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The actors and actresses in the rehearsed photos are over 18 years (see [here](#) for a list of sites from where they were extracted). The anime/hentai/cartoon/3D/CGI images depict sexual fantasies of many Adults and as strictly drawings of erotic art are harmless and (at one time) were not subject to any legal restrictions (see [here](#)). These images were created to be over 18 years old by their artists.

These short-stories do not have an "editor-in-chief". Many individuals contributed to different sections in a story. So it is possible that some questionable images "slipped through the cracks". If any image is judged to be illegal by a newer law, please contact [kelli@hotlegsinlove.com](mailto:kelli@hotlegsinlove.com) and it will be removed.

All of these images were retrieved from "free" public (i.e., non-paysite) websites including Google. Some have a massive collection from fake-celebrity-sex to BDSM to incest to bestiality images [such as [8muses.com](http://8muses.com) ]. The assumption was that if these somewhat-realistic images were illegal, the legal authorities would have had them removed a long time ago. But they are still there and so they are being used here and saving you a lot of web-surfing time.

If you are someone who might be offended by such fiction or the prevailing Laws of your locale do not permit viewing ***"Forced Sex"***-type material --

and especially if you are under 21 years of age --

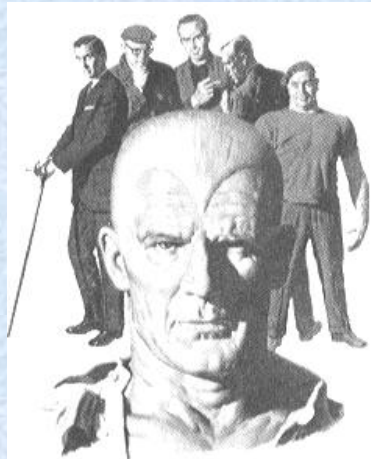
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## Doc Savage #034XXX - "The Fantastic Island"

**by Ryerson Johnson & Lester Dent - December/1935**

(**XXX** material added by [kelli@hotlegsinlove.com](mailto:kelli@hotlegsinlove.com))



**XXXXXX Not For Viewing By Anyone Under 21 XXXXXX**

*It looked just like any other deserted island. But hidden under its tropical sands was a monstrous slave empire, a vast underground network of death pits, giant carnivorous crabs and prehistoric beasts -- all ruled by the blood-crazed Count Ramadanoff! Blasting their way into this nightmare of horror, Doc Savage and the Fabulous Five embark on their most daring adventure.*

*with Patricia Savage !*

# THE PERILS OF PAT SAVAGE



*after their assault...*



<http://www.hotlegsinline.com/PSXXX.htm>

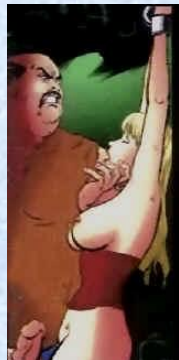


**XXXX** This is a 'X'-rated version of the original novel. **XXXX**

# **The Perils of Patricia Savage**

modified by [kelli@hotlegsinlove.com](mailto:kelli@hotlegsinlove.com)

**\*\*\*\* Not For Viewing By Anyone Under 21 \*\*\*\***



Thanks to [Blackmask.com](http://Blackmask.com) , [Worldlibrary.net](http://Worldlibrary.net) , [Munseys.com](http://Munseys.com) and the other websites who previously converted these Doc Savage paperbacks into electronic format. They were used as the base for inserting the **XXX** material.

The Adult **images** that accompany the **XXX** material were from free public sites such as [LuxBabes.com](http://LuxBabes.com) , [Twistys](http://Twistys) , [Hot Pornstars](http://HotPornstars) , [Richards-Realm.com](http://Richards-Realm.com) , and [Celebritiesmix.com](http://Celebritiesmix.com) .

The fantasy **XXX** material was in part created by inspiration from Rebecca at [RebeccaHAP.com](http://RebeccaHAP.com) and those wicked and talented **BDSM** erotic artists at [DoFantasy.com](http://DoFantasy.com) and [8Muses.com](http://8Muses.com) .

note: to skip to images of **Pat Savage In Peril**, do a <Ctrl>-F (Find) on **XXXXX** .



# I -- Shipwreck To Order

The disappearance of William Harper Littlejohn attracted no public attention whatever.

The reason for this was simple. The public never learned about it.

William Harper Littlejohn was a very famous man. It was impossible that if 10 average men on the street should be stopped and asked who 'William Harper Littlejohn' was, they would not have had the slightest idea.

But in his field, William Harper Littlejohn was tops. His field was Archaeology and Geology. Wherever men are interested in such things, he was known.

William Harper Littlejohn's disappearance was simple. He had chartered a ship and was taking an archaeological expedition to the Galapagos Islands below the Equator in the Pacific Ocean. The Galapagos are said to be the World's strangest islands.

William Harper Littlejohn simply disappeared. The ship vanished also. **As well as the whole expedition!**

It could not have been that their radio merely failed. There were 3 radio transmitters on the expedition ship.

No, there was some other reason. It was strange.

Just how strange it was, no one had any idea at the beginning of the thing.

William Harper Littlejohn happened to be one of the 5 men associated with that remarkable *Man of Mystery* - **Doc Savage**.

Word of his disappearance reached Doc Savage at his New York **Headquarters**. Doc acted promptly.

Two of Doc Savage's aides (he had 5 of them altogether) were on a vacation cruise in the yacht *Seven Seas* which chanced to be off the coast of Panama in the Pacific. Also aboard the yacht was **Patricia Savage**, a remarkable young woman whose relationship to Doc Savage was that of cousin. Pat had gone along for the trip, she claimed.



( <http://www.hotlegsinline.com/AnnaXXX.htm> )



But it was to be suspected that she was also looking for *Excitement!*

*If she was looking for excitement, she was certainly destined to find it!*

Doc Savage -- *Man of Bronze*, Individual of Mystery, Mental Wizard, and Physical Marvel to quote the newspapers -- sent a radiogram to the yacht *Seven Seas* headed for the Galapagos to look for William Harper Littlejohn (who was better known as 'Johnny') and his expedition.

**The *Seven Seas* was now about to slam headlong into more trouble than those aboard would ever have believed possible.**

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The *Seven Seas* was riding a radio beam radiated from the Panama Canal Zone by special courtesy on the part of the powerful United States Naval radio station. This beam simplified navigation and they were riding it straight for the Galapagos.

Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks stood on the dripping deck of the *Seven Seas* and stared into an immensity of black sky and blacker water. Occasionally he scowled anxiously upward at the radio rigging. Water slapped and *phosphoresced* around the bow.

Right now, the yacht was rolling in a huge ground swell, rolling alarmingly. Rivets strained and bulkheads creaked. There was at least half a gale blowing. It made noises in the rigging like the sighs of dying men.

Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks was commonly called 'Ham'. It was a nickname which he did not like. He now frowned darkly and made his way to the pitching bridge.

"This is dangerous!" he snapped. "We may run onto a reef any minute."

"Don't I know it!" a surprisingly child-like voice retorted from the semidarkness of the bridge. "This ground swell is bad. Mighty bad! When it piles up like this, it means the water is getting shallow."

Ham snapped: "But I thought you said ... "

"Something screwy," piped the child-like voice. "According to your log, we're supposed to have more than a hundred miles between us and the nearest land."

A young woman joined them on the bridge. She was a very striking young woman to look at, having not only a lovely face but also hair of a very unusual *bronze* color and *eyes* which actually looked *golden*. She was Patricia Savage and she loved *Excitement*.

"I wish you'd ask your old ocean to behave," she requested cheerfully. "I've been thrown out of my bunk 3 times in the last 15 minutes. I gave it up."

"Something is wrong, Pat," Ham told her. "We're getting into a big ground swell. That means we are near land or at least in shoal water. And that is very much impossible!"

Pat walked over to the second man on the bridge. "Just what is the trouble, Monk?" she asked.



The man addressed as 'Monk' sat in the shadows hunched like a bulky Buddha over an audio-frequency amplifier. His thick hands indicated the apparatus containing vacuum tubes for increasing the voltage and power of radio beacon signals.

"These direction-finding doo-dads have gone plain haywire!" he insisted in that small squeaky voice.

Ham joined them and listened to the signal pulsations coming from the loudspeaker.

He said: "The beat frequency is sounding just as it should. We are certainly not off the course as broadcast to us from the Government radio beacon in the Canal Zone."

"We're right in the beam all right," Monk grunted. "The 'A' wave is jammed with the 'N' waves so you don't hear any dots. Just a blur of dashes. We can't be off our course. But we must be!"

"Impossible!" snapped Ham. "Our goniometer with its new type amplifier developed by Doc Savage himself insures that the direction-finder couldn't go wrong. And the United States Government station is transmitting the beam to us."

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*The word exchange had the rather unexpected effect of throwing Monk into what looked like a very violent rage.*

"You tellin' me, you courtroom fop?" Monk growled belligerently at Ham.

"Don't get tough with me, you missing link!" Ham snapped. "I'll make shark bait out of you."

Monk pushed back from the radio apparatus and squared off threateningly before Ham.

"Who says I'm wrong?" he demanded in a voice no longer mouse-like.

"I did, you ape!" Ham snapped.

"You're a liar besides bein' a shyster lawyer," Monk bellowed. "I'm right! And you know darned well that I'm right!"

Pat said dryly: "I wonder if either of you know what you're quarreling over."

The 2 men pretended not to hear.

*Ham and Monk seemed always on the point of taking each other apart violently. The mildest word from one was likely to set the other off in a rage. But it was only on rare occasions that their enmity extended beyond the talking stage.*

Patricia Savage cast an idle glance around the horizon. She started violently!

"Look!" she cried. "Ahead there ... a bit to port. **Green** and **red** lights!"

"Huh?" Monk jerked around. "That sounds like channel lights."

Ham stared intently, forgot himself and his feud with Monk.



"Channel lights they are. But they were not there a minute ago."

Monk's small eyes <blinked> rapidly. "It ain't possible."

"Some mistake," Ham muttered. "No lights are indicated on the chart."

Pat pointed at them and said "There they are!" with inescapable feminine logic.

Ham and Monk crowded forward for another inspection of the charts.

They offered a strange contrast in appearance, these 2 men. Ham was meticulously attired in a blue marine uniform and a blue cap with its insignia in gold set jauntily on his head. He carried a slender black cane. He was handsome, lithe, and wore his clothes like a fashion plate.

On the contrary, Monk wore a not-too-white pair of duck pants. They wrinkled across the thighs and bagged at the knees. An enormous green-and-white-striped undershirt fitted around his barrel chest like a circus tent slipped on over an elephant. **Rusty** hair stuck out on his bullet-like head like mashed bristles on a wire brush. The hair grew low down on his forehead, half burying his ears, almost meeting his scrubby eyebrows. His homely face was mostly mouth and flat nose. His body was nearly as wide as it was long and his fists hung down almost to his knees. In fact, he did not look like a man. He resembled an amiable ape.

It was a mistake to judge either of these two by appearances. Ham was no fop. He was one of the most astute lawyers that Harvard had ever turned out. And Monk -- as Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Biodgett Mayfair -- was recognized as one of the greatest living industrial chemists.

The greatest claim to distinction of these 2 men, however, was that they were members of **Doc Savage's** group of 5 remarkable aides. That alone made them unusual for each of the **Bronze Man's** assistants was a master of some particular profession.

Pat went over now and disconnected the robot control which had been steering the ship.

"Shall I hold to the channel lights?" she asked, swinging the wheel slightly over.

"I don't like this," Ham said, uneasily. "There should be no harbor at all near us, least of all a lighted harbor. Even a lighted channel. But there is nothing else to do."

"Why not?" Monk demanded. "We don't have to go in that channel, do we? If there is a channel ..."

Ham snapped: "It's worth investigating. That is what I mean!"

*It looked as if their perpetual quarrel were going to break out again.*

Pat solved the problem by turning the *Seven Seas* toward the channel markers.

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The yacht was caught in a choppy cross-current now. The wind was rising. It no longer sighed like men at *Death's* door. It wailed and **howled**.



Ham went to the end of the bridge and clung to the railing to keep from being pitched off the violently tilting craft into the boil of black water around them. In spite of the wind, the night was oppressive and muggy with a faint sulfurous smell.

Suddenly a *flickering* glow -- as of sheet **lightning** -- sprang into life, tinging the low-hanging clouds.

Ham made a mistake. He dismissed it at first as ordinary lightning.

Then he saw that there was something different about these luminous flashes. They were *weird*, unearthly. They stained the low-hanging clouds a **bloody red**.

Ham heard a rasped breath behind him and was startled into whirling. It was Monk.

**"Red lightnin'!"** Monk uttered, hanging on against the fetid, sulfurous wind at the deck tip. "That's funny-lookin', ain't it?"

Again the gory **light** mushroomed out under the clouds. It was more sustained -- brighter this time -- and it showed them things. Off to one side bulked a shoreline.

But this did not strike them with terror. Pat called attention to the thing that did.

"Look!" she screamed. "*Look! All around us!*"

"Hard alee!" Monk squalled. "Engines reversed!"

The fantastic **red light** went out.

"Did you see?" Ham gasped in the silence that followed. "There must be 2 dozen ships -- big and little -- wrecked all around us!"

"And the *Devil* only knows where we are," Monk gulped. "I'm gonna back this boat, turn around, get outta here, an' wait for daylight."

**"A whole graveyard of wrecked ships!"** Pat gasped. **"And red lightning that smells of sulfur!"**

Pat's voice sounded, it seemed, rather cheerful.

"You always did like trouble, didn't you?" Monk grunted at her.

"And mystery," Pat added. "I eat it up!"

There must have been a tide that carried the *Seven Seas* to one side. Or some thing. They were in reverse, exactly retracing the course they had been sailing when it happened.

A curling wave lifted the bow of the *Seven Seas* high in the water and hurled it down. The yacht shuddered with a wrenching shock that knocked Monk and Ham sprawling on the wet deck. There was a nightmare of grinding and scrapings as steel plates were wrenched from the hull by jagged coral.

Caught fast on the submerged reef, the craft did not rise with the next wave. She heeled half over instead with a groaning of tortured steel. The wave washed in an avalanche of water over the deck.



Ham and Monk were battered against the anchor winch. They staggered up half-drowned to claw their way toward the bridge.

"Aid Pat if she needs it!" Monk bellowed. "Me, I'm goin' for Habeas Corpus!"

'Habeas Corpus' was Monk's cherished pet pig. He never went anywhere without the animal -- much to Ham's disgust and frequent infuriation.

A streak of blue-white **light** darted from the *Seven Sea's* bridge and knifed across the rock-fanged water.

"Turn that searchlight off!" Ham shouted to Pat as he went down again under a drenching cross-wave.

"It'll help us see to swim ashore," Pat protested.

"It'll draw sharks!" Ham snapped as he caught the life preserver Pat threw him.

"So you're afraid of sharks?" Pat said.

But she switched off the searchlight and joined Ham at the submerged rail. Monk appeared on deck an instant later with the squealing, kicking armful of razorback hog that was Habeas Corpus.

Habeas had a snout like a wood-rasp, flopping coal-scuttle ears, and long ungainly legs. The special life preserver which Monk had previously fashioned for Habeas did not improve his appearance. It added to his buoyancy, however.

Monk jumped into the water with the wet pig.

"That hog'll draw sharks!" Ham yelled.

"Habeas -- he fights sharks!" Monk roared back. "*Come on!*"

-----

Pat and Ham went overboard with Ham still holding tightly to his slim black cane which was almost as much a part of him as his shirt.

The cane was in reality a formidable weapon -- a sword cane. Its innocent-appearing exterior sheathed a length of gleaming steel, the point of which had been impregnated with a chemical capable of producing almost instant unconsciousness.

Under the **red lightning** glare, surf on all sides broke against hidden reefs, churning the water to a bloody froth.

But Pat and Ham came through the barrage of wave-dashed rocks and reeled half-drowned and gasping onto a mangrove-studded beach. Monk swashed ashore close behind them, holding the squirming Habeas Corpus under an arm with difficulty.

"That hog'll kick a rib out for you someday," Ham warned, breathing hard.



"Lay off Habeas Corpus," Monk gasped, "or I'll be kickin' out some ribs on my own account."

The **red luminance** bloomed again against the clouds. It crawled and writhed, disappeared, and blanketed out again like a bloody **mist** floating in air.

"What is it?" Pat demanded, shivering in spite of the sultry night.

"Nothing *supernatural*," Ham explained. "You notice the color on the clouds does not seep through from above. The light is reflected from underneath ... "

"There's an **active volcano** somewhere on the island," Monk summed up.

Pat pressed water out of her drenched hair. "Do you suppose here's where Johnny is?"

"We'll have to find out," Ham said, grimly.

"One thing I'd like to clear myself on," Pat said earnestly. "The shipwreck. I was holding dead in the middle of the channel when it happened."

"Yeah," Monk agreed. "It wasn't your fault."

"This shipwreck was arranged," Ham said ominously.

"Someone on this island set those lights so we'd run slam on the reef, you mean?" Monk muttered.

Ham said soberly: "Someone drew us a hundred miles off our course and wrecked us. We're up against something really *sinister*!"

"Kinda wish Doc was here," Monk announced.

*The next moment, he was wishing it even more violently.*

Attracted perhaps by the blue-white **searchlight** beam which had lanced out from the *Seven Seas* a moment after she had gone on the rocks, shadowy man-figures loosened from the darkly entwined mangrove thicket and bore down upon the castaways, brandishing short clubs and shrieking a harsh unintelligible gibberish.

*Coming up later ...*



## II -- Island of Horror

The dimly-seen attackers -- 20-or-more -- rushed out of the mangroves in a solid wave.

Ham and Monk thrust Pat behind, then met the attack -- Ham with his sword cane and Monk with his granite-knuckled fists.

Ham dropped two of the assailants with deft thrusts of the sword cane. He was careful not to allow the valuable cane tipped with the unconsciousness-producing chemical to be struck. In fact, Ham was more regardful of the cane than of himself.

Unexpectedly, there was an ugly-sounding *whack!*

Ham staggered back groggily from a club which had bludgeoned past his guard. Dazedly, he saw the club lift again.

But it did not descend. Not with any weight behind it.

There was a rap of knuckles against a jaw as Monk's long arm jabbed out and knocked the club-swinging off his feet.

Ham recovered his balance and got his deadly sword cane into use again.

"*Let's charge 'em!*" Monk squawled.

"Right-o!" Ham agreed. "We'll try to break through into the mangroves!"

Side-by-side, they advanced into a rain of clubs -- Monk's pummeling fists working like locomotive driving rods, Ham's sword cane darting in-and-out like an aroused snake.

Pressing forward behind them, Pat scooped up rocks from the beach and threw them as fast as she could. Even Habeas Corpus did his part, squealing and grunting and gouging his sharp tusks into every foot and ankle that came within reach of his wood-rasp snout.

The varied strategy was too much for the attackers. They thought Ham's sword cane was dealing out death. They broke suddenly with *hideous* yells to go crashing away and disappear in the black recesses of the mangrove sink.

Monk picked up Habeas Corpus and swung him lustily by the long ears, much to the pig's squealing delight.

Monk grinned. The *action* lighted up his unbelievably homely face, making it very pleasant to look at.

There was a little light now from the stars. Ham was making a quick examination of the anesthetized victims of his sword cane.

They were of different races and colors. And all wore loin cloths. Their necks were encircled with copper-studded collars made seemingly out of lizard hide.



A great blast of *noise* riveted Ham's attention. But it was only Monk laughing.

"What's the matter, you hairy ape?" Ham demanded, suspiciously.

"I was thinkin' how you would look in the costume of the country: a loin cloth and a dog collar."

Ham bristled and gripped his sword cane tighter.

"You wide-mouthed macaw ... " he began.

Pat silenced him with tight-lipped words.

"If you want more fighting, save your strength," she said. **"They're coming back!"**

-----

A loud "*plud*" sounded in the wet sand near Ham's feet.

In a second, the air was filled with heavy missiles. Habeas Corpus *squealed!*

"They're heaving rocks!" Ham shouted.

"They can throw more rocks than we can," Monk growled. "Let's get outta here."

Monk tucked one of the short thick clubs under his arm, grabbed up Habeas Corpus by the ears, and lunged into the shadowed thicket. Pat and Ham followed closely.

Pressing through the mangrove sink, they came out upon a height of land that was nothing if not *weird*.

Volcanic rock -- black lava sharp as broken glass -- swallowed them up in a welter of fantastically shaped hills and gullies. Much of the razor-edged glass was in tilted sheets which were prone to slip and shatter under the weight of a footfall. Giant cactuses rooted in the crevices and dangled their spiny pads overhead like hooded cobras ready to strike.

They lost all sounds of pursuit.

The low-raking clouds lifted and the three pressed on under the pale white light of Equatorial stars.

"I hope we get somewhere quick," Pat said, appalled.

"They speak of the Galapagos archipelago as the 'World's End'," Ham remarked.

"They don't miss it much," Monk grumbled. "How we're goin' to find Johnny in this volcanic scrap heap, I dunno."

"Did either of you get the impression," Pat asked suddenly, "that our League-of-Nations attackers were being careful not to kill us?"

"Yeah," Monk admitted. "Even those rocks were not thrown too hard."

"They wanted us alive, I guess," Ham supplied.

"My guess, too. But why?"

"That's anybody's guess."

"We could sure use **Doc Savage** about now!"

*Climbing higher up the glassy slope, they passed through a belt of cold volcanic pits and cones where ages before the molten rock had bubbled like mush and cooled in scabrous pockmarks.*

*They came out on a wide plateau where nothing grew -- not even the cobra-head cactus -- and where the pits were smaller, clogged with earth, and so close together that it was necessary to skirt the region to make any forward progress.*

Monk stopped suddenly.

"These pits are all in geometric order," he declared. "They're not volcanic pits like the ones below. They're man-made."

Ham stared. On the plain, the glassy rock had given way to a kind of reddish clay or hard-packed volcanic ash.

"Right," he clipped. "The pits are crumbling away now and mostly buried under loose earth. Hard to tell, but they must have been laid out originally with the regularity of cells in a honeycomb."

*As they continued on, the **honeycomb** pattern became more apparent as the pits were revealed in a less crumbling condition.*

"These were dug later," Ham observed.

"Yeah," Monk agreed. "The farther we go, the fresher the pits look."

"Rut what are they for?" Pat wondered. "Say! this all gets weirder and weirder. What's it all about?"

-----  
"Listen!" Ham said tensely.

Wafted on the miasmatic breeze came sharp, **cracking** sounds. There was unearthliness about the sounds as though they sprang from the air of their own volition.

"What is it?" Pat asked uneasily.

"No animal ever made a sound like that," Monk blurted.

**Suddenly through and above the cracking sounds came a long-drawn wail which quavered up-and-down the scale in agony so appalling that a trickle of icy water seemed to be loosened on the back of each of the 3 listeners.**

Pat gasped: "I never heard anything like it. *Horrible!*"



"A dying animal of some kind," Ham said.

"Dying man," Monk corrected grimly.

"Come on!" Ham said, gripping his sword cane.

As they pressed forward, the pits in the rock-like ash actually became as sharply delineated as the cells in a **honeycomb**.

A giant honeycomb! These pits were about 10 feet in diameter and some 10 feet where they were not filled with loose earth. The mysterious *cracking* noises sounded louder.

"Ahead there!" Ham rapped under his breath. "Look!"

"Shadows!" Pat gasped. "Like men moving!"

The three worked closer, holding to the concealment of the fringing thicket.

White-pointed thorns tore at them, viciously shredding their clothes and piercing flesh. But they succeeded in approaching opposite the place where the shadows moved and from where the *cracking-cutting* noises issued.

Here the plain stretched on. But the advancing line of pits came to an end.

They crouched down, watching. Stars dripped pale light.

Suddenly a close, bulking mountain disgorged a **red glare** into the sky. **Bathed in the baleful light of volcanic fires, huge muscled men could be seen moving ceaselessly up-and-down at the edge of the honeycombed ground.**

The men were clothed as those others had been. In loin cloths and leather collars. They carried long whips which they swung over their heads and cracked down into the row of pits.

*Hideous* groans and jabberings issued from the unseen depths of the pits. The whip-crackers -- their half-naked bodies in the **red volcanic glare** sleek with glistening sweat -- looked like *Satanic* apparitions come to Earth.

"Back on the yacht I said maybe we were headed for Hell," Monk muttered. "Now I know it!"

"The *cracking* noises we heard were from the whips," Ham observed.

"What's in the pits, I wonder?" Pat asked, in a hushed tone.

Monk was already edging forward, crawling on his stomach.

"Hold Habeas Corpus," he whispered back. "I'll find out."

"Blast your hog!" Ham complained.

But Ham held the pig.

As he muscled to a position where he could look down into the pits, Monk gasped with grim surprise.

In every one of the circular holes as far as he could see down the long line, stakes were driven. And to the stakes were attached chains. And to the end of the chains were fastened men.

There was one man with a shovel in each pit, digging. The diggers wore loin cloths only, lacking the lizard-leather collars worn by the whip-cracking overseers. These collars, Monk correctly assumed, to be emblems of authority.

Each of the pit-men was digging a hole of a circumference allowed by the length of his chain. Extending across the plain in a straight line, the holes were of uniform width. About 10 feet.

**Under the lash of the whips in the hellish red volcano glare, the chained men were actually digging their way to death!**

-----

Suddenly from behind Monk sounded a fast thudding on the hard packed ground.

Something thrust hard against his back as he swerved around. A shrill *squeal* sounded.

Monk clamped his huge hands over Habeas Corpus's snout to smother the affectionate squeals of the pig which had burst away from Ham and had run straight to Monk.

He throttled the squeals. *But the damage was already done.*

Whip-cracking overseers jabbered sharply at each other and clumped forward to investigate the disturbance.

Monk's squat bulk reared upward. Brandishing his stout club, he lunged forward to meet the attack of the nearest man.

But before Monk could close in, a deadly *swish* sounded.

Monk's enemy was still 6-or-8 paces away. But Monk felt his knees gripped as though by iron hands, jerked tightly together, and pulled out from under him.

He fell, striking the ground with stunning force!

Monk knew what had thrown him. His hands raked down to jerk away the lead-tipped thong which had whipped out of the night murk and entwined his legs.

Before he could free himself, his assailant was standing over him with the weighted whip handle raised high to crash against Monk's head.

Ham's sword cane slithered in that instant, dropped the overseer, and saved Monk from the blow.

But another whip *swished* out of the night ... wrapped around Ham's legs ... and hurled him to the ground on top of Monk.



***Clubs battered them both to unconsciousness before they could claw free from the knee-binding thongs!***

-----

When they came to a few minutes later, they found themselves bound and lying on the ground at the edge of the line of pits.

Ham focused his groggy glance at the nearest pit worker. The man had sunk his hole about 5 feet down so that his face was practically on ground level. That pain-racked face was almost within hand's reach of Ham.

Ham started violently! In a **red volcanic flare**, he had recognized the man as being one of the members of Johnny's expedition.

"Tony!" Ham whispered hoarsely.

A shudder went over the man as his crazed eyes turned to Ham's. His lips widened in startled recognition.

But he said nothing and kept on digging.

Ham shot a quick glance around and saw that the nearest overseer was intently engaged in a bullying cross-examination of Pat. Ham squirmed close to the edge of the hole so that his lips were almost at the digger's ear.

"Where's the rest of the ship's crew? And Johnny?" he whispered.

"Crew is in the pits diggin'," the man answered in a kind of wrenching sob.

"Where's Johnny? Is he alive?" Ham hung on the answer fearfully.

"Alive ... But he won't be for long."

"Where is he?"

"A big guy with a black beard took him away. I don't know where. I only know they're gonna kill Johnny. ***They're gonna kill all of us!***"

The man's voice rose to *hysterical* rasp.

"Don't talk so loud," Ham cautioned fiercely. "What have we got into here? Tell me what you know. Quick! While we've got the chance."

"I can't tell you ... But I can ... "

Then the man's voice rose in a choking shriek, out of all control now.

***It was an insane shriek!***

Plainly, the fellow had broken under the tortures he had endured.

---

Whatever it was he meant to tell -- or not to tell -- Ham remained forever untold.

The overseer rushed forward mouthing unintelligible curses. His arm reared up and down.

The leaded whip handle struck with gruesome thump against the crazed man's head! It was a blow heavy enough to have dropped anything alive.

But the man in the pit was not exactly alive now. He was a raving madman, mercifully removed from all consciousness of pain. His whitish eyes rolled madly. **Crimson** foam bubbled from his lips.

The leaded whip handle descended again. This time the man slumped, a slack weight in the pit.

**He was dead before his body hit the bottom.**

The overseer (he was some unidentifiable Asiatic type) bawled orders in harsh gibberish.

2 guards shoved forward. One was a giant brown-skinned man; the other a paunchy Caucasian of indeterminate race.

The brown man bent and commenced ripping the thongs from Ham's hands and feet. The other guard jumped heavily down, unlocked the iron cuff from the dead man's leg, and heaved the limp body out of the pit.

The guard on top grunted and pushed Ham roughly over the edge. Ham fell sprawling.

The guard in the pit was ready for him. He jangled the chain against the stake, grabbed Ham by the foot, and slapped on the iron cuff still warm from the dead man's leg.

He picked up the dead man's shovel and thrust it into Ham's hands.

The overseer above cracked down with the whip! A thick welt bloomed on Ham's cheek.

He started digging.

Overseers herded Monk a short distance down the line of horror holes and put him similarly to work.

*Coming next ...*





### III -- Prisoners of the Pits

Pat experienced a somewhat different fate from that of the 2 men.

She was consigned to one of the pits. But though she was chained to the stake, she was not whipped nor was she compelled to dig.

She was greatly relieved at this concession to her womanhood until -- cutting through the harsh medley of groans, whip-cracks, and guttural cries -- she heard the close voices of 2 guards conversing in English.

"Make her dig."

"No. The Count will surely order her to be brought to the Palace. He will not want her worn out from digging."

"But she could well stand a little bit of whipping."

"No," the other protested. "In this case, the Count will prefer to do his own whipping."

"Maybe you're right" the overseer growled and moved away down the line of pits.

XX

Then he came back with a new idea.

"If she is not going to dig, maybe we can find another use for her," he suggested.



The overseer replied: "What sort of use?"

The guard rubbed his **crotch** in a menacing gesture and grinned evilly.



"Maybe so. Maybe so," said the overseer. "But we will need some help. Get those slaves out of their pit. Those FAT ones."

Some nearly naked and quite sweaty overweight men were allowed to exit their confines. They conferred with the overseer and then accompanied him and the guard to the pit where Pat was. All of them had strange hard looks on their faces. And all of them were now fully naked with enlarged erect **penises**.



They climbed down into the pit to face Pat who was shrinking away. Her clothes had dried under the hot Sun and were revealingly tight on her. Especially her cotton top which had shrunk around her **full 34-D perky breasts**. It was a midriff top and her thin 22-inch waist was exposed. Her long **bronze** legs trailed down a brief pair of denim shorts.



"What do you want with me?" Pat said in mounting terror.

"Everyone here has to be of some use, baby. Since you don't want to dig, we've found a good use for you."



"I'll dig! I'll dig!" Pat yelled.

"Maybe later. If you feel up to it. Which I don't think you will," the overseer replied mockingly. "Go to work, boys. Make her hate it so she won't refuse work the next time."

They moved in on her ...



She couldn't run anywhere. She was in a small circular pit with walls too high to climb without a ladder. She was trapped!





The overseer and guard watched as the 3 fat sweaty men grabbed the slender **bronze** beauty and started taking off her skimpy tight clothes. Fat swollen lips roamed across her **plump pouty lips** as probing fingers began exploring her amazing body while the last of her clothes fell off.



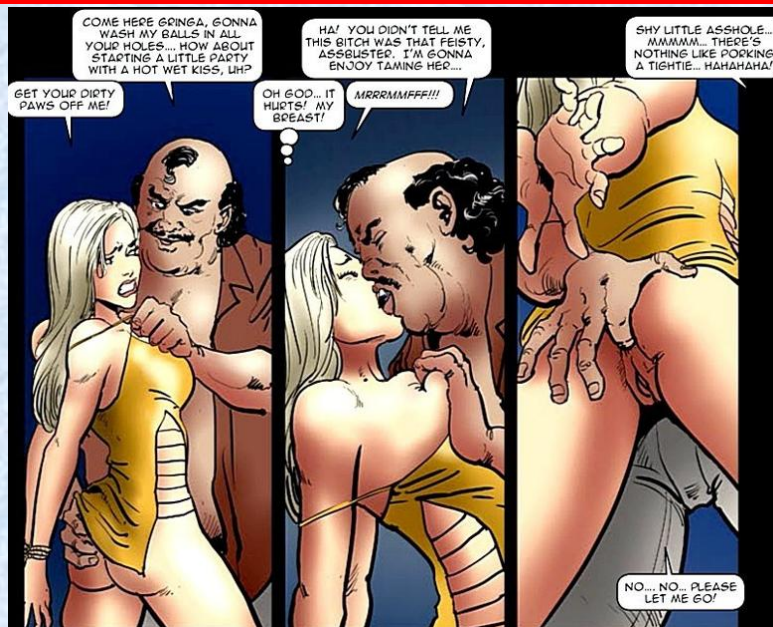




Her cries of protest were muffled by lots of sloppy wet **kissing**. And even as that was occurring, other mouths found their way to her defiant **breasts** and began sucking and biting on those. Pat only groaned as she felt little "sucker-bites" implanted on those breasts as well as her neck.







Her arms and legs were flailing in the air as they dumped her down on the hard rocky ground and layed on top of her. One of the others held her arms out wide and the other spread her long slender legs.



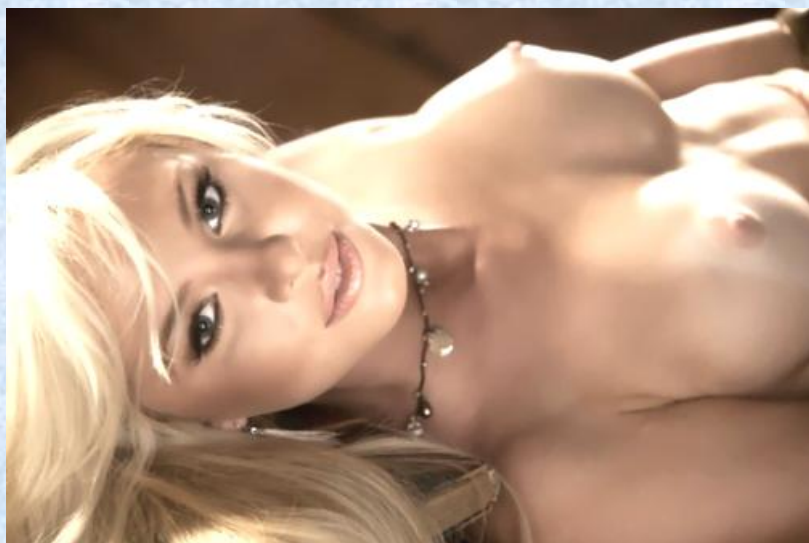


The fat greasy one on top held her pretty head in his hands so she couldn't avoid the look in his eyes with what soon followed.

*In her pursuit of Adventure with Doc Savage's group, Pat had unfortunately been raped and gang-banged many times. So she was not technically a "virgin", her hymen having been torn when she was barely out of her teenage years (see "**Brand of the Werewolf**" #011XXX).*



Still, she had some remarkable ability for her body to heal itself. In doing so, any vaginal or rectal passageways that had been brutally stretched-out had quickly returned to their original tightness. For all practical purposes as far as the pain and bleeding went, she was still a "virgin".





