

THE BOSS OF TERROR

A Doc Savage Adventure By Kenneth Robeson

Originally published in *DOC SAVAGE Magazine* May 1940



A Complete Book-length Novel

by **KENNETH ROBESON**

*Doc Savage and his pals fight
creepiness with brains and brawn.*

Chapter I THE LOONS

THE ambulance was traveling about fifty when it took a corner and missed a lamp-post scarcely more than a quarter of an inch.

The passenger spoke to the driver.

"The stork that brought you," he said, "should have been arrested for smuggling dope."

The driver grinned. He looked startlingly like an ape when he grinned—and before he grinned, for that matter.

The ambulance lined out on a straight stretch through the park and the

"Don't you recognize me, Long Tom?" the chauffeur asked suddenly.

The electrician gave a start, then stared unbelievably.

"Good grief—no!" he exploded. "Say, that disguise is all right."

"It fooled the butler, so it seems that it might get by."

"I didn't know you."

The chauffeur pointed at the moose head. "What were you doing over there?"

"Rigging a microphone in the ear of the moose," Long Tom explained. "Makes a first-class spot for it. The ear of this moose was acoustically designed by nature for the purpose of picking up sound. With that microphone deep in the ear, and the wires run under the moose hair and through a hole in the wall—there's a closet nobody uses in the back, and I'm taking the lead-out through that—I should be able to make a phonograph recording of everything that anybody says in this room."

"Nobody suspects you?"

"Why should they? I'm supposed to be checking over the air-conditioning installation."

"How many rooms have you wired for eavesdropping?"

"About half of them. The ones they use the most. This is the last one I intend to wire."

The chauffeur was silent a moment. He might have been thinking.

"Do you know Annie Spain?" he asked abruptly.

"Who's she?" Long Tom shook his head. "No, I don't know anybody by that name."

"A very pretty dark-haired, dark-eyed girl who wears a blue tailored suit so plain that it must have cost two hundred dollars."

"I still don't know her."

"I see. Have you seen John R. Smith yet?"

"From a distance only."

"How is he?"

"Scared green," said Long Tom.

"Annie Spain is apparently well acquainted with John R. Smith," the chauffeur said thoughtfully.

The two men parted.

JOHN R. SMITH was one of the industrial powers of the United States—more properly, of the North and South Americas—and therefore frequently in trade magazines and confidential reports emanating from the New York and Buenos Aires stock exchanges, although on the other hand neither his pictures nor news about his personal doings were often seen in the daily newspapers, this last being true not so much because he was a modest man, but rather for the reason that too much newspaper publicity does very little for exceptionally rich men other than set them up as a target for moochers and skin-game artists. John R. Smith was certainly not modest. No man could be as rich as he had become and be truly modest. To get as much money as John R. Smith had, you needed to be convinced in your heart that you were a greater organizer than Napoleon and gifted with unparalleled courage.

John R. Smith was more often called Radiator Smith. Almost no one, except the people who worked for him, called him anything else. Persons in his employ were afraid to call him Radiator Smith.

But Radiator Smith he was. He was Radiator Smith in the John Smith Club to which he belonged. The John Smith Club had as members only men whose names were John Smith, and the John Smiths were designated with nicknames according to their professions—there was Insurance Smith, Bank Teller Smith, Broker Smith, Sailboat Smith, and a lot of other Smiths in the John Smith Club. John R. Smith was Radiator Smith because manufacturing radiators happened to be his principal business.

Radiators made in Radiator Smith's plant were used the world over in automobiles, airplanes, air-conditioning, and in whatever fashion radiators are employed.

Like many rich men, Radiator Smith had a no-good son. The son was named Maurice, and he and his father were the sole occupants—if one didn't count thirty-seven servants—of the huge mansion on upper Fifth Avenue. The other Smiths of the Radiator Smith clan had all passed on to the other world.

With no taste for the job whatever, Long Tom began scrutinizing the corpse. But suddenly his interest became so aroused that he forgot his squeamishness.

"It was lightning!" he croaked.

"It was," Doc agreed, "according to every indication."

There was a commotion in the hall—a machine-gun rattle of footsteps, a rasping sound as the runner slid to make the turn into the room—and the homely Monk popped inside.

"Some guy makin' his getaway, Doc!" Monk exploded. "Takin' a sneak through a window!"

"You didn't seize him?"

"Thought you might want to follow him," Monk said.

"Nice idea. You fellows stay here and explain to the police."

"But how'll we explain it? We don't know what it's all about." Monk looked helpless.

Chapter IV THE FURNITURE POLISHER

THE man had climbed out of a third-story window and slid down a drainpipe, thinking he was unobserved, and had crawled across a narrow strip of concrete driveway to the basement window of an adjacent house—this structure was an apartment building—which he had opened. He had vanished into the basement, walked through, and eventually found his way out the front door of the apartment house, as innocent as could be. He walked down the street, careful not to hurry.

Doc Savage spotted the man—he and Ham were idling across the street, at the edge of Central Park—as soon as the fellow appeared.

"You stay here," Doc told Ham. "See that Monk doesn't get in trouble with the police when he tries to explain this."

"I'll do what I can"—Ham sounded hopeful—"to see that the homely mug gets in jail."

Ham Brooks—his full name was Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks, and he was one of the country's leading lawyers, as well as a Doc Savage aid—conducted a kind of perpetual quarrel with

the apish Monk Mayfair. He had never been known to make a civil remark to Monk, a favor which Monk had returned. There was a strange sort of squabbling—each had risked his life to save the other on assorted previous occasions.

Doc Savage followed the man who had slipped out of the Radiator Smith mansion.

The fugitive was long and thin enough to be made out of fence rails, but he had a round face that was rather babylike, except that it was wrinkled. An elderly grapefruit would be a fitting article to compare to his head. His nose was negligible, although his mouth was ample and his eyes large and innocent. He wore a suit of coveralls, and carried under one arm a canvas bag that was somewhat shabby.

The fugitive crossed Fifth Avenue, entered Central Park, and quickened his pace enough to show that he had a definite destination. He hugged his canvas bag tighter.

The sky was darkening, for the sun had descended behind the thicket of skyscraper spires across the park to the west. It would soon be dark. The street lamps along the park driveways and sidewalks had already been turned on. The nurses and their baby carriages had disappeared for the day. There were a few bums with newspapers, looking for soft benches.

The man Doc was following traveled faster. He seemed to be walking about as fast as he could.

He stopped and bent over beside the walk, ostensibly to tie his shoe, but actually to pick up a rock and put it in the canvas bag.

DOC SAVAGE got off the sidewalk and kept behind trees. Doc was not a conspicuous figure. He was still partially in disguise, of course—his hair was stained a black that contrasted greatly with its usual bronze hue, and his skin was also stained so that it was somewhat sallow instead of being a bronze that nearly matched his hair—so he was not recognized. Had he not been thus partially disguised, there was strong likelihood that some park loiterer would have recognized him. The bronze

man was much better known than he would have liked to be.

Newspaper and magazine articles had publicized him as that strange and remarkable individual who made a business of righting wrongs and punishing evildoers who happened to be outside the law.

Doc continued to follow the lathy man with the worn canvas bag.

The fugitive came to one of the lagoons in Central Park.

He threw the bag as far out in the water as he could pitch it, when he thought no one was watching.

The man went on. Doc let him get out of sight, then waded out in the lagoon—it was not deep; the depth of most of the little lakes in Central Park is deceptive—and located the bag, got it and carried it ashore.

The bag contained the kind of stuff used by a furniture refinisher. Among the contents was a bottle of shellac and a bottle of alcohol.

THE long, thin fugitive gave a nervous jump when Doc Savage appeared from behind a bush and stood suddenly in his path. Doc said, "Just a minute, if you don't mind."

The fugitive stared at the canvas bag—the one he'd thrown into the lake—which Doc was carrying.

"What's the idea?" he demanded uneasily.

Doc said, "A little over half the furniture in the room where Maurice Smith was found dead had been freshly polished with shellac and alcohol." Doc moved the canvas bag pointedly. "There is shellac and alcohol in here."

"Why, I . . . well—"

"Also," Doc added, "you climbed out of the Smith house through a third-story window and slid down a drainpipe."

The man swallowed. "It looks rather bad for me, I'm afraid."

"It sure does."

"I shouldn't have taken anybody's advice," the man muttered. "I should have stayed."

Doc said, "Suppose you tell a coherent story."

"My name is Oxalate Smith."

"Smith? Any kin to Radiator Smith?"

"No. The world is full of Smiths, you know."

"Yes. What were you doing in Radiator Smith's house?"

"I was hired to polish the furniture. I'm a furniture repairman and refinisher. I also have a small shop dealing in antique furniture. The butler—Jonas is his name—will tell you that he hired me."

"Why did you flee the house?"

Oxalate Smith twisted his hands together. His face was frightened.

"I was polishing the furniture in the library when Maurice Smith came in. I was a little over half done polishing, but Maurice Smith ordered that I leave the room, so naturally I did so. He told me I could come back and finish my polishing later. I went upstairs to work in one of the guest parlors."

