily, she turned pale; her voice sank to a whisper.

"A storm. And The Monster always comes when it storms."

Herb Dwight's eyes flickered uneasily toward the windows. His tall frame seemed bent and aged, suddenly.

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"Already some of the more timid have left," he said. "I do not blame them much. We all will leave if this Monster is not trapped and killed. Only the fact that we knew you were coming kept as many of us here as there are."

Doc nodded. "This Monster, I believe, is referred to in an Indian legend. It seems strange, however, that its power would be great enough to reach Chicago."

"You mean "

"John Alden was killed in Chicago," Doc reminded. "His body was not mutilated, but otherwise the symptoms outwardly were as if he had been killed by The Monster. The same odor was about his body. He lost his voice as others have said they did when they saw the strange beast."

Herb Dwight looked at Doc strangely. "I gather, Mr. Savage, that you may doubt there is such a monster, may believe our people have merely imagined they saw something."

"No," said Doc. "I do not doubt the stories of the colonists. They have reported just what they saw."

"What Doc means, I think," Long Tom explained, "is that there may be a human agency as well as an oversize, giant beast to contend with."

Mrs. Dwight shuddered. "To think that humans might be connected with such a foul thing, that they might aid it in catching other men so it might feed on bodies!"

Monk frowned. "Now that's all over," he said reassuringly. "There's goin' to be no more screamin' from now on "

He broke off, his face changing expression with startling suddenness. Every person at the table went rigid.

High and shrill, came a long, unearthly wail.

MONK and Ham moved fast. Long Tom was far from slow. They barely had their chairs pushed back before Doc was outside.

Herb Dwight sat as one frozen for a long instant. The fast disappearance of his guests snapped him out of it. Courage returned to his lined face.

He, also, leaped from his chair, raced for the door. He grabbed a long-barreled rifle as he ran.

The wail sounded even louder outside. It did not stop, did not rise or fall. It kept on, steady, high-pitched.

The sound came from the direction of Doc's big transport plane.

And then the loud, unearthly wail stopped. It shut off in mid-beat, and the silence that followed seemed queer and sinister.

Herb Dwight was almost behind Long Tom. The white-haired colonist heard a sudden shout of surprise come from the lanky electrical genius.

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Long Tom put on more speed. He moved away as if Herb Dwight had been standing still.

In the same instant, two other shapes flashed by. One was running low to the ground, making queer grunting sounds. The other was half erect, and made no sound at all. Red eyes gleamed in a hairy face.

Habeas Corpus and Chemistry were not going to be left behind. If there was to be action, they wanted to be in on it, too.

The night was pitch dark. It had stopped raining for the moment, but storm clouds hid the stars. It was impossible to see three feet ahead.

Monk and Ham moved forward rapidly, Monk lumbering, Ham running with the smooth grace of a fencer.

A low, trilling sound came to their ears. Neither Monk nor Ham hesitated. They dived face downward on the ground.

Blam!

Blam!

Lead tore over their heads. Guns flashed from the direction of the plane.

Only Doc's warning had saved the dapper lawyer and hairy chemist.

MONK and Ham separated without a word. They moved forward in short bursts, crawling rapidly, then dropping flat. The guns continued to bark.

Doc Savage circled. He moved like a wraith in the darkness. A small object was in his hand. It was one of his tiny gas bombs, a gas that brought quick unconsciousness, but not death.

Slowly he eased forward.

Ham was saying bitter things to himself. The ground was muddy, his immaculate attire was being ruined.

From the sound of the shots, there could be only two men. Doc could take care of them.

And Ham knew that it was no monster they were stalking, nor had the weird wail been from a human throat. The wail had merely been a siren, which sounded when any one approached the plane and passed through a ray of invisible light. It was one of the usual precautions they took to safeguard the plane.

The sudden stopping of that siren was something else. Ham thought he knew what that meant, also, thought he knew what they would find when they reached the plane.

The lawyer saw a lumbering figure, shortly ahead of him, creeping forward cautiously. A grim smile came to his lips.

Slowly he drew himself up, leaped forward.

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DOC, close to the plane, hurled the small gas bomb. It hit a wing of the ship, made a faint crash as glass broke.

A hoarse shout came. "Beat it! That bronze guy has thrown a bomb!"

There were sounds of running feet. Doc sprinted after them. He could overtake them easily, could probably gain some information from one of the two attackers.

Then he halted. A strangled shout had come from near by. It was Ham's voice. It was a call for aid. Following it came a tremendous thrashing, and more gurgling cries.

Doc did not hesitate. Ahead of him were two men who might hold the key to the secret he sought, but behind him one of his men was in trouble.

Instantly he whirled, sped toward the scene of the fight. Squealing sounds were coming now. Monk's bellow could be heard as he also raced toward the scene.

Doc drew a small flashlight, flicked it on. He stopped.

On the ground, rolling over and over, was Ham. His eyes were almost popping from his head, his hands were beating the air futilely.

Astride him, one hairy arm crooked about the dapper lawyer's throat, was Chemistry. The ape's small red eyes were blinking, his teeth were showing viciously. Nipping at the ape's heels was Habeas Corpus.

MONK panted up, took in the scene with one quick look. His mouth opened, he almost strangled with laughter.

"Chemistry!" said Doc quietly.

The ape started, his grip relaxed. Almost sheepishly he loosed his hold, ambled over to Monk.

"I saw something creeping forward," gasped Ham. "I jumped on it and it was that."

"And what did you expect Chemistry to do?" Monk howled. "Naturally he fought back."

"And meanwhile, the men at the plane have made their escape," Doc Savage said quietly.

Monk sobered instantly. Doc never criticized, but Ham knew it was his fault the men had gotten away. Doc had returned to aid him.

"I don't think all of them did," Long Tom put in with quiet satisfaction.

Long Tom was right. One had not escaped. His body lay beside the door to the plane. One hand was burned.

"The siren sounded a warning," Long Tom explained to Herb Dwight. "But this man came on. The plane was wired, not with enough juice to kill under ordinary circumstances, but only to give a severe shock. To-night, the ground was wet. Which would complete a circuit. I thought something like this had happened when the siren stopped. This man was killed as he tried to enter the plane. That meant the circuit was shorted."

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"But but who is he?" Dwight gasped. "I never saw him before."

Long Tom shook his head. He had never seen the man before either. He was dressed like one of the colonists, but evidently he wasn't one of them.

Doc entered the plane. He returned almost at once, his face expressionless as usual, but his aides knew something was wrong.

"Barge Deeter is a very persistent man," Doc said quietly. "The hair that came from The Monster has been stolen. Nothing else was taken."

Chapter XII. AN INDIAN RAID

NOT all the colonists had been alarmed by the sound of the siren. A mile up the valley a girl and a boy were absorbed only in each other.

For them, fear had lifted with the arrival of Doc and his men. For the first time in days, they felt free.

They walked along, almost unaware of the rain that fell. A burden had been lifted from them the burden of fear. Arcadia had become a paradise again.

"I've got a plot of land picked out," the boy explained eagerly. "We can get it all right, and then we can get married next week. Won't that be fine?"

The girl's hand tightened in his.

Thunder roared, back in the mountains. A jagged streak of lightning flashed across the sky.

And then The Monster appeared!

The odor came first, that penetrating, sickly sweet smell. The two youngsters halted, terror-stricken.

Its long legs moving slowly, almost creeping, the huge, loathsome bulk of The Monster moved into view. It stopped short at the sight of the panic-frozen girl and boy.

Then the girl screamed. A long, frenzied scream of horror.

Half a mile away, Doc Savage heard that scream. His flake gold eyes blazed with unaccustomed feeling. He launched himself forward with blinding speed.

The boy and girl did not know that help was on its way. It would not have aided them if they had known.

Picking up speed with every stride, The Monster raced toward them.

A thin yell came from the boy's tight lips, broke the spell that held him. He shoved the girl face down in the mud.

Then he turned and ran directly toward The Monster!

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DOC found the girl, still lying in the mud. She was sobbing. She tried to talk, but could not.

The bronze man surveyed the scene rapidly. Lightning flashed. Far in the distance was a small dot, a dot that appeared to vanish.

The odor of The Monster was still in the air, but it was disappearing rapidly. The girl lifted her head. She recognized Doc.

"You didn't save him!" she cried. "We were to be so happy! Now he is gone! Gone!"

The bronze man lifted her to her feet, his lips tightening slightly, but he did not speak. It would do no good to tell her that he had asked Herb Dwight to notify all the colonists that he wanted them to remain indoors until he and his aides could investigate. Evidently this girl and her sweetheart had not been given the message.

Monk, Ham and Long Tom rushed up, breathing heavily. They had been with Doc when they had heard the girl's scream, but the bronze man had far outdistanced them.

Doc turned to Long Tom. "Take her to her home," he said quietly.

Gently, Long Tom took the girl's arm. Still sobbing, she was led away.

Ham's face was serious. "It it struck again, Doc?" he asked.

The bronze man inclined his head slightly. "It would appear so," he said soberly. He drew a flashlight, turned it on the ground. Footprints of the boy were easy to follow. They were wide-spaced, but wavering.

The footprints did not go far. The boy had not had far to run to meet his fate.

And his body or what was left of his body was not much farther along the trail.

Monk grew rather white around the eyes. Ham set his jaw as tightly as he could, and tried not to look.

Doc moved about cautiously, taking care not to destroy any marks on the ground. Then he knelt beside the body, examined it carefully.

It seemed impossible that any animal could wreak such havoc. But the evidence was there. And the foul odor, just like that which had been on the hair, still clung faintly to the body.

The tracks showed clearly how the giant beast had skidded to a stop, snatched up its helpless victim, only to drop him a few moments later.

Ham was looking at the boy's head. He recalled something about the legend he had heard. "H—his hair was black, Doc," he said jerkily. "N—now if he'd been bronze-haired, maybe The Monster wouldn't come again.

For the boy's heart was gone.

A SMALL man, hidden a hundred yards away, didn't hear Ham's words, but he was thinking the same thing.

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The man wore only a breechcloth. His copper-colored skin was oiled, and dabbed with paint. His face had been made hideous by long streaks about the eyes and mouth.

He turned quickly, wiggled through the grass as silently as a snake. When he reached a small grove of trees he rose to his feet and started to run.

Over one shoulder was a long bow. He had arrows about his middle.

The Indians of Arcadia Valley had shed civilization, had returned to the days of their forebears.

Now they were planning a raid such as never had been staged before.

Quite a different, but just as formidable, a foe was watching Doc and his men from a small hill, not far from where the boy's body lay.