And then it quickly happened. A long thick penis was brutally **rammed** up into her tight crotch! *Oh how that HURT!*



"*You bastard!*" she whimpered as he began unsympathetically stroking it in-and-out. Her terrified eyes met his cold stare as he **plunged** away in her womb.



Every so often he would lower his head to give her a slobbery fat kiss. This was not to give her any endearment but rather to keep up his **lust** as he was getting nearer to **ejaculation**.











Then he *came!* Like a volcano! It felt like an earthquake to him as he emptied both of his genitals up into her quivering vagina.

"*Uuuggghhhhh!!!!*" she groaned as she felt the *squishy* onslaught inside.







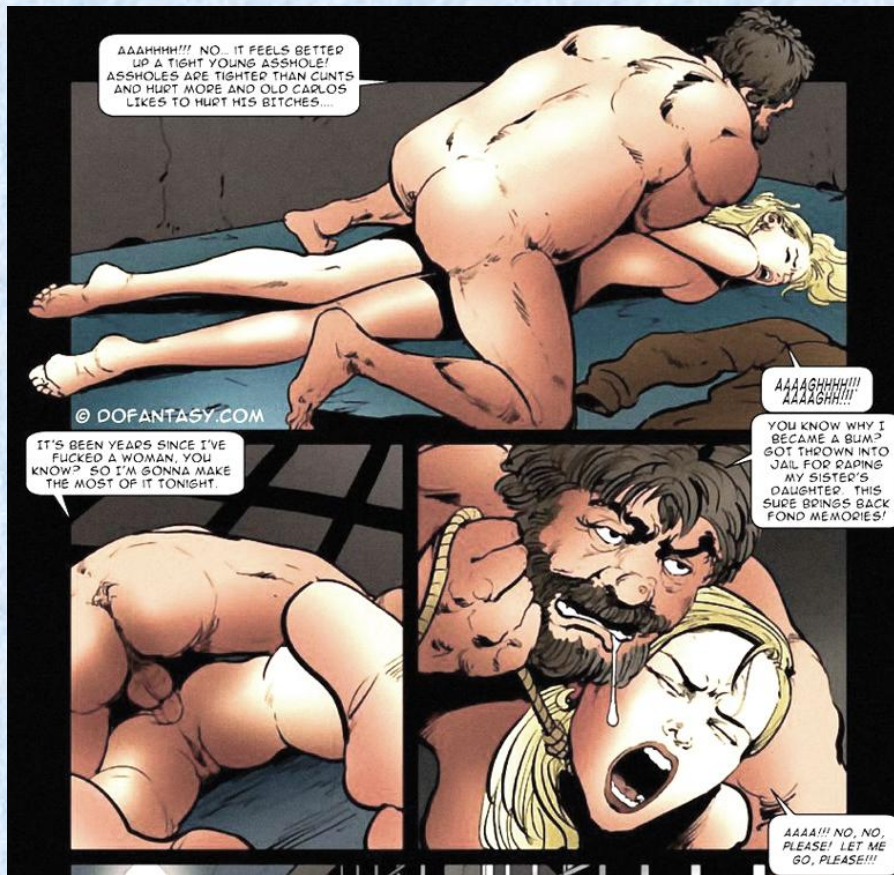
He pulled out of her a limp and exhausted man.

But she couldn't rest because his 2 companions took up where he left off. **With Gusto!**



One of them didn't mind "sloppy seconds" and proceeded to implant his very thick organ in her vagina. She was turned a little on her side which let the other one have access to her buttocks. Which he did by impaling her up her anus with his slender shaft.



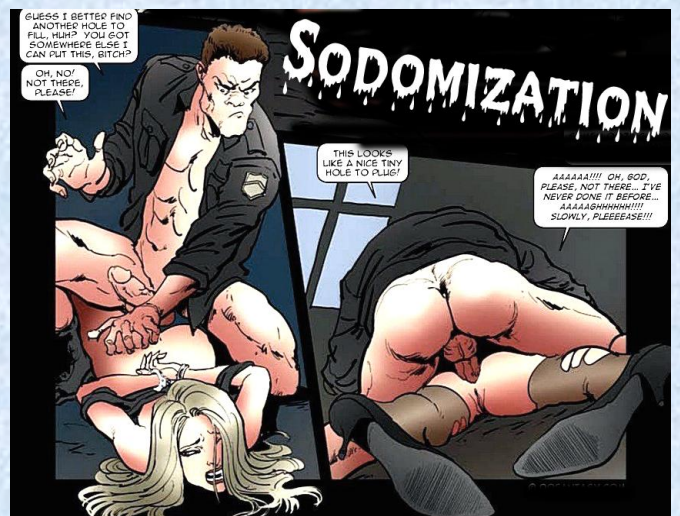


Two men *pounded* away in her 2 most sensitive orifices. *She was in pain!!!*

But they didn't care as long as they were going to be allowed to fill this beautiful feisty woman up with their *slime*. It took them a good 30 minutes to do it.

But when they did finally "cum", it was a **tremendous effort!**







*Goopy sticky **semen** oozed out of her crotch and butt to collect on the stony ground and crystallize on her well-toned **bronze** thighs. Pat was in a state of *whimpering* shock.*





*In a Parallel Universe ...*



Another guard then bent close over the edge of the hole. Pat shrank back.

All at once, the pulse throbbed violently in her wrists and in her *golden eyes* sprang a look of desperate hope.

She was recognizing this guard. He was another member of the expedition that had disappeared with Johnny.

"Aren't you ... " she started to suggest.

"Al Fredrickton, First Mate," he supplied.

"But you ... And that whip!"

"I have to whip to keep from being whipped," he whispered savagely. "I'm on top today. Tomorrow they may yank the collar off my neck and pitch me in a hole. I'm just as much a prisoner as these poor devils digging."

"But what is it all about?" Pat questioned.

"I don't know any more about it than you do. I only know that men dig and die."

"*Dig and die ...*" she echoed starkly. "What about Johnny?"

"He was taken to the palace. He may be alive. Listen! ... 33 Redbeach Road, Long Island. Can you remember that?"

"33 Redbeach Road ... I've got it."

"Boris Ramadanoff at that address."

"I've got it. What about it?"

The man's breath came faster.

"You're our only hope," he rasped. "They'll take you to the Palace. Try to contact Johnny. Tell him the name and address. There's a powerful shortwave radio sending set at the palace. Johnny must get a message to Doc Savage. Tell Doc Savage to contact Boris Ramadanoff."

"Yes. But what good will that do?"

"Ramadanoff can tell Doc Savage all he needs to know to effect our rescue. Ramadanoff is the brother of the Big-Shot here on the island. They quarreled, the two brothers. And Boris left for New York."

"How did you find out all this?"

"After our ship followed in the false harbor lights and was wrecked, we were taken prisoners. The steward and I were retained to work in the Palace kitchen. The steward heard the brothers quarreling. He learned Boris's new address and passed it on to me."

"Where is the steward?" Pat asked.

"Dead!" said the man. "They suspected he knew something. They killed him."

Pat shuddered. "Life isn't worth much here, is it?"

-----  
*Something happened the next moment to demonstrate anew the fiendish ruthlessness of the **Sinister Genius** in control of this island.*

A drumming beat sounded against the ground and a huge horse -- ridden hard -- snorted to a stiff-legged stop in front of the line of working pits. The horse was a quivering black shadow under the wan starlight. The rider was a shadow proportionately huge and black.



With virulent curses, the rider urged the plunging horse in among the cowering overseers. He leaned far out of his saddle, cracking heads right-and-left with a fearful instrument -- a knout, fashioned somewhat on the order of those used in Imperial Russia.

Again-and-again the knout descended, its woven leather thongs reinforced with wire and hardened by a rosin treatment biting down deeply and forcing agonized yells!

One of the guards showed fight. He dodged the blow of the knout, flung in close against the plunging horse, and reached up to pull the horseman from the saddle.

The man in the saddle only laughed a raw ghoulish clacking ... pulled a revolver from holster ... **and shot the guard dead.**

The horseman kept laughing and driving bullets into the guard's body even after the fellow was slumped in a still, dead heap on the ground.

After that, no one offered resistance.

The horseman raised his voice in a bawled order. Guards scurried frenziedly into the pits where Monk, Ham, and Pat were shackled. They unlocked the leg irons and motioned for the captives to climb out of their holes.

The three were brought before the man on the horse. The man spoke in precise English. *His voice was suavely sinister.*

He said: "It was a stupid blunder of my slaves to chain you to the pits. It is only the Asiatic immigrant ships sailing to South America that I intercept for my pit laborers. Those and occasional Ecuadorian fishermen, guano and moss hunters. When upon rare occasions a yacht comes this way, its occupants are received as welcome guests."

"How does a 'guest' get off this island after his ship is wrecked?" Ham asked dryly.

"My dear General Brooks" came the precise voice from the darkly-bulking figure on the horse. "None have ever gotten off."

*"This lug knows who we are!"* Monk muttered.

Then aloud, he said: "They're all on here now? The 'guests'?"

"They are, my dear Colonel Mayfair. Though a bit unrecognizable, some of them."

"Doubtless you have reference to Professor Littlejohn," the other murmured.

"He is quite recognizable. I shall take you to him. But first permit me to introduce myself. I am **Count Alexander Ramadanoff.**"

Turning to the guards, the Count barked an order.

Men padded forward with peculiar contrivances, resembling wicker hammocks. They deposited the litters on the ground and stood a little back.



The Count's hand waved out. His sardonic voice sounded.

"There is one for each of you. Recline and I will conduct you in state to the Palace."

Monk hooted: "No hospital cot for mine. I'll walk!"

"Recline," the Count ordered again and the knout swung menacingly in his hand.

They took their places on the wicker litters -- Monk grumbling, Ham doubtful, and Pat frankly grateful for the convenience.

"Hey!" Monk blurted. "We're forgettin' Habeas Corpus."

"You have reference to the trained Arabian pig?" the Count questioned with suave politeness.

"You know everything, don't you?" Monk growled. "Yeah, I mean my pig."

Count Ramadanoff exchanged a few guttural phrases with the overseers, then addressed Monk.

"The pig must have escaped into the jungle. He will find company more to his liking there. Wild swine overrun this island."

Ham said: "Well anyhow, we've seen the last of that hog."

Monk glowered at Ham. "It's your fault, shyster! You let him go."

"If it wasn't for you and your pesky pig, we wouldn't be in this fix," Ham retorted.

Count Ramadanoff cut short their quarrel by ordering the litter bearers to proceed. Through a narrow path hacked in the vine-matted jungle growth, they jogged along with the Count on his horse bringing up the rear.

They came out on a strip of rocky coastline and the "guests" stared with astonishment.

"Blazes!" Monk gulped. "Blazes! *Look!*"

---

Rising sheer washed by ocean spray on one side and bathed in the **blood-red** glare of volcanic light on the other, a Palace of medieval Slavic type flung its black rock turrets high above the jungle growth.

Through a drawbridge in the bastioned wall of 20-foot thick volcanic rock, they entered the bleak Palace courtyard. The drawbridge swung ponderously closed behind them.

Pat shivered. *She felt as though she was locked out of the World.*

"An army couldn't get through these walls," Ham reflected uneasily.

"Some joint!" Monk mumbled.



Past the high buttressed towers the "guests" were carried and deposited in front of a low-arched doorway. The Count dismounted from his black horse and waved them inside.

"Some joint is right!" Monk said emphatically as he stopped inside the stone threshold and stared around.

The room was huge, high-vaulted. An oppressive cavern of black volcanic rock and wooden beams. Demoniactal *blue flames* leaped within a fireplace large enough to have engulfed a whole ox for roasting.

The fire shadows swooped on long curtains of somber **ruby red** which hung on brass hoops. **Silver** samovars glowed dully from shadowed recesses. Ancient icons looked down from the walls.

The only modern touch in the whole vast room was a grand piano draped with costly sea otter furs and brightly illuminated by crystal spangled candelabras which shed a yellow light from high overhead.

Count Ramadanoff indicated ornately gilded, **ruby**-plush chairs.

"Sit there before the fire," he invited, "while your chambers are being prepared."

In the light, the Count was revealed as a magnificently proportioned man. Broad-shouldered, muscled, and well over 6 feet in height. He was dressed in black-black riding boots, black breeches, black coat, black satin string tie. His 'Czar-of-Russia' beard was black, too. And his black eyes smoldered with a *sinister* light which it was impossible for him to conceal.

Pat sat on the edge of her high-backed chair and mentally chewed her fingernails. There had been no opportunity for her to divulge to Monk or Ham the information she had learned regarding the New York address of the Count's brother.

Monk pawed at his barge-like jaw. "Where's all the other 'guests' you mentioned?"

"Where's Johnny?" Ham rapped.

Pat also spilled questions. "What is the location of this island? How did you know us? **Why** did you wreck us? **What** are those horrible pits for?"

The Count stood with his back to the fireplace, his fingers writhing before the *blue flames* which strangely gave off little light and almost no heat.

"Answering your questions in order," he said in his suave, precise voice, "you would not enjoy seeing the guests."

"Why?" Monk demanded.

"Because, my dear Colonel Mayfair, most of them are in various stages of decomposition."

"Huh?" Monk grunted.

"The **mortality rate** among my guests has been regrettably high."



Monk went directly to the point.

"You mean you kill 'em?"

"Nothing so crude as that," the Count denied.

*There was a quality about the Count's voice which gave a menacing, blood-crawling emphasis to his most casual words.*

"What then?" Ham demanded.

"They were -- shall we say -- 'liquidated'."

"Sent to the pits?"

"Many of them, yes."

"Why?"

*Fires flared deep in the Count's **fanatic** eyes!*

"Some of them for trying to escape. Some for becoming too curious."

*The man's cruel, glinting eyes fastened upon Pat.*

"For becoming too curious," he repeated. "That -- I think, my dear young lady -- answers all four of your questions."

Pat's breath drew in sharply. She glanced nervously around the oppressive room.

"That's a beautiful piano," she said.

"It is indeed," the Count agreed. "4 men were killed taking it off the boat. Do you play?"

"No," said Pat. "Won't you play something?"

Count Ramadanoff nodded. "I regret to say that later, I most likely shall."

"You 'regret'?"

"Yes. When I play, it is always a prelude of **unpleasantness** for somebody. Savages in the jungle are aroused to an animal frenzy through the beat of their own tom-toms. In similar fashion, I am impelled to unspeakable decisions when my fingers wander over the keys."

Playing a waiting game, Monk and Ham said nothing. Then Count Ramadanoff spoke again.

"I have now met all except two of Doc Savage's world-famed specialists. It would give me the utmost pleasure to match wits -- and strength -- with this almost fabulous personage **Doc Savage** himself."



*"Be careful of what you wish for," murmured Pat enigmatically. "Perhaps you shall."*

A dark-skinned man approached on soundless feet ... bowed low before Count Ramadanoff ... and motioned toward the broad stone steps disappearing upward in a sweeping spiral into a region of shadows and **ruby**-colored velvet drapes.

The thin, cruel line of the Count's mouth seemed not to move.

But an abrupt *hissing* noise escaped his lips. It seemed to be a signal of dismissal for the slave turned and padded swiftly up the stairway.

"Follow him," the Count said, shortly. "He will conduct you to your chambers."

-----

Upstairs, the three were shown to separate rooms.

Ham had not been alone for more than 40 seconds before he saw his door latch lift noiselessly. He crouched, the fingers of his right hand involuntarily clenched as though he gripped his deadly sword cane.

But the cane would have been of no use to him. It was only Pat who opened the door and eased into his room.

In a rush of whispered words, she told him of her conversation with the pit guard who had been with Johnny's expedition.

"The logical place for the radio room is in the top of the tower," Ham said excitedly.

"But there's a steel door barring the stairway to the tower!"

"Let us go talk to Monk," Ham suggested.

*When he heard the news, Monk -- characteristically -- was all for immediate action.*

"We won't get a better chance than now!" he declared.

Ham was inclined to agree.

"But that steel door!" Pat protested.

"Come on. We'll go look at it."

Monk eased out into the gloomy hall. For all his simian bulk, he moved with surprising agility on catlike feet. Pat and Ham followed.

"An army tank couldn't push it in," Monk muttered.

Monk reached the door and felt over the steel panels with his powerful hands. The door was tight in its frame.



Pat reached up and touched the latch. The door swung open soundlessly.

"Unlocked!" Monk blurted. "Well, I'm a bush ape!"

"Didn't I always say so?" Ham accorded readily.

"You tailor's dummy!" Monk retorted.

"*Sh-s-sh*," Pat cautioned. "We may never get another chance at this. Come on!"

The steps coiled upward like a circular stairway in a lighthouse. They were fashioned out of blocks of untrimmed stone. There was no railing, no light. A single misstep on the narrow flight would plunge a person down to unknown depths.

Closing and bolting the door of ponderous steel behind them, they mounted single file in the pitch blackness, feeling with their hands, hugging the damp side wall.

They came out at the top in the tower room without mishap. A single alcohol lamp set in a wall niche burned with a small straight flame casting a *glow* over the rock-girt room. The floor was constructed of steel plates. This room was as weirdly unreal as the rest of the place.

But there was nothing unreal about the banked **instrument** which glinted softly in the light.

Ham and Monk pressed forward, their hands touching familiarly the tubes, condensers, and wire-wound induction coils of a radio sending set as modern as any they had ever seen.

They switched on the juice and started tapping out Doc Savage's call letters. *Violet* light flashed weirdly from the tubes.

Pat's face shone pale in the glare.

"Won't they hear this noise downstairs?" she questioned.

"Not a chance," Ham said.

"Couldn't hear a cannon through these walls," Monk confirmed.

-----

Ham sent the key dancing under his sensitive fingers as he spelled out the words of the message. The message read.

**Prisoners On Fantastic Island In Galapagos Group    STOP    Contact Boris  
Ramadanoff 33 Redbeach Road Long Island    STOP    Grave Danger**

Unexpectedly, the harsh transmitter whining ceased.

The key continued its frantic dance under Ham's deft fingers. But the electrical power had been cut off. No further radio words were flung to the air.

*And now a new sound flooded the room.*



The sound came from everywhere ... yet from nowhere definitely. It crept and crawled and writhed -- never loud but clear, insidiously penetrating, *eerie*, freighted with menace and unseen **death**, causing hair to tug at its roots and goose flesh to prickle out with a shuddering chill.

This sound which wafted with such horrible portent through the high tower room was music.

### **Piano music!**

"The Count is playing his piano," Pat said in a small voice.

"He said he only played when somethin' was goin' to happen to somebody," Monk remembered aloud.

"How can we hear it from this high place?" Ham asked tensely.

"This radio apparatus makes more noise than a piano," Pat said fearfully. "If we can hear him, he must have heard us!"

Ham said grimly: "It must be because he heard us sending the radiogram that he's playing on his piano."

*Suddenly the music stopped.*

But the notes continued to throb their *eerie* menace for seconds, it seemed, before quietness clamped down.

"Let's get out of here!" Monk jerked, breaking the ominous hush.

*"Do not be in a hurry,"* a suave voice interposed.

It was Count Ramadanoff who spoke. No one having heard that *sinister* voice before could have mistaken it. The prisoners stared helplessly, trying to locate it.

Then a huge slab of stone in the tower wall swung outward.

From within a hidden recess, the Count stepped forth. He carried a modern automatic pistol in his hand.

"I always plan my radio room with 2 entrances," he purred. "And dictaphones are useful household articles to one such as I. And now since you have violated my hospitality, I must dispense with your valued company. You are accordingly sentenced to labor in my pits. Strong-backed coolies sometimes last a month. Last year, a big Frenchman endured for 2 weeks."

Monk's hand thrust down and squashed out the feebly flaming alcohol lamp. In the pitch darkness which flooded the tower room, he hurled the glass lamp bowl at the spot where the Count with revolver in hand had been!

At the same instant, all of Monk's great muscles acted to wrench his body to one side. The action undoubtedly saved his life.



Saffron gun *flame* and a bullet blasted out of the Count's revolver! The lead slammed so close to Monk that it jerked a quick breath from his lips.

A loud curse from the Count indicated that he had been struck by the flung lamp. Both Monk and Ham leaped forward in the darkness to overpower him before he could recover from the blow. But not more than a single step did they take.

*Then a blighting force seemed to rocket through their bodies!*

Pat also felt the enervating force. It *tingled* from the feet to the tips of the fingers -- freezing the muscles into instant, cramped immobility.

**As firmly as though they were glued to their tracks, their feet were fastened to that steelplate floor.**

*They could only tremble. They could not cry out.*

-----  
A white beam slashed from the Count's flashlight.

He barked an order and out of the same secret entrance through which he had originally appeared, a shadowy man-figure emerged. The man moved silently and slapped handcuffs on the wrists of the three.

The Count reached back and turned off an electrical switch. The numbing force which held the prisoners fast to the floor flowed out of their bodies again and they were free to move.

"As you must have deduced," the Count's suave voice sounded from beyond the flashlight, "these steel floor plates -- in alternate strips -- are wired to take charges of *electricity*. You were rooted to the floor by the electrical current as efficiently as though you had sat on an electric railway track and grasped the third rail. I myself, as you see, am wearing sandals insulated by thick rubber and so am immune to the *shock*."

*He paused impressively.*

"I have just one thing more to say," he continued. "In view of your belligerent attitude, I have decided not to send you to the pits but to keep you here in the Palace under my close observation. Kindly proceed down the stairs and we will join another member of your group: **Professor William Harper Littlejohn** -- 'Johnny' as I believe you refer to him."

Near the bottom of the winding stairway, the Count requested his prisoners to halt.

He indicated a long slot in the tower wall which looked out upon an inner courtyard. Hemmed in as it was on all sides by starkly-rearing palace walls, the courtyard was in effect a **dungeon** pit. A dozen feet above the flagstoned yard, a balcony ran entirely around.

"Under the balcony," the Count's voice sounded in a silky purr, "observe your new quarters."

They looked. Thick iron bars extended from the balcony edge into the flagstoned floor below, marking off a number of bare prison cells.

Count Ramadanoff spoke again.

"Do you observe that bundle of rags in the cell off to the left? Look closely."

While they strained their eyes in the courtyard gloom, the interminable **red lightning** rippled out of the island volcano and sent its ghostly **glare** over the heavens. Cleverly-arranged reflectors at the top of the courtyard dungeon directed the **hellish** glow downward to the flagstoned floor.

The still bundle of rags in the barred cell was bathed in the **blood-red** light.

"**Johnny!**" Monk and Ham jabbed fiercely.

And Pat echoed it. "That's Johnny in there!"

-----

"You will be interested to know," the Count's odious voice continued, "that the cell bars are movable. They are actuated electrically. I have only to press a button and they rise out of the floor to allow a prisoner to step out into the courtyard. Or to allow the prisoner to be visited by an **inhabitant** of the courtyard."

"What inhabitant?" Pat asked quickly, impelled by a foreboding curiosity. "I don't see any."

But the next instant ... *she did!*

A bulky shadow stirred from the flagstones, propelled itself out into the **red volcanic glare**.

Pat gave a little choked cry of sheer **horror** and started back.

Ham leaned forward, his fingers clutched so tightly on an imaginary sword cane that the knuckles were white splotches on his skin.

Monk crouched, his simian bulk frozen.

"Blazes!" he gulped.

The courtyard below had an incredible inhabitant.

Monk, Ham, and Pat possessed what is commonly called an "iron nerve". Yet the **thing** below aroused in them absolute horror, a feeling of desperation. They seemed hardly able to breathe as they stared at it.

"It ain't real!" Monk choked, at the same time knowing he was mistaken.

"It is quite real," murmured the Count

They stared, as fascinated as birds suddenly confronted by a snake.

Suddenly Pat emitted a low strangled cry, spun, and covered both eyes with her hands. She trembled.



"Your chief -- this famous 'Doc Savage'," the Count droned, "would no doubt be greatly interested by our little friend in the courtyard."

XX

What Pat saw caused her to temporarily forget more of the atrocities that were recently committed on her by the perverted guards ...

The guard came up to her as she was sitting up. He was looking slowly at her **mouth**.



Placing his strong hands on the back of her head, he grabbed her **bronze** hair and forced her mouth forward to open up to accommodate his wart-covered organ.

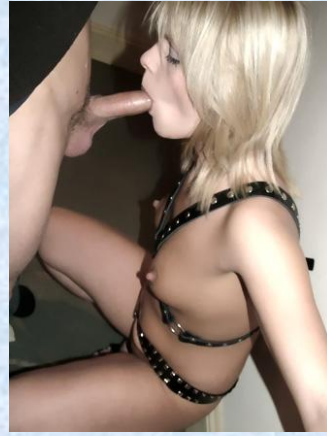
Pat made *slurping* and **gulping** noises as it moved in-and-out of her **pouty lips**.











It only took him 10 minutes (it seemed forever to her!) for him to *explode* in her mouth. She had no choice but to swallow much of it down so she could continue to breathe.

*"I wish I were dead!"* she thought.







She was still sitting down when the overseer approached her. What a sloppy mess she looked, he thought, with *jizz* all over her pretty face and in her eyelashes and hair, seeping out her cunt and butt, and drying on her legs and breasts.



"I'll help 'wash' some of that mess off you, **Whore**. We want you to be looking at least semi-clean when you meet the Count."

And with that, he proceeded to *urinate* all over her cringing body.

If she turned away to avoid the yellow stream, the others held her and turned her back to face it. If she opened up her mouth to protest, that got *pee-ed* into as well.













[Impregnated Whore]

"Now the next time someone tells you to dig, you better do it. Else there might be a dozen men who will try to persuade you!"

*A ladder was lowered and the men climbed out of pit. Pat was left there silently sobbing and wondering what would come next.*



## IV -- Radio Trap

As a matter-of-fact, some very interesting things were at that moment on the point of happening to Doc Savage.

In the skyscraper section of midtown New York, a man so thin that at first glance he seemed to be walking sidewise and who had a skin so white that it rivaled the pallid waxiness of a lily strode along with a briskness which belied his fragile physical appearance.

The man -- 'Long Tom' or Major Thomas J. Roberts / "Electrical Wizard" as he was known to the World at large -- was another of Doc Savage's aides. Long Tom's specialty was Electricity of which he had profound knowledge. Electrical patents recorded under his name were legion.

Long Tom looked like a man on his last legs. But appearance in his case was a terrific lie. His chalk-white face did not indicate ill health. He happened to be one of those rare individuals who no matter how much they expose themselves to the Sun's rays cannot get a tan. There was incredible strength in his fragile-appearing body.

Long Tom turned in at a building which towered -- a sheer mountain of gleaming stone and steel -- nearly 100 stories into the sky. The entire 86<sup>th</sup> floor of this building constituted the New York *Headquarters* of Doc Savage.

Past a phalanx of elevators in the skyscraper lobby, Long Tom strode and paused before Doc Savage's own private elevator shaft, fishing in his pocket for a key. This speed elevator was of Doc's own ingenious designing. It maintained lightning-quick passage between that 86<sup>th</sup> floor and the main lobby as well as the basement where in a subterranean garage Doc Savage's remarkably equipped motor vehicles were housed.

Fitting the peculiar key to the hole, Long Tom gained access to the speed elevator.

He jumped wildly just after he stepped into the lift!

There was *blurred* movement as something (it appeared to be an amazingly elongated mouse) scurried between his feet and disappeared around the corner in the lobby.

Long Tom popped his head out of the elevator to get a better view. All he got was another impression of *blurred* motion. Strangely, the *thing* did not seem to be running on legs nor did it writhe like a snake. It flowed, seemingly.

Like a grayish-blue streak, it flowed against the shiny black oxford of a uniformed elevator starter and disappeared within the recesses of his trousers leg.

The elevator starter was an active young man who liked to practice tap steps when no one was around. He was rather good at it.

But the dance routine that he went into when that grayish-blue streak flowed up his pants leg was like nothing executed on a stage or ballroom floor.

Long Tom grinned at first, watching the young man's epileptic antics.



*But suddenly he quit grinning and started forward with great strides!*

He had caught a glimpse of the elevator starter's face. The young man's features were knotted in stark **agony!**

A shrill cry broke from his writhing lips. His knees bent under him. He fell, arms gyrating wildly.

Long Tom caught him before he struck the floor and bent over the shuddering body. His hands patted frenziedly over the young man's trousers leg, attempting to crush that unseen thing responsible for the fellow's tragic condition.

-----

"Stand back!" Long Tom warned as curious men and women in the lobby surged close.

They paid no attention, of course, crowding in and staring, asking aimless questions. New Yorkers invariably behave thus when one of their number acts in a manner slightly deviating from the normal.

"Get a doctor," someone advised.

"*Stand back!*" Long Tom warned again, sharply this time. "Something bit him. There's a poison snake or bug or rat or something loose in here. *You're all in danger!*"

Even that did not move them. With new recruits continuously pressing in from behind, the crowd swelled closer. Curiosity was an emotion more rampant than Fear.

*Then something happened which did move them.*

They became all at once conscious of a man approaching. He neither spoke nor shoved. But there was such quiet mastery in his face and manner that -- instinctively -- they looked at him.

And then with a kind of **awe**, they pressed back to allow him free progress through the crowd.

### **The man was a giant!**

His strong features -- kilned by tropic Sun and Arctic wind and held under superb emotional control -- seemed to be molded in **bronze**. He topped by fully a head every man in the lobby. And yet so perfectly was his **huge frame** developed -- prodigious **muscles** molded in perfect symmetry -- that it was only the manner in which he towered above the close-pressed crowd that revealed him as the giant he really was.

His crisp hair seemed made of **bronze** only a shade darker than his skin. His great neck **sinews** -- only slightly less hard than metal -- showed decidedly above his collar. **Cables** of the sinew ridged his hand.

The most remarkable feature of all about the bronze man was his **eyes**. Strange eyes they were, *hypnotically* compelling like pools of **flake-gold**, stirred with restless life as though tiny *whirlpools* kept the fine **gold** flakes continually in boiling suspension.

For an instant after the **bronze giant** was discovered in their midst, a hush settled over the lobby.



"Doc Savage!" someone said.

Others took up the name. From lip to lip, the murmur flew.

"Doc Savage!" ... *"Doc Savage!"*

---

Doc Savage was bending over the unconscious form of the elevator starter. Cabled fingers (which could without exaggeration twist a horseshoe into a straight line!) rolled up the trousers leg of his patient with gentle deftness.

On the calf of the leg, **2 rows of blue holes** were revealed. There was no swelling, no inflammation. Just that double row of tiny lacerations.

*Suddenly, penetrating the many-mouthed murmur in the lobby came a weird sound -- a kind of musical **trilling** which ran up-and-down the scale, softly, fantastically as though the sound emanated from the air itself. It was suggestive of the sibilant slipping of an evening wind through palm fronds. Or of the call of some golden-winged bird out of an Arabian Nights fairy tale.*

This sound came from Doc Savage himself. It was an unconscious part of the **Bronze Man** -- a thing he did in moments of stress or at times of great surprise.

Doc Savage spoke to his aide Long Tom. The **Man of Bronze's** voice was arresting, deep, and pleasantly resonant.

He said with impressive simplicity: "We will take him upstairs."

Doc lifted the unconscious man with noticeable ease. The crowd made a path for them to the elevator.

On the 86<sup>th</sup> floor, Doc Savage and Long Tom entered the **Headquarters' Reception** room. The room with its great comfortable chairs, deep-piled Oriental rug, and solid table exquisitely inlaid with ivory reflected the power and solid dignity of Doc Savage.

Doc examined his patient more closely and administered a hypodermic.

Long Tom hovered close. "Will he come out of it, Doc?"

"He will," the **Bronze Man** said quietly.

*Doc listened then attentively while Long Tom related what he knew of the elevator starter's injury.*

"Did you identify the *thing* which attacked him?" the **Bronze Man** queried.

Long Tom shook his head. "I only glimpsed it. It seemed to flow along the floor so fast that I saw only a *blur*. It didn't appear again after attacking this lad. I think it must have been trampled under the feet of the crowd."



Doc pointed to the parallel rows of lacerations on the patient's leg.

"Only one thing could have left such marks."

"**Centipede?**" Long Tom hazarded.

"Correct," Doc said. "Judging from the angle in which the anterior legs -- or modified fangs -- have dug into the flesh, the space between lacerations, and the immediate effect of the creature's poisonous bites, I should say one of a species of giant centipedes indigenous to the Galapagos Islands."

"The Galapagos! That's where Monk and Ham and Pat sailed looking for Johnny!"

"They have arrived," Doc said grimly. "**And they found trouble!**"

-----

Long Tom stared.

"How do you know?"

"This message came in over the shortwave set a few minutes ago."

Doc handed Long Tom a copy of Ham's and Monk's message, reading:

**Prisoners On Fantastic Island In Galapagos Group    STOP    Contact Boris  
Ramadanoff 33 Redbeach Road Long Island    STOP    Grave Danger**

Long Tom whistled.

"I'm beginning to get it. It's a long arm that reaches from the Galapagos to New York City. This centipede was meant for you, Doc! It was introduced into your elevator as an attempt upon your life."

"Perhaps," Doc Savage admitted. "Though the immediate intent was probably to render me unconscious as the first step in a kidnapping plot."

"How do you figure that?"

"A centipede's bite is rarely fatal. But we all seem to be tinder the thousand-legger's shadow. Consider ... Johnny was first apprehended. Now Ham, Pat, and Monk are taken. And almost paralleling their message of distress comes this Galapagos 'calling card' in the form of a centipede."

Long Tom was silent for a moment.

*As a result of their unceasing war upon the most ruthless and cunning forces of criminal adventurers, Doc and his aides lived always in the shadow of danger. But at the moment, they had no active case under investigation. The developments of the last few minutes had struck with stunning suddenness.*

"What do you make of it, Doc?" Long Tom questioned uneasily.

"Frankly," said Doc, "I don't make anything. It's a complete mystery."



"That address in the radiogram -- we ought to turn up a clue there."

Doc nodded soberly. "I was on my way to 33 Redbeach Road when I ran into the excitement downstairs. Let me suggest that you see about getting this young man to his home, then jump in your car and join me at the Long Island address."

Doc descended in the private elevator to his subterranean garage, the existence of which was known only to a few people outside the immediate circle of his 5 aides.

From among the number of specially-built vehicles, Doc chose a low-swung coupe of gunmetal finish and expert streamlining. The car was, in reality, a rolling fortress with bulletproof glass, armored body, chrome-steel fenders, and bulletproof tires of cellular rubber construction.

Actuated by photoelectric cells, the garage doors opened slightly as Doc eased the car forward. The doors closed automatically behind him as he rolled along the ramp into the stream of uptown traffic.

Toward Queensboro Bridge and Long Island he headed, the powerful motor under the beetle-backed hood propelling the car with silent, flowing motion.

-----

Seeking 33 Redbeach Road took Doc Savage to a semi-deserted tide-flat region on Long Island Sound. He turned in at a brush-grown lane.

Swirls of fog were rolling in from the Sound. An ancient brick house with sagging porch roof and rusted rainspouts loomed through the mist. The place had evidently once been a fine estate. But it now gave every evidence of having been deserted for a long time.

Doc parked under a dragging-branched elm which dripped water from leaves sodden with condensed fog. He did not get out on the steering-wheel side of his car. He slid over to the opposite side ... stepped to the ground ... *and disappeared in a grove of wet birches.*

Doc had no reason to doubt the authenticity of the Galapagos radiogram. He was not expecting trouble. But it was his policy never to take unnecessary chances.

After a few minutes of reconnoitering, he approached a side entrance to the decaying mansion and knocked.

*There was a long silence.*

Doc knocked again. *Still nobody came.*

Through years of patient training, Doc Savage had perfected his hearing to an animal keenness. He could hear sounds above-and-below the scale audible to the average person.

Within this house which appeared to be as deserted as a snatched grave, he could hear **movement**. Hurried, secretive, man movement.