"And then?"

"And then I heard that Maurice Smith had been murdered in the room where I had just been working."

"Murdered? Who told you it was a murder?"

"The girl—Annie Spain, she said her name was."

"Annie Spain?"

"She came to me upstairs. She said that Maurice Smith had been murdered, and they were accusing me. She said that they had found that potassium cyanide had been mixed with my furniture polish, and that it had killed Maurice Smith. She said they were going to have the police arrest me. She advised me to flee. I . . . well, I was terrified. I did as she suggested. I took my bag along, and threw it in the lagoon in the park, because I didn't want the police to find the potassium cyanide in my furniture polish."

Doc Savage shook his head slowly.

"You don't know much about potassium cyanide, do you?" he asked.

"I've always heard it was a deadly poison."

"It is. But you could hardly kill a man by putting it in polish then applying the polish to a piece of furniture which he used."

"Then I didn't—"

"Furthermore, Maurice Smith wasn't poisoned. He was killed by what apparently was a bolt of lightning."

"But—"



The fugitive gave a nervous jump when Doc suddenly appeared and stood in his path!

"You come back to the Radiator Smith house," Doc said. "If your story checks out, you will probably be turned loose."

THE police had arrived at the Smith mansion and taken over. Monk, Ham and Long Tom were left with nothing to do. They met Doc Savage and Oxalate Smith on the sidewalk in front of the house.

"What do the police think?" Doc asked.

Monk said, "They don't know what to think. They're in there trying to figure out what killed Maurice Smith. We told 'em it was a lightning bolt, and they threw us out. They think we're crazy."

"Did you tell them why we are here?" Doc inquired.

"No. We don't know ourselves, do we?"

"Only that Radiator Smith got in touch with me by telephone, almost hysterical with fear, and wanted us to help him—and be very careful that no one knew we were helping him."

"I didn't tell the police anything."

Doc said thoughtfully, "I had better remove the rest of this disguise, or the police will get suspicious and take up our time asking us a lot of questions for which we haven't got answers. Where did you leave your car, Monk?"

"Two blocks south, just off Fifth."

Doc Savage walked to the car, a large sedan which was average-looking in size and color—only a close examination would show that the machine was armor-plated and had bullet-resistant glass—and climbed into the rear. Monk had returned

continued on crosstown. The cross streets were darker, and as he came nearer the East River, they took on a slum character.

The abrupt change from bright lights, rich apartments, regal homes, to a dismal slum section was typical of metropolitan New York, where rich men and beggar rub shoulders in the streets, and their homes do the same thing.

There were unpleasant odors, there was gloom, and the sidewalk was none too smooth.

The club came out of a darkened doorway. Maybe it was a fist. Oxalate Smith didn't see it, so he was not sure; later, when he examined his bruises on his jaw and found several marks that might have been made by knuckles, he suspected it was a fist.

Something came up and hit him very hard. It was the sidewalk.

A shadowy form—the individual who had put the slug on Oxalate Smith—unblended from the darkness of the doorway, and doubled over the unconscious man. Oxalate Smith was lifted. He was carried down the sidewalk a few yards to an unlighted car and dumped quickly inside.

The assailant stood by the car for a time, watching and listening, but there was no alarm. The assailant climbed into the back seat of the machine, where Oxalate Smith had been dumped.

IN time—it must have been about half an hour later, he afterward concluded—Oxalate Smith regained his senses. A policeman was shaking him.

"Here, here," the policeman was saying. "You can't sleep on the sidewalk this way."

Oxalate Smith opened his mouth, then shut it. He clenched his teeth, trying to clear his head. The interior of his skull felt as if several blacksmiths were at work upon it. His stomach didn't feel so good, either.

"You sick, or something?" demanded the patrolman. "You was layin' here. Maybe I better call an ambulance."

Oxalate Smith got his wits organized.

"No," he said. "I don't need an ambulance."

"What ails you?"

Oxalate Smith made his voice thick and uncertain, like that of an intoxicated man.

"Jush one lil' drinky too mush," he said. "All of sudden, feel shleepy."

This was perfectly reasonable to the cop. He encountered drunks every night. His practice was to throw a scare into them so they would go home.

"I'm gonna call the wagon," the patrolman said, "and toss you in jail."

"No, no," said Oxalate Smith wildly. "Lemme go home."

The cop made a business of scowling and considering the point.

"Beat it," he said. "If I find you again, I'll run you

Oxalate Smith heaved to his feet and stumbled away. He was very glad to escape.

He'd had enough of the police this night.

"Ugh!" Oxalate Smith groaned, and held his stomach. His stomach felt terrible.

He rounded a corner, slowed up and explored in his pockets. The reason for the attack puzzled him. But it became clear when he discovered his pockets were empty. His billfold was gone, among other things.

"Some damned footpad," he complained. "As if I didn't have enough trouble!"

Chapter VI

THE TRAILING OF ANNIE SPAIN

JONAS, the butler, looked over the upturned end of his nose and said, "The master does not wish to see you, sir. He asks that you kindly leave the house, sir."

"He does, does he?" Doc said thoughtfully. "And why? He seemed very anxious to have us out here when he called on the telephone this morning."

"Begging your pardon, sir. But the master says he never sent for you. It must have been someone else."

Doc Savage walked past the butler, and the rather officious servant made a move to seize the bronze man, but Monk got in his way and exhibited a large hairy fist which had the properties—color and hardness—of a brickbat. "You just keep

your shirt on," Monk advised. "We want to talk to this Radiator Smith."

The creator of the Smith radiator fortune was seated in one of the upstairs sunrooms. He looked up dully when they entered. He was pale; perspiration stood on his forehead as if he had a fever and it was breaking. The sinews were ridged out on his hands as they gripped the chair arm.

"You!" he said shrilly. "I told the police and the servants to keep you out of here."

Doc said, "You have recovered from your shock sufficiently to talk. We want to know why you called for us."

"I didn't," the wealthy man said flatly.

"You have a distinctive voice," Doc said quietly. "We made a recording of your telephone call, so we can let you listen to your own voice if that would refresh your memory."

"It wouldn't—" Radiator Smith swallowed. "It must have been someone imitating my voice."

"What killed your son?"

The man tightened and breathed heavily for a moment. "I do not know."

"Why was he killed?"

The other shook his head dully.

Long Tom Roberts said, "I don't know whether you know it or not, but Doc Savage saved your life. You had an attack when your . . . when Maurice was killed. Doesn't that make any difference to you?"

Radiator Smith clamped his lips and said nothing.

Without pursuing the line of questioning further, Doc Savage turned and left the room. Homely Monk Mayfair overhauled the bronze man on the stairs.

"Doc, we could grab him and give him a shot of truth serum," Monk suggested.

"Later."

"Why not now?"

"His physical condition is still bad. He couldn't stand truth serum. The stuff is hard on the human system, you know."

In the central reception room downstairs, the big room just inside the main entrance, they found a number of police technicians gathered. Apparently they had finished their work at the Smith house.

Doc asked, "What was the verdict?"

"Killed by lightning," a man said gloomily. "Now it's up to someone to explain how lightning got into the room without leaving any marks, on a day when there wasn't any lightning."

There seemed to be nothing more that Doc Savage and his three aids could do. They were stymied. There was a perplexing mystery, but no clues, no leads they could follow.

"We might as well go get some sleep," Monk said glumly.

They walked to the sedan and climbed in. Doc drove. The car was parked on a one-way street, and they waited at the junction with Fifth Avenue, at the corner nearest to Radiator Smith's great house, for the traffic light to change.

It was quite dark and clouds hid the stars. There was some traffic, not as much as usual. Across Fifth Avenue, on the wide sidewalk that paralleled Central Park, there was a peanut wagon presided over by a thin figure which was bundled in rags.

"Stop at that peanut cart," Monk suggested. "I want to get some peanuts for Habeas Corpus."

Habeas Corpus was Monk's pet pig.

Doc stopped the sedan beside the peanut wagon. An overhanging tree made the spot particularly gloomy, and the thin piping whistle of the peanut roaster was a ghostly sound.

While Monk was buying five sacks of peanuts, Doc made two rather strange remarks. He made them in a loud voice.

"Oxalate Smith certainly laid the crime on Annie Spain," he said. "If the police catch Annie Spain, they will probably electrocute her."

A moment later, he made the second remark.

"Oxalate Smith has been gone about an hour," he stated.

Monk got in the car with his peanuts, and Doc drove down the street.

"Doc, what did you mean by the talk about Oxalate Smith?" Ham asked in a puzzled voice.

Instead of answering, the bronze man took the first turn into a side street and yanked the sedan to a stop. He said, "Hand me a portable radio."

Long Tom passed a pocket radio outfit from the back seat. The apparatus was small, about the size of a folding

camera, but it was capable of transmitting and receiving over very short wave lengths for distances up to fifty miles.

"Keep in touch with me," the bronze man said, and got out of the car.

"What's up?" Monk barked.

"That peanut vender," Doc said, "was Annie Spain."