He was one of the men who had made the attack at the plane. He did not see the Indian slip away. His attention was centered on Doc and his aides.

The man had not run far after escaping the gas bomb Doc had hurled. He had remained hidden, and had trailed along when the bronze man and his aides started up the valley.

As Doc started to trace the tracks of The Monster, the man grinned. He ducked off the hill, down to a spot where he was well concealed.

There was a pack on his back. A small microphone dangled around his neck. He waited until the thunder died for a moment, then spoke into the microphone.

Not far away, the running Indian also had dropped into a small valley. Two score of warriors waited him there.

"It is time," the small Indian said. "The one we were told was coming is now here."

"The bronze-haired one, he is where he can be seized?" asked one of the waiting group.

The messenger grunted. In silence, the others lifted their bows. All had guns, but not with them. For the job they wanted to do, arrows would serve their purpose best.

In single file, almost invisible in the darkness, and making no sound, they left the place where they had been concealed.

"IT seems incredible," said Ham. There was awe in the lawyer's voice.

"Anything seems incredible to you outta a courtroom," said Monk. The hairy chemist had regained some of his usual spirits. But secretly, he also was amazed.

Footsteps of the giant beast had disappeared. Doc alone did not seem surprised. The bronze man retraced their steps, appeared chiefly interested in the individual footprints made by The Monster.

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Rain was washing away some of the detail, but the clear-cut prints made by the huge feet were plain enough to make out the faint markings of tiny hair along the sides.

Monk's small eyes blinked. He dropped behind, his huge fists clenched. There was no reason for those footprints to simply stop.

He bent over, trying to find some clue to the mystery. There was a solid thump. Monk did more than bend over. He went on down, landing on his face in the mud.

Ham and Doc did not notice his absence. The lawyer was also ranging wide of the trail.

Then something collided with the back of his head. It did not strike squarely. Ham had just moved. He caught only a glancing blow. But it staggered him. The flashlight wavered in his hand. The beam of the light caught a small object in its path. The object was stuck in the mud, still quivering.

Ham gulped, incredulously. It was an arrow. But the end was not sharp. It was dull and had a heavy weight on it. The lawyer opened his mouth to yell to Doc.

Two arrows struck him at the same time. One caught him on a temple, the other at the base of the jaw. The arrows had been fired from close at hand, and were moving swiftly.

Ham joined Monk on his face in the mud.

DOC was closer to Ham. His superkeen ears caught the sound of the arrows as they struck the lawyer's head. Instantly, his flashlight went out.

And then all hell seemed to break loose. The air was filled with a very storm of arrows and made hideous with sound. Two score of Indians, screaming war whoops, charged from all directions.

The man with the portable radio heard the whoops. He turned pale, started to run down the trail over which Doc and his aides had come. He ran squarely into a lean, sickly appearing man.

Long Tom had left the girl at her cabin, was on his way to rejoin Doc. He didn't know who had run into him, but he didn't stop to ask questions.

The electrical wizard didn't look like a fighter. That is what his opponent thought. For that reason, the other didn't even try to draw a gun, he swung a hard fist. He brought the fist up from the ground.

Had it landed, Long Tom would have been out of the fight. It didn't. Long Tom struck first. He buried one fist in the other's belly, brought the second over in a looping swing that caught the man on the jaw. The man went down.

Long Tom leaped over him, raced down the trail.

A human volcano seemed in action ahead of him. Men were erupting from all sides, only to pick themselves up, dive back into the fray.

Doc could have escaped ordinary opponents with ease. The Indians were different. They were experts at ambush. They closed in on him, some swinging clubs.

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The battle with the bronze devil became a new legend.

Doc's hands were flicking out with incredible speed. Man after man toppled over.

Long Tom hurled himself into the fray recklessly. That was a mistake. He was engulfed, went down almost at once. A club caught him over the top of the head while he was still yards from Doc.

Brilliant light flooded the scene suddenly. Doc had tossed a small flare high into the air. By its light he could see the prone bodies of his three aides, knew they were not seriously hurt.

Forty against one are heavy odds. Doc had devices with him which could have equalized those odds. But he did not use them. He went down, seemingly because a human wave had swarmed over him.

The shouting Indians did not know that he had permitted himself to be taken prisoner.

His aides didn't know that, either. Monk was the first to recover.

The hairy chemist shook Ham angrily. Ham roused, got to his feet. They found Long Tom without difficulty.

But Doc was gone!

"And it was Indians," said Ham, for once ungrammatical.

"What are we waiting for?" rasped Long Tom. "We're going to need help."

The aides started to run. They headed toward the cabins of the Arcadia colonists. Fear gave them speed.

Thunder roared. The rain came down with redoubled fury.

Chapter XIII. A SACRIFICE IS TAKEN

AT about that time, a strange meeting was going on at Herb Dwight's home. Nearly every able-bodied man in the colony was crowded into the small rooms.

A tall man with hawk-nose and piercing eyes was taking the lead. "Even-Swap" Crowel was one of the newcomers to the colony. He had won his nickname by always wanting to trade, to "swap-even." Usually those who traded with him found they had not come out even.

"The Monster's struck again," he proclaimed loudly. "The famous Doc Savage was almost on the spot, so to say, and what did he do? He did nothing!"

There was a murmur of agreement from the packed rooms.

"But we oughtta give him a fair chance," Herb Dwight put in anxiously. "He has just arrived; he hasn't had an opportunity even to investigate yet."

"I say let's get out!" Even-Swap bellowed loudly. "Let's get out while at least some of us are still alive."

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The murmur of approval grew louder, then died down.

Herb Dwight's shoulders set, he glared about defiantly. "I'm goin' to stay. I'm not goin' to lose everything I've got here a chance for a real home, a comfortable living."

Even-Swap Crowel snorted disgustedly. "I've got some land down in Arizona. Ain't worth much, but it would be worth more to yuh there, than this will up here, with you dead. I'll swap even."

Herb Dwight looked at him with eyes that suddenly narrowed. "Seems to me I've heard you try to trade others around here for their land," he said coldly. "There wouldn't be any particular reason for you wantin' us all to get out, would there?"

Even-Swap laughed harshly, his hawk-nose quivering. "Hell, no, I'm only trying to save your stubborn old life "

Monk and Ham burst into the room, Long Tom close behind them.

"The Indians got Doc!" Monk bellowed. "Get your guns, we've got to rescue him!"

There was a moment of startled silence. Even-Swap looked triumphant. "See your famous Doc Savage can't even handle a bunch of scrawny Indians," he sneered.

Monk's big shoulders hunched, his squat head juttet forward. Small noises came from him as he stepped forward. He threw up one huge fist. It caught Even-Swap under the chin. The other almost turned a backward somersault.

"I thought you guys were men!" Monk snapped. "Did we come up here to try and save a bunch of babies?"

Argument broke out. A few a very few were in favor of helping hunt for Doc. The others were frightened. Monk did the arguing. Ham and Long Tom slipped outside. No one saw them leave.

"If we knew it was only Indians," one colonist said hesitantly.

"It is Indians, I tell you!" Monk roared. "Your ancestors fought Indians. Are you "

Blam!

Blam!

Lead tore through the roof over their heads. Loud war whoops came from outside. They sounded as if coming from two dozen throats, and from all sides.

"W-why, the Indians have attacked us!" Herb Dwight breathed incredulously.

The others said nothing. They reached for nearby guns.

Fighting the terrible menace of The Monster was one thing; fighting Indians was something else. They weren't afraid of Indians.

One or two thought it strange that the war whoops stopped when they got outside, but that, they reasoned, might be because the Indians were playing cagy. They raced along behind Monk without question. A few

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moments later, Ham and Long Tom joined the rear of the procession.

A broad grin was on Ham's face. He chuckled with silent mirth.

"First time I ever knew I could be such a good Indian," he said to Long Tom.

THE Indians who had seized Doc did not waste words. With the bronze man tied so tightly that he could hardly move a muscle, they had set off at a fast pace.

They left the low hills, with scattered woods, and came to a broad meadow. The leader grunted. Doc was dropped to the ground.

Four stakes were driven into the soft earth. They were driven so deeply it would have taken an exceptionally powerful man to have pulled up even one of them.

Doc was thrown flat on his back. Ropes were fastened to each wrist and each ankle. One end of the ropes were tied to the stakes.

The bronze man was spread-eagled on the ground, helpless.

Doc made no move. He did not show that he was even conscious. His breathing was slow, unhurried.

The leader grunted a signal. Silent as shadows, the Indians slipped into the background. A few cast anxious glances toward the mountains to the north. It was from there The Monster came.

Another man was watching those mountains. He was the man with the portable radio, who had been knocked out by Long Tom. He had recovered just in time to see the Indians carry Doc away.

A sly grin was on his face as he followed.

When he saw Doc tied helplessly on the ground, his grin grew to an evil smirk. A deadly automatic was in his fist.

As the Indians retreated, he advanced. But despite the fact that Doc was bound, apparently unconscious and unable to move, he advanced cautiously.

Doc's eyes came open. His ear was close to the ground. He heard the other's approach.

The bronze man made no move. Nor did he yell out.

The man with the gun came close so close that he could not miss. He raised the gun.

"No use taking chances," he muttered. "This way we'll be sure." He squeezed the trigger.

Blam!

The man with the gun went over on his back. His shot went up in the air.

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A small object had appeared in Doc's hand. It was shaped somewhat like a knife. In fact, it did have a sharp blade. But in the center of the knife was a small hole. It was an ingeniously contrived pistol.

The bronze man secured the weapon concealed in his sleeve when he heard the gunman approach. As the other had raised his weapon, Doc had fired.

The bullet was not solid. It was of the mercy type that Doc had perfected. But it hit with a solid blow, and when it caught the other in the face, it had knocked him to his back. The quick-working anaesthetic made him unconscious instantly.

The Indians heard the shot. They had not gone far. One drew a knife, rushed forward.

"The Monster wants the heart of a live bronze-haired man, not a dead one!" he shrieked.

The gunman had no chance. He was senseless. Something happened Doc had not counted on. The knife-gun carried only one shot, it was useless.

Still shrieking, the Indian plunged the blade of his hunting knife into the heart of the helpless gunman. The next moment he ripped the scalp from the other's head.

Thunder roared. The Indian yelled, dropped the scalp and ran.

A small object had appeared in the north. In the space of seconds it became much larger. The Monster was charging directly toward Doc!

THE sound of the shot and the Indian war whoop gave Doc's aides and the colonists the clue they needed. They were not far away.

Monk, Ham and Long Tom shouted orders. They all had been army officers. Under their direction, the colonists spread out in a thin skirmish line. They advanced on the double, weapons ready.

