

MAD EYES

A Doc Savage Adventure
#34

Kenneth Robeson
[Lawrence Donovan]

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DOC SAVAGE'S AMAZING CREW

William Harper Littlejohn, the bespectacled scientist who was the world's greatest living expert on geology and archæology.

Colonel John Renwick, "Renny," his favorite sport was pounding his massive fists through heavy, paneled doors.

Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Blodgett Mayfair, "Monk," only a few inches over five feet tall, and yet over 260 pounds. His brutish exterior concealed the mind of a great scientist.

Major Thomas J. Roberts, "Long Tom," was the physical weakling of the crowd, but a genius at electricity.

Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks, slender and waspy, he was never without his ominous, black sword cane.

WITH THEIR LEADER, THEY WOULD GO ANYWHERE,
FIGHT ANYONE, DARE EVERYTHING—SEEKING
EXCITEMENT AND PERILOUS ADVENTURE!

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THE OTHER WORLD
THE FLAMING FALCONS
THE ANNIHILIST
THE SQUEAKING GOBLINS
MAD EYES

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A DOC SAVAGE ADVENTURE

BY KENNETH ROBESON

MAD EYES

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CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I NIGHTMARE OF MONSTERS	1
II VANISHED TRAIN	7
III DOC SAVAGE ACCUSED	14
IV MISSING GLOBES	20
V THE RUMBLING TRUCK	26
VI HAM SEES MONSTERS	34
VII DOC'S STRANGE ATTACK	41
VIII THE VANISHED SAFE	48
IX TWO DOC SAVAGES	54
X TEETH OF THE RATS	61
XI SKYSCRAPER MURDER	65
XII THE PROFESSOR'S FINISH	71
XIII MURDER IN THE NIGHT	77
XIV FEAR OF MADNESS	81
XV TRAIN IN THE NIGHT	87
XVI UNDER THE MOUNTAIN	90
XVII CAVERN OF MONSTERS	96
XVIII MEN WHO LIVED AGAIN	101
XIX END OF THE DOCTOR	109
XX WHEN CRAGROCK FELL	117

MAD EYES

Chapter I

NIGHTMARE OF MONSTERS

“They’re after me!” screamed the gaunt, loose-jointed man. “Take them away!” His voice cracked out with a nasal twang.

The man’s arms were long. His big hands flapped. He was beating at the empty air about him. One set of fingers clutched suddenly at his colorless hair. The hand came away with strands the man had torn loose.

The long man was clad in brown overalls. Lights slanting across the railroad yards showed him to be beyond middle age. His wild, terror-filled screams were loud enough to be heard above the grinding and the clanking of switch engines.

A cut of freight cars was being shunted onto a siding. The running man evaded these by only a few feet. He was headed back toward the building from which he had dashed.

A thin rain slashed down on the railroad yards. The mist of it almost obscured the building from which the man had darted.

“They’ll tear me to pieces!” screamed the man.

He pitched to his hands and knees in the middle of a track. Two brakemen were riding the bumper step of a switch engine. One man shouted hoarsely.

“Hey! Look out! You gone nuts? You’ll be pulverized!”

The brakie’s lantern swung. The switch engine stopped with a squealing of brakes. The two railroad men scrambled off. But the tall man had leaped to his feet.

“Grab ’em!” he shrieked. “That one’s got ten heads!”

The two brakemen tried to seize and restrain the fellow. The man was too quick for them. His hands apparently were batting at nothing.

“They’re everywhere!” the tall man continued to scream.

Having escaped the switch engine, he leaped across the tracks. He tried to reenter the building from which he had come. But there appeared to be no doors.

“That’s the watchman—an’ he’s gone nuts!” growled one brakeman. “Anybody’d go off his bean, locked up in that crazy place every night!”

“Yup!” barked the other railroad brakie. “This big guy, Doc Savage, fixed them doors. Even the yardmaster can’t open ’em!”

The doors of the long, low, concrete building were as described by the railroad men. The structure, unlike other industrial plants along the metropolitan railroad yards, bore no sign.

In the thin rain, the building looked much like a tomb. No windows appeared anywhere. The wildly screaming watchman had emerged from a small door. This door was of chromium steel.

One end of the long building appeared the same as the other. But at intervals—perhaps twice a week—one end would slide open. When this took place, the yardmaster would be notified.

All of the incoming and outgoing shipments were handled in special sealed cars. None of the regular yard crews were ever permitted inside. It was not surprising that the railroad men viewed the plant with suspicion.

Especially ominous were those doors. On a few occasions, the railroad men had seen persons connected with the plant enter the place. It seemed to the railroad men that these persons merely stopped and looked at that small, low door of chromium steel.

The yardmen were not aware the small door and the house track slide were locked by an electroscopic device. Those opening the doors were equipped with radio short-wave control of these electroscopes.

The screaming watchman had now returned to the small door.

For a few seconds he beat his fists against the steel. His voice still rose above the pounding of wheels in the yards. When he was not hitting the door, the man was whirling and striking at something invisible to the near-by brakemen.

“Guess we’d better sit on ’im an’ get one of the yard bulls to take ’im out,” suggested one of the brakemen. “He’ll bump into something around here!”

Though the engineer and fireman of the switch engine climbed down and joined the chase, the screaming man evaded them.

His long arms writhed above his head, as if he were being tortured. Though he might have been, as the railroad men imagined, in an advanced stage of delirium tremens, John Corbin, the trusted watchman, never would describe the frightful monsters he may have seen.

Leaving the concrete building, the man started running across the maze of yard tracks. He leaped and screamed, tearing off some of his clothing. The four men of the switch engine crew were close behind him.

“If he runs into one of them third rails——”

One of the brakemen yelled this. His cry was lost in the roar of a local train coming out of Manhattan. The crazed watchman apparently just missed being struck by this train.

He had fallen and rolled over when the local flashed past. Now he again staggered to his feet. The blinding headlight of a limited express came across the yard and bore down on the watchman.

The crew of the switch engine stood frozen to the spot. They could do nothing more. Against the brilliant headlight of the express, the leaping watchman showed for a few seconds. His long body with the flapping arms was like that of some black human bug about to be impaled.

“Goshamighty!” gritted the engineer of the switch engine. “It got ’im!”

The roaring express had hit John Corbin, the watchman.

For an instant it was a fearful human projectile. Then the watchman was only a bag of crushed bones, lying more than a hundred feet from the spot where he had been struck.

The four men from the switch engine were the first to reach the crushed body. The watchman's face had escaped disfigurement. But the railroad men were sick.

John Corbin's eyes were still wide open. Though his hands no longer batted at invisible monsters, all his features were twisted, as if the man still saw something horrible.

"By crimony!" grunted the engineer. "If that's what hooch does, I'm never takin' another drink!"

The whole tragedy thus far had the brand of being an overdose of intoxicants.

"Couldn't blame a guy for takin' on a few snifters in that daggoned graveyard buildin'!" said one of the brakemen.

One of the railroad men had summoned a yard bull. This representative of the law had in turn put in a call for a regular State police detail, an ambulance and the nearest deputy coroner. Waiting for the arrival of proper authority, the yard bull went over to the long, concrete building.

Like the other railroad men, the bull suspected the business of this windowless, lockless structure might not be on the up and up. But the name of Clark Savage, Jr., was a power with the railroad officials.

Among his countless other interests, the noted Doc Savage had a considerable financial finger in the affairs of this transportation line. The railroad officials knew only this building was under the control of Doc Savage. They also knew the plant was operated by a rather queer old codger, a Professor Lanidus Spargrove.

"That's funny," muttered the yard bull, walking around the end of the building where two lines of railroad tracks disappeared under the blank wall of the door. "Never saw it up like that before."

The yard bull bent down in the rain. This end of the concrete building was in darkness. The bull played a flashlight across the two tracks. The immense door was made to fit down evenly over the rails.

Now the big door was almost a foot above the tracks. It looked as if the door had been opened and then improperly closed. The yard bull was a bulky man. But there seemed to be space for him to crawl under the door.

"Might as well have a look," he murmured, and started twisting under the walllike door.

Something happened. It was noiseless. Only the agonized yell of the yard bull hit the ears of the railroad men beside the watchman's body. Two men ran through the rain around the side of the building.

The yard bull had screamed only once. What the two railroad men saw was worse than the body of the watchman. The door over the tracks had dropped.

The yard bull had been part of the way under it.

There were two cases awaiting for the county police and the deputy coroner. That of the yard bull was the most horrible. But the brakemen, still beside the watchman's body, had quit looking at the twisted face.

"I'm signin' off this yard after to-night," muttered one of the men.

The twin lights of a motor car showed on the highway just below where the body of the watchman lay. The car stopped. Apparently the driver had been attracted by the railroad men's lanterns near the track above.

The man who got out of the automobile was a bulky figure. Yet he moved up the embankment with the easy, soundless steps of a cat. A slicker over his other clothes protected him from the rain.

"What's happened here?" said the new arrival. "One of your men get hit?"

"No," said one brakeman. "It's the old guy who had the job of watchman at that nutty building without the windows. Acted like he'd been hit by the D. T.'s an' run right into the——"

The brakeman stopped speaking abruptly. His mouth hung open.

The big man from the car on the highway had thrown back his slicker. He had dropped on one knee beside the dead John Corbin. One big hand was passing softly over the dead watchman's face.

The stranger was making a swift examination. The light from the brakemen's lanterns were shining on him. It was this that had caused the brakeman to quit talking so suddenly.

For the driver's hands were the color of bright bronze. The skin of his face and his thickly corded neck was of the same golden hue. The rain slid off his hair as if it were a waterproof mask.

The hair, also, was bronze in color. It was only slightly different from the skin.

The brakeman found his voice again after his survey.

"You must be Doc Savage himself," he said. "Then maybe you know more about this guy than we do. Say! One of the bulls got hurt over there! A couple of the boys have gone over!"

The big bronze man rubbed the tips of his fingers across the forehead of the dead watchman. He straightened to his feet. Once more the slicker was around his body. But his eyes were fixed on the brakemen.

These orbs seemed now to be shining like flakes of polished copper.

"You say one of your men was hurt over by the building?" asked the bronze man. "I shall see about it."

The bronze man walked around the corner of the building. The men there could do nothing for the yard bull. The door on his body weighed tons. The bronze man stood behind them.

Perhaps the others thought the bronze man only looked at the great door over the house tracks. One hand was under his slicker. Suddenly, the great door started upward.

"Remove the man," stated the bronze giant. "Have the police been called?"

“Ye-yes, Mr. Savage,” stammered one of the railroad men. “I—I guess all this trouble’s over that watchman hittin’ the hooch.”

The body of the yard bull was then removed. The bronze man said nothing. When the railroad men looked where he had been, he was no longer visible.

Police Inspector Higgins had an Adam’s apple which seemed to make him mad. When he talked, this lump slid up and down his thin neck. Inspector Higgins talked most of the time.

“Well! Well! Well!” jerked out Inspector Higgins, walking around the bodies of John Corbin, the watchman, and the yard bull. “Whyntcha stop ’im from runnin’ head-on into that express? An’ where’s the engine that hit ’im? Why’d this bull crawl under the door, an’ how’d he get out? Answer me that?”

The railroad men attempted to reply to all of these several inquiries at once. One said, “Well, the watchman was crazy with too much booze an’ he got away from us.”

The deputy coroner who was also the medical examiner shook his head mildly.

“You’re all wrong about the liquor,” he stated. “This man shows no evidence of having been drinking. It must have been something else.”

The railroad men stared at each other.

“Then it must be that crazy building where Doc Savage makes machinery for war or something,” one man volunteered. “When the watchman came out of there, he was nuts an’ runnin’ in circles. An’ when the bull tried to crawl in, the door come down on him.”

Inspector Higgins hopped around the building on his skinny legs. He took in the railroad door with a jumping Adam’s apple and a gleam in his eyes.

“Well! Well! Well!” he snapped. “Somebody open these doors, an’ we’ll have a look at what started this!”

“You have to know how to look at them doors to make them open,” grinned a railroad man. “I guess it’s done with mirrors or something.”

“Don’t try bein’ funny!” snapped Inspector Higgins. “You fellas in the yard know how to get cars in and out! Where’s the yardmaster?”

“He don’t know no more than the rest of us,” said another railroad man. “That dump’s Doc Savage’s own plant, an’ none of the crews ever get inside.”

“That’s a good story!” yapped Inspector Higgins. “Then how in time didja get the bull’s body out from under that door? Will you answer me that?”

“Sure,” said a railroad man. “Doc Savage himself just stood there an’ looked at the door. It opened and closed.”

“Doc Savage?” barked Inspector Higgins. “Well, where is this Doc Savage? This is his trouble! Where’d he go? Why didn’t you hold him here until duly constituted authority arrived?”

A chunky brakeman scratched his head.

“You mean you think we should’ve grabbed Doc Savage himself?” he said. “Say, from what I’ve heard of that big bronze guy I wouldn’t try grabbin’ him if he was

already tied up with barbed wire!”

“I guess you fellas are just dumb because you’re shackies on a railroad, or maybe it’s the other way around!” sneered Inspector Higgins. “Me, I’m gettin’ into that dump an’ seein’ what’s been goin’ on! Come on, boys, bust down that little door!”

Inspector Higgins was accompanied by half a dozen of his men. If he said break down a door, it was their job to do it. They failed, however, to carry out this laudable intention.

“Well! Well! Well!” snapped Inspector Higgins. “Jam it in with the end of a railroad tie!”

But though he added his bony weight to the tie, the improvised door-buster might as well have been rammed into the two-foot thickness of the concrete itself.

“I would suggest calling Professor Spargrove, the fellow who runs this joint,” said one of the railroad men. “He’ll just look at that door and it’ll open up.”

Chapter II

VANISHED TRAIN

While Inspector Higgins was making his useless and profane effort to break down one small steel door, a closed car was smashing several speed records. This car slewed and skidded alarmingly in the rain.

“Listen, you misfit of nature, you either slow down or I’m getting out of this bus and walking the rest of the way!” rasped a stridently sharp voice. “You might bounce that solid skull of yours off the concrete without any damage, but I’ve got something inside mine I’d like to keep there!”

The apish-looking driver twisted the speeding car dangerously near the edge of the concrete. He seemed to have an uncanny skill at just shaving the soft shoulder of the highway.

“There wouldn’t be nothin’ much missin’, unless you happened to bite off your tongue,” said the driver, in a childlike voice. “Anyway, I could make this car climb a tree.”

“You slow down, or I’m ramming about ten inches of this sword cane into your neck!” snapped the other man. “Now what—— That cursed shote of yours has gone and bit Chemistry! In about a minute——”

The hunched-over driver straightened. One long arm whipped over the back of the seat. A hairy fist smashed into a flat nose. A voice much like that of some angry child jabbered.

The driver skidded the car to a stop with a reckless disregard for brakes and tires.

“Hey!” yelled the driver. “You take that wrench away from that bob-tailed monkey of yours, or I’ll wring both your necks!”

The thing in the back seat of the car did look much like a bob-tailed monkey. He was a baboon, and tailless. Also, he was a smart baboon. The thin, raspy-voiced man in the car was Theodore Marley Brooks, better known as “Ham.”

Ham was a lean man. He dressed in most perfect taste. And he was one of the world’s smartest lawyers.

His companion, Andrew Blodgett Mayfair, was everything in appearance that Ham was not. Known as “Monk,” though he was one of half a dozen leading industrial chemists, he really resembled a gorilla. His arms were too long and his legs too short. His forehead sloped, and his eyebrows were too near the top of his skull.

Added to this, Monk was thickly covered with wiry, reddish hair.

The wild scrimmage now taking place in the back of the closed car was between two of the world’s oddest animals.

One was an Australian woods hog, composed of mostly long ears and long legs. The other was a tailless baboon. The baboon came from South America.

The hog answered to the name of Habeas Corpus, which was a direct insult to the impeccable Ham. The baboon had been named Chemistry, with malice aforethought on the part of the lawyer.

Just now, Habeas Corpus had taken a good-sized bite out of one of the baboon's legs. Chemistry knew better than to risk himself close to the razor-edged teeth of the hog. A tire wrench was handy.

Chemistry was in the act of trying to brain Habeas Corpus, when Monk interfered. The baboon chattered and cracked the heavy wrench across Monk's arm.

"Daggonit!" squeaked Monk. "This time I'll put that baboon brother of yours to sleep for keeps!"

"That would be no less than fratricide," drawled Ham. "You can't go killing off your own relatives."

How far this bickering would have continued never would be determined. Monk twisted suddenly back in his seat.

"Good gosh!" exploded Monk. "Didja see that?"

"Well, what am I supposed to see, and where?" snapped Ham.

"Huh!" grunted Monk. "Well, it was either something that went past us on the road or up on the railroad or between the highway and the railroad. I just got a glimpse of it an' then it was gone."

"I knew it," nodded Ham solemnly. "It's been creeping up on you gradually. Nothing passed us. I see the lights of a car coming around the bend ahead, but that's all there is."

Monk scratched his furry head. His small eyes glittered.

"You didn't see anything that might have been a train?" he said plaintively. "Not on the track—maybe down here on the road?"

"Too bad, too bad," said Ham mournfully. "I'll come and see you some time in the hospital. I'll try and take good care of Habeas Corpus for you."

Monk started the car. But he continued to stare up at the railroad. About ten minutes before a limited express had roared northward. Since then, Ham was sure nothing had moved on the lines of rails.

"Perhaps all this mystery about Doc's new machine has gone to your head," suggested Ham helpfully. "This must be about the biggest thing he's ever tried. He hasn't even taken Renny or Long Tom or Johnny in on it. They're supposed to meet us out here at midnight."

"Daggonit!" complained Monk. "You know, I don't like this! We haven't seen Doc for three days, then he calls us by radio. It must be somethin' Doc's afraid somebody wants to steal."

Ham and Monk were speeding toward the tomblike plant they knew only as the Spargrove Laboratories. The same plant where even now one Inspector Higgins was jumping up and down because he had failed to break in the door.

The inspector, though, had succeeded in raising Professor Spargrove. The excited professor would not be more than half an hour in reaching his locked laboratories.

Habeas Corpus and Chemistry temporarily adjusted their war. They watched each other with bright, wary eyes.

Ham caught Monk's right arm.

"Look out," he cautioned. "That driver's hitting seventy, and he's taking most of the road."

"Howlin' calamities!" squawked Monk. "You think I'm movin' over for any road hog! I'll——"

Two blinding headlights leaped down the road directly toward their car. For the fraction of a second, it seemed as if the other driver intended crashing them head-on. Monk quit talking to hold as far to the side of the highway as he could.

"I told you!" rapped Ham. "Hey, hold her!"

The lawyer's warning was too late. The flying headlights had stabbed on into the rain. But where the four tracks of shining, wet concrete had been brilliant, Monk was now driving into what resembled a floating pool of ink.

Monk's hand reached out and turned a switch. He clapped huge, oversized goggles to his eyes. Still he was looking into a smoky cloud.

An infra-red beam of invisible light should have penetrated almost any smoke screen. But this was something more than mere smoke. It had the density and opaqueness of black velvet.

Ham let out a yell, but it was somewhat scattered by his head having been banged into the roof of the car.

The reason for this was simple enough. Their car was no longer on its wheels. In the black cloud, the automobile had plunged from the road. It was bouncing along on its top. It traveled thus for possibly fifty yards, before it rolled over and again stood upright.

Ham was bruised and scratched in several places. Only the glass being bulletproof and shatterproof had prevented serious injury.

"All right, you imitation of an ape, I hope you broke your nose!" yelled Ham. "Just why in the devil do you want to try driving upside down?"

Monk made no reply to this. The inky cloud was now clearing away.

Monk was whipping the car around. But few motor vehicles would have taken that shock and continued to run.

But the tires were of sponge rubber. The chassis was of special alloy. From wheels to top, nothing much less than a cannonball could have wrecked this car's amazing motor.

"Run me offa the road, will they?" exploded Monk. "Daggonit, I'll show 'em!"

"Good gosh!" groaned Ham. "Now I'm in for it!"

Riding with Monk on a normal drive was filled with dire possibilities. But riding with Monk when he was in a hurry was only a degree short of suicide.

The car which had emitted the inky cloud must have gained at least two miles. It was still being trailed by a dense screen of smoke. Monk was favored in one respect. A brisk wind was now whipping the rain in sheets across the highway. This gave glimpses of the concrete in Monk's headlights. Ahead, the tail-lights of the other car jumped in and out of Monk's vision.

"And when you get those fellows, then what?" inquired Ham sarcastically. "They haven't done anything to us but throw a little smoke in our eyes."

"I'm findin' out what kind of juice throws that smoke screen," announced the stubborn Monk. "Maybe we could use some of it."

Ham was watching the red tail-lights of the other car.

"I wouldn't be too sure we'll catch up with that fellow," he announced. "There's something funny about that motor. You haven't been gaining an inch."

Monk had the gas in his car wide open. The big chemist was mad all the way through. He knew Ham was telling the truth. For ten miles, he hadn't gained an inch.

"Suppose we call it off and get back to meet Doc," suggested Ham. "The message said midnight. That isn't far away."

Monk was holding the car at close to a hundred. The lights bored around a curve. They picked up a pair of brilliant red reflectors. Ham's fingers gripped Monk's right arm.

"Grade crossing, insect!" he rapped. "Pull her down!"

The red reflectors told where the highway crossed the lines of the railroad.

Monk had made no movement to slacken the speed.

Abruptly, the red reflectors disappeared. They were blotted out as if a giant hand had smashed them off the crossing. The night was shattered with a rending, crackling crash. Two red tail-lights went up in the air.

These lights acted as if they were attached to pinwheels.

The crash died suddenly into a grinding drag. It sounded as if steel and glass were being dragged along the ground. One wild, human scream of pain came out of the darkness.

"Howlin' calamities!" exploded Monk, jamming on the brakes. "That car got hit at the crossin'! It's smashed to splinters!"

"Hit by what?" Ham grated. "There isn't a train in sight! Pull over, Monk! Well have to look into this!"

The highway swung onto the railroad on a slight grade. Both of the red reflectors had been broken off. Nearly a hundred yards from the road crossing a bright flame flared up.

"Hurry up, Monk!" shouted Ham, running along one railroad track. "It's that car, an' it's on fire! They'll be burned up!"

Ham was correct in part. The blaze was shooting from what had been a pan of an automobile. Other parts were scattered along the track.

Monk had twisted the headlight beams of his own car to cover part of the space. Ham was using one of Doc Savage's special generator flashlights. Both men were prepared for the shock of coming upon a scene of horror.

Monk and Ham reached the blazing fuel tank together.

"Good grief!" rapped Ham. "What became of the people in that car? Say! You don't suppose they jumped and made their get-away before the car crashed?"

Monk was standing in the middle of a track, scratching his head.

"It's confounded funny," he muttered. "Ham, there ain't any sign of anybody havin' been in that car, an' if there was, what hit 'em?"

"Why, it had to be a train——" Ham began, then stopped. Then he blurted, "Monk, we didn't see any train! That car couldn't have been hit! It's been fifteen minutes since that last train passed us!"

"Daggonit!" growled Monk. "I don't like this! I looked all along the road where we stopped! There ain't any place the people in that car could have jumped out! Their lights were movin' as fast as ours all the time!"

Examination of parts of the car's seats showed no marks of blood. Monk took out a small bottle. He shook a greenish powder over the plush of the wrecked car's seats. Immediately, there appeared a faint glowing.

"Every seat was occupied," he announced. "There were five persons in that car within the past few minutes. So where did they go?"

Ham was kicking at the tire of one wrecked wheel. He bent down and ran his hand along the rubber.

"Listen, Monk!" he stated emphatically. "This is one of Doc's own cars! That tire's sponge rubber and can't be punctured! Have a look at this!"

Ham's foot kicked over a badly shattered infra-red beam projector among the wreckage.

"Howlin' calamities!" squeaked Monk. "You don't suppose Doc could have been in that car? I've been all around, an' nobody got hurt! Ham, I'll betcha something's happened to Doc! Well——"

"Wait a minute," interrupted Ham. "Here comes something!"

The something was a thumping, banging gasoline car running on one railroad track. It came from the direction of Manhattan. The lantern of a railroad worker illumined a man in overalls.

The gasoline car chugged to a stop. The man climbed off.

"Hey! What's all this?" he demanded. "Somebody smack off them crossin' lights?"

Ham prodded Monk's ribs.

"About five minutes ago one of your trains smashed an automobile, and these pieces along here are all that's left," stated Ham. "The train didn't stop, and neither did the occupants of the car, so far as we can ascertain."

The railroad man held up his lantern and looked closely at Ham's lean face.

"You're screwy, brother," he announced. "There ain't been no train up the line or down it since the express, an' that went north more'n twenty minutes ago. I guess I oughta know, because I'm the track inspector on this line. I just come buzzin' up the road an' there ain't a wheel turnin' in this ten-mile stretch."

"Is that so?" complained Monk. "That car could've smashed itself, but it didn't scatter the pieces a hundred yards along the track!"

The railroad track inspector walked up and down muttering.

"It's screwy, that's what it is," he repeated. "No automobile could be hit by a train where there ain't been no train. It's as nutty as what happened a while ago down in the yards. The watchman at that loony place they say is bein' run by Doc Savage was knocked off tryin' to climb over an express an' one of the bulls got himself caught in a door that don't have no locks, an'——"

"Good gravy!" rapped out Ham. "Monk, come on! Now we have got something to dig into! What did they find inside that Spargrove plant, if that's the place you mean?"

The track inspector rubbed his dazed eyes.

"So far, they ain't been able to bust in," he said. "But the police is lookin' for the fellow they call Doc Savage, and——"

Monk was loping back toward the car. He stopped abruptly.

A girl's voice had cried out. It came from a clump of bushes several yards above the railroad. This was on the opposite side from the parts of the wrecked car.

"Howlin' calamities!" yelled Monk. "Ham, there was somebody left from that car! It's a woman!"

Monk's flashlight beam picked out a face. It was the white, round face of a young woman. Her eyes were as snappy as black opals in the light.

"Well, can't one of you help me out of here?" she demanded.

Chapter III

DOC SAVAGE ACCUSED

The young woman was plumply rounded out. She did not seem quite the type to have a fiery temper. But sparks were snapping in her black eyes. Her voice was edged with anger.

“Hurry up, funny face, and pry me loose from these thorns!” the girl demanded of Monk. “It’s a wonder I’m alive! Oh! You’re one of Doc Savage’s men! Well, I’m not a bit surprised!”

Monk’s long arms lifted a hundred and fifty pounds of fairly good-looking woman from the bushes. He set her on her feet between the rails of one of the tracks.

“You don’t mean to tell me you were in that wrecked car?” said Ham. “You don’t look as if you were hurt much.”

“That car?” exclaimed the young woman. “You think I was in that? I couldn’t have been, the way it looks. But I must have come here some way! After Doc Savage started looking at me, I knew something was wrong!”