There was astounded silence in the car as he left. Doc ran to the corner, slowed his pace to a more decorous one, and entered a cab. He rode in the cab past the peanut cart. The cart was in motion. The vender was wheeling it away from the spot where it had been standing—a spot where the Radiator Smith mansion could be watched to best advantage.

Well ahead of the peanut wagon, Doc alighted from the taxi, took to the park and loitered in its shadows, watching. His guess had been good. The vender wheeled the cart just far enough away that its being found abandoned in front of the Smith place would not seem suspicious.

The vender slipped into the park shadows. It was Annie Spain, all right. She slipped out of her ragged coat, stripped off the ancient trousers, got rid of a cap and bulky shoes. Under these garments she had been wearing her expensive tailored outfit. Her high-heeled slippers had been concealed somewhere around the cart. She put them on.

When she headed for the street, Doc ran, got there ahead of her and engaged a cab without being discovered.

THE facilities of New York City's most densely populated section—this is Manhattan Island—for handling automobile traffic are generally conceded to exceed those of any other of the world's great metropolitan districts. The paramount artery for traffic in Manhattan is the elevated speedway running almost the entire length of the island on the west side, and leading northward to a system of scientifically designed parkways which enable the motorist to travel from Manhattan northward for a distance of more than fifty miles almost without pause and at a comparatively high rate of speed.

Annie Spain's taxicab followed the parkway well up into Westchester, the county of impressive suburban homes. The

cab finally turned off, pulling into a drive-in restaurant.

The cab driver entered the restaurant. The place was equipped with a bar, and he began loafing there.

Annie Spain walked along a side road where darkness was almost complete. She used a tiny flashlight, the beam darting about nervously. Doc trailed her.

Doc used his little radio and told Monk and the others about the roadside restaurant and the cab driver idling in the bar.

"Find out what the girl told the driver to do," he instructed.

"Righto," Monk said. "Here's the restaurant now. I guess we weren't far behind you."

Annie Spain took a left turn. It was a winding road that mounted up an abrupt hill. Thick foliage banked each side of the road, then abruptly there was a stone wall and an arched gateway.

The young woman did not go near the gateway.

The gate was lighted brightly, and two men stood there, one holding a high-powered hunting rifle, the other an automatic shotgun.

Careful that the guards did not see her, Annie Spain reached the wall some two hundred feet from the gate, and cautiously climbed it.

Doc was close to her, and instead of waiting until she got over to climb the wall himself, did so while she was getting over, knowing there was less chance of the young woman hearing him at the moment.

Once across the wall, Annie Spain spent some moments in listening. During this interval, Monk's voice came over Doc's little radio, which he had tuned down until the speaker was hardly audible.

"The cab driver says the girl told him to wait," Monk explained. "Wait all night, if necessary. She gave him a ten-dollar bill and showed him a second one. She must be flush with money."

Doc whispered into the microphone, giving the location of the estate in which he now crouched. "Get up here," he said. "But do not show yourselves, and wait outside the gates."

"Seems like we're closin' in on somethin', huh?" Monk said.

THE estate was as rich in a rural fashion as Radiator Smith's was palatial in the city. There was probably ten acres of yard. The house stood like a great dark block of stone on the top of a hill, dappled with white panels that were lighted windows. It was very late at night for so many windows to be lighted, particularly since there was no outward evidence of a party.

Annie Spain got close to the house and began examining the lighted windows. She went from one window to another, then appeared to locate one that was going to hold lasting interest for her, because she climbed a small tree.

Doc puzzled about the tree-climbing for a moment before he suspected the reason. Then he climbed a tree himself—his tree was farther back, but afforded almost as good a view of the lighted window as the other one. His guess proved correct. The grounds were patrolled.

Two watchmen passed. They had shotguns and flashlights, but went by without discovering either Doc or the girl.

The window was bulletproof, Doc saw. Light from within shone through in a manner that showed the glass had such thickness that it could only be bulletproof.

The room beyond was a comfortable study with a fireplace and pieces of furniture that were large. A desk occupied the central space. It was a vast piece.

The man who sat at the desk was likewise vast. Probably he could have lost a hundred pounds of weight and felt much better. His chins hung over his collar and his stomach pushed against the desk. When he put his hands down on the desk, they spread out like toy balloons filled with jelly.

The man was working—glancing over reports, signing papers, occasionally picking up the mouthpiece of a dictaphone to dictate. He used the telephone. He was smoking cigars, rich-looking cigars, each of which came in an individual glass container. The air in the room had a faintly bluish tinge because of the tobacco smoke.

After Doc had watched the fat man working for a while, he realized the fellow was scared. Terrified.

Also, he recognized the man. This man was named Smith, too. Doc had never met him. His name was J. Stillman Smith, and the newspapers called him Sell'em-short Smith, because of his stock-market manipulations.

There was a rumor that Sell'em-short Smith had made in excess of a hundred million dollars during various phases of the business depression, just by selling stocks and bonds short. The Federal government had once tried to indict him for something or other that had to do with raiding the stock market.

There were a lot of Smiths getting involved in the mystery, Doc reflected.

He was thinking about that when Sell'em-short Smith began dying before his eyes.

Chapter VII ANOTHER SMITH DEAD

SELL-'EM-SHORT SMITH was talking over the telephone when the halo appeared around his head. The halo appeared suddenly—a strange phenomenon of luminous character, almost as bright as flame because it was plainly discernible in the lighted room. It was not flame. Rather, it was a weird bluish light that abruptly surrounded the fat man's head.

The fat man did not move for moments. He sat rigidly, gripping the telephone. His mouth was roundly open, and his eyeballs were slowly protruding more and more.

The aura of eerie bluish light around his head increased in volume, became a kind of fantastic corona of luminance, not bright enough to cast a light itself, yet very discernible in the brilliantly illuminated room.

There was a sound now. A low kind of a sound that might have been made by a locust, although of a somewhat faster beat than a locust note. It had started in a very muted degree, as if coming up out of inaudibility, but now it was louder, and there seemed to be many of the sounds; or possibly it was only the echo of the sound itself which made it seem many.

The butler pointed to the mounted head of a tiger on the wall. The tiger had been an enormous thing; the taxidermist had managed to capture a little of its ferocity.

“The master killed that tiger after it charged him and knocked him down,” the butler explained. “He had climbed two of the highest mountains in the world in his time. As you know, sir, mountain climbing is not a pastime indulged in by—ah—pantywaists, if I may say so.”

“You have no idea what scared him?”

The butler shook his head. “I know just one thing that might help.”

“What is that?”

“I brought the master the newspapers tonight,” the butler explained. “They contained a story about the death of another man named Smith—the son of Mr. John R. Smith, better known as Radiator Smith. The master read that story. He became very pale.”

Doc asked, “Did the two Smiths know each other?”

“I do not think so. I have never heard it mentioned, if they did.”

“Then there was no connection between the two Smiths that you know of?”

“No.”

The dapper Ham said, “But there must be a connection somewhere.”

“Maybe Annie Spain can explain it,” Doc suggested.

They went to the room to which Monk had taken Annie Spain, a rather private room centrally located in the house, a room which had no windows, but depended on circulation from the air-conditioning shafts for its air.

Monk was standing outside the door with the makings of a spectacular black eye.

Chapter VIII THE SERUM TRICK

“WHAT happened to you?” Ham demanded.

“That girl,” Monk said grimly, “hit me with an ash tray.”

Ham grinned widely. Any minor misfortune to Monk always intrigued Ham.

“What were you trying?” Ham asked.

“Nothing,” Monk growled. “We got to talking and I showed her some photographs of me I had in my pocket, and I just remarked that the pictures didn’t do me justice.”

“Then what?”

“She said I needed mercy, not justice, from a photographer.”

“She was right. Then what?”

“I tried to reason with her. I told her fellows like me didn’t grow on trees.”

“And?”

“She said she guessed not. She’d never seen a tree with warts.”

“I’m going to like that girl,” Ham chortled.

“I asked her what was wrong with me,” Monk said gloomily.

“Did she know?”

“She said nothing much, she guessed, although she thought they should have put my nose on my face bottom side up so that I would drown the first time it rained.”

“I’ve often thought the same thing,” Ham declared. “What happened then?”

“She just stood there and looked at me for a minute, then she up and hit me with the ash tray,” Monk explained. “I don’t understand it.”

“If you would look in a mirror,” Ham said, “you would not be so puzzled.”

Doc pointed at the door. “She is still in there?”

“If she isn’t, she’s seven-eighths ghost,” Monk said. “There are no windows in that room, and this is the only door.”

They tried the door and it was locked. Doc knocked on the panel.

“Who is it?” Annie Spain called.

“Open up and stop this foolishness,” Doc Savage said.

“Oh, it’s you.” The door opened immediately. “Your large monkey of a friend there seems to think he’s a lady-killer,” she said.

She stared at them, obviously wondering what they wanted. She looked remarkably chic, considering what she had been through. She had removed her stockings, which had gotten runs when she climbed the tree, but the fact that her legs were bare did not make the picture less interesting.

