FIRST EDITION 32

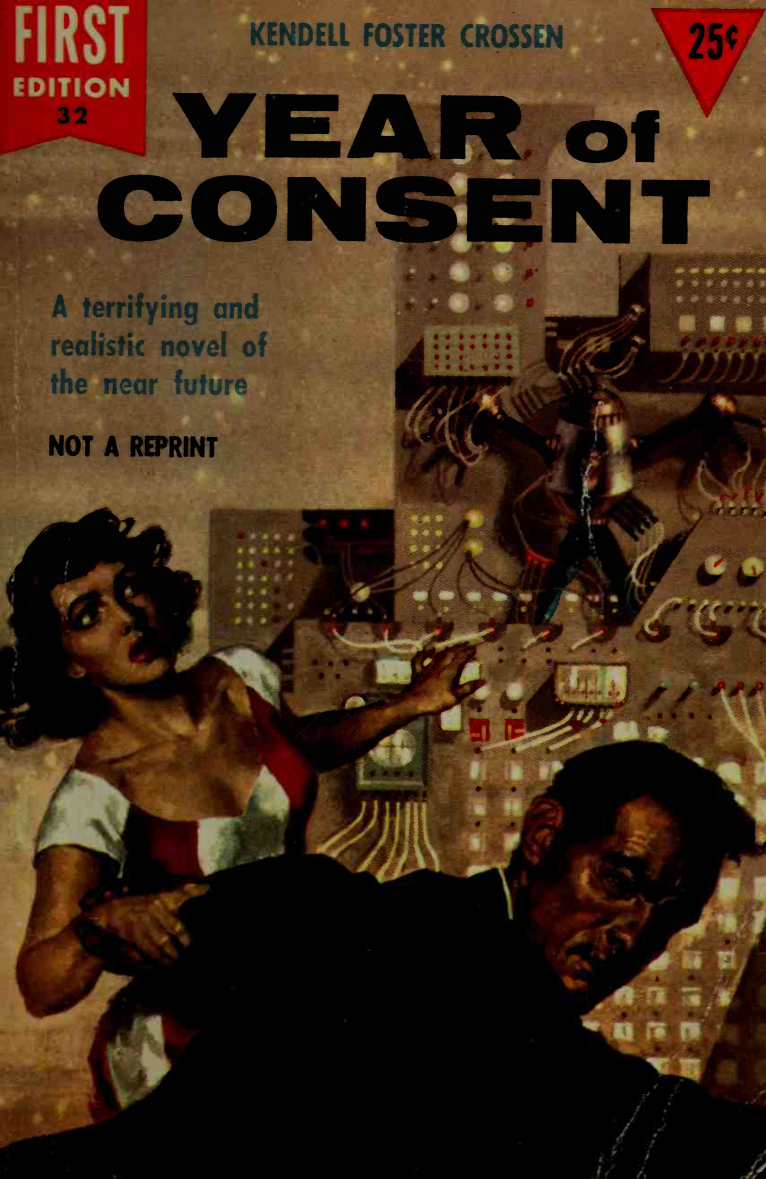
KENDELL FOSTER CROSSEN

25¢

YEAR of CONSENT

A terrifying and realistic novel of the near future

NOT A REPRINT



THOUGHTS ENGRAVED UPON THE HEAD OF A CERTAIN PIN

"To public-relations men may go the most important social-engineering role of them all: the gradual reorganization of human society . . ."

—G. Edward Pendray
Public Relations Counselor

". . . the approach to the problems encountered can be scientific—social engineering, the engineering of consent . . . or whatever term we wish to give it."

—Edward L. Bernays
Public Relations Counselor

"I think of a man in a voting booth who hesitates between two levers as if he were pausing between competing tubes of toothpaste in a drugstore. The brand that has made the highest penetration on his brain will win his choice, and the nature of the human brain is such that a one-minute or thirty-second speech, expertly crystallized, gets maximum penetration on its content."

—Rosser Reeves
Advertising Executive

"If our society comes to an end it will not be with a bang or a whimper. The sound track will be the soft tinkle of rimless glasses on a conference table."

—"Is Anybody Listening?"
William H. Whyte, Jr.

By

KENDELL FOSTER CROSSEN

Author of:

ONCE UPON A STAR

FUTURE TENSE

YEAR of CONSENT

A DELL FIRST EDITION

An original novel, not a reprint

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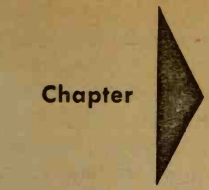
FOR MARTHA

"Of golden sands, and christall brookes,
With silken lines, and silver hookes."

Printed in U. S. A.



THE SOFT STRAINS of music eased me out of sleep. For a moment I was suspended just short of consciousness, wondering vaguely who would play so sweetly at a time like that. There were round-the-clock broadcasts, of course, but early morning music was always vigorous and stimulating. "Beautiful Dreamer" might mean that revolution had finally come. Then I was awake and knew it hadn't.

I stretched, feeling the sensuous scrape of the sheets against my flesh, and opened my eyes. Geometric patterns of color floated across the TV screen to the rhythm of the music; "the dance of the integral calculator," someone had once called it. I knew now that this was not one of the regular civilian radio stations. The closed channel had started broadcasting. I glanced at the wall clock. It was seven-thirty. And except in emergencies, the closed channel went on this early only once a year. It was D. I. Day.

Fear tugged briefly in my stomach, but I forced my mind away from the thoughts that caused it even before they reached my consciousness. I had done it before, I told myself fiercely; I could do it again. For twenty-four

hours I could keep my thoughts away from certain subjects: even from the all-important fact that I was a member of the Uns. There would be traps, of course, but the way out was to provide an alternative explanation for the increased heart beat, the sudden spurt of adrenalin.

The volume of the music dropped and a voice faded in behind it and the rainbow of shapes. It was a soothing, friendly voice. "Third time around," it said cheerfully. "Time that everyone was up and activating at all levels and echelons."

Even if I hadn't known the closed channel was transmitting, the voice would have been a tip-off. They didn't talk like that on the regular broadcasts.

The volume of the music came up, losing its softness as the mood changed. The pitch rose until it was guaranteed to arouse anyone who had managed to slumber this long. There were enough decibels involved to make a picture on the wall start shuddering.

I swung my feet out of bed and sat up. A glance at the clock told me I had enough time for a cigarette. I got one out of my shirt and lit it. Then I got up and went into the kitchen. I switched on the range-mike.

"Two eggs, sunny side up, and toast," I said. "One coffee."

There was an almost imperceptible click as the stove went into action. "Adam and Eve on a raft and muddy one," it answered.

That wasn't part of the standard kitchen range; I'd installed it myself, with my own voice on the tape. It amused me. I sometimes suspected that it didn't amuse anyone else, but apparently it had not hurt my record any.

I went back into the living room and started to dress. The music was once more soft and a blue octagon was

lazily chasing a yellow ball across the screen. I finished dressing and sat down just as they stopped and the background music faded.

"Communications Administrative Department," the voice said more formally. As if it could have been anything else. There were other closed channels for other purposes, but the only one on the receiving sets of CAD officials and employees was the CAD channel. Official announcements automatically over-rode any station you had tuned in on the selector. When the set was turned off, the department channel could still activate the speaker.

The voice went on despite my musings. "Good morning," it had just said. I still thought of it as The Voice, for that's what it was. A tape recording by someone, probably an actor, whose index rating showed his tones would be pleasant to most of us. It sounded pleasant even to me. This was the one time of the year when all the resources of the department were turned on its own members.

"As most of you know, this morning is the beginning of our annual Depth Interview Day. D. I. Day." There was a chuckle drawing attention to some coming levity. "Over in Administration there's a theory that this is the only day of the year that we boys and girls at SAC work."

An old joke. Its humor, if it had any, lay in the fact the department of Security and Consent—my department—was the only one that worked around the clock every day. That was where the voice was coming from. The tape was stored in SOCIAC, or "Herbie," the giant mechanical brain that took up ten floors of the SAC Building on Pennsylvania Avenue, not far from the White House.

"As I said," the voice continued while the music thrummed softly in the background, "most of you know all about D. I. Day. But there are a few new employees, fresh out of their social-engineering classes, who will be taking

part for the first time. It is for them that I want to explain the pitch. In just a few minutes you'll be digging out the D. I. kit you were issued when you came to work in the department. There are complete instructions in every kit, but if you're a little nervous—" a small chuckle—"I'll tell you what to do. The camera goes in the lapel of your coat, if you're a man. The distaff side will find their cameras are made in the shape of an attractive breast pin. The receiver goes in your hat, at the back so it will rest against the bones just over the ears. The girls can put it in their hair, if they like. The analyzer straps around your arm up near the shoulder. Sorry, girls, I guess you can't wear sleeveless dresses today."