The girl’s black eyes flashed at Ham. She had smooth, black hair and a white forehead. Her mouth was round and small and very red.

“I knew it!” exploded Monk. “I told you, Ham! Doc’s in trouble! Where’d you come from, miss, and how——”

“Don’t try to kid me!” snapped the young woman. “Both of you belong to Doc Savage, so you must have been with him! Sure, that’s it! You were there when he held up the laboratories and put me in a trance with his whirlwind eyes!”

“Hold everything just a minute,” suggested Ham. “Let’s begin at the beginning. You’re saying Doc Savage hypnotized you or something like that? I presume then you came from the Spargrove Laboratories. You claim you didn’t know you were in that wrecked car?”

“You heard me telling you I don’t remember anything after Doc Savage looked at me in that funny way he has,” declared the young woman. “Anyway, I’m Jane Davidson, and I’ve been helping Professor Spargrove at his laboratory.”

“I don’t care who you are!” howled Monk. “I want to know if Doc was in that smashed car!”

“How many times do I have to say I don’t know?” rapped Jane Davidson. “I may have been in the car! Probably I was! But I don’t remember anything after Doc Savage looked at me! Besides that, I was called to the laboratories to help Professor Spargrove with some kind of meeting for Doc Savage and——”

“I believe you, Miss Davidson,” interrupted Ham. “You’ve got Doc all wrong, but I guess you think you’re telling the truth. Monk, put Miss Davidson in our car. I’m having a look around. She couldn’t have come here alone.”

“I won’t go with you in any car!” snapped Jane Davidson.

Sheets of rain whipped down on gusts of wind. The track inspector grinned a little.

“Maybe I could give you a lift, miss,” he suggested.

“On that thing?” said the girl, looking at the rain-swept gasoline engine. “I should say not!”

Jane Davidson appeared to be an extremely contrary young woman. She suddenly changed her mind. And from the loose folds of her coat she produced a stubby-looking automatic.

“All right!” she stated. “I’ll go with you in the car!”

She walked along the tracks toward the highway crossing. Monk ambled beside her. Though the ugly chemist was worried about what might have happened to Doc, he was wearing a crooked grin.

Monk liked young women with spirit.

“Daggonit!” he said plaintively. “You don’t have to wave that pistol! We were on our way to meet Doc! We’ll take good care of you!”

“You certainly will!” announced Jane Davidson grimly. “And if something’s gone wrong at the laboratories, I’m sure Doc Savage knows about it!”

The track inspector’s one-lunged gasoline car chugged away. The railroad man was going to the nearest point where he could report the crossing smash. He acted as if he were glad to get away from the place and the company.

Ham, meanwhile, climbed the steep bank above the railroad. He used his flashlight around the place where the girl had been tangled in the thorny bushes. The only evidence of her having been there was a scrap of her dress hanging on a branch.

“It’s confounded crazy,” murmured Ham. “There are her tracks in the mud after Monk lifted her out, but there are none coming up. So she must have been thrown out of that car.”

Ham saw Jane Davidson and Monk walk into the headlight beams of their own car still standing on the highway. At that instant, the lawyer became conscious of a peculiar note on the wind.

The sound was like the wind had suddenly blown across taut, melodious strings. It was eerie, something like a tune, yet having no clear melody. It seemed to proceed from a point back of some near-by rocks.

“Doc!” exclaimed Ham. “That sounds like him, and yet it isn’t exactly the same!”

In moments of stress, danger or concentration, Doc Savage nearly always emitted a weird trilling. The sound was a part of the bronze giant.

But something warned Ham to proceed with caution. The lawyer whipped a few yards toward the rocks in the darkness. As he moved, the smooth, black cane he carried separated. In his right hand played a gleaming, pointed sword blade.

The sword cane was Ham’s favorite weapon. The point of the blade was covered with an anæsthetic drug. The lawyer needed only to touch an enemy to render him instantly unconscious.

Ham slipped between two large rocks. The trilling sound had not been repeated. Rain slapped into the lawyer's eyes. He could see only a few feet ahead. But by concentrating on one point, he was sure he had seen a shadow move.

"Doc!" Ham called out softly. "You in there?"

A husky, whispering laugh came from close behind Ham. Something like a human foot crunched on the rocks. The lawyer whipped around, bringing the sword blade into play.

Ham was aware he had been tricked. He was surrounded by what seemed only swiftly moving shadows in the drenching rain. He thrust at one of these with his sword. To his astonishment, the keen-pointed blade passed directly through one of the shadows.

The bright steel jammed into a rock. The blade snapped. Something made a hissing noise in the rain. Ham was forced to drop both his cane and the broken blade. A soft, hairy noose of some kind had dropped over his head and tightened around his throat.

The noose cut off Ham's breath. He attempted to let out a yell. Somehow, he got his fingers under the cord. But he could not free enough breath to utter a warning.

Again there came a hoarse, whispering laugh. This was more like the wind than a human voice. A coarse, sacklike affair descended over Ham's head. Kicking and threshing around, the lawyer was pulled to the ground.

The inside of the sack had a sweetish smell. In a few seconds, Ham lay still.

Monk looked up at the hill above the railroad. He could not see where Ham had disappeared. He called out several times.

"Now I've got to go an' find that daggoned dumb shyster," growled Monk. "You get in the car an' keep dry."

Jane Davidson started to climb into the car. She still held her stubby automatic. An unearthly squeal came from the car's rear seat. It was followed by a coughing grunt of rage.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Jane Davidson. "I might have known there was some trick!"

She backed hastily into Monk's arms. The ferocious, small eyes of Chemistry, the tailless baboon, were shining at her, as well as those of Habeas Corpus.

"They won't hurt you," assured Monk. "That's Habeas Corpus, my pig, and Chemistry, Ham's pet baboon."

For the first time, Jane Davidson seemed shaken.

"I—I guess I'll wait out here," she said. "I've been in enough trouble to-night without mixing up with a menagerie."

Monk quieted Habeas Corpus. He dragged the pig out by one ear.

"Now you'll be all right," he promised. "Come on, Chemistry, we've gotta find Ham."

Jane Davidson got into the car out of the rain. She kept a tight hold on the stubby pistol. Monk loped across the railroad toward the hill. Habeas Corpus did not seem to

mind being toted by one long ear.

The tailless baboon grumbled and grunted. But he followed. His ambling movement was not much different from that of Monk. The baboon had sense. He hunched ahead of Monk.

In the rocks above the tracks, the baboon halted. He pounded his hairy breast and whined much like a human baby. Monk called Ham's name, but got no reply.

The tailless baboon had picked up some object. He was hitting a rock with it. There was a metallic sound. Monk used the powerful generator flashlight.

Chemistry was whipping the hilted half of Ham's broken sword blade against a rock. Monk found the remainder of the sword and the cane sheath.

The big chemist whipped out the superfiring pistol which looked like a small drum with a tube sticking out of one side. He called and moved with infinite caution among the rocks.

The stones showed no footprints. Monk attempted to use chemical tracing powder, but the rain had washed out possible marks.

The chemist produced a small, flat box. When he moved a switch, nothing apparently happened. But in the invisible ray of black light emanating from this box some queer marks appeared on the hard ground.

These looked like the prints of a man's heels. They showed where Ham had come up the hill. Where he had stood between the rocks, the marks were all mixed up. They glowed with blue light.

This was simply a substance contained in the spongy rubber heels of Ham's shoes. It was one of several chemicals which fluoresced under the black light.

"Howlin' calamities!" squealed Monk. "Ham didn't walk away from here!"

This was apparent. The imprints of Ham's heels ceased abruptly in the confusion of marks where the broken sword had been picked up.

Monk loped back and forth among the rocks. The tailless baboon was even more excited. But from that one point in the rocks, Monk could find no trail.

Perhaps Monk would have remained, searching all night. But from the highway below came the strident whine of a radio. The whine became two words.

"Ham—Monk! Ham—Monk!"

With a last, fruitless look around, Monk ran back down the hill. The baboon followed, pounding his breast and chattering.

Jane Davidson was huddled miserably in the seat of the car when Monk returned.

"The radio's been calling you," she said. "It couldn't be possible, but I'm sure it's Doc Savage's voice."

The radio speaker under the dashboard of the car still whined out the call for Ham and Monk. It sounded like the voice of Doc Savage.

Monk immediately tuned in with a reply.

“Ham—Monk!” came the order. “You will proceed at once to the Spargrove Laboratories. Renny and Johnny will join us there.”

Monk gave an O. K. to the summons. But his homely face was twisted like a crossword puzzle.

“That couldn’t have been anybody but Doc,” he stated. “But you think Doc was with you in that smashed car. And now Ham has been grabbed!”

“Ham has been seized?” said Jane Davidson. “I don’t believe it! And if that was Doc Savage on the radio, then he had some one else bring me out here and try to kill me on that crossing! I’ll bet Ham went away with whoever brought me out here!”

Monk glared at the girl. The big chemist liked most pretty women. But Jane Davidson was plainly rubbing his fur the wrong way.

“Doc!” said Monk over the radio. “Ham’s been grabbed out here! One of your cars _____”

Doc’s voice cut in on the other end of the broadcast.

“I know all about the car. Ham will be all right. You will do as directed. Bring with you the young woman who was in the wreck at the crossing!”

Monk let out a gasp. Jane Davidson spoke with a sneer.

“So, your wonderful Doc Savage didn’t have anything to do with trying to kill me?” she jeered. “You’d better do as you’re told, and if you make one wrong move, I’ll be driving this car back alone!”

Jane Davidson jabbed the stubby automatic emphatically into Monk’s ribs. Monk was too puzzled to even grunt.

Chapter IV

MISSING GLOBES

As Monk headed his car reluctantly toward the Spargrove Laboratories, another small car was reaching the locked doors of the tomblike structure. From this small vehicle climbed an odd figure.

The man was short of stature. He wore a shabby, hairy overcoat. The fuzzy hair of this coat seemed to continue where it touched his neck. The hair on the man's head was thick and bushy.

The man wore what once was known as a mutton-chop beard. This stuck out belligerently on both sides of his face. It made his face look smaller and runnier than it would have been. It was small and funny, anyway.

The man's little eyes jumped around under bushy brows. He came to the group around the small locked door of the Spargrove Laboratories.

"What's this? What's this?" he sputtered. "Who called the police to interfere with my work? Where's Jane? If you wanted in, why didn't you get hold of John Corbin?"

"Well! Well! Well!" gabbled Inspector Higgins. "Wasn't you told this John Corbin went bugs an' tried to bump an express train offa the track? An' this infernal trap of yours murdered one of the railroad bulls, an' you can't be runnin' any place that won't open its doors when duly constituted authority wants to get in!"

"John Corbin's been killed?" said the hairy man. "I'm Professor Spargrove, of course. Well, why didn't you have the young woman or Doc Savage let you in? They're both inside."

"Yeah?" rasped Inspector Higgins, hopping around. "An' what other crooked contraptions you got in there? Unlock this door before we get a few sticks of dynamite an' blast hell out of it!"

Despite the news about John Corbin's sudden and untimely end, Professor Lanidus Spargrove had a will of his own.

"I want to see John Corbin's body," he announced. "Then perhaps I will open the door, if Doc Savage consents."

"You'll *perhaps*?" yelled Inspector Higgins. "If Doc Savage consents? I'm representin' the law in this end of the county!"

"Let me see John Corbin's body," said Professor Spargrove mildly. "I will then take up the matter of opening the door. I don't believe I'd try dynamite if I were you, inspector. It is possible there are some elements in the building which might cause you inconvenience."

"Inconvenience?" shouted Inspector Higgins. "Two bumpoffs already, an' this crooked dump all locked up, an' you talk about inconvenience! What inconvenience, Professor Spargrove, if that's your right name an' not some alias?"

Professor Spargrove was nervous and excited, but he still spoke calmly.

“In other words, an attempt to blow those doors probably would set off an explosive that would make TNT seem like a penny firecracker,” he stated.

A few of the railroad men were beginning to ease away from the spot. The mild deputy coroner spoke.

“Whether it would blast this place or not, inspector, I don’t believe I’d try crossing up any property belonging to Doc Savage.”

Inspector Higgins’s Adam’s apple jumped. Inspector Higgins hopped.

The body of John Corbin had been covered with canvas. Professor Spargrove swept back the protective cloth with quick but gentle hands. The eyes under his bushy brows missing no detail of his dead watchman’s corpse.

One hand rubbed across John Corbin’s cold forehead. Into the eyes of Professor Spargrove came a speculative gleam.

“He was like this when the express hit him?” questioned Professor Spargrove.

“Well, he was jumping around and fighting pink elephants or something,” volunteered a railroad brakeman.

“Yes?” said Professor Spargrove slowly. “Coroner, have you removed anything from the body?”

The mild deputy coroner bristled.

“It is not my custom to disturb a corpse more than necessary!” he said.

“Curious, most curious,” murmured Professor Spargrove. “So John Corbin was running away from something?”

“That’s it! That’s it!” piped up Inspector Higgins. “An’ my men are bringin’ up half a case of powder! In about one minute I’m going into that crazy plant of yours!”

Rain slashed across Professor Spargrove’s hairy face. The deputy coroner remarked that Doc Savage himself had examined the body of the watchman.

“Then I think Doc Savage went away down the road in a blue sedan,” said the deputy coroner. “If there’s explosive inside, that Higgins will play the devil. He’s a stubborn guy.”

Sticks of the yellow-wrapped dynamite were being piled in front of the small, chromium steel door. Inspector Higgins yapped at his men.

“You’re being detained, Professor Spargrove!” he rapped out. “Just in case you’ve really got explosives contrary to duly constituted authority inside this joint!”

Inspector Higgins had slashed one end of a stick of powder. In this he had stuffed an explosive cap.

“You’re right, inspector,” stated Professor Spargrove. “We would be detained. Too much detained, in fact. So now——”

The hands of the professor fumbled under his hairy coat. He was looking at the chromium steel door. The door swung silently open. A low passage appeared. It was lighted by a row of small incandescent bulbs.

“My gosh!” grunted a railroad man. “The hairy guy just looked at it! An’ them cops have been buttin’ it with a railroad tie!”

But something else was taking place. Professor Spargrove seemed to have lost his mind. He seemed to be talking into his own mutton-chop whiskers.

“Spargrove speaking. Is it all right, Doc, to permit the police to enter?”

Out of the rainy air came a voice. It might have been an emanation from the hairs of Professor Spargrove’s beard. It was a compact radio set attached to his body.

“Let the authorities investigate in your own judgment.”

“Come in, Inspector Higgins, and you other gentlemen,” invited Professor Spargrove. “I will find my assistant. Undoubtedly she is informed of what has taken place. You will do well to remain in this main room. I will not be responsible for trouble if any one enters other compartments.”

The interior of the Spargrove Laboratories appeared to be of cellular construction. One central room seemed to be the assembling compartment for several types of ponderous machinery.

Professor Spargrove directed the body of John Corbin be brought into the main room. He spoke to Inspector Higgins.

“You say my watchman is reported to have seen various strange things which caused those who observed him to believe him suffering from liquor or hallucinations?”

“Well! Well! Well!” grunted Inspector Higgins. “There ain’t any doubt but what he had the D. T.’s or somethin’! He was seein’ things that wasn’t there!”

At this moment Professor Spargrove himself looked a bit off.

“John Corbin really saw those things,” he said quietly. “Only I didn’t know my assistant knew of the secret. I shall have to inquire into this. You will please wait here.”

Professor Spargrove whisked himself through a small inner door. Like those outside, this seemed to open as he looked at it. In less than ten seconds, Professor Spargrove leaped back into view. For the first time, he appeared greatly excited.

He opened another door and shouted. “Jane Jane! Where are you? Come here at once!”

Professor Spargrove was running from one small room to another. He dashed back into the central chamber. This time, all his calmness had departed.

“My whole life’s work—all gone!” he yelled. “I tell you, it’s impossible! All of it’s gone! Jane! Jane! Why didn’t Doc Savage stop them?”

Inspector Higgins imposed a hard hand on one of the excited professor’s shoulders. This copper was not so dumb. He knew the time to break a case was when he had the other fellow somewhat out of his head.

“All right! All right!” snapped Inspector Higgins. “So your whole life’s work is gone, is it? What’s gone?”

Professor Spargrove led the way through a small door. Here was another large room. Along one side was a loading platform. Switch tracks penetrated all of the

vaultlike building.

“Jane Davidson, my assistant, has been kidnapped!” yelled Professor Spargrove. “She preceded me here to attend a meeting with Doc Savage and some of his men! Now they’re gone—gone—and the two copper globes weighed more than three tons apiece!”

Professor Spargrove was pointing with a trembling hand at huge concrete blocks. These bore the fresh imprint of other objects. They seemed to have been the foundation for heavy machinery. Two blocks looked as if they had been fitted to the base of immense globes.

“They were both made of copper!” shouted Professor Spargrove. “They weighed more than three tons apiece! There were four big generators on those other bases! The whole thing would be more than ten tons! And they were all here less than three hours ago when I left! Who opened the doors?”

Inspector Higgins scratched his nubbin of a head. Anyway, he was sure none of his coppers had opened the doors. The railroad men on duty all night all immediately stated the plant doors had not been opened at any time, except when John Corbin had emerged.

Professor Spargrove was walking around and around the concrete foundations. The other men could see plainly enough that heavy machinery had been removed only recently. The marks of the copper globes were bright. These would have tarnished in a few hours.

“Well! Well! Well!” rapped Inspector Higgins. “So somebody walked in an’ picked up ten tons of copper an’ iron and walked out with it? Maybe that crazy watchman was carrying it in his pockets when he butted into that train!”

Professor Spargrove appeared to be looking at the big sliding doors through which the tracks had their exit. The big doors went up silently. The professor whipped outside. Inspector Higgins was close beside him.

“Look here!” yelled Professor Spargrove. “These are truck tracks! It was a big truck! Who saw that truck leave here?”

At the edge of the motor highway back of the laboratories was a muddy shoulder. Immense doughnutlike tires of a big truck had cut deep into the soft earth. The tracks were fresh.

“Holy Moses!” growled the yardmaster. “We can’t keep track of all the trucks that go by here!”

“All gone!” wailed Professor Spargrove. “Wait until Doc Savage discovers this! I’m ruined!”

“Doc Savage?” barked Inspector Higgins. “He knows plenty about it! We’ve got to find that guy—and quick, too!”

Inspector Higgins was jotting down many notes. What these meant, he probably did not know himself. The snatching of ten tons of machinery under the eyes of a railroad yard

full of men was adding a little too much to this assignment.

Now Professor Spargrove seemed to have forgotten about the reputed missing globes. He had led the way into another long room. This looked as if it might have been an aquarium.

Long rows of glass tanks were ranged around the sides. Only these tanks appeared not to have been filled with fish. Scummy green water showed against the glass. The air was rank with the odor of decaying vegetation.

Professor Spargrove was walking up and down.

“It couldn’t be! It couldn’t be!” he kept repeating. “You are sure John Corbin screamed he was seeing things?”

One of the railroad men affirmed this. Professor Spargrove darted into a side room. When he came out, he was staring strangely. He seemed hardly to see the others in the room.

“It’s incredible! Incredible!” the professor cried out. “The globes are gone! Yet I see—I see—— It can’t be possible!”

“Well! Well! Well!” snapped Inspector Higgins. “An’ what do you see?”

“You wouldn’t understand,” the professor said quietly, “but I see the same things John Corbin saw. Only I know what they are, and poor John Corbin did not. Some of them have a hundred heads and some have a thousand mouths. They are reaching for me with long tentacles.”

“Holy mackerel!” grunted a railroad man. “Me! I’m pullin’ my freight right now!”

Inspector Higgins slipped a hand into a side pocket. His Adam’s apple was clearly out of control.

“I guess maybe, professor, you’d better come along with us,” he suggested. “Probably the strain’s been too much for you.”

But Professor Spargrove leaped and struck at something in the air. Unfortunately for Inspector Higgins, his bony nose was in the path of the professor’s fist. Scarlet fluid splattered over the inspector’s chin.

“We’ve got to get them back!” screamed Professor Spargrove. “My life’s work! I tell you not even Doc Savage can rob me of what I’ve slaved years to produce!”

“Now we’re gettin’ somewhere!” growled Inspector Higgins. “I bet that bronze guy knows all about this! Make a close check-up on all freight that’s been moved! Ten tons of machinery can’t walk out of the middle of a railroad yard without being seen!”

“That’s the complete check-up,” announced the yardmaster half an hour later. “Nothing has been moved on this side of the yards to-night. It would also have been impossible for any one to have transferred ten tons, or even one ton, of equipment from that building to a truck on the highway without being seen.”

“That puts this whole thing right back on this Doc Savage,” declared Inspector Higgins. “He was here. He saw what had happened, an’ then he beat it away in a blue sedan. It all checks up.”

Inside his plant, Professor Spargrove was wandering from room to room. Inspector Higgins had two county policemen keeping him under surveillance. They could hear the professor talking to himself.

Occasionally, Professor Spargrove came in and stared at the tanks of green water. Each time, he resumed his crazed muttering. He did not seem to observe the policemen. The coppers kept more than a respectful distance.

Also, the policemen kept a close eye out for anything that might have a hundred heads and a thousand mouths. They wouldn't have been surprised to really find long tentacles reaching for them.

Outside, Inspector Higgins still had no trace of the missing machinery.

He repeated a telephone order to have Doc Savage picked up as soon as he could be located.

Chapter V

THE RUMBLING TRUCK

Colonel John Renwick, famous engineer, was standing his companion's hair on end. William Harper Littlejohn, noted archæologist and geologist, was not a man to have shivers sent easily through his scalp.

But when it came to driving a big car with a fast motor over a rainy highway in the night, Colonel Renwick, otherwise known as "Renny," seemed to have no sense of either speed or safety.

"Renny," stated "Johnny," "an apparently insuperable obstacle looms in the immediate foreground. Unless you alter your present tangent, it will be the mournful case of an irresistible force colliding with an immovable object."

Renny was a giant of a man. His hands on the wheel were ponderous as small hams. His rugged face was solemn, so solemn he had the appearance of grieving greatly most of the time.

Johnny, who had once occupied a chair in a leading university, was addicted to the longest words he could manage.

"Put it in English, Johnny," rumbled big Renny. "Whatcha mean 'my present tangent?'"

Johnny was a long, bony fellow. His body looked as if it might break if he bent over suddenly.

"I mean, Renny, if you don't pull over about two inches, we're going to smack head-on into that house truck coming down the road," said Johnny quickly. "Well, I'll be superamalgamated!"

The last exclamation was drawn out by the margin of less than an inch which Renny allowed in squeezing by the huge truck. The truck driver stuck out his head. Johnny could see him swearing.

A short distance behind the truck came a small coupé. It seemed to be trailing the truck. The faces of two men showed behind its windshield.

"Holy cow!" grunted Renny, as they swung the next curve. "It looks like Doc is having plenty of company!"

The engineer skidded his car off the concrete into the muddy shoulder of the road. Close by loomed the vaultlike building of the Spargrove Laboratories. In response to a special radio summons from Doc Savage, this pair had arrived at the laboratories.

Dozens of men with lanterns and flashlights were scurrying around the building. Some were shouting orders.

Inspector Higgins was the first to confront Renny and Johnny.

“Huh! Well! Well!” he slapped over his bouncing Adam’s apple. “So you fellows belong with this Doc Savage, an’ you was to meet him here? Well, I want to meet him here or any other place! He’s been pulling enough crooked stuff——”

“Hey, Renny, wait a minute!” said Johnny hastily, grabbing at the engineer’s arm. “Remember, this guy’s an inspector! He’s talking for the law!”

“Yeah?” thundered Renny. “An’ if he makes one more crack like that, he won’t be talkin’; he’ll be eatin’ soup through a straw! What does he mean ‘Doc’s crooked?’ ”

Johnny had been in the nick of time to save Inspector Wiggins from a fist that had smashed many tough doors. The inspector hastily sidestepped.

“Well, anyway,” he said, “your Doc Savage ain’t here. He’s been here, an’ ten tons of machinery went up in thin air. The professor who runs this joint has gone cuckoo! He’s seein’ things!”

Johnny’s skull-like countenance turned upon the inspector. His eyes brightened in their bony sockets.

“And what might Professor Spargrove have been seeing?”

They were in the long room filled with tanks of stagnant water. The air had the odor of dying vegetation.

“Well,” said Inspector Higgins, “the professor was lookin’ straight at them glass cases full of weeds an’ he kept sayin’ he was seein’ somethin’ like the maybes. I guess this place drives ’em all nuts. That’s what started this watchman runnin’ loco.”

Johnny ran a long finger along his sharp nose. He looked at the tanks of dirty green water.

“Seeing the maybes?” he remarked, in a musing tone. “Could it have been, inspector, he might have been suffering with illusionary phobia of the amoeba?”

“Havin’ the what of the what?” snapped Inspector Higgins.

“Perhaps the chlorophyll or the vorticelli suddenly assumed hitherto unknown dimensional relativity and emerged from the jungle of algae to be observed about us,” continued Johnny solemnly. “Did Professor Spargrove by any chance refer to hydra-headed monsters with tubular tentacles, inspector?”

Inspector Higgins swallowed his Adam’s apple. His eyes popped at Johnny.

“Either you’re tryin’ to kid me, or you’re nuttier than them others!” he yelled. “What in thunderation are you talkin’ about?”

Johnny rubbed his finger along his nose and smiled.

“Let it pass,” he suggested. “I fear it wouldn’t make any difference if I explained. Did Professor Spargrove happen to have anything in his hands when he mentioned seeing these maybes, as you call ’em?”

“He didn’t have nothin’ nowhere!” rapped out Inspector Higgins. “He just stood in the middle of this room an’ looked around. He was yellin’ about two big copper globes an’ some ten tons of electrical machinery havin’ been grabbed off them concrete foundations. We checked up, an’ that stuff must have been taken out of here before to-night. It couldn’t have been done!”

Johnny was suddenly silent. He walked over and dipped a bony hand into one of the tanks of green water. Slimy vegetation clung to the hand.

“Big copper globes and generators?” he said, in a musing tone to himself. “So that’s why Doc wanted us out here!”

Professor Spargrove danced into the room. He recognized Renny and Johnny instantly.

“They’re gone!” he yelled. “The copper globes weighed all of three tons apiece! They were all hooked up, and the generators went with them! Where’s Doc Savage?”

“Holy cow!” grunted Renny. “I guess he has got the maybes, or whatever it was you were talkin’ about!”

“We came here to meet Doc,” stated Johnny. “What was the purpose of the big globes and the generators, professor?”

“I am not at liberty to divulge the nature of this equipment,” Spargrove stated, with some dignity. “Only Doc Savage can inform you of that. It was for that purpose, I believe, he summoned you here to-night. Doc Savage and myself alone know the secret. No other person could possibly be informed.”

“Well! Well! Well!” yapped Inspector Higgins. “All this yammerin’ is gettin’ us nowhere! For two cents, I’d lock up all you fellows until we get our hands on Doc Savage! If he knows what drove that one guy nuts an’ killed him, he ain’t safe runnin’ around loose!”