A majority of the colonists carried rifles, a few were armed only with pistols.

Doc's men carried strange weapons. In appearance they were somewhat like sawed-off shotguns. But there were big, circular cylinders for bullets, and at the front end of the barrels were large disks.

The weapons were really rapid-firing elephant guns, shooting slugs large enough to stop a charging rhino, and with force enough to penetrate chilled steel. The disk at the end of the barrel was a recoil check, so that a man could fire without being knocked to the ground.

Adapted by Doc, they were probably the most deadly weapons ever conceived. Using explosive bullets, they could have stopped a charging tank.

They were part of the equipment Long Tom had brought from New York at Doc's instructions, and were designed for cases just like this.

The colonists were yelling shrilly. They still thought they were hunting only for Indians.

And then they saw The Monster!

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It was still half a mile off, but it was coming with the tremendous speed of a racing car. Its eight long legs were eating up the distance. A lightning flash made every feature of its loathsome appearance plain.

The colonists might have stopped, might have turned and run. Most of them wanted to. But then came the first whiff of the foul, sickly sweet odor of The Monster.

And in the same instant, Monk lifted his rapid-firer gun, kept the trigger down.

B-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

The blast was like that of a dozen cannons firing at once. The very roar sent renewed courage through the colonists. Their guns came up. A hail of lead rained toward The Monster.

But it was still out of range. It did not pause, did not hesitate.

And directly in front of it was Doc Savage!

THE Indians would have been surprised, then, if they could have seen the bronze man. He was no longer tied. The rope loops were off his wrists and ankles, had been removed from his neck.

His marvelous physical development was the answer to that. Every muscle in his body was exercised and trained far more than the ordinary man's.

Muscles had rippled in his wrists; the rope had been forced back up; his fingers had doubled back with the open blade of the knife-gun, had severed the bonds.

But Doc did not move. He lay quietly, seemingly even expectantly.

There was a small object on his chest. That object was trained directly on The Monster. Had any one who witnessed the scene been wearing black glasses, they would have been amazed. For then they would have seen that light was coming from that object. The light was trained on The Monster.

Monk, Ham and Long Tom did not know that, nor did they know that Doc was free, that he could move at any instant.

Something like a moan came from Ham; he tried to put on even more speed. Monk darted to one side. He was yelling shrilly.

For the first time, The Monster seemed to be aware that there were many men in front of it, instead of just one victim. It slowed.

Ham raised his gun. And the foul odor suddenly was dense in the air. Frantically, Ham tried to tighten his grip on the trigger. His muscles refused to obey; his tongue was tight in his mouth. Slowly, the big gun fell to the ground.

The Monster came on with a slow, stalking gait that was even more ominous than its rushing speed of an instant before.

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On all sides guns were dropping from men's hands. Almost as one, the colonists stopped, frozen. The terrible scent had done its work.

Ham realized his senses were reeling, felt a quick, almost irresistible impulse to run directly toward The Monster. He knew he had to do something anything, otherwise all was lost.

Monk's gun had slipped from his big fists. He, too, felt the pull, the hypnotic attraction of The Monster, felt he must run toward it. But he, too, knew that he had to do something.

With a desperate jerk, Ham grabbed a queer-shaped pistol from his belt. His arms were leaden; his muscles were trying not to obey the impulse of his brain. The lawyer's brain was well-trained. Slowly the pistol went up; the muzzle pointed directly at the sky. He pulled the trigger.

Ham, fighting with every ounce of will power, directed his short legs to run. They moved, slowly at first; then with more speed. They ran not toward The Monster, but to one side.

There was a sudden burst of light, a tremendous flare that bathed the plain in its glow. The gun Ham had fired had been a Very pistol; it had discharged the big light that troops used in the war for night fighting, made the scene as light as day.

And then an amazing thing happened.

The Monster was almost upon Doc. It seemed it would seize him in the next instant.

It didn't. It turned, flashed into action with a speed that seemed impossible. It took one tremendous leap, almost vanished from the range of light. It leaped again

MONK, head down, was running for all he was worth. He had fought his way clear from the spot where the odor of The Monster was strongest. He had only one idea in mind: he wanted to divert the attention of The Monster, lure it from the spot where Doc lay.

He succeeded. He was directly in its path. The huge beast, its bulk rearing as high as a two-story building, did not seem to pause, but its pincers went out.

Then Monk screamed. He had not intended to, he didn't want to. The shriek was torn from his lips in spite of himself.

The Monster swooped him up. It leaped again. The next second, and it was gone.

Doc Savage was on his feet and running. He, alone, had not been affected by the foul odor, the queer, hypnotic smell that came from the huge beast.

Ham was frankly crying. Long Tom's features were strained. Doc had been saved, but Monk was gone.

Ham realized, now that Doc had not been helpless, that for some reason of his own, he had been lying quietly and silently. And knowing the bronze man's amazing physical prowess, the lawyer knew that Doc probably could have escaped without aid.

But the light evidently had frightened The Monster.

Now Monk was gone.

And still the rain came down steadily.

Chapter XIV. BEAUTY IN DISTRESS

THE colonists were fumbling around, like men coming out from under ether. The wind and rain were clearing the air. The odor of The Monster was vanishing. As it vanished, the men's senses returned.

And with the ability to think came blind, panic-stricken fear. They did not pause to pick up their guns. They did not stop to ask questions. The colonists turned and ran like men possessed by demons.

Doc's face was grave. From his nose he took two small objects, about as big around as pencils, but not as long, and made of porous material.

The objects were antidotes he had prepared in the plane's laboratory to combat the strange effects of The Monster's odor. He had given similar objects to his aides. In the excitement they had forgotten to use them, had been affected by the odor, had been unable to use the powerful guns they carried.

Ham controlled himself with an effort. He had fought with Monk, had quarreled with him continually. But there was real affection between the two.

"The old ape," he said softly, and tried to keep his voice steady. "He thought he was giving his life to save you, Doc."

The bronze man nodded. His flake gold eyes were sober. "The least we can do is keep faith with him, and conquer The Monster," he said quietly.

Something in his voice brought Long Tom's head up sharply. He, too, was shaken, but he tried to hide it. "You learned something, Doc?" he asked hopefully.

"I do not know for sure. I think so," the bronze man said.

A suspicion was forming in Ham's mind, also, but it didn't make sense. It looked as though a gang of men might be wanting to buy up the land in the valley, possibly through Even-Swap Crowel, and were trying to take advantage of the terror created by The Monster.

But there could be no valid reason for that. Government geologists had reported no oil formations, nor had any trace of valuable minerals ever been found in the valley. The land was good only for farming; it was valuable only to men like the colonists.

Besides, who would want to live in the valley, with The Monster still running loose?

DOC and his men searched until daylight. They found no trace of Monk. Evidently he had not been killed at once.

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Footprints of The Monster vanished abruptly a short distance from the spot where Monk had been seized. Search as they would, they could find no sign to show where it had landed again.

But as witnesses had testified the giant beast was capable of jumping great distances, this was not so surprising. It might have turned in any direction and the footprints escaped detection.

At dawn they returned to the big plane. Ham and Long Tom were dejected. Doc went at once to the plane's laboratory.

Opening his shirt, the bronze man removed the small, oblong object that had been suspended there. It was a novel camera. From it he took a long roll of film, developed it rapidly.

The camera was one of Doc's devising. Attached to it was a light of great strength, but it threw black light, not white. The film used was of the type to take photographs under infra-ray beams.

While Doc had been lying quietly, apparently waiting to be seized, he had in reality been taking pictures of The Monster. The infra-ray lights had not been noticed by the giant beast.

Swiftly, he examined the film. His low, trilling sound came suddenly.

Long Tom and Ham rushed to his side. "Find something, Doc?" Ham asked hopefully.

"Something very strange," the bronze man said. "This film shows The Monster as it approached me. The detail is perfect. It also shows the action as the beast whirled to go after Monk."

He set up a small movie projector. "There is one other thing it shows. That is what I want you to watch for. It is a clue of the highest importance."

THE colonists were not waiting for further investigation by Doc. Every home was the scene of great activity. Men were loading their possessions into old cars and into wagons. Women and children stood by, silent and spiritless.

The colonists were going. They were abandoning their homes and the high hopes they had felt. The fear of The Monster had conquered thought of all else.

A few were hesitant. Herb Dwight was one of these. But even his resolution had been shaken. And a number of men were circulating among the colonists, relating again and again the long list of victims slain by The Monster, and telling of the impossibility of combating it.

Even-Swap Crowel was one of these. But now, Even-Swap was making no effort to trade land in Arizona for land the colonists were abandoning.

He had his furniture and goods packed in a car surprisingly better than those used by the average colonist. He, also, was ready to leave.

Even-Swap saw Doc and his aids return to their plane. The hawk-nosed man signaled sharply, and one of those who had been urging the colonists to lose no time in leaving, slipped to his side.

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Even-Swap gave crisp orders. The other, a burly, thick-chested man with the broken nose of an ex-prizefighter, nodded. He crept close to the plane.

The pug was hiding near by when Doc spoke to Long Tom and Ham. His face changed color abruptly. He turned and ran. When he found Even-Swap, he talked swiftly.

Even-Swap's face also altered; it became suffused with rage.

"I don't like to do it, it ain't my mob!" he raged. "But we've got to act! We can't have things spoiled now!"

He ran to his car, grabbed a tank that had a long hose attached. The tank was heavy, but he carried it without difficulty, running as rapidly as possible toward the plane.

The colonists did not notice. There was too much confusion in the hurried exodus.

As he neared the plane, Even-Swap turned a small valve on the tank. A tremendous sheet of flame broke from the end of the hose.

Breathing heavily, Even-Swap turned that flame on the plane. It completely enveloped the big ship in fire.

DOC had just started to show the film in the movie projector. The sudden heat from the flame-thrower was tremendous. Metal wing struts melted, gasoline tanks exploded.

"Blazes!" shouted Ham. It was more than just an exclamation. It was a literal statement of fact. The entire plane was ablaze.

Chemistry and Habeas Corpus had been left in the plane when Doc and his aides made their night trip. Now the pig was squealing in fright; the big ape was hopping about madly, his fur smoking.

Doc did not waste time. He ripped open a small door in the laboratory, brought out what appeared to be thin, transparent sheets.

Ham and Long Tom knew what they were. They grabbed them. Chemistry and Habeas Corpus were covered first. Then they slipped into two suits of the transparent material. Invented by Doc long before, they were fire suits, capable of withstanding extreme heat.