So far it was the same old speech. Even the same jokes. That one about this being the only day SAC worked: I'd been in on the conference that had decided to put that in. The whole speech was designed to throw listeners off-guard. With most of them, it wouldn't really matter. My case was different. I'd have to watch myself carefully all day. If the department ever got a hint of my Uns membership. . . Brr.

"As the instructions also explain, the camera will record everything you yourself see. The receiver is so that you may be contacted wherever you are. The analyzer merely records your blood pressure, pulse beat, body temperature and skin moisture. These three things must be worn for the next twenty-four hours. And except for your room tests, that's about all there is to it." A friendly, one-of-the-gang chuckle. "So you see there's nothing to the rumor that D. I. Day is spent spying on you. The purpose of this one controlled day each year is to help us set up a fresh index on the work we're doing. There is no need for anyone to fear Depth Interview Day—" another soft chuckle —"unless, of course, he has subversive tendencies, or some-

thing like that."

I wasn't listening any more than I had to. I knew all of this by heart. I was scared enough without listening too closely to the carefully-planted suggestions about fear.

Very few average citizens know much about Communications. History books mention only that it was added to the cabinet in 1965, a year after the social engineers won the election. The general public thinks it's mostly concerned with keeping the telephones and the television stations operating. Men higher up in government—Congress, the Cabinet, the General Manager, the President—know it's more important than that. They know better than to make a move without consulting Communications Vice President Bradley Bernard, even though they may nominally outrank him. There is no government function that doesn't involve language and language is a matter of communication. Almost every problem turns out to be a communication block of some kind. But even the biggest wheels only know part of it. They think the Communications Administrative Department exists to help them—and not the other way around.

If Communications is *the* department in government, Security and Consent is *the* bureau in Communications. The Vice President in charge of Communications always comes up out of SAC. There are engineers and scientists in every part of government, of course, but SAC—Security and Consent—is the haven of social engineers. If you aren't a social engineer, you can't be employed in SAC; if you are, you just don't work anywhere else. Even the clerks have the degree of Bachelor of Social Engineering; those with more important work have an M.S.E. That included me, Gerald Leeds, Expediter.

Just as the world knows little about Communications,

so does Communications—CAD—know little about SAC. They all have a vague idea, but they certainly don't know that without the social engineers in SAC there would be no Communications and no Government—at least, not as we know it.

Three hundred and sixty-four days out of each year, the social engineers sit on top of the world. They scrutinize it, dissect it, poke at it, and lead it along the paths they have planned for it. Except for themselves, everyone in the United States of Americas is conditioned from the cradle to the grave, from morning to night, through all media. Dissenting voices are quickly brought under control. Only the social engineers escape—and they do so only after they have passed the rigid university entrance examinations for the profession set up by the SAC. Even then, many of those who make the grade can't re-adjust to the true situation as it is revealed to them, many more flunk out; and all of these failures have their memories of the courses erased before they are allowed to resume a normal life. Those who graduate at least are free of the normal conditioning, but subject to a much more subtle kind: the knowledge that they—we, that is—are the elite. We don't have to be persuaded with every step, for we are the consent makers.

This is why D. I. Day is a day of fear in SAC. It is the one day when the scrutinizers become the scrutinized, when *we* march beneath the microscope that is usually turned the other way. The broadcast I was listening to, the instruments I would soon have to buckle on, were confined to those in SAC. For twenty-four hours nothing would go unnoticed in the search for defects that might have developed since the year before.

The voice had finished the instructions and was giving a last cheerful assurance. "Don't think you'll be the only

ones taking part in D. I. Day. Everyone, from Vice President Bernard and SAC Co-ordinator Dillon on down, will be going through exactly the same thing." The voice got more confidential and dropped all formality. "B. B. and Rog will be buckling on their analyzers at the same time as you do. And now it's time. Get out your kits and follow the instructions. After that, carry on as usual."

Carry on as usual, I thought bitterly. Then I crowded the feeling out of my mind. Against my will, it might cause some resentment which would show up on the analyzer.

I walked over to my dresser and got out the kit which had been tucked away there for a year. I took out the impulse-camera and put it in my lapel. The pictures it took would be automatically broadcast back to the SAC Building and printed on film stored in SOCIAC. I put the receiver in my hat and left it on the table so I couldn't hear any last little messages before breakfast. The camera would record the fact, but I'd done it before without any bad results. I pulled up my sleeve and fastened the analyzer around my arm.

For the millionth time I thanked my stars that the equipment didn't include a microphonic pick-up. It had at one time, but SOCIAC had finally decided it was unnecessary, and even harmful in some cases. It made certain types of people feel too much as if their entire lives were being laid bare, and in any case the camera-analyzer combination was enough to record their reactions to any kind of situation they might meet. Actually, although nobody mentioned this, the pick-ups were superfluous, since SAC employees almost always worked in the presence of other SAC employees—and the loyal ones could always report any disloyalty.

"Soup's on," the range called from the kitchen.

I went in, lifted the top of the range, and swore mildly. The range could be controlled either by voice or from a keyboard, and apparently I'd forgotten and left some of the keys depressed the day before. The serving receptacle contained a complete double order: four eggs, two slices of toast, two cups of coffee. I wasn't that hungry, so I shrugged, removed what I wanted, pushed the overload control to dispose of the rest, and sat down.

As I ate I amused myself with the thought of all the pictures of disappearing breakfasts that would be stored up on film in SOCIAC. It was time to go to the office when I'd finished the last sip of coffee.

The voice—another one, softer but more insinuating—was already getting in touch as I put on my hat. ". . . just go on as if this were any other day," it said. "There's no reason to have any fear. . . ."

Downstairs, I debated with myself over how to go to the office. Usually, I took a cab because it offered the least exposure to the planned advertising that blanketed the city. SAC employees were provided with special glasses and ear-plugs which blocked the 'casting of commercials direct to retina and eardrum; they were a nuisance, but the lesser of two evils. This morning, however, I would have prepared the assault on my senses to drown out the insidious voice on my receiver.

It was better, I knew, not to break my routine. So I thought about riding the overhead monorail and then hailed a cab. It swerved in to the curb and I got in.

"SAC Building," I told the driver.

The cab lurched away from the curb. The driver flipped the flag down without looking around. He was obviously making an effort to keep his face turned away from me. I was used to that, too.

Cab drivers are usually a pretty smart group. They don't know any more about SAC than anyone else, but they are usually a little afraid of anyone going there. It is probably the knowledge that those who suffered from social ills go through that building on the road back to mental health. There is no secret about it, but Communications hadn't yet been able to convince everyone that this was better than sending people to prison.

The TV screen in the cab was on, tuned to one of the regular channels. I reached over and punched the volume a little higher. That helped. Now when the voice on my receiver spoke—as it did every few minutes, giving assurance that there was nothing about Depth Interview Day to frighten even a child—it was a meaningless murmur.

Analysis of the film from my lapel camera would reveal what I'd done, but SAC veterans like myself were allowed a certain latitude as long as our other ratings were up to standard. And I needed something to distract me and keep the lurking fear from crowding into my mind.

The show was one of the most popular morning broadcasts, with a little bit of everything. There was news; a feature on American democracy as practiced in the state of Argentina, which I knew was part of the build-up to the blast at the Russian satellites in Europe which had been requested by the State Department; interviews with a prominent TV star and the senior senator from Peru; a trio singing the latest song hits, and a comic who wasn't very funny. It was sponsored by Paragon Chemical Products. Before long the commercial came on.

It opened with the Paragon congressional representative giving a little talk on the public service performed by the company. A new factory had been built in Mexico, resulting in 750 miles of improved federal highway and a million dollars worth of low-cost housing. There was a

musical interlude with a song about the fifteen hundred products manufactured by Paragon. Then they ran in a clip of film showing one of our most glamorous TV stars getting dressed. There was no doubting her attractions. I could feel my own pulse quicken as I looked at her and was amused, knowing the analyzer would take it all down and SOCIAC would probably approve.