The room was comparatively bare, being fitted with two comfortable leather chairs, a table and a pair of reading lamps, which indicated it was a private study. In the corner was a washbasin with hot-and-cold-water faucets. Monk's portable chemical laboratory and a metal equipment case containing stuff they had thought themselves likely to need stood on the table.

"We are ready to ask you questions," Doc Savage told Annie Spain.

"It's about time," Annie said. "Get going on me."

"Monk," Doc said, "get the truth serum out of that equipment case."

ANNIE SPAIN gave a start and frowned unpleasantly. "Truth serum? Say, what is this?"

Doc said, "A long time ago, we discovered that it was practically impossible for us to tell when a woman was lying. They must have been equipped by nature as expert liars."

"I like that!" Annie Spain snapped.

"And so," Doc continued, "we give them truth serum whenever we can."

"Will the stuff hurt me?"

"It will be something like getting drunk, as far as the sensations are concerned. This is an advanced type of truth serum."

"Have I got any choice in this matter?"

"None."

"Let's get it over with, then."

Although Doc Savage's manner indicated that he put full trust in the truth serum, he was fully cognizant of the fact that the stuff had a degree of unreliability. There was nothing magical about it. The truth serum did not work legerdemain in the human mind and in some fashion separate lies from truth, so that only truth came forth; nothing as super-efficient as that. Rather, the serum simply dulled the mental processes to such an extent that the victim could not function enough gimp to think up a lie. The truth was conveniently at hand, so the dazed mind answered with the truth, unable to develop a falsehood.

The effects of the stuff, while not terribly unpleasant, were nevertheless a shock to the human system, and it was not

a good idea to administer it to a person with a weak heart or lowered vitality.

Annie Spain took the stuff. After a while, her eyes became droopy and uncertain in their focusing.

"All right," Monk said. "We're ready to go."

Doc said, "Maybe you had better do the questioning, Monk. She is a little scared of you, hence more likely to answer your questions."

This was a psychological fact that the bronze man had discovered.

Monk got in front of Annie Spain. He said, "Who are you?"

"Annie Spain," said Annie Spain thickly.

"What are you?"

"I'm a young woman."

"What do you do?"

"The best I can."

Monk looked disgusted. Ham said, "You'll have to do better than that, Monk."

Monk made his voice louder and said, "Answer me! What were you doing in Radiator Smith's house?"

"I am a private detective," explained Annie Spain in a rather mushy voice. "I was trying to find out what was wrong with Radiator Smith."

"Was something wrong with him?"

"He was scared."

"How did you know that?"

"I eat in the same restaurant downtown where Radiator Smith eats lunch," Annie Spain said slowly, her eyes closed. "I saw that he was scared. I went over to him and told him what he needed was a good private detective. I asked him to hire me. He swore at me. I knew he was afraid. So I decided to help him anyway."

"Isn't that kind of unusual—helping him anyway?" Monk demanded. "What made you do it?"

"I needed a case. I haven't been making expenses with my detective agency."

"What did you learn?"

"That Radiator Smith was really scared. That a whole bunch of Smiths were in danger, and that the one most in danger, next to Radiator Smith, was Sell-'em-short Smith."

"How did you hear that?"

"Radiator Smith was talking over the telephone. I eavesdropped."

It occurred to Long Tom that he had neglected to inform Doc Savage what he was doing, but there had really been no time for that.

Jonas took an elevator. There was an indicator over the elevator door, and it moved around to nine, indicating the cage had gone to that floor. It made only the one stop—this was an out-and-out break of luck—which indicated that Jonas had been the only passenger.

Long Tom wrote a note on a piece of paper and dropped it in a mailbox.

Then Long Tom took to the stairs. He didn't know but what the elevator operator might be in cahoots with Jonas and the others.

The ninth-floor hallway proved to be full of doors. It offered a problem. Long Tom waited in the stair well. There was to be quite a gathering here, he'd understood from the recording. He hoped Jonas wasn't to be the last one to arrive—

Several minutes later a ratty-looking fellow—"crook" was written all over him—scurried out of the elevator and hurried to a door. He knocked several times, unevenly, in a signal, then disappeared inside.

Long Tom spotted the door, and as soon as it was closed he glided down the corridor. His objective was either one of the doors to the right or left of the one through which the man had disappeared. He reached one of them. It was locked, but the lock was simple, and Long Tom knew something about picking locks. He got the door unfastened.

He opened the door very carefully until he was sure there was darkness inside, then stepped in quickly. The place smelled very faintly of disuse.

It was utterly dark. The complete blackness puzzled Long Tom, for Broadway outside was so bright, and if there was a window—but there wasn't any window. That was it. The whole side of this building was walled up to afford a background for one of the Great White Way's fabulous electric signs. That explained the windowless office.

A crack of light came from under the door to the adjacent office. So there was a door! Growing more elated by the moment, Long Tom tried the door very cautiously—he didn't want them walking in on him—and found it locked.

He attached his eavesdropping device. It consisted of a pickup microphone which was held against the door panel by adhesive strips, the panel serving as a sounding board. There was a small amplifier, a headset and plenty of cord.

Having planted the pick-up, Long Tom struck a match and gave the office a brief examination. There was a yellow oak desk with a desk lamp, some hard chairs, and an elderly rug.

On the desk stood an ordinary crystal microphone on a stand.

Long Tom was ogling the microphone in astonishment when a key clicked in the door lock.

LONG TOM had not become an electrical wizard without learning to think. He made a dive, reached the spot where the cord from the desk lamp plugged into a wall outlet. He pulled the outlet plug out a trifle, whipped a silver half-dollar from his pocket and jammed it against the brass lugs, short-circuiting them. There was a spit of blue flame; somewhere else the faint pop of a fuse blowing.

They wouldn't be able to turn on the lights in here now and discover him.

A moment later, he began to doubt that the lights would have been turned on anyway.

The figure which entered the room—it was outlined briefly against the hall light—was swathed in an enormous tan topcoat of the wrap-around variety. The topcoat collar was turned up; a large hat was yanked down low. The door clicked shut the instant the newcomer was inside.

Astonished, Long Tom realized he not only hadn't recognized the visitor—he didn't even know whether it was man or woman.

He listened in growing amazement.

The visitor lost no time in taking a seat at the desk and beginning to speak into the microphone. First, there was a faint clicking sound. Long Tom knew what that meant when the other began talking. Some kind of gadget—probably a short tin tube—placed between the lips to disguise the whispering.

Whispering! The visitor spoke entirely in a whisper, and it was shrill and unnatural, yet quite understandable. But

whether it was a man or woman talking, it was impossible to tell.

"Are all of you present?" the whisperer asked. "Jonas will you answer? Speak in a loud voice so that you may be heard."

From the other room, Jonas answered, "Everybody here."

Long Tom knew that the whispering was being stepped up by a battery amplifier and put out through a loud-speaker in the adjacent room.

"I have called you here in order to give you certain commands and thus tighten our organization," said the whisper. "As you know, one Smith died this afternoon. Another has also died, as your morning newspapers will reveal. The other Smiths will die as scheduled, and thus everything will continue according to plan. Do not worry about that."

There was a pause. In the adjacent room, the whisper from the loud-speaker must be an eerie thing, and the author of the sound probably knew it. The pause was to let it take full effect.

"More Smiths will die," the whisper continued. "But there are others we will have to include with the Smiths. A man named Doc Savage and his associates."

Long Tom was an impulsive fellow. He decided he'd heard enough. He had the master mind of the gang here in the room with him, so what was the use of fooling around any longer?

Long Tom came up out of the corner where he had been crouching, fished in an underarm holster and brought out an unusual weapon called a supermachine pistol, a gun which Doc Savage had developed. The weapon was capable of firing hundreds of shots a minute; it could put bullets out a great deal faster than a man could feed them into the mechanism with clip magazines, in fact.

Long Tom remembered the jug—the little black thing that Doc had given him. He was supposed to get rid of that as soon as he contacted the culprits. He pulled it out of his pocket. There was a wastebasket close, and he shoved the jug into that.

Then Long Tom started for the figure at the desk—and forgot all about the lamp cord on the floor. His toe hooked it. He practically stood on his head.

His finger tightened on the machine-pistol trigger and it roared like a big bullfiddle.

"Help!" rasped the whispering voice. "The next room to you! South! Help!"

Long Tom fumbled on the floor. He had lost the pistol; the recoil of the thing had made it jump out of his hand.

Before he found the gun, a flashlight beam jumped at him from the desk. The moment the light impaled him, Long Tom surged up and charged. He dived over the desk, hit a figure. They crashed to the floor. The flashlight flew to one side, glanced off the wall and landed so that its beam was pointed partially at their figures, enough that there was light for Long Tom to identify his foe.

"You," Long Tom exploded. "Damned if I'd ever have guessed *you* were the killer!"

There was no more conversation, and not much more action, because Jonas ran in and crashed a chair down on Long Tom's head.

Chapter X DEATH FOR SMITHS

IT was about this time that Doc Savage and Monk Mayfair heard a racket outside Sell-'em-short Smith's house in Westchester. The noise—it was a frenzied pounding—came from the garage; or rather from a room over the garage.