“I fear, inspector,” said Johnny, “that Doc Savage knows a great many things that would drive lesser minds nuts, as you call it. Also, I can assure you he must have some good reason for being absent at this time.

“Professor Spargrove, I believe you are wrong. Other persons do know the purpose of the copper globes, if they have disappeared as you say.”

“Thunderation!” rumbled Renny.

His sudden bellow was startling. The giant engineer had a pair of lungs like blacksmith’s bellows. When he was excited, his voice was a good imitation of a roaring foghorn.

“Now what the——” began Inspector Higgins.

“That big truck we passed, Johnny!” shouted Renny. “There was a little car trailin’ it! Accordin’ to the time it was makin’, it was rollin’ a heavy load! It was headed upcountry! Come on!”

Renny and Johnny paused only long enough to make sure of the tire treads in the mud near the laboratories.

Inspector Higgins got several of his men into the police car. Professor Spargrove still retained enough of his mind to jump into the seat of his roadster.

Led by the police car, the three motors plunged into the slashing rain. The wind had taken on extra violence. Solid sheets of water whipped across the concrete.

This was no night to be driving more than a safe thirty miles an hour. The police car was doing seventy. Professor Spargrove’s roadster bettered that. At one of the first curves, the professor skidded his roadster ahead of the police car.

Red lights suddenly appeared in the rain ahead of the three cars. They were undoubtedly the tail-lights of a truck. Just behind this big, rumbling vehicle a small car was being driven fast. The top lights of the truck showed green and red. The vehicle seemed as big as a house.

“Honest guys don’t drive a big bus like that on a night like this,” declared Renny. “That truck’s doing all of sixty. It’s top-heavy an’ the way it’s takin’ them curves, somethin’s due to bust.”

Renny was undoubtedly correct. For the truck and the car following it had just swung into an S turn. Its lights waved in a manner that indicated the heavy body of the vehicle was doing a roll that threatened to turn it over.

The truck’s lights were swinging wide on the S turn. Apparently the driver was giving the big bus all the gas it would take. Also, he must have been taking the wrong track on the road.

“Well, I’ll be superamalgamated!” gulped out Johnny.

“Holy cow! It had to happen!” boomed Renny.

Twin headlight beams flashed around the crooked turn. A car was coming fast in the opposite direction. Apparently the driver of the truck lost his head completely.

The top lights of the truck seemed to hover in mid-air. Then they went up and over. The whooping wind was not loud enough to drown out the rumbling, roaring crash. Tons of wood and steel were smashing to bits on the rocks of the hill below the highway.

“There goes the professor’s copper globes!” yelled Johnny.

Johnny quit talking. Renny stopped cars much the same way he drove. Suddenly Johnny bumped his bony forehead against the windshield.

Inspector Higgins’s car had narrowly avoided piling on top of Professor Spargrove’s roadster. The professor had stopped by the simple, if dangerous expedient of skidding off the concrete.

Already Professor Spargrove was out of his car and leaping down the embankment.

“That other little car never stopped,” said Renny.

“That’s the great help we get from police sirens,” commented Johnny. “The fellows in that little car probably won’t stop this side of Providence or Boston.”

The car that had caused all of the confusion had slid on into the night. It had been traveling fast. Now it was slowing down. Its driver was showing an intention of coming back.

Inspector Higgins and the others did not notice this. They were piling down the hill toward what was left of the big truck. The giant doughnutlike tires of the truck stuck up in the air. They were still spinning.

They looked remarkably like the helpless feet of some monster suddenly turned on his back.

“Hey, you fellas!” yelled Inspector Higgins at his cops. “One guy’s busted all to hell on them rocks, but there’s somebody inside! Listen to him!”

Acute ears were not required to ascertain some one was inside the splintered body of the big truck. For a human voice was screaming.

“Take ’em off! Take ’em away! They’re eatin’ me alive! Look! That one’s got a thousand eyes! There’s heads everywhere!”

“We seem to have an uncanny faculty for arriving at psychological moments,” observed Johnny.

“Good grief!” growled Renny. “Maybe the truck’s on fire inside!”

The truck had not caught fire. One whole side had been broken open on the rocks. A county copper’s flashlight shot a finger of illumination into the wreckage.

“My life’s work—all smashed to bits!” shouted Professor Spargrove. “I’m a ruined man! Doc Savage’ll never forgive me!”

“Well! Well! Well!” snapped Inspector Higgins. “If that’s your life’s work, I know you ought to be in the nuthouse. Good grief! It ain’t anythin’ but one of them water tanks, an’ the glass ain’t even cracked!”

Professor Spargrove ceased shouting. The hairy scientist had remarkable moments. One moment he seemed crazy. The next, he acted as if nothing mattered. Now he was staring at what the policeman’s flashlight showed.

“One of the amoeba,” he said, in a musing tone. “And they didn’t take the globes in that truck. Say, there’s a man! He’s——”

The entire load of that huge truck was indeed strange. For it consisted of that one small, unbreakable glass tank. And one human passenger. It was this man who had been shouting. He was still screaming.

Yet, in all the crash, the victim did not seem to have suffered more than a bumped nose and a blackened eye. This gave his face a queer, distorted appearance. But the man’s voice did not lack in strength.

“See ’em!” he squawked. “Millions of ’em! They’re big as houses!”

“The gentleman seems to enjoy a remarkably wide perspective,” remarked Johnny, climbing to the side of Professor Spargrove.

“What do you make of it, professor?” Johnny added.

The professor had no time to reply.

The passenger suddenly caught the edge of the broken side of the truck. He swung himself out. A policeman grabbed for him and missed. The man started running among the rocks. Such hair as this man had left was fuzzy and gray at the edges.

Inspector Higgins let out a shout.

“Get ’im! Don’t let ’im hurt himself! Good gosh! That fella’s Howard Van Ronzen, the millionaire! He’s been batted on the bean or somethin’!”

“Van Ronzen,” stated Johnny, “lives at Great Neck, Long Island. I visited once on one of his yachts. He’s worth millions.”

Van Ronzen, the millionaire, proved to be an agile man for his age. He climbed on a rock. His thin hands slapped at invisible objects. His coat had been removed and his shirt was partly torn off.

“It’s got a thousand heads!” screamed Van Ronzen. “Take ’em away! I’ll give you anythin’ I’ve got!”

Inspector Higgins and his men encircled the rock. But Professor Spargrove was the first to reach the yelling millionaire. The professor sopped his handkerchief in a pool of water on the rock. When the coppers reached him, he was bathing Van Ronzen’s head.

This application seemed to have a remarkably soothing effect. The millionaire’s eyes were closed. He opened them, but he no longer yelled. He stared at the men around him as if he had no idea of where he might be.

Then in a perfectly sane voice, Van Ronzen said, “Did you see them? One had a thousand arms. They followed me. What am I doing out here in the rain?”

Inspector Higgins’s Adam’s apple had almost rubbed a hole in the skin of his scrawny neck. He gulped and looked at Van Ronzen.

“I think perhaps he will be all right now,” said Professor Spargrove calmly. “He should be brought to a hospital at once.”

“We’ll attend to that!” said Inspector Higgins. “Where have you been, Mr. Van Ronzen? How did you get in that truck?”

“Was I in a truck?” said Van Ronzen dully. “Have I been somewhere? There were so many of those things trying to wrap their tentacles around me, I lost track of where I was.”

“I believe Mr. Van Ronzen should not be questioned now,” advised Professor Spargrove.

The medical examiner, the pudgy deputy coroner, had been in the police car. He was as puzzled as the other. But he said, “I agree that now is no time to ask questions. Get the man to a hospital.”

“Well,” snapped Inspector Higgins, “now where are all those big copper balls you was talkin’ about, professor?”

Professor Spargrove stroked his mutton-chop whiskers. A cunning look came into his almost hidden eyes.

“It does not matter greatly at this moment,” he said calmly. “The globes are not in operation. Apparently they were not in this truck. The dead driver can be of no assistance.”

All of this was indeed evident. With the assistance of an army of piano movers, two three-ton copper globes might possibly have been transferred from the Spargrove Laboratories to the big truck. That is, if the vehicle could have hauled these along with the other machinery Professor Spargrove reported as missing.

Inspector Higgins had made a swift investigation.

“Them license plates on the truck are phonies,” he announced. “They don’t belong on that kind of job.”

Still moaning and showing evidence of having been through a terrible ordeal, Van Ronzen, the millionaire, was carried up to the highway.

In the midst of this, Professor Spargrove lost all of his recent calm attitude.

“They’re on again!” he yelled. He danced up and down. “I am ruined! My life’s work is gone! We’ve got to find the globes before there is great disaster which even Doc Savage cannot prevent!”

Johnny was close to the professor. He whipped suddenly upon him. But the professor was quick. He sprang nimbly up the hill. He showed in the headlights of a car that had just arrived.

“Howlin’ calamities!” squealed a childlike voice. “What’s happenin’? Hey, Renny! Johnny! Is Doc with you?”

Inspector Higgins hopped up the embankment. He peered into the furry, ugly face of Monk.

“My good gosh!” groaned Inspector Higgins.

In the window of the halted car appeared another face. There was an angry, chattering voice. Something like a pig squealed.

Inspector Higgins was speechless for a moment. He was looking into the glittering, bright eyes of Chemistry, Ham’s baboon.

Chapter VI

HAM SEES MONSTERS

Inspector Higgins was not a fainting man. He had been a county copper too long to keel over. But he almost did keel over as Chemistry's hairy face and wicked eyes showed in the glass of the car.

He made a valiant effort. This time he seemed to swallow his Adam's apple completely.

"You—you're lookin' for this Doc Savage?" he groaned. "An' why did you expect to find him out here, if you can speak the English language?"

"Daggonit!" yelled Monk. "I'll push some of the English language down your skinny throat! I'm lookin' for Doc because he's the only one who can straighten out all this mess! Renny, you seen him?"

"That's exactly what I thought!" snapped Inspector Higgins. "So is everybody else lookin' for Doc Savage! It looks like he could explain a few little things about crazy monsters, an' bumping off people, an' stealin' copper globes, an'——"

"And don't forget," said a cool, angry voice from the seat of the halted car, "Doc Savage also might explain a kidnaping!"

"Jane! Jane!" shouted Professor Spargrove. "How did you get here? Where have you been?"

"All I did," said the young woman with the snapping, black orbs, "was to make the mistake of looking into Doc Savage's eyes. The next thing, I was stuck in some thorn bushes on a hill. The car I was supposed to be killed in was scattered along the railroad tracks. Then this Monk and Ham come along with their menagerie, and Ham beats it."

Inspector Higgins was writing furiously in his notebook. If he knew what he was putting down it was a miracle.

The deputy coroner was still a relatively sane man.

"Affairs seem to grow more complicated as we go along," he commented mildly. "I suppose there are more bodies back by that wrecked car on the crossing?"

"That's the funny part of it," said Monk. "There were five people in that car an' it was smashed to pieces. Then Ham went up the hill and disappeared. This Jane Davidson is the only one of the five we found, and she don't know if she was in the car to start with."

Inspector Higgins snapped off his pencil violently.

"And you said things were complicated, coroner?" he groaned. "If you're askin' me, they're all hell west an' crooked! We've got to find Doc Savage! I'm gettin' to a telephone! All you others hold yourselves ready to be arrested any minute!"

"They got the globes, Jane," Professor Spargrove was saying to Jane Davidson. "I don't know what I'll do. Years of work, and they're gone."

“I’ll return to the laboratories with you, professor,” announced Jane Davidson. “I have learned poor John Corbin was killed. He must have been knocked out before Doc Savage walked in on me. Anyhow, I can’t remember anything after that.”

Despite repeated efforts, little was brought to light about what had happened to the millionaire. Van Ronzen stated that he had been riding along a Long Island country road. A car had suddenly crowded him into the ditch. Apparently he had been knocked out. When he had recovered, the whole world had changed.

Johnny, listening to the tale, formed a startling theory concerning the happenings of the night. But he had no means of verifying it. And what was more, he wasn’t going to repeat it to any one. He didn’t want to be considered crazy, too.

Inspector Higgins didn’t believe anything of Van Ronzen’s story. Neither did he believe Professor Spargrove had been seeing things. The inspector hadn’t seen anything, so he had reached but one conclusion: All were mad.

Inspector Higgins left the scene in disgust and went back to headquarters. There he tried to make something out of the notes he had written. They were so badly scribbled they made little sense. After he got them straightened out, they made less sense.

After Inspector Higgins had left, Monk, Renny and Johnny made repeated efforts to pick up Doc Savage’s radio signal. They then decided that their quickest way of finding their bronze chief was to return to headquarters. Apparently nothing more could be done at the scene of the Spargrove Laboratories.

Doc Savage’s headquarters covered the entire eighty-sixth floor of one of Manhattan’s most impressive skyscrapers. Doc’s famous laboratory, his great library of scientific volumes and his other devices, were housed under a tower of stone and steel.

“Daggonit!” groaned the sleepless Monk. “It ain’t no use! If Doc’s anywhere at all, he ought to be gettin’ them signals!”

Monk, Renny and Johnny had been taking turns working the remarkable short-wave radio which was a part of Doc Savage’s system. This specially powered transmitter and receiver could pick up the Doc Savage code in almost any part of the world.

“Confound it!” rumbled big Renny. “Why don’t we do somethin’?”

“About this time,” suggested Johnny, “a few thousand county and city police are looking for Doc. We’ll probably get results by saying where Doc can locate us.”

Chemistry, the tailless baboon, wandered restlessly around the laboratory. Sometimes he whined like a baby.

“Howlin’ calamities!” squeaked Monk. “Anyway, I ain’t waitin’ much longer! I’ve been callin’ Ham’s club an’ all over, an’ he’s not anywhere! The spooky devils that wrecked that car must’ve got him, or he wouldn’t have busted that sword cane!” Monk and the others would not have believed their own eyes if they could at this moment have been walking through an isolated corner of Central Park.

Some life stirred in Central Park. It being a sunny morning, a few men and women of the Park Avenue set cantered along a bridle path. Others who preferred early morning walks, were strolling along some of the bypaths.

On some of the more hidden Park benches, a few frowzy individuals unrolled themselves from newspapers. They blinked and yawned. The park had been their only lodging house. A park copper walked along. Occasionally he tapped the soles of a late sleeper.

But the copper did not disturb one man on a bench. This fellow was apparently of the better class. In fact, he was elegantly clad in the latest morning stripes affected by Park Avenue. In his buttonhole was a fresh gardenia.

The man flicked some dust from one knee with a pair of immaculate gloves. Beside him reposed a neat black cane. One or two persons hurried by. They glanced enviously at this paragon of the latest in spring fashions.

For the man thus enjoying the sunshine after a night of driving rain was none other than Theodore Marley Brooks. If Ham had suffered any ill results from his strange disappearance, he must have forgotten it.

Truthfully, Ham was having trouble with his memory at this moment. Those knowing his shrewd brain would have been amazed to know the lawyer was trying to assemble a few elusive facts.

Here he was all dressed for a morning stroll in the park. Everything was in perfect order. He had been bathed and shaved. Doubtless he must have come from his apartment in an exclusive club near Park Avenue.

Yet Ham had not the faintest recollection of where he had passed the night, or how he had arrived in Central Park.

“Monk and I started out to meet Doc,” he murmured to himself. “Yes, that was it. Then Monk went off the highway. Good gravy! I’ll have to call up and find out about that insect!”

No person was in sight as Ham arose and started along a gravel walk. But just then a small, unhealthy-looking fellow came across the park. This man had a sallow complexion. He appeared to be in the final stages of some serious ailment.

Any two or three thugs who might have tackled the fellow would have been in for a great shock. For the man was Major Thomas J. Roberts, otherwise known as “Long Tom.” He was the fifth of Doc Savage’s companions.

Long Tom was the electrical wizard of the adventurous outfit. His appearance was most deceptive. Though small and apparently in poor health, Long Tom could handle several men larger than himself.

The sartorially perfect Ham instantly identified his colleague in Doc Savage’s group. Jauntily swinging his black cane, Ham started across the plot of grass.

“Hello, Long Tom!” he called out. “I’m glad you happened along! I seem to be in somewhat of a mental fog this morning!”

The pallid-faced electrician halted abruptly. He stared at Ham. For Long Tom had only a few minutes before been contacted by Renny and the others. This was why he was hurrying toward downtown Manhattan across Central Park.

And Long Tom had been informed of Doc's mysterious actions and disappearance the night before. Also, he had been told of Ham having vanished at the railroad crossing. Yet here was Ham, looking like a fashion plate and wholly unconcerned!

Ham was looking directly at Long Tom. Near-by, to one side, was a small pool in which a few pond lilies grew. Ham suddenly experienced a queer sensation. Something like an iron band tightened around his brain.

In the stagnant pool suddenly arose a great turmoil. Water and weeds were lashed about. It was as if the small pond had been hit by a cyclone wind.

Ham stood, staring stupidly at this manifestation. Out of the churning water arose a long, slimy head. It was followed by a score of others. Then it seemed to Ham there were hundreds of ugly heads with blobby, bright eyes.

Forked tails lashed through the water. Monstrous creatures came to life. One with a score of protruding necks seized upon another. Somehow, all of the necks succeeded in swallowing the other monster, dividing it into parts.

Onto the grass crawled long, serpent-like bodies. They had forked tongues. Then some seemed to sprout wings. They were attacking each other. Wide mouths gaped. Into these disappeared some of the monsters.

Now the air was filled with writhing, terrible bodies. All around Ham the sun must have disappeared. For he was in the midst of great, pudgy beasts. These flew without wings. Some came close.

Ham yelled loudly. He struck with his sword cane. He did not have time to draw the blade. For his whole body was being enveloped by hideous creatures.

Still the pond was a whirlpool of battle. When Ham's sword cane struck one of the flying beasts, the creature simply divided into separate parts. Each part became a new hydra-headed monster.

"Take them away!" shouted Ham. "Kill them, Long Tom!"

Ham imagined he could see Long Tom running toward him. Then scores of filthy, incredible serpents with many heads surrounded Long Tom. Ham saw the electrician vanish in the midst of the unbelievable attack.

"Run, Long Tom, run!" Ham screamed. "Look out! You'll be eaten alive!"

But instead of dashing to Long Tom's aid, Ham turned and darted in another direction. Above him came weird figures of the shape of scorpions. They were of prehistoric size. Ham could see only they were about to enclose him with their frightful pincers.

"Run Long Tom!" he yelled again.

With his natty attire, Ham slammed into the pool of stagnant water. He whipped about with his sword cane. His escape from the monsters of the air seemed to have been a mistake.

Ham lay down in the shallow, muddy pool. Park Avenue would have been greatly shocked. The impeccable Ham was smearing his face and head with the filthy mud.

"Take them away!" he yelled. "There are more of them coming!"

Ham hurled his sword cane at some monstrous shapes. Then he slapped at others with his bare hands. His blows seemed to pass through the great monsters. And each

time there were two where one had been before.

Ham slid into the water. He gulped great mouthfuls. He was gasping, choking.

Long Tom ran around the pond. This spectacle of the usually calm and self-possessed lawyer suddenly losing his mind was terrible for the electrician.

“Keep quiet, Ham!” Long Tom called out. “You’ll have all the cops in Manhattan here! Wait a minute! I’ll pull you out! There ain’t anything after you!”

Ham struck at him with both fists and yelled. Long Tom grunted. It looked as if there was only one remedy for this. He took it. His hard fist cracked Ham expertly under one ear. Ham quit fighting.

The lawyer rolled over and lay still as Long Tom got him onto the grass.

Long Tom looked around. He wanted to get Ham away without having to make explanations. He groaned as a big car skidded and stopped in the nearest driveway. Then he gasped with relief.

The figure of a big, bronze giant glided from the car. His eyes glowed like dull copper as he looked at Ham and Long Tom.

“What happened, Long Tom?” the man said quietly. “How did Ham get into that state?”

“That’s what I’d like to know, Doc,” replied Long Tom. “I heard he had disappeared last night. Renny told me you couldn’t be found. I was hurrying downtown when I saw Ham walking along. Then he started batting things in the air and yelling.”

“There’s something very mysterious about all this, Long Tom,” the bronze man stated. “I fear we are opposed by a terrible power. Last night I had some contact with Ham and Monk; then I lost control of the radio.”

Ham was recovering from the blow to his jaw. He was slowly sitting up. He stared wildly, but he had ceased fighting.

“Doc, you here?” said Ham dazedly. “What became of those things? My heavens! The whole park was full of them!”

“They must be gone now, Ham,” said the bronze man quietly. “Long Tom, you go at once to headquarters. I will take Ham in the car to his club. Tell the others I shall join you presently. We have work to do.”

Ham, the cool lawyer, never had been so shaken. He walked with the bronze man to the bulletproof car in the driveway.

“We got a lucky break that no cops came along,” said Long Tom. “I’ll tell Renny and the others everything is all right.”

Long Tom watched the big car with its sponge rubber tires disappear. It went in the direction of Park Avenue. Long Tom hailed a taxicab at the nearest street. He reached headquarters.

“Holy cow!” thundered Renny. “Ham in Central Park? And him seein’ things? Why can’t we get in touch with Doc?”

“Doc said something had happened to the radio,” explained Long Tom. “He said we were to be prepared to fight some great power. It seems he already has started something. But he wanted Ham taken care of at his club.”

“That’s funny,” declared Monk. “I never knew Doc to act like he’s been doing since last night. An’ if it’s somethin’ could make Ham see things, it’s plenty bad.”

“Wait a minute,” called out Renny. “I’ve got Doc on the radio.”

A message was coming through. Undoubtedly it was in Doc’s own code. But he was evidently having some trouble with the transmission. Johnny figured it out.

“Doc says we are all to go at once to the plant of the Twentieth Century Alloy Metal Works in the yards across East River,” interpreted Johnny. “Says it is important we waste no time. He thinks there will be some trouble there very soon.”

“The Twentieth Century?” said Long Tom. “Say, that isn’t so far from the Spargrove Laboratories. They’ve been making some special stuff this Spargrove was using in some of Doc’s experiments. I’ll bet the whole thing’s mixed up with what happened last night!”

“Howlin’ calamities!” exploded Monk. “Have we got to start that all over again? I’ve still got a headache tryin’ to figure out what happened! Anyway, I wish I could see Ham an’ find out where he went on that hill!”

Monk’s wish was almost immediately gratified. The door opened slowly. Ham staggered in. His eyes were red and bloodshot.

Chapter VII

DOC'S STRANGE ATTACK

Theodore Marley Brooks, legal light and Beau Brummell, never before had been in such a state. Monk looked at him and scratched his nubbin of a head. Ham's condition ordinarily would have called forth insulting comment from the apelike chemist.

But Monk was in no mood to jeer at Ham. Long Tom stared at the lawyer.

Ham's Park Avenue stripes clung to him in soggy rags. Traces of pond weeds stuck over his ears. Ham stood in the middle of the room. Suddenly, he jumped to one side and looked all around.

"I guess they're gone," he croaked. "There were millions of them! Monk, you made a mistake turning that car on its top."

"Holy cow!" grunted Renny. "Long Tom said Doc took you to your club! Why did you leave him?"

"Doc?" said Ham slowly. "Yes, that's right. Doc and I went for a ride in Central Park. That was after Monk upset the car. Then Monk ran off with that black-haired dame."

Johnny was preparing a hypodermic. Ham made no objection to having it thrust into one arm. The needle contained a sedative which Doc Savage had devised for control of the most serious mental ailments.

The bronze adventurer was noted as a great surgeon. This was only one of the many accomplishments he had gained by a lifetime of the most rigid training and exercises.

Ham's nerves became more quiet. He glanced in a mirror.

"I'm in a devil of a mess," he said quietly. "I'll bet I've been talking wild. But if you had seen the things I did, you'd all be ready for the bughouse."

"Howlin' calamities, shyster!" squeaked Monk. "You still believe you saw somethin'?"

"I saw a lot of things that were uglier than you, insect!" was Ham's sarcastic reply. "Then Doc came along and took me in his car. Say! Something must have happened to Doc! The next thing I knew, I was walking along a street down on the East Side. I had one devil of a time convincing a cop who I was, and then he didn't seem sure."

"Brothers, perhaps all of this has been mere hallucination," stated Johnny. "But we've had a radio call to go to that Twentieth Century plant. It came in our code. It was Doc's voice. I don't know what this is all about, but I'm sure Doc needs us."

All agreed that Doc Savage would not have summoned them unless there was urgent need for their presence. Ham continued to be jumpy, but he prepared with the others for a fast ride to the railroad yards across the East River.

At this moment a strident, whining noise came from one wall. Into what appeared to be a black square of glass jumped two figures. This glass was merely the electrical arrangement whereby callers at Doc's headquarters could be inspected from the inside.

"I was afraid that piece of bad news would be coming along," grunted Johnny. "That means, anyway, the police haven't picked up Doc. And Inspector Higgins has got your black-haired friend with him, Monk."

The ugly chemist let out a growl.

"That Jane Davidson ain't any friend of mine, an' she ain't to be trusted," declared Monk. "Now what do you suppose they want?"

Inspector Higgins followed his Adam's apple into the outer reception room. The snappy-eyed Jane Davidson accompanied him.

"Well! Well! Well!" rapped Inspector Higgins. "Now don't any of you fellows make any resistance! I've got this place surrounded! I'm havin' a look for this Doc Savage!"

Doc's five companions grinned slightly. All the police of two of the world's most thickly populated counties could have surrounded that downtown Manhattan skyscraper, and the occupants of the eighty-sixth floor could still have walked right out.

Doc Savage had been one of the designers of this immense pile of stone and steel. His headquarters had many exits which the most searching scrutiny would not have revealed.

"I presume you came armed with a search warrant?" suggested Ham, who was now nearly recovered.

"Warrant?" yelled Inspector Higgins. "I'm the duly constituted authority! This young lady with me was abducted last night, and an attempt was made to murder her!"

"From what I've heard of the young lady," rapped Ham, "it's too bad it was only an attempt!"

Ham did not mean this literally. His nerves were still raw. The absence of Doc Savage had all five of his companions in an extremely touchy mood.

"Let him go ahead and search the place," suggested Long Tom. "We've got to get out to that Twentieth Century plant."

"You're going where?" snapped Inspector Higgins. "You'll wait until I can accompany you! There is no doubt but that Doc Savage has been breakin' the law! I've just come from Howard Van Ronzen!"

"Yes!" snapped Jane Davidson. "And Mr. Van Ronzen now remembers how he was seized on the road! He says he never met Doc Savage, but he described him perfectly! It was a big bronze man who ran his car into the ditch and then hit him over the head!"

"Let Inspector Higgins have a look around," suggested Johnny. "We're as anxious as you are to find Doc, inspector."

Doc's five companions were seething with rage. They did not believe any of the reports being made about Doc Savage. But they were greatly perturbed.