"Ladies," the announcer said, "you, too, can have the rounded, glamorous figure of a TV star—the soft curves that makes a man's heart quicken with desire. It's as simple as stopping in at the drugstore and getting a box of Glamorones. Or ask your family doctor if you're in doubt. Remember—it's *Glamorones* for *glamor.*"

I'd only been half-listening, but that startled me. It was at least four years since I'd heard Glamorones advertised. Now they were pushing them again. It meant that there had been a population drop in the United States.

The real function of Glamorones was top secret, shared by no more than two hundred people in SAC. For several years we'd had a controlled population, but outside of this small circle nobody knew it. Whenever the birth-rate fell below what had been decided was the norm, Glamorones were pushed in all advertising outlets. It was a preparation of hormones which stepped up a woman's sex drive, often producing a condition of oestrus. If the birth-rate went too high, Glamorones disappeared from the market and the public was sold on Slimettes for women and Vigorone for men. Both products were made of phosphorylated hesperidin which blocked fertilization in more than ninety per cent of the cases.

All three products were manufactured by Paragon. They were quite happy to take orders from an SAC representative and ask no questions. I should have been aware

of it before, I realized. Nancy had been showing more affection recently. She wasn't one of those in on the secret at SAC and she was a sucker, like millions of other women, for any of the glamor or beauty aids on the market. Even SAC employees didn't escape that kind of conditioning.

I glanced away from the screen and saw that we were passing the White House. Although the old building had not been torn down, it had been rebuilt several times. The most recent addition had been finished only a week before. I had seen many of the old pictures and I had to admit that it was now a far more handsome building with its wide expanses of glass and steel. They had also put a new billboard on the East lawn near the flagpole from which flew the 74 stars and 13 stripes. The cab driver slowed down for a car ahead and I was able to get a good look at it.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICAS—
where 378,835,785 people live happily and
peacefully—offers an administration that is
CLEAN
HONEST
FREE OF HARMFUL SOCIAL ILLS
No other government can make this claim!
THE SUN ALWAYS SHINES ON THE
AMERICAN PRESIDENT

I didn't doubt that the whole thing made an impression on people—SOCIAC proved that it did and who was I to argue with a brain that occupied ten floors—but it was the last sentence that brought people in droves to the White House every day it rained.

Some of the Communications engineers had worked out an electronics "blanket" over the White House so

that any rain or snow evaporated into steam long before it reached the building. There were also built-in lights all over the building so that even during a rainstorm the sun did seem to be shining on it. The only purpose of all this was to focus more attention on the building. It certainly succeeded.

A few more blocks and the cab stopped in front of the SAC Building. I paid the driver and got out.

Like every other employee, I always carried a small metal identification tab. This was recognized at the entrance by an electronic eye and the door swung open for me. I stepped into one of the special elevators and punched the button for the fifteenth floor.

Even in the elevator I was conscious of the vibrations, like an inaudible hum, of SOCIAC at work. The giant electronic brain filled up the first ten floors of our building. There were additional memory banks in several subcellars and in another nearby building. It was impossible not to be in awe of it. Just as an example, it contained about 500,000 electronic tubes and about 860,000 relays. Not counting the extra memory banks, it had 400 registers totaling 6,400 decimal digits of very rapid memory in electronic tubes and about 6,000 registers totaling 120,000 decimal digits of less rapid memory in relays. It handled the entire output of 74 other electronic calculators, one in each state, and still did all of our other work.

Officially the giant brain was the SOCIAC, but simply because we were all a little afraid of its ability we were seldom that formal. To everyone around the office, it was known as Herbie—supposedly in honor of the first engineer to have been elected President.

Nearly everyone was already at work. I stopped for a minute beside Nancy's desk. Her full name was Nancy Harper and she was a sequence clerk, which meant that

she was one of those who attended to the clerical needs of Herbie. She also had red hair and a figure that would have made even Herbie forget about being the great brain if he could have seen her.

"Hi, Nancy," I said.

She looked up and smiled. "Hello, Jerry," she said. I thought she looked a little strained.

"You feeling all right?" I asked her.

"Why shouldn't I be?" she said, nodding. I noticed she was wearing a dress with sleeves just long enough to cover the analyzer. But it had her usual plunging neckline, which was one reason I always lingered by her desk as long as I could.

"Our date still on for tonight?" I asked. "Or would you rather call it off because it's D. I. Day?"

"Still on," she said. She smiled so I wouldn't feel dismissed and proceeded to dismiss me. "Run along. Today is one of Herbie's busy days."

"Isn't it for all of us?" I murmured and went on into my office.

My official title at SAC was Expediter. There were about five hundred of us in Washington, although not all in the SAC Building. It would have been more accurate to say I was a troubleshooter. If you were romantically minded and still read some of the old mystery novels—and they were almost impossible to find, because Herbie disapproved of them—you might even have called me a government private eye. Any way you sliced it, it still entitled me to a private office. It also included my name on the door in nice bold script, superimposed on the usual infinity symbol.

If you didn't know much about SAC, you might jump to the conclusion that this made me a big wheel. From the viewpoint of someone like Nancy Harper, I suppose

I was. Actually, however, there were many levels above me. Top man in SAC was, of course, the Vice President of Communications. Under him came the National Co-ordinator. That was Roger Dillon. There were six Vice Co-ordinators and seventy-four State Co-ordinators. Then there was something like a thousand Sector Co-ordinators and any one of them could give me orders if I were in his sector.

Below the co-ordinator level, SAC was divided into two parts. Everyone in the Consent Secretariat outranked those of us in the Security Secretariat. It consisted of the consent engineers, who planned the conditioning for every level of society, and the account executives, who worked directly with every business firm. Since all advertising and much manufacturing were integral parts of conditioning, theirs were important jobs. In the Security Secretariat, expediters and members of the Clinic Squad were theoretically of equal rank, although in reality the Clinic Squad could take an expediter into custody with or without a special order. And then under us were the clerks and technicians of various grades.

So I was somewhere around the middle of the heap. And with no chance of going any higher, for Index Record listed me as an accident prone with a low Stability rating.

My office was just big enough for my desk and chair, two extra chairs and a small lounging couch. I tossed my hat on the couch. There was a speaker in the wall that would give me the same reassurances as the one in my hat. It was doing so as I entered.

"—follow your usual routine," the voice was saying. "D. I. Day is only another means of keeping our records up to date. Forget that you're wearing those instruments and

go right on with your work. There is absolutely no reason for anyone to be afraid of D. I. Day."

But everyone in the place was afraid. But before the day was over Herbie was going to evaluate all of us. There was something frightening about being judged by a machine, even though we knew that Herbie had never made a mistake.

And, of course, they could always say that we weren't really spied upon. True, the cameras weren't turned *on* us; everything we said wasn't recorded. It was our pulses, temperature, heart beats, perspiration—fear and guilt will make you sweat—that went into the analyzing banks. There was a time record on every bit of film and every report of our bodily functions. You looked at something and your heart beat faster and Herbie knew all about it. Or a voice on a record said "There's no reason to be afraid unless you've done something"—but you *were* afraid and you sweat a little and Herbie knew about it, making you still more afraid.

But there was more to it than that. Maybe you were a perfectly loyal citizen. Maybe you heard somebody say that the social engineers were dictators and maybe you reported them the way you should, but your heart beat a little faster when it happened, or skipped a beat while you hesitated. Herbie knew about it if it happened on this one day and added it to all the other things stored in his tubes—and you could be sure everything was stored there, down to the fact that you liked to wear brown socks and eat chocolate ice cream. The electronic tubes would glow and out would come the information that potentially you were a threat. And off you went to be treated for a communication block before it happened.

It was little wonder that we knew a special fear on that one day of the year. Herbie, with the aid of other giant

brains, kept tab on everybody, but people outside of SAC didn't know he did and didn't know what Herbie could do with the information. We knew both.

Of course, my case was special. I had reason for fear. If SOCIAC learned that I was a secret member of the hated, outlawed Uns—in short, a potential saboteur in the bosom of the enemy—it would be my finish.

There were three baskets on my desk, directly below the instrument panel that connected me to Herbie. There was an output basket, now shining and empty. There was a regular input basket with a few cards for me to check. There was a red input basket for emergencies. There was one white card in the center of it.

I could delay picking it up just long enough to get settled at my desk, but no longer. This was something else about D. I. Day. There was no way of telling whether an assignment was legitimate or a trap. Even if it were legitimate, it might still be a trap. On any case important enough to be an emergency, the problem was fed into Herbie with all the cards of available expediters. Herbie picked the one to be assigned. On D. I. Day, the choice was as apt to be made with the idea of testing the expediter as well as for the overtly desired results.