They unlocked the door.

Ham stumbled out. Ham had a skinned place on the side of his head, and a desperate expression.

"Why, shyster, I thought you were supposed to be watching Annie Spain," Monk said. "You took over that job when Long Tom left."

"She hit me with a wrench. Then she locked me in that upstairs garage room, I guess. Anyhow, I was there when I came to my senses."

"Where did she go?"

"If she isn't around, it's obvious. She skipped."

"When did this happen?"

"A good two hours ago. Not very long after Long Tom left."



Long Tom leaped over the desk, hit him!

It was almost dawn when they returned to Doc Savage's headquarters.

The headquarters occupied the eighty-sixth floor of one of the town's most impressive skyscrapers, and consisted of three general divisions—a reception room, a library, and a laboratory where the bronze

man conducted his endless scientific experiments.

They were trying to get some sleep, and keeping each other awake by talking—when Annie Spain turned up. Monk opened the door.

concerned, Doc stalked past a phalanx of secretaries and into the great man's presence without being announced.

Radiator Smith sprang up with a gasp and quickly shoved a bundle of papers into his desk.

Doc wasted no time on politeness. He strode to the desk, pulled the drawer open and took the papers out. Radiator Smith pawed futilely at him, trying to prevent him seeing the documents.

The papers were headed:

OPERATING ORDERS

Doc ran his eyes over them. They were simply typed directions telling Radiator Smith how to run his many enterprises. There was no clue as to who had written them, but it certainly had not been Radiator Smith.

"Give me those!" Radiator Smith gasped.

Doc returned the documents. The man was pallid, perspiring and shaky.

"This explains your behavior, doesn't it?" Doc remarked.

Radiator Smith sank weakly in his chair.

"Like the other Smiths, you were ordered to turn over management of your interests to someone, or be killed," Doc said. "In your case you were told your son would be killed."

Radiator Smith made an inarticulate noise. His hands were knotting.

"You ignored the threat and summoned us," Doc said. "Your son, Maurice, was immediately killed. That changed your mind.

"I do not believe I blame you. But can you give us any information that will help us?"

Radiator Smith shook his head slowly.

"I couldn't," he said, "if I wanted to."

Chapter XI THE HEIR

THE note from Long Tom Roberts arrived late that afternoon. It had been delayed because it was not even in an envelope; it was merely a sheet of paper,

and there was postage due, for there had been no stamp on it in the first place.

It was the note Long Tom had written in the lobby of the building on Broadway.

It simply stated that Long Tom had followed Jonas to the ninth floor of the building.

Twenty minutes later, Doc Savage and the others were standing in the building. Another five minutes were expended in locating the room where Long Tom had met his bad luck.

There were fight signs about. The desk was upset, and one chair had been broken. The microphone, its amplifier, and the loud-speaker in the next room were all in place. So was Long Tom's listening gadget. The stuff told an understandable story.

"Long Tom got in here to eavesdrop," Doc said thoughtfully. "He was probably surprised by someone who came to talk, using that loudspeaker, to someone in the next room."

Monk picked up a piece of tin. It was like a flattened tube, about two inches long.

"What's this?" the chemist pondered.

Annie Spain said, "Probably used to disguise a voice. I have a hunch that if one spoke through that, and whispered, too, that the voice would be unrecognizable."

Monk grinned. "That's such a good guess," he said, "that I almost suspect you of being here."

Ham twirled his cane—the innocent dark cane contained a sword, and he never went without it—and looked thoughtful. He said, "The big point is: Any sign of who did the talking through the loud-speaker—the headman?"

"It couldn't have been the butler, Jonas, at any rate," Monk said.

"What makes you think so?" Ham demanded.

"Long Tom followed Jonas here, didn't he? He wouldn't have come into this room with Jonas here and had time to attach his listening-in device to that door."

"Jonas could have come from the other room to this one."

Doc Savage examined the wastebasket. He found Long Tom's jug, the small black thing, the shell of which was

made of bakelite. The bronze man went to the window, stood looking at the device.

The others did not notice that he had found the little contraption. He did not tell them.

The bronze man's face was sober, his manner concerned as he moved slowly about the room. Then abruptly—as though there was something important suddenly in his mind demanding immediate action—he left the building. Monk and Ham remained behind.

They found nothing of value, but did discover that fingerprints had been wiped off anything that might have retained them. The rooms had been rented by mail, they discovered, and no one around the building had ever seen the individual who had taken them.

"Doc knew those guys would be too slick to leave any clues," Monk said. "That's why Doc left. Wonder where he went?"

DOC SAVAGE turned up shortly in the city room of one of the town's most blatant tabloid newspapers. His entrance created quite a commotion, because the bronze man was distinctly the stuff of which newspaper headlines are made, as well as being handsome enough to make excellent camera fodder.

Doc Savage assumed a forbidding manner. "I have come here to tell you," he announced, "that you had better stop publishing matter concerning myself and my associates. In particular, you must not publish anything concerning Long Tom Roberts."

The city editor wasn't the city editor of that hell-raising tabloid because he could be bluffed. Several times in his hectic career, he had told senators, and even the president, where they could go, as far as he was concerned.

"Yeah!" he said. "Oh, yeah? Let me tell *you* something. This rag publishes news, and anything that happens is news, and if you don't like that, see our lawyers!"

"You refuse to co-operate?" Doc asked.

"Co-operate? You're a fine one to talk about co-operating!" The city editor turned purple. "How many times have you thrown my reporters out? How many times have you refused to give interviews?"

It was quite a few times, but Doc skipped the point.

"I see there is no use talking to you," the bronze man said.

Doc turned away. He deliberately acted nervous, and drew out his handkerchief to mop his forehead.

A yellow envelope came out with Doc's handkerchief and fell to the floor, the bronze man apparently not noticing. He walked away.

The city editor had seen the envelope fall, but he sat there without saying anything. As soon as Doc had gone, he snatched up the envelope.

It was a cablegram envelope. The city editor opened it and read the contents.

"Jumping cats!" he said. "Joe!" he yelled. "Hold page two." The city editor slammed the cablegram down on his desk and grabbed a typewriter. "Try to keep me from publishing news about his friends, will he!" he growled. "I'll show him!"

THE first editions of one of the morning papers—the editions which hit the streets about eight o'clock—carried a story that astounded Doc Savage's associates. Monk was gazing idly at the loudest tabloid of them all when his eyes popped.

"Great grannies!" he yelled.

"What's wrong?" Ham demanded.

"Look!" Monk exploded. "Just look at this!"

Ham leaned over Monk's shoulder and read the story which had astounded the homely chemist to such a degree.

"By jove!" Ham said thoughtfully.

"And here we've been treating him like he was a common working guy like the rest of us."

The story:

ELECTRICAL WIZARD INHERITS FORTUNE

Major Thomas J. Long Tom Roberts
Heir to South Africa Gem
Millions

It was learned today that Major Thomas J. Long Tom Roberts, New York electrical engineer, has inherited an estate of at least ten million dollars from his uncle, Cunico Roberts, of Cape Town, South Africa. Cunico Roberts is reported to control

"What's eating you?"

"Chief's orders not to kill this guy under any circumstances," said Lopez.

"Huh! Why?"

"It seems he's inherited ten million dollars and some diamond mines."

LONG TOM sat back, no little surprised, but with the wits to hold his tongue and look wise. So he had inherited ten million dollars, had he? He hoped it was true.

He was aware of a new attitude of respect toward him on the part of his captors. They were even solicitous about his comfort. A few moments ago he had been no more to them than a hog they were taking to the butchering pen, but now they had a personal interest in him.

"Ten million dollars, eh?" Long Tom remarked. "And some diamond mines. Well, well!"

"Did you know your Uncle Cunico well?" Lopez asked.

"Who—"

"Uncle Cunico, the man who left you the dough."

"Oh, you mean Uncle Wilbur—I guess maybe they called him Cunico," Long Tom said. "Yeah. A great guy, Uncle Wilbur."

He was being cagy, taking no chances that they might be feeding him the name of a fake relative in order to trap him. He had no Uncle Cunico. He had no Uncle Wilbur, for that matter.

"My handcuffs hurt me like hell," he said. "How about taking them off my wrists and putting them on my ankles?"

"I don't know," one of the captors said doubtfully.

"I'll give you a check for fifty dollars," Long Tom said.

That did the trick, and Long Tom's first act after having his wrists freed was to write a check. They had left him his fountain pen, but he had some difficulty making it write, scratching around on the check for a while without making visible marks, and finally borrowing a pen from one of the men. He made out the check and signed it, and they rolled northward in harmony.

"Where are we going?" Long Tom asked innocently.

They grinned at him; he had asked the question before, and gotten no satisfaction. The only difference was that this time they grinned at him, instead of slugging him in the face.

He sat back and pondered the question of the ten million and the diamond mines. It made nice pondering. But he did not let delight carry him away. He smelled a trick.

It was a fact that whoever had created the illusion that he had inherited ten million dollars had saved his life.

"Doc Savage," Long Tom remarked after a while.