But the heat from the flame-thrower was as strong as the blast of an acetylene blow torch. Even in the suits, the skin turned red, hair curled. Life could not long be sustained.

Doc did not hesitate. He grabbed a small metal ball, opened two tiny jets. There was a quick, hissing sound. What looked like a giant soap bubble began to form. Doc and his men were inside the bubble.

The bronze man manipulated the tiny jets again, and the big bubble expanded more. It became a mass of foam, pressed the fire back. Calmly, Doc stepped forward, the others at his heels.

The big bubble rolled along before him, forcing the flame back. Without hurry, they walked right through the fuselage. Only the metal skeleton of the plane remained, and part of that had melted.

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EVEN-SWAP'S mouth dropped open. He thought he was seeing things. He had believed it impossible for anyone to escape the fiery hell he had created.

Desperately he swung the hose of the flame-thrower so that the three men were directly in its path. The fire stopped when it hit the bubble, stopped as if it had run into a blank wall. The three men did not stop, they came directly toward him.

Even-Swap's nerve broke. He dropped the flamethrower and fled.

Doc turned off the jets. The big bubble collapsed. It had been made by quick expansion of gas compressed into the metal ball, the walls of the bubble being of a fire-quenching foam perfected to a degree even higher than the foam used for fighting oil blazes.

Ham threw off his fire suit. He pulled out his mercy pistol, started to fire. Doc knocked the pistol aside.

"The film is destroyed. This man may be the only clue we have left," Doc explained swiftly.

EVEN-SWAP had started to run toward the colony. The flames from the burning plane had attracted the attention of the colonists, however, and they were running toward the scene. Crowel saw he would be trapped.

He turned, dashed toward the distant mountains. Doc raced in pursuit. Behind him trailed Ham and Long Tom, with Chemistry and Habeas bringing up the rear.

The bronze man could have overtaken Even-Swap at any time. He made no attempt to do so. Instead, he loafed along. And he took care to keep concealed as much as possible.

Even-Swap cast desperate glances behind. Then he decided he had thrown off pursuit. But he did not pause. He merely altered his course. He headed directly for the mountains in the north.

The trail led upward swiftly. It wound along for a time beside a mountain stream. Then Crowel plunged off the beaten path, started to climb through thick trees.

Doc's flake gold eyes glinted. There seemed no doubt but that Even-Swap was heading for a hiding place, probably where others of his gang were concealed. He might even be going toward the spot where The Monster hid.

Then came the scream. It was a woman's scream, high and piercing.

Even-Swap heard it, but he did not stop. Rather, he redoubled his speed. Doc did stop. He turned in the direction from which the scream had come.

Barbara Hughes appeared far to the right. She broke into a small clearing. Her clothes were torn from running through trees. Her eyes were wide and staring. Fear was on her features.

Close behind her came several men. The girl was running rapidly, but it was clear she could not escape. Her pursuers were gaining with every leap.

Doc hesitated, but only for an instant. If he went to the girl's rescue, Even-Swap would escape. He might lose the only chance he had of solving the mystery of The Monster. But if he didn't go to the girl's aid, there

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was no telling what might happen to her.

The bronze man whirled; he ran toward the girl.

Barbara Hughes saw him. For a moment her face lighted with hope. Then it changed.

"Run, get away!" she shouted.

One of her pursuers was almost up to her, he reached out one hand and grabbed. Her dress ripped at the shoulder. She turned, raked the other's face with her finger nails. The man bellowed with pain, and turned her loose.

The girl's cry had warned the others. They saw Doc. Instantly, their tactics changed. They paid no more attention to the girl. They dropped, and pulled out guns.

"Save yourself, Doc Savage!" the girl cried.

The bronze man did not hesitate. Lead rained about him. Some of the shots struck him.

He was wearing his bullet-proof underwear. The bullets merely bounced off harmlessly. As he ran, Doc pulled a thin cape from his pocket, and put it over his head. That would protect him against being shot in the head.

FAR down the mountainside, Ham and Long Tom heard the sound of the shots, realized that Doc must have encountered opposition. They increased their speed.

But fast as they went, they could not keep up with Chemistry. The long-armed ape was very much at home in the big trees. He swung along at a flashing clip. And he had no difficulty in following Doc's trail.

Chemistry was attached to Ham. He had a great adoration for Monk, and had followed the hairy chemist around for hours. But he had even more respect for Doc. Probably because as an animal he could sense the attitude of humans, he knew that Doc was the leader, that all his men turned to him.

And Chemistry had been in many fights. He knew the sound of gunfire and what it meant.

As Doc neared the first of the gunmen, the man leaped up in terror, tried to run. He couldn't understand why his bullets had had no effect.

One of Doc's arms floated out. His hand seemed scarcely to touch the other's neck, but the man went down, the nerve at the base of his brain paralyzed.

There were four other attackers. They were bunched. They were typical gangsters, hard of eye and accustomed to rough-and-tumble fights.

Doc plowed into them without pause. He was met by a storm of swinging fists. Gun butts were in some of those fists. Others held blackjacks.

The bronze man's head appeared to fade back as the blows came toward him. Gun butts and blackjacks struck only empty air.

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His two big hands caught the necks of the closest gangsters. He swung their heads together with force enough to bring quick unconsciousness.

The other two sought to run. Once more Doc's hands flicked out, pressed the nerves at the base of their skulls. They joined their companions in untroubled slumber.

The fight had been a brief one. But Even-Swap had disappeared. So had the girl.

Doc's lips came together slightly. The girl had shouted a warning. She had indicated clearly that this time, at least, she was friendly. But she had not stayed to help or explain.

There came a crash of breaking tree limbs, and sounds of a scuffle. Doc raced toward the sound.

The girl had tried to run away, but she had not gotten far. She had been spotted from above.

Chemistry, looking absurdly like Monk, had one long arm about her neck, his furry paw over her mouth. With the other arm, he had caught her just above the elbows, was holding her so she could not move.

Now he was lumbering forward, carrying his struggling burden awkwardly. He looked very pleased with himself.

"That will do, Chemistry," Doc said quietly. "You did very well."

Chemistry beamed under the praise. He set the girl to her feet. She was gasping, and her face flushed with anger.

"Lieutenant Colonel Mayfair, I never thought you would treat a girl so roughly," she began. Then she turned, saw that Chemistry, not Monk, had been the one who had seized her. Her flush became scarlet.

"However, I think Chemistry did just right," Doc said calmly. "You have a great many things which you might explain, which would help. Are you ready to talk?"

The flush left the girl's face, it became white. Fear returned to her eyes.

"I I" Sobs shook her small frame. "I I'm afraid," she said. "B-but, I'll talk."

Chapter XV. THE GIRL'S STORY

"I I REALLY am a newspaper woman, and I was trapped, just as you were, although they tried to make it look as if I were in with them," the girl said.

"I know," Doc nodded.

The girl started. "B-but how could you know?"

"Your city editor repeated to me the message you sent through Deeter," Doc said quietly. "You said it was 'thirty,' which in newspaper parlance meant the end for you."

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"I should have known you would understand, but I didn't see how you could ever escape from that horrible crematory. It was terrible, and I was helpless. I was watched every minute. I couldn't call for aid."

"Tell me what happened," Doc said.

The girl spoke swiftly. She had hoped to escape from Deeter and call help for Doc and his men. Barge had prevented that. He had taken her with him.

"I knew that if I stood any chance of getting away alive, and of helping others later, I had to play along," she said, and blushed. "I made Barge think I had fallen for him, and that I really wanted to go along on his account."

"Actually, I was hoping I could learn what The Monster was, could learn some way to save those poor people in Arcadia."

"Yes?" Doc prompted.

"We went to a hide-out farther up here in the mountains," she explained. "But Barge didn't really trust me. I was blindfolded. I only could learn a few things."

"And those things?"

The girl's face paled, she started to tremble again. "Something big, something tremendously big, is afoot, Mr. Savage," she breathed. "I do not know just what the full extent is, but I do know it is far beyond anything I ever imagined before."

"There is a huge canyon, partly concealed by big trees, partly hidden in the form of a natural cave. Hundreds, possibly thousands of men are there. I did not see them, but I could hear them. Day and night there is the murmur of voices."

Doc looked thoughtful.

"I heard other things, too," the girl continued. "I heard the sound of many planes, coming and going. Always there seemed some activity. The sound of those planes could not be heard in Arcadia. I'm sure, because of the mountain in between. And I" she hesitated, seemed to shrink "I smelled something, something fearful. Something that seemed to smell just like the newspaper accounts of The Monster that has been killing Arcadia colonists."

The bronze man nodded. He had expected that. For a moment he looked at the girl without speaking, his hypnotic eyes appeared to drill into her brain.

"And the leader of all this, did you meet him?" he asked softly.

The girl shuddered. "I don't know. Perhaps. Sometimes while I was blindfolded, I could sense someone near me, staring and staring. I had the feeling that it was someone I knew. But I didn't see him."

"Barge kept urging me to marry him. He said that would prove I had really come there because of him, and that then he would take off the blindfold, and that I could learn all there was to know. But " She shivered violently.

"And then you escaped," Doc prompted.

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The girl started. "Only an hour ago. How stupid of me to forget that that Hune helped me," she said excitedly. "Hune was one of the guards. He he fell for me. I persuaded him to free me. He was afraid to stay, so he came along when I ran. I know he must be hiding some place close."

Doc's flake gold eyes lighted.

"He can tell you all you want to know," the girl said.

DOC'S rescue of the girl had not gone unnoticed. Barge Deeter had discovered Barbara Hughes's escape almost at once. As a small group went in immediate pursuit, he organized a large party and followed. He could not afford to have the girl free now.

Big feet planted firmly, he watched through binoculars as Doc overcame the men who had caught up with the girl.

His face set in crafty lines. He spoke softly to the score of men with him. They fanned out, drifted through the trees, surrounding the spot where Doc and the girl stood talking.

Barge Deeter took a small object from one pocket. He had held a similar object in his hand when John Alden died at the Chicago airport. But none had seen it. And none were destined to see it now.

Deeter grinned mirthlessly as he slipped forward. Doc Savage had escaped many traps. He would not be able to escape this.

Despite his big feet, Deeter moved silently. He was hidden close by as Doc and the girl started looking for the guard who had befriended her.

But not having heard their conversation, he did not know what they were looking for. He waited, watching them closely. He noted with satisfaction that Doc had removed the transparent helmet he had worn when charging the gunmen.

Doc Savage had exceptionally keen ears. But even he did not hear Barge Deeter's approach. Probably that was because a mountain creek ran not far away, drowning what noise the big man made.