Doc's **bronzed** features remained immobile. He simply waited there by the door.



After a while, the knob turned from inside the curtained room and the door opened. A foreign-appearing man with short-cropped hair stood within the dimly lighted interior and invited him in.

"You are Doc Savage?" he questioned in broken English. "I have been expecting you. I am Boris Ramadanoff."

XX

Actually, even Doc's super-sensitive hearing powers were unable to detect some sounds from within the house. Particularly those that were occurring in a sub-basement isolated room.

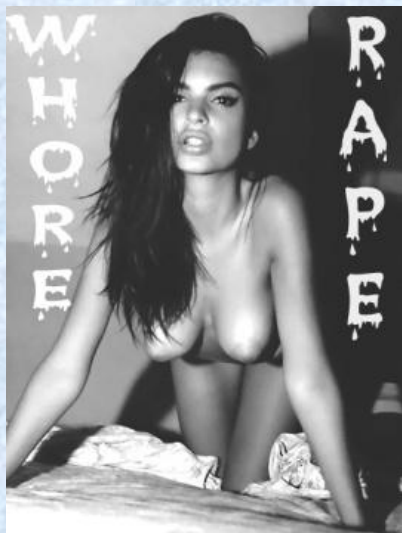
A tall captive brunette woman was being *ravished* and tormented by a savage group of vile men.







"GIVE ME SOME LUVINS, SLUT. I HAVE TO GET IT HARD BEFORE I RAPE YOU!"



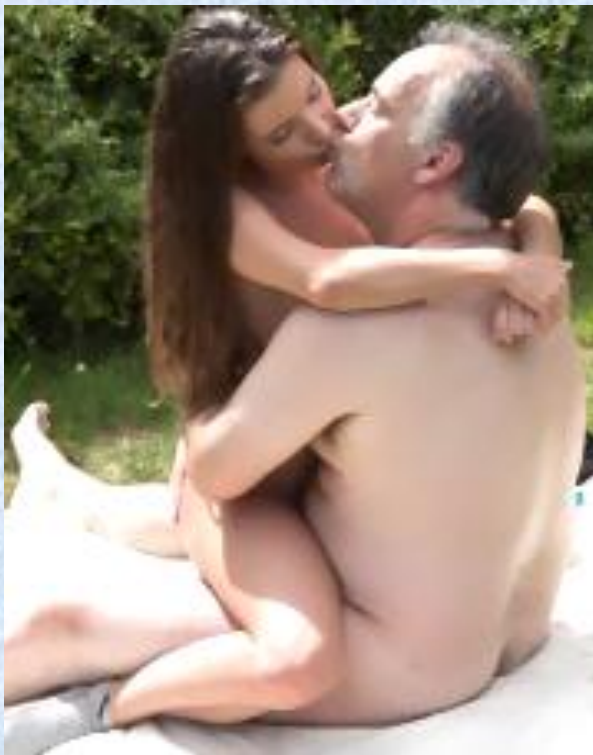
"WE'RE GONNA FUCK YOU, SLUT!"



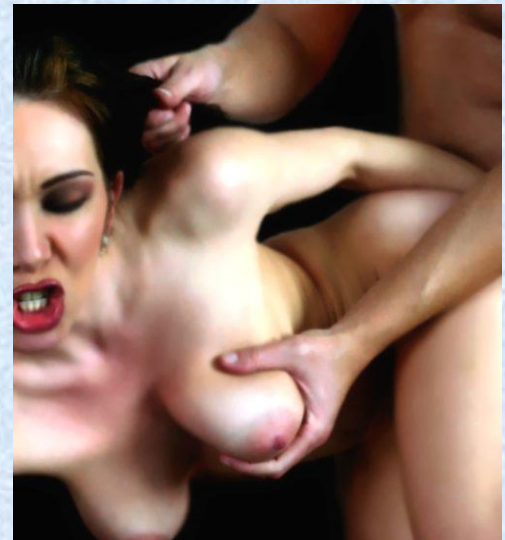




Slobbery kisses were sucking all the **lipstick** off her wet lips while sweaty hands were madly fondling her full breasts.







Hard **fingers** were probing the most sacred of her bodily openings.







She was repeatedly knocked down on the hard concrete floor and spread-eagled.

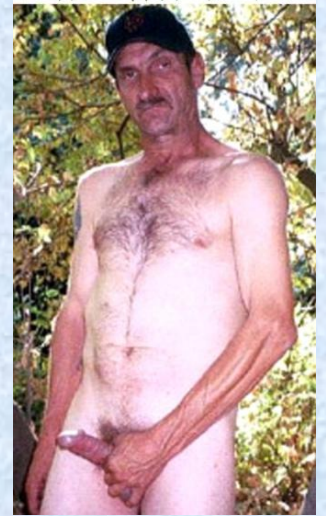




"HIT THE SACK,  
YOU FILTHY WHORE!"



"I'M GONNA RAPE YOU, BITCH!"



Long hard **penises** thrustled furiously in-and-out of her torn vagina squirting sticky gobs of **semen** up inside her.



"OPEN UP FOR ME, GODDAMN YOU!"







**"FUCK YOU, BASTARD!"**



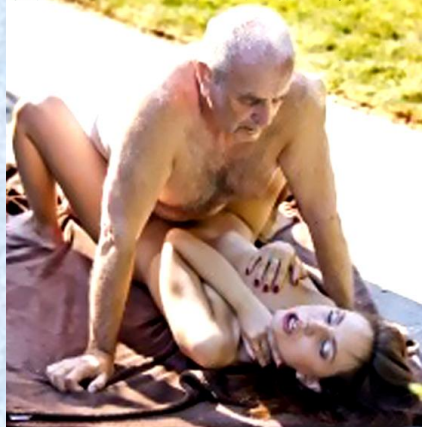




"I'LL FUCK YOU,  
SLEAZY WHORE!"



"STILL THINK I'M TOO OLD FOR YOU?, WHORE?"







Those same **lips** were quite busy sucking and swallowing each **dick** that presented itself to her mouth.



PREPARING TO SUCK HER RAPISTS' COCKS



"TIME FOR YOUR FEEDING, PRETTY WHORE"



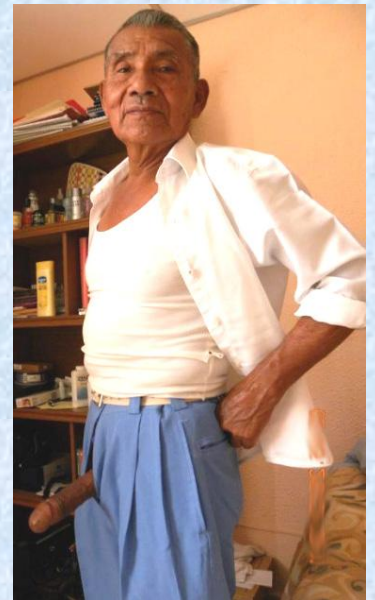








Other cocks were **jamming** and **ramming** up into her **anal** cavity as she *screamed* at this ultimate violation.







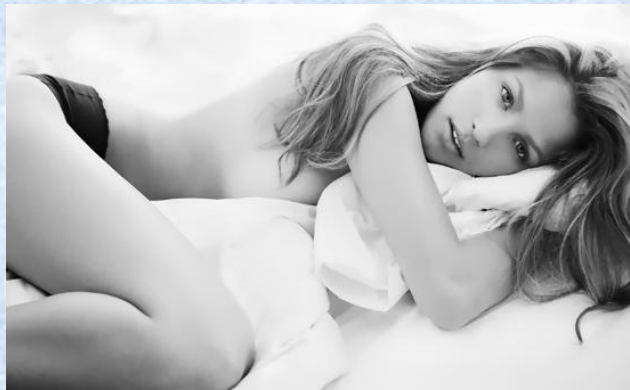




"Oowww! I'll kill you, BASTARD!"









*In a Parallel Universe ...*



---

Doc stepped inside.

But because he had been made wary, the thing which happened next was no surprise to him.

With all his senses alert, he caught the *creak* of shoe leather against the carpeted floor and the virtually imperceptible movement behind a curtained alcove.

The *bronze giant* crouched and whirled as men flung in at him from 3 directions.

His *cabled* hands streaked out, closing with a grip of iron on the shoulders of 2 of his attackers! He lifted them both from the floor ... crashed them against each other ... and let them drop.



They fell stunned in an octopus tangle of arms and legs. And with smoothly synchronized effort, Doc struck out with his appalling **fists** at 2 other of his attackers.

Just once with each **fist** did he strike. One man went down wailing, his face altered. The other -- jarred into instant unconsciousness -- went down too and never knew until an hour later that his jaw was broken.

Doc swerved as he caught a *glint* of the revolver drawn by the man with the cropped hair who had represented himself as being Boris Ramadanoff.

With a leap that in its force and precision could be compared only to that of a Nepal tiger, Doc landed halfway across the room!

The short-haired man smacked the floor with a solid *thud* and Doc was standing there with a firm grip on the revolver.

He was absolute master of the situation. There were 10 men in the room besides himself. Most of them lay stunned as the result of Doc's rough handling. The others cowered back, afraid to try another move.

From outside the house in the direction of the roadway sounded a burst of **machine-gun fire**. Echoes crashed flatly.

Then a new noise broke with a harsh drumming.

It was a fearful sound. Doc Savage recognized it as the bull-fiddle bellow of one of the **superfiring pistols** carried by his aides.

The superfirer was one of Doc's inventions. It resembled an overgrown automatic and pumped out a withering stream of so-called "mercy bullets" -- hollow shells filled with a drug which upon the slightest penetration of the skin produced instant unconsciousness. It was Doc's code never to take a human life when he could in any way avoid it.

Wafting on the hooting echoes of the superfirer came a sharp, urgent sound of a man calling.

"Doc! Doc!"

The **Bronze Man** recognized Long Tom's voice. He could guess what had happened.

Long Tom -- according to directions -- had driven up and he had run into a machine-gun ambush as he stepped out of his car. Fierce fighter that he was, Long Tom would never call for help unless the emergency was dire.

The safety of his men was a thing that Doc Savage put before every other consideration.

On the instant, Doc gave up the advantage which he held over his enemies in the room.

He wheeled ... wrenched open the door ... and plunged out into the fog with his great **thewed** legs carrying him in giant strides to Long Tom's aid.



Doc still held the automatic which he had taken from the man who had said he was Boris Ramadanoff.

- - - - -

Doc Savage carried no revolver or superfirer of his own. It was the **Bronze Man's** contention that dependence upon such a weapon robbed a man of ingenuity and made him helpless in the face of danger should he chance to be deprived of the accustomed weapon.

Therefore, he depended upon his own strength and cunning to pull him out of desperate situations. Where strength did not suffice, he resorted to some chemical or mechanical trick which was usually effective and always baffling.

Doc did not scorn the use of a gun, of course, when emergency put one in his hands. He used one now.

Pushing out through the dripping birch leaves, he came upon Long Tom who was caught behind a meager rock shelter in a threatened cross-fire of submachine-gun lead.

As the machine-gun swiveled down to rake Long Tom, the automatic in Doc's hand **barked!**

The single bullet damaged the hand of the gunner. The man squalled and let his weapon clump to the ground.

The second machine-gunner swung the snout of his death-dealing gun on Doc, holding down the trigger and slicing a leaden pattern through the fog-drenched birches!

But the gun cut out before the leaden stream reached Doc. Another coolly-directed bullet from the **Bronze Man's** automatic took care of that. The gunner cursed, let his weapon drop, and wrung his injured hand.

*From behind the brick house (now lost in the fog) sounded the throaty roar of 2 automobile motors exploding into life. There was a grinding of gears ... clashing shifts into second ... then a rapidly diminishing sound as the cars rammed into distance.*

"Watch this pair," Doc called to Long Tom.

Doc's prodigious strides carried him in a matter of seconds back to the house. But as he had feared, all 10 of his attackers were gone.

He searched the house. It was empty. The uninjured men had loaded the unconscious members into the cars and decamped.

Doc did find one thing. A hastily scrawled note signed:

**"Boris Ramadanoff."**

The note read:

***Next time it will be different! We will use more than our fists!***



Long Tom came up with 2 prisoners.

"Stay here and watch this place," Doc directed. "Move your car up close to the house where we can keep in touch with each other through the shortwave radio set while I tail those vanished cars."

But Doc did not chase the autos.

The **Bronze Man**'s coupe and each car used by his aides and their 86<sup>th</sup> floor **Headquarters** as well was fitted with shortwave telephone receiving&transmitting apparatus. As Doc flung inside his car, he <clicked> concealed switches under the dash.

*Static* crackled from the radio loudspeaker. And then the excited voice of Colonel John Renwick -- renowned engineer, the last of Doc's 5 aides -- boomed out of the diaphragm.

"Renny" was doubtless speaking from the skyscraper **Headquarters**.

Doc lifted a microphone from a concealed hook.

"Listening," he said.

Renny's voice roared.

*"Better get back to Headquarters quick, Doc. There's the Devil to pay!"*

*Pat's troubles are not over yet ...*





## V -- Russian Tea Party

As the **Bronze Man** hurled his car down the driveway, he spoke back through the microphone. The radio apparatus functioned while the car was in motion, of course.

"What precisely has happened?" he asked over the air.

Renny's voice bawled out of the loudspeaker.

*"That weird centipede that disappeared after clawin' up the elevator starter. Well, it showed up again!"*

"Did you manage to kill it?"

*"Yes, but too late. It attacked another man."*

"Yes?"

*"The man died, Doc!"*

"Are you positive the victim was killed by the centipede's bite? Except in the case of the aged or infirm, death rarely results from ..."

*"Nothing aged or infirm about this victim, Doc. He was a 30-year-old 200-pound cop. He took about 6 breaths -- that's all -- after the bug got him. He died in my arms."*

"That was too quick for a hypodermic to have done any good. Watch yourself, Renny."

Doc spoke quietly. But Renny understood that the **Man of Bronze** had delivered a warning that an ordinary man would have yelled.

"Is there anything else?" Doc Savage questioned.

*"No. Except there's a guy here waiting to see you."*

"Who is he, Renny?"

*"Some Russian-sounding name -- Boris Ramadanoff."*

From his radio speaker, Renny heard a weird note. An almost soundless musical *trilling*.

He thought it was some *static* manifestation at first but almost instantly he identified the sound as that subtle emanation peculiar to Doc Savage in moments of stress or surprise.

"Doc," Renny thumped, *"what is it?"*

The **Bronze Man** countered with a question of his own.

"How long has Boris Ramadanoff been there?"



*"Long as I have anyhow -- 10 minutes."*

"Describe him."

*"Old-fashioned little guy with a black cutaway coat and a black Czar-of-Russia mush all over his map. Talks with an accent. What's the excitement, Doc?"*

Doc complied. "A man claiming to be 'Boris Ramadanoff' sought to kill me a few moments ago. Sit tight, Renny. We have good reason to believe that the lives of Johnny and all those who went after him -- and maybe our lives as well -- depend upon what we do within the next few hours."

-----

As Doc stepped out of his elevator on the 86<sup>th</sup> floor and entered the **Headquarters' Reception** room, a remarkable man shifted his towering bulk out of a comfortable leather chair and lumbered forward. Alongside any one but Doc Savage, this individual would have been considered enormous.

This man had a long, puritanical face that was shrouded in gloom as though he had lately returned from a funeral and contemplated going to another. As a matter-of-fact, the expression was habitual whenever he was expecting **action**. Which was most of the time. Strangely enough, it meant he was happy.

His **fists** swung restlessly at his sides. **Huge fists** they were. Larger than Monk's and rivaling the flint-padded claws of a Kodiak bear.

The big-**fisted** man was 'Renny' -- Colonel John Renwick, an engineer who had possibly built dams and bridges in more parts of the World than any man alive. And knocked out more door panels with those appalling **fists**!

Renny's hand waved toward a little man who had sprung up from a chair and was in the middle of a courtly bow.

"This is Boris Ramadanoff," Renny announced.

The black-bearded little man continued to make bows.

"I am prostrated," he said in precise English. "From the Colonel here, I have just learned that you met with trouble from a man posing as myself."

"Do you have an address on Redbeach Road?" Doc asked, cryptically

"But yes! The number is 33."

"Within the last hour at that address, several men -- one of whom claimed to be 'Boris Ramadanoff' - - did try to trap me," Doc admitted.

The little man's eyes gleamed. "Was he a bullet-headed fellow with close-cropped hair?"

"The one who claimed to be Ramadanoff? Correct."



"I know of him. I repeat it, Sir, I am prostrate! To think that you should be set upon by thugs in my own home! The truth is that I have many enemies. Doubtless they took possession of my house, their intent being to apprehend you in the belief that you could furnish them with information regarding my whereabouts. Accept my most profuse apologies."

Doc nodded.

"You wished to see me?" he suggested.

"From South America, I have come to see you!"

The little man bowed again and with a quick bird-like motion, he thrust a leather folder toward Doc.

"This establishes your identity," Doc said to Boris Ramadanoff as he handed back the papers. "And now ... "

"I seek your aid, Sir," Boris said earnestly. "I need it desperately. Lives hang in the balance. I will come quickly to the point. In the Galapagos Archipelago, there is an unknown island upon which my brother -- the Count Ramadanoff -- has set himself up as master of life-and-death over every living thing, causing ships to be wrecked and forcing the seamen to dig the circular pits."

"Why the pits?" Doc questioned.

Boris shrugged eloquently. "That is a profound mystery to me. The Count Ramadanoff -- my brother -- transported all his worldly possessions from our native land to this island before the revolution. He brought with him artisans who built a castle. But of that original company, I alone remain. He has killed them all. His real motive for such horrible deeds, I do not know."

"Precisely what do you want of me?"

"I want you to go with me to that island in the Galapagos and help free dozens of poor devils -- shipwrecked seamen -- digging their way to death in the honeycomb pits."

"Purely an appeal in the name of Humanity?"

"Yes. Although in freeing those others, you may also be in time to save one of your own men -- Professor William Harper Littlejohn -- who is also a shipwreck victim of my mysterious brother."

*The little man had meant this to be a smashing climax to his appeal. But if he expected Doc to show surprise over the information, he was disappointed.*

Doc said merely: "How do you know about this?"

"I was on the island at the time my brother caused your aide's boat to be wrecked. Since then, I escaped."

"You have come directly to me?"

"Yes. And thereby saved my life!"

"How do you explain the Redbeach ambush?"



"I arranged for the house some time ago without seeing it, expecting eventually to make it my permanent New York address."

The little man's eyes closed weakly. *A shudder coursed over him, trembling the very tip of his beard.*

"My fiendish brother anticipates every move I make! His hand is long and ruthless. He caused the trap to be set for me at Redbeach Road. He caused the centipede trap to be set for me here, thus bringing tragedy to those two -- the policeman and the elevator starter."

XX

He didn't comment on the young woman that was violently defiled ...

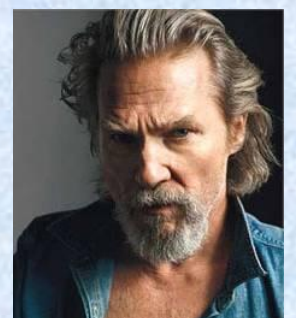
They evil bastards even brought out captive **young teenage boys** to *impregnate* the lovely woman.



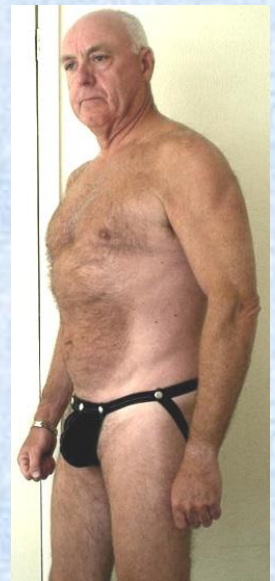




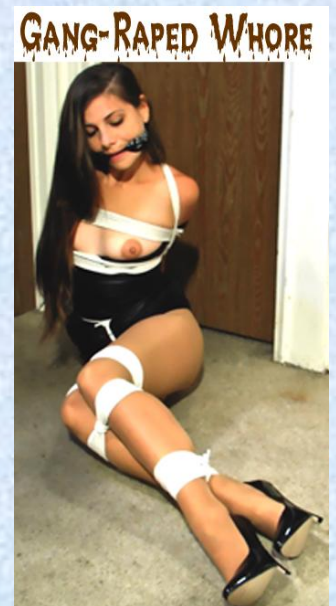












[Who is the Daddy?]



Doc put another question to Boris Ramadanoff.

"You have charts which will enable us to fly directly to the island?"

"But yes! They are at your disposal."

"How soon can we see them?"

"At your convenience. Immediately if you wish."

"The sooner, the better," Doc said.

Ramadanoff bowed. "My thought exactly. Perhaps you will be moved to accompany me now to my hotel apartment? We will go over the charts -- perhaps plan a course of action -- while we have tea."

Doc assented.

As he and Ramadanoff were leaving, the **Bronze Man** advised Renny:

"Best stay where you can keep in touch with Long Tom and myself."

-----

In Ramadanoff's apartment (the apartment was like a thousand others in the metropolis), Doc Savage sat studying charts while Boris Ramadanoff brewed tea in the next room.

Soon the little man came out smiling.

"The day for me is not complete without my tea. You will join me, no?"

Doc nodded shortly and fired questions relative to directional bearings on the unknown island. The other answered concisely.

Then excusing himself, he left the room and returned with a silver tray bearing 2 crystal glasses two-thirds filled with pale tea and a steaming china-lined silver pot.

"Please," he said, holding the tray before Doc.

Doc took one of the glasses and touched his lips to it. There were 2 reasons why he did not drink more.

One reason was that he did not commonly indulge in stimulants of any kind, reserving them only for their proper emergency use.

The other reason was that his acutely developed taste warned him of a foreign substance in the tea.

"You do not care for it?" Ramadanoff asked solicitously. "It is made in my own samovar which I carry with me always. But perhaps you do not like the flavor of the Galapagos herbs which I add to the tea to give it its unusual tang?"



Doc's *gold-flecked eyes* bored steadily at Ramadanoff.

"It is not the herbs to which I object. It is the *poison*."

"What?!"

*The little man's hands holding the tray started shaking so that tea splashed from the spout of the silver pot.*

"Poison," Doc repeated.

"*Poison!*" Ramadanoff gasped incredulously.

He sat the tray on a low table and reached out for Doc's glass.

"Allow me," he murmured.

He raised the glass to his nose and sniffed cautiously.

His face went white to the roots of his beard. The glass slipped from his trembling hand and crashed on the floor!

He slumped in a chair ... then roused himself to lean forward and sniff at his own glass. He slumped back again, weakly.

"They are ... *indeed* ... poisoned!" he said hoarsely. "We have, Sir, very narrowly escaped death."

"Do you recognize the active agent?" Doc asked, quietly.

"Yes, since you have called my attention to it."

"What is it?"

"A vegetable poison known to the best of my belief only to that Galapagos madman - my brother!"

*Doc Savage continued to hide his reactions behind a mask of *bronze* immobility.*

"You can explain?" he asked.

Ramadanoff covered his face with trembling hands. 2 gems on finger rings flashed a weird menace against his white hands.

One of the gems was an *emerald*, thicker than a man's thumb. The other was a *ruby* of equal size and fineness.

"No," the little man moaned. "I cannot explain. As you yourself are aware, I left the room where I was preparing the tea for only a moment."

A new voice sounded mockingly in the still room.



*"The moment was ample!"*

At sound of the voice, Ramadanoff stiffened in his chair as though an electric current had jolted through his body. He jerked his head from side-to-side peering with a groan through spread fingers. He saw nothing to explain the mocking voice.

His writhing lips wrenched words.

"It is our doom. The *Devil's Honeycomb!*"

He husked the meaningless phrase again.

*"The Devil's Honeycomb ... "*

Then his tortured voice trailed into silence.

Only his long tapered fingers moved, digging in agony into the flesh of his face.

The gems on his fingers protruded from the whiteness of hands like baleful eyes.

*Coming up ...*



*... Pat will become a new "Wife"!*



## VI -- The Platinum Packet

When that mocking voice filled the room, Doc's action was in marked contradiction to Ramadanoff's. The **Bronze Man** sat perfectly still, relaxed.

Out of the dead hush, his **voice** sounded. It was controlled and compelling.

"Come and join our tea party," he suggested.

Another crawling *hush* followed Doc Savage's calm pronouncement.

Then the closet door burst open. A man shouldered out cuddling a submachine-gun. The man was the same bullet-headed, hair-clipped individual who had posed as Boris Ramadanoff at 33 Redbeach Road.

While he kept Doc under the machine-gun muzzle, the man's guttural voice chopped orders.

2 men armed with automatics sidled in from the next room. And 2 more machine-gunners came in through the French windows from the fire escape.

The 5 guns covered Doc and Ramadanoff in a close, deadly ring.

The bullet-headed man's blond face was a fiery **red** from the excitement of his triumph. His **blue** eyes glittered with cold malignity as he looked at Doc.

"I promised you," he gloated, voice thick with his foreign accent, "that the next time, we would use more than our fists. And I promise you now that at the slightest sign of resistance, you will eat lead from 5 guns!"

"Interesting," Doc said quietly, remaining relaxed in the chair. "What do you want of me?"

The man with the close-cropped hair scowled. "I'll do the questioning. You figured we were here, didn't you?"

Doc nodded. "You made some slight sounds. And there was your bodily odor which carefully trained nostrils could detect."

The other snarled nervously: "Why didn't you do something about it if you knew you were on a spot?"

Doc started stretching his arms leisurely. "I intend to."

"The Devil you do!"

The machine-gun jerked. The bullet head jerked, too. The thin lips barked an order.

"Rats, the handcuffs! Get the big one first!"

A thin man with ratty eyes -- one of those carrying an automatic -- wrestled handcuffs from his pocket and approached Doc. He walked warily, his swarthy face apprehensive.



Sitting in his chair, Doc continued his leisurely stretching until his arms were straightened out from his body in the form of a cross. The rat-eyed man with the handcuffs stared helplessly with panic gripping him as he found himself so close to those great, cabled **fists**.

"Don't go chicken, Rats," the bullet-headed leader snarled. "We can put enough lead in him to sink through the floor."

To Doc, he ordered: "Hold your wrists together for the cuffs."

"All right," Doc said. "And when I do, watch what happens!"

Slowly ... like the wings of an eagle closing ... Doc swept his arms to meet in front of him.

The eyes of every man in the room were on those closing arms. Doc meant that they should be. *There was purpose in his dramatics.*

While he was centering their attention on his arms, the toe of his right foot was deftly disengaging a novel metal packet from within his left trousers cuff. It was a packet scientifically designed to withstand the utmost in internal pressure, fashioned out of an alloy stronger than any other known metal.

The instant Doc succeeded in releasing the packet from the cuff, he kicked it away from him!

The bullet-headed leader was alert for tricks and caught the movement out of the tail of his eye.

"Watch his feet!" he snarled.

-----  
But it was too late for anybody to watch anything.

A sharp, cracking **explosion** blended with an un-nameable sound -- a *sw-oo-sh* reminiscent of blanketing fire damp gas ignited in a coal mine. Almost instantaneously, the room was choked with a yellowish smoke so dense that it appeared **black**.

*For the space of a rasped breath, there was silence.* Then bedlam!

Shrieked curses, splintering wood, and crashing glass as automatics barked and machine-guns clattered! In their panic at Doc's nerve-racking maneuver, the men butted blindly, their guns making **ruddy** flashes in the **smoke** as they drove their bullets.

Doc Savage was in the clear. At the instant of the **smoke** explosion, he had rammed forward from his chair, ducking low with one **thewed** arm reaching for the spot where he knew Boris Ramadanoff to be and the other arching upward like a scythe toward the bullet-headed leader's neck.

Doc's packet had contained an organic chemical held under pressure. With the bursting of the packet, the chemical had expanded instantly in a gaseous state. Moisture in the air had acted to cause partial combustion of the chemical, thus generating the instantaneous cloud of **smoke**.

*Then the unexpected happened.*



Boris Ramadanoff was not where he should have been in the chair. And the short-haired leader had shifted his position.

Doc Savage moved about very silently endeavoring to find Ramadanoff.

"Open the windows and let this stuff out," rapped the chief of the raiding party. "Everybody be perfectly still so we can hear the **bronze** guy if he moves."

They could think quickly, these men. They had taken the one course which would most quickly result in disaster to the **Bronze Man**.

Doc Savage changed his position using the utmost *stealth*. But even his remarkable eyes could not penetrate the **smoke**.

*Some moments passed in utter silence.*

Then outside, police sirens began to wail in the streets. Neighbors must have heard the shooting and the excitement, and summoned officers.

"The cops!" ripped the man with the cropped head. "We gotta blow!"

With that, they made a concerted charge for the door. Doc Savage moved swiftly but chanced to brush someone.

There was a pale burst of gunfire and deep **crash** of gun noise near his ear!

His hands streaked through the **smoke**, knocking the gun out of the man's grasp and clamping a hold on the fellow's neck.

There was more shooting in the room. Wild shots.

"*Out!*" the mob-leader was howling. "*The Law is comin'!*"

Then amid a great rush of feet, they were all out of the room. They slammed the door! A number of shots were driven into the panel from the hallway outside to discourage pursuit.

Carrying the man he had captured under one arm, Doc Savage hurriedly searched the rooms.

**Boris Ramadanoff was gone!**

-----

Doc carried his prisoner to the fire escape and hurriedly descended. His purpose was to watch the rear of the apartment building. By now, the police were around in front. They would take care of the entrance.

Noting that from the spot where he had parked his coupe he could watch the court that gave to the rear entrance of the apartment, Doc Savage hurriedly carried his prisoner to the car. It was just as well



to get the fellow out of sight of the police, thus avoiding the delay which explanations would necessarily cause.

The radio was still turned on in the coupe. Static *crackled* from its loudspeaker and mingled with that was the frantic crackle of words. Doc recognized the voice.

It was Long Tom, no doubt speaking from the transmitter of his car at the Redbeach Road address where Doc Savage had left him on guard. The electrical wizard's voice came in frantic bursts, almost inarticulate.

*"Doc ... centipedes ... killing me ... "*

The words suddenly ceased coming.

That changed Doc Savage's whole plan of action. Any danger to Long Tom transcended in importance what might have happened to Boris Ramadanoff.

Doc switched the coupe's engine on. With a squalling of tire rubber, it got under way.

The car rocketed down the street, siren squalling. The use of the siren was permitted Doc by the police department. He depended upon it, of course, only in dire emergencies.

While he wheeled along, Doc called through the coupe's radio, attempting to renew connection with Long Tom.

But he got no response.

He shifted his call back to Renny at *Headquarters*. Renny was listening in, feverishly awaiting directions.

Doc said: "Better get over here to 97<sup>th</sup> Street and stand by. Try to avoid trouble with the police. Leave your radio switched 'on' in your car so we can keep in contact."

*"Right, Doc,"* Renny answered.

Doc replaced his microphone on the hook and turned his attention to the captive that he had lugged into the car with him.

He was "Rats" Hanley -- the scrawny-chested, rat-eyed individual who had been going to clip the handcuffs on Doc.

Doc put pressure on him and learned from him that the bullet-headed man was Jans Bergman. And that Bergman worked for someone higher up.

*Gaining this information, Doc put Rats to sleep by pressing on a hidden nerve. Later, Rats would be sent to Doc's "**Crime College**" in upstate New York. There by surgical means, the crook would be cured of his criminal tendencies.*

Doc's coupe crossed the Queensboro Bridge over the East River and continued along the Sound. Sea fog still hung heavy over the run-down estate -- the decaying red brick house at 33 Redbeach Road -- as Doc swerved his car in at the gate and rolled silently up the brush-grown lane.



**There was no sign of Long Tom!**

---

The **Bronze Man** spent no time in reconnoitering. With Long Tom's life threatened, even seconds were important.

He leaped from the car and traversed the short distance to the house in great bounds!

He tried the door. It was locked.

He used Renny's pet method and one of his **fists** -- propelled by prodigious arm and shoulder muscles -- **crashed** through the solid oak panel!

Like closing vises, his hands caught the splintered wood and wrenched! He tore the door half down, then walked through the rest of it with forward-pressing force which shattered the entire door frame.

In the dim interior, he moved around.

His footfalls sounded hollowly throughout the ghostly house. The place seemed to be deserted.

He whipped out a flashlight and snaked its searing rays over floor and walls. Black corners leaped into white life.

In one room, he found evidence of a furious struggle. Furniture was overturned. Still-wet **scarlet** was on the carpet.

*But the **crimson** was not the most alarming thing.*

**Scattered over the floor were the crushed bodies of fully a dozen centipedes!** Hairy legs on some of the broken segments were still writhing.

While Doc's flashlight poked its white beam around the shambles of the room, there came a sound from the hall of a floorboard *creaking*. Doc whirled crouching a little, the light from his flash snuffing out.

He *glided* to the wall and waited, frozen close. The *creaking* from outside the door sounded louder.

It paused ... started up again ... then paused a second time within the doorway. Doc could hear the cautious *breathing* of the stalker.

The unknown took a wide step to clear the bare floor and land soundlessly on his feet on the carpet.

He got his foot on the carpet, all right.

**Then his whole body left the floor.** With his feet as high as his head, he fell heavily on his back!

Doc had taken advantage of opportunity when the stalker took his wide step to pull the carpet from under him.



The man's trigger finger started jerking spasmodically. Plaster showered and the room rocked to *gun thunder* as orange flame stabbed the gray light.

Suddenly the echoing uproar stopped. There was a *metallic* clatter and a hollow *thump*.

With one leap, Doc had landed in the middle of the room ... knocked the gun to the floor with one hand ... and whacked the man's head down with the other.

He looked at the man he had knocked unconscious. There was enough light to reveal features.

The man was no one that Doc had seen before.

But the next moment, Doc was looking upon a face which he had seen before. *It was one of the few times in Doc's life that an enemy succeeded in actually surprising him.*

A floorboard *creaked* in the doorway. Doc looked up to find himself covered at deadly range with a submachine-gun. The gunner had been able to advance without being heard because of the uproar the pistol shots had made.

The smooth skin of the man behind the submachine-gun gleamed with pale menace in the half light. The wide mouth opened. Thin lips writhed in triumphant grimace.

**The gunner who stood there threatening quick death was Jans Bergman** -- the man with the close-cropped hair whom Doc had left on 97<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan in an apartment with a squad car of the police department closing.

-----

"There is only one way you could have gotten here so soon," Doc said quietly.

"One way," Bergman agreed with his heavy foreign accent. "In the luggage compartment of your coupe."

"You are clever," Doc said.

"You had a lot on your mind," Bergman said grimly. "That helped. Stowed away in that compartment, I heard the radio 'SOS' that came through from here."

"How did you leave everybody on 97<sup>th</sup> Street?"

"Pretty badly shot up. It was a nice trick -- the **smoke**. But your last trick, I think."

Doc straightened.

"Hold your hands high!" Bergman slashed. "Keep them wide apart! Even the fingers -- keep them open."

Doc complied.

"And the feet -- step them wide apart."



Doc moved to stand wide-legged.

"That's better," Bergman said. "You don't trick me this time."

Doc stared with a certain grimness into the slitted eyes of his enemy. He spoke what he was thinking.

"But few men have opposed me before and risked another meeting."

"I," Bergman bragged, "am a bold man."

"Perhaps only foolhardy."

"You are the foolhardy one if you think you can outsmart Jans Bergman. Maybe you're wearing bulletproof clothes. Don't depend upon them. My machine-gun lead will push your face out the back of your skull."

Doc shrugged and asked evenly: "Now that you have 'the bear by the tail', what do you propose to do?"

Bergman stared, his slitted eyes glittering.

"I'll keep holding 'the bear by the tail' until ...

"... until a very few moments. Do you hear what I hear?"