The captors stared and one demanded, "What?"

"I was just thinking," Long Tom said. "What do you reckon Doc thinks became of me?"

Lopez—he was riding in the car now—answered that question.

"Doc Savage is going to think you are in South America," said Lopez.

"How come?"

"You're going to write a cable."

"I'm not in South America."

"That's all right. You write the cable, and we'll send it down there and a friend of ours will cable it back."

"I don't need to write it," Long Tom said. "A cable doesn't come in the handwriting of the man who sent it. It comes off one of those simplex machines in typing."

Lopez looked sheepish. "That's right," he said. "I'll just write the cable out myself, and we'll send it soon."

Chapter XIII TRAIL TO MAINE

IT was a very convincing cablegram which Lopez had composed and which landed in Doc Savage's hands several hours later after having gone the roundabout route to South America:

It read:

ESCAPED FROM GANG AND GOT
HOT TIP AND AM TRAILING HEAD
CROOK IN PERSON STOP HAVE
REACHED MARACAIBO VENEZUELA BY
PLANE AND FOLLOWING MASTER MIND



There was nothing butterlike about Jonas now—and he had a rifle!

**Chapter XIV
THE CLIFF**

MONK handled the controls of the plane and flew south. They had been north beyond the Canadian border, following the road, and the road had eventually petered out. They had discovered no trace of a blue sedan. Now they were going south again, making another try.

"Look!" Ham exploded.

Monk seized binoculars and stared downward. "Doc's motorcycle!" he said.

He started to dive the plane downward, then quickly changed his mind. He flew on, rather than attract attention to Doc.

Annie Spain asked, "Does he have a portable radio?"

"Yes," Ham said shortly.

Monk explained, "We'll land down the coast somewhere and wait for Doc to call us."

The land offered no opening of sufficient size for them to set the plane down. The ship was big and fast, needed more than an average amount of room.

Monk arched out over the sea and studied that. The waves were small, and there was not much of a swell.

"We'll try the open sea," he said. He waved to the eastward. "Fog rolling in, anyway. It'll hide us."

The fog was thick and close to the sea, like a floating layer of soiled cotton.

They hit, bounced; spray climbed out in sheets. Monk grunted, wrestled the big wheel, batted at the throttles with his palms. The ship straightened out and settled, knocking the tops off a long series of waves before it became stagnant on the surface.

There followed two hours of dreary bouncing around on waves. The motion was nauseating to the extreme. Monk became somewhat green.

There was no radio communication from Doc Savage.

"We better investigate," Monk said biliously.

"Anything so you can get on shore, eh?" Ham quipped. "O. K. But I've been enjoying myself watching you!"

"You would!" Monk snarled. "You better fly this thing."

They took to the air again, climbed in tight circles until they had fifteen thousand feet of altitude. They flew northwest for a while, until the coast appeared in the moonlight.

"There's an inlet close to where we saw Doc's motorcycle," Ham volunteered. "We can land there and make an investigation afoot."

Monk peered downward. His seasickness had subsided. He discerned the inlet, but noted also that it was floored with fog, the cliffs projecting above the layer of vapor and showing the outlines of the cove.

"We'll have to drop down into that fog and land blind," he said. "Suppose we hit a rock."

"There were no rocks," Ham said. "I noticed when we flew past it before."

ANNIE SPAIN sat very stiff in the plane during the landing. She knew just enough about flying to be awfully scared. They came down in the fog well out to sea—the motors had been cut at the fifteen-thousand-foot level—and the landing was made dead-stick. Through the fog. Into the mouth of the bay.

The fog rushed past the plane windows, coated the glass until they could see nothing but a gray blur. Monk opened the forward windows, and damp air charged inside. Then they hit the water. It was much calmer here, and the plane eventually slowed until its only motion was that given by the breeze.

"Anchor," Monk said.

"The water is too deep, you ape," Ham objected, then got out the anchor. The water wasn't too deep; only about eight fathoms. The anchor, a small collapsible one designed for gripping properties, took hold and the plane slowly angled its nose into the wind.

Monk put a collapsible boat in the water. It was a little thing, hardly as stable as a canoe. The paddles were of light airplane metal.

"I'll get in first," Annie Spain volunteered, "and hold it for you fellows."

"You aren't going," Ham said.

"You're crazy," Annie Spain snapped.

Ham got a pair of handcuffs out of a compartment. "You're not going anywhere," he said grimly. He walked toward the young woman with the handcuffs.

Monk exploded, "Now wait a minute, Ham! What's the idea of treating this young woman like that?"

"She's been too sassy," Ham said. "And that's only one reason."

"What's another reason?"

"You remember when Long Tom disappeared?" Ham demanded. "Well, this girl locked me in the garage at Sell'em-short Smith's home about that time, and escaped. She was missing about the time Long Tom vanished. Then she came back."

"She explained her absence," Monk reminded.

"Not to my satisfaction, she didn't. She said she had changed her mind and decided to come back."

"Women change their minds. They're that way."

"Well, I'm not," Ham said. "I'm going to lock her here in the plane while we're gone."

"You idiot!" Monk snapped.

Monk's objections were neither as violent nor as serious as they sounded. He was doing two things—following his usual habit of disapproving of everything Ham did, and getting in solid with the girl. He noticed she was giving him looks of approval.

"You want to leave her free?" Ham demanded.

"Of course!" Monk said angrily. "She's an honest girl. I believe everything she has told us."

Annie Spain gave Monk a more ravishing smile. Ham saw this, and it scorched him. He suddenly understood why Monk was objecting. So he promptly double-crossed Monk.

"All right," he said. "Here." He handed Monk the handcuffs.

"Huh?" Monk gulped.

"It's up to you," Ham said calmly. "You've out-argued me. If she gets handcuffed aboard, you'll have to do it."

Monk knew he had been double-crossed.

"You overdressed shyster!" he gritted.

Monk handcuffed Annie Spain to a cabin brace, where she could sit on the floor in a position that was not uncomfortable.

The young woman parted her lips and let go a round general opinion of them; she did not exactly swear, but her words gave that impression.

"What if this plane sinks, or breaks loose and drifts out to sea?" she demanded.

Monk went to the tool kit, got two small three-cornered files and handed them to her.

"You can file through those handcuff links," the homely chemist said. "I know, because I had to do it once. Take you about three hours if you stay with it. We should be back before then."

They each pocketed one of the small black jars which Doc Savage had instructed them to carry, and discard as soon as they met an enemy.

Then they closed the plane door behind them. The cabin of the plane was practically soundproof, so that the best yelling which Annie Spain would be able to do was not likely to be heard more than a few feet away.

THEY found Oxalate Smith at the boathouse.

They had been ashore only a few minutes when Oxalate Smith walked out of the darkness, completely astounding them and said, "Oh, gracious, I'm glad to see you!"

The boathouse in itself had been a surprise. There was a long rock running out into the water, and they had climbed onto that without realizing it was a natural wharf which someone had utilized by building a boathouse at the shore end. The boathouse was a very old one, constructed of slabs nailed to the planks, but it was in good repair.

So intense was the darkness that they did not at once recognize Oxalate Smith.

"Oh!" Monk gasped.

He dodged backward so precipitously that he slipped off the rock into the water. Monk was large enough to make quite a splash.

"Sh-h-h!" admonished Oxalate Smith wildly. "They may hear us!"

Ham took a chance and put a flashlight beam on Oxalate Smith. He saw that Oxalate was disheveled, and that he was holding one end of a rope, the other end of which was tied about one of his ankles with a very complicated hard knot.

"Put out the light!" Oxalate Smith exclaimed.

Ham doused the light. "What the devil?" he muttered. "You told us you were an antique dealer and furniture refinisher with a shop in New York."

"Sh-h-h," breathed Oxalate Smith.

There was silence for some moments while they listened, but no sound—no alarming sound, rather, for there was a little noise of night birds—could be detected.

Oxalate Smith whispered, "Remember I told you I frequently made trips into the country to buy antiques at bargain prices?"

"Yes," Ham admitted.

"Well, I was called up here by someone who wanted to sell an original Duncan Phyfe set of furniture. A whole set, mind you! The price named made it a marvelous bargain, if genuine. I rushed right up here. But before that —"

"What happened when you got here?" Ham interrupted.

"Before that, in New York, I was set upon by a footpad," Oxalate Smith went on. "That was right after I left Doc Savage. I do not know what significance that attack had, if any. I was robbed, however. Do you know anything about that attack?"

"Us?" Ham said. "No, we didn't waylay you. And we don't know of anybody who did. You say it was a robber?"

"I didn't catch sight of him. He struck me down in the darkness. Must have sprung upon me and injured me, as well, because my stomach has been bothering me since."

"Your stomach?"

"Yes. It aches slightly. Nothing serious, you understand, but nevertheless uncomfortable."

Monk growled, "Let's skip your bellyache and get down to the present. What happened here?"

"I was made a prisoner."

"When?"

"As soon as I arrived."

"Then what are you doing loose now?"

"I got away. Tonight. I crept down here to this boathouse hoping to find a boat, but there is none. I was wondering how I could escape when I heard you fellows, and realized who you were when one of you spoke."