They completed their preparations for departure as Inspector Higgins went through the big library and the laboratory. This duly constituted authority emerged from the laboratory with somewhat of a blank look in his blue eyes.

“Good gosh!” he exploded. “With all them infernal machines this Doc Savage has got in there to torture people, he should have been put in jail a long time ago! I never saw such contraptions! But from now on he ain’t goin’ to do no experimentin’ on good an’ law-abidin’ citizens!”

In the outside room, Jane Davidson repeated emphatically that it was Doc Savage who had hypnotized her before she was taken for a midnight ride.

Doc’s five companions were becoming excessively irritated with this positive young woman.

“You come with us out to the Twentieth Century Metal Alloy Works,” advised Johnny. “If Doc is there, it won’t take long to prove both you and this skinny-necked cop are goofy.”

“You can wager your sweet life I’m going with you!” blazed Jane Davidson.

A few minutes later three automobiles flashed along the East River streets northward to the bridge crossing into the Bronx district. One carried Inspector Higgins and some of his men. In another car Monk and Ham had taken Jane Davidson as a passenger.

As the three laden cars sped through the Bronx on the Boston Post Road, one section of railroad yards not so far from this main highway up the coast was busy. It was close to noon.

With a slamming of bumpers, a coughing of stacks and the whine of electric engines, the morning cars were being spotted. Two freight trams were being made up. The yardmaster was busy hopping around.

The Twentieth Century Alloy Metal Works did a mixed business, as its name indicated. Its furnaces made a specialty of metallic alloys designed for unusual services. Most of its shipments were of great value and had to be handled carefully.

Steel box cars stood at two long loading platforms. Along these loading platforms moved two score laborers. They wheeled heavy boxes on trucks.

The fussy, little man jumping around was the kind who would be expected to hold the same job with the same company for a great many years. He took his job seriously. His men imagined he had eyes in the back of his head.

His name was Evans. He was the general manager of the Twentieth Century. Just now, he was watching the spotting of an express car close to the main office on an inner loading platform. This indicated some shipment of unusual value was due to be loaded.

Manager Evans was also watching several men loading a box car. He squinted at these men and walked over to a white-collared foreman.

“You gotta bunch of new men again, Bill!” rasped Manager Evans. “Seems like we’re changin’ hands all the time lately! I don’t like it! I want all new men to report to me!”

The foreman rubbed a sweaty forehead.

“Got six boxes to be made up for the mixed local at noon, an’ you know how the loaders are,” he replied. “Half of ’em didn’t show up this morning, an’ I had to pick up

what I could get.”

“Well, I don’t like it!” insisted Manager Evans. “I want to know the record of all men workin’ for the Twentieth Century!”

“That’d get a lot of cars loaded,” muttered the foreman as Manager Evans hopped back toward the offices.

A serious, owl-eyed young man came from the inside office.

“You got all that stuff in the big box?” demanded Manager Evans. “We’re supposed to deliver half a ton of it to-day, an’ the express car’s been spotted.”

“Yes, sir,” said the serious young man. “All them conduits have been put in the safe. We made the thermite test yesterday. Only one batch went soft. The rest of it took five thousand degrees.”

“Great stuff, that thermite tester,” declared Manager Evans. “If those conduits went through it, they’ll stand anythin’ Doc Savage will ever use.”

“I hope so,” commented the serious young man. “But from what I’ve heard of Doc Savage, he’s likely to have something that might shove the temperature to ten thousand degrees.”

“That’ll never be done,” stated Manager Evans. “Thermite’s the only thing that’s ever been found that’ll melt down the hardest metals. The fellow who thought of mixin’ aluminum an’ iron oxide an’ then shootin’ electrical currents through it made himself a fortune.”

“Guess he did,” assented the young man. “That reminds me, Mr. Evans. We’ve got a batch of that mixture thermite in one of the big vaults outside. We ought to move it. A short circuit in there might play the devil.”

“I’ll look after that end!” said Manager Evans snappishly. “You see that those conduits are ready for loadin’. But don’t unlock the big safe until the guards are on hand.”

His words indicated the new alloy conduits designed for Doc Savage were immensely valuable. They were. They rated higher per ounce than gold, even at its advanced prices.

At this moment, a breathless office boy hurried onto the loading platform. The boy looked as if he had just seen a ghost.

“D-Doc S-Savage himself’s in your office, Mr. Evans!” stammered the boy. “H-he says he wants you right away!”

Manager Evans’s office was not brightly illuminated. A man was standing by the windows. His great bulk seemed to fill all of the lighted space. The man’s hands were fumbling with a metallic object he had picked up from the desk.

“Sorry, Mr. Savage, to keep you waitin’,” exclaimed Manager Evans. “I was just out preparing to load those conduits to be shipped to the Spargrove Laboratories. Mornin’ paper said there was some trouble over there last night. A watchman killed an’ one of the railroad men. Hope it won’t hold up your experiment?”

The bronze skin of the big man glowed in the faint light from the window. His bronze hands showed their tremendous reserve strength as they toyed with the metallic object.

“Nothing will interfere with the experiment,” stated the bronze man. “I’m glad to hear you have the conduits ready. They stood the thermite tests all right?”

“Five thousand degrees,” stated Manager Evans. “Not many persons could afford to pay the price for that kind of alloy. It’s the greatest thing our chemists ever have produced.”

“That’s fine,” said the man with the bronze skin. “Let me have the keys to the big safe, and I’ll look the stuff over before it’s loaded.”

“Why—why, well, I’ll unlock the safe for you,” said Manager Evans. “I make it a rule never to let these keys out of my hands. I hope you won’t feel offended. You see I _____”

Manager Evans had turned toward the door of the office. The bronze man must have moved with the speed of a cat. Manager Evans heard nothing.

“*A-a-agh!*” he gulped. “You can’t do that——”

Manager Evans’s windpipe suddenly collapsed. The great nerve centers at the base of his skull became paralyzed. The fussy little man batted the air with his hands. His movements became feeble.

It was very strange. Manager Evans remained wholly conscious. He could still see and hear. The big bronze man extracted a bunch of keys from one pocket. One of these was of peculiar design.

The strong safe of the Twentieth Century plant operated on an electroscopic principle of its own. This had been invented by Manager Evans himself. It required a key which made an electrical contact.

Now Manager Evans lay on the floor. Only his finger tips wiggled faintly. When he tried to cry out, he had no voice. The big bronze man passed into the outer offices.

Clerks in the outer offices saw the big bronze man whip into the main room. He stood for a moment looking around. He was looking out at the loading platforms.

“Everything is ready, Bill,” said the bronze man, without raising his voice. He turned on the perplexed clerks. “Every one will get out at once.”

The serious young man who had talked with Manager Evans was the only person to protest against the strange order.

“But—but—Mr. Evans said nobody was to——”

The big bronze fellow apparently made little movement. His eyes glowed like flaky copper. One hand snapped out with unbelievable speed. The serious young man left the office through one of the windows.

This exit carried the sash and the panes of glass with it. The other clerks rushed outside.

In the meantime, some of the new men on the loading platform had suddenly dropped their truck handles. Fists started smacking. Older employees were on the

wrong end of those blows. A dozen of the regular men were herded and hurled into an open box car.

The door slammed shut and the iron hasp was fastened.

Knuckles pounded at the inside of the car. Men's voices shouted. But the new men of the loading crew had other business.

The foreman called "Bill," seemed to be directing this effort.

Men with rubber gloves dragged two electrical wire leads toward the end of the Twentieth Century plant. Here was a vault with a door something like that of a refrigerating plant.

Two men carried the wire leads through this door. They came out hurriedly. Bill shouted an order. Another man pushed a switch.

Under the door of the big vault appeared a flickering, blue flame. The electrical leads were alive. They were pouring a current of high frequency into the closed vault.

"Everybody out!" yelled Bill. "That thermite's worse than dynamite! It'll melt everything in sight!"

The thick-walled, insulated vault seemed to dissolve. In its place appeared a terrible blue flame. This flame seemed to have no tongues or smoke. It was like an expanding sponge of the fiercest heat.

The plant's stock of thermite was pouring out five thousand degrees of heat. Platforms began to disintegrate.

Chapter VIII

THE VANISHED SAFE

The small tank of terrible thermite did not cause an explosion. Switcher crews in the railroad yard began yelling. The yard siren squawled.

One of the yard fire engines got streams playing on the fire. Fortunately, the thermite burned itself out quickly. Only one end of the big plant was destroyed.

In the meantime, the yardmaster had ordered a rapid shifting of car strings on the sidings. A dozen electric engines ran cars to a safe distance from the plant should the fire spread.

On the near-by Boston Post Road, many motor cars were halted. Drivers poured out to witness the fire. Arriving county cops and patrolmen quickly got most of these moving. But traffic was jammed for perhaps twenty minutes.

During this time, the driver of a big moving van appeared to be blocked. He was forced to run his immense truck onto the flat shoulder of the road close to the burning plant. He climbed out and ran around swearing at other drivers.

It might have been noticed that a small automobile with its shades drawn had also stopped near the truck. Workmen from the burning plant were now carrying out some of the portable objects of greatest value.

The workmen apparently made some mistake. They seemed to be loading some of the rescued boxes into the stalled moving van.

After an interval of swearing with his voice and his hands, the truck driver climbed back into his seat. The big van found a way through the traffic, heading toward the Bronx.

The smaller closed car also vanished at about the same time.

The fire was now being rapidly brought under control. The thermite had burned out.

About this time, Manager Evans must have regained his physical faculties. His face was blackened with smoke, but his voice seemed unimpaired. The firemen and railroad men had believed every one had left the plant.

Manager Evans leaped into the edge of the crowd on the Boston Post Road.

“Stop him!” he was yelling. “We’ve been robbed! They took it away! Doc Savage got it! They took our conduits! An’ they grabbed a five-ton safe!”

“The heat’s got ’im,” commented the nearest policeman. “Nobody moved any five-ton safe or any other safe. Come on, we’ll have a look.”

Manager Evans led the way into the scorched main office. The policemen gaped at what he pointed out. Without doubt, a tremendous safe had recently stood at one side of the big office.

Gouged marks showed where it had started to move. Beyond that point the floorboards had been badly scorched.

“You say it was a safe an’ it weighed five tons?” questioned a copper.

“Yes, yes, yes!” yelled Manager Evans. “The new metal alloy in it was worth maybe a million! Before the fire I got myself knocked down! He took my keys!”

“Well! Well! Well!” rasped a nasal voice. “Who took what keys? What’s worth a million, an’ how’d you get yourself knocked down?”

County Police Inspector Higgins had pushed his acrobatic Adam’s apple into the picture. Close beside him was a round-faced, plump and pretty young woman.

Four others of Doc Savage’s companions were at Inspector Higgins’s elbow. Big Renny had halted outside. The three cars from Manhattan had arrived just as the fire had been brought under control.

Renny had an engineer’s eye. He had been attracted by the clever methods of the yard crews in shunting strings of cars out of danger. Renny was absorbing a mental picture of the yards of the Twentieth Century plant.

Ham was with the others. His eyes still had a vacant expression.

“Howlin’ calamities!” yelled Monk. “We’re lookin’ for Doc Savage! Who’s seen him? Was he here before this fire started?”

“I’ll bet he was here,” stated the cold voice of Jane Davidson. “There aren’t many places he hasn’t been.”

“That’s right!” shouted Manager Evans, pulling at his scorched hair. “Doc Savage was right here! It was him who knocked me out an’ took my keys! That was just before they grabbed this five-ton safe!”

Inspector Higgins swallowed his Adam’s apple. He waited until he had it in action again.

“An’ that cinches this Doc Savage!” he rasped. “You saw him, an’ he knocked you down? Then he took your keys an’ stole your safe?”

“That—well, that’s what I think happened,” said Manager Evans.

“Then,” interrupted Long Tom, “all you have to do, Inspector Higgins, is find a big bronze fellow walking around with a five-ton safe under his arm.”

“Don’t try to be funny!” snapped Inspector Higgins. “Disappearin’ copper balls an’ machinery, crazy men seein’ things where they ain’t, an’ now this Doc Savage walks right through a crowd with five tons of safe!”

“It seems to me you’re being funny without trying,” suddenly commented Johnny. “Mr. Evans, how would they have got that safe out of here?”

“I believe—I think—I’ll bet I know!” gulped a serious young man. He was the clerk who had been ejected through the window.

“Well! Well! Well!” exploded Inspector Higgins. “You believe, you think you bet— Make up your mind!”

“Yes, sir—no, sir,” gulped the confused young man. “But about five minutes ago there was a big moving van loaded with something out of the plant while it was on fire

—an’ it went down the Boston Post Road toward Manhattan—there were boxes and —”

“Good gravy!” snapped Ham suddenly, coming out of his apparent coma. “Wouldn’t you know if there was a safe?”

“Yup—of course! Sure, there was a safe!”

“Great Scott!” yelled Inspector Higgins. “An’ we’re standin’ here! I’m gettin’ Doc Savage this time!”

Monk drove one car. Renny was at the wheel of another. Inspector Higgins himself had the police car.

Though traffic on the Boston Post Road pulled off at the wail of the police siren, it seemed an even bet which driver would be the first to hit the ditch.

The determined Jane Davidson rode with Monk. Perhaps the ugly chemist made the going a little tougher on this young woman’s account. She had persisted in accusing Doc Savage.

“Daggonit!” yelped Monk, who was leading the other cars. “That must be the truck!”

The lumbering vehicle was making all the speed of which it was capable. But the four-track Boston Post Road did not seem wide enough. Many drivers were being crowded into the ditch.

The driver of the truck was leaving several minor smashups in his wake. And close behind the truck was a smaller car. This was a sedan. The back window was obscured by a curtain.

“Move over!” shouted Inspector Higgins. “There ain’t goin’ to be no more foolishness!”

The police car shot ahead. From its windshield protruded a mean-looking snout. This suddenly took on a rosy blossom of fire.

“Good gravy!” exclaimed Ham. “That crazy cop’ll knock some other car off the road! This isn’t any place to turn on the fireworks!”

Inspector Higgins must have been mad. A stream of jacketed bullets skipped straight up the concrete. This climbed to the gas tank of the sedan following the truck. The sedan skidded and slewed to one side.

“That got ’em!” yapped Inspector Higgins. “Blow them tires on the truck!”

The police machine gunner knew his stuff. A knifelike line of slugs rippled off the concrete. This sliced through first one and then the other of the huge, double doughnutlike tires under the moving van.

“That bus’ll wreck somebody before it goes over!” asserted Long Tom. “Look! There she goes!”

The big moving van was going over. It partly toppled. The sliced tires swung the rear end over toward the ditch.

“Howlin’ calamities!” squealed Monk. “Look at that other fool driver!”

The remark was justified. The sedan with the leaking gas tank had swung up alongside the big truck. It seemed as if it would be crushed under the van at any second.

Then two figures leaped from the driving seat of the truck. They caught the sides of the closed sedan.

The driver must have swung the truck's wheel desperately at the last instant. The moving van jumped like a house with dynamite suddenly applied to its foundation. As it turned over, its huge body completely blocked the four tracks of the road.

Inspector Higgins jumped up and down like a madman. His car had to be driven high on the bank before it could pass the truck. Monk and Renny followed.

"We'll get those fellows," said Long Tom. "Look at the road."

It was apparent the fleeing sedan was losing gas rapidly. The wet line showed where it was pouring out. But the wrecking of the truck had given it nearly a mile lead. It had disappeared around a sharp curve.

Inspector Higgins and the others braked to a stop. Two men were jumping up and down in the middle of the highway. Near them the closed sedan was burning. It had been shoved into the ditch.

"Well! Well! Well!" barked Inspector Higgins. "Get them out of that fire! Them fellows are under arrest!"

One of the men jumping up and down in the road had a black eye. The other man's nose was bleeding.

"Get 'em out?" yelled one of these men. "Hell! They ain't in there! They just knocked us down, grabbed our car an' beat it! They set that sedan on fire with a cigarette lighter!"

Inspector Higgins's Adam's apple threatened to sock him on the chin.

"Stole your car?" he yelled. "What'd they look like? What make of car?"

"Well," said one man, "it was a Caddy, an' faster'n what you've got! It's insured, anyway. There were five guys in that sedan. One of them that hit me was a big guy with a brown face like an Indian."

"Now that couldn't possibly have been Doc Savage?" murmured Jane Davidson, with a malicious note in her voice.

Apparently the other car had too great a start. There were too many side roads. Ten minutes later, Inspector Higgins had a report from up the road that the stolen car had been jammed into a wall near the railroad and abandoned.

"So, the young man saw a five-ton safe loaded into this truck?" observed Renny. "Maybe they tossed it over to that sedan when the men on the van made their get-away."

Inspector Higgins was speechless. This wrecked truck carried a few boxes. All were small. They were minor parts of machinery from the burned Twentieth Century plant. There was no evidence of a five-ton safe or any other heavy article having been carried.

Back at the Twentieth Century plant, Manager Evans was in a state of collapse. No evidence had been uncovered to show how the big safe and the million-dollar conduits had been removed. One man had lost his life in the fire.

The foreman known as Bill was missing. It was feared that he had been trapped near the burned thermite vault. But Bill had not been trapped in the vault.

Doc Savage's men were looking around the place. Inspector Higgins wasn't with them. He was on the telephone wire, giving orders that the man of bronze should be picked up. He was adding, dead or alive.

Doc Savage's men were as anxious as Inspector Higgins to have Doc Savage found. Never before had Doc called them to places of danger without excellent reason.

Renny was the first one to notice something wrong. He had whipped out into the railroad yard and was inspecting the lines of cars saved from the fire. Once before, he had impressed every detail of the switching yard on his brain.

"That's funny," he muttered. "I wonder why they moved that stuff out?"

Two minutes later, Renny was talking to a yardmaster.

"What became of that old carnival car that was on the graveyard track?" demanded the engineer.

"By golly!" said the yardmaster. "It's gone, ain't it? Maybe one of the switch engines moved it out of the way of the fire."

A search followed, minute in detail. But the car was not found.

The carnival car had disappeared.

Chapter IX

TWO DOC SAVAGES

There was but one light in the dungeonlike room. This was a dust-covered electric bulb set in the high stone ceiling.

But there were countless other little lights. Terrible little lights. Because they were not white like the dim globe above. They were tiny, and green, and deadly.

These little lights moved constantly. This was accompanied by a shrill squealing. There were gnawing sounds like small knives being sharpened on stones.

The many green lights were but reflections. They were the eyes of scores of great rats. Starving rats, shut off from all food for many days.

Now they scurried back and forth in the shadows at the edges of the room. Their hunger was not great enough to bring them to attack the only other living figure in the cellar dungeon.

For many hours there had been only one other living figure. He was a big man. From before the time John Corbin had run screaming to his death from the Spargrove Laboratories, this figure had been bound to the oozy, filthy wall of stone.

The prisoner had been there at the time Jane Davidson had stated she had looked into the eyes of Doc Savage. The green-eyed rats had crept closer and closer. Only that light in the ceiling kept them from attacking this human enemy.

The rats only waited for the prisoner to fall asleep. Or for that little light in the ceiling to wink out.

But the bound prisoner had still been awake when Ham was seeing monsters in Central Park. He was still watching the scurrying rats when a five-ton safe was removed from the Twentieth Century plant.

For the prisoner was Doc Savage, the great bronze adventurer.

The manner of binding Doc Savage had been simple. Too simple to be easily disengaged. The bronze giant had been known to free himself from the most complicated of modern manacles. But few sets of handcuffs would have held him.

Doc Savage was helpless now under the most primitive of winding cords. Strips of rawhide, only partly dried, had been employed. These enwrapped all of his tremendous body. They were interknotted around the massive arms from wrists to shoulders.

The legs were encased as securely as the wrappings of a mummy.

Doc Savage had been tricked to this underground cellar on the East Side. The ruse had also been simple.

For Doc Savage had seen himself. The other man had appeared only a few times in the street crowds. But each time, the bronze giant became aware his own appearance had been duplicated.

The other man's size, his bronze skin, the smooth mask of his bare head and his movements were faithful copies of Doc Savage.

Another note added to this. It was the strange trilling which suddenly swept over the crowd, then was as quickly terminated.

Scores of persons had been halted by that unexpected eerie note. It was gone so quickly they had not located its origin. But Doc Savage had marked it.

That trilling was Doc's own distinctive brand of sound. Usually it was uttered when in the face of danger or when concentrating upon some deep problem. His own men knew the trilling as a part of Doc.

Now Doc heard it emanate from his double. Undoubtedly the man desired that Doc Savage hear it.

Doc Savage knew the fellow had a purpose in all that show. He had wanted to be observed and followed. Doc had immediately taken up his trail.

Perhaps Doc Savage should not have so accommodated the other man's wishes. For his double had almost disappeared when Doc himself found himself surrounded.

Doc Savage's defensive devices were numerous. The big bronze man never carried a lethal weapon, such as a pistol. He believed men came to rely too much upon such weapons. This lessened the use of their wits.

True, Doc was armed with small grenades, tiny capsules and a few other devices which would render an enemy unconscious. But Doc had no desire to kill. Many of his enemies had been overcome. Then they had disappeared.

These men never were heard from again in their true identity. At an institution far in northern New York, many criminal minds were treated. When they emerged they were new persons. The twist of crookedness had been removed from their brains.

Now that Doc's double had appeared and vanished, the bronze man was surrounded by a throng of men. They were closing in from all sides. Doc was fully aware it was their purpose to capture him. The bronze man deliberately refrained from fighting.

Doc Savage had been rendered unconscious by something like one of his own chemicals. Here was proof that a most dangerous enemy had appeared for some mysterious purpose.

Doc's awakening was in the cellar with the scores of huge rats.

His immediate belief was that his strange enemy wished to terrify him for some purpose. The filthy, black rodents scuttled and squealed close to his feet.

A few times the small light in the ceiling went out. When this happened, there was a rush of many small bodies. Then the rats permitted their hunger to overcome their fear of a human presence.

But this torture wasn't quickly over with. Rather, it was prolonged. Each time the ceiling light went out, it remained dark for a few seconds. When it flashed on again, the squealing rats retreated. This torture of the prisoner had continued for hours.

Doc Savage possessed a brain as accurate as a clock. He was conscious of having been in the dungeon for nearly twenty-four hours. And in that time the bronze man had tried to connect up his imprisonment with some outside purpose.

What could be the reason which would make it worth while for another man to appear as Doc Savage?

The whole situation was baffling, it was even more so because of the thoroughness with which the bronze man had been disarmed. Even his bulletproof skullcap with its bronze hair had been removed.

Again the little light winked out. Almost immediately the rats were scuttling across the floor. Sharp teeth cut through the cords into one of the bronze man's arms.

The light came on again. And now a big man stood in the middle of the cellar. Doc Savage had heard the grating of a stone door by which the man had entered.

The man who stood there was of splendid proportions. He weighed perhaps two hundred and fifty pounds. His white shirt was stripped back from his forearms. Muscles stood out like small cables.

But the most amazing thing was the man's skin. It was bronze, a perfect replica of Doc Savage's own skin. Any one in a thousand persons would have mistaken him for Doc Savage.

Doc Savage waited. Little whirlpools stirred briefly in his gold eyes. He could see the eyes of the other man. They, too, appeared to be of bright copper. The light made whirlwinds show in the middle.

Doc Savage's first words were a quiet comment on the other man's appearance.

"It is very difficult to obtain glass shells of that color," stated Doc. "It is a metallic shade, which makes it possible to reproduce it in glass. The rest of your set-up looks like the real thing. Perhaps you will inform me why all this masquerade?"

The other big man laughed. Plainly he was proud of his success in becoming a replica of Doc Savage himself.

"You see," he stated, in a voice as quiet as Doc's own. "I never have had the opportunity to study your eyes at close range. Photographs are not much good. You know, of course, that no person can detect the exact color of another person's eyes at a distance of more than fifteen feet. I shall remedy that error."

Doc Savage did not have to be informed that here was the most dangerous type of enemy. Sure of himself. Cool as a cucumber. Remarkable in his make-up ability.

The big man came closer. His stride had that easy, catlike movement which marked Doc Savage. He did not have to bend down to peer closely into the eyes of his bound prisoner.

"I see what you mean, Doc Savage," he stated calmly. "The iris of the fake shells I am wearing do not give the proper whirling effect in the light. I shall have that remedied. Also, it might gratify you to know that my eyes will not hypnotize as yours have been known to do. That's tough through glass."

Doc Savage smiled slightly.

"After you have all the make-up perfect, you could hardly expect to fool my own men when they are near you," he stated.

The fake bronze man laughed confidently.

“On the contrary,” he stated. “I have already completely fooled two of your smartest men. I met Long Tom and Theodore Marley Brooks, or Ham, in Central Park not many hours ago. Long Tom followed my instructions, and Ham willingly accompanied me in an automobile.”

“But you have not attempted speaking with them—over the radio, for example,” suggested Doc.

The big man laughed.

“For many weeks I have had a short-wave set cut in on your own sender,” he advised. “I have learned the sending code, also your system of voice scrambling. Not less than a few hours ago all your men replied to a call to the Twentieth Century Metal Alloy Works above the Bronx.”

Doc Savage’s calm countenance did not change expression.

“Then this whole game is for the purpose of stealing some of our most valuable alloys?”

“Much more than that, oh, much more,” smiled Doc’s double. “When we have finished, some terrible things may have happened. Whole cities will discover we control their water supplies. Ah, no, Doc Savage! We shall not appear in the rôle of extortionists or blackmailers.”

“The Twentieth Century alloys?” said Doc, in a musing tone. “It couldn’t be possible that connects up with the Spargrove Laboratories?”

“You are a very erudite man, Doc Savage,” stated his bronze double. “Unfortunately John Corbin, the watchman at the Spargrove Laboratories, must have been drinking some very bad liquor last night. He was killed in the yards while trying to escape the D. T.’s.”

For a minute or two Doc Savage didn’t say anything. His face was a blank mask.

Few men could discover when anger came uppermost in Doc Savage. His calm control was always perfect. Yet now he was seething inside. Doc’s double’s statement that he and his cohorts could control whole water supplies told the bronze man more than other persons could have guessed.

“Becoming Doc Savage would hardly further your scheme, whoever you are,” stated the man of bronze. “It is true you may possibly discover the means of killing millions. You could lay barren millions of acres of this and other countries.”

“Also,” smiled Doc’s double, “we can restore what has been destroyed. And could not the great work of Doc Savage be carried forward? Perhaps you now can see what we are attempting.”

“I would be very dumb indeed, if I did not,” advised Doc. “But certainly you cannot hope to keep me under cover forever? My men will not be fooled for long.”

“Ah,” Doc’s double said, rubbing his big bronze hands together, “you have come upon the main thought. We would not try to keep you under cover forever. Nor will your able companions be free to upset any of our plans. In fact, the great Doc Savage is staging his last stand!”

Doc Savage could read death in the other bronze man's voice. But he could tell that the other man was not yet finished with taunting him.