*Outside the house, an auto was droning up the driveway. The sound throbbed close, then died.*

*Car doors slammed! Feet scraped across the wooden porch, entered the house.*

Bergman yelled: "This way, you guys!"

*Foot scuffling and muttered curses sounded closer.*

"Inside here," Bergman ordered. "Get a line on him from 4 angles. If he moves a finger a quarter-of-an-inch, let him have it. In the face!"

4 men -- black shadows in the gray gloom -- eased inside the room and took positions within a yard of Doc, their machine-guns poking for his face.

Bergman bent ...placed his rapid-firer on the floor ... and approached Doc with handcuffs in one hand and an automatic in the other.

He said hoarsely to cover his nervousness: "Now you will see how we treat the 'bear' we have caught 'by the tail'."

*Something happened then.*

*Jans Bergman was jolted by surprise greater than any which had come to him in his active life!*



Doc Savage did not move his feet. He did not move his hands. He did not even move his fingers.

But suddenly! there was a sound that might have been *explosion* in slow motion.

There was *super-white light*, too. It was an undertone of blue. And looking at it was something like looking at the arc of an electric welding operation.

It did things to the eye. In fact, it brought blindness that was momentarily complete.

Doc Savage had his own eyes closed tightly and thus escaped the blinding effect of the flash to a great degree. He ducked for safety as lead spurted with ear-shattering *clatter!*

Jans Bergman began bellowing for his men to quit their suicidal shooting. More than any of them, Bergman came near understanding what had happened.

He had caught the flash of Doc's wristwatch an instant before the flash came. He had realized the **Bronze Man** had expanded wrist muscles so as to split the case and release the contents.

*Jans Bergman, of course, knew nothing of the chemical composition of the powder which had been in the watch and when released into the air had ignited instantly by spontaneous combustion. Nor did he know that the powder was one which when burning (it burned like ordinary flash light powder) gave off those rays of light most destructive over a temporary period to the delicate nerve mechanism of the human eye.*

While his enemies were milling about cursing, shooting, and gradually getting vision back into their eyes, Doc Savage plunged out into the hall.

He slammed the door behind him ... streaked through the shadowed house ... and went outside into the sea fog which still rolled in from the Sound.

The **Bronze Man** made for his coupe in the driveway and got there in time to hear Renny's frantic voice trying to raise Doc through the loudspeaker. There was no way of telling how long Renny had been calling.

"Doc!" Renny was rumbling urgently. "*Calling Doc Savage! Important!*"

Doc grasped the microphone and said into the apparatus: "Listening."

"Doc," Renny thumped, "*I am shoving off in my car ... gonna join you. I've learned something. Boris Ramadanoff! Holy cow ... he ...*"

**A grinding crash blasted from the microphone.**

It was a noise such as might have been made by 2 cars crashing together at high speed.

"Renny," Doc called in alarm, "are you all right?"

"*All ... right ... Doc,*" sounded Renny's voice, faintly.



"Quick! What did you find out?"

*A new voice jumped from the microphone -- harsh and mocking.*

*"The same thing you'll find out, Savage. After it's too late!"*

*Very soon ...*



*... the Count will have his way with his new **Whore!***



## VII -- Subway Seizure

Doc trod the starter of his car.

But the great motor under its long hood did not throb into life. It remained as cold and unresponsive as the water-dripping trees which loomed through the fog.

He dived out and lifted the hood. He could see at a glance what was wrong.

Wiring had been torn loose and ignition parts smashed. Jans Bergman obviously had used a monkey wrench before entering the house.

The gunfire had ceased inside the house. But it soon cracked from close outside! Lead skidded off the armor plate of the gunmetal coupe, mushroomed against the bulletproof glass. Hoarse shouts sounded!

Doc Savage -- a *bronze flash* -- *streaked* from the other side of the car and melted into the fog.

Bullets came hunting him, chopping through wet branches. Doc twisted running low ... changed his course, crashed on through fog-drenched trees ... and came out on the automobile highway.

A truck headed toward New York City pounded past.

The **Bronze Man** left the ground in a headlong leap and got a grip on the end-gate of the wheeling truck. He crawled over the gate and made his way forward.

From behind, he had been sighted by his enemies. Machine-gun slugs crashed out of the gray murk but fanned harmlessly past as the heavy truck swayed around a curve. Doc reached the truck driver.

"Faster," he ordered.

The driver took one startled look and jammed the accelerator to the floorboards. The truck stepped up to 55, weaving ponderously on the wet pavement. They covered a mile-or-two.

55 mph was not fast enough. At that speed, they could be overtaken by Jans Bergman.

A sleek sedan bored from behind doing a few miles more than the truck. But it was not Bergman -- just a motorist.

As the motorist swung left to pass around the truck, there was a *thump* on his sedan which gave the driver a badly startled moment.

A bigger moment followed for him when unceremoniously a door of his car opened.

Doc Savage had left the truck with a gauged leap, landing on the speeding sedan!

"Let me have the wheel," he ordered.

The bulging-eyed driver shot one gasping look at the *bronze giant* and complied.



Doc took the wheel. The speedometer needle went to 80 ... 85 ... 90 miles-an-hour.

They were out of the fog now. Doc looked behind. There was a car tailing them.

He recognized it. Jans Bergman's. The pursuing car was coming up fast.

They were running through traffic now. Doc did not want to subject pedestrians or his drafted driver to the dangers of speed and machine-gun bullets.

He said to the man who had been driving: "Slow down ahead there. I'm going to the subway station. I'm leaving you."

"Okay, D...Doc Savage," the other stuttered.

He had recognized the **Bronze Man**. He would brag about this experience for the rest of his life. And so would the truck driver.

The brakes *squealed* like stuck pigs and tires slithered as the sedan buckled in toward the curb.

"Thanks!" Doc flung and plunged down the subway stairs.

A second afterward, Jans Bergman's car -- rubber smoking -- careened to the curb.

Bergman stayed in the car but three of his men burst out and followed Doc down the stairway.

-----  
The automatic steel doors of a Manhattan-bound express train were sliding shut as the **Bronze Man** flashed through the subway turnstile.

A split-second before the door hooks caught, Doc's outstretched hand fastened on the rubber-cushioned door edge and yanked the door open again! He disappeared within the brightly-lighted car and let the door slide shut at his heels.

The doors to cars in New York subway trains are connected by a safety mechanism to the motorman's controls. When Doc stayed the closing of one door, it delayed the starting of the train. This gave Jans Bergman's men time to squeeze through the windows of another car.

The train started. It roared its way through the black tube.

The train was crowded. Passengers were standing closely packed in the wide aisle, some of them with hands reaching up to hold white-enameled grab-irons.

The cosmopolitan population of New York City is less observing, perhaps, than the citizenry of any other city in the United States. People crowd the streets, subways, towering skyscrapers of the metropolis with blank looks on their faces, immersed almost wholly in their own business.

It is doubtful if even as commanding a personality as Doc Savage would have been noticed in the closely-packed subway except for the fact that the **Bronze Man** over-topped by a head the tallest man in the car.



People were beginning to murmur, to point, to gasp with recognition when suddenly there was a *crash* of sound. A **blinding** swath of *greenish-blue* light enveloped the train.

With an ear-piercing shriek of brake shoes on wheeling metal, the train bucked to a violent stop, flinging many of the people in the car to the floor!

Following the blinding greenish *glare*, **darkness** shut down -- the darkness of underground places, jet and utter. *Acrid* smoke fumes drifted through broken windows, causing the panic-stricken passengers to shriek and struggle in mad frenzy against each other.

A uniformed trainman switched on a flashlight and bawled at the top of his voice.

*"There's no danger! Short circuit, that's all!"*

The light was knocked from his hand by somebody's thrashing arm. But he kept on bawling to the milling passengers.

*"No danger! Take it easy! No danger!"*

The New York underground is as safe as any railway in the World. The passengers knew this.

Gradually the panic subsided as the hoarsely repeated words *"No danger! No danger!"* penetrated through the din to their consciousness.

-----

For one person in that car, there was danger however.

This had been no ordinary short circuit. The unscheduled stop had been promoted by one of Jans Bergman's men.

As the subway went back and the cars lurched to a standstill, Doc's great form was jostled to the floor with those others. But it was not alone the jolting car which had taken Doc off his feet.

In the darkness, **2 hard swung blackjacks had thudded against his head!**

Before the lights went on under cover of the confusion, it was a relatively simple matter for Jans Bergman's thugs to lift Doc's limp body through a window and carry it down the black passageway. They cursed under their heavy burden and stumbled often, being careful to feel their way by scuffing their shoes along the cold rail at the opposite side of the track from the hooded death of the *electrically-live* third rail.

They came to a place where a **red** light glowed, marking an emergency exit in the massive expanse of dusty reinforced concrete. Onto the catwalk platform, they lifted Doc and carried him with effort up the steep steps.

Out on the street with their limp burden, they ran slam into a stick-twirling policeman.

One of the men cursed under his breath and his hand jerked toward his coat pocket. Before he could draw his automatic, his quicker-witted companion had knocked his hand aside and blurted to the policeman:



"Subway accident ... train stalled ... this guy we're carryin' out overcome by gas! Lot more of them down there in the same fix. S'awful! You better report it."

Deceived and conscious of his importance in being the first to turn in a report of a first-page headline accident, the copper rushed for a call box.

Doc's captors rushed for a taxi and shoved the **Bronze Man** inside.

One of them clipped to the driver: "Nearest hospital."

He spoke loudly for the benefit of spectators crowding close.

But it was not in a hospital room that Doc opened his eyes.

He was lying on his face on a brick floor with his wrists handcuffed behind him.

He turned sidewise ... maneuvered his legs under him ... and got to his feet.

Light filtered wanly through a sidewalk grating, illuminating the bare, brick-walled room. The place was damp, musty-smelling. A single steel fire door, tightly closed, was the only exit.

Doc tried his weight against the door. His ramming shoulder attack shuddered the rusty sheet steel. With time, he might break through.

Then he heard voices outside and paused, listening. He could not catch the words at first.

XX

Mixed in with the voices were the *cries* and *whimperings* of a young woman being abused.







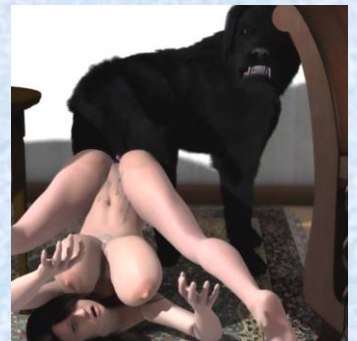
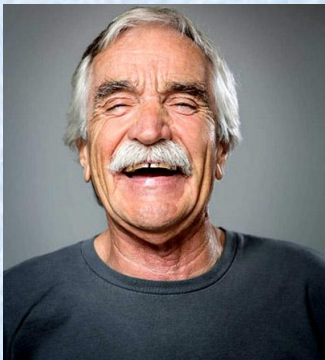
















[Knocked-Up Slut]

While the muffled mumble of voices approached, Doc tried his strength on the handcuffs which bound him. Other times in his life, he had broken the connecting link on a pair of handcuffs by utilization of sheer strength and wrist leverage.

***Muscles*** bulged and rippled now as he bent forward exerting a terrific tug on the steel cuffs!

He tried only once. Then he knew what he was up against.



His enemies were taking no chances with him. His hands had been locked behind him with the most modern of tempered chrome handcuffs. A sledge and chisel would not have sufficed to get the cuffs off his wrists. It was work for a cutting torch.

Another appalling feature was that the cuffs contracted (i.e., took up slack) when pressure was exerted against them, forcing a saw edge into lacerating contact with the wrists. **Crimson** dripped from his skin where the steel points had gouged.

The **Bronze Man** bent his fingers upward till they could touch the end of his coat sleeve. His fingers moved deftly, unraveling a thread.

From a pocket in the coat sleeve, his hands received a small metal envelope -- flexible as lead foil.

Doc opened one end of the envelope with his fingernail and carefully maneuvered his hands to pour the liquid contents (a few drops only) on the handcuff links.

The talking men outside had now approached close enough to the door that Doc could hear what they were saying. He recognized one of the voices.

It was Jans Bergman's. The blond, bullet-headed leader with the skull-tight skin had apparently just come in. His glib pronouncements sounded strange when uttered with that foreign accent.

Doc heard him saying *"You left his clothes on? You fools!"*

A sullen voice answered. "We frisked him. Got everything he had."

"You couldn't have gotten half of it! Savage has a thousand pockets. You could yank out his teeth, shave his head, and pull out his nails and he'd still have enough chemicals hidden on him to blow up a battleship!"

The other curved nervously. "I don't like it ... monkeyin' with this **bronze** guy!"

"You're getting your cut."

"What good's heavy sugar if I croak before I can blow it?"

*There was a silence -- heavy, oppressive.*

Then Bergman asked: "Has he come out of it yet?"

"Look through and see for yourself," the other snarled. "I ain't even lookin' at him any more. He's like a poisonous snake to me."

There was a sharp *metallic* rasping as Bergman slid back an eye-slit in the door and peered through.

-----

He saw Doc lying on his back, feigning unconsciousness.

"He's still out," Bergman said.



"He ought to be. We both of us give him a tap that would have busted a cable on Brooklyn Bridge."

*There was another silence, more ominous than the one before.*

When Bergman spoke again, it was in a hoarse voice, curiously hushed.

"We've got to kill him," he said.

"Maybe you're right," the other muttered. "But how would we kill him? A gunshot would bring one of them thousand-legged bugs crawlin' down our necks."

"A gunshot, yes. But a slit throat makes little noise."

"Get close enough to that **bronze** guy to cut his throat? Not for mine."

"He's handcuffed."

"Suppose he skins out of them cuffs?"

"How can he?"

"How can he do a lot of things he does?"

"All right, suppose he gets out of the cuffs? He can't. But if he does, look at the knives. We won't have to get so close to him as you're thinking."

Bergman tiptoed aside. From under a litter of boxes and excelsior packing, he lifted 2 huge knives, bone-handled, with blades nearly half-a-foot in width and close to a yard long.

To Doc's ears came the gasped words "*Sugar cane knives, ain't they?*"

**"Right. I'm going to cut Savage's head off!"**

The heavy door swung open with ponderous creaking and Jans Bergman -- followed closely by his companion -- advanced across the damp bricks toward Doc's prone form.

The assassins walked in a crouch, their ***machetes*** raised high.

-----  
Once in reach of Doc Savage, they paused.

"If I don't make a clean job with the first stroke," Bergman muttered, "dip your own knife in the blood. Then follow me out in a hurry."

The other's teeth started chattering. The massive knife wavered and he grasped it with both hands.

"I'm practically out on the sidewalk now," he husked.

**Bergman's knife lifted higher ...**



*... then down it chopped, the wide blade glinting dully in the half light.*

The first stroke was not enough. It was not even a starter.

As the blade swished close, Doc -- whose muscles had been tensely braced against the floor -- wrenched his head and shoulders forward.

It was too late for Jans Bergman to change his stroke. The frightful blade slammed past Doc's head and sank inches deep in the mortar.

Before Bergman could pull the blade free -- before his companion could chop down with the other knife -- Doc sprang an even greater surprise on them.

His arm (now free from the handcuffs) struck out and down against the back of the mortar-imprisoned blade, knocking it forcibly from Bergman's grasp! At the same time, his other hand streaked forward and grabbed the handle.

"No handcuffs!" the other man shrieked in terror as he chopped down, holding his knife in both hands.

Doc parried the down stroke with the knife he had taken from Bergman. Steel met steel with grinding *clangor*!

The knife aimed at Doc skittered in the air, glinting like water heaved from a bucket and *clattered* on the bricks at the other side of the room.

"No handcuffs!" Bergman echoed.

The skin was drawn so taut across his face in his terror at the spectacle of the *bronze giant* wielding that slab of razor-blade steel that it seemed his cheekbones must poke through.

The explanation of Doc's handcuff escape was simple.

The liquid he had released from the flexible metal envelope had been an acid which made short shift of steel such as composed those handcuff links.

From outside the room sounded excited voices and approaching footsteps.

Doc Savage bolted for the door, brandishing his fearful weapon in the faces of the newcomers and scowling ferociously.

Doc made no attack on these enemies. He was looking for bigger game now.

He took the basement steps in a series of bounds. From above, he hurled the unwieldy cane knife down since he preferred to depend upon his own scientifically-developed weapons.

Locking the solid door at the top of the landing and bolting it against the aggregation below, he stalked away in search of the Master Schemer he knew to be somewhere in the building. In search, too, of Renny and Long Tom whom he surmised must have been captured.

It was this last objective which had brought Doc to this building.



Back in the subway, the **Bronze Man** had not been knocked out by those thudding blackjack blows.

He had only feigned unconsciousness, reasoning that the quickest way to locate his aides (if they were still alive) was to maneuver to get himself taken to their place of imprisonment.

*When Pat meets the Count ...*





## VIII -- The Thumb-Hole Death

Mounting from the basement flight-after-flight, Doc Savage was not long in discovering the type of building he was in.

It was one of those ancient tenements -- condemned and abandoned -- on the upper West Side of New York City near the Hudson River. It was a sore spot among the surrounding modern buildings. Its windows blanked out with time-chipped whitewash.

As he raced upward, his senses were alert to catch the faintest sign of human habitation. His footfalls sounded hollowly against the worn, splintery floor, revealing wooden laths like the ribs of something long dead.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> floor, Doc paused. Here, plaster on the hall floor had been ground under many feet.

He went up another flight. Here, too, plaster had been crushed underfoot. This building was several stones taller than most of its kind.

Doc went up 2 more flights to the top floor -- the 9<sup>th</sup>.

There were signs of recent passage on the stairway leading to the roof. He went up.

At the top landing, he had a mild surprise.

A fire door of modern steel construction had recently been built in. It was solidly placed.

For the present, Doc contented himself with peering through a lookout slit in the door.

His almost inaudible *trilling* sound, weirdly traversing the musical scale -- that small, unconscious manifestation of Doc Savage in moments of stress or surprise -- tremored in the dead air of early evening as the *Man of Bronze* focused his *eyes* on the rooftop.

He saw a plane -- a gyro of ultra-modern design -- lashed down on the roof under a collapsible silk-cloth shelter. Huge silencers were attached to motor exhaust stacks.

The roof had been leveled, patched, reinforced, and a raised apparatus -- a Navy-type catapult -- erected. There was also a conventional cable device to kill landing speed.

That the roof had been used for landings was evident by the wheel marks. The district was a mercantile one, virtually empty after business hours. Surrounding buildings were low.

Quite evidently, the gyro did not operate from this base by municipal permit. But it must have been able to go-and-come by night undetected. *Luminous* paint markings on the roof were commencing to glow in the twilight. A clever scheme for night landings.

Doc turned -- *noiseless, a shadow in the failing light* -- and silently descended the stairs.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> floor, he paused for a detailed search. Tracks in the plaster dust led to closed doors of several rooms.



Before each door Doc paused ... listening. He made no sound. *He might have been a **bronze, floating cloud**.*

Suddenly a screeching, splintering noise **crashed** through the shadowed hallway!

It was a screeching of hinges rent from doors and the splintering of the door itself under the **terrific** force of Doc Savage's lunge!

Listening in the hall, Doc had caught the sound of human breathing inside the room. As he smashed through the door, a man who had been bending over twirling the dials of a modern safe straightened up with a guttural curse.

From the crashed-in door, all that was visible of the man was a bulky body with a blunt, close-cropped head.

**Jans Bergman!**

-----

In the time it took for Bergman to jerk his bullet head around to look, Doc Savage had cleared the width of the room and locked a **steel-thewed arm** around the man.

Bergman struggled, trying to get at the automatic in his pocket.

He was a big man. During his youth in his native country, he had won recognition as a wrestler.

But with Doc's arm holding tighter and **tighter**, strength flowed out of Bergman's body until -- if Doc had not held him up -- he would have fallen to the floor.

Doc appropriated Bergman's automatic and tossed it clattering onto the writing surface of an old-fashioned roll-top desk. Then he allowed Bergman to slump into a chair.

Doc indicated the safe. He said: "Greed brings many men to ruin. You did not leave when you had the chance. You came back here to help yourself to more money."

"Yes! Let's get out of here ... **while we're alive!**"

Jans Bergman was staring up at Doc with panic creeping into his slitted eyes. Sweat was beading his brow and glistening in the close-cropped hair on his head.

"Who is your boss?" Doc questioned.

Bergman's thin lips pressed so tightly that they disappeared in the stretched smoothness of his skin. He shook his head.

Doc shrugged. "All right. But here is one you will answer. Where are my 2 men that were brought here before me?"

Bergman's lips writhed. "I have nothing to say!"



Doc settled himself on the large roll-top desk and said: "We will stay here until you talk."

"Savage, you're nuts!" Bergman jabbered. "It's as dangerous for you in here as it is for me! Sometimes a man drops dead with nobody near him. What has killed him is a little hole in his temple about the size you could poke your thumb into."

"What makes that hole?" Doc queried, curiously.

"I don't know. But I'll tell you where your men are ... "

*In the twilight murkiness of the room leaped a peculiar sound -- a kind of fleshy crunch.*

**Bergman's words died in his throat. His head flopped sidewise. His shoulders followed it with flowing motion. His head thumped hollowly against the floor.**

**His body lay there in a twisted huddle.**

Doc leaped from the desk and made a quick examination. His fingers encountered a bone-crushed depression in the left temple -- a smooth, white wound -- in its size and contour the same as a man's thumb would have made if jabbed into white lard.

Even as Doc looked, the wound commenced to ooze scarlet in *red pinpoints* which quickly built up an overflowing **red puddle**. Bergman's flat ear divided the 2 streams which ran onto the floor.

Jans Bergman's racketeering days were over.

He was a victim of what he had called the "*thumb-hole death*".

-----  
A voice sounded in the room, precise.

*"The same thing could have happened to anyone. Anyone!"*

No one had come into the darkening room. There was no one standing outside the doorway. There was only that mocking voice rebounding from the walls.

Doc turned and fastened his gaze on the roll-top desk.

A laugh floated mockingly into the room.

*"Congratulations, my dear Savage. You have located my voice. Almost any second now, you may look toward the doorway where you will be confronted by a second menace. Not so mysterious but fully as deadly as that thing which Jans Bergman so quaintly called the '**thumb-hole death**'."*

Shoe scuffling sounded from down the hall.

Doc turned to see 2 men loom inside the doorway. They were clearly none of Bergman's men. They were squat Mongol types -- massive of shoulder, heavy of jowl. They carried equally heavy, squat weapons -- short guns with stubby barrels flared at the muzzle.



*"Meet my personal bodyguard, Savage," the voice sounded. "Their weapons will interest you. They are instruments of my own designing, combining the features of a sawed ..."*

A faint *whirring* sounded and a stout oak panel in the side of the roll-top desk slid back.

A man stepped out into the room and the panel closed behind him. He stood there with black glittering eyes -- a little man with an Old World manner and a black Czar-of-Russia beard.

**It was Boris Ramadanoff!**

Doc evinced no surprise.

Ramadanoff said suavely: "Why should you wish to be here?"

"To secure the release of my 2 men."

As he spoke, the **Bronze Man** commenced sliding the toe of his right foot toward the cuff on his left trousers leg.

Ramadanoff's beady eyes caught the movement.

"Hold it!" he slashed angrily and then in throaty Asiatic speech barked an order to his bodyguard.

The 2 squat assassins -- Mongol eyes closing to slanting penciled slits in their broad faces -- moved closer with their fantastic guns.

Ramadanoff warned Doc: "Twice you have escaped with your tricks. You will not do so a third time. The movement of a single muscle will bring you death."

Ramadanoff stepped forward, stooped, and ran his fingers quickly around Doc's trouser cuff while the 2 Mongols held a steady bead on Doc's head with those wide-lipped guns.

In the left cuff, Ramadanoff's fingers closed on a small metal packet. He detached it with a quick movement and stepped back, holding the article as gingerly in his fingers as though it were a nitroglycerine cap. He deposited it upon the desk top, being careful not to allow it the slightest jar.

He faced Doc triumphantly. "Now, no more tricks. The claws of the tiger are drawn!"

*The last words were spoken in a tone somewhat strange. They were jumbled as if the tongue that made them was suddenly under the influence of an intoxicant.*

Then the little man with the beard demonstrated that he was an amazingly quick thinker. As lightning strikes, so did the realization of something wrong hit him. And he acted simultaneously.

Straight to the door he flung to literally fall through it!

Doc Savage had been slightly crouched ... waiting ... knowing what was to come. The mechanism of the little packet was such that it would open shortly after being detached from his trousers cuff. It held some of the **anesthetic gas** which he had developed long ago and which he used so frequently. It was odorless, colorless, and its effects were almost instantaneous.



Doc lunged through the invisible gas. Holding his breath had saved him from the anesthetic gas.

But where the door should have been there was something else!

Doc collided with such force against an unyielding surface that he was flung back. He kept his breath in his lungs.

As firmly set as concrete, a smooth **metallic surface** was now mysteriously substituted for the wooden door which he had bashed in with his fists.

He heaved the full weight of his massive shoulders, ramming with all the power of his remarkably developed body!

The surface did not budge.

From outside in the hallway sounded Boris Ramadanoff's sardonic (if weak) laugh. His voice filtered in faintly. He had not gotten enough of the anesthetic to overcome him.

*"Just a trick, Savage," he snarled. "I managed to press a button on my way out, sliding the steel door into place from within the wall. Did you think I had no more protection for my safety than the wooden door you broke down? You can stay in there and simmer in your own juice -- as the Yankees say -- or perish in your own gas."*

*"I will go hack and tell my brother it was a mistake for him to have sent me to New York for you. You cannot be controlled. Very well ...*

*"... then **DIE!**"*

*Coming up later ...*



*... Pat will be "entertained" by her new **Daddy!***



## IX -- Flaming Fury

While Ramadanoff's voice droned from the hallway, Doc turned. 3 great strides carried him to the window.

There was a grating sound that would have set a man's teeth on edge. It was caused by Doc Savage's fingertips scraping on smooth metal. The same mechanism which had blocked the doorway with heavy sheet steel had similarly actuated a steel window barrier!

With both door and window barred to exit, Doc drove his *metallic fist* against the plaster of the wall.

It was a futile move. He found that the walls had been reinforced with heavy metal back of the plaster.

Still holding his breath against the anesthetic vapor, Doc hurled himself across the room. He had one last hope -- the movable panel in the roll-top desk. There was not time to look for the control key which would open the panel. There was time only to crash it in.

Swiftly, Doc felt out the boundaries of the stout oak with his sensitive fingers.

Then his fists drummed a mighty tattoo. But fists were not enough.

His shoulders lunged! He braced himself against the wall and kicked!

His hand drifted out and contacted a heavy chair. He swung it in a wide arc. The chair splintered in a dozen places ... but the panel remained unmoved.

**He was trapped!**

Not from the gas, however. That would become harmless in a few seconds as it mingled more completely with the air.

Faintly from an unidentifiable source, voices sounded. The words were not articulate. But Doc could recognize the tones.

It was Renny and Long Tom shouting from some part of the building. They had heard the noise and aware of Doc's presence in the building they were shouting in the frantic hope that their voices might direct him to their rescue.

They had no way of knowing that the **Bronze Man's** situation was as desperate as their own.

Doc could breathe now. The anesthetic gas had dissipated. It was now powerless due to chemical reaction with the oxygen in the air.

He flung himself upon the massive roll-top desk. His attack was not chaotic but planned so that he could use every muscle in his *powerful* body.

**Wedging himself on top of the writing surface with knees jackknifed in air, feet braced against one end, shoulders against the other ...**



*... he pushed!*

---

*Muscles bunched and quivered ...*

... and suddenly his jackknifed knees went straight!

There was a screeching of rent metal as he pried the desk apart! Doc parted the rest of the desk with his hands, making an opening large enough to squeeze through.

He found that the sliding panel had given onto a secret upward passage converted from an old dumbwaiter shaft.

Before plunging in, Doc leaped back into the room and examined the prone bodies of the 2 Asiatics. He found about what he had expected.

Both men were senseless from the anesthetic gas and would remain so for some time.

Turning, Doc bolted for the dumbwaiter shaft. His hands closed on the rungs of a built-in ladder. He streaked upward like an islander climbing a palm!

A partition had been roofed across the shaft at the next floor level.

In the side wall in front of him, Doc's probing fingers found a wooden door. His **fists** battered, the blows ringing hollowly.

The door was as stout as the one built into the roll-top desk. It did not yield.

But Doc's pounding occasioned an uproar from the other side of the door. Voices came through in wild clamor.

"Doc? Is it you?" That was Long Tom.

"Holy cow, Doc!" That would be Renny.

"Stand back from this door!" Doc called.

He jackknifed his body between the door and the opposite shaft wall using the same kind of bodily leverage he had utilized on the roll-top desk.

The door broke in with splintering **crash!** and Doc was catapulted inside the room.

Beyond the Palisades, the Sun had gone down. Already Broadway was blazing under a sun of its own making. A billion electric bulbs supplied scattered illumination for the rest of the city.

But the room in which Doc stood reunited with Renny and Long Tom was dark. Electrical connections had long since been cut off from the outside.



Renny boomed: "The little squirt with the bush on his map yelled at us just before you came. He said ... "

" ... he's **firing** the building and leaving us to burn!" Long Tom cut in.

"This trap would go up like a gasoline tank, Doc."

Long Tom added: "We've been trying to break down the door ... "

Renny cracked his big **fists** together and wailed: "I've nearly wore 'em out on that door, Doc! She almost breaks. But not quite."

*It was evident to Doc that Renny considered his reputation at stake as well as his life. Renny had long boasted (and backed up his boast) that his bare **fists** could pound the panel out of any wooden door.*

"I smell smoke!" Long Tom gasped.

Doc's sensitive nostrils had already detected the *acrid* odor of the smoke.

"This building has been fired," he admitted.

"Listen!" Long Tom breathed.

*A heart-stopping sound -- the seething crackle of **Flames** feeding through dry wooden floors -- wafted to them faintly.*

"We got to get out of here!" Renny blared.

"Right," Long Tom seconded.

"Come on, Renny," Doc directed. "We will try the door."

-----

Under the combined fist battering and shoulder lunging of Doc and Renny, the door shuddered ... groaned ... then collapsed like a hut in a tornado.

**Smoke** billowed in as all 3 men burst out. It was slightly lighter in the hall in spite of the smoke.

"Stay close," Doc rapped and leaped for the stairway.

Renny roared: "Holy cow! *That's the wrong way!*"

"The other way is down," Long Tom added.

Taking the steps several at a time, Doc did not pause to explain.

He disappeared in the smoke and darkness of the floor above and forged on up the next flight of stairs.



His *flake-gold eyes* -- ever alert -- had seen something his aides had missed.

---

Doc had glimpsed Boris Ramadanoff scuttling around the bend of the stair landing above. The **Bronze Man**'s giant strides slashed the distance between himself and the murderous little man. At the top of the roof flight, Doc was only a little behind.

Ramadanoff went out on the roof like an eel. He got the door shut behind him. A snap lock caught and held as Doc rammed the panel with terrific force.

After Doc had tried his strength on the door that once, he did not waste time on it again.

From the roof, Boris Ramadanoff shouted with raw gloating: "*Stay there and burn!*"

Doc did not hear. He had already vaulted the banister and landed on the smoke-filled floor below. He met Renny and Long Tom coming up.

"Down," he ordered. "Back into the room out of which we just came!"

"We can't, Doc!" Renny thumped.

"Fire's already cut us off from that floor!" Long Tom cried.

Creating its own draft, the **Fire** funneled up the stairway below them. A few flights down, there was a *crash* as something collapsed.

"Down!" Doc ordered and led the way.

Unquestioning, Long Tom and Renny followed him, shielding their eyes and slapping at **flames** that caught their clothes.

"This was our only chance," Doc threw out as they gained the room.

Long Tom's eyes were seared shut with smoke. "Doc, where are you?"

"This way!"

They followed his voice, crowding into the shaft out of which Doc had smashed his way a few minutes before to rescue them. Splintering wood showered down on their heads.

"**The building's falling!**" Renny roared.

---

But it was only part of the building. The overhead partition which had been built in to seal off the shaftway. Doc had torn it out.

Doc said: "Follow me up. There's no ladder above. We will have to brace ourselves -- feet and shoulders in the shaft -- and shove with our hands. It is only 2 floors to the roof."



"Is the shaft open at the roof?" Long Tom gasped.

"If it is not, we will have to open it," Doc replied.

"What good is it gonna do to get on the roof?" Renny questioned hoarsely.

"Save your breath," Doc advised. "Climb."

The shaft was not open at the roof. While the **Fire** roared and *crackled* behind them and **smoke** packed about them like black mortar, Doc struck and heaved against the roof surface which capped the shaftway.

The **Bronze Man's** *metallic muscles* were more enduring than the planks which opposed them. His prodigious hands tore out a hole big enough for his body to follow.

From the roof, a throbbing drone reached his ears. It was Boris Ramadanoff's gyro plane.

It had taken Ramadanoff a few minutes to clear the airplane of its silk-cloth covering. But now the machine with its "windmill" revolving was wrenched along by the Navy-type catapult for a take-off.

The gyro pitched dangerously to one side as it cleared the catapult. The side pitch gave Boris Ramadanoff a nasty moment as the rooftops below tilted dizzily. The whirling "windmill" blades steadied the plane and Ramadanoff snatched an easy breath.

*But he was totally unaware of the reason for that unexpected side pitch.*

Many curious persons -- crowding the street to watch the **Fire** -- could have told him the cause. Gasps left many throats as watchers saw something they could hardly believe.

They saw the gyro float up from the roof, glinting **red** in the lurid reflected light of flames. That alone was exciting enough. **An escape by airplane from a burning building!**

The gasps which sprang from a multitude of lips, however, was not occasioned alone by the rising gyro.

What brought the sound from throats was the **figure of a man clinging to the tail skid of the gyro**, causing the "windmill" plane to pitch alarmingly and the man's dangling body to swing from side-to-side.

The spectacle was visible for only an unreal instant ...

Then the lifting gyro and the man dangling in thin air from the understructure were blotted out by smoke.

If the awed watchers could have seen what followed, they would have received an even greater thrill.

Climbing with an agility made possible only by *tremendous muscles*, Doc Savage worked astride the fuselage and toward the open cockpit of the gyro.

Boris Ramadanoff uttered a hoarse yell when -- warned by the behavior of the plane -- he turned and saw the **Bronze Man** come into view. The presence of Doc on the plane after an iron door had slammed in his face locking him in a burning building smacked momentarily of the *supernatural*. At least to Ramadanoff, it did.

As though bitten by demons, the bearded man reared up and plunged overboard from the opposite side of the cockpit.

His body dropped. He wore a parachute and this promptly bloomed, snubbing his fall.

Doc reached the cockpit and took the controls. Back to the burning building, he headed.

The crowd in the streets got another thrill.

They saw the gyro float in through smoke -- **blood-red** in the reflections of the flame -- and like a gigantic humming bird settle out-of-sight on the rooftop.

The excitement that the streetwatchers experienced was not a fraction of the one Long Tom and Renny felt there on the blistering roof.

The crowd yelled itself hoarse when the gyro arose again.

Most of them thought they were witnessing a sensational fire department rescue although a few noisily expressed the opinion that the whole thing was a publicity stunt of some kind.

*Very soon ...*



*... the sophisticated Pat Savage gets s-t-r-e-c-h-e-d to the Max!*



## X -- Equatorial Flight

When Boris Ramadanoff bailed out of the gyro, his parachute lowered him into a narrow strip of parkway between Riverside Drive and the Hudson River.

There was but one person to witness his landing. That individual being a bench derelict sodden with alcohol.

He merely stared wild-eyed, believing the spectacle of the man crashing into the underbrush with something like a bedsheet fluttering over his head to be a variation of the old "pink elephant" theme.