There were ways, however, of fooling even Herbie. I opened a drawer in my desk and fumbled for a pencil. In finding it, I uncovered a pornographic picture. I had put it there a month before, saving it for today. I glanced at it long enough to be sure the camera had caught it too. Herbie might mark me down as having an unstable sex life, but the analysis wouldn't know whether my quickened pulse came from the picture or the emergency tray. I reached over and picked up the card.

It was a note from Roger Dillon, Co-ordinator of SAC.

Jerry, I read, *I think we've got a high priority communication block. Herbie suggests you. I've arranged for you to take your room test at 9:20. Come in and see me as soon as you've finished. Rog.*

No way of telling what it was, but it must be high priority if he was that vague. I was glad I'd looked at the picture in the drawer.

I glanced at my watch. It was time for me to go to the testing room. I went out, purposefully leaving my hat in the office. At least I wouldn't have that voice prodding me.

Outside there was a big board that ordinarily gave an electronic record of where everyone was; today it included testing room assignments. I was scheduled for 1604. I headed for the elevator.

This was the only part of the day that couldn't even be disguised as routine. Each one of us had to go to a testing room where some small cell of Herbie's electronic brain would throw taped questions at us. Mostly the questions were on history or social matters and what was said in the answers didn't really matter. It was the reactions faithfully reported by the analyzer that counted. Anger or excitement while giving a truthful answer might, when added to Herbie's other information, be enough to call for therapy.

It was a small room with a single chair facing a wall with lights, a mike and a receiver. A white light went on as I sat in the chair, showing that my presence had registered in the brain downstairs. I waited while the impulses arranged themselves.

"Gerald Leeds," said a voice from the receiver. It didn't matter whose voice; it represented Herbie. "Expediter in the Security Secretariat, Bureau of Security and Consent, Communications Administrative Department. Tenure,

seven years. Code: 1-0-1101-11-101-1-100."

"Yes," I said even though no answer was required.

"Six feet, one inch tall. Weight, one hundred and eighty-five pounds. Brown hair. Brown eyes. No identifying scars or marks on body. Skin tone code: B-16-031-57. Attraction to the opposite sex code: AA-97-02-99-6."

That last code number indicated that Herbie had me listed as being handsome and that women found me attractive. Personally I had always thought my face pretty ordinary, but I had never protested. Not only because I was flattered; no one ever argued with Herbie. The other things, I knew, were being checked. An electronic beam had taken my height as I entered. There was a scale attached to the chair in which I sat. And Herbie's records would show if I'd had any wounds during the past year.

"A gain of one pound in weight over last year," the voice announced. "No other physical changes."

I waited for the next step. It was not long in coming. An enlarged photograph of my face was flashed on a screen in front of me. It was the one taken the year before. I gazed at it as objectively as I could—at the straight nose which I'd always considered too large, and the full lips which I thought too thick. A moment later another photograph of me flashed onto the screen beside the first one. This one had been taken only a moment before.

This part of the test had always fascinated me. I watched as the second photograph moved over until it was superimposed over the first one. This was a final identification of me and of changes that might have taken place in a year.

Jagged lines of light appeared around my head. All it indicated was that my hair was a little longer than it had been the year before; I needed a hair cut. A tiny streak of light appeared on my forehead. That meant one extra

small wrinkle from frowning. There were no other lights.

The voice reeled off a series of coded numbers for the files.

The screen went blank. I leaned back in my chair and relaxed as best I could. Now came the tough part. I had learned long before that it was possible to let questions and answers skim in and out of my brain without my emotions becoming involved. But would I get away with it this time?

"Educational background?" the voice asked. Herbie knew that as well as I did. He was just warming up.

"Harvard Tech. Degree of Social Engineering. Exempted from all conditioning courses. Straight A in all courses. Graduated among the top ten."

"Name the states of the American Republic." Still warming up.

I ran through all 74, starting with Alabama and Argentina through to West Indies and West Virginia.

"Give dates of entries of the most recent states."

"Alaska, Greenland and Hawaii in 1970," I said. "The Philippines in 1971. Cuba and Canada, 1972. West Indies in 1973. Mexico in 1975. The Central American states in 1978. The South American states applied for admission, as a block, following a brief police action in 1980."

"Give a brief political picture of the world today." This was getting closer to it.

"Two major powers in the world," I said, "currently existing in a cold war which started before the evolutionary changes of 1964. The United States of America, a democratic government elected by the people. Soviet Russia, together with her satellites, a dictatorship. Of less importance, but still powerful, Imperial China, now under the second ruler of the Mao Dynasty. Existing as minor factors: England, a socialistic kingdom; Spain under

King Francisco II; Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Norway and Sweden as minor republics. Other European countries vanished, of course, in the Russian maneuvers of 1971. Then there is Australia, which would be another minor republic, except that it gave refuge to the group which still calls itself the United Nations, claiming to represent the peoples of the world."

There was a moment of silence while the tubes and relays absorbed this and checked it against other relays and tubes.

"Your summation on the United Nations?" the voice asked.

This was it.

"An illegal body existing only in Australia," I said as calmly as I could. "The delegates have no standing at all. Why, there is even a man who claims to be the United States delegate-in-exile. He is, of course, sick. While they have been able to find some supporters here for their opinions, the Uns—as they are called—are not considered a serious threat. Before long it should be possible to diagnose all of them and effect cures."

Another wait, while I hoped I'd made it strong enough. "You are aware of the political set-up in the United States at the present?"

"Of course," I said. "While there is only one political party, the President and the Executive Vice President are elected by popular vote, two candidates for each office being offered the people. Candidates are chosen for qualities which will most appeal to the mass of people according to the available data on public tastes. Senators are voted into office from each state and candidates are chosen by the party through the same means. Candidates for the House of Representatives are chosen from the leading corporations and business firms throughout the nation

and are elected by popular vote, two candidates being put up by each firm."

"You approve of this?"

"It is efficient," I answered calmly. "The government operates smoothly and with little waste. The healthy people of the nation are satisfied and happy."

"What sort of rule would you call it?"

"Democratic rule by consent," I said. We were now coming to the part that was tricky for anyone in SAC.

"What about class distinctions in the United States?"

"The old ones have been abolished," I said. "There are essentially three classes. The Producers, or Pros, who also control the political machinery, as they should since their training fits them for it. The Consumers, or Cons, who constitute the great mass of people and who give their consent to be so intelligently ruled. And the Nulls, or Non-producers, such as the intellectuals, who also give their consent to be ruled."

"Would you say that is a complete picture?" the voice persisted. "I might add that your answer to this question will be erased from the memory banks once it has been evaluated to make certain it doesn't fall into the hands of unauthorized personnel."

"No," I said. "There is in reality a fourth class, but its existence is submerged and technically it is a part of the Pros. This class consists of the social engineers—sometimes known as Infs from the infinity sign which appears on their identity cards. Social engineers were responsible for abolishing the old slipshod methods of governing and we are completely responsible for the current government. The Pros believe that they are the rulers of the country and that we merely help them; we condition them to believe this. They also believe that we condition the Cons and Nulls, working through all media, and that they are

free of this because they have their own TV channels and their own reading matter; the truth is that both Pros and Cons have consented to being ruled by social engineers, and specifically by SAC, whether they are conscious of this or not. In the same fashion, our methods will one day persuade the whole world to consent to our rule. For this reason we cannot help but win the psychological war with Russia and the invisible war with all the other countries, including the so-called United Nations."

"You like this?"

"A social engineer," I said, quoting from the college text book, "is not concerned with liking or disliking. He is concerned only with that which is workable."

"All right," the voice said. The light went out and I was free to leave. I walked out and took the elevator down to the fifteenth floor. I was pretty certain I had succeeded in blocking off all emotional reactions in the test room. If I could do as well on the next lap, I would be all right. I paused long enough to light a cigarette and then went into Roger Dillon's office.

He wasn't alone, which surprised me. The door should have been electronically locked when there was someone with him.

It was a woman, who seemed to be on the point of leaving. She turned at the sound of the door, and I amended my first observation. A beautiful woman. Short black hair framed the loveliest face I'd ever seen. The rest of her was just as good—enough so that I could feel a quickening of my pulse. For Herbie's file, I thought.

"Sorry," I said automatically. I switched my gaze to Roger Dillon. "Your note said—"

"It's all right, Jerry, boy," Roger Dillon said. "Mrs. Randall is just going. This is Gerald Leeds. Mrs. Randall."

We said hello. I noticed her eyes were black and soft.