"Perhaps," said Doc's double, "you do not believe everything is in order to carry out what I have outlined. You have observed my gestures?"

"They are almost perfect," admitted Doc. "I could only suggest that the trilling note you uttered on the street would not mislead any of my men very far. That in itself is something over which I myself have no control."

"Your men need not understand for long," said Doc's double. "As soon as we have pretty generally discredited the great Doc Savage with his friends and the police, it is probable your men will cease to be a factor in our plans."

Doc Savage spoke quietly.

"You may have discovered part, but you could not have all that which you are boasting."

Doc's double laughed. One bronze hand flicked back the mask of his hair. It was a movement much like Doc himself might have made.

Doc's double stepped close. His hands flashed across Doc's eyes.

"Now you see nothing?" mocked Doc's double.

"True enough," stated Doc. "Now I see nothing."

The bronze man's voice was without expression.

Doc's double slopped his feet through the ooze of the cellar. He crossed to the opposite wall. A small, circular disk hung there. Doc's double said, "All ready, Anstratton?"

There was a brief delay. Then Doc's double said, "Let the great globes turn!"

For a few seconds the fake bronze man watched Doc Savage. The real man of bronze did not change expression. He seemed to be looking into the corners into which the countless rats had scurried, waiting for their human prey.

Suddenly Doc's double laughed loudly. For the moment, he seemed to forego that calmer rôle of the Doc Savage.

"Now you can see them!" he squawked. "They are beautiful creatures! What a boon to civilization the invention would have been! Perhaps after we have collected plenty, I will see that it is applied as you intended! But you and your companions will know nothing of the results! Probably I will decide to become hailed as the world's greatest benefactor! Disease and death will be conquered! You do see them, don't you?"

Unlike John Corbin, the watchman who dashed to his death, or Ham, the lawyer, Doc Savage did not appear greatly disturbed by what he might have been seeing.

Any one looking through the bronze man's eyes at the moment would have missed seeing the eyes of the furtive rats. For the floor of the cellar had suddenly become filled with the most incredible vermin.

Some of these creatures were the size of men. Hideous, hydra-headed monsters crawled around Doc Savage's feet.

Around his bound arms and legs were gigantic coiling serpents. Great pudgy beasts floated before the bronze man's face. The single light in the ceiling had temporarily disappeared.

In its place were big, violent animals. They were of more terrible proportions than those of the prehistoric age.

It must have seemed remarkable that the scores of giant rats were not terrified. But all that seemed to hold these ravening rodents in check was the electric bulb.

Doc Savage could not now see his bronze man double. But he spoke clearly, quietly.

"I fear you have made one vital mistake," he advised. "Temporarily, no doubt, you have possession of Professor Lanidus Spargrove's laboratories. But there must soon be metal replacements you cannot make. Ponderous machinery has to be moved."

Doc's double laughed scornfully.

"You think we would be such fools as not to know all that before we started?" he mocked. "We have taken enough of the new alloy from the Twentieth Century plant to keep all this in operation for ten years."

"But how could you remove tons of machinery?" asked Doc.

"No matter," said Doc's double. "It has already been done. And that is as great a secret as your own. Combined, they give us the greatest power on earth. Already, we have a few men of great wealth who will contribute to our campaign."

"Men with wealth would not embark upon such an enterprise," stated Doc.

"Ah!" stated Doc's double. "One such man has escaped us. He never will forget what he saw. Just now, you are seeing our pleasant little friends with the horns and the many heads. They do not affect you. But there are many persons who will not know the truth.

"In fact, Doc Savage, when it comes to telling the boys with millions where they get off, this beneficial device of yours is a devilish contraption."

Doc's double stepped to the disk in the wall. He spoke a few words. Almost instantly the dingy cellar room became normal. The hydra-headed monsters vanished.

In their place were the green eyes of the gray rats, who still scurried about. They only awaited the extinguishing of that light in the ceiling.

Chapter X

TEETH OF THE RATS

Doc's double stepped quickly before the man of bronze.

"Picked bones in an old basement cellar, when and if they are discovered, mean little on New York's East Side," he remarked pleasantly. "Too many poor devils have died in too many unpleasant ways to cause much furor."

Doc Savage now could see the other bronze man clearly.

"Regardless of your disguise," said Doc, "I shall know you instantly when we meet again. In your case I shall have several items to remember."

The oozy walls of the old cellar shook. The rumble might have been that of an "el" train or a subway. Doc Savage knew well enough his remarkable bronze double was speaking the truth.

This dungeon was not directly under a house. It was placed beneath what had been the end of an abandoned street. Years before, it had marked the outlet of an old storm sewer.

Apparently the route of the sewer had been changed. There was nothing now but the crumbling walls of broken masonry leading into the depths. No doubt, this emerged far under the East River. Possibly the outlet had long ago been broken and filled with sand and silt from the river's bottom.

The gurgle and suck of the water could be heard.

"Remembering me will do you little good, Doc Savage," said his double pleasantly. "The bones of one man are much the same as those of another. There will be no broken bones, no bullet marks. The rest of your brief existence lies now between you and your friends, the rats."

Doc Savage was fully aware even his great strength could not break those rawhide thongs. They had been bound about him with uncanny skill. One knot or two might be severed, but the others would hold.

"The rats are keeping back in the shadows now," said Doc's double. "But even your strength cannot break those rawhide thongs. I could dispose of you now, but there must be no marks. None but ourselves—not even my men—have been in this basement tomb."

Doc's double strode toward ascending stone steps. His movements were a perfect imitation of the man he was leaving behind to die. His steps rang with a hollow sound on the stone. A heavy iron door clanged shut.

Doc Savage was alone with the horde of rats.

Doc's body was nearly stripped. His arms and wrists were bound firmly behind him. All his tremendous strength only tightened the rawhide cords.

He could hear the distant gurgle of water in the old storm sewer. The opening of this was dimly visible. It was back of the main horde of rats.

Doc kept a close eye on the light bulb. All the time, he set his trained muscles against the rawhide cords. Perhaps one would yield.

But he was not seeing the cellar and the light bulb. Occasionally the writhing, leaping monsters filled the space.

They were a terrible weapon in the hands of unscrupulous persons. There was little doubt but that this bronze man who was Doc's double was one of the world's most unscrupulous men.

In some manner, Doc Savage knew, his double and his men had gotten full control of the globes. And yet nothing that moved along the highway could have transferred the machinery from one spot to another.

Once more the monsters of the dungeon disappeared. There was now only the vaguely flickering lamp bulb. Once it winked out. Immediately there was a rush of the rats. Then the light came on again.

With the light on again for a few moments, Doc studied the dungeon. He was too tightly bound to attempt to climb the steep stone steps. He rolled over and watched the rats scuttling behind some boxes.

Slowly, with infinite caution, the bronze giant lay down on the floor. Inch by inch, he pushed toward the boxes in the corner. With great care, he thrust his bound arms between the boxes.

Here his arms and wrists were in the darkness. It required the maximum of will power to keep his arms there.

Great rats attacked in this dark space. Their edged teeth sliced into the rawhide thongs. They did not miss the flesh. But to the rats, the hide of the binding cord was an unusual delicacy. Doc had remembered that hordes of rats live around tanneries. They are an evil all tanners must combat.

The rawhide thongs went first. Doc's massive arms did not escape. When his hands at last broke free, blood was pouring over his fingers. He got the thongs off his legs in record time.

But as he heaved himself from the floor, the little light went out. Immediately, the blood-crazed rats were upon him. They sprang upward and clung with teeth and claws. Doc could not see his horde of enemies. He could fight them only when they struck.

The man of bronze got across the dark cellar. He had fixed the position of the stone steps ascended by his double. On these steps, he was able to beat back the rats a little better.

Achieving the exit door accomplished nothing. For Doc's great shoulders might as well have been set under the foundation of his own skyscraper headquarters.

The exit door was a solid block of thick concrete. It was smooth underneath, with no mark for a ring or handle.

There remained but one outlet.

This was the broken storm sewer of the East River, filled to the dungeon with water seepage. Perhaps it was not solidly blocked at the underwater end.

Doc Savage backed into the small space. He beat the rats away from his face with his hands. Suddenly one hand encountered what felt like a rounded club.

This proved an effective weapon. But the rats were ferociously determined not to be cheated of their meal. Doc was backing into the cold water of the river in the sewer.

He was striking with the club. Again, his other hand encountered what might have been clubs. Then he discovered he had been fighting the rats with the thigh bone of a human skeleton.

From the big man of bronze broke that eerie, weird, melodious trilling. It was considerably unlike the imitation employed by Doc's double.

Doc Savage whipped squealing rats off his face. In the muck of the broken sewer, he collected an armful of human bones. He succeeded in gathering together the complete skeleton.

The darkness was Stygian. Doc felt his way back into the stone dungeon. Rats sprang and fought him all the way. The bronze man had lost a great deal of blood.

When he again backed into the old sewer, all the bones of a human skeleton had been piled in the basement cellar. Doc Savage smiled grimly.

Now he was in water up to his waist. The rats would not follow. The top of the old sewer bumped his head. Within a few yards, the sucking tide of the East River touched it.

Battling away the last of the rats, Doc Savage filled his lungs and submerged. Even the divers of Southern Seas could not surpass the man of bronze under water.

But there was always the chance this broken sewer would be blocked. Doc swam rapidly away from the basin.

The rats were gone now. Doc's only enemy was the river itself. This busted old sewer conduit. All at once, the bronze man struck something. This was a rusted iron grating lodged solidly across the sewer outlet under the river.

The bronze man applied all his remaining strength to loosen this iron. It was weighted down by what seemed to be tons of mud and river silt. It could not be moved.

Doc raised his head, only to discover no space existed between the top of the sewer and the water. His bronze hands wrenched desperately at the iron grating.

At last there was no more air and little more strength in Doc's huge body. He pulled feebly at the bars of the grating. He could not now have returned to the dungeon of the rats if he had so desired. All avenues of escape were cut off.

Something struck the iron grating. Doc could feel the barrier move. This seemed incredible. It was as if giant fingers had suddenly reached under the river and given their aid to the bronze giant.

Doc could only cling to the iron grating. Slowly, it was being torn away. Claws like steel came through. They narrowly missed Doc's face.

About this time, Doc Savage must have lost consciousness. But his hands still were thrust through that iron grating.

All the time, Doc Savage was seeing the hideous monsters at intervals. Strangely enough, the man of bronze could have quit seeing the unbelievable creatures at any time.

But it was by his continued view of the monsters that Doc was keeping check on what his mysterious enemies were doing.

However, Doc Savage was seeing nothing when the bucket of an East River dredge clanked to the surface bearing the section of iron grating that had been over an abandoned storm sewer.

“Holy mackerel!” shouted a big member of the dredging crew. “Look what we’ve snagged on the bottom! We’ve got a corpse!”

Indeed, it looked as though this might have been a corpse. It was the huge bronze body of Doc Savage.

The bronzed hands still were locked in the bars of the sewer grating.

Chapter XI

SKYSCRAPER MURDER

Possibly it was some hours after Doc Savage was scooped from the bottom of the East River that three men entered the downtown Manhattan skyscraper.

These three men drew smiles of recognition from two men on one of the rear freight elevators. Whenever there was a load to be moved for Doc Savage, it meant an extra, generous tip.

The three men who made their way up on the freight elevators were the big bronze man, Renny, with his solemn face and his slow movements, and Monk, who, having once been seen, could never again be mistaken for some other person.

Sam Simpson had been in the Manhattan building for a long time. The other man was a new employee.

“Forget everythin’ else, an’ do what the big bronze guy wants; he’ll make it worth our while,” advised Sam Simpson.

Doc Savage had once paid for making one of the Simpson children walk again. The operators held the elevator on the eighty-sixth floor.

The doors of Doc Savage’s headquarters opened by the usual radio control. This would always remain a mystery to Sam Simpson. Once inside, the man of bronze issued hasty orders.

“That stuff in the laboratory first,” he directed. “Bring in the cases from the elevator. I want especially to have all the electro-magnetic machinery packed.”

Renny and Monk moved as if they knew their way around. The bronze man aided in packing some of the stuff. But most of the time seemed to be occupied in a wrecking expedition.

“If they get back in here, I’ll bet they don’t find much stuff working,” stated the man of bronze.

This indicated he was deliberately acting to remove intricate devices, and to destroy those which were permanent fixtures.

It must have seemed that Doc Savage’s experience of the past few hours had made it seem necessary to transfer his headquarters to some other location.

Strangely, for Renny, he seemed clumsy. He broke two pieces of television equipment in removing it from the wall.

“Be careful of that stuff, Renny,” growled the bronze man.

Sam Simpson was listening at the door.

“O. K.!” snapped Renny. “But how would I know the thing would bust when you touched it?”

Several huge wooden cases had been brought up. These were filled.

“Stack them on the alley loading platform,” instructed the man of bronze. “We’re having a truck brought around, to take them away.”

“Certainly, Mr. Savage,” agreed Sam Simpson.

But the elevator man was suddenly watching the bronze man closely. He had heard the sharp words between the bronze guy and Renny. It must have seemed somewhat unusual to Sam Simpson.

A dozen cases had been packed and removed by the freight elevator when the man of bronze said, “The truck is just around the corner. It’s a big Red Rooster moving van. One of you fellows can call it around for the load.”

Sam Simpson spoke to his fellow operator.

“You call the truck, Jim,” he directed. “I’ll help with the rest of this stuff.”

Monk’s long arms were wrapped about a small case. This must have contained glass. It slipped from the chemist’s arms. There was a crackling impact.

Sam Simpson was looking directly at Monk. Monk had reddish hair of almost a furry texture. But over one ear, Sam Simpson was sure he had glimpsed a small patch of smooth, black hair. The elevator man moved closer to Monk.

At that instant, the awkward Renny again stumbled. A wooden case struck one foot of the bronze man. The bronze man’s fist lashed out and caught Renny a staggering blow under the chin.

“You damn big lummo!” shouted the bronze man. “Whyn’t you look whatcher doin’?”

Sam Simpson blocked the controls of the freight elevator. One of his hands slapped at Monk’s head. A wig of fuzzy, red hair flew off.

Sam Simpson knew that Doc Savage never became excited. He also was aware that Doc never shouted at any one.

“Hey!” yelled Sam Simpson. “Wait a minute! You ain’t takin’ any more of this stuff down! There’s somethin’ phony here! I’ll see——”

What Sam Simpson intended to see, never would be told by him. An oath whistled from the teeth of the bronze man. One big hand caught Sam Simpson’s throat. It jammed the operator’s head back with slow, sickening force.

Sam Simpson’s eyes protruded. He clawed uselessly with his hairy hands. Then his spine cracked like a dry stick. The bronze man laughed mirthlessly.

“We’ll have to move fast now,” he said. “I didn’t expect to get this far without a jam. Dump him down the side.”

The ugly, squat fellow who had been enacting the rôle of Monk picked up the body of Sam Simpson. The elevator was some twenty floors from the alleyway basement. Sam Simpson must have turned over a dozen times before all of his bones were broken at the bottom.

The other elevator operator came running in.

“Here’s your Red Rooster truck!” he shouted. “What’s become of Sam?”

The bronze man's reply was without words. The second elevator man was not in evidence when the Red Rooster truck was being loaded. The bronze man and his two companions swung onto the truck as it drove away.

The truck had just vanished toward the East River when two cars arrived at Doc's headquarters. These carried Ham, Long Tom and Johnny, and Inspector Higgins with Jane Davidson.

Inspector Higgins did not care for Doc's high-speed elevator. Its rocket-like ascent to the eighty-sixth floor was too much for his nerves. On the other hand, the cool, black-haired Jane Davidson seemed to enjoy the upward flight immensely.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Jane Davidson at the eighty-sixth floor. "Your Doc Savage must have got back!"

"It does look like it——" began Johnny. Then he closed up like a clam.

With Ham and Long Tom, Johnny was staring at the havoc which had been wrought in the big laboratory. Bits of broken packing cases lay all over the outside floors.

"So, the big bronze guy beat it?" snapped Jane Davidson. "And you still think he's on the square? Wrecks his own joint while he sends you fellows on a wild-goose chase! Anyway, he's made a good job of it!"

"The sooner you choke, the better pleased I'll be," muttered Ham. "Come on, Johnny, Long Tom—there's been a lot of stuff freighted down the back way! We've been raided!"

"Well! Well! Well!" snapped Inspector Higgins, coming in. "That's your story. But they've found one man knocked out, an' another one croaked downstairs!"

"Maybe there's been an accident," ventured Long Tom. "It looks as if we've had burglars up here."

"Hooley!" snarled Inspector Higgins. "Accident? One man at the bottom of an elevator shaft with his head almost knocked off, an' another one just comin' out from under a punch on the chin!"

"Perhaps it's difficult for you to understand," stated Ham. "But we have had visitors who didn't belong up here. Some of our most valuable equipment has been taken away. Find the thieves and you've got the men who killed that elevator operator."

Sam Simpson was dead. But the other elevator man was not hard to find. After he got back his senses and his voice, he was very much on the job.

"Sam was killed by that big bronze fellow he called Doc Savage," volunteered the elevator man. "Sam told me he was Doc Savage. He said if we handled the bronze fellow's stuff carefully, we would get a big tip. So we handled it right, an' that's what poor Sam got. Then the bronze guy poked me on the chin."

"Can you describe the two fellows with this Doc Savage?" demanded Inspector Higgins.

"Betcher life I can!" asserted the elevator man. "You couldn't miss 'em, even if they was in a crowd at Coney Island! One had red hair all over and looked like a

baboon. Sam called him Monk. The other one was as big as the bronze guy an' looked like he was goin' to a funeral. Sam called him Renny."

"Which cinches the whole thing!" said Inspector Higgins. "Maybe you fellows can tell me why this Renny and Monk beat it right after we had that runaway truck out at the Twentieth Century plant?"

"Aw, what's the use in talking about it?" said Ham, with disgust. "You heard them say they were going to the Hudson River hangars to look for Doc. That is about the only place left where we haven't searched."

"I don't know anythin' about your Hudson River hangars!" shouted the living elevator man. "I know this fellow called Doc Savage broke Sam Simpson's neck! He ain't out at no hangars! He left here in that Red Rooster truck!"

"Red Rooster truck?" snapped Inspector Higgins. "Now we've got to go chasin' another truck!"

"Our luck doesn't seem to be finding things in trucks," commented Ham caustically. "We ought to try chasing a street car for a change."

"I believe you're all murderers!" raged Jane Davidson. "You would protect your Doc Savage to the limit! I'm going back to the laboratories and see if Professor Spargrove is all right!"

"Your decision merits supreme acclamation," declared Johnny.

"In other words," supplied Ham, "if you never come back, it will be a great relief to us."

"Quit evadin' the issue!" gulped Inspector Higgins. "I wish to know at once if Renny and Monk are at the Hudson River hangars! What is the number?"

"It isn't listed," stated Ham. "But I'll prove to you that Renny and Monk went straight to the hangars."

Ham connected with a number, while Inspector Higgins listened on the extension.

"No," replied one of the caretakers at the Hudson River hangars, "we haven't seen Doc Savage, or Renny, or Monk for several days. We've been wondering what had happened."

"Well! Well! Well!" rapped Inspector Higgins. "We will again go trailin' a truck! This one probably ain't got nothin' in it but eggs or somethin'!"

Jane Davidson had flounced out to return to Professor Spargrove.

Two cars flashed northward over the truck highway out of Manhattan. Because of its glaring Red Rooster insignia, the truck these cars were trailing was not difficult to trace.

The Red Rooster truck apparently had followed the Second Avenue route. This heavy vehicle thoroughfare parallels the East River to a bridge crossing far above the East Nineties.

The main highway northward was the old Boston Post Road. It is a heavily traveled road.

But Red Rooster vans were scarce.

Filling-station operators identified the flaming signs of the big van. Yes, it had turned northward on the highway paralleling one of the main lines of railroad.

Inspector Higgins was a firm believer in clearing traffic with his wailing siren. This disgusted Long Tom, who was driving one of Doc's cars.

"That Red Rooster driver will know we're on his trail at least a couple of miles before we catch up with him," growled Long Tom. "What do you suppose has happened to Doc?"

"I've been trying not to think about that," grunted Ham. "If he could get to us, he would."

A few more filling-station operators identified the Red Rooster van. It was still headed north along the railroad.

Several times, it seemed, the pursuing cars had lost all trace of the Red Rooster van. Then a motorist became obliging.

"Sure, I saw a big truck with a Red Rooster on its side layin' in the ditch about five miles up the road," he volunteered.

A few minutes later the two cars arrived at the car wreck.

Inspector Higgins walked around the truck. He came back and glared at Ham, Johnny and Long Tom.

"I'll betcha you fellows knew just what was goin' to happen!" he accused them. "There ain't a damn thing in that bus but some straw an' some broken glass!"

"I fear we would have to resort to some obscure occultism," supplied the long-worded Johnny.

"We ain't resortin' to nothin' but the hoosegow for Doc Savage, if we can catch up with him!" rapped Inspector Higgins.

Many persons had gathered around the overturned Red Rooster truck. None recalled the unloading of the wrecked van.

Chapter XII

THE PROFESSOR'S FINISH

While Inspector Higgins was making a general nuisance of himself on the old Boston Post Road, Professor Lanidus Spargrove was sitting dejectedly in the office of his laboratories.

Inspector Higgins was getting nowhere. All he was doing was snarling up traffic. Inspector Higgins now suspected every innocent motorist of being the notorious Doc Savage. He had heard many reports of the bronze man's ability to disguise himself.

Still there had been no definite trace of what had become of the contents of the Red Rooster van. The Red Rooster company freely admitted hiring the truck out for a hauling job earlier in the day.

Perhaps Professor Lanidus Spargrove also wanted to find Doc Savage. As he sat in the gloomy office of his laboratories, he was apparently a deserted man. None of his workmen had appeared.

"What'll I do, Doc?" was the murmur of Professor Spargrove.

Occasionally, the little man passed his hands over his eyes. He would stare at the walls. Then he would speak other words.

"They're there, Doc! They're there!"

These other words became almost a scream.

"Why did you do this to me, Doc?" was another sentence Professor Spargrove uttered.

Occasionally he let out a yell. "Stop them, Doc! Stop them!"

Two police guards remained at the plant. They regarded Professor Spargrove as some kind of lunatic.

"If he don't stop that yappin' about seein' things, he'll have me doin' it!" grunted one of the guards.

Professor Spargrove wandered from his office. He stood looking at the immense concrete foundation. There, clearly imprinted, were the marks where two huge copper balls had rested. On other blocks the bolt pinions of electrical machinery apparently had been removed bodily.

Great strength had been required to accomplish that.

Suddenly Professor Spargrove was back in the room with the small tanks of stagnant water.

He yelled. The two police guards could hear him plainly.

"I've got it, Doc! I know who did it! I know why it was done! There could have been only one person! I'll find you, Doc, and I'll tell! There they are again! This will mean a world catastrophe!"

The police guards heard Professor Spargrove rush back into his inner office.

“If that was me,” commented one of the guards, “I’d give that guy a shot in the arm. But maybe the inspector hopes he’ll spill somethin’.”

Professor Lanidus Spargrove never was to divulge anything of great importance.

It must have been that Professor Spargrove was fleeing from something more definite than vague monsters he might have been seeing. Almost immediately, a woman screamed.

“Now what?” yelled one of the guards. “How did that dame get in there?” They clumped toward the inner offices.

The two guards did not reach Professor Spargrove’s inner offices. A crazy-looking young woman rushed out. Her black hair was streaming. Fresh blood spilled in scarlet stains over her dress.

“He grabbed me!” she yelled. “Oh, he grabbed me! He was all cut to pieces. He said ‘Doc Savage!’”

The young woman dashed past the guards.

“There were two of them!” she shrieked. “They were going toward Professor Spargrove’s offices! I shouted to warn him! But there was a tall man! He looked like Doc Savage! He caught me and pushed my head into one of the tanks!”

Apparently the young woman had been pushed into one of the tanks containing the stagnant water. Green weeds were mixed with the blood in her hair.

One of the police guards caught hold of one of the girl’s arms.

“What happened then?” he demanded. “Have you been seein’ things, too?”

“No! No!” screamed Jane Davidson. “I saw nothing! Only those two huge shadows! One was holding a knife! Before I got out of the tank of water, I heard Professor Spargrove groan!”

“What happened then?” the police guard questioned again.

“Professor Spargrove threw his arms around me!” gabbled the frightened girl. “The shadows were gone! The professor just said, ‘Doc Savage,’ and then he fell down!”

No doubt, blood had been spurting from Professor Spargrove’s throat. His greater veins had been severed by a sharp knife.

Jane Davidson must have had a horrible experience. Her disheveled appearance indicated Professor Spargrove had died in her arms.

“‘Doc Savage!’ was all he said just before he died!” Jane Davidson kept repeating.

“Then you think Doc Savage had somethin’ to do with his death?” asked the county copper.

“I don’t know! Oh, how could I know? He might have had many reasons for speaking Doc Savage’s name just before he died!” cried the girl.

Jane Davidson looked to be ready for a room in some sanitarium. But that amazing young woman quickly recovered her self-possession.

“I’m going back to Doc Savage’s men,” she announced. “I’m going to stick with them until we have run this Doc Savage to earth. Nobody but Doc Savage and one of his men were in the laboratories. Professor Spargrove and myself were the only persons who knew the secret of his life’s work.” About the time Jane Davidson was discovering the murder of Professor Spargrove, Big Renny and Monk were nearing the Hudson River hangars. Though this was the location of Doc Savage’s most important aerial and underwater craft, it looked to be only a very shabby warehouse.

A little sign read: “Hidalgo Trading Co.”

“Holy cow!” boomed Renny. “If Doc had been around the hangars, the radio hook-up would have showed it before this!”

“Howlin’ calamities!” yelled Monk. “You know what I think? I believe Doc’s been held prisoner somewhere while we’ve been chasin’ fake radio calls!”

“But, confound it!” thumped Renny. “There ain’t anybody could use our code!”

“Well, anyway, it seems to me that the kind of guy who could elope with ten tons of machinery from one place an’ a five-ton safe from another spot in the middle of railroad yards wouldn’t have much trouble stealin’ a few special air waves,” asserted Monk. “I’m beginnin’ to think none of these messages we got were on the square!”

“Good gravy!” thundered Renny. “Then where’s Doc been all this time? What’s them copper globes for, anyway?”

“I’m only a chemist,” said Monk plaintively. “I ain’t any magician. Besides——”

The long, low sedan was only a few blocks from the Hidalgo Trading warehouse. The narrow water-front streets along this part of the Hudson River were gloomy. Monk slowed the car for a traffic light.

Now the ears of Doc’s companions were almost as keen as his own. The bronze man had taught them a great deal of his system of training. Any one should have heard the opening of a car door, especially when riding in the front seat of that car.

But the controlled voice which spoke proved that Renny and Monk had accumulated an unexpected and uninvited passenger. The voice came from the rear seat.