Boris Ramadanoff, therefore, was enabled to land virtually unseen.

Skinning out of his 'chute harness and scrambling through the park shrubbery, he scurried up the long flight of stone steps to the street level and caught a taxi on the Drive. On 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue directly west of the Times Square district, he directed the driver to the curb.

"Wait for me," he called and leaped out and ducked into a grimy doorway.

*He was back soon, clutching a stiff object wrapped inside a trailing blanket.*

"West Street!" he barked.

Riding toward the river, Ramadanoff took the ends of the blanket and wrapped them more snugly about the object which he carried.

XX

He was nervous and scared and needed something to take the "edge" off. He looked angrily at the cab window ...

... then he spotted something that might do the trick. A prim slender woman was *tap-tap-tapping* down the dirty sidewalk. She almost looked out of place.





"A fucking **Whore!**" Ramadanoff thought to himself. But then he regarded all women as **whores**.

"Just what I need right now," he said to himself.

But it was loud enough that the menacing taxidriver heard it. He looked in the rearview mirror at his fare.

"Mind if I get a piece of the **bitch**, too?" he asked.

"Sure," grinned Ramadanoff. "Why-the-hell not!"

The driver slowed his vehicle so that it would intersect the woman just as she was crossing a vacant alleyway. Both of the men had stiff erect penises now.



Suddenly the cab screeched its brakes and came to a stop. The perky young woman was startled and jumped. But strong hands quickly covered her mouth and yanked her back into the dirty bowels of the alley.





"Now strip, you goddamn **Whore!**" Ramadanoff yelled. "Git them clothes off right now and be quick about it! I'm in a hurry!"

The young lady was stunned and naïve. This was all new to her. Plus ...

... she was a VIRGIN!

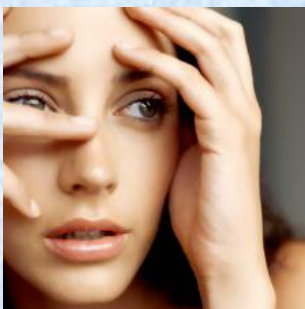
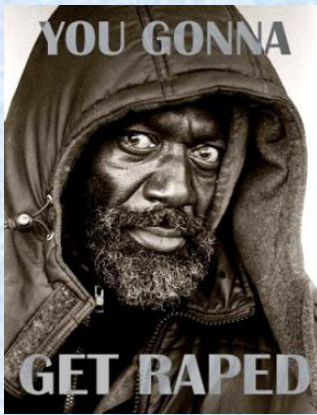


"Please don't!" she begged them. "Please don't ... R- ... Ra- ... **Rape** me!"

She had trouble pronouncing the word. But when she finally said it, it was almost like she was talking "dirty" to them. It aroused them even more!

The African-American taxidriver was anxious to see her breasts. Once he got off her flimsy bra and panties, the rest of her slender body looked just as yummy ...



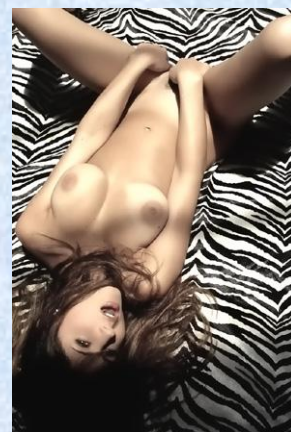
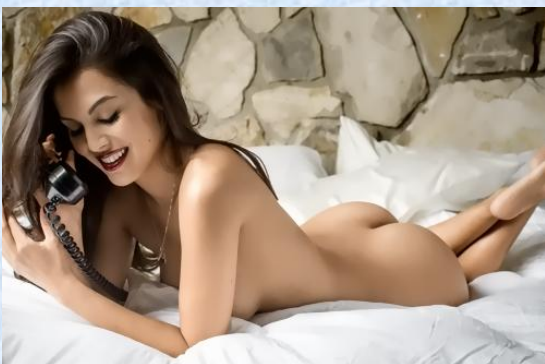




With the foreplay finished, she was finally ready for the "main event".

"Spread those legs, **Whore!**" Ramadanoff commanded.

"Yeah! And spread 'em real wide," the **black driver** said. "You got a helluva *fuckin'* to do in a short time!"



The terrified woman emitted a pitiful *squeal* as a fat **penis** eagerly sought her cunt.



"Ugh! Ugh!" panted Ramadanoff as he plunged in-and-out of her tight vagina.



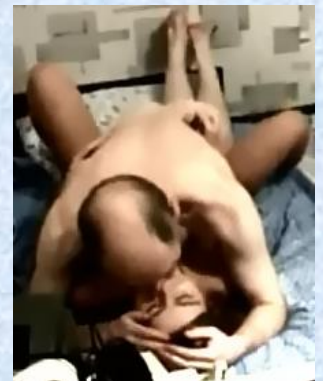


He even flipped her on top of him and forced her to **rape** herself on his cock.



**Blood** from her torn vagina was mixing with his **sperm** and leaking out on his shaft.

"You're ... killing ... me ... !!" she whimpered.

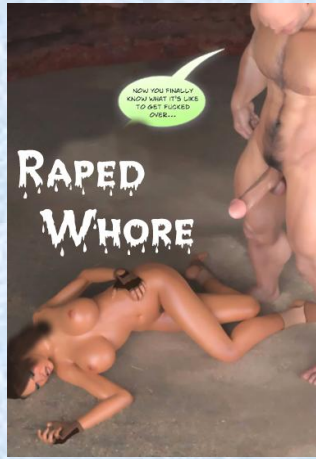


"Ready or not, here it **cums**!" he suddenly yelled.

She moaned as she felt a huge glob of **impregnating** semen shoot up her womb.







She had temporarily forgotten about the **black** man. But now it was his turn.

"I like my **whores** in a different way," he said. "Flip her over on her tummy for me."



She didn't understand the significance of his request until she felt something long and slimy **ram** itself into her rectum ...



She couldn't help bawling as he maddenly twisted and plunged deep into her bowels.





She was *whimpering* and her body was *twitching* when he finally pulled out. Nasty smelly **semen** was *oozing* out of her butt-hole.



"Hell! We gotta go," said Ramadanoff to his accomplice. "But I do feel a helluva lot better now. How about you?"

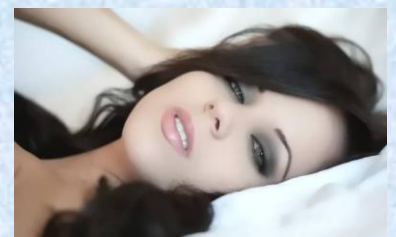
"The **bitch** was a good fuck," agreed the black taxidriver.

Then Ramadanoff looked at the cowering woman and a sneer came across his face.

"You **whore**! You fucking piece of shit! We're gonna fix it so you'll be stuck for a while."

He didn't have any trouble finding odds&ends in the alley. He grabbed a rod-like device and began poking it up her ravished orifices ...









West Street skirts the Hudson River and is lined with docks. When Ramadanoff let his taxi go, he walked a block down the dimly lit riverfront street till he came to a large, roofed-over pier.

The huge brick building was smoke-stained and old-looking. There was nothing to distinguish it in appearance from any of a thousand other piers in New York accommodating the World's shipping.

A sign over the corrugated metal door read:

### **HIDALGO TRADING COMPANY**

As Ramadanoff very well knew, there was something unusual about this pier.

It was not, practically speaking, a "pier" at all. It was Doc Savage's waterfront hangar. It housed an assortment of heavier-than-air craft as remarkable as the ultra-modern land vehicles garaged in the basement of Doc's skyscraper *Headquarters*.

Ramadanoff made no attempt to force an entrance into the sprawling bulk of the hangar. He had scouted the locale before. He knew that the hangar -- protected by photoelectric eyes and magnetic fields -- was as impossible of entrance as a bank vault would have been.



What he did was ridiculously simple.

On each side of the driveway door was head-high, rather scrawny shrubbery. Ramadanoff moved along the dim street until his dark figure merged with the shadows of the shrubbery.

Anyone watching could have observed that his figure did not show again on the other side of the shrubbery.

But there was no one watching.

The little man squirmed into the very center of the concealing branches and crouched down. He pulled the blanket wrapping from his parcel, exposing a **submachine-gun** of non-glinting **blue-metal** finish.

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*When Ramadanoff -- weaponless -- had ducked out of the taxi into the 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue doorway, it was to make a lightning quick call on one of Jans Bergman's men who had a room at the address. Bergman's demise was not yet known to his men, so it had been no trouble for Ramadanoff to arrange for the use of the machine-gun. \*

*Ramadanoff knew that Doc Savage would waste no time in arriving at the hangar to take off for the Galapagos. Of course, Doc would go by plane.*

*But Ramadanoff was determined that the **Bronze Man** would never even enter that hangar. He would drop before a withering blast of ambush lead!*

After a while, a sedan rolled down the street and nosed silently in the Hidalgo Trading Company's driveway.

Ramadanoff's pulse quickened ... then slowed. He had expected Doc Savage to stop the car, get out, and open the hangar door.

But the car ran on without slackening of speed pointing head-on for the closed roll-down door.

At the instant Ramadanoff expected a collision, the door rolled silently upward, actuated by a shortwave radio beam transmitted from within the car to a detector-relay device connected to an electric door-opening mechanism.

Doc's car disappeared within the hangar and the door closed down.

Ramadanoff's face was purpled from his **rage** at missing the last chance he would have to prevent Doc from flying to the island. He had a ferocious impulse to empty the machine-gun drum against the corrugated metal door in sheer insane frustration.

*A moment later, he was glad that he had not wasted those bullets.*

Amazingly, the door opened again.



Ramadanoff could hear a scuffling of shoe leather against dusty concrete. Then a **huge Bronze figure** became visible in the door.

**The drowsy quiet of early evening was smashed by thunderous *macabre* rattle as Ramadanoff held the trigger and swung his stream of leaden death back-and-forth. Mindful of bulletproof garments, he aimed high for the face.**

A great many bullets sprayed harmlessly against the corrugated metal surface of the hangar front.

**But fully 2 dozen were direct face hits on the Bronze Man's figure in the doorway.**

There might have been more hits. But suddenly the machine-gun silenced.

A ***crashing weight*** had descended into the shrubbery -- apparently from the clouds -- grinding the underbrush, the assassin, and the machine-gun into the ground.

Ramadanoff's finger was broken before he could clear it from the trigger. But the finger was the least of his troubles.

He felt himself lifted and slammed. He knew what had him ...

... **Doc Savage!**

Doc had leaped from a hidden door high in the warehouse side directly on top of Ramadanoff.

He dragged Ramadanoff inside the hangar door and said to Long Tom: "Haul 'Robbie' in and get the door shut."

Long Tom chuckled. "Robbie will be needin' a new paint job on his face, Doc."

"Yeah," Renny boomed. "And a set of new teeth."

Ramadanoff stared bleary-eyed as Long Tom and Renny pushed the **huge Bronze figure** -- which had appeared in the doorway and taken the bullets -- inside and closed the hangar door.

"A dummy!" he ejaculated.

"Sure," Long Tom said. "A mechanical likeness of Doc. '*Robbie the Robot*'."

"And can Robbie take it!" Renny rumbled.

"Has had his face shot off him 4 times so far," Long Tom added.

*Ramadanoff was muttering profanely to himself.*

"Don't you get it, Whiskers?" Long Tom demanded.

*Ramadanoff scowled.*



Renny explained sardonically. "Doc likes to cooperate. So he provided the shrubbery outside for guys like you that want to pot him from cover. Doc ordered the bushes big so as to give plenty of room for a man with a gun to hide inside."

Long Tom continued. "And the bushes are wired so that anyone crowding inside of 'em will cause a signal to flash."

*Doc was already penetrating deep within the hangar.*

"Come on," he called back.

Dragging their prisoner, Renny and Long Tom hurried after Doc Savage.

The **Man of Bronze** was swinging inside the cabin of his large speed ship -- a 3-motor job with streamlined alloy hull. The wings tapered into the fuselage for minimum wind resistance. It was a combination land-and-sea plane and had a speed of nearly 300 mph.

"We taking this one, Doc?" Long Tom queried, his hand waving out to indicate the plane before them.

"Right," the **Bronze Man** said.

*Renny and Long Tom shoved their prisoner inside and piled in after him.*

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With the 3 supercharged motors delivering their full quota of power, the big speed plane hurled south through the Atlantic seaboard darkness.

They caught the slumberous twinkle of early morning lights in Cuba and roared on, doing better than 300 mph as they climbed high and rode the stratospheric air currents to the Canal Zone.

*At Colon, they got a surprise.*

They set down for refueling. A dark-skinned man in a white linen suit popped out of the directional radio station operated by the Department of Commerce and ran across the field toward Doc's plane. The man was waving a radiogram.

"For Doc Savage," he called.

The dark-skinned man leaned against the low-slung cabin with a hand resting on the ledge of an opened porthole. His black eyes were centered in rapt admiration on Doc as the **bronze giant** opened the envelope and read the radiogram.

**Have discovered Boris Ramadanoff is working with his brother Count Ramadanoff  
Stop Disregard our other radiogram Stop Alive but may not for long Stop  
Better do things**

**Monk**

Doc handed the radiogram to his aides.



"Huh!" Renny snorted. "We got Boris's number before they did, I guess."

"They're still alive," Long Tom said tensely.

"Yeah. And we'll be there in a few hours," Renny thumped.

"Watch the plane," Doc instructed Renny. "Do not let Ramadanoff out or let anybody else come near."

With the electrical wizard Long Tom, Doc accompanied the dark-skinned man back to the broadcasting station to try to get a line on what was the matter with the radio beam.

"A ship carrying one of my aides -- while following your beam -- was recently thrown off its course and wrecked," Doc advised.

"The trouble must have been with the receiving apparatus," the dark-skinned man said.

"Impossible!" interposed Long Tom who had made the boat's radio installation and knew it was as perfect as was possible.

"Then examine my layout," the radio station attendant invited.

*Doc and Long Tom made a careful examination, then returned to the plane.*

"What'd you find out over there?" Renny queried.

Long Tom answered: "Everything was in perfect mechanical shape."

Refueled, the plane took off and soared high over the feverish Panama jungle, then left the lush **green** for the sparkling **blue** of the Pacific with engines throbbing as it bored steadily Southward toward the Galapagos.

Long Tom was bending over the audio-frequency amplifier. He jerked his headphones off and held one to Doc's ear. A 'dot'-'dash' combination in sharp *staccato* sounded plainly.

"The 'A' wave is coming in too strongly," Long Tom said.

"Are we off the course?" Renny rumbled.

"We are off the course as transmitted by the beam antenna back at the Canal Zone," Doc stated.

"But that's the right course," Renny protested.

"Is it?" Doc asked mildly.

-----  
"It's the beam the others were riding when their ship piled on the rocks," Renny rumbled. "We want to go where they were wrecked, don't we?"

"Yes," Doc said. "But this beam may not be directing us there."



"I get it," Renny muttered. "If there's nothing the matter with the instruments, the trouble must lie with that dark-skinned baby at the Canal Zone who is transmitting the signals."

Doc nodded. "He transmitted the beam so that it put Johnny on the rocks. It may be that now he is laying down a beam which -- if we follow it -- will land us in the Pacific Ocean with empty gas tanks."

Renny snorted! "Thinks he's sendin' us on a one-way trip, huh?"

Long Tom was struck with an idea.

"Stop me if you've thought of this one, Doc. But how does the course -- as broadcast to us by the radio beacon -- compare with the latitude and longitude of the island as given you by Boris Ramadanoff?"

"The two check perfectly," Doc said.

"Then Ramadanoff gave us the wrong directions, too?"

"It is almost certain that he did."

"Want me to bring him in, Doc?" Renny asked, eagerly.

"Yes," Doc said. "It is time that Ramadanoff talked."

Renny hurried aft, unlocked a small individual cabin, roused Boris Ramadanoff out, and trundled him forward to Doc.

The **Bronze Man** turned the plane controls over to the sensitive mechanical arms of a robot pilot. Then he faced Boris Ramadanoff.

"I want the latitude and longitude of your brother's island," Doc announced.

"I gave it to you ... "

"I want the correct latitude and longitude," Doc interrupted, severely.

"The one I gave you is correct," the little man insisted, stubbornly.

Doc fixed his **gold-flecked eyes** on Ramadanoff while he spoke in brittle tones to Renny and Long Tom.

"Get out the rope, Renny, and loop it over Ramadanoff's right foot," the **Bronze Man** said. "Long Tom, open the side hatch."

Renny looped the rope over Ramadanoff's foot and pulled it tight. Renny hauled back so exuberantly that he pulled the bearded little man off his feet!

Long Tom threw open the side hatch, revealing a patch of **blue**. It was the **Pacific Ocean** nearly a mile below.



"Pull his 'chute off, Long Tom," Doc directed.

Long Tom slipped the pack-chute from the little man's shoulders. The packs -- contrivances developed by Doc himself -- were not bulky. They could be worn with no more inconvenience than a heavy coat would have occasioned. When in the air, Doc and his men were usually equipped with the safety devices and -- in this case -- they had provided one for their prisoner.

Doc looked at Ramadanoff and said: "Renny here is going to lower you through the hole. He will lower you down hand-over-hand slowly until he comes to the end of the rope. Then if you have not indicated that you will speak the truth, he will let go the rope."

Doc looked toward Renny. "Lower away."

Ramadanoff had been lowered half of the rope's length when the bluff worked. He looked up and squalled like a wildcat!

***"I'll tell!"*** he screamed.

"Hold him there a minute, Renny," Doc ordered.

He looked down at the cringing prisoner. "The location?"

Ramadanoff screamed latitude and longitude down to minutes-and-seconds! *He had it on the tip of his tongue.*

-----  
"We will let him cool off now," Doc decided. "Renny, take charge of him."

"Will I, Doc!" Renny boomed.

Ramadanoff was so giddy from being dangled on the rope that he could not stand when he was first drawn back within the plane. Long Tom fitted the pack-chute back on the man's shoulders.

Then Renny dragged him un-gently aft and locked him in the fuselage compartment again.

The plane ran into a fog bank as it droned Southwest. Doc climbed the plane and came out on top in dazzling sunshine. Occasional rifts in the fog showed him the **blue** Pacific below. Eventually, a rent showed something else besides water.

"Land below," Renny announced. "A small island."

"Cocos Island," Doc said. "We take our final bearings from here. The next land we sight will be the Galapagos."

"That won't be long at the rate we're traveling," Long Tom said.

It was only a brief glimpse they got of Cocos Island. Then the fog closed in again like swaddling cotton, seeming to wedge the hurtling plane against the sky.



"Bring out the prisoner, Renny," Doc suggested some time later. "We will try again to find out something more about this mysterious *Devil's Honeycomb*."

Renny grinned and went aft to unlock the compartment door.

"We'll make him talk," Long Tom affirmed grimly.

*But they did not make Boris Ramadanoff talk.*

Renny threw open the prison compartment door and stared, jaw sagging, his generously proportioned mouth yawning wide like a tunnel opening.

"What's the matter?" Long Tom called, sharply.

"Matter!" Renny howled, dazedly.

He turned and dived forward.

**"He busted a hole in the floor!"** Renny squalled. **"He's jumped out!"**

---

"How could he break out?" Long Tom demanded. "Nobody can break through the alloy skin of this plane. It's even bulletproof."

"How did he do it, Renny?" Doc asked quietly.

"That was the compartment where we had the floor ripped up the other day, Doc," Renny muttered. "It wasn't welded. Just small bolts set in temporarily."

Doc looked at the chart.

"It is too late to do anything about it now. Doubtless, Ramadanoff bailed out over Cocos Island. It is entirely too large an island for us to waste time trying to locate him."

*The great tri-motored speed ship scudded on, riding above the fog bank like a gigantic water bug skimming the surface of quiet depths.*

"How're we gonna locate anything in this fog?" Renny wanted to know later.

"We can get our latitude and longitude above, then go down and land on the water to wait till the fog lifts," Doc explained. "That, of course, may not be necessary."

*That logical plan -- it developed later -- was never to be put into execution.*

At the present latitude and longitude given by Boris Ramadanoff under pressure, the fog became strangely reddish in color over a considerable area. This **crimson glow** was uneasy, flickering, brightening and dulling as though the leaping fires of **Hell** itself strove to break through.

Doc banked the speed plane in a wide spiral around the **scarlet**-stained sector.

"What caused that?" Renny rumbled, awe making his voice somehow weird.

"Volcano," Doc decided. "Active."

"Let's ease down," Long Tom suggested.

They did go down. But not easily.

**An ear-splitting *crash* sent a convulsion through the plane, then tilted it in a mad dip.**

**Accompanying the detonation, *flame* sheeted out, enveloping them.** They were stunned and temporarily blinded.

"Whole back end blown off!" Renny bawled.

"Lost half the fuselage!" Long Tom shouted.

The plane was plummeting, weaving dizzily, shuddering and bouncing in the air as against something solid.

"Jump!" Doc ordered. "Spill air to guide your 'chutes away from the **red** portion of the fog!"

*Very shortly ...*



*... Pat Savage will be forcibly **IMPREGNATED** !*



## XI -- Shredded Death

The plane had been very high when the explosion occurred.

Their parachutes were larger than the average, so they went down slowly. And because they pulled at shrouds on one side, they skidded through the sky. They left the domain of lurid **red light** behind.

In fact -- lost from everything but each other in the fog -- they overdid the skidding a little. They came down in water.

Close over the sea, the fog was thin. Releasing themselves from the parachute harnesses a few feet above the water, Doc and Renny plunged into the seething gray expanse within easy hailing distance of each other. Long Tom plummeted down farther to the left. Where the plane hit, they could not tell although it was probably nearer shore and off to the left.

Treading water and trying to orient himself in the smother of waves, Renny bawled: "What caused that explosion, Doc?"

"A bomb obviously," the **Bronze Man** shouted back.

"But we searched Ramadanoff before we brought him aboard," Renny pointed out.

"Ramadanoff did not do it," Doc returned. "It must have been done at the Canal Zone landing field."

"The dark-skinned guy!" Renny roared. "The one who brought the radiogram out and stood by while we read it!"

"Right," Doc agreed. "The fellow evidently had his orders in advance."

Renny took water, coughed it up, and sputtered.

"But what made the thing go off right when we were over the island?"

"Probably a radio-control detonator actuated by a transmitter below," Doc Savage hazarded. "The mechanism would have been fairly simple for a good radio technician to construct."

The **Bronze Man** was treading water. The water all about them seemed to be swirling like a furiously running stream. There was a pronounced undercurrent that at times nearly took them under.

"Holy cow!" Renny thumped. "Some swimming pool!"

"A tide rip," Doc Savage offered. "It seems to be carrying us offshore."

Unexpectedly, a *streak* of phosphorescence angled in toward the **bronze giant**. The streak was preceded by a water-slashing fin.

"**Sharks!**" Long Tom yelled from near by.

But Doc had already seen the racing black fin.

"Make for the reef!" the **Bronze Man** shouted to Long Tom.

Swerving close to Doc, the black fin went under in a boil of bubbles and phosphorescence. Doc went under, too.

Half -a-minute later, Long Tom uttered a hoarse cry and kicked out with his feet! He thought he was being attacked by the shark. But it was only Doc who had swum underwater and come up alongside him.

With Doc's assistance, Long Tom gained rapidly in his fight against the current. Nearing the coral reef and temporary safety, a shark slashed in at them.

"Try to make it alone," Doc jerked and disappeared underwater again, almost under the chisel nose of the attacking shark.

The shark dove with the **Bronze Man**, rolling.

Long Tom made it to the jagged reef.

A moment later, Doc stroked up and muscled out of the water alongside him.

-----  
Long Tom coughed water. "Playing tag with that man-eater ... drawing him away ... You saved my life, Doc!"

"Listen," Doc cautioned.

*The put-put of a motor launch sounded strongly.*

"What'll we do?" Long Tom gulped.

"Can you make it ashore by swimming?"

"Afraid not," Long Tom puffed. "I was almost gone when you reached me."

"Renny might not make it either," Doc said thoughtfully.

The motor launch nosed around a wave-laced reef into close view. Men in the bucking launch waved. Doc answered their signals.

Long Tom growled tragically: "Wrecked just when we could begin to do some good! Our superfirers -- all our weapons -- at the bottom of the ocean. And now we'll be taken prisoners the same as Johnny, Pat, Monk, Ham, and the rest of 'em!"

*A **bellow** of distress reached them faintly through the whipping wind.*

"It's Renny!" Long Tom gasped. "Sharks!"

Doc took the water in a shallow dive which bounced him to the surface and sent him streaking through the short, steep waves toward Renny's voice.



The motor launch came on, picked up Long Tom, and bore down upon Doc and Renny.

A boat hook snagged Renny's collar and drew him alongside. Hands reached down and helped him aboard.

"Sharks!" someone exploded. "Right alongside!"

A boat hook probed at Doc. The shark reached the **Bronze Man**.

Doc and the shark disappeared in a welter of churning water. Bubbles streamed up and broke whitely on the dark surface.

But only at first did they break whitely. Very soon, they were breaking **red**.

The **red** stain spread over the water. A gory blanket around the pitching launch.

Renny and Long Tom stared at the water in dawning **horror!** The half-dozen men who had come out in the launch crowded the rails, chattering in strange languages as they scanned the surface looking for visual evidence of the tragedy indicated as occurring below.

**Blood** in the water brought more sharks closing in. The launch threaded back-and-forth until the **red stain** was diffused.

*But Doc Savage did not appear again!*

The helmsman swung the launch around and started bucking the currents toward the shore. All the crew were dressed in the same fashion-simple loin cloths and collars of lizard hide.

The launch docked at a pier running out from the Palace of the Ramadanoffs.

-----

Inside the Palace in the huge room -- that high-vaulted cavern fashioned from wooden beams and black volcanic rocks -- Long Tom and Renny were "welcomed" by the Count Ramadanoff in the same suavely polite manner in which he had greeted Monk, Ham, and Pat.

The heatless **blue flames** leaped as before within the mammoth fireplace, causing shadows to dart and vanish throughout the luxuriantly furnished hall. From high overhead, the crystal-spangled candelabra -- hanging from its massive chain and burning fully 200 candles -- shed a yellow light which penetrated weirdly to the middle stair landing hung with the long curtains of somber **ruby** velvet.

Grief-torn as they were by Doc's disappearance after the attack by the shark, Long Tom and Renny could not help but feel the **menace** which stalked through the dank air of the place.

Count Ramadanoff himself appeared as someone not quite real. He was a towering **giant** -- almost as large as Doc Savage. This much they realized. With his Czar-of-Russia beard and his courtly bearing, he appeared to be a replica of his brother Boris. A replica fully twice as large!

The Count bowed ... then said precisely: "My guests have a predilection for arriving here in wet clothes. I will have a change of dry garments laid out for you."

The Count's thin lips writhed back to emit a sharp cobra-like *hissing*. A wizened slave padded forward on bare feet in answer to the summons.

While the Count issued orders for the preparation of a chamber for his guests, Long Tom murmured an aside to Renny.

"Do you see what I do?"

Renny grunted. "The slave! He's a member of Johnny's expedition. Or was, wasn't he?"

Long Tom nodded. "We've got to put on an act until we get the lay of things here. It's all weird."

"And we can't let this whiskered devil know we think Doc is dead," Renny whispered.

The Count looked sharply at Renny.

"So," he murmured, "the **Bronze Man** is dead!"

*Renny stared belligerently, aware that the Count must have read his lips.*

Long Tom smoothed things over. While Renny's big **fists** started swinging nervously at his sides, Long Tom said: "There seems to be a mistake. It's the shark that's dead."

The Count's eyes *glittered*.

"I hope you are right. I am eager to meet this Doc Savage personally."

"What we want to know," Renny put in bluntly, "is where are Ham, Monk, Johnny, and Pat?"

The Count answered precisely.

"You have reference, doubtless, to Brigadier General Theodore Marley Brooks, Lieutenant Colonel ... "

"Yeah," Renny interrupted, "they're the ones! Where are they?"

The Count shrugged. "How should I know? This is an extremely remote island in the Galapagos. Not an information booth."

Renny's glance roved fiercely around the great hall and fastened for an instant upon the grand piano draped with rich sea-otter furs.

*The Count's cruel eyes flashed!*

"I assure you, my dear Renwick, the persons you mentioned are not concealed in my piano."

The slave in his loincloth and lizard-hide collar padded down the broad stone steps and prostrated himself before his Master. But his eyes -- for a flashing instant -- had caught Long Tom's with a significant glance.



"You may follow the slave," the Count announced. "When you have changed to dry clothing, I will receive you down here."

As Long Tom and Renny mounted the sweeping spiral of the stairs and passed beyond the ruby-colored drape held back by the slave, Count Ramadanoff's voice followed them with suave menace.

"One thing, remember," Ramadanoff intoned. **"The shadow of the Devil's Honeycomb lies everywhere upon this island."**

-----

Inside the chamber assigned them, the slave bent to take off Long Tom's wet shoes. Renny reached down and poked a huge thumb and finger under the man's chin and tilted his head up.

"Don't you know us?" he asked.

The man squirmed, looking at Renny out of fear-haunted eyes.

"Not I," he whispered. "I don't know you."

"Downstairs you did," Long Tom suggested.

"That was before he reminded me."

"Reminded you of what?"

The man's voice rasped hoarsely. "That the *Devil's Honeycomb* is a menace everywhere on the island!"

"Where's the rest of your party?" Renny demanded.

"I don't know anything!" the man mumbled.

"You mean you won't talk."

*The man's lips whitened.*

"Anybody who tells anything on this island dies!"

Renny grunted with disgust at the display of fear.

"It ought to be safe to talk here," Long Tom urged.

"It's safe nowhere," muttered the other. "You talk and you die!"

"How do you know?" the Electrical wizard insisted.

"Mister, I've been standin' close when it happened," the slave mumbled. "A little hole comes in your temple about the size you could jab your thumb into."

"Baloney!" Renny summed it up.

**Suddenly flooding the room, a weird strumming music vibrated.** *Fantastic melody!* It struck the ear with pulsations that seemed to raise goose flesh over the entire body and cause the hair to tug at its roots.

"What's that?" Renny demanded, glaring about, swinging his big **fists**.

The man who had become a slave was staring with panic bulged eyes. He choked out words.

"The Count playin' at the piano!"

"So what?" Renny boomed.

"So somebody dies!"

"Nuts!" Renny rumbled.

The man rasped stubbornly: "Every time I've heard him play like that, somebody has died right afterwards! Why, your own men and the girl ... "

*He choked off his words with spasmodic effort.*

Both Long Tom and Renny seized him and shook him simultaneously.

**"What about our men and the girl?!"** Renny's great voice was **thunder!**

In the grand hall below, the music had stopped, though faint mocking echoes hung about like an exotic perfume.

"All right!" the man gasped. "I'll tell you! I might die for it. But if I don't tell you, I'll die anyway. But first, is it true that Doc Savage is dead?"

"A shark took Doc," Renny said, bleakly. "He didn't come up."

The man wilted. "Then it's no use! Without Savage we can't ... "

"Talk!" Long Tom jabbed. "What were you going to tell us?"

The man opened big mouth to speak. But it was not his voice which Long Tom and Renny heard.

**There was a flesh-crawling sound -- a bony *crunch* -- and the man who would have talked plunged forward, his head striking solidly on the floor, his body flopping over and lying inert.**

-----  
Renny and Long Tom stared wildly.

There had been no visible movement within the room. Just that ***crunch*** ... then the man falling limply.



**Fists** swinging, Renny went tearing around the room pulling aside curtains, banging closet doors, and looking under the beds.

*He found nothing.*

With Long Tom, he examined the limp body. The man was dead from a wound in his temple. A hole a bird's egg might have dropped into. Or a man's thumb!

*All at once -- welling with chill mockery -- music from the Count's piano flowed through the room again.*

Renny jerked upright and swerved for the door.

"Come on!" he barked at Long Tom.

"'Come on' where?"

"To punch the Count's face out from between his pointed ears!" Renny roared. "We'll settle all this mystery now!"

"It's a good idea," Long Tom agreed and plunged out after Renny.

Past the hanging **ruby** drapes on the middle landing and down the wide stone steps 3-at-a-time, they rushed. The Count rose from his piano to confront them with suave dignity.

"Why do you hurry, gentlemen?" he questioned, dark eyebrows arched.

Momentarily disarmed by the Count's quiet manner, they slowed their precipitous descent and came forward slowly.

"But you have still your wet clothes on, gentlemen," the Count chided.

"When we get through, you won't worry about clothes!" Renny threatened.

"Who killed the man in our room?" Long Tom demanded.

The Count smiled thinly. "Your bellicose manner becomes understandable. A man has been killed, you say?"

"In our room!" Long Tom grated.

The big bearded man queried: "There is, perhaps, a hole in big temple?"

"If you know that, then you did it!" Renny howled, starting his forward rush.

Unperturbed, the Count lifted a hand.

"One moment, my dear Renwick. It is only natural that I should know about the **thumb-hole death**. Such deaths occur with great frequency on this island."

While he talked, the Count's white tapering fingers toyed with a small object. A slim thing of flashing **gold**.

Long Tom moved forward to look at the **gold** thing.

"Pat Savage's **lipstick**!" he clipped, horrified.

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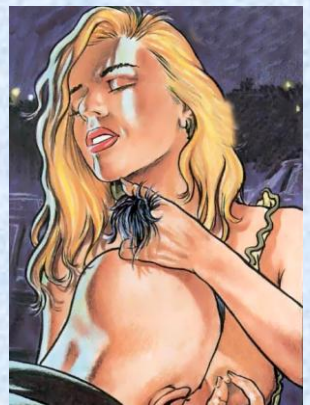
Long Tom's hand reached out. "Let me see that."

"With pleasure."

The Count handed over the **lipstick**.

"It is Pat's!" Long Tom muttered, examining it.

XX



He glared at the Count. "Where'd you get it? You said you hadn't seen Pat. Where is she? Snappy, brother! Before we give you what is known as 'the works'!"



"Ridiculous!" the Count asserted. "In your United States, lipsticks are mass-production articles. There must be upward of half-a-million of this identical design."

"There aren't half a million of these!" Renny's voice sounded in a bawl of hoarse triumph as he rushed to a corner and seized a slim black malacca **cane** and held it up.

"Ham's sword cane!" Long Tom echoed.

Renny faced Count Ramadanoff.

"Here's Ham's cane! I want to know where Ham is."

"You are making yourself utterly ridiculous," the Count asserted.

"Brother, you asked for it!" Renny roared and rushed the Count, striking out with his great **fists**.

The Count made no attempt to dodge. He stood and took it.

And in return laid his fist against Renny's jaw in a blow which rocked the big Engineer back on his heels.

Renny <blinked> dazedly. **He had never met opposition like this in his life!** He could almost believe that it was Doc Savage's powerful muscles that had just put those staggering blows across.

Long Tom was helpless to aid because at a nod from the Count, a slave (a squat Mongol) had appeared from behind a wall drape and nudged Long Tom's ribs with the flare-lipped muzzle of a diabolical *poison* dart gun.

Renny tried everything. Science, brute force. But he might as well have been fighting a shadow for all the impression he made.

Finally, the Count grew weary of the sport. Eyes glinting and thin lips drawn back to a thin line, he put over a haymaker.

Then he stood over Renny, callously kicking him back to consciousness.

"I will always regret that I did not meet your Doc Savage," the Count said gloatingly and then sighed. "It appears that I must live all my life without meeting a foe worthy of my efforts."

He *hissed* again and the slaves bound and dragged the 2 prisoners out of the main hall and part way up the tower steps. Before the same slot in the tower hall which Doc's other aides had been forced to look through, Renny and Long Tom were halted.