"Mrs. Randall is George's wife," Dillon went on. George Randall was one of our expediters. I knew him only slightly. "George is out of town and I've been trying to convince Mrs. Randall she should come to our annual ball tomorrow night." Each year, following D. I. Day, there was a big party for the surviving members of SAC.

"A good idea," I said.

"Say, I just thought of something," Dillon exclaimed. "Mrs. Randall is old-fashioned. She says she doesn't like to come unescorted. Why can't you pick her up, Jerry?"

There was more than a question in his words. But looking at her, I didn't mind.

"I'd like to," I said, looking at her.

"I'll think about it," she said. She smiled. "Call me tomorrow, Mr. Leeds, and I'll let you know. Good-by, Mr. Dillon."

Roger and I both said good-by and watched her walk through the door. She had the kind of walk it was a pleasure to watch.

I turned back to him when she was gone. "Who's she?"

"I told you. George Randall's wife."

"How come I've never seen her before?"

"As a matter of fact," he said, "Mrs. Randall has never wanted to attend any of our office parties. George has always come alone. That's why I was trying to convince her she should come this time."

I waited, but he didn't go on, which was curious. Roger Dillon never did anything accidentally. It was strange that he had let me walk in when she was there, still stranger that he had volunteered as much information as he had, or that he'd ask me to take her to the party. There was no clue in the expression on Dillon's plump massaged face.

"Well, Jerry, boy," Dillon said, going back to his desk and motioning to the big leather chair beside it. "Take a

load off. How'd it go?"

"Like always," I grunted. "What's up?"

"Got a few reports here," he said, pointing to his desk. There was a stack of code cards from Herbie and beside them the translated reports. "Thought we might noodle this one together." He was addicted to much of the terminology from the early days, when most social engineers were advertising or public relations men. He seemed to think it made him one of the boys.

I nodded and waited.

"Jerry, boy," he said, leaning back and staring at the ceiling, "how many Uns do you think we picked up this last year?"

I knew, having learned from my own Uns contact, but decided it would be better not to guess too closely. An ordinary expediter wasn't supposed to know too much about the over-all picture. "A couple of hundred," I said.

"Five thousand," he said, chopping the air with his index finger. "Five thousand Americans with the identical communications block. They were convinced that the world's salvation lies in restoring the United Nations, with all of its fumbling methods. They believed that there is little difference between this government and the one in Russia. Pavlovian, I believe, they called both."

"An epidemic," I said, feigning surprise.

"A bad one," he agreed. "Five thousand was only the number we caught. What about the ones still walking around? You know something else, Jerry, boy? You won't believe this. Ordinarily, you feed five thousand people's cards through Herbie and he'll be able to tell you exactly where to find anyone else who agrees with them. Well, Herbie almost blew a few thousand tubes when he tried to collate the findings on those five thousand Uns. The only thing they had in common was the communication

block. Hardly any two of them even liked the same breakfast cereal."

"Impossible," I exclaimed.

"True," he said sadly, "but it happened. I'm afraid we're going to have to double our efforts on the Uns. We've got to at least find out how many sick people we've got walking around. But I think maybe we've got a lead."

"What?" I asked, dropping my butt in a tray and lighting another cigarette.

"We ran all five thousand of these captured Uns through the psychotherapy-calculator," he said. "I'm afraid the results were bad. A few cures. But there were more who developed communication blocks on all levels and in many, many cases pre-frontal lobotomy was necessary. None of them had much information either. But we did get a few hints pointing to one man who seems to have been the focus for their activity. We ran those through Herbie."

"What did you get?"

"Not enough. A partial personality picture. Herbie estimates that if we put it through for identification we'd pull at least two million cards. But yesterday another Uns was picked up here in Washington. This morning I heard that he knew one thing more. The man we want is in New York today. I've got the address here. I'll give it to you with what few conclusions the analysis came up with. Herbie says you're the best man to catch this one and bring him in. I agree—not that my opinion is important."

"Who's the man I have to get?" I asked.

"It's undoubtedly a code name," Roger said, glancing at the papers on his desk, "but he calls himself Paul Revere."

I was glad my hands were in my lap, out of sight of my

lapel camera. Roger was turned away so his camera couldn't catch it. I jabbed the lighted cigarette against the top of my hand and held it while I counted to ten. Then I let out a grunt of pain.

"What's wrong?" Roger said, looking up. "You know the name?"

"No," I said. I laughed ruefully, not needing to pretend the pain. "I was following what you said so closely that like an idiot I burned myself on my cigarette." I held up my hand so he and the camera could see it. A blister was already puffing up on it.

That, I thought, ought to throw Herbie for a loop when he starts collating my reactions to what Roger had said.

"That's one of the troubles with you," Roger grunted. "You're always doing some damn fool thing like that. No wonder you've got a number of low ratings on your record. But—" grudgingly—"I suppose that's also why you've got such a high rating on concentration."

"Anything else?" I asked.

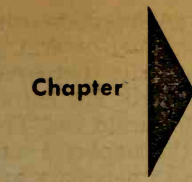
"It's all in here," he said, lifting the papers from his desk. He hefted them for a minute as though he were questioning even Herbie's advice about sending me. Then he handed them over. "If there's no slip-up, you ought to be back by tonight."

"Sure," I said. I walked out of his office and started down the hall. My hand was still hurting and I was glad of it.

I knew a lot about the Uns and their communication block. SAC called them sick people, but I knew they were a healthy underground movement.

And my code name in that movement was Paul Revere.

I was going to New York to bring back myself.



ALL THE TIME I waited in the dispensary for the nurse to treat my burned hand, I was trying to think of a solution. My orders were to go to New York and bring back the underground leader known as "Paul Revere." But that was me. Was it a trap, had Herbie gotten some misinformation, or what?

I could see no solution but to go ahead to New York and make the motions of looking for Paul Revere. On any other day, I might have been able to fake it—but not this day. The camera in my lapel filmed everything I saw and would show where I was every minute of the day.

By the time my hand was dressed, I had accepted the need to go through the motions. My reactions were well enough under control to insure a steady pulse. All I had to do was watch out for surprises.

I checked in at the supply office on the next floor and drew field equipment. All small stuff, nothing really high-powered. There was an impulse-sender which would broadcast to the nearest SAC office. It could be used to ask for help manually, and if it stopped broadcasting at any time help would be sent automatically. There was a finger-hypo, a small hypodermic needle that fitted over

a finger and would make an injection when the wearer slapped someone on the shoulder or arm. It carried four loads of a drug that temporarily destroyed resistance so that a patient could be handled. For extreme cases there was a pencil-gun filled with a mild gas. That was all.

An SAC car drove me to the airport. I was in time to get a scheduled flight, so it wasn't necessary to use one of the SAC planes. All I had to do was show my identity card and board the plane. Even the fare was automatically charged to SAC. It wasn't quite that easy for other passengers. They had to produce a Work Transfer or a Vacation Permit before they could board an interstate plane.

It was one of the new laws often held up usually by Russia as proof that the American government kept a rigid control on all its citizens; the "iron curtain" between states, it was sometimes called. In reality this was not true; the ultimate aim *was* control, but a control different and far more subtle than the enemies of social engineering, in America or abroad, imagined. The administration wanted to know as much as possible about what everyone thought and felt. What people ate, where they spent their vacations, what they talked about—all of these things were added up and passed through Herbie to produce complete pictures of individuals and groups. Thus, when the administration wanted to make a new move, they knew exactly how to condition the people so that it would be backed. Or they knew exactly what sort of man to put up to win a popular election. This, then, was government by consent.

It was the same with telephone taps. Every telephone in the United States was tapped, but not primarily for the purpose of uncovering disloyalty. It was seldom that even members of the Clinic Squad bothered to listen to taps, but the tapped conversations were fed directly to a

calculator and added to the huge stock of intimate knowledge about the people.

On the plane to New York, I glanced over the papers that Roger Dillon had given me. Once again I had to marvel at Herbie. From tiny bits of stray information the machine had been able to construct an accurate, although incomplete, picture of "Paul Revere." I recognized myself in it. Of course, that could be a sign of nervousness; it was so incomplete that it could fit a lot of people.

I decided that my assignment was not a deliberate trap for me. The machine had probably picked my card for the job on the basis of similarities—even Herbie worked on the old theory of setting a crook to catch a crook. But if not a trap, what was it? Had SAC set up a false Paul Revere, in the hope that the real one was so important the Uns would try to rescue him if captured? One of the Uns' aces was the fact that so far they hadn't been forced into any direct action, so that SAC was still largely in the dark about their strength and tactics.