“When you pass this light, keep driving—but do not go to the hangars.”

Having once heard it, none could ever mistake the calm, penetrating voice of Doc Savage. The bronze man had come out of the night. He was in the rear seat.

When Renny saw his figure, the big engineer gasped. For Renny seemed to be looking at himself, as in a mirror. Doc Savage had made himself an exact counterpart of his giant companion. Now the real bronze man issued swift instructions.

Renny, the engineer, was dropped from the car in an isolated section. Doc Savage himself took the wheel. Yet any one seeing the bronze man and Monk driving back toward downtown Manhattan would have sworn this remarkable substitution had not been made.

From under the hood of the car came a strident whining. Monk identified it instantly as a call meant for them. He twirled the dial:

Professor Spargrove murdered—Police ordered to pick up Doc Savage, Colonel John Renwick and Andrew Blodgett Mayfair at once—Jane Davidson has found card clutched in Professor Spargrove's hand—Has not told police—Card had address which may be important—Jane wants all Doc's men to meet her alone—Renny and Monk lay low—Hudson River hangars watched—Gyroplane on upper river—If you receive, give counter signal—

Monk twirled the dial. He turned to Doc Savage, who now was driving.

He yelped. "Did you get that? All of us are wanted! They've bumped off that professor!"

"I thought that would happen," stated Doc. "The professor knew too much. That is why it is best, for the present, that I appear as Renny. It will be believed I am dead. We will meet this Jane Davidson on the upper Hudson. That was Ham sending."

Then Doc added, "For the present, we will let Jane Davidson and the others imagine I am Renny."

Half an hour later the big sedan carrying Monk, with Doc Savage at the wheel, slid down a little-used road. In a sheltered spot, a peculiar craft lay moored to the shore.

This machine appeared to be a huge umbrella with four small leaves. It was an ordinary type of gyroplane, but it was winged and powered for added speed.

Jane Davidson was with Doc's other three companions. It was plain that neither Long Tom, Johnny nor Ham had accepted the girl through friendship. But Jane Davidson plainly was excited.

"Professor Spargrove must have scribbled the note in his own blood, then tried to reach the door of his office," declared the girl. "It might not mean much to other persons, but I know what he tried to tell. Here it is."

Cragrock Sanit

Here the dying professor's hand must have failed. The card was blotted with the man's own blood. Jane Davidson explained.

"I remember taking it when Professor Spargrove grabbed me and fell, but I did not think it important. Now I know he wanted me to look for something at Cragrock Sanitarium. It's one of the most isolated places in the State. No road of any kind goes there."

"Then how are we supposed to reach this mythical sanitarium?" demanded Ham.

"That's part of its secret," smiled Jane Davidson. "And I believe it is one of the places maintained by Doc Savage."

"If you don't lay off Doc, I ain't budgin' an inch," grunted Monk. "Now I suppose you think he killed this Professor Spargrove?"

Jane Davidson shook her comely, black head.

“I can’t help it, even if I think that,” she announced. “But I do believe the rest of you have been misled. You are entitled to a break. Also, I think you will come nearer finding the murderer of Professor Spargrove than the police. Even if it’s Doc Savage, I’ll depend on you to play square.”

Ham, Johnny and Long Tom had not penetrated Doc’s disguise. To them he was big Renny. Now they heard an amazing statement.

“Holy cow!” boomed Doc in Renny’s thunderous voice. “If Doc or anybody else has been responsible for this killin’, I want to be among the first to get him!”

“Well, I’ll be superamalgamated!” exclaimed Johnny.

The scholarly geologist was staring.

“The sanitarium is operated by a man called Doctor Josiah Anstratton,” said Jane Davidson. “He is a queer combination. Once he practiced psychiatry. Later, he took up geology. Then he built an observatory at this place he calls Cragrock. Now, I believe, he takes care of only exclusive patients who arrive by plane.”

Doc Savage said, “This Doctor Anstratton doesn’t add mythology and oceanography to his other hobbies, does he? Perhaps he takes some of his nutty patients up there and tries to get their minds off themselves by giving them a course in astronomy?”

Jane Davidson replied, “Professor Spargrove told me once that Doctor Anstratton had taken up astronomy and other applied sciences to bring his wealthy patients back to normal.”

“Daggonit!” piped up Monk. “An’ maybe that includes havin’ his patients see things that don’t exist!”

Ham fixed a cold and glittering eye upon the ugly chemist.

“Those things do exist!” he snapped. “I don’t wish you any bad luck, insect, but I hope you see a few of them yourself!”

Doc Savage, as Renny, interrupted.

“I’ve been lookin’ over some charts,” he stated. “This Cragrock Sanitarium is situated on the peak of a walled mountain. Three sides always have been abrupt precipices upon which no highways could be constructed.”

“And so,” supplied Johnny, “we’re supposed to conduct a nice, quiet search by coming down on the landing field this Doctor Anstratton maintains at the top of the mountain.”

Chapter XIII

MURDER IN THE NIGHT

With all but Monk still believing him to be missing, the man of bronze continued in his rôle of Renny, the engineer, as he directed the flight. His purpose now was to mislead Jane Davidson as to his identity, until the real status of this young woman was more clearly established.

Soon the flat mesa of Cragrock stuck up from the ground like a man's bald head. In this appeared an elongated slit.

"That's Cragrock, all right," said Jane Davidson. "These goggles are wonderful! There doesn't seem to be any one moving outside!"

The goggles referred to by the girl were wonderful. The others were also in a position to see clearly without being seen from below.

The gyroplane's infra-red beam projector was working. Its black-and-white illumination swept all the space around Cragrock Sanitarium.

"The nearest highway is about ten miles away," stated Long Tom. "But there are lines in that old granite quarry down there. I'll bet those were the switch tracks they used to haul out the rock. They run right up to the wall."

It could be seen this line of railroad must have been built some ten miles into the hills for the purpose of taking out the valuable granite. Then it was apparent the vein of granite had run out.

"Looks like they had run into some softer quartz back of the granite," explained Johnny. "The observatory is on top of that quartz. It's softer rock. Doctor Anstratton could have constructed himself an inside passage up to his sanitarium."

"Loosen up the tops," instructed Doc suddenly. "Johnny, you hold the gyroplane in position. I'm havin' a look down below."

"Good gravy!" exploded Ham. "If it's anybody's job to take that jump, it's mine or maybe Long Tom's. You're heavy, Renny, for a 'chute drop."

Doc Savage was slipping into the harness of a special parachute.

"I'll have a look around first," he stated in Renny's voice. "Keep the black light on. I'll rub you a signal if you are to land and where."

By this, Renny meant he would use a special fluorescent chemical on the ground below. Thus, without having been observed, the gyroplane could be set down right in Doctor Anstratton's front yard.

Doc did not make the jump at once. It was Jane Davidson who cried out.

"Oh! They can see us! Look! That man is pointing up here!"

The sanitarium with its bald-domed observatory was much of the same construction as the Spargrove Laboratories. Only a low door showed here and there. From one of

these doors, a man had darted.

“He didn’t wait to put on his clothes!” exclaimed Ham.

It did appear as though the man was wearing only a nightshirt. This flapped around his skinny legs.

The running man did not seem to be affected by the rain or the cold. He could not see the gyroplane now hovering a few hundred feet above him. But he did seem to be pointing upward.

“By gosh!” exploded Long Tom. “He’s fightin’ somethin’!”

The nearly naked man was leaping madly. He was striking all around him in the air.

Doc had whipped out a strange-looking pair of binoculars.

These were superlensed. They showed all objects in four dimensions at any distance.

“Who does that fellow look like, Johnny?” asked Doc.

“Well, I’ll be superamalgamated!” exploded Johnny. “That’s Rufus Bannaford! He’s been missing for weeks!”

Now other men were running from the building. They were fully dressed. Half a dozen seemed to be pursuing the fleeing man in the nightshirt.

Above pursued and pursuer, the gyroplane was hovering like a silent, gray moth. Its infra-red beam projector outlined the drama below.

Rufus Bannaford screamed once, a high-pitched yell of terror. His bare feet spurned stones from the very lip of the granite quarry.

“Oh! He’ll be killed!” cried Jane Davidson.

For once that cool young woman seemed overcome. Her eyes closed. She fainted. Her body struck the lever controlling the infra-red beam. When the running man fell from the cliff, those in the plane did not see the tragedy.

“Keep the plane steady!” boomed Doc Savage in Renny’s voice, and jumped.

Johnny attempted to swing the infra-red beam into service. Jane Davidson’s plump body was jammed across the lever.

“There’s somethin’ haywire about all this,” grumbled Long Tom, who was handling the device which operated the four blades of the gyroplane. “First it’s Ham slips a notch, and begins seein’ things, and now it’s Renny gone off his bean. There’s nothin’ to be gained by jumpin’ out and gettin’ mixed up down there.”

Monk made a chuckling noise in his throat. He was getting a big kick out of the others believing Doc to be Renny.

Long Tom succeeded in holding the gyroplane a few hundred feet above the light which marked the bald dome of the Cragrock Sanitarium.

A thunderstorm was rising over the mountain. This let go with a sudden, blinding sheet of lightning. In this, those in the plane could clearly see several figures below.

These figures looked as if they were balanced on the lip of the thousand-foot drop into the abandoned granite quarry.

“That fellow Bannaford took his last dive over the wall,” asserted Ham. “Probably Doctor Anstratton’s men will go down there looking for him. It wouldn’t be so good to have his body discovered that close to the sanitarium.”

Lightning started playing more luridly across the mountain. The men near the sanitarium had ceased looking into the old quarry. They were darting about. Some pointed upward.

Two or three men were running back toward the sanitarium.

But while the pursuers of the mad millionaire may have seen the gyroplane, they did not detect the parachute in which Doc Savage had jumped.

Wind of the increasing storm whipped at the big body under the swaying parachute. This was a gale across the knob. It threatened to slap the ’chute over the edge of the rocks and down into the granite quarry.

Doc did not wish to land in the old quarry. Nor did he intend to be trapped by dropping directly among those who had run out in pursuit of Rufus Bannaford.

The big man under the ’chute gathered some of the cords in one immense hand. This lessened the spread of the parachute.

The ’chute landed on Cragrock. Yet none saw it. All eyes were directed at the flapping wings of the hovering gyroplane.

The bronze man’s ’chute collapsed directly on the rounded top of the observatory tower. Doc rolled along the sloping roof. Few persons in the world could have maintained a hold.

Doc freed himself from the cords of the ’chute. He slid along the roof to the edge of the slit through which protruded the body of Doctor Anstratton’s telescope. Here he was looking directly into the inner room of the observatory.

What he saw there brought a gasp of amazement.

If Doctor Josiah Anstratton was engaged in treating persons suffering with mental disorders, he was employing unusual methods. He must have been giving treatment to four patients at this time.

Four men were tightly bound to chairs. These chairs were of carved stone.

The four patients were so held as to be unable to move any of their muscles. Only their eyes were alive.

Doc twisted his big body alongside the projecting telescope. His hands slid along its smooth surface. Heavy glass surrounded the instrument. Doc did something to this glass with some liquid he spilled from a small bottle.

The glass broke and came away. Doc did not permit any of it to fall inside the room below. Those in the gyroplane had no glimpse of Doc. At this time, Johnny was engaged in attempting to start the forward speed motor. The plane had dropped to within two hundred feet of Cragrock.

“Them gorillas are shootin’ at us!” yelled Monk.

This seemed to be true. From the summit of Cragrock spurted short slices of blue flame. But there was no sound of bullets striking the gyroplane.

If bullets were coming from the guns being fired, there were no bright lines indicating combustible tracers. But suddenly there was something much more

disastrous.

“They’ve got us!” rapped out Long Tom. “That’s what I’ve been expecting! Everything’s gone dead!”

The blue slices of flame ceased coming from the ground. But the gyroplane was dropping.

Long Tom’s expert hands played across dead switches.

Sustained only by its revolving blades, the gyroplane was dropping directly into the depths of the old granite quarry.

Chapter XIV

FEAR OF MADNESS

Long Tom and his companions in the gyroplane knew what had happened. One of several rays perfected for disabling plane motors had been employed.

The long, revolving gyro blades on top of the plane prevented it from being dashed to pieces.

The gyroplane struck with force enough to partly stun its occupants. Monk's long arms prevented the plump Jane Davidson from being dashed into one of the windows.

"Now I know it's Doc Savage!" she asserted. "No one but him could have stopped one of his own planes like that! What are we going to do?"

"Daggonit!" grunted Monk. "One more crack about Doc, an' I'm goin' to put you back in some thorn bushes like I found you!"

"I've got an idea we had better collect everything we need and get as far away from the plane as possible," advised Ham suddenly. While Doc Savage's companions were following Ham's advice, four men sat in stone chairs. All four were men of gray-haired dignity.

A queerly deformed figure paced before the four men. His hands were mostly knuckles. All his flesh had shrunken away.

This man laughed with a malicious chuckle. One shoulder twisted much higher than the other. This shoulder was the controlling feature in the life of Doctor Josiah Anstratton.

Doctor Anstratton undoubtedly owned one of the world's most remarkable brains. Perhaps if he had been normal physically, his mind might not have become warped as it was.

But as he walked, Doctor Anstratton tried to make it appear that the lower shoulder was as high as the other. This gave him the appearance of a hobbling dwarf. But he was a tall man.

The eyes of the four men in the stone chairs followed the figure of the doctor. One of the four men spoke. He could have been identified as Jonas Hydebottom.

The name of Jonas Hydebottom was a power in financial circles. He was noted as a man who had no fear.

"I don't believe it, Doctor Anstratton! You're not that crazy," said Jonas Hydebottom. "You wouldn't dare let Bannaford go to his death. This talk about Doc Savage proves this whole thing is a bluff!"

Doctor Anstratton rubbed his bony knuckles and chuckled.

"Already you have observed what might happen," he stated. "You will see more, much more. Doc Savage is dead. We have his bones."

The bodies of all four men in the stone chairs seemed to shiver.

Shortly before the gyroplane owned by Doc Savage had arrived over Cragrock, five men had sat in five stone chairs. These chairs were of peculiar, carved construction.

When there had been five men in the chairs, Doctor Anstratton had walked before them.

Rufus Bannaford, the youngest of the prisoners, had been seated in the fifth of the stone chairs.

“You are all men of wealth and influence,” Doctor Anstratton had announced, in a calm voice. “All of you are acquainted with the bronze man known as Doc Savage. First of all, Doc Savage is dead. His marvelous devices and inventions have passed into my hands.”

Rufus Bannaford had worn a scornful grin.

“Nuts!” he said quite distinctly. “You’ve been looking into that telescope so long you’ve begun seeing things, doctor!”

Doctor Anstratton had controlled his fierce anger with an effort.

“Seeing things?” he snarled. “That’s exactly what you’ll be doing, unless you are prepared to be reasonable! I tell you I will soon control all Doc Savage’s inventions! I lack only financial backing to become a world benefactor! You, gentlemen, are going to supply some of that backing!”

“Nuts!” came from Rufus Bannaford.

Doctor Anstratton became suddenly calm, dangerously quiet. He stood in front of Rufus Bannaford.

“I intend only to do good,” asserted the doctor. “But in order to accomplish good, it is sometimes necessary to adopt queer expedients. I have selected you gentlemen to be brought here. You will contribute to our great cause, and you will go away and say nothing about it. Otherwise, one by one, you will lose your minds.”

“Nuts!” sneered Rufus Bannaford. “This is a modern century and you’re within ten miles of a State police patrol!”

Doctor Anstratton stepped back. He cracked his bony hands together. Three men appeared.

“Treatment!” snapped Doctor Anstratton. “Lightly!”

Rufus Bannaford was seized. Some lesser anæsthetic was applied to his nostrils. In a few seconds, his eyes closed.

Doctor Anstratton walked over. He rubbed his hands gently across Rufus Bannaford’s forehead. He touched each of his closed eyes. Then he produced a bottle of aromatic spirits.

“Well, that’s over!” sneered Bannaford. “You won’t get a dime of my money to carry on your nutty schemes!”

A heavy voice spoke. This was not that of Doctor Anstratton. It came from the vicinity of the immense telescope in the observatory.

“That which you have heard is true! I have seen Doc Savage die. We have greater power than even he possessed! Now you are entering another world; you are surrounded by incredible monsters——”

Rufus Bannaford strained forward in the stone chair. His muscles strained. The locks holding him in the chair were suddenly released.

Doctor Anstratton chuckled evilly.

Rufus Bannaford uttered a profane shout. He struck out violently with his fists.

“It isn’t true!” he yelled. “There are no such things! There—take it away from my head! Take it away, you fiend! I won’t give you a cent of my money! Look out, doctor!”

“Why, I see nothing,” stated Doctor Anstratton mildly.

“You lie! You lie!” screamed Bannaford. “That one’s got a thousand heads! Look! Look at the arms! They’re strangling me.”

Rufus Bannaford sprang back. He fell over the stone chair. He was up again. His swinging fist hit one of the other prisoners.

“For Heaven’s sake, Doctor Anstratton!” said this man. “It’s all a trick! Stop it! Bannaford! There is nothing here!”

“There are more coming—more!” screamed Rufus Bannaford. He ran, smashing into a wall. His fingers locked with some invisible creature which must have seemed to him to have been flying about in the air.

Rufus Bannaford struck the floor, still wrestling with the monsters that apparently were visible only to him.

The Voice from near the telescope spoke.

“Notice that no one is near this madman; no one approaches. No one touches him _____”

Rufus Bannaford sat up. He caught the queer expressions of the other men. Bannaford was no longer scornful.

“They’re gone,” said Bannaford slowly. “I don’t know where. Yet I believe they are still there waiting for me.”

“Your friends think you were hypnotized,” suggested Doctor Anstratton.

“No, no, no!” shouted Bannaford. “I saw them! Some were like snakes with many heads! They were all around me! I was not hypnotized! It’s all some devilish trick—and I won’t give a penny toward this man’s——”

The invisible Voice spoke again.

“You have committed yourself to madness from which you never will recover! They have come upon you again——”

Doctor Anstratton was not even looking at Bannaford. He was gazing at the others with a triumphant expression.

Rufus Bannaford leaped straight up. He was clad only in a flowing nightshirt. This he attempted to tear off, as if it were choking him.

Perhaps it was Doctor Anstratton’s command which opened a low door. Rufus Bannaford dashed through it.

Several men pursued him. In a few minutes, they returned. There was a hurried conference with Doctor Anstratton. The Voice spoke.

“Doc Savage’s men! At last we have them! Bring them down——”

This Jonas Hydebottom was thoroughly a tough customer. There was no doubt but that Rufus Bannaford had died. His final wailing shriek had been heard.

“He saw nothing but monsters,” announced Doctor Anstratton quite calmly. “Gentlemen, you have your choice. Madness or a few millions. You shall be reimbursed for what you invest. I can boast of one invention greater than Doc Savage ever owned. It is one by which many tons of his most valuable equipment have been spirited away.”

“You damn killer!” rapped Jonas Hydebottom. “You have nothing but a misshapen body and a crooked mind! I’ll see you in hell before I give you a dime!”

Doctor Anstratton’s dark eyes glowed with hatred. He waited for no assistance. He himself applied a light anæsthetic.

Doctor Anstratton brought Jonas Hydebottom back to consciousness by roughly slapping the millionaire’s cheeks.

“Now look at them!” rasped the doctor. “So I’m deformed, am I? In the next few years of your life you’ll wish you were dead!”

Jonas Hydebottom was not freed from his stone chair. He became like some man bound to a stake with burning coals applied to his body. He writhed and twisted and screamed.

Doctor Anstratton walked over. The Voice spoke.

“Now we shall see!”

Jonas Hydebottom seemed to have recovered his sanity. But the other three men eyed him suspiciously.

“I was not hypnotized,” stated Jonas Hydebottom. “I saw some of the most horrible creatures! And your ears became as big as houses. No, I am entirely sane.”

Plainly the other three men did not believe Jonas Hydebottom.

The Voice said, *“It will require only a few millions—millions which will be returned. Doctor Anstratton has told you we have one invention alone that is worth more than all your millions. It has been used to destroy Doc Savage and his power; we cannot market it yet, but soon all your money will be returned! Take your choice: You can aid us or follow Bannaford—or leave here with millions of monsters in your minds!”*

“Yes! Yes!” shouted one of the other men. “Let us all go! You can have what you ask—only Jonas must be released and——”

The doors of the Cragrock Sanitarium were constructed of wood. They were of the strongest oak.

The chuckling pleasure of Doctor Anstratton was lost. The threat uttered by the invisible Voice died away. It seemed that nothing less than an earthquake could have broken down the solid oak of the door leading toward the observatory telescope.

Three or four men shouted oaths. The great oaken door burst as if it had been hit by a battering ram. This was no less than a huge, knuckled fist.

The door cracked and sagged on its hinges.

The first of the Cragrock guards who came in was a huge man. He was big and tough. But he came in on his back. His lower jaw was cocked at a queer angle. It had been dislocated.

The second guard might have said something, but he was too busy holding his stomach.

A portion of the oak-door panel hung around the wrist of one great fist.

Doc Savage had smashed the door and the guards. He stood erect on massive legs. His face was melancholy. Those who knew Renny, the engineer, would have said this was one of the moments when he was enjoying himself immensely.

All that now seemed to trouble the big man was the lack of another jaw or two to crack.

Jonas Hydebottom thought he was looking at Renny.

“Colonel John Renwick!” he shouted. “So Doc Savage is dead, huh? I knew there was a catch to this somewhere! Get us loose, Colonel Renwick!”

Doctor Anstratton snarled like a wild beast. His bony knuckles twisted, and his deformed shoulder jumped.

“Doc Savage is dead!” he yelled. “None of his men can do anything to stop us! I’ll _____”

Doctor Anstratton was quick. He darted toward one wall. It was clear he intended plunging the room into darkness.

A piece of oaken panel fell from the bronze man’s fist. None could have followed the motion of his hands. Doctor Anstratton was suddenly stricken motionless.

The deformed doctor stopped as suddenly as if a bullet had furrowed his warped brain. Only one of Doc Savage’s thumbs had touched the doctor. That touch was close to the shoulder, the one which hunched upward.

Doctor Anstratton fell to his knees, squawling. “Stop him! He’ll kill all of us! Stop _____”

The giant gave no more heed to Doctor Anstratton.

“We will end this here and now!” boomed the man of bronze. “It seems I arrived just in time! One other man has died!”

But Doc did not move toward the prisoners in the chairs of soft stone. From the vicinity of the telescope, the Voice spoke.

This Voice sounded much like that of Doc Savage himself. It was not raised. Yet its lowest tone penetrated to every ear in the room.

“*Stand where you are,*” commanded the Voice quietly. “*You can do nothing. If you make a further motion against my will, all of the men before you shall die instantly. Others will be easy to find to take their places.*”

Doc released his hold on Doctor Anstratton. The doctor slumped to the floor. Doc was watching the four prisoners in the stone chairs. His own hands were close to various devices which might have been effective under ordinary circumstances.

But behind each chair appeared the wicked, blue muzzle of a machine gun. The cold steel of each of these touched a man's neck.

"For grief's sake, Colonel Renwick, stand still!" gasped Jonas Hydebottom.

Doc's big hands dropped. A dozen men seized his arms, but he made no resistance. Doctor Anstratton laughed in a high, cackling tone.

Chapter XV

TRAIN IN THE NIGHT

Something about that abandoned quarry gave it more than average eeriness. Thunder rumbled above the thousand-foot wall.

“Daggonit!” complained Monk. “I’ve got only one wish! I’d like to have Inspector Higgins out here! Maybe he could find a truck or something to chase!”

Jane Davidson was stumbling along with the others. All the bottom of the quarry was a maze of rusted rails. Many tracks had been constructed to remove the valuable granite.

The weird, blue illumination of the lightning showed a track leading directly toward a granite wall.

“I judge we are promenading in an erroneous direction,” advised Johnny. “If we are to get out, we should be working away from the wall.”

Jane Davidson squealed. That competent young woman seldom let herself go. But she sobbed loudly, and started running. She was stopped by a sump hole.

Sump holes in quarries are filled with water. Monk pulled her out.

“Oh, I saw him!” gasped the girl. She pointed. “Right there by the wall!”

All followed the extended finger and saw the huddled shape lying in one corner.

Rufus Bannaford had fallen a thousand feet.

He was a gruesome spectacle for even the cool Jane Davidson. The girl had had a number of horrible experiences. She sat down beside the body and shivered.

Rufus Bannaford’s head had somehow escaped being crushed.

It seemed Jane Davidson was not quite herself. She was holding the dead man’s head in her arms.

“Good grief!” exclaimed Ham. “Maybe she knew him! She’s acting like she thought a lot of him!”

Johnny was saying nothing. The scholarly geologist was looking intently at the girl. He had the thin pencil beam of a flashlight touching her face. Tears squeezed from Jane Davidson’s eyes.

The girl rubbed her hand over the dead man’s forehead.

Suddenly Jane Davidson screamed. Crying, she stumbled along the track toward the granite wall.

All were on one of the rusted tracks. Johnny halted suddenly.

“Look out, Miss Davidson!” he called out. “Get to one side!”

Johnny sent Long Tom flying into the bushes with his elbow.

“Monk!” he shouted. “Get off that track! Stay off!”

From the rusted rails came a low, steady humming.

“Maybe it’s an airplane,” said Ham. “I’ll bet Doc has got on our trail.”

“Sure, shyster,” grunted Monk. “So he’s using one of these tracks. I’ll——”

Monk did not complete his sentence. The thing that came out of the rainy darkness had no form that could be detected. It was like the passing of a cyclonic wind.

Jane Davidson and the others were thrown on their faces.

The thunder whooped suddenly. A brilliant glare of lightning split the black canopy above the old quarry.

“My good gosh!” gasped Long Tom. “I saw that quarry wall break wide open! And what was that thing went by?”

“After the things I saw in Central Park,” declared Ham, “I don’t believe anything went by.”

Johnny was a little slower to venture an opinion.

“Something passed us at incredible speed,” he asserted. “It was running on that old track. And it was going right toward the wall of the quarry!”

Johnny ran a light along the rusted rails. He grunted when he proved the inner edge of one rail had been worn and polished. Still it seemed impossible anything could have been operated over the old, weed-grown track.

There was no further evidence of the monstrous object that had hurtled by them in the darkness. Long Tom slipped away from the others. In a few minutes he returned.

“One thing we won’t have to worry about,” he remarked, “is patching up the gyroplane. Apparently it has departed.”

“You mean,” gulped Monk, “Doc’s gyroplane ain’t there?”

“Right,” said Long Tom, “and not even a mark where it might have been.”

“Come on, brothers,” invited Johnny. “Well have a look at that granite wall. You all right, Miss Davidson?”

“I’m as all right as any one could be after what’s happened,” stated Jane Davidson. “I don’t expect to get out of here alive, so I’ve quit worrying about it.”