"Observe your 'playmates'," the Count directed.

-----  
They looked through the slot. And in that courtyard dungeon hemmed in by starkly rearing palace walls, they saw the same unbelievable **monster** that Monk, Ham, and Pat had witnessed.

"Holy cow!" Renny breathed.

Squatting in the middle of the flagstoned pit bathed in the **red volcanic glare** was a creature that **had a ridge of tooth-like horns running down his scabrous back and tail.** Swinging its armored head upward, it snorted 2 streams of vapor from its nostrils.

Then it drew in air and its sides swelled out until -- to the horrified glance of Renny and Long Tom! -- the loathsome thing threatened to expand to such a bulk that it would fill the whole courtyard.

"What is it?" Long Tom gulped.

"I don't know," Renny said, suddenly hoarse.

"In observing this Gargantuan monstrosity," the Count's odious voice broke in, "do not overlook the cells under the balcony -- your temporary abode. I say 'temporary' because the cell bars are movable, actuated electrically at my desire. And my desire is dictated to a large extent by the humor of the creature you are observing."

Again the Count sounded his ghoulish *hiss*.

Then Long Tom and Renny were hustled down the stairs out onto the circular balcony which ran all the way around the courtyard dungeon and thrust unceremoniously through a trapdoor in the balcony floor. They landed heavily 10 feet below on the flagstoned floor of a cell.

Through the heavy iron bars they could see clearly in the courtyard. The **monster** had retreated out of sight into its den.

Opposite them on the balcony, the Count looked down.

"The creature has enjoyed itself for the day," he informed. "He will sleep before he needs diversion and exercise again."

Suddenly, Renny and Long Tom reached out and clutched each other, trembling. *They had seen the same things almost at the same instant.*

There almost under their feet were 4 shapeless, mauled bodies. The flags of the court were stained a ghastly **red** that did not come from the reflected volcanic light. Remnants of clothes clung to each torn body. And Long Tom and Renny were recognizing those remnants!

**They were the claw&teeth-shredded garments of Johnny and Ham and Monk and Pat!**

"And the shark got Doc Savage," the Count remarked, looking down from his balcony.



*Next ...*



## XII -- The Honeycomb Horror

But the Count Ramadanoff was somewhat mistaken.

The shark did not get Doc. The **red** smudge which had bloomed on the water was not occasioned by the shark's flat, pointed teeth tearing at the **Bronze Man**.

Rather, it came from wounds inflicted by Doc's slashing knife on the shark itself.

After beating off the shark's attack, Doc swam under water and came up out-of-sight of the launch behind a jutting coral reef. He waited until the boat had churned away through chopping waves ... then struck out in the long, hard swim for the island.

Doc had touched shore on a lava-strewn beach ... waded through a belt of brown sea weed ... and plunged into the obscurity of shoreline vegetation -- wind-bent trees bleached white with ocean spray and dangling, cobra-headed Peruvian cactus.

The **bronze giant** drove on through the thorn-studded undergrowth and came out on a broad, well-defined game trail. He recognized it as an age-old path used by the Galapagos tortoises as they butted through the jungle between their feeding grounds and watering places.

It was evening and the volcano was blinking its **red light** over the island when Doc reached the high plateau, \ pocked by those mysterious man-made honeycomb pits. He forged forward, keeping to the jungle fringe until he arrived near the active workings.

From a cactus covert he watched -- **gold-flecked eyes** weirdly alive -- while the overseers strode up-and-down before the long line of pits and cracked their whips over the backs of the chained slaves digging their way to death from exhaustion in the strange honeycomb pattern of circular holes.

The **Bronze Man** watched for a chance to maneuver closer and examine the pits. But since the disturbance created by his aides on the day they had been wrecked on the island, the guards had been doubled.

Doc had no opportunity to get close enough to look down,

-----

Ahead of the advancing line of pits -- perhaps 50 yards distant on the high plateau floor -- loomed a small stockade containing surplus working tools. It was guarded by 4 men. Beefy-shouldered, swarthy fellows, their semi-nude bodies glistening with a hard burnish whenever the volcano lighted up the sky with its Hellish **red glare**.

XX

They had just finished **raping** a young teenage girl who had been captured along with her father. The latter swore and sobbed watching the 4 brutes eagerly take the girl's virginity (and then some!).

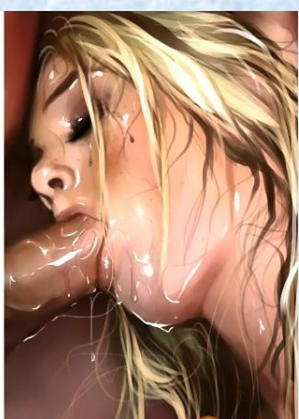
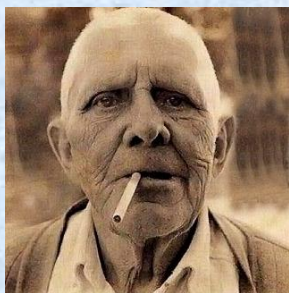




















They talked among themselves in brittle Asiatic gibberish. One of them clacked suddenly in his native tongue.

"That flat rock out there. Where did it come from?"

*The **volcanic fire** died down before his companions could look.*

"I remember no rock out there," one of them said.

"Then look the next time the **glow** comes," the other suggested.

*Momentarily, the lurid lightning sheeted out again.*

"Look!" the sharp-eyed one exploded.

"Look where?" the other snapped.

"I am looking," a third said. "I see nothing."

"Are you trying to fool us?" the fourth remarked. "There is nothing there."

"But before, there was a rock!" the first guard growled stubbornly. "I am sure ... "

*In the blanketing darkness, the man's voice was cut off with a muffled gurgle.*

"What's wrong with you?" a companion asked sharply. "Did you swallow a bug?"

*There was another muffled gurgle as this man ceased speaking in the same abrupt manner as the first.*

Together, the other 2 men clacked in alarm. "What is the matter?"

They never learned what it was. 2 gurgles sounded simultaneously ...

*... and after that came silence.*

For all evidence to the contrary, it might have been the equatorial darkness pressing malignantly close which had choked all 4 watchers into insensibility.

**Volcanic light** gleamed again over the honeycomb pattern of pits on the high plain. The light revealed the 4 guards sitting silently upright, their backs to the stockade ...

... while inside the stockade, a **giant Bronze Man** moved, selecting a digging instrument -- a wedge-pointed pick.

The **light** went out ... then flared again and revealed a lump that might have been a **bronze-hued "rock"** on the plateau halfway between the stockade and fringing underbrush. But the next time **red light** rippled out, *the stone had vanished.*



Under cover of the thorny bush, Doc Savage was creeping toward the line of pits with the wedge-pointed pick in his hand.

He had silenced the guards by deft pressure exerted on nerve centers at the back of their necks with his *cabled* fingers. It would be hours, perhaps, before the guards regained consciousness.

- - - - -

Doc passed by the front line of pits in which the chained slaves were digging and -- watching his chance -- crawled over and dropped inside one of the worked-out cells immediately behind the active front row.

He crouched with pick in hand and commenced rapidly digging a hole in the circular walls.

The wall separating the cells was thin. In a matter of minutes, he had picked a hole large enough to let him look through.

It had been Doc's intention to contact one slave after another in this manner until he came upon one who could furnish information regarding the fate of his aides. As he looked through the fist-sized hole he had dug, his *trilling* sounded faintly.

The chained slave heard ... *and stiffened visibly!*

This slave was an astounding individual with a massive hairy torso and a neck nearly as thick as his broad head and long, gorilla-like arms extending almost to his knees. There was such strength in that hairy body that the man could bite his shovel into the flint-packed volcanic ash without the necessity of loosening it first with the pick.

The *gory glow* of volcanic light illuminated the man's face briefly, revealing a sprawled nose, a huge gash of mouth, and a forehead almost buried in bristling hair. The man was so incredibly homely that he was rather pleasant to look at. Like a genial bulldog.

He kept digging. But his keen little eyes had detected the hole Doc had gouged in the pit wall. He heaved close, the chain rattling against his leg iron. His voice was small, childish, and jerky with emotion.

"Blazes, Doc! How'd you get here?"

"Give me the story, Monk," Doc whispered guardedly.

"We're all alive. But we wouldn't be much longer," Monk said, making his small voice smaller.

"The situation seemed desperate from that second radiogram you sent to intercept me at the Canal Zone," Doc said. "Or did you send it, Monk?"

"We only sent one, Doc, to New York," Monk grunted.

"The second message sounded so legitimate that it deflected my attention enough for Count Ramadanoff's agent to get a time-bomb in our plane," Doc said grimly. "Which, of course, was why the radiogram was sent in the first place."

"Did you crash here, Doc?" Monk demanded.

"Offshore. Renny and Long Tom are prisoners. Where are the others?"

"Ham's chained in the pit next to me. And Johnny is in the one beyond that," Monk advised.

Doc breathed: "And Pat?"

"As far as I know, the Count's got her cooped up in his Palace. We got to get her out! The Count's got a man-eatin' beast there as big as a mountain. I know it doesn't sound sane. But all of us saw the thing. Whew!"

Doc asked: "You were imprisoned for a time at the Palace?"

"Yeah. But when old bush-face saw how tough we were, he sent us here to kill ourselves diggin' instead of feedin' us to his critter," Monk growled. "That man-eatin' thing has even got teeth on its back, Doc! You wouldn't believe a *monster* like that was in the World!"

-----

A guard passed by and looked down, then lashed with his whip! A red *welt* sprang out on Monk's shoulder.

"Quit mumblin' to yourself," the guard directed in English. "And dig faster!"

After the guard continued on, Monk gritted through the hole to Doc: "You see how it is? Most of the diggers die off quick."

"Why the pits?" Doc queried.

"You've got me," Monk grunted. "We've sure wondered about 'em."

"I'm going to dig through into your pit, Monk," Doc informed. "Stand so your back will hide me as much as possible."

After Doc entered Monk's pit, he dug his way quickly through into Ham's. Monk filled both the holes as best he could. In the adjoining pit with Ham, Doc kept close to the wall so that unless one of the overseers stepped close and looked directly down, he would remain undetected.

Ham stifled his amazement at Doc's appearance. And Doc -- reaching out with his pick -- gouged an entrance for himself into Johnny's pit.

*Almost the instant he arrived alongside Johnny, things began to happen.*

"I'll be superamalgamated!" the bony geologist exploded as Doc squirmed into view.

"Say it louder," Doc directed.

"What?" Johnny blurted, startled.



"Say it louder," Doc repeated.

Johnny was so surprised at the whole business that he did not speak out in his accustomed verbose manner.

"It'll bring the guards down on us!" he protested.

"That," Doc said, "is what we want."

*"I'll be superamalgamated!"* Johnny blurted his favorite expression again.

"LOUDER!" the **Bronze Man** directed.

Johnny gulped, then raised his voice with determination.

*"I'll be superamalgamated, superalgamated, superalgerated ...* Aw nuts, Doc. You say it!"

*For once, that word had gotten him down.*

But it was not necessary for Doc Savage to say it.

An overseer lunged toward the pit. Doc was back against the side. The overseer did not observe him. The whip cracked down at Johnny ...

Doc's hands reached out ... grasped the slashing rawhides ... and gave a downward jerk!

The unexpected tug pulled the overseer off balance before he had time to brace himself or let go the whip. He teetered on the brink of the pit ... then fell inward, sprawling.

Doc's fist lanced out, smacking against the fellow's jaw while he was still in the air. The man was unconscious before he hit the bottom!

Doc bent ... flipped him over ... then yanked loose a key dangling from a thong on the lizard-hide collar. He fitted the key to the lock of Johnny's leg iron, twisted briefly ...

... and Johnny stood free!

Doc grabbed up the whip he had wrested from the guard and -- swerving -- ducked through the hole into Ham's pit.

"Follow me, Johnny," Doc suggested cautiously and reached to unlock Ham's leg iron.

-----

Suddenly from all along the line of fantastic pits, the groans, babblings, and the whip-cracking ceased. One note dominated the nightmare scene ...

... the deep, echoing clangor of a brass ***gong***.

One of the overseers had witnessed his fellow plunge mysteriously into the pit and he had sounded the **warning gong**. While the dread hush spread over the pit, overseers converged, running toward the hole where Johnny had been working.

"We'll never make it, Doc!" Johnny snapped. "They kill anybody caught trying to escape!"

A cursing uproar burst out as the first-arriving overseers discovered Johnny's pit to be empty. More of the lizard-collared guards swarmed down. A whip lashed into Ham's pit as one of the overseers discovered the 3 men there.

Bellowed words brought the others crowding to the pit rim. Whips lashed down! As Doc lunged upright from unlocking Ham, the pit became a whistling storm of flesh-cutting rawhide.

Doc shoved the leg-iron key to Johnny.

"Follow me through into the next pit and unlock Monk!" he shouted above the swish and crack of flaying leather.

Close at Doc's heels came Johnny and Ham. While the two bent to the task of releasing Monk, Doc stood upright taking the rain of whip lashes and cutting back with the whip he had wrested from the first guard.

Under the **red volcanic glare**, Doc's face -- uplifted to the lightning of whips -- was a mask of emotionless **bronze**. He did not use his left arm to fend off the searing strokes. He had better use for that left arm. It cooperated like a machine with his whip-cracking arm!

Doc was not whipping aimlessly. Holding his left arm in such a way that he could protect his **eyes**, he sent his lash snaking upward from the pit with a twist of his **cabled** wrist. A deft jerk at the precisely correct instant caused the long, pliant rawhide to curl tightly about whatever object it struck.

Sometimes it was a neck. Sometimes an arm or a leg.

But in every instance, a quick backward jerk of Doc's arm brought his whip-hooked victim toppling into the pit. And then it was that Doc's left **fist** cooperated, driving against the head of each falling victim and pounding them into senselessness.

And after Doc had dragged some half-a-dozen men into the pit with relentless precision, the remaining overseers drew back cursing and shouting out-of-range of the appalling rawhide lash.

"Okay, Doc," Johnny's voice sounded.

Monk kicked his loosened leg chain aside. "*I'm clear, Doc!*"

"Lead the way, Monk," Doc ordered. "Duck through the same hole I first entered by. The rest of you follow. I will hold them off with the whip and bring up the rear."

Crowded closely by Johnny and Ham, Monk butted through into the next pit back of the active working line. Doc ceased slashing his whip and bent to follow them ...

... only to have his head rammed with a hollow thump against an object hurtling back through the hole from the other direction.



It was Monk's granite head that Doc had bumped!

"We can't get out that way, Doc!" Monk roared, in his frantic haste squirming past Doc and whacking his head on the bottom of the pit as he fell in.

Ham and Johnny came piling through on top of Monk.

"**Carnivorous crabs!**" Johnny loudly shrieked.

"Man-eating ones!" Ham augmented.

"Big as dogs!" Johnny insisted.

"And millions of 'em!" Monk finished, holding his head.

*In the Count's playroom (coming up) ...*



## XIII -- Bits of Hell

"This way, then!" Doc said and whipped through the hole into the pit where Ham had been chained.

There was a *blur* of movement on the pit floor accompanied by a fearful sound: a *metallic clacking*.

Then Monk -- coming through the hole in the wake of Doc -- found himself jammed into the pit that he was trying to leave.

"Blazes!" Monk protested. "What's the matter?"

"This route is barred too," Doc said.

"Crabs?"

"Right. The pit floor is covered with them."

"They keep 'em in cages somewhere behind the working pits," Ham jerked. "They turn them loose to forestall escapes. I saw one poor blighter go down under a wave of them last night. They had his bones picked clean in a horribly short time."

The *metallic clacking* grew louder, coming into the pit with a din like the croaking of thousands of tree frogs.

"That noise is the crabs clackin' their claws," the academic Johnny said ungrammatically but forcefully. "They can take a man's finger off with one snip. They climb your legs, all the time hacking you up as if 2 razors were working on you."

"They're land crabs too, Doc," Ham put in. "Something like those recorded in parts of Siberia only bigger. Not as big as dogs as Johnny said. But bigger than any I ever heard of before. Ferocious as tiger sharks!"

*There was a **thumping** sound on the pit sides.*

"Them guys with the dog collars are heavin' rocks!" Monk roared.

Ham's shout blended with Monk's roar. "***Here come the crabs!***"

"Kick 'em back!" Monk bawled.

"Kick them back yourself!" Ham snapped. "I have no shoes on!"

"Whadda you think I'm wearin'?" Monk growled. "I'm barefooted too!"

"Block the hole with your head!" Ham suggested sarcastically.

*While they quarreled, they were taking action.*

Monk had picked up one of the large stones which had been heaved into the pit and was smashing crabs as they came in.



Ham was slugging at another hole with the weighted butt of the whip which Doc had dropped.

Some of the *clack-clacking* monsters got through. Johnny was dancing around on his bare feet, trying to stamp on their backs before their fearful claws could nip off his toes or slice through the muscles of his legs.

"Doc!" Monk yelled. "They're comin' through faster'n I can pop 'em off!"

"Let a few of them in," the **Bronze Man** said suddenly.

Puzzled -- but aware that Doc Savage must have some plan -- Monk complied.

In the meantime, Doc was stripping off his outer garments. He managed to get at the bulletproof chain-mesh undergarment which he wore and remove it. He used it to shield his hands, then grasped one of the crabs when an unusual brightness came into the unholy **crimson** sky and straightened.

He hurled the fearsome thing at the nearest overseer!

There was light enough for the cruel fellows to see it coming. They emitted cries and crowded into the nearest of honeycomb pits in an effort to escape. The wall of earth between the pits was not wide enough to permit quick mass action.

Monk got the idea and admitted more crabs one-at-a-time. Doc grabbed the things and hurled them.

As a matter of safety, the oversers withdrew.

"All right," Doc rapped. "We'll make a break for it, now. Let me heave you up."

Monk ran and jumped into the **Bronze Man**'s clasped hands. Doc gave a jerk, hurtling the apish Chemist up to the pit run.

"Head for the underbrush!" Doc called.

Ham and Johnny ran at the *bronze giant* and Doc heaved them up in the same manner.

Then he himself leaped ... caught the edge of the pit with one deft arm ... drew himself up and ran across the narrow walls of earth between the honeycomb pits to join his aides.

-----

The overseers were already swarming upon them.

Strangely enough, the fellows seemed to have no weapons other than the vicious whips. They were handicapped by their very numbers due to the scarcity of the footing on which they had to work.

"*Make it faster!*" Doc called.

His aides were having trouble. Their feet were bare and the volcanic rock had many of the characteristics of broken glass.

Stones began falling near them, rattling on the brittle rock and occasionally breaking off glassy fragments. Whips lashed, popped!

*"Go ahead," Doc directed.*

They went on, moving as rapidly as the tangled vegetation would allow.

Lower down, the jungle growth became more dense. Matted vines and thorny branches disputed their way. Gigantic orchids -- pale flowers of *Evil* in the flickering **volcanic light** -- dangled fleshy petals from overhead. Doc Savage's huge **frame** often bored a way for the others.

"What's the hurry, Doc?" demanded Monk, puffing.

"Renny, Long Tom, and Pat are prisoners at the Palace," Doc said simply.

"Well why bust our necks in this jungle?" Monk queried. "Let's get on one of the turtle trails."

*They were paralleling one of the well-beaten trails. At the moment, the **red volcanic light** was flaring.*

*Doc moved close to the trail and scanned the way ahead.*

"Come," he said and started on a trot down the ancient path.

"This is better," Monk muttered, lumbering close behind.

*50 yards ahead, Doc halted abruptly.*

"Stand back," he said. "Look!"

He stood well to the side of the trail. His **bronzed** hand drifted out and plucked at something invisible to the eyes of the others.

There was a swish of tree branches slicing through air ... a glint of metal ... a sharp *thud*.

Doc bent and pulled out of the ground a knife buried to the hilt. His hands moved, unfastening the knife from the branch to which it was deftly attached by means of leather stringing.

"An old Malay trick," he announced. "An animal-hair trigger is strung across the trail. Even in good light, it is practically invisible. A sapling is bent back with the knife attached. When the hair is broken by a man walking on the trail, the sapling springs upright, sinking the knife into the stomach of the trail walker."

*Monk rubbed apprehensively at his midriff and said nothing.*

"These trails are possibly guarded by other traps also," Doc stated. "By daylight and looking sharply, they might be traversed safely. But at night, they had best be left alone."

Doc handed the knife to Ham. "Perhaps you had better carry it till we locate your sword cane."

"That reminds me of something else we lost, Doc," Monk burst in. "Habeas Corpus."



"That porker getting lost is the only good thing that's happened to anybody on this blasted island!" Ham snapped.

"Come," Doc said, forestalling another resumption of the perpetual quarrel.

He plunged back into the tangled jungle growth. The others followed.

*They forged on, working interminably through darkness slashed occasionally by the lurid **volcanic light**.*

-----

It was nearing morning when through the interstices of jungle vegetation the grim walls of Count Ramadanoff's palace loomed ahead.

On the side toward the sea, the walls were glistening wetly **black** from high-flung spray. On the jungle side, the towers and turrets of igneous stone were bathed in a bloody mist as the **red volcanic light** blanketed through miasmatic swamp vapor.

Monk hunched his massive shoulders. "Spooky-lookin' joint, ain't it?"

"A habitation singularly minacious," Johnny murmured.

Monk -- as Johnny's self-appointed interpreter -- said: "He means 'full of threats'."

"Everything is threatening on this island," Ham said. "Doc, those pits where we were digging -- what's it all about?"

Doc's hand waved out toward the bastioned walls of 20-feet-thick volcanic rock surrounding the Palace.

"The **secret** of the pits lies behind those walls," he stated.

"You mean that whiskered devil -- the Count?" Ham queried.

"With the Count Ramadanoff, yes."

*Doc stepped a few paces aside ... bent over ... and straightened up holding a fallen palm trunk thicker than his body.*

"Help with this fallen log," he instructed. "If we are to climb that wall, we will have to get it propped over the water in the moat by the wall."

All labored strenuously getting the log solidly against the wall. Doc tested it with his weight.

Then standing with legs grimly planted and back braced against the wall, he tersely said: "Monk! Up on my shoulders."

Monk stepped from Doc's cupped hands to the **Bronze Man's** shoulders with a balanced ease surprising for a man so heavily built. With his feet on Doc's shoulders, he braced his back against the wall.

"Next - Ham," Doc said.

Ham mounted swiftly from Doc's hands to the top of his head from Monk's hands to Monk's shoulders. Standing there with back to the wall, his own upreached hand missed the top of the wall by only a few feet.

"All right, Johnny," Doc called.

"Veritably, an elevating proceeding," Johnny murmured. "Herculean in concept. But destined irrevocably for fructiferous termination."

"Save that until Ham gets off my neck," Monk grumbled.

The professorial Johnny stepped closer and then -- monocle, loin cloth, and all -- shinned up the 3-man "rope" with the agility of an acrobat. Gaining the top of the wall, he lay flat to hook his feet over the rear edge, then reached over and grasped Ham's upreaching hands.

Supported by Johnny's grasp, Ham swung free from Monk's shoulders. Monk, in turn, grasped Ham's legs. Doc climbed over the dangling human chain and got his hands atop the wall.

The wiry Johnny for a moment had been sustaining the weight of all of them. He might be an ex-professor and he might wear a monocle. But Johnny was about as toughly muscled an individual as could be found.

When all were on the wall, Doc eased over and hung by his hands from the other side. Then one after the other, his aides climbed over his body ... hung from his feet ... and dropped into the Palace courtyard below.

Finally Doc Savage dropped lightly to join them.

"Lateral peregrinations eminently successful," Johnny whispered.

Doc led the way through inky shadows to a small stone structure which evidently had been intended as quarters for servants. He forced the door and led his aides inside.

"Wait here," he said.

"Where'll you be, Doc?" Monk asked, mystified.

"Going to climb the tower and enter the Palace from above. Will open the door from the inside when you hear my whistle."

Johnny asked: "Does it percolate to this secretive assemblage that the sinister genius of the Galapagos may be simulating nescience of our ensconcement behind his bastioned ramparts?"

"You mean does the Count might know we're here and he's set a trap for us?" Monk translated.



"Exactly," Johnny agreed.

"Possible," Doc admitted. "This Count is diabolically clever."

"And there's that beast! That thing, that **monster!**" Monk muttered. "There ain't rightly no name for it, Doc."

"It is as large as a house!" Ham corroborated.

"Assuredly yes," Johnny said with an infinitesimal exaggeration.

"How close were you to the thing?" Doc questioned.

"Too close!" Monk gulped. "We saw it from the slitted window of the tower."

"Let us hope you hear my whistle," Doc said.

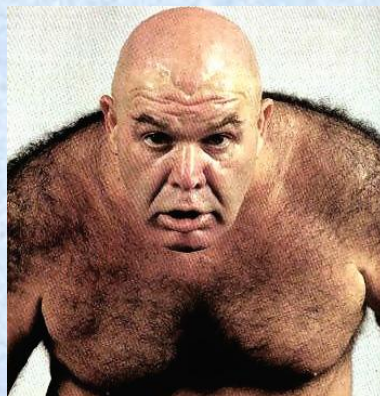
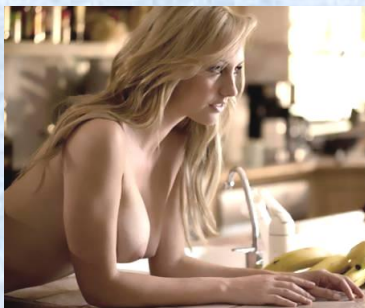
The **Bronze Man** took silent steps and was swallowed by crawling shadows. His aides stared tensely in the direction where the Palace loomed in the darkness.

And when next the **red lightning** flashed its lurid menace, they saw Doc flattened like a human fly on the sheer surface of the black tower, climbing by the **sheer fabulous strength** of fingers and toes the almost non-existent cracks between the stone blocks.

Then the **lightning** died and blackness swooped down. And when again the **red lightning** flickered ...

... *Doc Savage had disappeared.*

*Up next ...*



*... the Count will have his way with his new **Whore!***

## XIV -- Jungle Palace

Doc had little difficulty effecting an entrance through one of the high tower windows. For it had no fastening.

In the darkness, he felt his way down unbanistered, serpentine steps. In the halfway room containing the long window slit overlooking the courtyard dungeon, he paused and peered out.

Below in the flagstoned enclosure, the rippling **volcanic light** revealed to him the same *incredible monster* that the others had seen.

The fearful beast on its shapeless multi-clawed legs was propelling its gross body around, its sawtoothed tail lashing and armored head wagging. *Foam* dripped from its grisly jaws as it braced itself against a barred cell, its claws scraping out.

In a frenzy of impotence at its failure to break through the bars, the *monster* swelled its scabrous body to what appeared to be half again its original size.

XX

Count Ramadanoff had come into Pat's room. His sudden appearance caused Doc Savage to shrink away lest his presence be discovered.

"My dear lady," the Count began, "if you would be so kind as to follow me."

Hesitantly, Pat followed him out of the room. He led down a hall to what seemed to be a sumptuously-decorated **bedroom** (which was quite soundproof). Large cushions and pillows abounded about the room.



"Please, my dear. Make yourself comfortable. Lie down among the pillows."

"I don't like you calling me 'dear'," Pat said defiantly.



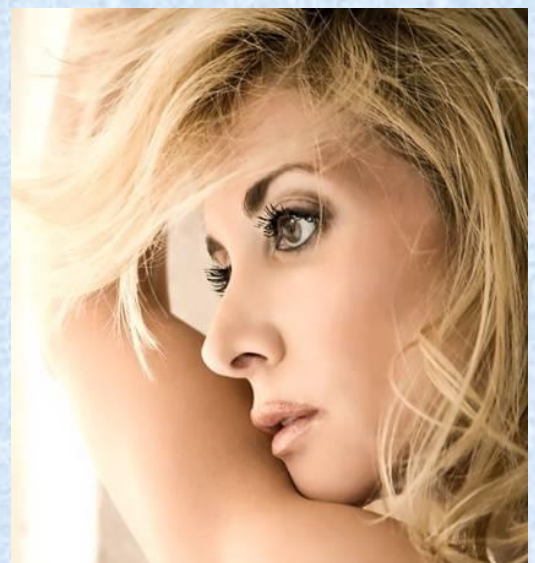
"Would you rather me call you whore? Or slut? Because that is precisely why I brought you down to this special room."



Pat panicked and tried to get out. But of course, the huge door was locked and there were no windows. Already the Count was taking off his clothes.

"I have been searching for a suitable Countess for a long time. One that can satisfy my manly urges and accommodate my **size**," he said rather nonchalantly. "There have been many who have tried. Not willingly, of course, but I did give them a chance. Few survived the experience because I am rather well-endowed as you can see."

Pat looked in horror at the **largest penis** she could conceive anyone could possess. It was **monstrous!!** No wonder the other women didn't survive!



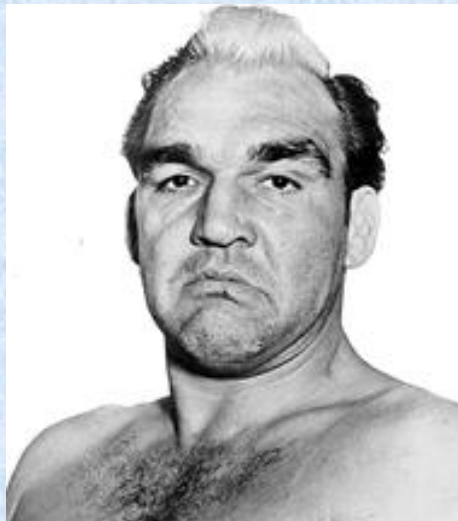


"Now, my feisty **Bitch**, let us see how you fare with the others. Perhaps you will be the lucky one whom I shall make me wife, my Countess, my **Whore**. Strip for your **Master!!!**"

Based on her prior **rape** experience with the men in the pits, Pat knew it was hopeless to resist the powerful Count. It would be futile and in the end he will have taken her anyway.

So for the first time in her life, the feisty **bronze**-haired woman with the **34-D** perky breasts and the tiny **22-inch** waist numbed herself and started disrobing. She was only hoping that she wouldn't be terribly injured when his assault was over.

PAT SAVAGE THE WHORE







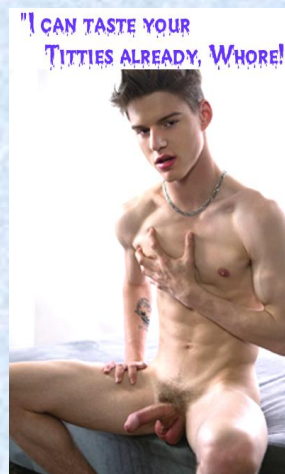
"*Magnificent*" and "*Glorious*" were among the adjectives used by the Count as she undressed to reveal a perfect flawless body.

"Do not think that I am totally thoughtless and without foresight," said the Count. "I know you will have much difficulty accommodating my **organ** when it attempts to *impregnate* you. So I have arranged to have a young man stretch you out beforehand."

*(He did not know that his pit guards had already more than "stretched out" Pat.)*

Pat was astonished and repelled when she saw what looked like a high-school-aged boy approach her. He had teenage **lust** in his mean eyes.

"You can have her now," the Count said. "Do with her as you wish. Just be sure that you widen her tender vagina so that it will be able to accept me."





He smiled *evil*ly as he directed Pat: "Assume the position, my Precious."





Pat groaned in shame as the boy eagerly started probing her beautiful body.



She writhed in *humiliation* as he inserted his fingers into her pussy, trying to feel what it was like as well as to widen it at the same time for his upcoming intrusion.



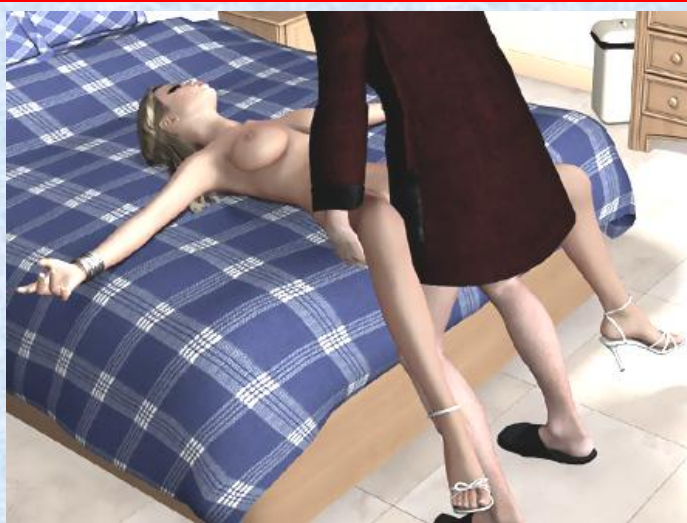




The boy mounted Pat as if he had done this before. She turned her away in humiliated shame as he **thrust** in-and-out of her, his adolescent pecker finally emptying itself deep inside her tight fertile cunt.









Pat fought the feeling that was coming over her. Fought it with every ounce of feminine honor and pride that she had. The teenage penis wasn't large enough to cause her pain. But it was stimulating her against her will and wishes. ***She was CUMMING!*** Like a **whore** in heat!







"Well done, my boy!" the Count congratulated. "I think she is ready for me now."

The Count motioned her to a group of pillows. "Lie there and as you Americans say - **- Spread-Eagle!**"

Pat did as she was commanded ...





"Use your hands to play with your breasts. Squeeze your nipples, please," he directed. "And lift your knees up higher so I can better see your sacred womb."

She felt humiliated. Like she was undergoing a crude doctor's examination. But she had no choice.



The Count was already kneeling between her widespread thighs. Pat tried to avoid his conquering eyes.

But then she found herself looking at a **2"** thick penis that must have been **15"** long!

She turned her misty eyes back to his own. He seemed to approve.

"I will try to make this as painless as possible. I will go slowly. But make no mistake, I will go in **ALL THE WAY**. Every inch of my manhood will find its way in your womb. Who knows? Perhaps you will enjoy it and have an *orgasm* of your own."





*"Like that's really going to happen"* thought Pat as she felt the large head pressing against her vagina opening.



He must have started a little premature ejaculation because the top part of the monster shaft was coated with a shiny *slime*. Maybe it would help lubricate, she wondered.





She uttered a loud *"Uuumpph!!!"* as it slowly progressed into her.

The Count didn't stop and move it back and then forward but continually pushed it without pause. **All 15 inches in her tight womb!**

When it was finally imbedded in her all the way, she thought she was going to die!



"Wonderful, my dear! Absolutely wonderful! You are one of only 3 women who have ever been able to accommodate me and still retain consciousness without injury. And let me assure you that those other tramps did not have your beauty."



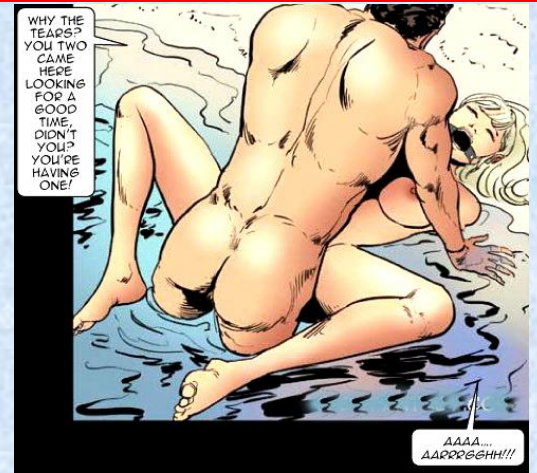


His bearded face pressed down on hers to give her a congratulatory **kiss**. It lasted very long and involved a lot of his tongue searching for hers. His hands were *squeezing* her full breasts as he started to increase his thrusting rhythm faster-and-faster.