Or could this whole affair possibly be some plan of the Uns to confuse Herbie and SAC, however slightly? But if so, they'd have contacted me about it. Unless, again, our system of contacts had been broken up in some way. . . . My head was spinning, but I couldn't figure out the answer.

The plane came down on Barton Field in New York an hour later. As I'd expected, there was an SAC man from the New York office there to meet me. He was a pale young fellow named Lon Moore.

As we rode into the city in an SAC car, Moore reported that since early morning they'd been watching the house where Paul Revere was supposed to be hiding. Regional SAC offices, of course, were not permitted to do more

than that. Communication blocks, or anti-social activity of any sort, could be handled only by expediters from the national office.

We entered the city over the 59th Street bridge and drove slowly westward.

"He's in a house on West 70th Street," Moore said. "We'll probably have to leave the car around Park Avenue, get across Fifth on foot and then catch a cab."

"Why?" I asked.

He grinned. "For everybody in SAC, this is D. I. Day," he said, "but in New York it's Hatshaw Day."

"Hatshaw?" I said. Robert (Bob) Hatshaw was the President, now in his third term. "What's going on?"

"Anniversary of the first time an advertising agency ever handled a presidential candidate. It happened, of course, back in the old regime. But it was a New York agency and we've celebrated it every year with a presidential parade. The old agency is still operating under the same name—as a matter of fact, it's one of the mainstays of the government, having handled the campaigns of more than half the men in the House of Representatives—and occupies the old U.N. building. The President shows up there for a ceremonial in the morning then goes downtown for the parade. They come up Broadway as far as Eighth Street, switch over to Fifth, all the way up and then all the way back down."

I could already hear the murmur of the crowd ahead of us. "Sounds like you've got the whole city out," I said.

"Almost," he said. "We pull all the stops out on this one. The build-up started almost three months ago. Last year there were ten million people out on the street from early morning until late at night. Some hassle."

He parked the car near Park Avenue and we proceeded on foot. We encountered the crowd when we were a half

block from Fifth. They were packed solidly in the street. TV screens on long booms swung overhead for those who were too far away to see the street. They showed the parade as it headed up the avenue, still several blocks away. Occasionally an announcer would come on and tell what was happening farther downtown. In between came the blare of music.

I had to admit that the New York office had done a good job. The crowd had probably been waiting several hours, but they were still in a festive mood. There were a number of picnic baskets in view, and even more bottles. Innumerable pretty girls were wandering through the crowd throwing their arms around the men they encountered. When we were almost to Fifth Avenue, two of them descended on us.

"Some fun, eh?" Moore shouted. There was a smear of lipstick on his cheek. His arm was still around the girl who had approached him.

"Yeah," I said. I shook loose from the girl who was clinging to my neck. "Much more of this, however, and Herbie'll burn out a couple of tubes running an analysis on our libidos."

He laughed, then sobered at the carelessly disrespectful public reference to Herbie. "Want to stay long enough to see Bob? Our men will hold the place down," he changed the subject.

"I've seen him," I said. I'd also seen his index card. Robert Hatshaw made a perfect president. He had all the attributes of a TV star, played a top game of golf and never missed a shot on hunting trips. At any time of the day or night, from any angle, he photographed like a million dollars. There was nothing wrong with him—he had an I.Q. of 92 and a small operation on his throat had made his voice almost irresistible—so he was perfect for his role.

All administrative duties were carried out by the General Manager and the Vice Presidents, while the President made speeches and appeared in parades.

It was a good arrangement, for the mere sight of Hatshaw was enough to inspire confidence in over two hundred million voters.

Moore reluctantly left the girl and followed me across Fifth Avenue. As soon as we were free of the crowd, we found a cab.

"Are you sure this—Paul Revere is still in the house?" I asked.

"He hasn't left since this morning," Moore said. "We were on the job as soon as we got the flash from Washington. Nobody's left the house and there's somebody inside. We put a monitor on the phone and checked back on the phone tapes, but that didn't produce anything. We can't do more than that, you know."

He sounded disappointed and I nodded sympathetically. Too much so, I guess.

"What's the chances of getting a transfer to Washington?" he asked. "I've put in for it, but they never tell you anything. Maybe you know . . ."

"Sorry, I don't," I said. I knew there wasn't much chance, but there was no point to rubbing it in.

"You fellows have all the fun," he said. He laughed shortly. "I suppose that'll give me a low rating on patience—but then it's already low."

"If you heard some of the grumbling in Washington, you wouldn't think we had all the fun."

"I know," he said. "I'll just keep hoping. Maybe the Uns will knock off enough of you to make them need some of us."

I felt a sudden flare of anger and struggled to fight it down so the analyzer wouldn't notice. "The Uns don't

knock people off," I said a bit stiffly. "They haven't harmed a single government employee."

"I know," he said again, "but I'm betting they will when the pressure starts. Sooner or later, we'll have to start cracking down harder on them. I've got a theory that this is one thing where the machines have fallen down on the analysis. I think the Uns are more dangerous than we've granted. This is a new kind of revolution."

I looked at him sharply. "What do you mean?"

"I'm not sure," he said, "but for one thing I don't think this is going to be solved just through communication. Maybe we're communicating but I don't think the Uns are listening."

It was a good thing, I thought, that he was buried in a regional office. He was too close to the truth for comfort. "How can anybody not listen?" I asked with a grin, gesturing toward the TV screen in the cab where a trio was singing one of the public service spots.

"Eddie was just a little boy who didn't think
That Star-Cola was the Great American drink,
Or that eating Krinkly-Krunch
Would make him one of the bunch. . . .
It was obvious that Eddie was a Parlor-Pink!"

"Maximum penetration of content," I said as the announcer faded on to identify the "Eddie" of the song as one Edward Clay who had recently been convicted of being a Communist spy. "According to the latest Spindex report, there are almost three hundred million TV sets in the United States and each set is turned on a minimum of four hours daily. Not to mention the Visual Aids to the American Way of Living which are in every possible place and the talking and singing ads in every public

place. No, my boy, everybody's listening."

"Maybe," he said, but he didn't sound convinced.

Further conversation was stopped by our arrival at Broadway and 70th Street. I was just as glad. We paid off the driver and walked west on 70th Street. Halfway down, we stopped and Moore took a pocket-talkie from his coat. He murmured into the mouthpiece, then held it to his ear. He slipped it back into his coat and grinned at me.

"Everything's all right," he said. "They've got the front, back and roof covered and nobody's left."

"Let's go," I said. We walked rapidly down the street.

In a few minutes, I thought, I'd know what was back of this "Paul Revere" assignment. My mouth was dry; my skin felt tight and drawn. I knew the analyzer around my arm was recording everything and sending it back to Herbie. There was a good chance, however, that it would be marked down to the excitement of the raid, especially since it had been impressed upon me that this was an important one. Glancing over at Moore, I saw he was excited. That would make my own reactions seem more normal.

We reached the house, a small building with four apartments, one to each floor. The local SAC men were well concealed. I finally spotted one of them in the window of an apartment across the street. To anyone else he would have looked natural, but I caught the glint of light from the camera in his lapel.

"Which floor?" I asked.

"First," Moore said tightly. He was looking at me and I could see the muscles of his jaw working.

By strict protocol, I was supposed to leave him out on the street and go in by myself unless I was certain that help was needed. But an expediter was allowed considerable freedom on an assignment and I could see his eager-

ness to go in with me. He was so keyed up that his emotional reactions would be a cover for my own tension. All I'd have to do would be watch out for sharp surprises.

"Come along," I said. "Let's go take him."

He gave a nervous grin and quickened his pace to keep up with me. I saw him pat at one pocket and knew he was feeling to see if he still had his finger-hypo; it was the typical gesture of an inexperienced expediter.

We walked up the steps and into the foyer. A glance at the mail boxes showed that the ground floor apartment was in the name of Peter Stacey. There was something familiar about the name; I felt sure that I knew the name, although I didn't know the man, but there was no time to stop and think it out.

The outer door was locked. I took a small electronic lock reader from my pocket and applied its "feeler" to the keyhole. It took only twenty seconds for it to indicate the position of the tumblers. Another twenty seconds and the door was unlocked with an adjustable master key. Inside, we stopped in front of the apartment door. Again I took a reading of the tumblers. Then I knocked on the door.

There was a moment of silence, then a scurrying, rustling sound beyond the door as though there were mice in the apartment. The sound stopped just beyond the door. There was a pause. I knocked again.