Monk and Ham digested this amazing story.

"Who seized you?" Monk demanded.

"Why, several men. I had never seen any of them before, with one exception."

"And the exception?"

"Jonas, the butler who was employed by Radiator Smith."

THE stillness of the night continued, broken only by the squawking of some predatory sea bird out over the fog-covered

water somewhere, and the distant hooting of an owl. Once, far away, a wolf howled, or it might have been a dog, although it sounded like a wolf.

Ham asked, "Have you any idea, Smith, why you were decoyed up here and seized?"

"Well—I have a theory."

"What is it?"

"It was feared that I might identify the master criminal as having been in Radiator Smith's home, and acting strangely."

"Jonas, the butler, you mean?"

"No. He is only a minor crook"

"Who, then?" Ham demanded.

Monk said, "He must mean Annie Spain."

Both Monk and Ham became coldly grim at the thought. They had come to know Annie Spain, and they rather liked her—not entirely, they believed—because she was a remarkably pretty girl. The idea that she was responsible for the deaths horrified them.

"You mean Annie Spain?" Ham asked.

"No," Oxalate Smith said. "I don't mean Annie Spain."

"Who, then?" Ham exploded.

"Radiator Smith himself," said Oxalate Smith.

Monk and Ham digested that; then Monk snorted.

"The idea is ridiculous," Monk said.

"Why? Didn't you know that Maurice Smith wasn't Radiator Smith's true son, but an adopted boy? If Radiator Smith is the criminal, and Maurice found it out, that would give a motive for the murder."

"Um-m-m," Monk said uncertainly.

This possibility had not occurred to either him or Ham earlier.

After a period of silence, Ham changed the subject, asking, "Where were you held a prisoner?"

"In a house on top of the cliff."

"Could we get in it?"

"It might be dangerous," Oxalate Smith said uneasily.

"But we might manage it?"

"Yes."

"Come on," said Monk and Ham together.

THEY reached the basement shaft that extended down from the bottom of the vat, and stood there peering into the depths uneasily, listening to make sure no one was immediately below to hear them once they started down.

"Crazy for power," Annie Spain repeated. "Yes, that describes him. You know, Jonas, that he came to me when he was assembling his gang and wanted to hire me as one of them."

"Yes, I know."

"I guess my reputation as an adventuress fooled him into thinking I would work for anybody. I had just gotten out of that spy mess in Austria, and there was lots of publicity. I was painted as a Mata Hari and Dracula combination, sort of."

Jonas said, "I don't hear anyone down below, miss."

"I pumped him when he tried to hire me," Annie Spain said grimly, "and found out what a wonderful invention he had developed. He wanted to use it to terrify people, to rule a lot of big business enterprises, and finally—the United States."

"Yes, miss. He's power-crazy."

"I think I was justified in turning on him and trying to take his infernal machine away from him, because he was going to kill people." The young woman smiled slightly. "Of course, I wasn't doing it as a good deed, entirely. I know that machine itself is worth millions if I can get it."

Jonas, the butler, moved his shoulders uneasily. He felt, when he was in the presence of Annie Spain, rather as if he was associating with a man-eating tigress. The young woman was so competent, so unafraid, that she scared him.

They began, with infinite care, to climb down the shaft, Jonas going first on the ladder, the girl coming close above him and keeping the machine gun balanced on his shoulder, both of them going very slowly because they felt heavy and awkward with the ammunition drums stowed in their clothing. The drums were heavy.

Jonas reached the bottom first. There was a little light, enough to show the tight ring of figures that surrounded the foot of the shaft.

Jonas made a slight gesture at the men, then tossed one of them the machine gun.

"It's all right," he told the girl, who was still out of sight in the shaft.

But just to make sure there was no slip in capturing her, he seized one of her ankles and jerked. Annie Spain fell down the last steps of the shaft to the cave floor.

Men sprang upon her and gripped her arms. She tried to fight them, but did not have much success.

"So you sold out on me!" she told Jonas grimly.

"Not exactly, miss," Jonas said. "You never hired me in the first place, although you didn't know that. We simply thought it advisable for me to pretend to work with you. It made everything much safer for us, you see."

A man said, "Where is Doc Savage?"

Jonas turned. "Locked in the old mine tunnel. Miss Spain locked him there."

ANNIE SPAIN let them tie her wrists and ankles—there was hardly anything else she could have done—and remained where they dropped her at one side of the chamber. She watched them prepare a party to go after Doc Savage. Her mouth was tight, and her body felt colder than the stone against which she crouched. They would not hesitate to kill a woman; there was no doubt whatever in her mind about that. It was not the first time that death had seemed in prospect, but it seemed more certain now than at any time in the past. Certain. She saw no way of avoiding it.

Jonas, even in his present triumph, was still the perfect butler—smug, polite, using a modulated voice in which there was just a trace of pride.

He led the men up the shaft, out of the house and down the steep slope toward the cove shore and the old tunnel. They went boldly, lighting their way with flashlights. There was nothing to be afraid of. Doc Savage, his three men, Annie Spain, all had been captured.

Jonas unlocked the heavy iron door of the mine tunnel. It was intact, he saw.

"Come out!" he warned.

After about five minutes of trying to get someone to come out of the tunnel, they ventured inside. The place was empty.

Moreover, the floor inside the door was muddy, and they could see that there

were no tracks in the mud, a good indication that Doc Savage had never even entered the tunnel.

Chapter XVIII THE BAD BREAK

THE ventriloquist known as the Great Lander had taught the bronze man more than the art of "throwing" the voice, which was nothing more than speaking so that the voice did not sound as if it came from the speaker; he had taught Doc to imitate other voices, and make them seem to come from very far away.

So now Doc stood in the darkness near the tunnel mouth.

"Monk!" he called. "Monk! Ham! Are you there?"

It sounded as if he were more than a quarter of a mile away.

He changed to Monk's voice, said, "Over here, Doc. We been looking for you! Over here by the end of the cove."

Jonas heard the voices, and he was taken in. He swore in a harsh tone full of horror.

"Damn!" he gasped. "That Monk and Ham got away! And Savage is loose!"

"They're back toward the end of the cove," a man growled.

"Come on!" Jonas snapped.

The men moved away, bunched tightly, guns ready, and not showing their flashlights.

Doc let them go. He had not entered the old mine tunnel at any time. When Annie Spain had thought she heard him call to her from far back in the tunnel, the bronze man had actually been outside, only a few feet from the girl.

The fact that Annie Spain had expected the bronze man to be in the tunnel had made the deception easy. In ventriloquism, having the audience expect the voice to come from another source was half the battle. Otherwise ventriloquists would not have a dummy to sit on their knee.

Having sidetracked a part of the enemy temporarily, Doc climbed up the cliff to the house.

Like Monk and Ham when they had first come there, he had no idea of the

layout of the place. He spent some time cautiously prowling the outside, listening at the windows. The moonlight was brighter, so that he had to keep low in the weeds that surrounded the place to remain inconspicuous.

He saw the small black jug which Monk had placed on the window sill. He got it, opened it.

The contrivance was a tiny recording electroscope—a device that registered the presence in its neighborhood of radioactive substances.

Doc had designed several of them as protective apparatus for hospitals in which a store of infinitely valuable radium was kept; the jugs, when planted in the doorways of the hospitals, and hooked to an electrical relay and bell, would raise an alarm the moment anyone attempted to pass through the door with any of the hospital's radium.

They were sensitive enough, these electroscopes, to register the passing of anyone who had merely been treated with radium emanation. There was an adjustment which could be screwed down to prevent this. In the present case the adjustment was not screwed down, however.

Doc examined the electroscope. It showed that it had been close to a slightly radioactive substance.

DOC reached the vat in the basement. Doc stared down the shaft. Far below, he could see light, and occasionally there were small sounds of men moving about. He saw a man shove his head into the shaft and jerk back quickly so as not to be seen. They were watching the thing.

Doc retreated. He left the basement—the basement was no place to spend much time, for he could be trapped there—and got out of the house.

The yard had a crop of weeds that looked like monkey fur, and there were clumps of scrawny shrubbery which had been planted there but never trimmed. The bronze man took shelter in that maze.

He had not been there long when there was the pounding noise of frantic feet and the whipping of branches flung aside. Two men. They were in a great hurry.

the two caves—the chambers were actually not rooms, but rather different arms of the underground labyrinth—and watching around the sharp angle, he saw that Jonas had assembled another group of men and they were preparing to leave.

"You're sure Monk and Ham haven't escaped?" Jonas demanded angrily.

"You can see for yourself," a man said.

"I'll do that."

Jonas strode down a narrow passage, dropped a board that spanned a deep pit with water at the bottom, gingerly crossed over and scowled at a guard who stood there.

"Let me see the prisoners," he growled.

"Sure." The cell guard turned, thumbed on the beam of a flashlight.

Monk, Ham, Long Tom and Annie Spain were staked out. The floor of the cave at that point was gray clay that had washed in through the ages, and long iron pipes had been driven into this, forming anchorages to which the prisoners were spread-eagled.