Pat felt like a miniature battering-ram was plunging into her. The Count now did not seem concerned about her comfort as much as he was about expending his enormous load of *impregnating* semen. So much for the orgasm!







He stood up and raised her with him. His penis was still inside her. He actually seemed to be supporting her off the ground with it alone! It seemed to have a living strength all its own.

He began lifting her up-and-down on it using his arm strength to raise her and letting gravity push her back down. Then he moved his hands from her armpits to lift her up by her proud **breasts alone**! The combination of that pain with what she was feeling in her crotch nearly drove her to madness.



She thought she was on the verge of blacking-out when she heard a loud "YAAAAAAAAA!!!!" come from his mouth. About the same time she felt a gush of a **heavy viscous substance** flood the cavities in her womb. It didn't seem like it was going to stop!



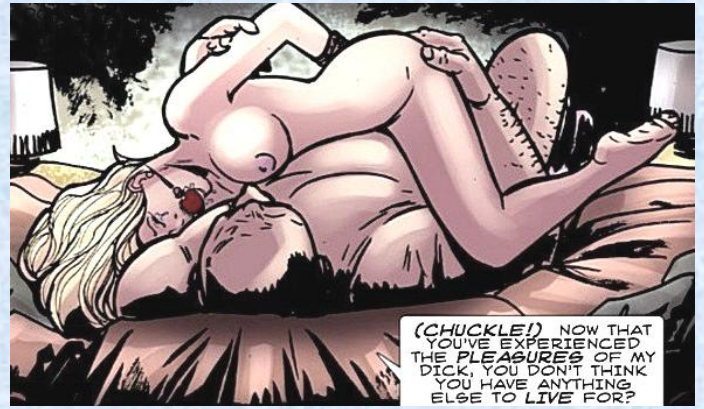


"YAAAAAAA!" he repeated as yet another stream of hot *impregnating* sperm flooded her ravaged cunt.





## PAT SAVZAGE BEING IMPREGNATED"



When he finally pulled out of her, it was done quickly, not gently. Almost with a popping-type sound. He layed her back down and rested his knees on both sides of her chest and displayed his **semen**-coated (with traces of **blood**) penis in front of her face.



"See what you've done, my dear **Whore**? You were incredible! Is it not your new **Master**? Now kiss it!"



She was too much in shock to resist and numbly puckered her lips. He ran the **sperm**-coated head all over her **full pouty lips** before inserting it into her mouth. It surprised her and she gagged. She could feel it "deflating" and becoming limp as he pinched her nose.







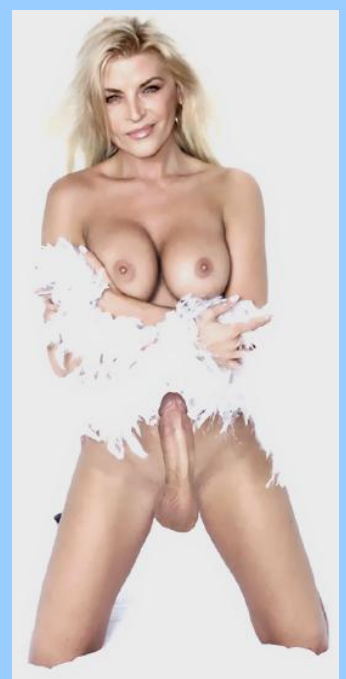


Then she felt a stream of some liquid. It was not thick and heavy like his **semen** but almost water-like. When he released her nose, she knew immediately what it was -- **URINE!!**





*In a Parallel Universe ...*





"I think you will make an excellent Countess. And I promise you that I will give you the pleasure of my **manhood** at least a dozen times each day for the rest of your life. Of course, that is until your tummy gets bigger and some **little Counts and Countesses** are on the way. But I still have your **mouth** and **backside** for that."



He removed one of her **5" pumps** and began rubbing against the "G-spot" of her crotch. Pat writhed at this obscene attempt to try to force her to orgasm.





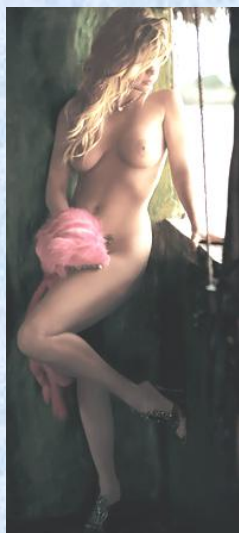
He then turned to a strange-looking machine which took the place of Pat's shoe. It inserted itself into her vaginal opening. But he did not succeed. She was just barely conscious.



And with that, he led her out of the **Rape Room** and back to her original room. He continued on a task which he had previously started ...











[Impregnated]

Watching the beast, Doc Savage made no sound. His finger drifted out and felt briefly over the glass of the slitted window ... then *drummed* softly.

As though the *drumming* on the window glass had been a signal, there was a sound in the darkness behind Doc. A *breath* unwillingly expelled.

Doc crouched ... jerked out of line of the window ... and listened.

Through the weighting blackness came sounds of *breaths*, jerkily taken. Plainly, Doc was sharing this room with some person attempting to conceal the noise of their breathing.

Holding his breath and moving with the utter silence of a jungle denizen, Doc eased toward the source of those bated breathing sounds. His body was crouched, his hand outstretched, *cabled* fingers tensed to grip and choke ...

Then he stood stock still, his sensitive nostrils flaring.

A subtle *odor* -- a faint and familiar **perfume** -- wafted to him.

The tension went out of his clawed fingers and he straightened, groping in front of him gently.

"Pat ..." he whispered.

*From out of the darkness sounded a smothered gasp and feminine hands grasped for him.*

"Oh Doc!" breathed Pat.

Pat Savage was trembling. But with Doc's presence, strength seemed to come back to her.

She stopped shaking, sighed, and looked up, trying to see the **Bronze Man's** face. She shuddered.



"Another hour would have been too late. Renny and Long Tom were to be given to the ... **thing** ... at daybreak."

"You mean the **monster** in the court?"

"Yes," Pat said, grimly. "The Count locked me in here to watch the ... the 'feeding'. He says I'll be the next one."

*Her voice became more grim.*

"He's been trying to scare me into agreeing to stay on the island. He says he'll make me a 'queen'. Imagine! Queen of the honeycomb pits. He's not human. He's a **fiend**! He's more of a monster than that ... that **thing** in the courtyard!"

**Then Pat went silent as the fateful piano music flooded the room and bombarding their ears with weird vibrations.**

*The notes seemed to roll through the darkness with lethal menace.*

As suddenly as it had begun, the music stopped though -- as always before -- an ominous pulsing hung in the air.

"Someone is going to die!" Pat gasped.

"Why do you say that?" Doc asked sharply.

"The Count plays on his piano and someone always dies!" Pat said rapidly. "I know it sounds mad. But it is true. Usually it is the **thumb-hole death**. A hole appears in your temple about the size you could press your thumb into!"

Concealed lights flashed on then, bathing the bare rockgirt room with **white brilliance**.

Doc and Pat <blinked> to accustom their eyes to the sudden glare. Pat gasped at what she saw in the light, then shuddered.

Doc Savage was equally surprised. But his **bronze** features remained impassive.

**Standing there -- so close that Doc could reach him with a leap -- was the Count Ramadanoff!**

In black evening clothes, he loomed tall and sinister. His Czar-of-Russia beard was an inky-black against his long white face. Broader than his brother Boris and nearly 2 feet taller, he was in other respects identical in appearance even to the rings on his tapering fingers -- a **ruby** and an **emerald**, each as big as the end of a man's thumb.

Doc watched the Count's eyes. They were as **hard** and **glittering** as the gems on his fingers.

Doc had power that but few men had succeeded in developing down through the Ages. He could use his **gold-flake eyes** upon another, often to *hypnotize* against the other's will.



But with the Count, Doc got nowhere. The brittle gem-like eyes glared back as though they did not see at all.

The Count's lips twitched slightly. He made a low and courtly bow. His white hand waved out, the jewels flashing.

He spoke suavely: "If you will be so gracious as to escort the lady, early morning breakfast is served in the Great Hall."

Pat said with her lips only: "He does the strangest things. This is some kind of trap."

Doc nodded without speaking, rested his fingers against Pat's elbow and guided her through the opened door and down the winding stone steps. The Count followed closely as they pushed through the hanging drapes of ruby velvet on the stair landing and entered the cavernous maw which was the hall.

Before the huge fireplace where the *blue flames* danced without sound -- without heat and appreciable light -- a breakfast table was set for three.

"You see! I have prepared for you," the Count said, nodding them to chairs.

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With its crisp damask and softly glowing silver service, the breakfast table was the only fresh touch in the high-raftered hall.

All else remained the same. The grand piano swathed in sea otter; the swinging candelabra burning in hundreds of flames; and the regal collection of samovars, sending off dull metal glitters from velvet-draped recesses.

While slaves served the food, the Count leaned forward and said in a confiding manner:

"You are a Man of the World enough to know that things are not always as they appear."

"And so?" Doc said noncommittally.

"It would appear that I have treated your aides badly," the other murmured. "But such is not the case."

"I consigned three of your men to my pits," the Count continued. "Strange as it may seem, I did it to protect them from an island horror."

"The *thumb-hole death*?" Doc suggested.

The bearded giant murmured: "Ah, you know of it?"

"I had occasion to observe its deadly effect in New York."

*The Count's eyes glittered.*

"It has long hovered over brother Boris."



"And what have you to say regarding my other 2 men?" Doc questioned dryly.

Their host drawled: "My dear fellow, they are at this minute leading a searching party to recover your body, supposedly mangled by sharks."

Pat interposed hotly: "If that is true, why was I locked in the tower room and told to watch their executions?"

"A proceeding later to be illumined," the Count said precisely. "The intended executions -- a myth."

"There was no myth about that ... that *monster* I saw in the courtyard!" Pat insisted.

She was not eating. The Count helped himself to food.

He leaned toward Doc. "You have seen my pet?"

"The 'creature' in the courtyard?" Doc questioned. "The *iguana*?"

The Count's breath drew in *raspingly*. "So you were able to identify it!"

He shrugged. "Identifying it, you must have been all the more impressed by its formidable size. A Galapagos or seagoing lizard attaining the length of 6 feet would normally be considered a 'monster'. You saw my pet in the courtyard. How long would you estimate him to be?"

"It appeared," Doc admitted, "many times that size."

"But how is it possible?" Pat protested.

She was not eating. She had no taste for food served in the *sinister* environment of the Palace.

The *blue flames* in the fireplace instead of lighting up her lovely face threw it in ghastly, *bluish* shadow.

XX





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Pat shrank back as the Count's tapering fingers reached out to touch her arm.

"On this island are undreamed *horrors*," he murmured.

"And something else," Doc put in. "Something you wish found."

*For the first time, something other than sinister Evil seemed to come over the man before them.*

He straightened visibly in his chair and put down his eating implements.

"You have learned of that?" he asked.

"It has become evident," Doc Savage told him.

The big man leaned forward smiling eagerly in his black beard. "You know what it is?"

"The name? Yes," the **Bronze Man** admitted. "The *Devil's Honeycomb*."

"You don't know more than that?" the other demanded.

"No," Doc admitted.

The bearded man settled back and seemed relieved. He began eating again, glancing once at them curiously as if noting for the first time that they were consuming no food. He did not urge them to eat.

"I have need of your scientific abilities," said the Count casually. "I have tried the usual instruments for making subterranean surveys. They are not sufficiently sensitive. You can make more powerful ones, more delicate ones."

Doc Savage said sharply: "In order to properly design the instruments, it will be necessary to know what you want located."

"That is impossible!" the other said abruptly.

"Then what you ask me to do is also impossible," Doc informed him.

The bearded man showed his teeth through his heavy whiskers.

"You have the reputation of a man who does the impossible," the Count said grimly. "You will manage to do it now. Or take some very unpleasant consequences."

*Doc Savage said nothing.*

"With your exhaustive knowledge of Geology and Cartography, my dear Savage, it should not be too difficult for you to locate an object which I shall describe as having an atomic structure entirely different from the rest of the island," the whiskered man said.



The Count raised his napkin and blotted his thin lips. He blotted carefully. For a moment, the whole lower half of his face was concealed by the stiff damask.

The *blue flames* which leaped in the fireplace commenced promptly to shorten. They died down to half their height within the next few seconds.

*Doc Savage spoke suddenly to Pat in strange language words composed largely of guttural -- though curiously melodic -- sounds.*

*Doc was using the language of the ancient **Mayans** -- the remarkable people whose civilization flourished in the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico long before the Egyptian pyramids were built.*

*It is doubtful if more than a dozen persons in the so-called Civilized World were sufficiently conversant with the strangely syllabled speech to understand it.*

-----

Even as Doc talked, the *blue flames* shortened farther until they became little more than crawling stubs within the massive fireplace.

"What are you saying?" the Count demanded. His voice had a noticeable nasal quality now.

"Nothing," Pat answered, tensely.

She sat back in her chair, breathing deeply as Doc -- speaking in *Mayan* -- had directed her to do.

*"Fill your lungs with fresh air," Doc had said. "And if the blue flame goes out, do not take another breath until we can get outside."*

To the Count Ramadanoff, Doc said in English: "Before I do anything about locating your *Devil's Honeycomb*, the release of my 2 men held prisoners in your iguana pit will be necessary."

"So?" the Count said with nasal quality still predominantly in his voice. "You have finished with breakfast chatter? You prefer to deal in realities? Then listen to this!

"Not only do I refuse to release your two men. But I am also pleased to inform you that **your other 3 aides** are prisoners of mine also. Securely locked in that same garden shelter where you left them when you scaled my tower.

"This Palace, my dear Savage, is amply equipped with electrical safeguards much in the manner -- I should judge -- as your own skyscraper headquarters in New York is protected. Nothing can happen within these walls that I am not immediately informed about."

Turning his head, the Count summoned a slave by means of that odious *hissing* noise he made through compressed lips.

"Throw open the outside door," he ordered.

The slave -- swarthy and of mixed blood -- padded across the hall, swung wide the massive door, and started back toward the breakfast table.



30 feet from the door, his body was gripped with spasmodic convulsions. A chopped-off scream of **agony** passed his lips as his face contorted and his body -- grotesquely knotted -- thumped onto the floor. Early morning sunlight slanted through the open door bathing his heaped body with funereal benediction.

The Count's eyes glittered.

"If you doubt he is dead, my dear Savage, you have my special permission to examine the body. And anyone else who approaches within that 30 foot area in front of the door will be similarly **electrocuted**. I arranged the exhibition to demonstrate to you the futility of attempting escape."

From the region of the fireplace sounded a metallic *sigh* as the **blue flames** flickered out.

Out of the tail of her eye, Pat had been watching the **flames**. She held her breath. Doc did the same.

As Doc was aware, the failing of the **blue flames** signaled the flooding of the room with an anesthetizing (perhaps even a lethal) gas.

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As a flame in a gas stove burns **blue** giving off virtually no illumination, so did the weird flames in the Count's fireplace burn **blue** and light-lessly. That they gave off no heat was accounted for by drafts mechanically arranged to conduct the heat up the chimney.

But the draft -- controlled by a concealed floor button within reach of the Count's toe at the breakfast table -- could be closed and the **flames** extinguished, throwing such a volume of unburned gas into the great hall that even with the outside door opened, a few whiffs would rob a person of consciousness.

Doc had been warned when his alert **eyes** had observed the Count pressing the napkin to his lips.

Under cover of the napkin, the Count had no doubt inserted wads of chemically treated gauze into his nostrils so that he could breathe for a short time with safety in the gas-laden atmosphere. It was this gauze that had given his voice its pronounced nasal quality.

Coincident with the failing of the **blue flames**, a loud **crash** sounded. **It was the breakfast table going over, propelled by a forcible kick from Doc Savage's feet!**

The table turned over in the direction of the Count with such appalling **force** that the Count in his chair went over also.

In the moment that the bearded man was clearing himself of the table wreckage, Doc grabbed Pat by the arm and propelled her violently across the room and up the sweeping flight of stone steps!

The Count was on his feet and running forward by the time Doc and Pat had reached the stair landing, hung with the velvet drapes.

The Count looked very happy as he observed that the **ruby**-colored drapes had tangled themselves about the fugitives and must certainly trip them up.



But Doc and Pat were not tripped by the hangings.

It was no accident that the drapes had become swathed about Doc's mounting figure. Doc was holding them in one *metallic* hand, carrying them upward with him.

Suddenly he stopped and faced around.

*"Hang onto my back,"* he said in *Mayan* to Pat. *"And hold your breath."*

Pat thrust arms about Doc's neck from behind. From high overhead, the brass hoops creaked on their rod and the **ruby** drapes became taut as a wind-bellied sail as Doc -- lifting his feet and gripping the drape like a rope -- swung downward in a wide arc.

Down he swung on that plunging curve, passing high over the astonished face of the Count and up ... up ... with Pat clinging tightly around his neck. At the very height of his swing, he was dangling at a fearful distance above the high-swung candelabra.

He let go his hold on the drape and hurtled forward and down, the wind a hard rush in his ears. His **muscle**-corded hand -- outstretched -- caught the candelabra, his momentum swinging it forward. Candles showered down, their flames whipping like tiny comets' tails.

Letting go of the candelabra, the **Man of Bronze** swooped through the air above that **death stretch** -- the 30 feet of flooring in front of the door charged with high-amperage **electricity**. Through the lofty door his body shot down.

He landed easily, taking the shock in a way that showed he had practiced jumping from great heights.

Pat had managed to hang on throughout.



## XV -- Mangrove Murder

Safely outside that **Palace of Death**, Doc circled the tower running. And Pat ran with him.

It was Doc's intention to reach the tomb-like structure in the garden where his aides were imprisoned and effect their release.

But he did not reach the prison house.

He got close enough that Monk, Ham, and Johnny could see him from the barred window. Ham even shrieked a warning.

*But it was too late.*

**A Black Fury which had leaped down from a Palace window landed with crushing weight on Doc's shoulders.**

Doc went down, a hard fall to the flagstoned yard. *And on top of him riding him down was the figure of Count Ramadanoff!*

The Count's fists thudded on Doc with vicious short-arm jabs delivered with the force of a pile-driver! His white hands that looked so soft were not soft at all. On his shortcut through the Palace to intercept Doc, he had slipped his hands into gloves of basket-weave wire as flexible as thin kid and knobbed on the knuckles with jagged slugs of lead.

*"With my own hands, I will beat you to death!"* the Count raged. *"Three of your men at one time my fists have beaten. And now YOU!"*

As Doc's head hit the flagstoned surface, the Count's right fist bludgeoned in. There was nothing short-arm about this jab. He had timed the blow. His fist bashed in from far back with all the weight of his massive shoulders behind it. **He meant to crush Doc's skull between mailed fist and flagstone!**

The fist drove down and struck solidly ...

... but not on Doc's head.

Doc jerked clear, timing his movement so that the Count could not pull his punch. The fist swished air in Doc's face and rammed flagstone. Holes had been fashioned in the backs of the leaded gloves so the finger rings could push through and serve as additional punishment factors.

Under the drive of fist against flagstone, the **ruby** (as big as the end of a man's thumb) crushed into a mound of **reddish** crystalline powder.

As he jerked clear, Doc drove his own **fist** upward to the point of the Count's chin. The madman's head rocked back until his bull neck creaked! Doc doubled his knee and kicked himself clear.

Up on their feet, the two crashed in at each other. Doc took one fearful blow on the side of his head. But he rolled with it, thereby avoiding most of its effect and at the same time providing an opening for his own fists.



*Years of private muscular development (literally from the cradle!) tempered by almost as many in training, the **Man of Bronze** exploded into Action for the first time. No more games now! No more simply evading punches ...*

**He hit 3 times in *dazzling* succession! It was almost like a single blow. A drilling one-two punch over the heart and an uppercut to the jaw swung from down around his knees.**

***The blow would have dropped a rhinoceros!***

**It dropped Count Ramadanoff senseless!**

He did not awaken until several minutes later. And by that time, his hands were tied.

Guided by Pat, Doc had found the generator room and turned the electricity off all over the Palace.

Also by the use of a tiny vest-pocket grenade, he had broken down the door of the garden prison and freed his 3 aides.

-----  
The Count sat up groggily and Doc ordered: "Inside the Palace! Free my 2 men locked in your dungeon cells."

"And make it fast!" Monk threatened.

With the Count leading and the others following close, they trooped through the great hall and up the winding stairs.

"You have beaten me with your fists," the Count said. "Very well. But there is still the ***thumb-hole death.***"

XX

Count Ramadanoff secretly smiled to himself. He had beaten Doc Savage in another way. He had ***raped*** and ***impregnated*** his beautiful cousin ...



Before the door to the balcony which surrounded the animal pit, the Count paused ... impressively.

"What you will see beyond this door is something the like of which until today has never been observed by any living man except myself," he announced, dramatically.

"I know what we'll see," Monk blazed. "The *monster*!"

"It's not the '*monster*' you have in mind," Doc interposed enigmatically.

The Count's breath rasped.

"So you have solved my mystery?"

"Correct," Doc admitted. "The window which looks upon this courtyard from the tower room is in reality a powerful **magnifying glass**. The beast we saw is not as large as it appears."

The Count's lips writhed. "Do not make the mistake of thinking the *horror* is diminished. It is increased uncounted times."

Pat shuddered. "What could be worse than that ... that *monster*?"

The Count leered at her. His answer was simple. And devastating!

"**Many monsters," he said.**

His foot must have touched a hidden lever -- actuated mechanically -- because the door to the balcony swung open. Doc Savage's aides crowded forward and stopped with ludicrous suddenness, staring down into the pit with cold shock.

Monk was the first one to get his voice.

"Not one *monster*!" he gasped. "But about a hundred of 'em! All nearly 6 feet long!"

The hundred was somewhat of an exaggeration because the *iguanas* -- the most hideous of beasts -- were so tightly packed on the dungeon floor that their scaly hides rubbed together and made it impossible for them to swell out their bodies in the loathsome habit they had in moments of excitement.

The mass of scabrous-hided *monsters* undulated on the flagstoned floor snorting, armored heads without exception pointing toward the cell wherein Renny and Long Tom were held captive.

"They have been starved to hunger frenzy," the Count's odious voice sounded. "They are waiting for the bars to go up so that they may get inside the cell."

Pat Savage uttered a choked cry of dismay.

The Count's silky voice -- thick with expected triumph -- continued.

"*Iguanas* inhabiting some of the Galapagos Islands are not particularly savage, I believe. But these are different. Everything on this island is *savage*. If I did not find it so when I came, then I made it so.



"For one thing, you will observe that these brutes are a full foot longer than the average. The strongest -- those fellows which have forged their way to the front and are grinding their teeth against the bars -- are half again larger than any other *iguana* reported on other islands."

"Tryin' to throw a scare into us, huh?" Monk blustered, secure in the realization that the electricity had been cut off and that the Count could no longer control the bars by a touch of a hidden button.

"If anything happens to my men ... " Doc began ominously.

"Your warning comes too late, my dear Savage," the Count rasped. "*Look!*"

-----

**Before their horrified eyes, the iron bars commenced to lift upward out of the floor.** There was a gobbling sound -- *the Count's weird laugh.*

"Fools!" he raved. "What matters it if you have temporarily disrupted my electrical system? There are a hundred places on this balcony where I can touch my toe and actuate the bars by mechanical control!"

As the bars lifted upward, the slavery-jawed *iguanas* surged like a wave inside the cell!

Renny and Long Tom -- acting in a way they had planned for just that emergency -- leaped upward and caught hold of the rising bars. The bars ceased lifting and the 2 men hung sag-weighted while the scabrous monsters with frenzied grunts and a blood-chilling grate of serrated teeth leaped up at them, falling just short.

The Count continued his gobbling laugh.

"It is always the same!" he gloated. "The victims hang onto the bars until the weight of their bodies loosens their grip. Then the *monsters* have their fun. Observe how the *iguanas* crowd from behind. The 2 men will not be enough to appease them. So you, my dear Savage with your 3 other aides and your charming cousin, will form a **second course** for my pets, I confidently predict."

Doc's *gold-flecked eyes* were lancing around the torture chamber.

He could not reach his aides by means of the circular balcony. A sheer dividing wall cut off the way. And by the time he could circle through the palace forcing doors, it would be too late. Long Tom and Renny -- their bodies grown leaden -- would have lost their grips and fallen prey to rending jaws and claws.

There was but one way to the cell. And that led directly through the pit where the monsters crowded together.

Doc looked at Johnny. "Hold your knife at the Count's neck. If he makes a move ... Monk, you and Ham stand by."

*Swerving, Doc Savage gripped the balcony railing and vaulted down into the pit' along with the swarming, hunger-crazed monsters.*

-----

"Doc!" Ham shouted in horror.

Ham's voice was lost in the beastly chorus of grunts echoing up as the *iguanas* discovered the human in their midst.

Pat suddenly hid her eyes. Had she watched, she would have seen some interesting footwork.

Doc landed on the scaled backs of one of the creatures. As it lurched, he leaped onto the back of another. 4 opened mouths rushed him.

He leaped clear in rapid succession stepping from back-to-back of the close-pressed animals much in the manner of a white-water lumberjack running over a log jam.

By virtue of expert eye-to-muscle coordination -- never remaining more than a split-second in any one spot -- Doc reached the middle of that nightmarish arena.

From then on, progress was easier. The animals were too closely packed to attack him successfully so long as he kept on his feet and moving.

Doc reached the cell. Leaping from the back of the enraged *iguanas* to grip the iron bars, he pulled himself up to a safe height. Then bracing his feet against one bar and hands gripping another, he exerted all his tremendous ***strength*** in an effort to pry them apart.

**Under the unbelievable *force* of his muscular pressure, the loose ends of the bars shuddered ... then bent.**

"Can you squeeze through now?" he demanded.

Long Tom did not have to answer.

His beanpole body had already writhed through. Holding to the bars, he added his own strength to that of Doc's. The bars bent enough more to permit Renny also to squirm through.

Hand-over-hand, the three climbed the bars and pulled themselves over the railing to the balcony floor.

Looking back across that frightful pit of frustrated monsters, Doc called to his aides: "*Wait till we come to you!*"

Doc used a vest-pocket bomb. Tiny things, they were no bigger than medicinal capsules but loaded with a powerful explosive.

They blew down a door which separated the balcony from the rest of the Palace. Where necessary, he used more of the capsule bombs to force other doors and finally reached his aides.

*United now for the first time since the **Devil's Honeycomb** mystery had flung malignant shadows across them, Doc, his 5 aides, and Pat with Ramadanoff their prisoner went on a quick, triumphant tour of the Palace.*

*They found the Palace empty, the slaves having decamped into the jungle at the first opportunity.*



---

"We're all together at last!" Pat said joyfully.

"Yeah ... all but Habeas Corpus," Monk amended, a dour look on his homely face.

"I favor leaving the island quickly," Ham snapped, "before that hog finds us."

"You shyster!" Monk growled. "Habeas Corpus is a good hog."

"Good to eat, maybe. But even that I doubt!"

After providing themselves with firearms, Doc's aides donned some of the Count's clothes. The Count wore nothing apparently but black.

Long Tom pointed at Renny's long, puritanical face protruding from a black waistcoat.

Doubling with laughter, Long Tom said: "You look like Frankenstein!"

"Anyhow, they fit," Renny growled. "And I don't look like a scarecrow in a garden patch like you."

Monk and Ham made acrid comments on each other's appearance.

"Holy cow!" Renny rumbled. "It's sure swell to hear you 2 guys scrappin' again. This lug that calls himself a 'Count' fixed up some skeletons with some of your clothes hangin' bloody on 'em. We thought you had all been killed."

As they were all in the act of leaving the Palace, Ham pounced upon the blade of his sword cane where it had been concealed beneath the sea-otter robes on the piano. He examined the tip ... found it still coated with the sleep-producing chemical ... and shifted the blade back into the *malacca* cane handle.

Monk sighed. "Now absolutely everything is found but Habeas."

"And he won't be found." Ham said hopefully. "Didn't you hear the Count say the island is infected by fierce things?"

Monk insisted: "Habeas'll never be devoured by anything on account of he'll do the devourin' himself, if any!"

---

*Volcanic smoke hung over the island in a black pall dimming the equatorial Sun as Pat, Doc, his aides, and their prisoner hurried from the Palace courtyard.*

"Now what?" Long Tom muttered.

Doc Savage studied the volcano for a time. Its **glow** seemed to have acquired additional **brilliance**.

"That volcano is not behaving in a manner calculated to inspire peace-of-mind," Doc said. "However, there are 2 things requiring our immediate attention."

"One is to rescue those poor devils digging those honeycomb pits," Ham offered.

"Right," Doc admitted.

"And the other," Johnny said tensely, for once using small words, "is to find out what this '**Devil's Honeycomb**' business is all about."

"Right again," Doc agreed.

*As the party plunged into a grove of mangroves, Doc and the scholarly Johnny conversed in lowered tones.*

"No doubt, you have already reached the conclusions that I am going to outline," Johnny said. "First, Ramadanoff insisted you could locate this **Devil's Honeycomb** -- whatever it is -- with instruments. That implies that it is composed of substance different from the island and volcanic ash."

"Exactly," Doc Savage agreed. "And the fact that those pits are being dug close together indicates that the **Devil's Honeycomb** or whatever is not large. If it was a large object, they would have dug the pits farther apart."

"I had not thought of that, but it bears out my theory," Johnny declared. "Now have you noticed the geologic structure of this island? That coastal plateau is really a ridge along the shore. That is where they are digging. I am positive the plateau was thrown up as a deposit of volcanic ash. This occurred not many years ago, judging from the lack of vegetation. Beyond the plateau inland is a small swamp section heavily jungled."

Doc Savage put in: "There are indications that the swamp was originally the seashore."

Johnny chuckled. "I see you have reached the same conclusions as myself. Are we going to look the place over?"

"We are," Doc Savage told him. "We are going to examine that swamp quite thoroughly."

Monk dropped back to grumble. "I wish somebody'd tell me what all of those honeycomb pits are for."

"Did the overseers examine the volcanic ash you excavated from the pits?" Doc Savage queried.

"Sure," Monk said. "But not very closely."

"The purpose of those pits may prove to be somewhat of a surprise," Doc Savage said, then offered no more.

*As the party proceeded, the mangroves grew more dense. The coiled roots were head-high in places, causing frequent stumbles in the spongy, water-logged soil. The volcanic smoke grew **black**er. The **red** flashes became more lurid. A fine ash of volcanic pumice sifted down through the maze of weirdly curved tree branches above.*



*Uttering raucous alarms, frigate birds and fantail gulls skimmed over the tops of the giant mangroves. Red-footed boobies perched on their nests and squawked continually.*

"These birds would drive a guy nuts!" Monk rumbled.

"They're sure to give us away in case anybody's looking for us," Long Tom added.

"Snipers in these mangroves is one thing we don't have to worry about," Monk mumbled. "The Count was afraid to let any one else on the island have a gun ... "

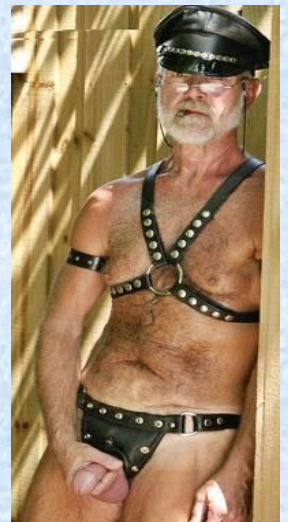
"Down!" Doc rapped, unexcitedly. *"Everybody ... get down!"*

Monk -- with the others -- instantly dropped on all fours.

A moment later, there was a *crash* of **rifles!** Lead snarled through the mangroves, chipping bark, and tearing at boughs over their heads.

"My mistake about the snipers," Monk said, grimly.

*Very soon ...*



*... Patricia Savage gets **SODOMIZED** (butt-fucked!)*

## XVI -- Portuguese Freebooter

Doc and his men returned the fire with the guns they had confiscated from the Palace. With the sifting volcanic ash turning the shadowed mangroves into a place of perpetual night, the enemy guns flared in **saffron** bursts. Echoes crashed flatly.

"Holy cow!" Renny boomed. "Sounds like an army!"

Doc Savage said: "My guess is that brother Boris has flown here from Cocos Island and rounded up the slaves."

Renny groaned. "We should have let Boris drop when he was on the end of that rope hanging from the airplane."

Monk fired a burst of 3 shots.

Answering bullets chopped mangrove branches about his head.

"Trouble with firing at their gun flashes is that they shoot back at yours," Monk growled.

The battle went on with the mangroves rocking to gun thunder and the black volcanic dust sifting down as though trying to blot out the livid bloom of guns. Lead whined and smacked, driving the combatants to seek additional protection by burrowing deeper in the mud.

"Monk's pig would love this," the fastidious Ham gritted, bogged almost to his eyebrows.

Big-**fisted** Renny growled: "Let's charge 'em."

*Suddenly the enemy firing **increased**, coming noticeably closer.*

"They're charging us!" Renny boomed.

"Keep down!" Doc ordered. He spoke calmly, hiding the alarm he must have felt.

*As a matter-of-fact, they were on as deadly a spot as any they had run against on the island. With lead slapping around them like hail, there was a good chance of none of them escaping.*

"Let's charge 'em!" Renny roared again.

Johnny's scholastic voice said sharply: "Exsiccate and attune auditory faculties."

"Huh?" Renny gulped, startled. "Whatcha say?"

"He means for you to dry up and listen," Monk interpreted.

Listening, they heard clearly above the whooping gun thunder a new sound.

**It was a massed grunting as though perhaps 100-or-more of the Count's hunger-crazed iguanas had escaped from the Palace and were butting through the mangroves on a manhunt.**



The Count Ramadanoff himself was first to name correctly the sound. He did so with considerable excitement.

"Climb trees!" he bawled, abruptly concerned over his own safety. "I will call at our enemies to cease shooting!"

"What's comin'?" Monk demanded.

**"The little wild hogs!"** the Count gasped. "They run in droves like peccaries. In sufficient numbers, they can bring down anything that lives!"

-----

They listened.

It was a herd of the ferocious little animals, undoubtedly. There was a good deal of noise in the mud.

The Count was screaming at the enemy riflemen, beseeching them not to shoot but to climb trees themselves and seek safety.

The response was interesting for it seemed that Doc Savage's party had taken shelter in the only large trees immediately convenient. Those trees where the besiegers lay -- although thick enough for excellent concealment -- were only bushes which would hardly support human weight.

**In a mud-slogging wave, the herd of wild pigs approached.**

"The trees!" Doc Savage directed.

And they hauled themselves out of the mud and climbed, boosting the big bearded Count up into the branches and helping Pat with the rest of them following hastily.

Always concerned with his appearance, Ham paused to scrape some of the mud off. The result was that he was slow in reaching a tree.

In fact, before he gained his tree, a lean ungainly shote with long legs and flapping sail-like ears popped out of the brush and headed straight for Ham. The mud-smeared Lawyer unlimbered his sword cane as he retreated hastily.

"Hey!" Monk bawled. "Be careful! *That's Habeas!*"

"What of it?" Ham snapped. "If I don't get him, that pack of wild hogs chasing him will!"

"Chasing him nothing!" Monk bellowed. "Habeas -- he's leadin' that gang of hogs!"

Monk's prediction proved to be optimistic. He had based it, no doubt, on Habeas's previous accomplishments in fighting. Which had been considerable.

But Habeas in these wild, peccary-like island hogs had encountered -- if not singly then at least in numbers -- its match.

It could outrun them, however. And it was engaged in doing it.

Ham went up his tree and Habeas promptly tried to climb after him. But he failed.

"Scat!" Ham yelled. "Go away! And take your friends with you!"

*An idea seized Monk.*

At risk of falling out of his own leafy retreat, he hung down and waved an arm, *whooping* to get Habeas' attention. Monk had long ago taught his pet shote to move in response to hand gestures.