"Who's there?" a voice called through the door. It was an old voice, trembling with what might have been fear.

"Security and Consent," I said. "Open up."

I held the adjustable key ready, but it wasn't needed. The lock turned and the door swung open. Moore and I crowded quickly into the apartment.

The man who had opened the door stood there, waiting with an air of resignation. He was old, probably well over

sixty, with a great shock of white hair. His faded blue eyes held fear, but they held something else, too—a will to resist.

"Watch him," I told Moore. I went swiftly through the rest of the apartment, but the old man was the only person there. The apartment was almost bare. A minimum of furniture, a small amount of food in the storage compartment of the kitchen range, a telephone. Not even a TV set. On a table in the living room there were two papers. Seeing them there, I had a hunch that they'd been left on purpose. I glanced quickly at them. One was an Uns leaflet charging that government-by-consent had robbed people of their ultimate liberty—the right to choose. It was a leaflet that had been distributed from a private plane. The pilot had been caught and was already undergoing treatment. The second paper was just a scrap covered with writing. It seemed to be in code and referred to the sailing of an Australian merchant ship from the New York harbor.

I went back to Moore and the old man. They were standing just as I left them. Moore looked as if he were about to burst at the seams, but he knew better than to do any questioning on his own.

"Your name?" I said to the old man. I tripped the trigger on my pocket recorder.

"Peter Stacey," he said. He kept his eyes lowered, his hands held stiffly beside his body.

I remembered now where I'd heard the name of Peter Stacey. He was one of the first members of the Uns. He was one of the few Uns who was ever referred to by his right name. I'd never met or seen him, though.

"Your identity number?" I asked.

"10-26-472-18-19567-1-0-43."

His identity number told me, among other things, that

e dated from the old regime, that by trade he was an rtist—which made him a Null, that he had been ques-ioned about his activities before and had undergone one xamination under the psycho-therapy calculator. My re-pect for him went up, but I didn't let on.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"Nothing," he said.

"Do you deny that there is Uns literature here?" I de-nanded.

"No," he said simply. "I am proud to say that I am a nember of Uns. All my life I have believed in one world nd in the charter of the United Nations, and especially n the attempt to reaffirm a faith in the fundamental hu-nan rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, n the equal rights of men and women and of nations large nd small—"

"Enough," I said sharply. "Obviously a case of commu-ication block. Recommended for therapy." This was dded for the benefit of the recorder. I had no other hoice. "What do you know of a Paul Revere?"

A look of triumph came over his face, so genuine that t surprised me. "You won't get him," he said.

"Why not?"

"He has left."

"That's impossible," I said. "This house has been vatched since early this morning."

"He left last night. He's out of the country by now."

I glanced at Moore, who shrugged. "We didn't even now about this house until this morning," he said. "It's ossible."

I turned back to the old man. "You say he's out of the ountry?" I asked. I remembered the coded sheet of paper n the table. "How did he leave? On the Australian ship?"

The old man nodded.

"Bound for Australia?"

"I do not know," he said. Briefly his faded blue eyes came up to meet mine. There seemed to be a strange urgency in them, but I couldn't be sure it wasn't my imagination. "I know nothing more about it. You cannot wring from me knowledge which I don't possess."

"Perhaps," I said crisply. That was not my responsibility, so I didn't pursue it. There were only a few more things I had to do. "Stand quietly," I ordered him.

I stepped closer and searched him. There was nothing in his pockets, except a pipe and some tobacco which I let him keep. Nor was there anything concealed beneath his clothes. Then I noticed his hands. His arms were still held stiffly at his sides and the fingers were clenched. I reached for one of his hands. I had barely touched it when his fingers moved convulsively and I felt a small pellet of paper shoved into my own hand. I automatically caught it in a fold of skin beneath my thumb and continued opening his hands. Now I understood the urgency I'd seen in his eyes.

"You know," I said to Moore, "you'd expect these people to be armed, but we've never found one that was."

"It proves how dangerous they are," he said.

I shook my head. "Not dangerous. Sick. Sickness is not dangerous in a nation that understands preventive medicine. We do. Now, bring in your men."

He spoke into his pocket-talkie and a moment later the other New York men came into the apartment. We stood beside the door while they went to work. They quickly photographed every inch of the apartment, using a special magnifying lens on the camera. With a special vacuum cleaner, they covered every part of the apartment. The dust from each room was sealed in its own container. The papers from the table and the film were also sealed

ıd the pouches were handed to me.

The small pellet of paper still nestled in my hand and burned to read it. Its presence had made me revise my inking. It meant that this wasn't a trap prepared by meone in SAC; more likely it was part of some Uns an and the paper would explain it to me. But I needed o covers; one for reading the note without being seen ıd the other for any reaction I might have to it. If only y own stupidity hadn't made it impossible to talk to acey alone!

We left the apartment. The doors and windows were aled. Pending the examination of the film and papers ıd the analysis of the dust taken from the apartment, ey would be kept sealed. The old man meekly accom- ınied us to the sidewalk.

"Want me to return to Washington with you?" Moore ked. He couldn't conceal the eagerness in his voice.

"It won't be necessary," I said. "He's going quietly. If should change his mind, I can always put a control on m. Let's go back to the airport."

"I'll go quietly," the old man said. "I am too old for olence. Nor do I believe in it."

"Check in with your office," I told Moore, "and have em ready an SAC plane for us."

Again he busied himself with his pocket-talkie, finally placing it and nodding to me. The three of us walked the street. At the corner, we hailed a cab and ordered e driver to take us as close to 59th and Fifth as he could.

We were all silent on the ride back. The old man sat tween us, resignation explicit in his body. The piece paper still burned in my hand.

We got out of the cab and started forcing our way rough the crowd. I indicated the sealed pouches I car- ed. Moore took the old man's arm, holding it firmly.

The voice of an announcer boomed out, telling the crowd that President Hatshaw had already reached 45th Street and would soon be there. Excitement swelled into a tangible force.

A pretty little blonde came pushing through the crowd. She planted a kiss on Moore's cheek and then on the old man's. She came to me and threw her arms up. I pulled my cheek away and pressed my lips to hers. My arms went around her and pulled her against me. For a second, she stiffened, then she began to respond. The tip of her tongue began to flirt with mine, her body growing taut with awakening desire.

I had started it in cold blood, but the pressure of her mouth and body set my heart pounding. Using my wrist to maintain the pressure on her back, I unfolded the pellet of paper and read it over her shoulder. The pressure of the crowd rocked us as though we were in a boat.

There was no salutation in the note, only a bare skeleton of information. *Recognize that recent captures might provide lead. Arranged for information to be given providing specific but false one. Provided for a "Paul Revere" to escape before he could be caught. Trust this extends your life expectancy. The individual is greater than the state.* This last was the one driving philosophy of the Uns. There was no signature, but I had no doubt the old man had written it.

My admiration for his courage grew enormously. The plan to protect Paul Revere was smart enough in itself. But Stacey couldn't possibly have known that Herbie would pick the real Paul Revere as the expediter who would arrest him. And there were no other Uns agents in SAC, so by holding that prepared message in readiness in the hope that I'd arrive and he'd recognize me he had been taking a terrific chance. The whole United Nations

as lucky it had worked out so well.

At the back of my mind, though, there was a frighten-ng doubt. If SAC had gotten that close to Paul Revere nce, they might do it again. My personal safety wasn't ne only thing; I was the Uns only source of direct infor-nation about what was happening in SAC. Without me, ney'd lose a lot of territory.

I crumpled the paper up in my hand and gently pushed ne girl away from me. Her face was flushed as she smiled p at me. Then a part of the crowd washed in between us nd she was whirled, laughing, into somebody else's arms. felt a brief regret that she'd had to be a statistical note n Herbie's analysis. I glanced around and saw Moore rinning at me.

"A great thing, festivals," he shouted. "Only they should ive us a holiday so we can enjoy them."

There was a flash of something like amusement in the ld man's eyes before they looked away. I shoved through ne crowd, my fingers slowly shredding the note and drop-ing the pieces.

We reached Moore's car and were soon going back across ne 59th Street bridge. He drove at a fast pace and it asn't long before we were once more at the airport. I nanked Moore, and the old man and I climbed into the lane with the infinity sign on the wings that marked it n official SAC ship.