Had Chemistry been present, he might have detected Barge's presence. But Chemistry had gone back to lead Ham and Long Tom to the scene.

The ape had been very proud of himself, and when Doc no longer noticed him, he felt he had to find an audience that would.

Nor did Chemistry detect the fact that he was being followed. Two men were slipping down the mountainside behind him. Barge Deeter had laid his trap well.

THE guard, Hune, was hiding not far from where the girl and Doc had been standing. He had been afraid to appear, fearing Doc would mistake him for one of the gunmen. And he had seen what happened to those who opposed the bronze man.

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His face was sheepish as he made his presence known.

"You have befriended Miss Hughes," Doc said quietly. "For that I will have you taken care of in a befitting manner."

The bronze man did not explain that what he meant was that he would have the man sent to his hospital in Upstate New York, where a delicate brain operation would remove his memory of crime, return him to the world as a good citizen.

"I am particularly interested in what you can tell me about The Monster," Doc added.

Eyes shifted in the man's weak face. He looked about nervously, wet his lips.

"Okay, boss," he said.

Barge Deeter lifted himself slightly in the bushes where he was hiding. He raised his hand containing the queer-shaped object.

It was almost at that instant, that Chemistry rejoined Ham and Long Tom. The lawyer and the electrician had found rough going, were not making as good time as they had expected.

Chemistry bounded forward, trying to talk. He made queer sounds. For a moment he had the spotlight but only for a moment.

Habeas Corpus, ranging on ahead, squealed in sudden fury. The lean porker darted ahead.

Two men had appeared on the trail before him. They were the men sent by Barge Deeter.

Ham and Long Tom caught sight of them in the same instant. The dapper lawyer had been getting rather tired of walking; the prospect of action galvanized him into sudden speed. His sword cane flashed in his hand.

Long Tom gave a yell of triumph. He, also, bounded ahead.

The men stopped, as if surprised. Then they turned and ran. They ran at an angle. They were leading Doc's aides far from the spot where the bronze man waited.

Ham and Long Tom did not know that, nor did they know what was happening to Doc.

DOC'S flake gold eyes were riveted on the shifty face of the guard. The man opened his mouth to speak.

Then it happened.

The narrow glade was suddenly filled with the foul, sickly sweet smell that always indicated The Monster was near.

The guard's mouth opened. One hand grasped his throat. He seemed to be trying to speak, but could not. He fell forward on his face.

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The girl screamed. Her face became ashen. Then her vocal cords seemed affected, also. The scream cut off sharply.

Doc whirled, turned in the direction which the guard had been facing. He took a step that way.

Then he, too, threw one hand to his throat. His tongue protruded from his mouth. His lips worked without making a sound.

The big man of bronze took two more steps. He seemed to be forcing himself to go on where any other would have dropped.

Slowly his knees folded. He went down on his face.

Barge Deeter rushed from the bushes. The girl stood as if paralyzed. From all sides, other men came into view. Barbara Hughes was trapped.

"And the mighty Doc Savage falls at last," Barge Deeter jeered. "At that, it was too easy for him, and The Monster will not be pleased. But "

"But what?" prompted one of his men.

"But we'll take Doc along with us anyway," Barge Deeter grinned. "Even if he is dead, The Monster may like to have the heart of a bronze-haired man."

Barge ordered his men into action. Doc was wrapped in a blanket, thrown over a burro that had been brought along.

Chapter XVI. TRAPPED

"JIMINY, but those fellows can run!" Long Tom panted. Ham puffed in agreement.

The fellows certainly could run. But Long Tom and Ham were no mean sprinters themselves. They gained slowly. Chemistry swung along overhead, plainly irked that the others could not move as fast as he could. Habeas Corpus was having difficulties. He squealed angrily as he scrambled over rocks and through underbrush.

"We'll catch up with those guys," Long Tom breathed. "Maybe we can squeeze a little of all this mystery out of them."

There came a sound as if a giant bull whip had been snapped. *Cra-a-ack!*

"W-what was that?" Ham spluttered.

They found out as they emerged on the edge of a deep, rock-strewn gully. The gully was at least a hundred feet deep and nearly as wide. A slender, bark-stripped tree was still waving in the air. Ham went back a few yards and examined the underbrush.

"A catapult!" he yelled. "They shot themselves over that gully. They'll be way ahead of us now." The

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catapult had been so constructed that it destroyed itself after it had been used.

"Let's go after them!" Long Tom shouted. He started inching down the side of the gully. It was precipitous and rocky.

Chemistry began jumping up and down and making weird sounds. He seemed to have other ideas on the subject. His nostrils were quivering and he kept looking upwind, which happened to be the direction to the clearing where Doc had been attacked.

Long Tom got half a dozen feet down the side of the gully, but the ape rushed after him, pulled him back.

"Let me go, you nitwit," Long Tom protested.

"Wait," Ham said. "Chemistry was with Doc. He's been right before on this trip. Maybe we'd better follow him."

CHEMISTRY led them to the clearing where he had left Doc. There were signs of a struggle. The body of the guard who had befriended Barbara Hughes lay at one side of the clearing.

Habeas Corpus squealed, tried to run. Ham stopped him. There was a faint odor still in the air, the odor they had first smelled in Chicago, the same smell that accompanied The Monster.

"He's been killed just like John Alden was," Ham said. "Gosh, I wonder if they got Doc?"

Long Tom muttered a noncommittal answer and began pawing through a small canvas bag he carried. He pulled out a queer pair of glasses. The lenses were about the size of small cans of condensed milk. They were black. Long Tom put them on and began to go over the ground in slow scrutiny.

"Doc was in a fight," he reported. "He didn't leave on his feet."

Long Tom was using the special fluoroscopic glasses developed by Doc Savage. It was a prearranged method of following each other if they got separated. Doc's shoes were covered with a fluorescent chemical which was invisible to the naked eye. But with the queer black glasses, his footprints would glow like a neon sign.

"No trace. They got him all right," Long Tom said slowly.

Ham was already moving. The trail was easy to follow. The burro that had carried Doc Savage's body left hoofprints in the ground. Long Tom followed behind. He still wore the queer glasses.

Ham muttered to himself as he strode along. The story of The Monster's hunger for the heart of a bronze-haired man kept running through his mind. Ham didn't like to think about The Monster. He remembered how it had seized Monk.

"I wish Johnny were here," the lawyer said suddenly.

"And Renny, too," grumbled Long Tom.

"Johnny," really William Harper Littlejohn, another of Doc's aides, had few peers as a geologist. "Renny," big, two-fisted Colonel John Renwick, was the engineer of Doc's group. But Renny and Johnny were far

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away, in distant China, working on a commercial enterprise of vast importance.

It had occurred to Ham that Johnny, if he were along, might be able to solve the secret of what was so valuable in this unsettled region. And Long Tom believed Renny's vast fighting ability might be of great aid.

Ham, with his interrogating legal mind, kept trying to figure what goal could be behind the forces that were dealing death. The answer eluded him. He expected they would find out eventually, however.

It was to be unpleasantly sooner than he anticipated.

"I've lost the trail," Ham cried suddenly. The trail had run onto a stratum of rock. The burrow didn't leave hoofprints in that.

Long Tom exploded with an exultant shout.

"Doc got away from them somehow!" he bellowed. "I've picked up Doc's tracks!"

Footprints from Doc Savage's shoes glowed under the fluoroscopic lenses. Long Tom and Ham quickened their pace. Long Tom took the lead. The aides knew that if Doc were free again, they could expect action that would be favorable.

"We're gettin' closer," Long Tom exulted. "Doc seems to be takin' his time. The prints are getting fresher."

The trail went through a rocky gorge. It was narrow, and footholds were treacherous. Halfway through the gorge, the aides heard a harsh laugh from above them. Ham looked up.

"Run!" he yelled. "It's an avalanche!"

It wasn't an avalanche. But it was about as effective. Huge boulders bounded down the side of the gorge. Ham didn't see who had laughed up there. He just saw tons of rocks descending. Fast sprinting got them out from under the rocks and earth that crashed down. But the trail behind them was completely blocked.

"There's only one way to go now," Ham observed.

"Doc's ahead, anyway," Long Tom pointed out. "That's the way we want to go."

Long Tom's reasoning was sound. But the results were not quite what he expected them to be. He turned a sharp corner in the gorge. With the glasses on, he couldn't see anything except the fluorescent footprints of Doc's shoes. But Ham saw several other things.

The first thing he noticed were Doc's shoes. The bronze man wasn't in them! But a grinning thug was!

Ham plunged forward, whipped out his sword cane. The grinning thug in Doc's shoes went to sleep when the anaesthetic-tipped point of the sword touched his neck.

That didn't do Ham any good. A dozen hands seized him. Another dozen grabbed for Long Tom.

Ham darted his cane in and out. Then he dropped it and showed he could do equally well with his fists. Long Tom was giving a swell exhibition of how an unhealthy-looking man is not supposed to act.

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Four men twice his size went down with amazed looks on their faces. But superior numbers finally smothered him. Ham was smacked from behind with a club. Chemistry blundered into a wire noose before he had a chance to get going. Habeas, squealing and biting, was seized in a blanket.

LONG TOM and Ham were tightly bound.

"Look at that," Ham groaned. "They fooled us with Doc's own shoes."

Bronze hair showed faintly from one end of the blanket roll on the burro's back. Well-shaped, bare feet protruded from the other side. Barge Deeter stood there, grinning.

"Is he dead?" Ham could not help asking.

Deeter grinned wider. It was not a pleasant grin.

"He died too easy," he gloated. "I thought he was tough. And you guys are just dumb."

Barge Deeter's chest seemed to swell. Probably he had never been quite as proud of himself as he was right then.

"We heard of them trick shoes of his," he sneered. "We knew we could grab you if you followed. So now we got what's left of your gang."

Ham winced at "what is left of your gang." The Monster had gotten Monk. The gang had killed Doc. Ham shuddered. He didn't care much what happened to himself now.

Barbara Hughes was dragged into view. Her face was tear-stained. "I'm sorry," she said, as she saw Ham's stricken features. "I tried to warn Doc, but he came to my aid."

Ham nodded. The lawyer did not ask needless questions. He had never suspected the girl. Only Monk had been wrong about her. But then, Monk always was wrong about girls.

Barge Deeter took peculiar-looking chains and collars from a saddlebag on the burro. He put the collars on Long Tom, Ham and Chemistry. The collars were chained together. They were shoved along, single file, like African slaves being herded through a Congo jungle.

Habeas was chained to Ham's ankle. Ordinarily, that would have annoyed the dapper lawyer. But right now, he even felt sympathy for the pig.