Jonas stared at them.

"But I heard their voices outside," he growled. "Heard Savage, too."

He rubbed his jaw, scraped fingers through his hair, and his mouth made thinking shapes. Suddenly his face blanched. Scared wordless, he dashed back to the shaft which led up to the house on the cliff rim.

Jonas saw the note. He read it. Then he demonstrated that his intelligence was past the ordinary.

"Savage is in here!" he roared. "Get your guns! Get all the lights on!"

Chapter XIX THE STOMACH TROUBLE

DOC was moving fast by then. The guard had rushed away from the prisoners to see what the excitement was about. Doc reached the board over the pit. The board was an ingenious but simple door for a prison; once it was hauled back, it made the place a perfect jail, since the coming-out end was much higher than the other, high enough that no man was likely to leap

that gap and at the same time mount the distance. The height alone was a good high jump.

It took all of Doc's great strength to get the board down without attracting attention. He whipped across silently. He brought out the pocketknife he had taken from Harry as he crossed, made one big circular slash and got Monk free.

"Loosen the others," the bronze man said swiftly.

He spun, went back the way he had come. His leaps were long with haste. He crossed the plank, veered right, took to shadows. Farther up the cavern, lights were coming on, their luminance leaping through the passages like bright monsters. But here there were shadows that could conceal him.

He reached the great room where the machinery grumbled and whined. Earlier inspection had shown him how the sea-power motor could be stopped—there was a big lever that actuated a clutch. He threw that. The big device went silent; gears stopped grinding, generators ceased to whine, and the spark-blue corona disappeared from around the myriad of conductors. Then there was a report, sharp and terrific, like a bolt of lightning, and a jagged rope of flame climbed briefly through the apparatus.

Evidently that was the wrong way to shut it off. Some smoke and odor of burned insulation oozed into the room.

Doc did not wait. He pitched for a darkened niche, a place closed by an iron-barred grille. The grille was not locked; he jerked it open—there was a squawk of rusty hinges as he did so—and dashed his flashlight beam over the contents.

They were metal cases that might have been suitcases, for they were equipped with carrying handles. But they were not suitcases, the bronze man knew.

He clamped his lips, advanced on the cases. He was scared. He knew that he was closer to death now than possibly at any time in his rather hair-raising career. There was death in each one of those boxes; it was disaster of a concentrated kind that could kill scores at once, unless he was mistaken. And a single false move on his part would release it.

He began working on one of the cases. There was a switch on each of

them; he was careful not to close it. Instead, he worked on the contacts, was soon elated to discover what he had feared would be a tedious job could be made a quick one. The wire from one contact came away from the contact—it was soldered to the jaws of the switch—and entered the box through a small hole, bushed with an insulating compound, perhaps half an inch away.

He could thrust his belt buckle under the wire, tear it loose, then grip the wire with his fingers and pull it until it broke, thus making a quick repair out of the question.

He went over six of the boxes in this fashion. There were seven of them. Doc picked up the seventh box, backed out of the recess, and a man shot at him.

IT was too dark for the fellow who fired the shot to take a decent aim, and the bullet missed. But the man yelled an alarm.

"Get the lights on in the power room!" Jonas squalled.

"I can't!" the man howled back. "All the lights came off the switchboard. He could shoot me before I got there!"

That gave Doc Savage an idea. He ducked back into the barred recess. There was an electric bulb hanging from a dropcord and he seized it, put his flashlight on the bulb and examined it.

Thirty-two volts. It was a thirty-two volt bulb, not a one-hundred-ten-volt one. This meant that power for the lights came from a battery supply.

He picked up rocks—there were plenty lying about—and went back to a spot where he could see the switchboard without getting in range of the guns. He threw his rocks. Two of them missed, but the third, thrown very hard, smashed a master fuse out of its mounting and there was sudden darkness all through the cavern.

Doc moved fast then. He figured he might stand a chance of reaching his associates; if he could ever stand a chance, now was the time.

But a voice halted him.

It was an urgent, squeaking voice.

"Mr. Savage," it said. "Help me!"

It came from the right. Doc went over.

"Mr. Savage," the voice said, almost sobbing.

Doc thumbed on the flashlight quickly.

Oxalate Smith lay on the floor. Apparently he had been concealed in a dark corner, and at the outbreak of the excitement had crawled out into the open.

"Put out the light!" he gasped.

"They can't see us here," Doc said.

"What are you doing here?"

"They decoyed me up here from New York," Oxalate Smith said rapidly. "Then they captured me, and tried to kill me with their infernal machine. They hit me with a bolt of lightning. They thought I was dead. Your men think I am dead. But I'm not."

It was obvious he was far from dead.

"Can you walk?" Doc demanded.

"Maybe I can. I was afraid I couldn't.

That is why I called you." Oxalate Smith sounded frantic. "Take me with you."

"Take you with us where?"

"When you escape."

Doc said, "Come on."

The bronze man leaned over then, lifted Oxalate Smith to his feet. Then he clamped his left arm around Oxalate Smith's neck, jamming the man to his chest helplessly.

Doc picked up the metal case with the other hand.

He walked toward the open part of the cave.

"Watch out," Doc yelled. "I'm holding Oxalate Smith in front of me."

OXALATE SMITH went through several convulsions, then began to kick frantically at Doc's legs, causing the bronze man agony.

Doc loosened Oxalate's throat, held him by an arm about the chest, an arm that confined the fellow's arms like a steel band. Oxalate could yell now.

"Don't shoot!" Oxalate squalled.

"Rush the damned fool! But don't shoot! He's got me!"

Doc obligingly turned a flashlight beam on Oxalate Smith's face so that the men could see that Oxalate was really a prisoner. Then he ran toward Monk and the others.

"Monk!" he called.

"Over here!" Monk barked.

Behind Doc, there was shouting—yells intended to bring all the members of the gang from the various parts of the cliff cave.

Monk galloped up, trailed closely by Ham, Long Tom and Annie Spain.

“Who’s this?” Monk gasped, pointing at Doc’s prisoner.

“Oxalate Smith.”

“Oxalate—but he’s dead! We saw them strike him with lightning.”

Doc said, “You saw them make a pretense of that. Probably the charge jumped to a nearby electrode instead of Oxalate’s body, and he just fell over and played dead.”

“Then he’s one of them?”

“He’s more than that,” Doc said.

The bronze man was moving while he spoke. He headed toward the higher portions of the cavern, the spot where the shaft led upward to the house.

But flight was cut off. Someone fired at them—four rapid shots from an automatic—and Ham made a snarling sound and fell down, but jumped up immediately. He clamped a hand to the calf of his leg. Crimson leaked through his fingers.

“Back,” Doc said. “Even if we did get to that shaft, they would kill us while we were climbing it.”

They retreated. They had no arms, except what rocks they had picked up. In the darkness these were not entirely useless. But suddenly the lights came on. They had found the switchboard in the power room. “Run!” Doc rapped. “Back to the prison!”

“But—”

“It’s the safest place,” Doc rapped. “We can pull in the board and keep them from reaching us temporarily.”

Ham was running—he was ignoring his wound—well ahead of the others. He rounded a corner, almost ran into the muzzle of a rifle. He twisted so that, although the gun exploded, the bullet missed him. He fell upon the rifle, twisting furiously, going over and over with his foe, concentrating on getting the weapon.

Monk rushed in, leaned down with a fist. The foe made a single barking sound and stretched out motionless.

“You better take it easy, with that hole in your leg,” Monk warned.

“Shut up and see if he’s got any cartridges,” Ham ordered.

Then suddenly an avalanche of figures were upon them. Seven or eight men, desperately intent.

“Don’t use your guns!” Oxalate Smith screamed.

Doc Savage jammed the metal case into Ham’s hands, said, “Get it across the board into the place where you were held prisoner.”

Ham nodded, fled with the box.

THE fight lasted a minute or two, and during the interval no one probably had a coherent thought. Everything was by instinct. Strike, clutch, kick—anything to get a foe down.

Oxalate Smith got up and ran. Doc could not hold him and fight at the same time. The bronze man slugged Oxalate once, and the man dropped, feigning unconsciousness—Doc suspected he had not hit the man hard enough, but had no time to remedy it—then Oxalate crawled away, got up and ran.

Suddenly there was quiet. Not silence—just no more action for the moment. Of the men on the floor, three were moaning and one kept screaming over and over with the agony of a broken arm.

“The prison niche,” Doc rapped.

They ran, feeling better now, for they had rifles and some ammunition.

“Look,” Monk barked, stopping. “Here’s Ham!”

Ham was not out. He had been clubbed over the head.

“Some guy grabbed the box from me,” he said. “But he didn’t get away with it—I managed to kick it into the pit. It fell in the water down there somewhere.”

“Come on,” Doc said.

They crossed the board. They hauled the plank back, giving them at least temporary sanctuary.

The bronze man searched quickly. He had noticed that this arm of the cave turned sharply, and went back some distance—far enough to offer them protection from both bullets and hand grenades.

Ham sank down on the floor. He was weak from his wound.