Johnny walked close to the young woman. He spoke shortly.

“By the way, Miss Davidson. What was it you took off Rufus Bannaford’s body?”

Jane Davidson drew herself to the full height of her plump body. One hand slapped Johnny unexpectedly across a bony cheek.

“What do you mean by an insulting question like that?” she blazed.

Johnny made no movement. He did not appear to be in the least angry.

“I meant,” he repeated, “to inquire what you took off Rufus Bannaford’s body. Of course, if he’s an old sweetheart or something, it’s none of my business.”

“Well, if you must know,” snapped Jane Davidson, “it was this!”

The young woman produced a small photograph in a pocket frame. It was a good likeness of Jane Davidson.

“All of us make mistakes,” said Johnny quietly. “I’m sorry if he was a friend of yours.”

The rusted track ended abruptly against the wall of solid gray granite. Nothing less than dynamite could have made an opening where the last of the rails touched the flinty rock.

“Just as well make up our mind we’re like Ham and the rest of them,” said Long Tom. “We’ve been seeing things. Nothing went by us back there. We just imagined it.”

The freakish lightning failed to reveal any crack or break in the thousand feet of granite wall.

Chapter XVI

UNDER THE MOUNTAIN

Some monstrous thing must have whipped along the old quarry track, even if it did appear that it had vanished into a solid wall of granite. For, ten miles from the Cragrock quarry, traffic had been badly disrupted on the North-and-South railroad.

A station agent had seen or imagined a ghostly train passing at terrific speed in the night. He had attempted to warn other trains, but somewhere between stations the illusive monster had disappeared.

This had been but a few minutes before the rushing demon had seemed to pass through the quarry pit. The station agent had been accused of "seeing things." He had been discharged. For the train he had reported seeing had apparently vanished into thin air.

There was not a connected switch track where it might have been shunted off. The rails leading to Cragrock quarry had long been disconnected from the main North-and-South railroad lines.

Yet it was in that vicinity the speeding monster had disappeared.

And about the time the railroad men were muttering over the mystery, Doc Savage's companions and Jane Davidson were listening to the same wind whining over the lip of Cragrock quarry a thousand feet above them. After she had confessed knowing Rufus Bannaford, Jane Davidson had been very quiet.

"I think," she said finally, "the best thing we can do is try and follow the old switch track out of here. You may feel all right about whatever crazy thing Doc Savage is doing, but I don't want to run into him again."

It was difficult to hear anything over the roaring of the storm. But Johnny's ears were keen.

"Some one's using our gyroplane, or there's another plane cruising around overhead," he announced. "No, it isn't our plane. This one has twin motors."

"I believe that's one of the new police special jobs," stated Long Tom. "Look! He is trying out the searchlight. He won't see much down in this soup."

"I knew it!" yelled Monk. "I'll betcha that fellow Higgins is right on our tail!"

Monk moved closer to Ham.

"Dang it, Ham," he muttered. "Maybe there's somethin' haywire about that dame wantin' us to come out here. I don't like that woman!"

Johnny made an announcement.

"Brothers, there is no evidence we saw or heard anything on the switch track a little while ago. But there has been something on these rails that wore the inner edges clear of rust."

"That makes your explanation perfect," drawled Ham. "And I suppose whatever it was went right through that solid wall of granite?"

They stumbled back along the track for perhaps a hundred yards. Long Tom was leading. With a yell, he jumped back. He caught Johnny and pushed the others to the ground.

“Look out!” he shouted. “We’re running into something!”

This something was a weird, snakelike line of fire. It seemed to come from nowhere. But it crackled in a wavering thread a few feet above the ground.

“High frequency!” pronounced Long Tom. “If we’d walked into that on this wet ground, all of us would have been electrocuted! Brothers, it doesn’t seem intended we are to leave this place!”

The line of strange fire became a wide noose of flame. This was slowly being drawn together.

“I’m going to duck under the thing!” exploded Monk. “It’s driving us back to that crazy wall!”

Before the others could interfere, the apelike chemist had made a dive from his short legs.

The line dipped directly toward the spot where Monk was starting to roll under it. Ham yelled and plunged forward. He caught Monk’s ankles.

Both men splashed into one of the sump holes.

None made another attempt to cross the electrical noose. The crackling fire line was much like that employed by Doc Savage to guard the doors of his headquarters.

“You know,” stated Johnny, “we have been making chumps of ourselves. We might as well walk right up to that granite wall and say, ‘here we are!’ ”

“You mean, we have been watched all the time?” said Long Tom. “I have been suspecting that for some time. Apparently we are not the only persons who have discovered the use of waves too short to be visible to the human eye.”

“The more we get into this thing,” declared Jane Davidson, “the more it is being proved Doc Savage is making monkeys out of us all.”

Directly overhead, perhaps a thousand feet above the edge of the granite quarry wall, the sky was suddenly split by a sharp detonation.

Though they were being backed slowly toward the granite wall by the noose of electrical fire, all had been keeping an eye on the darting beam of the plane circling above Cragrock.

Apparently the presence of the plane, if it were a police special, had not been overlooked by the habitants of Doctor Anstratton’s sanitarium. And now it looked as if methods had been employed to remove it from its post of observation.

“Good grief!” exclaimed Long Tom. “They must have used a ray that ignited the tanks! I hope it isn’t that fellow Higgins! He was such a darn nuisance, I got so I kinda liked him!”

Even the encroaching electrical fire was forgotten as the twin-motored plane burst into flame two thousand feet above the old quarry.

The long fuselage plunged toward the dome of Cragrock. It was like a falling rocket. Johnny and the others had no doubt but that it was the flaming coffin for at least two men.

Johnny caused all the party to move faster toward the thousand-foot wall of granite. The deadly line of the high frequency current had been speeded up.

Now all were crowded into only a few yards of space between the electrical loop and the face of the tall cliff.

“Daggonit!” yelled Monk. “Come on out an’ fight!”

The ugly chemist had produced his superfiring pistol. He brandished the awkward-looking weapon around in search of an enemy. None appeared.

“Probably this will be the finish,” announced Johnny.

From the wall itself came a light. Though Monk whipped around with his superfirer, and Ham slapped his sword blade into one hand, the light seemed to have no particular point of origin.

It seemed for a few moments as if the whole face of the huge granite wall had become a flat, cold flame.

“Howlin’ calamities!” squealed Monk. “I’ll bet that dame knew all the time what she was runnin’ us into!”

Though her dress was muddy and wet and clung to her plump figure, and her black hair was stringing around her face, Jane Davidson somehow managed to look calm.

“If you weren’t such a dumb, ugly ape, I might pay some attention to you,” said Jane Davidson calmly.

From the granite wall now came a Voice. This was so remarkable in its tone, that Ham exclaimed.

“Good gravy! It’s Doc! It couldn’t be any one else!”

The others stared at the wall. They tried in vain to fix the location of the Voice.

“*Stand where you are! Make no resistance and you will not be harmed,*” said the Voice coolly. “*You are mistaken in thinking you might escape or injure any one by fighting. When the walls open, you will walk in.*”

The granite cliff split silently. It was like the slow movement of a theater curtain. A score or more men came walking out.

These men seemed to wear only ordinary clothing. Under the queer light from the cliff their faces had a bluish appearance.

“I ain’t goin’ in there!” shouted Monk.

He raised the superfiring machine pistol. The weapon whined like a swarm of bees. Its bullets streamed into the line of slowly walking men.

Johnny and Long Tom joined with their own superfirers. Johnny selected a couple of small glasslike globes and tossed them at the feet of the oncoming men.

The men from under the mountain were immune to the anæsthetic capsules.

The score of men continued walking as if they were animated by some sort of machinery.

"Your mercy bullets are worthless," suddenly announced the Voice from the wall. *"Doc Savage is dead. Another, greater than Doc Savage has taken his place."*

"It's a lie!" shouted Monk. "Doc Savage is right——"

The ugly chemist did not complete his sentence. Johnny had been looking up at the granite wall beside the opening. He hoped there might be some means of ascent where they could make a stand.

No crevasse appeared. But high on the wall a few stunted trees stuck out.

"Well, I'll be superamalgamated!" exclaimed Johnny. "It's Renny! He didn't get onto Cragrock! He's been hanging up there all the time!"

Monk sprang close to Johnny. One of his big furry hands fastened on Johnny's arm.

"Daggonit! Keep your mouth shut!" yelled the chemist.

For Monk had instantly realized this was Renny himself clinging to the wall above with Inspector Higgins. No doubt, Higgins had picked up the big engineer after Doc Savage had taken Renny's place.

Monk could foresee complications. He knew that the man of bronze, made up as Renny, must be somewhere on Cragrock. He could not have been in the wrecked plane with Higgins. Now there would soon be two Rennys in the picture.

Johnny saw something that took his breath. In the branches above him appeared the torn remnants of a parachute.

"Good gravy!" spilled Ham. "I ain't so sure I'm not seeing things again! That looks like Inspector Higgins! And he and Renny are both hangin' to the same parachute! Say! How could Renny——"

Monk's furry hand closed over Ham's thin face.

"Start fightin' shyster, an' don't do no more lookin' up!" muttered Monk. "Them other guys from under the mountain ain't seen that 'chute! Let's rush 'em before they spot it!"

The men coming from under the granite wall had not spotted the parachute caught in the small trees. They were still under the overhang of the cliff. In addition to that, they were facing the renewed whooping of superfiring pistols.

"Come on!" shouted Monk. "We'll show 'em!"

His short legs carried him valiantly into the lead. Ham was close beside the chemist. The men from under the mountain did not fall.

Johnny and Long Tom fell down. It was strange. None of the men from under the mountain had apparently fired a weapon. But each now held a short black rod. As two of these rods were pointed at Johnny and Long Tom, they collapsed.

Jane Davidson ran forward. Monk grabbed Ham and pulled him down behind a broken piece of granite.

“I’ll bet we’re up against some new kind of paralyzing ray,” said Monk.

Jane Davidson cried out. She had whipped up one white hand. One of the short black rods merely pointed toward her. The plump young woman slumped to the ground.

“Listen, Monk, they’re going to get us,” said Ham. “I guess I’ve been half nuts ever since I saw those things in Central Park, but I’m not the only one who saw Renny up there in that parachute with a fellow that looked like Higgins. How in thunder did he get there?”

Monk was looking up the wall. Renny and the man who had looked like Higgins had disappeared. A fragment of the parachute fluttered in the rainy wind. Monk saw that Renny and Higgins must have crawled to some safer spot. At least, they had escaped detection. For the present, the hairy chemist had decided to keep to himself the secret that Doc was disguised as Renny. But it was Renny himself with the police inspector.

Four men came slowly around the granite slab. Each held a short rod. Ham sprang to his feet. His sword blade played like a flash of light.

“Get ’em, Monk!” he shouted. “Shoot for their faces!”

Monk did not shoot. The apelike chemist made a croaking noise in his throat. One of the men pointing a short black rod merely smiled. It might have been seen that the rod was attached to a thin wire.

Ham’s sword was aimed at one of their attackers’ throats. The blade halted in mid-air. It fell from the lawyer’s hand and banged on the granite.

High on the wall, Police Inspector Higgins and his companion saw Johnny and the others carried from view. The great wall of the old granite quarry closed silently.

Chapter XVII

CAVERN OF MONSTERS

This place under the mountain was much like a cathedral. Its roof was supported by huge columns. Some of the rooms were of fantastic shape.

One of these rooms might have been some place for lepers. There was one, low-arched entrance which all the workmen avoided.

All the men except one. This man was the queerly deformed Doctor Anstratton. When he hunched his way through the archway into the shunned room, he wore a large mask.

And as he entered, Doctor Anstratton dropped a curtain behind him. Though this curtain was no more than gauze, it was the only protection the others had from grisly horrors.

Doctor Anstratton stood before this curtain. His mask had a long protuberance. He was rubbing his bony knuckles.

“At last—at last!” he chuckled. “The last of Doc Savage’s famous group is in our power! Soon we shall begin the conquest of the invisible! The stubborn ones shall die! The little beasts which none can see shall destroy the last vestige of them!”

Doctor Anstratton lifted the gauze curtain. As he did this, a dozen or more men working near by turned their faces and hurried away.

The Voice that seemed to direct all of the affairs of Cragrock spoke.

“*Make sure, my good doctor, that they shall only be paralyzed,*” it stated. “*We shall be greater by restoring the living who have been partly dead than by saving those who never have suffered.*”

Doctor Anstratton replied with his high, cackling laugh.

“Restore these, indeed?” he sneered. “To be sure, we must see what can be done. But they must never leave this place.”

If it were possible for human animals to be converted into merely eyes, with voiceless tongues and inert muscles, the dozen men inside the room of the gauze curtain might be described.

These men neither sat, nor stood; nor were they lying down. They were but bundles of motionless bones and flesh. They wore only rags of clothes. Some mouths were open and tongues stuck out.

But there was not a quiver of a muscle. Yet it could be felt these men were cursing Doctor Anstratton with all of the venom which could be expressed by human eyes.

For all these men seemed to be was a dozen pairs of human eyes. None of these eyes were dull. None indicated stupid brains.

The eyes moved. Only the eyes. They followed the doctor's figure. There was cold murder in each pair of eyes. Intelligent, premeditated murder. No doubt, Doctor Anstratton could feel this.

It must have pleased the scientist's warped brain. Under his grotesque mask, he chuckled.

"I hope you will all eat like gentlemen to-day," he cackled. "Perhaps then we shall have the show and you shall see the little fellows of this new world in which you live. You may watch them swarming over you. Ah, that will be your treat for to-day."

Carrying an oversized syringe, Doctor Anstratton approached a queer-shaped glass jar in a row of such jars.

All these jars seemed to contain what might have been green, stagnant water. The syringe which Doctor Anstratton carried was of the type used to spray plants. It had a wide rubber nozzle.

The Voice spoke from somewhere.

"Are you ready, doctor?"

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" chuckled the doctor. "Let us have the globes turned on!"

Doctor Anstratton was peering through the smoky glass eyes of his awkward mask. He was looking into the jar of green water.

From the outer room came first a low humming. Generators were turning.

Suddenly it seemed as if some force had opened the top of the mountain. Crackling light played throughout the interior caverns of Cragrock.

"Ah, my little pets!" chuckled Doctor Anstratton. "Now I can see you! And you will help remake the world to our liking!"

The deformed doctor's voice was almost a scream. The doctor was dipping the nose of the syringe in the jar of green water.

The Voice spoke clearly.

"Those conduits are perfect, doctor," it said, with satisfaction. *"Without their resistance, the incoming voltage would melt everything in sight. Now the globes are really working."*

Though it was apparent that electrical energy was being drawn from the sky down into the caverns of Cragrock, the fearful hissing and snapping of the harnessed lightning was not sufficient to drown out the terrible screaming of human voices.

These voices came from the larger room outside that in which Doctor Anstratton stood.

Maddened men. One might have thought the incoming lightning was being employed to sear their flesh. Yet the men who screamed did not appear to be touched by fire or any other torture.

These men were fastened in a long row to one side of a great, vaulted room.

Some of the men screamed profanely. Their arms and legs were securely held in what resembled wooden stocks.

Each man sat with his head, his arms and his legs thrust through holes in the wood. These were locked together with iron hasps.

Of nearly a dozen men thus held, all but two were giving vent to their suffering, each in his own way.

“Let me die! I’ll give you all my millions! No! No! I won’t go mad! I’ll help you to power!”

That voice was none other than that of the strong-nerved Jonas Hydebottom. The aging millionaire was nothing now but a twisting gray head, which seemed to be trying to make a rag of its neck in order to shield the eyes from whatever horror they were seeing.

“There ain’t no such daggoned animals! I ain’t seein’ ’em. I won’t look at ’em!”

This came from the well-known Monk. His ugly head looked more grotesque than the others.

“Daggonit, Ham!” squealed Monk again. “You’re doing this to me! When I get out of here, I’m going to feed you to Habeas Corpus! *Zowee!* That thing’s got a million eyes!”

Ham’s head also stuck up. Ham was keeping better control.

“My only regret is that I’m so busy seeing other things I can’t observe how funny you must look right now!” rapped Ham.

Jonas Hydebottom was getting to be an old man. Perhaps that was why his nerve had broken all at once. Three other men rated as multimillionaires in the blue book, were joining him with their cries of terror.

They were offering any price to be freed of what they believed to be madness.

Because the air all about them was filled with bloated, horrible creatures, the row of imprisoned men had lost their view of this remarkable cavern of Cragrock.

Two prisoners, one at each end of the row, had been taking the torture with tight lips. One of these was Doc Savage himself in his assumed rôle of Renny, the giant engineer. His huge figure had already been locked in a set of the wooden stocks when his companions had been brought in.

Apparently from the moment he had been overpowered in the observatory of Cragrock dome, Doc had thus been held captive. And during all of that time, the bronze man had seemed to be half stunned, hardly understanding what was passing before him.

Doc had been strongly doped after his capture. Doctor Anstratton and that commanding Voice clearly did not underestimate Doc Savage’s group. Each of the five was in himself a power to be feared.

The skeletonlike skull of Johnny gave no evidence this smart geologist and archæologist was “seeing things.” In the few minutes before the crackling of the lightning had seemed to create a new world of monsters, Johnny had made an intensive study of the quartz formation of the mountain’s interior. Even in a moment of greatest danger, the scholarly Johnny was classifying the strata for future reference.

Long Tom had screamed with the others at first. Now he became the third one of the row to recover himself somewhat.

When first brought into the Cragrock caverns, all the prisoners had been unconscious for a short time. Then they had found themselves held in the stocks.

Long Tom had got his view of two great copper balls set close together upon a strange foundation. His electrician's eye had discovered their complicated hook-up with several generators.

But it had not been the generators and the copper balls which had puzzled Long Tom. From these great globes extended what might have been brightly polished cables. These passed upward and extended into the dome of soft rock overhead.

Long Tom instantly suspected these were the new alloy conduits which had been so mysteriously stolen from the Twentieth Century Metal Alloy plant. Their attachment to the copper globes proved they must have been some of the equipment Doc Savage had been using in some strange experiment. Long Tom and Johnny discovered that attempting to close their eyes did not discourage the flying horrors. In fact, it seemed impossible to close their eyelids.

But it was the scholarly Johnny whose mind remained the clearest. The great, vaulted room now appeared to be filled with thousands of varieties of beasts.

Johnny talked suddenly. Now there were some two score men besides the prisoners in the strange room. Perhaps more. And they were at this time engaged in an occupation which indicated preparation was being made by their bosses for possible departure from Cragrock.

None of these men could hear Johnny speak. Even if they had heard Johnny's words, they would not have understood. Johnny was employing the language of the ancient Mayans.

Johnny spoke quietly.

"Long Tom, I am beginning to get the answer," he stated. "We see a great many apparent monsters of which I have no knowledge. But at least I am familiar with many of the amoeba. I know that thing which looks like a monstrous anteater is nothing but a rotifer. I know those things with the sucker mouths and those with flagellums which look like tentacles."

"Good gosh!" exploded Long Tom, or the equivalent words in ancient Mayan.

"I haven't time to explain," stated Johnny. "But pass the word along to Ham and Monk. You can't get it to Renny, because they've got him up at the other end of the line."

"Say!" suddenly exclaimed Long Tom. "How do you suppose they caught Renny after we saw him hanging on the granite wall? And what happened to that nosey inspector, Higgins? That copper must have got away!"

"There is something decidedly fishy about the whole business," declared Johnny. "I don't see how they could have got Renny in here ahead of us, but he was here. And I saw him distinctly hanging with Higgins on that parachute."

Johnny may have had some of the answer to the world of hideous monsters, but his knowledge did not extend inside the room where Doctor Anstratton had finished filling the syringe with the long rubber nozzle.

Chapter XVIII

MEN WHO LIVED AGAIN

Johnny had succeeded in turning terror of the floating monsters into another problem. Now he had Long Tom, Ham and Monk talking with him in Mayan.

They attempted to communicate with the drooping figure of Renny. The bogus Renny, who was really Doc Savage. But the big engineer seemed sunk in a stupor.

Johnny said, "Perhaps they have done something to Renny that he doesn't see these things."

In this, Johnny was greatly mistaken. More than the others, Doc Savage in the end stocks was seeing all that was transpiring. Though horrible monsters seemed to float about him, he still was watching the operation of the immense copper globes.

Serpents of blue fire darted between these balls of copper. At the upper end of each globe was attached the cablelike conduit. The heat being conducted along these cables must have been terrific.

Only two places in the world had ever attempted to reproduce the equivalent of a single lightning bolt. One of these was in New York State. The other was in Switzerland. In each case, no more than ten millions of volts had ever been harnessed.

More electrical current than this was now entering the queer soft rock caverns of Cragrock.

Perhaps only Doc Savage fully understood what was happening. The little understood electricity was raising electronic energy to one of its greatest degrees.

Possibly the slightly studied force of atomic power was being released in minute quantities. Of the seven known scientific periods of atomic energy, there was now being reproduced what might have been the atom of the third period, or what scientists had termed sodium.

Doc Savage himself had been the inventor of those great copper globes and their conduit connections. But the Voice had announced Doc Savage was dead.

Dead with the starving rats in an underground cellar along the East River.

Inside the smaller cavern behind the gauze curtain, Doctor Anstratton had filled his syringe with the soft rubber nozzle. The doctor approached the first of the piles of bones and flesh.

The eyes of this inert man were intensely blue. They retained intelligence. They sparkled with hate. Murder was in the pupils. But the paralyzed man was helpless.

"This morning we make the test," spoke the mysterious Voice.

It was strangely like the voice of Doc Savage. Doctor Anstratton chuckled and cracked his knuckles. He thrust the rubber nozzle of the syringe into the mouth of the nearest man. The blue eyes looked at the doctor with murder.

“Observe!” said Doctor Anstratton. “You will see a miracle!”

The water had squirted into the inert man’s mouth. The deformed doctor hobbled swiftly past the others. Before each one, he paused. He rubbed bony hands caressingly across their foreheads.

Now it was apparent these other men were seeing what had happened to the first. The eyes of each of these paralyzed men became stricken with horror.

“You can’t speak!” shouted Doctor Anstratton. “I know what you are seeing! Great boring creatures are coming from your companion’s skin! They are being chased out by those other wide-mouthed monsters with the long, hairy feelers! Soon all of the borers will be gone!”

The eleven motionless men were watching their companion. It was true that hideous creatures of one form apparently were being driven out and devoured by other equally hideous monsters.

“Millions never will see these things!” shouted Doctor Anstratton. “But they will be there! Whole cities will become paralyzed! Whole cities will be healed and made well again! The world will hail a new Doc Savage! This one will have more power! What the bronze scientist planned to apply to heal many ills will now be employed to bring greater communities under control of the new Doc Savage!”

There is no doubt but that Doctor Anstratton was crazy. Even the man of the mysterious Voice must have known that. Perhaps he was merely using the extensive knowledge of the warped scientist for his own purposes.

“It is time to quit speaking,” said the Voice quite clearly. *“Soon we must prepare to remove all to a distant spot. Too many have come too close to Cragrock. Prove, my good doctor, your latest theory will work.”*

Doctor Anstratton dropped the rubber syringe. He stepped back.

“It is proved!” he shouted.

One man was moving. He was the man into whose mouth the green water had been injected. The man from whose skin the hideous boring creatures had seemed to emerge, only to be devoured by the others.

The enemies of the boring monsters must have been in that jar of green water. No doubt, the first creatures had come from another of those same jars.

The man who moved was a big fellow. His blue eyes snapped with sudden light. He drew his arms and limbs into motion. His great muscles were apparent, but he was moving as slowly as a tortoise crawling. His mouth had closed. His tongue must have found speech.

Doctor Anstratton passed quickly before the other men. He rubbed his hands across their foreheads. The horror left their eyes. Only now they were watching their companion with amazement.

“I’ll—get—— I’ll—I’ll kill you!”

These were the first words from the slowly reviving man. Perhaps that injection worked faster than Doctor Anstratton had intended. Suddenly, the big fellow was on his

feet. He was lurching toward the deformed doctor.

The hands of the blue-eyed man clapped around Doctor Anstratton's skinny throat. His recovery must have given him tremendous strength. The deformed doctor clawed at the other man's face. Breath gurgled in his throat.

"You have proved your case indeed," stated the invisible Voice. *"Preserve that which we have. These men must be destroyed. The fall of the mountain will care for those few fools who have believed Doc Savage invincible."*

Doctor Anstratton was not throttled. From the direction of the Voice shot a piercing, knifelike flame. This seemed to barely touch the bare skin of the blue-eyed man's back.

"A-ar-agh!" gulped the man.

A round, red spot appeared over the man's spine. His hands fell from Doctor Anstratton's neck.

The blue-eyed man stiffened and quivered. An electric bolt must have disrupted his inner organs. His face immediately turned black. The Voice did not speak again.

But as Doctor Anstratton struggled to his feet, oaths frothing from his bony jaws, the knifelike, electrical current crossed the room.

Paralyzed men cannot struggle against the spasms of death. The eleven men along the wall merely ceased to have murder in their eyes. They lay quiet.

Whatever the purpose of the experiment Doctor Anstratton had conducted, the Voice apparently had judged it better to murder a dozen men than to have the secret pass from that gauze-curtained room.

Doctor Anstratton looked at the dead men. He turned back toward the row of green jars. The gauze curtain lifted. There was a loud, piercing scream.

This was the voice of a woman. Jane Davidson stood in the entrance to the murder room. Her black eyes were round with horror. She was looking at the dead men on the rock floor.

Doctor Anstratton merely waved the rubber-nosed syringe in her direction.

"Get out!" he yelled. *"You'll get yourself——"*

What the doctor may have feared evidently affected the owner of the Voice fully as much. From the near-by wall leaped a great figure. As it came, the Voice spoke.

"Stop the globes! We are finished with these! Fool, do you want to die?"

The owner of the voice had the build of a giant man. He wore a white shirt, which bared his throat and smooth breast. His head was bare, and his sleeves were stripped back to his elbows.

With sweeping strength, the man lifted the plump figure of Jane Davidson. He glided past the door of the gauze curtain into the larger outer room.

As he moved, the man must have done something to Jane Davidson's nerves. For her screaming abruptly ceased. The woman lay in his arms as limp as a child.

The man started across the big outside room with long, swinging strides. Jane Davidson's long, black hair fell down. Her neck was like a rag.

At the command of the Voice, the hissing and crackling of the globes had ceased.

Now, all the row of prisoners in the wooden stocks could see clearly what was taking place. For the floating monsters had suddenly disappeared. Only Jonas Hydebottom, the aging millionaire, continued to groan.

It might be that the older man's mind would remain affected for the rest of his years.

It was the childlike voice of Monk which yelped first.

"That's him! He'll kill the dame! Stop him!"

"Good gravy!" rapped out Ham. "It's Doc! He's been in here all the time!"

"Doc! Doc!" shouted Long Tom. "We're over here!"