Barge led the way. They went down a steep trail. The trail turned. And involuntary gasps came from Long Tom and Ham.

They were at the entrance to a huge canyon. Big trees screened the top. A protruding lip of a huge cliff extended far out over much of the canyon, making it invisible from above.

And under that cliff was a veritable city. The forest of spruce and pines on the other side hid it from almost any angle.

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IT was more than a city. It was a Baghdad in Alaska. Oriental signs floated in the breeze. There were bazaars on the edge of the hard-packed earthen street. Men of all nationalities, all colors, moved about the place.

They seemed to have only one thing in common: The stamp of criminality was written on every face.

Here, deep in the Alaskan wilds, but comparatively only a few miles from Arcadia Valley, was a gathering, a massing of criminals such as none of the colonists had imagined.

Ham's mind clicked suddenly. No word of this vast city had ever seeped out. It seemingly had been a secret also, even from the Indians. That could mean only one thing:

This must be the home of The Monster!

Some parts of the legend of The Monster had been vague. On one thing particularly no one had been able to gain information from the Indians. That was as to where its den was supposed to be.

The Indians had indicated merely that it was taboo, sacred ground. Much as Yellowstone Park once was shunned by the Indians of the United States, who believed it the home of the gods because of the geysers, so this valley had been shunned by the Alaskan tribe.

They had not reported the vast concentration of men here because they had not known it. None had dared visit this valley. But the crooks had. They had moved in, had taken possession.

Which must mean they had been using The Monster for their own means.

Ham's thoughts broke off. They were being pulled on down into the valley, the vast, almost hidden canyon.

THE canyon was a seething caldron of activity. Two huge, amphibian transport planes soared inside, glided down to some hidden landing field. Several small, speedy scout planes slipped in after them. Long Tom understood, then, that it was from this spot the planes had come that had attacked them en route to Arcadia.

There was an excited babble in many foreign tongues as the inhabitants of the valley gestured toward the plane. Dark-skinned Hindus, almond-eyed Chinese pointed upward. Ham caught some of the lingo.

"Soon our turn. Soon we go, too," some of them said.

Others were not concerned. Or perhaps it was not their turn to go. Where they expected to go, or what they intended to do, none said.

Men were gambling with all manner of devices. There were card games, dice games, bird cage, roulette, faro, three-card monte.

Long Tom noticed that the gamblers were not using money. They were using gems, jewels of fabulous price. One shabby-looking man hurled a diamond tiara on the ground in the dice game. Ham gasped.

"The Preston tiara!" he exclaimed. "It was stolen last month!"

Long Tom and Ham looked more closely at the gems piled up beside the gamblers. Doc's aides kept track of important thefts. Their knowledge of them frequently came in handy. They recognized gems stolen all over

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the United States within the last few months.

"It's all stolen property!" Ham gasped. "This must be a tremendous international clearing house of crime."

"It's more than that," Long Tom muttered. He pointed to huge piles of merchandise, and big stacks of boxes lining the far wall of the canyon. Munitions, war material of all kinds, was stored there.

It was hard to grasp at first the full import of that, to realize what a huge scope of activities must be directed from this hidden city.

Men stepped away hastily from in front of Barge Deeter as the procession moved along. All showed the big-shoed man the greatest respect. But it was clear that even he was not the brain behind all this. Occasionally, Ham or Long Tom could catch the gist of some low-toned remarks.

Always it was some message to pass along to "the boss."

The procession moved over to one side of the cliff. The sky came in view above them, a perfect opening directly through the roof of the cliff. Halfway up the cliff, caves had been constructed. But there was one huge cave, well off by itself.

No men were near that cave. A faint, foul, sickly sweet odor came from it.

Ham's face changed color. Long Tom started, while Habeas pulled back hard on the chain that bound him to Ham, trying to run away.

Barge Deeter looked over one shoulder, his teeth showing in a wicked grin.

"Yeah, you're right. It's here," he said. "You'll see it soon enough."

Involuntarily, Long Tom's eyes drifted to the still form sprawled over the burro, rested for a moment on the bronze hair almost trailing in the dust.

It wasn't hard to interpret what Barge Deeter meant.

They were prodded up a narrow footpath. The going was difficult. Some of the guards came to their aid. Hampered as they were by chains, they were stumbling.

Barge Deeter stopped suddenly, listening. It seemed to him there had been a faint change in the murmur of voices among the thousands behind him.

Then he shrugged. His imagination must be playing him tricks.

The body wrapped in the blanket was taken from the burro, was tossed into one corner of a dark cave. Ham, Long Tom, Barbara Hughes and the animals, also, were taken into the cave. They were bound tightly.

"Just take it easy, boys," Barge Deeter smirked. "You won't be here long. The show will start as soon as I can inform the boss you're here."

Again there was a change in the murmur of voices in the valley below the cave. Barge's features screwed up in a frown. Something funny there. He'd look into it as soon as he conferred with the boss.

But it couldn't be anything serious. Of that Barge Deeter was sure.

Chapter XVII. REBELLION

BARGE DEETER might not have been so positive in his belief had he known just exactly what was going on among the packed throngs of criminals.

The buzz of comment Barge had noticed seemed to center about a huge, cruel-appearing Oriental. The man was fat, with long-hanging jowls, and eyes that were narrow slits. He was clad in the most expensive of silks, and the strangely shaped cap he wore apparently indicated he was a man of rank.

Those of his countrymen he addressed listened with careful attention.

His words were low, but they carried conviction. His listeners nodded their heads with increasing emphasis as he spoke. Several in the crowd around him drew cruel-shaped knives, rubbed the sides of the blades reflectively on their palms.

The big Oriental spoke sharply in singsong Cantonese. The knives disappeared.

Then he went on, approached another group. For a time, all those he talked to were Orientals like himself. And from those he addressed, other speakers appeared. They also circulated, talked swiftly.

The change of tone in the near underground city was startling. The gay, cheerful conversation ceased. A low, sullen murmur took its place.

Europeans and Americans looked up in wonder. Then they, too, gathered about the big Oriental. The Oriental switched to English that had little accent. He apparently was well-educated. Even the toughest of the European crooks listened to him with respect.

"Long time we be here, no?" the Oriental said. "We have paid, most of us, huge sums. We were promised certain things. But have those things been carried out? No!"

There was a murmur of approval.

"Instead of being taken on to our destination, as we were promised," the Oriental went on, "we remain here. Not only that, but we see hundreds of others brought here, while few leave. And we do not know that even those who leave reach their destination. There are rumors that many of our brothers who have left have been killed on the way and their bodies disposed of."

The murmur of approval grew louder.

A hard-faced gunman stepped forward. "So what?" he snapped. "The boss had to slow up for a while. He couldn't keep up the game until Doc Savage had been put out of the way. What did you want him to do?"

"We of the East have a saying," the Oriental replied indirectly. "'If a man giveth his word, then not keep it, it is well to take it away from him.'"

"Meaning what?" snapped the gunman.

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"All we have received are excuses," the Oriental evaded. "First, it was the colonists. We must remain quiet until they leave. Then it is this Doc Savage. We must wait until he is dead. We do not even know if that is true, yet."

The gunman chuckled harshly. "The hell we don't. The boss has got that bronze devil now. We just saw his body brought in."

"Then we may hear another excuse." The Oriental bowed. "Did you happen to think, wise one, that the boss has us, also? Word was brought me that the last possible exit by foot from this place has been blocked. Only the birds that fly by air can leave. If the boss wished to depart, taking all our gold, where would we be?"

Eyes grew wider, as the full significance of that soaked in. Treacherous themselves, the men could readily imagine treachery on the part of others. Argument ceased. The sullen murmur increased.

"But what of The Monster?" growled the gunman.

The Oriental bowed deeper. "Does it not occur to you, wise one," he said softly, "that perhaps we are to be left here to feed The Monster?"

The murmur of the crowd changed to one of fear. Eyes flickered uneasily to that big cave in the cliff. The picture was becoming plain, too plain.

"It was promised the heart of a bronze-haired man," the gunman objected.

"And has not received it," the Oriental said. "I do not think it will ever receive it. We are the ones who are to feed it."

Fear frankly seized the ranks of his listeners, a terrible kind of fear. They could see their fate ahead of them.

"What'll we do?" roared several at once. "You must have a plan, or you wouldn't be talking."

"I have," the big Oriental said softly. "Get weapons ready. Wait until I give the word. Then act. I know how to deal with The Monster."

A roar like that of caged animals swept the canyon.

BARGE DEETER heard that roar just as he entered a big cave. The place was a cave only in the sense that it had been carved out of the cliff. Otherwise, it was the latest word in luxury. There were expensive rugs on the floor, fine tapestries on the walls. The furniture was the best that money could obtain.

From an inner room came the sharp snap of wireless sets. It was to this room Barge Deeter rushed.

The room would have done credit to a broker's office on a busy day. There were half a score of sending and receiving sets about the room. Men were at each of these. Orders were being dispatched and reports received.

From here was controlled the network of probably the greatest criminal organization the world had ever known. The radio sets were in communication with hidden stations in half a dozen countries. Criminal jobs were planned and directed from this room.

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But more than just crime was directed here.

The hidden canyon was ideally located from a criminal point of view. It lay midway between the Far East and the United States.

Many political fugitives, fleeing spies, anarchists and plotters of all kinds had fled here for refuge, refuge that had been given them on payment of much gold. World rebellions were plotted here; arms and ammunition were smuggled out of the United States to this depot, then transshipped to the Far East, where they would be used by wild-eyed bands of fanatics.

The room was like the apex of a giant spider's web; the radio waves were the strands of that web which stretched over half the world. Crime, dope-smuggling, arms-running, world revolutions, making and breaking of empires all were part of the food upon which the spider fed.

And the big man in the center of the room looked as cruel as such a spider might be expected to look.

His eyes were thin slits behind a black mask. His head shot up as Barge Deeter rushed to him breathlessly.

"Something is wrong!" the man with the big feet panted.

"You have Doc Savage?" the other asked calmly.

"Yes, but "

"Then nothing is wrong," the masked man said with decision. "I know the little ones in the valley become impatient. But that will be over. Come, we will put on a little show for our playmates."

He rose, led the way from the cave.

HAM and Long Tom also heard the sullen murmur in the valley. They did not know what caused it, but they were sure it boded no good for them.

Long Tom's shoulders hunched. He could not keep his eyes from that blanket-clad figure, lying so still, in the far end of the cave.

Doc Savage was dead. The bronze man had come to the end of his trail at last in this out-of-the-way Alaskan wilderness. His bronze hair hung from one end of that blanket.