"Take 'em away, Habeas!" Monk yelled, indicating the shote should go in the direction of the enemy attacking party.

Habeas Corpus acquitted himself royally. Promptly setting off at a wild pace, it took its troubles in the shape of a grunting, snorting, tusk-flashing horde of wild pigs in his wake.

Among the enemy was much excited shouting, shooting, and an enraged squealing from the pigs. Doc Savage waited until the peccary stragglers joined what sounded like a considerable warfare ahead.

"Come on!" the **Bronze Man** said sharply. "Now is our chance to get clear!"

They scrambled down out of the boughs.

Making their escape did not prove to be difficult because the men who had been besieging them were involved -- for the time being -- with the herd of wild hogs.

-----

Doc Savage's party pressed for considerable time through the tangled growth and finally came out in what amounted to a valley. Before the last volcanic eruption -- if Johnny's geologic observations were as accurate as they should be -- the valley had been the shores of a bay.

Doc listened for some time. He heard no sounds of enemies.

"Wait here," he directed the party.

*The next moment, he was gone into the lurid gloom.*

He traveled swiftly, setting a course for a definite spot -- the beach near where his plane had crashed. Once there, he stripped off his outer garments and entered the surf.

The tide, fortunately, had changed and the rips were not bad as he swam out to the spot where his plane had sunk. It was impossible more than to approximate the location. Which meant that Doc had to make a number of dives before he located the craft in some 4 fathoms of water.

In truth, a film of oil on the surface coming up from the crashed plane led the **Bronze Man** to the location of the ship.

He dived to it a number of times. And when he swam back to shore, he was heavily burdened.



"Holy cow!" Renny exploded when Doc joined them in the valley that had formerly been a bay. "Whatcha got?"

"Our devices for locating metals underground," Doc Savage told him. "Long Tom and Johnny, you can help with this."

The apparatus was sensitive but unimpaired by submersion. Its case had been waterproof.

They worked with it for 3 hours. Then Doc Savage went and stood on a particular spot.

"Here," he said.

It was near the beginning rise of the coastal ridge and was in volcanic ash. They dug in using sticks for implements, working as quietly as possible.

It was Monk whose stick first hit buried wood. He scraped madly and uncovered a porthole.

"Pirate treasure!" he gulped excitedly.

Doc Savage held a match close to the porthole to examine it ... then said "Look" and pointed at an inscription on the porthole rim.

The inscription read:

**Patented June 1, 1908**

"Pirates," Doc Savage said, "were put out of business before 1908."

The porthole was large. After they had broken out the glass and worked the rim free, they could get inside by squeezing. Doc posted Renny and Monk as guards. With the others, Doc managed to get inside.

They searched carefully and at length ...

... and found nothing to indicate this was anything but an old tramp steamer. The boat had a metal hull. Most of the bulkheads were of steel. And there were no skeletons about. The hull was mutilated enough to show the ship had been wrecked-probably driven high on the shore in the course of a storm or by a tidal wave.

"This has turned out to be a bust!" Long Tom complained.

Only the Count registered no disappointment. Observing the bearded man covertly, Doc Savage noted that strangely enough the fellow could not keep from his face a look of feverish triumph.

Shortly after this, the Count approached Doc, complaining that the ropes hurt his wrists and suggesting that he might as well be freed since the only exit from the wreck -- the porthole -- was guarded by Renny and Monk.

Doc removed the bonds, at the same time remarking: "If you try to escape, the results may not be pleasant."

The Count bowed, narrowing his eyes to hide a gleam of triumph. He moved to one side and Johnny and Pat promptly assailed Doc with misgivings.

"Why did you do it?" Pat demanded. "He was lying about his wrists hurting him."

Doc's expression was enigmatic. "Pretend not to notice him."

---

Doc Savage himself pretended to be occupied in another part of the wreck.

The Count -- when he judged himself to be unobserved -- slunk from sight, entering a portion of the wrecked hull formerly used as the Captain's Cabin.

He found the spot for which his fingers were feeling. His tapering fingers pressed.

A small panel slid open. He thrust his hand through the hole ... felt behind the bulkhead ... and drew his hand out quickly, holding something.

"Give it to me!" Doc ordered and advanced on the bearded man.

The Count snarled, his bearded face contorted in baffled **rage**!

Then quickly, he controlled himself and forced a grim smile.

"Take it," he growled. "But I warn you. It means **Death!**"

He placed the article in Doc's outstretched hand.

"Outside," Doc ordered and the Count walked out.

"Tie him up again," Doc directed Johnny.

Only after the Count's arms were again bound did the **Bronze Man** allow his attention to be distracted to the object in his hand.

It was a mariner's emergency hand compass studded on the back with 2 superb stones much like those which had graced the Count's finger rings. An **emerald** and a **ruby**!

*Unexpectedly -- wafting on the pumice-fogged air -- the **Bronze Man's** **trilling** note came, causing Pat and Johnny to flash startled looks.*

Doc held the compass out for Pat to see.

"What is it?" Pat asked. She frowned. "I don't get it."

"The engraving," Doc suggested.

"It's in Russian," Pat decided. "I'm not so good at Russian."



"It says merely that the compass was presented to the Count Ramadanoff by the Czar of Imperial Russia," Doc told her. "It is the date which is important."

"I'll be superamalgamated!" Johnny exploded. "The date is 1911!"

*Up next ...*



**WHORE RAPE**

## XVII - The Red Ring

"Right," Doc said. "The date is 1911."

His words were echoed by a rumbling sound like caged thunder.

No wind blew. The noise seemed to press down with the sifting black pumice and at the same time to ooze up through the ground. It was everywhere as though tortured rocks -- far below the Earth's surface -- were vibrating throughout the Globe.

"What is it?" Pat gasped.

"The volcano," Doc said.

"The exordium of the termination," Johnny remarked.

"I get that one," Pat said tensely. "The beginning of the end."

"We must drop everything," Doc said, "and hurry ahead to rescue those poor devils in the pits."

Doc led off with his aides and Pat trailing after him bringing big bearded Ramadanoff.

Out of the jungle tangle, forging ahead through jagged lava beds, Doc's party was within close view of the squat volcanic cone. The mountain's mouth was wreathed in lurid **light**. **Smoke** belched upward in a twisting spiral to mushroom against high clouds and sift its pumice over the entire island.

"It won't be long now!" Ham yelled.

"She's been buildin' for a bust ever since we've been here!" Monk agreed, loudly.

Doc slowed his giant strides to fall back alongside Pat. When no one was observing, he placed the jeweled compass in her hands.

"Keep it where it will be safe," he admonished.

"You must be expecting violent **action!**" Pat gasped.

Doc said nothing possibly because ahead from out of gloom created by the black ash, **gun flashes** stabbed **redly** like tiny erupting volcanoes.

"**Down!**" Doc shouted.

Then bullets slammed whining past.

---

"Brother Boris again!" Monk squawked.

The volcanic rock afforded innumerable crevices. Concealing themselves, Doc and his aides returned enough fire to keep the enemies at a distance. Of even greater danger than the smashing lead



was the brittle volcanic slag which broke into thousands of pieces under impact of bullets, showering the slivered rock around like glassy needles.

Doc issued strict orders against reckless exposure on the part of any of his aides. Then leaving Monk, Ham, and Pat in charge of the prisoner, he took the others with him to stage a flanking movement.

Taking advantage of lava gullies and dead gas craters, Doc's flanking party worked up close.

Once they were sighted and a burst of bullets hunted them. One slug felled a high torch thistle and slapped the frightful plant across Renny's shoulders. Which meant Renny would spend weeks picking the barbs from his skin. Bullets splattered volcanic glass and drove splinters.

Doc left them, merging away into the gloom. The volcanic ash was falling thicker now and the squat volcano cone was bathed in a perpetual rose glow. Appearing to ooze from the rock underfoot, that fearful *rumble* like caged thunder came again.

Then came a crashing *roar!* A different sound. It sent echoes ricocheting through the lava canyons like a dynamite blast!

"Doc's little capsule grenades!" Renny boomed.

Piercing the ash-laden air on the heels of the explosion echoes stabbed frantic shouts. A ragged burst of gunfire came from Boris Ramadanoff's men. These noises receded until there was only silence and the sifting **black** snow and the mountain top gleaming a fiery **red**.

*Rock **crunched** and Doc loomed toward them from out of the murk.*

"Foray was eminently successful?" Johnny suggested.

Doc nodded. "They are on the run."

"We better be, too!" Renny grumbled. "The whole top of that mountain's about due to blow off if you ask me."

"It is becoming more threatening every minute," Doc admitted gravely. "Come on. We'll join the others."

*But Doc's flanking party did not join the others. The others joined them.*

That is, part of the *others* did.

"Doc!" Monk and Ham roared together as they came plunging out of the gloom.

"Here!" Doc called sharply.

"The Count is gone!" Ham squalled.

"With Pat!" Monk bellowed.

"He cut his hands free on this glassy rock, I guess," Ham gasped. "And then he grabbed Pat!"

XX



Monk howled in **rage**. "We couldn't shoot on account he held her in front of him!"

"And in this dust and murk, he was out-of-sight in about 6 steps," Ham finished. "We tried to find him. But no luck."

"Go on to the pits," Doc directed. "Let me hunt Pat."

With a parting wave of his hand, the **Bronze Man** moved quickly away.

*He was out-of-sight in a few long strides.*

-----

While Doc's aides raced for the honeycomb pits, the underground thunder sounded again. The rosy light glowing above the volcano crater expanded violently, flinging **fiery streaks** through the ashy gloom and disgorging a torrent of **lava** which cascaded in **red streams** down the blunt mountainside.

"I said she was ready to blow," Renny grunted.

The geologist Johnny reassured them.

"It would be excessively rare for the initial eruption to be of sufficient volume to inundate the plateau where the honeycomb pits are."

Long Tom gasped: "Look!"

"Blazes!" Monk blurted. **"Run!"**

The warning was hardly necessary.



Oozing down a defile upon them came a mass of **red, liquid lava**. It was a moving serpent of liquid superheated rock which -- disgorged from the gutted Earth -- had cascaded down the outside of the squat volcanic cone and was now seething forward.

**HEAT** in gaseous billows fanned out ahead of the molten avalanche. Doc's men felt the **withering blast** as they climbed in a frenzy toward higher ground.

"Holy cow!" Renny gulped. "That was close!"

"And how are we gonna get back across that strip of melted Hells?" Monk wanted to know.

"We're only cut off on one side," Long Tom pointed out.

Nearing the pits, Doc's aides fired warning shots. The overseers -- having no firearms -- did not contest their advance.

Already filled with dread at sight of the volcanic activity, the overseers shouted in panic and surrendered. Scattering over the entire front, Doc's aides forced the lizard-collared men into the pits to unlock the diggers.

So furiously the rescue work proceeded -- so intent were Doc's companions in effecting the release of every last one of the miserable fellows chained in the pits -- that they were unaware for a time of a frightful **trap** closing in on them.

It was Monk who first became aware of their predicament.

"Blazes!" he roared. "There's **lava** on both sides of us!"

It was true. The seething **lava** flood had swelled and curled out in a broad path on each side of the plateau, straddling it. The only escape from the plateau of the honeycomb pits was by the sea.

Renny cracked his huge **fists** together helplessly.

"The sharks!" he gulped. "Brothers, we're really jammed!"

Even as he spoke, the **lava** rivulets seemed to grow like a doughnut swelling in a cauldron of boiling fat.

*Fed by a continuous fiery flow from the spewing volcano mouth, the **red ropes** swelled and swelled, pressing inward, threatening to engulf the entire honeycombed plateau!*

*Up Next ...*



*... Pat gets her tight butt **Sodomized** !*



## XVIII -- The Mountain Makers

When Doc Savage took the trail of the Count and Pat, his **gold-flecked eyes** ferreted out minute clues.

A bit of shoe-crunched volcanic glass ... a bruised leaf ... and missing barbs from a form of jumping cactus which grew rankly in the **lava** crevices.

Mounting upward toward the **smoke**-belching crater, Doc came shortly across in the crushed volcano glass indisputable evidence that the Count Ramadanoff had met brother Boris's party and **joined** forces with them.

Trails of the brothers Ramadanoff led up-and-up the squat cone of the smoking volcano headed directly for the **fiery** crater.

The trail grew fresher. Doc was high on the stubby cone of the mountain when the **lava** burst from the crater in an especially violent eruption. Flowing down in a mountain-high waterfall of **Fire** in broad channels to the left of Doc's position, the **liquid rock** -- like the spawn of many glass furnaces dumped together -- sprayed heat and light through the sooty air.

Then above him, Doc glimpsed those he trailed.

A yellowish pall of **smoke** smudged them from view. But the glimpse had been enough.

The **Bronze Man** left the trail and lunged upward on a shortcut which would allow him to intercept his enemies.

It was hard going over old lava-flow formation. The stuff was deceptive. Twice the ground gave way beneath Doc's plunging feet and precipitated him into head-high ruts. Needle-pointed lava showered down upon him.

The ground under his feet became **hotter** as he proceeded. Oozing from fumaroles, noxious gases made breathing a hazard.

Nearing his quarry and to avoid being detected, Doc half-slid, half-climbed into one of the fuming cinder caves and groped his way across the bottom between smoking boles gleaming a raw **red color** and noisily horrible with the suck and gurgle of **fluid rock** below the cinder crust.

With lids slitted to prevent his eyeballs from being scorched, he waded through that withering **heat** and climbed the opposite slope of the clinker pit, maneuvering for a position which would bring him out above his enemies.

Doc gained the position ...

*... and then lost everything in the moment which should have been his greatest triumph.*

The air in the deep fumarole that he had just traversed was impregnated with an insidious gas -- Carbon Monoxide, colorless & odorless -- making its presence felt only by its sudden sapping of a man's strength. Doc had been aware of the possibility of this gas in the smoky atmosphere.

Making his painful way across the scoria or metallic rock froth, he had breathed no more than was imperative. But even this little was too much.

He felt a "giddiness" settle upon him. His legs grew leaden.

Taxing his reserve strength to the utmost, he reeled to the top of the pit and then plunged down with an avalanche of needle-pointed clinkers sliding in a brittle wash behind him.

With his eyes momentarily sealed shut from the stinging reek of volcanic gases, his reeling steps had carried him onto a bubble-glass surface which had crashed under his weight, plunging him down a tortuous slope almost on the heads of his enemies. He was half-buried in the downsurge of the metallic rock.

**Before he could extricate himself, Boris Ramadanoff's revolver muzzle was a burning coldness against the back of his neck!**

-----

The Count stood in front of Doc with his bearded head thrown back and ghoulish mirth issuing in loud gobblings from his mouth.

"**Everything ... it is perfect!**" Ramadanoff roared. "Better even than we could have planned it. Is it not so, brother Boris?"

Boris Ramadanoff nodded emphatically!

Pat Savage -- imprisoned between two of the lizard-collared slaves -- stared speechlessly, her face taut, her clothes in shreds. One of her beautiful breasts was visible to all. It had teeth-marks on it.

The Count pointed a tapering finger at her. Even in the tenseness of the moment, Doc noted that the **emerald** was missing from the man's hand.

"We have the girl," the Count rasped. "And we have you. And your other friends are trapped on the plateau."

XX

*What the Count didn't tell Doc Savage was what they had just done to pretty Pat.*

Or rather what brother Boris did. The Count had already had his way with her.





With Pat clawing and scratching as they wrestled her down to the rocky terrain and began **tearing** her clothes, Count Ramadanoff sat down and positioned his legs on both sides of her as her pretty head rested on his pelvic area.



He held her hands down as Boris finished tugging off her pants, leaving them only halfway down to her knees. Her magnificent **buttocks** raised up proudly to the Sun.

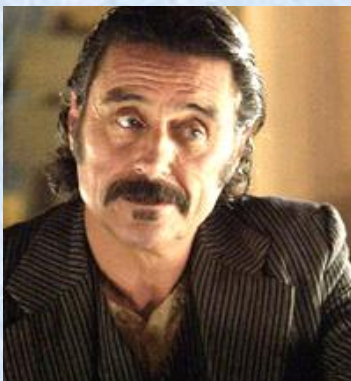


"I have not taken the **wench** there, Brother. You should find the experience most enjoyable," the Count said.

Boris didn't reply. He was rendered speechless by mounting **lust**.

He stared hard at Pat's tiny **anal** opening.





"But you, my fine **Whore**," the Count continued to Pat. "Do you remember how you pleased yourself with this? I think you should do it again."



Pat found her face touching his enormous **penis**. That thick long monstrosity of a thing.

The Count lifted her face up by her hair and **pushed it into her pretty mouth**.







Pat coughed and gurgled as it sought the recesses of her throat.



At the same time, Boris had his own organ out and was pressing against Pat's **anus**.

His was not like his brother's. It was rather thin and only about 8". But it would still cause her torment because her **rectum** was so small and tight.

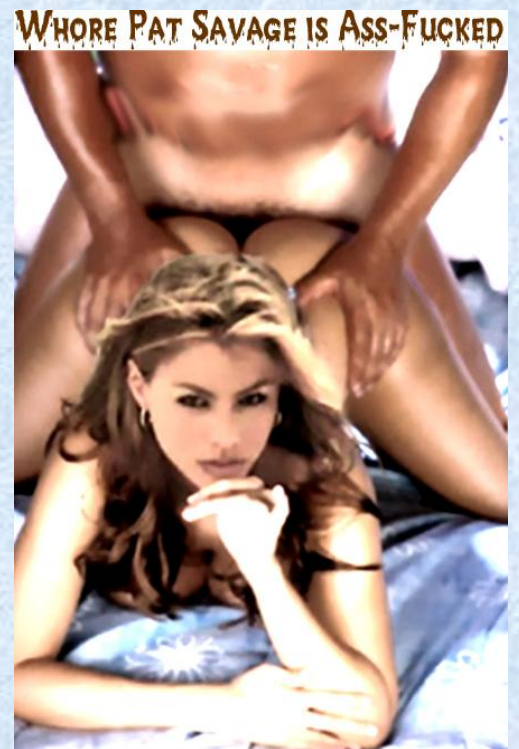




With a yell, he **rammed** it hard into her! She opened her mouth wide to scream. That was a mistake because it only gave the Count a better opportunity to penetrate her farther orally.



With her cries muffled, Boris Ramadanoff continued **plunging** and **thrusting** into her butt like it was the last thing he was ever going to do alive. He reached under her and grabbed her full **34-D breasts** to pull him in deeper. Pat silently **shrieked** as she was being **poked** and **torn**.



Plus the Count's humongous penis tasted so **nasty**! And his hairy crotch smelled badly as well.







*In a Parallel Universe ...*



Both brothers seemed to climax at the same time. Boris shot a slow stream of **goeey jizz** up her rectum that seemed to last forever. The Count had a series of mini **eruptions** that she couldn't help but swallow most.







"Did I not speak the truth, brother Boris? She is a most excellent **whore**, no?"

Boris got on his feet and kicked her in her crotch. "She is a **filthy slut!**"





Boris looked for something to shove up into her pussy ...

He found it!











[knocked-up Whore]

That is what Count Ramadanoff did not tell Doc Savage. What they had just done to his pretty cousin.

*But Pat Savage would recover from her sexual abuse. She had an unexplainable remarkable ability to somehow heal herself. Maybe it was the Savage bloodline. It would only be a matter of weeks for her stretched-out vagina and rectum to return to their original firmness. She would be virgin-tight again! But could she escape future rapes and gang-bangs????*

Doc looked at the Count and spoke in a composed voice.

"No lava flow will flood the plateau of the honeycomb pits."

The Count's eyes *glittered*.

"One thing you have not taken into consideration is that brother Boris and I have long been prepared for this eventuality."

He pointed with spasmodic eagerness. "Do you see that volcano crater?"

*Doc said nothing. No one could have seen the crater through the smoke.*

"It is mined with nitro charges," the Count growled. "That is why brother Boris and I have climbed this slope. To explode those charges. With a new vent blown out for the lava, the plain of the pits will be covered with molten lava."

Doc shook his head. "You would not blow those charges."

"And why not?" the Count asked.



"It is dangerous business tampering with the normal flow of volcanic lava," the **Bronze Man** reminded.

"If it were not for the fact that brother Boris is going to pull the trigger on the revolver which he is holding against your neck, you would see us dare it," the Count said ominously.

Ignoring the threat, Doc said: "There is still another reason why you would not flood the plain. That ***Devil's Honeycomb*** for which you have so long looked digging your pits. You would hardly care to have it buried under a hundred feet of lava."

"So!" the Count purred dangerously. "You have deduced where the ***Devil's Honeycomb*** lies."

"Since the **Bronze Man** knows so much," Boris sneered, "why not tell him the rest of it, Brother? Perhaps -- in the world to which my trigger finger will send him -- he will meet the real Count Ramadanoff whose interest in this bit of unrecorded History will be vast."

"Agreed, brother Boris," the madman answered.

He fixed his gaze upon Doc.

**"Know then that I am not the real Count Ramadanoff!** The real Count Ramadanoff came to this island to escape the horrors of the Russian revolution. His vessel was that tramp steamer which you, my dear Savage, so kindly located for us today.

"Escaping the revolutionists, the original Count brought with him to this island a hundred people -- artisans and noblemen. Of that hundred people, brother Boris and myself alone remain alive today."

-----  
"The ***thumb-hole death*** doubtless accounted for the others," Doc remarked.

"Some of them died by the ***thumb-hole death***," the madman admitted readily. "Others went by the way of the pits. But you interrupt my story. Among the articles which the Count brought with him was ... well, the ***Devil's Honeycomb*** among other things. This he cunningly hid.

"Brother Boris and I bungled badly when we killed the original Count Ramadanoff. He died before we had wrested from him the secret of his hiding place. Some things we knew, however. We knew that the ***Devil's Honeycomb*** is concealed on that plateau now encircled by **red**, running rock.

"So brother Boris and I caused ships to wreck. And in that way we procured men to dig for us. The pits were dug to a system. It was our intention to honeycomb -- the "honeycomb" part is humor, eh? -- the whole plateau if it was necessary."

Doc Savage put in: "The tramp steamer? How did it happen that you failed to know its location?"

"It was wrecked in a tidal wave when the volcano erupted and covered with volcanic ash," replied the other. "Neither Boris nor myself knew its location."

"But you knew about the **compass**. That it was the key to the whereabouts of the ***Devil's Honeycomb***," Doc said.

*Boris Ramadanoff started violently and peered at his brother.*

"You found the key!"

"No," the brother lied, quite calmly. "This man Savage is prevaricating. Trying to turn your hand against me for his own gain."

"He knew the nature of the key," Boris snarled. "How did he know it was a compass if he did not see it when you found it?"

"I tell you it's all a lie, Brother!" barked the other, somewhat desperately. "Pull the trigger that will send a bullet crashing through his brain. We will end this now!"

Boris scowled. "I would hear more about this compass key."

"*Fool!*" the bogus Count hissed.

Promptly following the hateful exclamation in the **smoky** haze, there was a sound which might have been made by fingers snapping very hard.

Boris slumped ominously to the ground, *scarlet* commencing to ooze through a depressed fracture in his temple. **The thumb-hole death had struck again!**

As a safety-first move, Doc Savage went into action.

All during the bogus Count's revelations, Doc had been surreptitiously working his knees and hips against the volcanic slag which had avalanched down and half-submerged him, holding him to a degree. He had succeeded in loosening appreciably the hold of the stuff.

Now he lunged forward! Clinkers washed in a wave as his body heaved free.

He felt something close to his temple. The exact nature of it was hard to define. It must have shaved him very close for his temple seemed to burn.

**It must have been the thumb-hole death.**

The Count suddenly lost his nerve. He lunged backward, spun around, and started running.

Doc Savage shouted at Pat in the *Mayan* tongue. She twisted and lunged frantically. Only her wrists were bound. So stunned were her captors at what had just occurred that she managed to get free.

Lunging, Doc Savage reached her side. Together they went over the edge of one of the smoke-ringed clinker pits.

*They ran furiously! Doc helped Pat.*

Up to the right somewhere hidden by the **smoke**, Doc Savage could hear the Count scrambling through the metallic clinkers. Judging from the strenuous sound, the fellow's main thought was to get away from the vicinity. Immediately!

His nerve had finally cracked.





## XIX -- Honeycomb of the Devil

Pat demanded grimly: "Shall we follow the Count?"

"We will," Doc Savage agreed. "Do not get too close to him. But make sure that he hears us."

This combination of suggested action seemed to puzzle Pat.

*To remain behind the Count and follow him furtively, she could have understood. But to follow him at a distance and still let the man know they were doing so -- that bewildered her!*

"What's the idea?" she demanded.

Instead of answering her, Doc Savage paused and dislodged a heavy rock, letting it roll down a declivity.

The man ahead had been traveling fast. But now he curse!

His speed became that of a madman. He knew that they were behind him.

The Earth had cracked in spots, probably under the force of expanding gases. They passed a stream of **lava** which had been diverted somewhere above and was already beginning to solidify in irregular waves. Some of these were head-high. In other spots, rivulets of the superheated stone twisted sinuously along.

They came to a region where imprisoned gases had long ago hollowed out the volcanic structure to form fantastic underground pits. It was as if monsters had dug dens in the sloping side of the cone. They waded through ground glass-like clinkers in which they sank to the knees.

"It cuts like razor blades," Pat groaned. "My boots won't stand much more of this."

Unexpectedly, they came out on a level area beyond which there was a sharp slope down to a cove. The wind was in their faces and swept the dust back to the other side of the island. Accordingly, they could see a little better.

Doc's *flake-gold eyes* scrutinized the terrain intently.

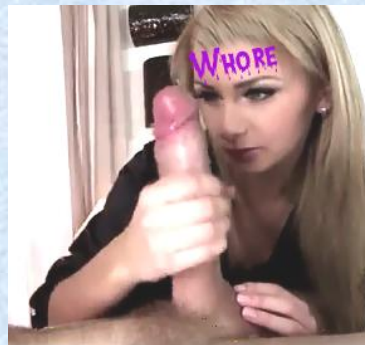
"Follow me," he directed Pat ...

*... and was suddenly gone.*

Pat tagged after him as best she could. She was just about exhausted. It seemed days since she had eaten, slept, had a peaceful moment, or drawn a breath of air that was fit to breathe.



XX



A shout came from ahead. **Shots!**

She heard the Count *scream*. Then Pat came on the scene.

It was at the edge of the little cove where the water was comparatively calm. Doc Savage was standing on the cove's edge, sheltered by a high boulder.

Fully 200 yards away, the Count was retreating warily along the beach with revolver in hand. He shot at Pat.

She got undercover ... crawled forward ... and joined Doc. She looked at the bay.

A seaplane floated there. A high-winged, twin-motored amphibian, each motor being equipped with a 3-bladed propeller. This ship was moored close to the shore. On its fuselage a painted legend could be read:

### **Cocos Island Treasure Hunters, Inc.**

"You headed the Count away from the plane!" Pat gasped, suddenly understanding why Doc wanted their quarry to know he was being followed.

It had kept the fellow frightened and had made him flee toward the plane. And it had worked.

"Right." Doc Savage waved at the plane. "That explains how the other brother got here. There must have been a treasure-hunting expedition on Cocos Island. There usually is as a matter-of-fact. This plane was probably stolen from them."

*Upon later investigation, this theory proved to be true.*

They waded out to the plane and climbed aboard.

-----

The big plane had a stout fuselage. One made for heavy work.

That was fortunate because the landing on the other side of the island -- although Doc Savage made it expertly -- was not easy on the hull. No plane could land easily in that chopping riptide.

Howling their delight, Monk, Ham, and the others met the ship on the beach ... waded out ... and seized the hull to keep it from being damaged on the rocky shore.

"We can't clear outta here too soon for me!" Monk yelled. "I gotta find Habeas Corpus! He's somewhere on the other side of the island."

"Probably with that herd of wild hogs still after him," Ham offered.

Doc Savage issued abrupt directions.

"Monk and the rest of you, use this plane to ferry these poor prisoners of the Count's to safety. Better take them out to the reef, not to the island. The reefs are not submerged even at high tide. They would be safe there."

"What about you, Doc?" Monk demanded.

"The *Devil's Honeycomb* is here on this plateau," Doc Savage advised.

Pat had been apparently thinking.

Now she said sharply: "Doc! That compass! There must have been a map in it or something!"

"Undoubtedly," Doc Savage assured her.

"But the Count took it away from me!" Pat gasped. "We haven't got it."

**For answer, the Bronze Man brought from within his clothing the jeweled compass.**

"It left the Count's person when he took part in the struggle attending my capture. I picked his pocket."

Pat elected to stay. So did Renny.



The others, being armed, felt able to take care of the prisoners. They carried them to one of the reefs near where the fake channel lights had decoyed ships to disaster.

There was light about them now. Burning jungle ignited by **lava** and lurid **flashes** from the cone took care of that.

Doc Savage worked at the compass, got the glass out, and lifted the card off its jeweled bearing. Beneath -- tied to the bearing pin with silken cord -- was a bit of parchment. He unwrapped this.

It was a simple chart showing landmarks and paced distances.

They were lucky. The principal landmark, it developed, was a boulder of extraordinary size which reposed near one end of the plateau.

They ran to this, pausing only to gather digging implements from some of the honeycomb pits. Doc Savage paced off the distances.

They began to dig. Doc and Renny were in the hole and Pat kept the slag tossed back. They hit the leaden lid of a small chest some six feet down. Prying the chest out, they could tell that there were many other similar chests below.

"Let's have a look at the inside," Renny rumbled and struck with his shovel.

The lead was soft. It split. Huge globules of **green** and **red** glittered before their *sweat-smarted* eyes.

"*Holy cow!*" Renny breathed.

**The contents of the lead box was an affair of **gold** -- probably a part of an ancient breastplate of armor. In this were set the jewels. The design of the mounting was orderly and laid out in such a fashion that it somewhat resembled a honeycomb.**

***There were **diamonds**, **rubies**, **emeralds** ... every one a stone that looked valuable!***

"I can see why they called it the *Devil's Honeycomb!*" Renny boomed.

"What about getting the rest out?" Pat demanded.

They began to dig for the additional chests. The sides of the bole promptly caved in, delaying them somewhat.

A moment later, there was another misfortune which entirely overshadowed this minor one.

***There came a crashing **detonation!*****

**The very Earth itself seemed to convulse ... leap upward ... then shake as if trying to split itself wide open.**

A great **thump** weirdly hollow followed that. It was such a sound as characterizes the detonation of an extremely powerful explosive.

Pat looked appalled.

"**The Count's nitro charge!**" she gasped.

-----

They looked toward the high volcanic cone and saw a sight that was probably the most spectacular -- and at the same time the most menacing -- they had ever witnessed.

A rumble had started and was growing and growing. But that was almost unnoticed. It was the thing happening to the top of the cone that held their eyes.

**Niagara Falls seemed to have become *molten fire* and was flowing upside down out of the great cone.**

"Holy cow!" Renny rumbled. "That's what I call a Fourth-of-July celebration!"

Doc Savage straightened and glanced about rapidly. He was calculating the size of the eruption and appraising their distance from the beach.

"**Run for it!**" the **Bronze Man** said abruptly.

Renny protested. "But these lead boxes ... "

"Nothing like that is worth dying for," Doc Savage said grimly. "If you stay to dig them out, you will not have a chance to get away."

Renny did not have to think it over long.

"You're right!" he thumped.

They ran for it, Renny pausing only to scoop up the cluster of mounted jewels which so strangely resembled honeycomb. A honeycomb the cells capped not with wax but with scintillating *brilliance*.

The plane picked them up without much more difficulty than they had expected. They got away none too soon. As the ship lifted from the water and circled toward the more peaceful end of the island, they studied the scene.

Under a sky *hell-red* to the far horizon, the cone was spitting lava, boulders -- some of the latter as huge as small buildings. A few of these great chunks fell into the sea or rolled there and sent up unbelievable quantities of billowing steam.

With the **roar** in their ears of a World coming to an end and the light of an *inferno* before their eyes, Doc Savage himself took the controls of the plane and landed it on the comparatively calm water inside the little cove. They did not beach the ship but kept it off with the motors running -- ready for a quick take-off should an earthquake start. The latter was a possibility.

*Ignoring all arguments. Monk went ashore. He wanted his hog Habeas.*



*Strangely enough, the dapper Ham -- not at all "dapper" now -- accompanied the homely Chemist.*

They were back unexpectedly soon, running. And they had Habeas Corpus!

"We found the other brother -- the Count, the one who was alive!" Monk yelled. "What do you think happened to him?"

*No one made a guess.*

**"Those wild hogs,"** Ham said grimly. **"They had finished with him by the time we got there!"**

-----

Monk's pet Habeas Corpus -- never a sartorially inclined porker at the best -- now looked very bedraggled. That it had spent a hectic time on the ***Fantastic Island*** was evident.

He took every opportunity to lie down. He had been thin before. As thin as it had seemed possible for a porcine specimen to get.

But now he was even thinner.

Renny jumped suddenly, squawled, and grabbed his side. He looked somewhat foolish and examined a small spot which rapidly grew livid.

**"What did that?"** he roared.

Monk made a quick movement with his wrist.

*Something thudded against Renny's ribs again.*

"Hey!" Renny said, startled. "What is that thing?"

Monk glanced at Doc Savage. "Had you decided what that darn thing was, Doc?"

The **Bronze Man** nodded.

"The brothers must have spent much time practicing to acquire such proficiency."

"Yeah, they sure must have," Monk agreed.

"Holy cow!" Renny grunted, examining the object which Monk held. "It's that big **emerald** ring the Count wore! It's tied to a tiny thread. But you can't hardly see it."

"And the thread is stronger than blazes," Monk told him. "You see, this is the ***thumb-hole death!***"

"But it seemed so mysterious," Pat said. "So *sinister*."

"It was both," Doc Savage interpolated. "If you recall, the ***thumb-hole death*** struck only when the light was not strong enough to reveal the almost colorless cord. They threw the ring with great force. Both brothers were well muscled, you will recall. They must have practiced a great deal. Then they jerked the ring back with the cord."

"We found it on the Count," Monk announced. "The wild hogs ... well, they left it."

---

*They fell silent after that, watching the scene before them.*

*The **rumble** and **roar** of it. The **leap** and flash of gory **light**. The **rumble** of descending boulders.*

*It was a fabulous spectacle.*

*Still -- watching the volcano -- they knew they were free to depart in the plane at any time and ferry the late prisoners of the brothers Ramadanoff to other and larger islands in the Galapagos where sailors could call for them. As they later did.*

Monk was exhibiting the honeycombed, jeweled breastplate.

"Not much compared to what we probably left behind," he said. "But my guess is it'll sell for a million, anyway. Divided up among the prisoners we rescued, that oughta help a little."

If Ham heard that, he showed no interest. Ham had plenty of money.

He was eying Habeas Corpus.

Ham suddenly emitted several loud grunts. He shuffled his feet noisily.

**"Wild hogs!"** he yelled.

Habeas Corpus never looked back. *He hit the water swimming and made for the safety of the plane!*

"Boy oh boy!" Ham grinned. "For years, I have been trying to find a way to make that hog keep out of my sight!"



XX



( <http://www.hotlegsinlove.com/AnnaXXX.htm> )



The next episode in the **"Perils of Pat Savage"** is  
**PS035XXX.pdf** ("Murder Mirage")

[ [http://www.hotlegsinlove.com/PSXXX/PS035XXX\\_Murder\\_Mirage.zip](http://www.hotlegsinlove.com/PSXXX/PS035XXX_Murder_Mirage.zip) ]

( the previous adventure was **PS030XXX\_Spook\_Hole.pdf** )

The images here plus video GIFs are stored online at <http://www.hotlegsinlove.com/PSXXX.htm>

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