Johnny said nothing. But like the others, he was staring at the bronze giant crossing the big, vaulted room.

In the end stocks, the real Doc Savage had lifted his head. His hair had fallen over the face that looked like Renny's. He looked as if he had been put into a permanent stupor. Even the presence of the great figure of bronze walking before him did not bring a response.

None had known what had become of Jane Davidson after they had been seized. All had seen the young woman struck down with the electrical weapon. After that, it seemed she had been spared imprisonment in the stocks. For the time, none had been given reason to suspect where she had been taken.

"Doc! Doc!" yelled Ham. "We're over here! Look out for those other fellows! They've got some kind of ray that knocks you out!"

The bronze giant turned his head. Every feature marked him as the long-absent Doc Savage. If this was the man who had hypnotized Jane Davidson, the young woman indeed had good reason for accusing the bronze adventurer.

Without moving his lips, the bronze man gave forth a faint, eerie trilling. This was a mistake. Johnny spoke. He knew instantly that trilling had a distinctly wrong note.

"That is the solution, and he is the Voice we have been hearing. Brothers, it may be that Doc has perished. If that is true, then our situation is most critical."

"Howlin' calamities!" exploded Monk. "Haven't you fellows——"

Monk did not complete his words. The bronze giant had apparently hurled Jane Davidson roughly onto one of three strange vehicles which stood to one side of the vaulted room.

The bronze giant spoke. His words might have been those of Doc Savage himself.

"Bring the doctor and load the air cars," he said. "Cragrock is charged for dissolution. We are ready to strike!"

"Good grief!" rapped out Ham. "You don't suppose all this stuff about Doc being dead is true?"

"Daggonit!" yelped Monk. "Can't you see——"

From what had appeared to be a solid pillar in the middle of the cavern vault boomed a deep voice.

"Holy cow, inspector! I told you Doc would be down here!"

One side of the rock pillar opened. The men in the stocks could see that this was really something like a spiral slide. It must have come into this lower room directly from the observatory above. It was much like fire-escape apparatus.

To the amazement of Ham, Long Tom and Johnny, at least, a bulky figure shot from this spiral. This was a great-fisted giant. The solemn face of Renny appeared above the mammoth shoulders.

Across one cheek was a deep, red gouge. Apparently Renny had been in some trouble. But whatever it had been, it was slight compared to what he now faced.

Behind this amazing figure of Colonel John Renwick appeared the thin face of Inspector Higgins. Even at a distance, the inspector's Adam's apple was jumping.

"Well! Well! Well!" rapped Inspector Higgins. "So you're Doc Savage, and we've caught up with you at last! Whatcha doin' with that woman? Put up your hands! You're under arrest for——"

Inspector Higgins had whipped out a regulation Police Positive revolver. He pointed this at the figure of the bronze man in the middle of the room. The result was no less than astounding.

The big man of bronze, did not move or issue an order. But two of the many men working around the strange vehicles he had called the air cars moved their hands slightly.

A pair of short black rods appeared. Inspector Higgins's pistol exploded. But not in the manner he intended. It became a blazing lump of blue flame.

The revolver jumped up in the air and fell to the rock floor. Inspector Higgins stuck his hands straight out. He fell down and rolled over.

"Well, I'll be superamalgamated!" exploded Johnny. "We have witnessed the apparition of Doc Savage, and it has proved to be only a hallucination! We have gazed upon microbes that have turned into monsters! And now I am looking at two Rennys!"

If Johnny was surprised, the big bronze man seemed no less so. His voice lost the calm tone he had been using.

"Grab that fellow!" he bellowed. "Something's been put over on us!"

The dull, solemn eyes of Doc Savage, imprisoned in the stocks, looked rather vacantly at the bronze giant. But the newly arrived Renny proved he was not in a stupor.

Several men jumped toward him. They were swinging the stubby black rods. The big engineer had seen something. It was a connection from which thin wires extended to those rods.

The hamlike fists smashed two ways at once. Before the ray could render him powerless, big Renny had proved what a cyclone can accomplish when it goes on the loose.

One of the engineer's feet smashed loose the connection of the electrical rods. He did not seem to mind being now surrounded by as many dancing, yelling men as could get close to him.

Not in a long time had the giant engineer had so many targets for those smashing fists. He seemed to have only one purpose: That was to reach the big man who apparently had been impersonating Doc Savage.

“Holy cow!” boomed Renny. “You will go around lookin’ like Doc!”

He swung a haymaker at the big bronze man, but another fellow tripped him up and he fell to his knees. Perhaps half a dozen men made the mistake of trying to make a football out of the big engineer.

“Howlin’ calamities!” yelled Monk. “If I could only get into it!”

The others were feeling much the same. But for considerable time big Renny appeared to need no assistance. He was putting up a perfect show as a one-man wrecking crew.

Now the prisoners in the stocks were shouting encouragement.

“But it can’t last long,” groaned Long Tom. “If Renny only had waited. Still, I’m dizzy over the whole thing. That’s Renny out there trying to smash the works, and that’s Renny fastened up there in the stocks. Say! Monk? You mean——”

Of the half a dozen men who had landed on Renny’s broad back, at least three would be of little use for a long time to come. Their skulls had been permanently cracked.

The big bronze man had separated from the others. He had glided toward one of the queer vehicles he had called air cars. He paused only to stare strangely at the bogus Renny in the wooden stocks and at the other man still playing billiards with his men.

At last the fake bronze man rapped out.

“We’ve been tricked, doctor! Give them the globes again! Doc Savage lives!”

The generators hummed and the copper globes crackled. The fake bronze man evidently had another idea up his sleeve.

“Black the lights!” he yelled. “Have the air cars ready! Hold everything for the detonators!”

The line of prisoners in the stocks again were seeing monsters. But Johnny’s voice was steadying them. He was talking in Mayan.

“If you could get your hands to your eyes, it would cease,” he stated.

The great, vaultlike cavern was plunged into darkness. The only light now was the eerie, weird serpents crackling between the big copper globes. Yet this faint illumination showed that which might not have previously been observed.

Stranger vehicles never had been seen than the three, streamlined affairs at one side of the underground room. They appeared to be merely monstrous-pointed cars, without windows or without wheels.

As Renny somehow managed to free himself from the jam of the bronze man’s henchmen, a strange thing happened.

One of the windowless vehicles seemed to have no load. The bronze man who had been enacting the rôle of Doc Savage rapped out an order. Five or six of his men ran over to this single car.

“Good grief!” stated Ham. “I’ve got them things off my eyes! Look! That car looks big as a railroad engine, but four men have picked it up! They’re turning it around! Say, the thing has a track underneath that unwinds itself!”

Perhaps none but big Renny could see this. And for once Renny had used rare judgment. Usually, the engineer would fight as long as his fists could find a skull to smash. But this time Renny had eluded his enemies.

In the faint blue light, the men under the mountain were cracking at each other.

“Connect the paralysis ray!” commanded the voice of the fake bronze man. “That will get him and the others! We must go with what we have gained!”

The mountain men had trouble connecting the paralysis ray. This trouble was unexpected.

Apparently Inspector Higgins had only been knocked out for a few minutes.

Chapter XIX

END OF THE DOCTOR

Inspector Higgins awoke in the midst of what he may have mistaken for a riot. The worthy copper was slightly groggy. His groping hand found his fallen revolver.

“I’ll get Doc Savage yet!” yelled Inspector Higgins.

The policeman was a man with one idea. Now the greenish light from the copper balls suddenly revealed the figure of a giant with bronzed skin. This man was making an effort to have his men connect the rods which carried the paralysis ray.

Inspector Higgins started shooting. The bronze man escaped. He leaped suddenly onto the curious air car in which lay the limp form of Jane Davidson.

Two or three men attempting to connect the rod wires were knocked down by Inspector Higgins’s bullets.

During this bedlam, a voice started speaking quietly. At the same instant, the bronze man beside Jane Davidson on the air car heaved to his feet. The greenish electrical glow gave his countenance a deathly cast.

That voice was coming from his lips. It was issuing a command.

“Keep the copper globes alive!” said this voice. “Release the prisoners in the stocks and drive them into the inner room!”

The men who had been attempting to get their paralysis ray rods in action ceased this effort. A dozen men hastened to obey the command. The bronze man on the air car, who apparently had given this order, was clawing at his face.

“No! No! No!” he was screaming. “Take them away! They’re tearing me to pieces!”

In some manner the greater illumination of the cavern flashed on.

“Well, I’ll be superamalgamated!” shouted Johnny. “Come on!”

All of the wooden stocks had been opened by a single lever. Monk, Ham, Long Tom and the four millionaires stood free. But they did not seem to know where to go into action.

The bronze man who had been taking the rôle of Doc Savage still stood on the queer air car. He was still clawing at his face. His words were meaningless screams.

The reason for this was quickly apparent.

The real Renny, the big engineer who had been fighting it out with overwhelming numbers in the middle of the room, had vanished.

The other Renny, Doc Savage, who had been locked in the stocks, was standing motionless on his massive legs. From his skull the brownish hair had been pulled away. Now there was revealed the smooth bronze hair of Doc Savage himself.

For a few seconds, a weird trilling filled the great vault. It arose above even the crackling and hissing of the copper globes and the conduits. All of the men in the room

seemed transfixed.

This was the unmistakable weird note of the real Doc Savage. The other that had been heard several times did not now seem even a good imitation.

Doc Savage moved his hands. The bronze skin showed. Metal flakes fell from his eyes. They were now stirring whirlpools of gold. And these eyes were fixed intently on that other bronze man on the air car.

Monk yelled, "I could've told all you what would happen! Daggonit! I knew all the time it was Doc who dropped from the gyroplane! Now we'll clean 'em up!"

The bronze man on the air car spoke again in distinct words. He was acting like a man in a nightmare. His hands moved as if he wanted to stop his own words and couldn't.

This was the truth. This fake man of bronze couldn't stop those words. Nor could he find speech of his own to inform his men that his crazy commands were being uttered by another.

For it was the real Doc Savage talking. In that cavern, on the crackling waves of the copper globes, it was possible to produce a ventriloquial effect that had never before been attained. This was one of the discoveries Doc Savage had made of the properties of the new short-wave rays the globe conduits were bringing to earth.

The speech of the fake bronze man was completely paralyzed. In his mouth were the words of Doc Savage.

And though he tried to avoid them, those flaky gold eyes of Doc Savage were upon him with an intentness the remarkable adventurer seldom employed.

For a few seconds, Doc Savage was able to hold this faker, his imitator, under a hypnotic spell. The real man of bronze was using these few seconds to the best advantage. For he had seen enough to know that the slightest mistake now would mean the annihilation of his companions, the four millionaires and himself.

Doc Savage had known all the time those wooden stocks had been wired for instant electrocution of prisoners in an emergency. So his first order through his helpless double was to free the captives.

Now he caused the writhing faker on the air car to issue another command.

"Doctor Anstratton!" came from the twisting, helpless lips. "You will destroy all of the jars of monsters! You will make them powerless to do harm!"

On the rounded top of the air car where the fake bronze man stood, the plump body of Jane Davidson moved. The girl's round white face was raised. She sprang up suddenly. Her arms were locked around the big man's waist.

At the instant the faker uttered the order to Doctor Anstratton, Jane Davidson cried out, "It's Doc Savage! He killed Professor Spargrove! He'll kill all of us! He wants to rule the world!"

The feet of the bronze faker flew from under him. He fell beside Jane Davidson. The young woman must have struck this boss of Cragrock with some object she held in her hand. His big body stiffened and he lay still across the air car.

But the eyes of all were pulled to the inner room of the gauze curtain. From inside this room came a crashing and crackling of glass. It seemed Doctor Anstratton was carrying out the order delivered by the real Doc Savage through his double.

Those who had freed their eyes of the hideous monsters now were able to observe more of this huge room in which they stood.

In many respects it was similar to the wonderful laboratory of Doc Savage in Manhattan. The walls of soft rock were studded with electrical devices. These included radio and television.

Apparently there had not been time to remove the big copper globes from the strange air car on which they had been placed.

On another similar car was piled a great deal of the equipment that had been stolen from Doc Savage's headquarters.

The third car was queerly camouflaged. While its streamlined perfection was revealed, it had the appearance of a very old and very common sort of railroad coach. It was painted like a carnival car.

Renny, the big engineer, now crouched close behind the big copper globes, knew exactly where he had last seen this coach. It had been in the railroad yards close to the Twentieth Century Metal Alloy Works above Manhattan.

Now, when the devilish scheme of the fake Doc Savage and Doctor Anstratton seemed about to be upset, Doc Savage and Renny had become aware that the slightest mistake would mean death for everybody.

Doc Savage had caused that order to be given to Doctor Anstratton merely to gain a few minutes of delay. He had learned that all of Cragrock had been charged with a terrible high explosive. Some hidden switch or lever would bring all of the thousands of tons of the rock crashing down upon these hidden rooms.

For this reason, Doc Savage's copper globes, his other more important devices and the best of the equipment of the fake Doc Savage and Doctor Anstratton had been loaded on the three mysterious cars.

Doc Savage's liberated companions had clawed something from under their eyelids. They stood awaiting an order to attack the two score men attempting to get their paralysis rods into action. And in the few seconds they waited, they heard the continued crashing of the glass jars in the room behind the gauze curtain.

"You would rob me of everything!" screamed a high-pitched voice from the doorway of the gauze curtain. "You have what you seek, and you would leave me with nothing! I know now! You want to become the new Doc Savage! You killed the real Doc Savage and left his bones to the rats! I won't be tricked!"

The curtain of gauze swayed to one side. The figure of Doctor Anstratton hopped into view. High above his one hunched shoulder, the crazed scientist held a small glass jar. In the other hand, the doctor balanced another.

Jane Davidson was standing erect on the sloping top of the air car. The big bronze figure at her feet had not moved after she had struck him down.

Jane Davidson screamed shrilly. There was the terror of death in her voice.

“This is all the work of Doc Savage!” she cried. “Don’t let him break those jars! They contain worse than death! They were filled by Professor Spargrove!”

“Holy cow!” muttered Renny behind the crackling copper globes. “This is about the nuttiest set-up I ever encountered! Now what?”

Apparently the two score men commanded by the fake Doc Savage and this Doctor Anstratton knew what it was all about. Moreover, they appeared to be in deadly terror of those swinging jars.

“No, doctor! No! You can’t do that!” screamed one man.

Another man yelled, “Get the cars moving! Open the wall!”

There was no time to get one of the queer air cars moving. Nor was there time to open a wall.

Doctor Anstratton chuckled with a fiendish glee, which could be heard above the hissing of the electrical currents of the big globes.

One bony-knuckled hand hurled one of the glass jars. This jar seemed to contain only some green stagnant water. The jar struck among some of the nearest of the mountain men and exploded into scores of splintery fragments.

The green water splattered over the faces and the hands of three of these men. Those whose eyes were clear and unaffected by whatever emanation was coming from the big copper globes saw the three men halt as if transfixed by lightning.

Then these three men fell down. None writhed or showed any other evidence of suffering. They simply became instantly only motionless bundles of clothes and bones and flesh.

“Good grief!” exploded Ham. “Doc! I’ll get him!”

Ham started to spring forward. The lawyer was not even armed with his sword cane. But he flashed toward Doctor Anstratton.

“Keep back, Ham,” came the calm voice of Doc Savage. “Every one get to the first of those cars. It is our only way now out of Cragrock. In a few seconds there will be no mountain.”

“So you think you’re another Doc Savage!” screamed Doctor Anstratton. “But you have spoken the truth! In another few seconds there will be no Cragrock. The detonator is set! None but myself ever will become the new Doc Savage!”

Doctor Anstratton broke the other jar. He crashed the top of it on the rock nearest him. A howl of laughter came from his throat. The scientist’s deformed shoulder twisted upward.

Renny shouted from behind the copper globes. “He’s drinking the stuff! He’s——”

Jonas Hydebottom and the other millionaires perhaps had not yet understood why they were seeing monsters, why they were on the verge of madness. There had been no time for them to remove metallic glass shells from under their eyelids.

Because of this, Jonas Hydebottom and the others were viewing much more than the mere paralysis of three men, and the strange transformation of Doctor Anstratton.

“Great grief!” yelled Jonas Hydebottom. “They’re eating them alive! There are millions of the things! Look out! They’re coming through the air!”

Jonas Hydebottom was seeing a myriad of hydra-headed monsters. These were equipped with dozens of gimletlike projectors. They surrounded Doctor Anstratton. Their terrible borers seemed to pierce his body. They emerged through his clothing.

The same thing was happening to the three men lying on the floor.

As if transfixed by all these hideous creatures, Doctor Anstratton sat down suddenly. His bony knuckles no longer cracked. His hands did not move. Only his deep eyes stayed alive.

The eyes of the three men on the floor were still alive. But their bodies were inert.

One of the long streamlined cars suddenly moved. It was that containing the fake Doc Savage and Jane Davidson. Apparently the plump girl attempted to leap off. The big man reared to his feet.

One fist knocked the girl down.

“Stay where you are!” the man shouted. “It’s too late for the others! The detonators have been set!”

This strange car was behind the other two. One of the other cars was that old railroad coach. Over its metallic body it had been camouflaged as a worn-out carnival car.

The real Doc Savage sprang toward the other bronze man on the moving air car. As he went, he called out, “All get back of the globes! Seize that other car! All can escape!”

The mountain men had been terrorized. Robbed of their paralysis ray, they flung themselves upon Doc Savage. They might as well have got in the path of a cyclone.

The great fists of Doc Savage were like invisible flying circles. Men fell all around him.

Monk, Long Tom and Johnny, having been robbed of their weapons, were using their fists and their hands. The gripping hands of the apelike Monk were more terrible than the fists of the others.

Doc Savage reached the sloping side of the moving air car on which rode the other bronze man and Jane Davidson. He was climbing upon it, when a ghastly laugh croaked from the throat of Doc’s double.

The real Doc was tossed a score of feet. The shock which had accomplished this had come from the metallic alloy of the mystery air car. Bearing the chief of the scientific monsters, and the plump Jane Davidson, this air car turned on what seemed a caterpillar track of its own. It headed directly for the closed wall of granite.

Outside this wall was the abandoned quarry. And there were the old switch tracks. Doc’s men could now see by what means these strange cars had been moved so mysteriously.

For the inner flanges of beltlike devices were fitted for the standard tracks of any railroad. The facility with which the cars could be moved undoubtedly made it possible

for them to operate anywhere between regular trains.

At the approach of a train, the air cars simply crawled off the rails into concealment.

But at this moment, Doc's companions had no time to study this one of the several devices by which a fake Doc Savage had expected to appear before the world.

Tossed a score of feet from the moving air car, Doc Savage whipped to his feet. He sprang toward the car containing the big copper globes. The electrical current between these globes was like the constant play of a zigzagging lightning bolt.

The special metallic conduits were glowing with the intensity of the heat being drawn from the sky above Cragrock.

The men of the mountain had put up a stubborn fight, but they appeared more subdued by fear of their three paralyzed companions than by the fists of Doc Savage's men. Now they were fleeing toward the air car which resembled a carnival car.

The vast underground room was a bedlam of screams.

"Get the others on the car of the globes," commanded Doc Savage quietly. "Renny, destroy the power. It was a mistake in the beginning."

The hand of Renny, the big engineer, moved toward a switch which had a three-way brass connection. He pulled this apart.

From somewhere in the top of Cragrock came a rumbling explosion. The vaulted room shook. Fragments of rock fell down. Another blast quickly followed. It felt as if the domelike observatory was being blown to bits far above.

Doc Savage climbed on the car between the big copper globes. Renny's pulling of the switch had shut off the generators. The bronze giant made a ruthless job of several delicately wired connections.

"This," he said quietly to Johnny, "concludes the experiment of the magni globes. With all of its possibilities for great good, we have seen what terrible evil it might bring."

"I had guessed some of that," stated Johnny. "Are we getting out on this car?"

"We will help the others aboard here," advised Doc. "Be quick. The whole mountain may go next."

His words seemed about to be fulfilled. Long Tom had made an effort to rescue the paralyzed Doctor Anstratton. The electrician halted as a blast from far above sent a whole wall of soft rock down upon the inert body of the crazed scientist.

All the mountain men had crowded aboard the air car with the flamboyant carnival paint. They had the vehicle moving. Its remarkable motors made only a hissing, as if they were drawing in air.

Jonas Hydebottom and the three millionaires were now beside Doc Savage. The hands of the bronze giant played over the side of one of the huge copper balls. The sphere divided. The power of the globes, whatever it was, had been destroyed.

"The others will escape through the wall," stated Doc Savage. "Get inside the globe. It is our only chance. We have no time to follow."

Chapter XX

WHEN CRAGROCK FELL

Through a thousand feet of soft rock the big telescope in the Cragrock observatory plunged into the great, vaulted room. Its long metal body rested across one of the copper globes aboard a motionless air car.

“We have no time to attempt to follow the others,” Doc Savage had cautioned. “Perhaps the globe will resist the blast.”

Doc and his men, Inspector Higgins, Jonas Hydebottom and the other men of wealth, were crowded into the limited space of the copper globe. The bronze man had closed the great ball until only a slit remained.

Through that slit appeared an amazing spectacle. The soft quartz walls inside Cragrock were splitting and falling. Blast after blast of high explosives shook the mountain. Apparently these had been timed by Doctor Anstratton or Doc Savage’s double to take place in a series after all had left the place.

“Them devils meant us to be buried here! What was the purpose, Doc?” came from Renny.

“We are not yet sure we won’t be buried here,” stated Doc Savage. “We have only one hope. This explosion may split the whole mountain.”

“Howlin’ calamities!” exploded Monk. “They must’ve been startin’ off at better’n a hundred miles an hour! Say! They didn’t make it!”

It was very apparent the two fleeing air cars had not made it. Perhaps the granite wall was supposed to open by some automatic mechanism. Those two cars had been traveling at great speed.

Possibly the blasting of the mountain had disrupted all of the intricate mechanism by which the granite wall should have opened.

The big bronze man who had been faking the rôle of Doc Savage was aboard the first of the cars. Nearly all his men, except the buried Doctor Anstratton were on the other cars.

Both cars struck the wall where the opening should have been. Their impact was almost as great as some of the blasts which had shaken Cragrock to bits.

“Good gosh!” said Long Tom. “Nobody could be left alive in them cars! Both of them squashed into that wall like bugs!”

“We are lucky,” stated Doc Savage. “Cragrock has been split. That is real lightning we are seeing.”

The last rumbling blast had died out. Tons of the quartz had hammered the big copper globe, but those inside were unharmed. Doc slowly widened the opening. Gusty wind blew rain through the roof where it had been blown apart.

“Well, I’ll be superamalgamated!” exclaimed Johnny. “It looks like we’re going to be blown right out of this place!”

“Daggonit, Doc!” complained Monk. “How are we ever goin’ to get these copper globes an’ all this stuff out of this mess?”

“When we have got ourselves out of this mess, that will be sufficient,” said Doc Savage. “Johnny, you said you had guessed what these globes were intended to do?”

“Yes,” stated the scholarly Johnny. “As soon as I realized I had some kind of metallic shells over my eyeballs and that I saw all sorts of strange things when the globes were turned on, I had the answer.”

“You are correct, Johnny,” advised Doc. “Professor Spargrove had been experimenting with this idea for years. We succeeded in creating what might be called a supermicroscope. When the cosmic rays and high voltage of the magni globes were inducted into the special finders, which were made into metallic shells for the eyes, millions of microbes were enlarged many thousands of times.”

“Yes,” stated Johnny, “and this Doctor Anstratton got in on it some way. He found hitherto invisible bacteria which could be reproduced and made to paralyze those they touched. With that, he and his companions could have held the greatest of cities in their power.”

“I fear they had even a more subtle scheme in mind,” stated Doc. “It was their purpose first to contaminate the water supply of the greatest cities, then produce the enemy bacteria which would kill off the others and cure the victims.”

“You mean,” said Ham, “they really intended to put over a kind of Doc Savage stuff of their own, by posing as benefactors.”

“It would seem so,” stated Doc. “Invention of these air cars would have made them millions, but they were not satisfied with mere wealth. These cars are a type of super-Diesel, which draws nearly all of its energy from the stratosphere. They are held to steel rails by magnetic belts rather than by the flanges of wheels.”

“By golly,” said Long Tom, “that’s a principle which may be applied some day!”

“No doubt and with great benefit,” stated Doc. “Their supposed thefts by trucks were only a cover-up for the real way they were carrying off the heavy stuff.”

“Well! Well! Well!” twanged Inspector Higgins. “What was all this twaddle which made it look like I had to arrest Doc Savage? That young woman, Jane Davidson—— Holy Moses! I forgot! She was on one of them smashed cars! Now that’s too bad!”

Doc Savage shook his head sadly.

“It is always to be regretted when death comes,” he stated. “But justice sometimes is dealt by the power which has created the injustice. I fear Jane Davidson was the brain behind all this scheme.”

“Holy cow!” rumbled Renny. “She was such a nice black-eyed girl!”

Scholarly Johnny smiled slightly.

“I was aware Jane Davidson was in on this before we came under the mountain,” he stated. “She suddenly became interested in that poor fellow, Rufus Bannaford. She told

me she had taken a photograph of herself from his body. I happened to see that same photograph of herself in her purse earlier. Also, I found a fragment of the metallic eyeshells, which she was removing from the dead man's eyes."

"Great gravy!" piped Monk. "Then who bumped off Professor Spargrove?"

"There appears to be no doubt but that Jane Davidson did that," advised Doc. "Probably the professor suddenly suspected who had helped steal the magni globes. The girl was his assistant. She got dreams of great power." The bronze man shrugged. "It was too great a temptation for her to resist."

"Then who was the other Doc Savage?" inquired Long Tom.

"That was what made me sure of Jane Davidson's part in all this," stated Doc. "The other Doc Savage was Andrus Davidson, brother of Jane. He had been an actor—possibly a bad one—for many years. And he was built for the part. I believe it was the purpose to discredit our own work before they tried to take up the great scheme of the magni globes."

It was now recalled by all that each time any person had apparently "seen things," some of the principals had had an access to them while they were unconscious. Even in the case of John Corbin, the first to die, the fake Doc Savage had appeared just long enough to remove the metallic eyeshells from the dead man's eyes.

"Well! Well! Well!" babbled Inspector Higgins. "I think I done a swell job breaking this case!"

"No doubt about it," stated Ham dryly. "You'll probably be promoted."

"Daggonit!" came from Monk "why don't you let him alone, you shyster? You were so scared of what was going on here you didn't do anything. At least Higgins isn't afraid!"

"I suppose you weren't, you hairy ape?" Ham drawled sarcastically.

"I was!" Monk admitted promptly. "Scared to death, as a matter of fact." And then the hairy chemist grinned. For once, he had caught Ham off guard, and the expression on the dapper lawyer's face was ludicrous. Getting Monk to admit he was scared was an accomplishment in itself.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Mad Eyes* by Lawrence Donovan (as Kenneth Robeson)]