For a time, the electrician had watched that form hopefully. He had seen Doc Savage pull too many miraculous escapes to give up easily. At any moment he had expected Doc to come free, aid them to escape.

But that still form had not moved. Tears were in Long Tom's eyes, although he tried not to show them.

The evidence was too strong, and Barbara Hughes had insisted that she had seen Doc killed in the forest clearing. He had died even as John Alden had died.

Barbara Hughes had told her story. Coupled with what they had seen themselves, Ham and Long Tom had a clear picture of the set-up. They could understand why they had been attacked in Chicago, why such strong efforts had been made to keep them from Arcadia.

THE MOUNTAIN MONSTER

But they were helpless. The fiendish cunning of their foe for once had been too great. Doc was dead. Monk was dead. And the vast criminal set-up would run on unhindered. A worthwhile project, the Arcadia Valley settlement, had been ended. Colonists had been run out.

All that, they had to charge against the chief criminal, the brains behind this hidden city.

Who that criminal was, how he controlled The Monster, they did not know.

Had they been free, Long Tom and Ham would have tried to go on, would have fought and plotted to the last in an effort to wipe out this terrible plague-spot that menaced the world.

But Doc was gone. And they were captives.

Ham was watching Habeas and Chemistry. The lawyer's eyes were puzzled.

Chemistry and Habeas both had always thought much of Doc. He had been their favorite, even though they had been pets of Monk and Ham.

Even in death, Ham had not thought Habeas would shun the bronze man. But the pig did. He cowered back as far as his chain would permit, just as far away from that still body as he could get.

Chemistry showed no fear. But neither did he show interest. He seemed far more concerned with the iron collar about his neck.

A strange thought stirred through Ham's mind.

It was at that moment that the sullen murmur below changed in tone.

Yells rang out. Somewhere a gun barked. That seemed to be a signal. In a moment there was the sound of fierce fighting.

Two men ran into the darkened cave. One of them was Barge Deeter. The other wore a black mask.

The man with the mask held a knife in his hand. "We'll take him to The Monster at once!" the masked man rasped. "That will quiet those fools."

"Be careful!" Deeter shrieked. "Even if he is dead, take no chances!"

"I intend to take none!" the other snapped. The knife in his hand lifted. Time after time, it came down in a very fury of motion. It was streaked with crimson from the blanket-wrapped man's body.

Long Tom moaned and hid his eyes.

The next second he opened them. Ham had given a loud yell of jubilation.

The masked man had cut the blanket off the body it contained, had yanked that body toward the mouth of the cave. Light struck it fairly. Ham understood now why Chemistry had shown no interest.

The body had bronze hair. But it was not that of Doc Savage!

THE MOUNTAIN MONSTER

An oath ripped from Barge Deeter. The masked man was terrible in his wrath. He rushed at Deeter, seemed for a moment about to use the crimson–stained knife on the man with the big feet.

Deeter screamed, ran frantically.

"Fool!" howled the masked man. He leaped in pursuit.

A BIG, fat Oriental, dressed in expensive silken robes, wearing a cap that denoted high rank, glided into the room. The man had cruel, thin eyes, and long–hanging jowls.

"Ham? Long Tom?" he asked softly.

"Doc!" yelled Ham.

"We're safe," breathed Barbara Hughes.

"And we're going to lick 'em yet!" Long Tom bubbled.

The big Oriental moved forward; swiftly he worked at the iron collar about the lawyer's neck.

Doc's reappearance was not as supernatural as it seemed. In fact, there was nothing miraculous about it.

The bronze man long before had solved the method by which John Alden had been killed, and had perfected a way to balk it.

Doc had examined John Alden's body in Chicago much more closely than any of his distinguished medical associates. His keen eyes had detected the tiny, almost invisible puncture in John Alden's throat.

The method of death had been plain. A tiny dart had been shot into that throat. At the same time, an odor had been released that resembled that of The Monster. The dart had been dipped in quick–acting poison. It had paralyzed the vocal cords first, producing symptoms similar to those effected by The Monster's odor. Then the poison had brought death.

A dart had struck Doc's throat, fired from the Oriental weapon held in Barge Deeter's hand. But a thin, flesh–colored wrapping had been about Doc's throat. The wrapping could have stopped a bullet. The dart had glanced off harmlessly. Doc had permitted himself to be taken prisoner to learn the route to the hideout.

Escaping had been no great feat. Barge and his men had stopped to rest several times en route up the mountains, leaving only one man to guard the burro and its burden. Doc had merely traded places with the guard; a chemical had changed the guard's hair to a bronze color. The guard had been unconscious, but alive, until the masked man had killed him.

When the city came into view, Doc had slipped ahead, changed his disguise.

This the bronze man explained swiftly. The iron collar came free from Ham's neck.

Doc turned toward Long Tom.

"Hold it, Doc Savage! You're trapped!"

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The bronze man whirled. His low trilling sound came, filled the cave, tuneless but penetrating. Ham and Long Tom moaned. Barbara Hughes slumped in resignation.

A tall, black-masked man stood in the doorway. Behind him was Barge Deeter. Each held two Mills bombs in their hands.

"This room is equipped with a dictograph," the masked man said silkily. "I heard all you said here. Try to move, and we will throw these bombs. I assure you that you cannot escape."

Chapter XVIII. BACK FROM THE DEAD

DOC SAVAGE stood tense, muscles coiled, ready for instant action.

"Take him, Doc," pleaded Long Tom. The electrician's features looked more unhealthy than ever before. In an instant his hopes had been smashed. The chance of conquering The Monster, of wiping out this hell-hole had gone.

The bronze man did not move. He could probably have reached his opponent. But that would do no good if those bombs were hurled. Doc would escape. Ham could probably get away.

But Long Tom was still a captive. The girl was tied. So were Chemistry and Habeas. Some, inevitably, would be killed.

Outside, the roar of battle grew louder.

"What do you wish me to do?" Doc said calmly.

"Just walk right out," the masked man gritted. "Keep your arms high over your head."

A dozen men poured on Doc when he reached the door of the cave, tied him securely. He made no resistance.

The masked man seemed to know just what he wanted to do. While others again tied Ham, and brought him along with Long Tom and Barbara Hughes, the man with the black mask led the way at a rapid pace toward a level spot on the cliff.

BELOW were seething thousands. Some had already started to storm the cliff.

Men with submachine guns were on top of the cliff, were raining lead into the massed throngs beneath them.

The slaughter was terrific.

But Orientals were in the vanguard of the attack. They were the ones Doc had first talked with in his disguise as a Mandarin. His words had carried weight.

Orientals are fatalists. They do not fear death, they came on, despite the terrible havoc wreaked in their ranks. By pure weight of numbers, it was apparent that sooner or later they would reach the top of the cliff.

THE MOUNTAIN MONSTER

The masked man could picture what would happen then. His face quivered beneath the black cloth.

He caught Doc Savage, thrust him before him like a shield, pulled him to the edge of the cliff. A small microphone was thrust into his fist by Barge Deeter.

"Halt!" he roared. His voice was magnified a thousand times, echoed through the canyon. The very unexpectedness of it caused fighters to ease trigger fingers. Silence fell. Eyes turned upward.

There they saw, apparently, a big, fat Oriental, the one who had stirred them into revolt.

"I have Doc Savage!" the voice roared on. "He was the one who misled you! Now he is to die! Look!"

Gunmen reached forward, tore the Oriental disguise from Doc. He stood forth, his magnificent bronze frame upright, his features calm.

Startled exclamations came from the packed ranks beneath. There was a sigh, almost of awe. Every one in those ranks had heard of Doc Savage, feared him. None, really, could picture the bronze man being a prisoner, even though Barge Deeter had said he had been captured.

But there he was. Plainly a captive. And he was in the hands of the boss. That meant he would be fed to The Monster. The threat the fake Oriental had warned about lost its force. All knew that when The Monster fed on the heart of a bronze-haired man, it would no longer terrorize any one.

Cheers rang from the thousands below where oaths and bullets had resounded only seconds before.

Tension relaxed in the masked man's frame. He had gambled, and he had won. Confidently he stepped forward, lifted the microphone again. His voice rolled forth.

"I do not know what lies you were told to cause you to revolt, but you can see your fears were needless!" he bellowed.

"The peril we faced the peril of the bronze devil is past. In just a few moments you will have the pleasure of seeing him die."

He paused dramatically. "You will have the pleasure of watching him being fed to The Monster!"

A tremendous burst of sound came from the throats of the packed thousands. It was the sound of a giant wolf pack, scenting a kill. It was a roar to chill the blood.

Ham and Long Tom looked uneasy. Doc's expression did not change. He seemed aloof, unworried.

NOT many miles away, the last of the Arcadia Valley colonists were pulling out from the place they had once called home. They left sorrowfully, even though fear tugged at their hearts.

Here they had found peace for a little time until the terror came. Hope had risen again with the arrival of Doc Savage. That hope had died, too.

Only a twisted mass of metal remained of the bronze man's plane. The bronze man himself and his aides had vanished as utterly as if The Monster had swallowed all of them.

THE MOUNTAIN MONSTER

Herb Dwight's eyes were misty and he turned for one last look at the home where he had expected to spend his declining years in peace and happiness. He gulped, pressed his wife's hand tightly.

The Arcadia Valley project had been a worthy one. Now it was all over. It had been crushed by man's greed.

But Herb Dwight did not know that. He did not know of the events occurring in the hidden valley. He only knew that hope was gone.

In the cities, men were shaking their heads as they read of the latest appearance of The Monster. An element of doubt had crept into the stories now. It seemed that someone no one appeared to know just who had given out a story that The Monster was just an invention of the colonists.

According to this story, the colonists really hadn't liked the project, had been hunting for excuses to get out. They had concocted a weird tale, and even had convinced the press of it for days. Actually, the mysterious authority went on, the colonists were ungrateful for all the government had done for them.

The man with the black mask might have explained that report if he had wished. He had issued orders to a big battery of press agents to see that it was circulated. Not content with depriving the colonists of their homes, he wished to make them appear ungrateful as well.

But there was a reason for that. With Doc Savage in his hands and the colonists gone, he wanted the story of The Monster to disappear from the press. He wanted no more investigation.

"Just a bunch of bums," men were sneering to their neighbors as they heard the colonists were leaving their homes for no reason at all. "Here they had a chance to live better than we do, and they run off."

The fleeing colonists didn't know that, either. But some of them knew there was such a beast. They had seen it.

THE men in the hidden valley knew there was a Monster, also. They had seen it slip from its lair, huge and loathsome, while storms raged. They had smelled its horrible odor, had seen remains of its victims.

"We have won!" the masked man was shrilling happily. "Planes will soon speed out of here again." He had an attentive audience and was making the most of it. "Those of you who paid to be taken to the United States will be taken there. Arms and guns that we have been forced to keep here, will be sent on to their destination. The uprising in Asia can come off as planned." He paused, shouted loudly.

"And all because of The Monster!"

"Who in reality is no monster at all!"

The masked man jumped as if a sword had been thrust into him. The last words had thundered out of the microphone, had crashed into the valley through the loud-speaker. They had come in his voice.

But he had not spoken them!

Doc Savage stood silent. But Ham and Long Tom gulped suddenly. The bronze man's ventriloquism was at work again.

THE MOUNTAIN MONSTER

"I have fooled you with my fake monster, even as I fooled the colonists of Arcadia Valley," the voice went on. The masked man's face was purple under the black cloth.

"I trick every one, even my friends. I have told you no one could escape The Monster. That is not so."

The masked man whirled. He had fathomed the secret of the strange voice. He also knew that Doc was one of the world's greatest when it came to imitating and throwing voices.

"Fools!" he shrieked. "It is the bronze man speaking, not I! And I shall show you he lies!"

A puzzled murmuring came from beneath. Some of those in the crowd below were remembering things that made it seem Doc Savage might have spoken the truth.

"No one can escape The Monster!" the masked man howled. "And I plan no tricks. You are my friends; I would not fool you!"

"He would fool every one, if he could!" the loudspeakers echoed.

Men grabbed Doc and his aides, forced them up the path that led toward the big den the den where The Monster lived.

And then a strange thing occurred.

A figure raced from that den. It was a hairy figure, with long arms that reached almost to the ground as it sped along with a queer, shuffling gait. Tiny eyes, almost hidden in pits of gristle, gleamed redly.

It was Monk!

"I've solved it!" the hairy chemist shouted. "I've solved it!"

Then all hell broke loose.

Chapter XIX. THE MONSTER DINES

THE masked man was really to blame. The crowd below surged forward at the unexpected appearance of Monk. The masked man lost his head. He thought the packed thousands were attacking. He shouted an order.

Gunmen lining the cliff turned loose with submachine guns.

Nothing could have prevented the terrible massacre after that. Doc's words were still ringing in the ears of the crooks. The firing of the machine guns bore out those words.

A horrible, screeching wail burst from their throats.

They rushed forward.

The masked man saw that he had lost. Barge Deeter was already running as fast as he could. The masked man whirled, pulled out a gun, looked for Doc.

THE MOUNTAIN MONSTER

The bronze man was no longer there.

With the speed of light the bronze man's hands had come free. He loosed Ham in almost the same instant, pushed tools into Ham's fists. The dapper lawyer understood.

As Doc ripped free the bonds that had held Barbara Hughes, Ham attacked the iron collar about Long Tom's neck.

Monk rushed up, his homely face alight. Ham scarcely glanced at him. Far be it from him to let Monk know how much he had worried when he had thought the chemist dead.

Doc dived back up the path, up toward the den where The Monster lived.

The masked man did not see him. He howled with rage, rushed into a small cave. He pulled a lever there.

A horrible, foul, sickly sweet odor flooded the canyon suddenly.

Shrieks and screams came from the charging thousands. For a moment they paused. Their voices stopped, as the deadly effect of that odor went to work, paralyzing their vocal cords.

Then the second effect of the odor was apparent. It exerted its peculiar, hypnotic spell. It attracted its victims, made them come right toward it.

A sob came from the masked man. He had forgotten that, had thought only of stopping the mob.

DOC caught a whiff of the peculiar scent. His hands darted to the belt about his waist, yanked out several small cylinders. A hissing sound came. Gas poured from the miniature tanks in Doc's hands. Others of his group, who had temporarily been under the spell of the sweet odor, snapped back to life. They raced after him.

Doc had long ago solved the secret of The Monster's odor, had prepared an antidote. That antidote neutralized the queer effects of The Monster's smell.

A terrible, frantic scream came from behind them.

Ham looked over one shoulder; his face blanched.

The mob had reached the top of the cliff, had reached the masked man.

Even as Ham looked, the mask was torn from the man's face, his clothing was ripped from his body. In less than seconds the man was literally torn apart by the fear-maddened throng.

Ham gulped. He had recognized that man. He had known him.

Doc was running ahead, sure-footedly, and as if he knew exactly where he was going. Long Tom, Monk and Barbara Hughes wondered at that, but did not question. They followed him as fast as they could. Chemistry had picked up Habeas Corpus, was carrying the pig so he could make better time.

Then Doc stopped. He was almost to the open den of The Monster. And he was directly under the peculiar open space there that led up to the sky, the open space The Monster used when it made its raids.

THE MOUNTAIN MONSTER

AN incredulous gasp came from the girl. Doc was going straight up into the air!

The bronze man seemed to be floating upward at first. Then the girl saw that his arms and legs were moving. As she came closer, she understood why.

Doc was climbing a cable. That cable had been so painted that it was practically invisible. It led high up into the air.

Even Long Tom and Ham showed surprise when they saw what was there.

A small dirigible floated gently in the sky.

Monk grinned, started to speak, but there was no time. Men, peering from the dirigible, watching the fight below, had spotted Doc. The bronze man might need help. The hairy chemist went up the cable as easily as did Chemistry immediately behind him.

Doc needed no help. While a still-startled crew was wondering if it was seeing things, the bronze man landed among them. Time was short. The howling mob would reach the others on the ground in the space of seconds.

So Doc wasted no time. His long arms floated out, his iron-cabled fists smashed into jaws. A gun was pulled from one killer's hand; the killer himself almost went off the dirigible in trying to catch his balance. Doc's fingers caught him at the base of the skull before he could move.

The others gave up. They could not withstand the bronze demon who seemed everywhere at once.

When Monk and Chemistry arrived, the fighting was over.

They wasted no time in conversation. Ropes were dropped; Ham fastened Barbara Hughes to one end, put Habeas in her arms. They were whisked aboard. Then Ham and Long Tom came up, hand over hand.

Beneath them, a fear-stricken man ran by, dived into the den where The Monster was.

It was Barge Deeter.

"And all the time I thought he might be the real criminal," the girl said.

"No," corrected Doc. "He was only a lieutenant. The real villain was Soung Percill."

THE cable holding the dirigible was cut loose, slowly the big gas bag rose into the air. Doc and his men had a dirigible of their own. They had no difficulty in operating this one.

"How did you know it was Soung Percill?" the girl asked when the first rush of work was over.

"His escape on the way to the crematory was obviously faked," Doc said. "He wanted to be thought dead in case you ever returned to Chicago, and Barge Deeter did not want to kill you. And, also, Percill was afraid Johnny and Renny might come after him if they thought he had killed me."

THE MOUNTAIN MONSTER

"If everything quieted down later, he could reappear and say he had been kidnapped. I recognized his voice when orders were given from the observation room of the crematory. He probably came in aboard the same plane you did, but remained out of sight."

"And he had been a mysterious figure in New York's Chinatown for some time," Long Tom put in. "We all knew that. His pretense at being an archaeologist was only a screen. Half Oriental, half white, he combined the worst features of both. It is easy to see he was plotting to get his grip on Asia, probably intended to foment rebellions there with his crook army, and establish himself as an emperor."

The girl sighed. "It has all been so fast, it is hard to think." Her eyes fell on Monk, and she gulped suddenly.

"B—but where did you come from?"

"Seized by The Monster," Monk grinned, "but they decided to let me live. They thought they might use me as a trading basis if Doc got too tough for them."

"But, what "

Monk led her to the window of the dirigible, pointed below. Far beneath them, was a huge, monstrous shape. It was in the shape of a giant spider. It had eight legs.

It swung from beneath the dirigible by long cables. It had been whipped out of its den as the dirigible rose.

"A fake," Monk explained. "Built like Hollywood builds freak prehistoric beasts, this thing hung from under the dirigible. Men were inside it, could talk by telephone to those in the dirigible."

"Then that explains why it fled when the Very light went on," Ham gasped. "The men were afraid we would see the cables and know it was a fake."

"It explains many things," Doc said quietly. "It explains why it could only be used in a storm, when thunder hid the sound of the dirigible's motors, and also let the dirigible hide in the clouds. During the World War, German dirigibles used the same principle, lowering observation cars beneath clouds, while the dirigible itself remained hidden above."

"And that guy that got killed when you were staked down, the one with the portable radio, he had been sending messages, telling The Monster when to come," Monk explained. "They weren't afraid of the Indians; they left this valley alone. But white men pay no attention to superstition, and it was only a question of time until some colonist learned what was going on. They had to drive the colonists out."

"But but the odor," the girl exclaimed.

Ham looked out a window of the dirigible. His face turned green suddenly, he walked away. Monk looked at him curiously.

"Doc, I think, figured that out quick," Monk said.

The bronze man nodded. "A combination of chemicals was used," he explained. "Musk was one, which attracted Chemistry. A nauseous gas was another. The third was new, is used by physicians when they wish to hypnotize patients preparatory to operations."

THE MOUNTAIN MONSTER

"And you knew what it was all along?" the girl asked.

"Soung Percill was the real monster," Doc said softly. "He terrorized a colony of worthy people. Yes, the hair that John Alden sent was the real clue. John Alden mailed that from Salt Lake City with his letter telling what he had seen. Barge Deeter made repeated efforts to regain it."

Ham gulped. He thought that rather an understatement.

There was silence for a moment. Thoughts turned to the colonists. Those colonists would be back in their homes by to-morrow, safe and happy again. They would have their chance for real, wholesome lives. The criminals, those who had not killed each other, were trapped in the hidden canyon. Federal men would pick them up.

Long Tom sighed happily. The case was over.

"And Barge Deeter, I wonder what became of him?" the girl said reflectively.

Doc Savage did not reply. He was operating the dirigible. Perhaps that was the reason. But Ham thought there was another reason. He gulped, glanced once more out the window at the huge, lumbering shape of the mechanical monster, dangling beneath them.

A body was half in, half out the jaws of The Monster. Those jaws could work without injuring the victim, but they could also rend and tear. Mangling machinery had been installed there by Soung Percill.

Barge Deeter had known The Monster would be lifted up, would float from the valley of hell; he had tried to climb inside the fake beast. Somehow, he had tripped the mangling machinery. His body was horribly torn.

The sunlight flashed briefly through his yellow hair.

For a moment, that hair appeared bronze.

The Indian legend had been borne out. The Monster had seized a bronze-haired man. It would never bother Arcadia Valley again.

THE END