The old man and I were silent on the flight to Washing-on. I tried not to think too much about him. It was im-ossible to tell whether he was frightened or not. He tared straight ahead, with no expression on his face. According to his identity number, he had been through alculator-therapy once, so he must have known what was head of him. I didn't dare think too much about what

he was feeling; if I did, then I would have had to struggle with the temptation to let him go. It would be a waste of emotion. I had no choice in the matter. I had no right to endanger my role in the underground to save one person; we were fighting to save millions.

Yet I could not completely block it out of my mind. I had never worked in the psycho-calculator department, but I knew a lot about it. To me it had always seemed more frightening than the torture implements of the old world.

The psycho-therapy calculator had been built many years before to treat psychological disorders. It had been suggested as early as 1949 by one of the men who specialized in giant mechanical brains. I think that perhaps in some cases it was a help. It could ask questions and record answers, or show a patient films and record answers. It could detect inconsistencies and manage to get more information. It was loaded with all available data on the type of psychological disorder it was treating, and when the patient tried to escape in fantasy or rationales, it could keep bringing him back. At the end of the day, when it had treated several patients, an analyst could listen to the calculator review the cases and feed new instructions into it if necessary. Its purpose had been to enable an analyst to treat fifty to a hundred times as many patients as he had in the past.

So far, so good. But there were two things wrong with the approach. Suppose, in the old days, you had a patient who had been diagnosed as a manic depressive, while in reality his illness was of another sort. In sessions with the analyst, the diagnosis would be corrected; his personality could convince the analyst that an error had been made. But did you ever try to convince a machine of anything? The machine had been set up to treat a manic

epressive and this is what it would do, come hell or high ater. If the patient is a manic depressive, he may get ell; if he isn't, he'll probably become a raving maniac.

Take it on another level. Suppose you're a member of ns and you believe that the present government should e overthrown in favor of an authentic democracy; suppose you don't believe in rule-by-machine. This is automatically diagnosed as a communication block, a psychological illness. You are turned over to the psycho-calculator. It has instructions to cure you and it won't stop robing and treating until you are cured or until your esponses make the electronic tubes conclude you're incurable and the machine spits out a neatly-typed tape hich recommends pre-frontal lobotomy.

It was this the old man was headed for; he had obiously been through it once and I wondered how. I knew here weren't many who survived the ordeal and continued function.

We were met at the Washington airport by an SAC linic Squad. They signed a receipt for the old man and ustled him into an ambulance. The last I saw of him as a brief glimpse through a grilled window as the amulance took off for the psycho-calculator building.

It was at that moment that the voice on the receiver in y hat came in once more to remind me that there was o reason for anyone to fear D. I. Day.

I took a cab back to the SAC Building, turned in my ecial equipment and went in to report to Roger Dillon.

"Good work, Jerry," he said as I entered. He had obiously already studied the tape and film covering the id. "Too bad we got the information so late that Paul evere had slipped out of the net."

"I thought maybe you could still catch the ship while

she was in our waters," I said. I slipped into the chair beside his desk and lit a cigarette.

"Don't burn yourself, boy," he said with a grin. "No, she was out beyond the limit before the first recording came in." He grimaced. "We might have taken a chance on stopping her, but the survey plane reported she was equipped for continuous audio and visual broadcast, so there was no way to do so legally."

"Australian registry?" I asked.

"Of course. But maybe we'll get another crack at Paul Revere. Herbie's analysis is that Paul Revere is an important focus of Uns activity here and the probability is he'll be back. When the analysis of the evidence you brought back is finished, and we have a report from the Clinic on Stacey, we should have a better picture of him. It'll be fed into all of the federal calculators and I doubt if he'll be able to get back into the country undetected."

I nodded. "Mind if I ask you something, Rog?"

"Shoot," he said.

"I've been wondering about this," I said. "Since the Uns represent some threat to our economy and since the brains of Uns are in Australia, why don't we—well, just annex Australia? She doesn't have much of a military force and neither do the Uns."

"We don't believe in war," he said.

"Of course," I said. "Actually, this wouldn't be war; it would be a form of police action, instituted to protect several hundred million people from a handful of maladjusted."

He grinned at me. "There is more to it than just not wanting to wage war," he admitted. "In one way, you can say we don't annex Australia for the same reason Russia doesn't. She is even more concerned about Uns than we are, because she sees it as another capitalistic plot and

doesn't have our awareness that these are sick people. Why do you suppose she doesn't grab Australia?"

I knew the answer to that. Actually, I knew the answer to both questions, but it wasn't wise to know too much. I was all too well aware that Australia was in the position of a tight-wire walker, with Russia and the United States each holding one end of the wire. Australia's existence and that of Uns, depended solely on neither of them being able to let go.

"The minute Russia grabbed," I said, "we would attack."

"Precisely," he said. "Herbie has indicated that that would be the one chance we'd have to cripple Russia with a quick blow. Herbie has also indicated that Russia would follow the same course if we tried to annex Australia."

That was the answer I knew, because I had asked Herbie five years earlier. Much of our strategy had been based on that. It was one of the advantages the Uns had in having an expediter as a member. I could ask Herbie such questions and have the fact that I'd done so erased from his memory. The only thing I couldn't ask was a personal question or what Herbie was instructed to classify as an anti-social question. Those would be fed into the memory bank that held my file before I could give an order to erase.

"So what's the answer?" I asked.

He hesitated a minute. "We'll have to implement our program on the Uns," he said finally. "Brad and Bruce and I had a top level meeting this morning and that was one of the things we threw into the hopper." Brad was Bradley Bernard, Vice President in charge of Communications, and Bruce was Bruce Layton, General Manager of the United States. The three of them held the three key

jobs. All of them were appointed, but since they, with the aid of Herbie, picked all political candidates, they had no trouble staying in power.

"I won't go into it now," Rog continued, "but we've hit upon a plan which Herbie analyzes as excellent. You're going to be assigned to work on it so you'll hear more about it tomorrow."

I felt relief flooding through me. It meant that Roger Dillon had already checked me up to the minute and I was in the clear. So far. I reached over to snuff out my cigarette and finally did what I'd been wanting to do since I entered his office. I glanced at the far wall which was covered with hundreds of tiny lights, each one representing an employee of SAC. I saw that one light had gone out.

"Herbie blew the whistle on somebody?" I said casually, nodding toward the wall.

"Yes," he said. He pursed his fat lips, more in sorrow than anger. "It just goes to show how important these annual D. I. Days are. It was Tom Shell, on the Clinic Squad. Did you know him?"

I thought a minute and finally remembered a chubby little man in a white suit. The Clinic Squad was the nearest thing to a police force we had these days and the only ones with a uniform. A white uniform with an infinity symbol in red on the left breast.

"Not well," I said, "but I think I remember him."

"He was doing a bang-up job all year," Rog said, shaking his head. "And he's been in the department ten years. This morning someone handed him an Uns leaflet. When he read it, his pulse jumped to ninety-three. He must have realized how bad that would look for he suddenly tore off the analyzer and the camera and ran. Poor Tom. We've got him over at the Clinic but the preliminary

diagnosis doesn't look good."

"What about the leaflet?" I asked. "Who distributed it?"

"We did," he said with a grin. "Just for today. It was one of a batch we discovered last month. A lot of hogwash about how we've deprived the American people of freedom." He made a face. "It just shows how sick those Uns are. How do they expect anyone to pay attention to them? Never has there been more freedom anywhere than there is in America today. We've done away with police and even prisons. Crime has been almost wiped out since we recognized it as a social disease. We've done away with poverty. There are fewer restrictions on people than ever before in the history of mankind. For the first time they're really free."

Even if it hadn't been dangerous, I wouldn't have argued with him. He believed what he was saying. His faith was the faith of a Torquemada backed by science. There was no way to make him see that the social engineers had taken away only one freedom, but that it was the ultimate freedom—the right to choose. Everything—what people ate, how they procreated, what they wore, what they thought—was decided for them and then they were conditioned to want it.

"You're right, Rog," I said.

"Well," he said briskly, "just spitballing like this will get us nowhere. Back to the salt mines, boy. We'll talk about the new assignment tomorrow."

"Right," I said just as briskly. I went back to my own office.

There were a few minor jobs to do. Most of them required feeding simple questions about some aspect of Security and Consent to Herbie and either filing the

answers or sending them along for a top level decision. It occupied me until the end of the working day.

I stopped by Nancy's desk and waited while she powdered her nose. When she came back she had repaired most of the day's damage, but she still looked tired and nervous.

Washington had a large selection of fully automatic restaurants, nearly all of them serving good food, but I usually tried to stay out of them. Nancy liked them, but she made no objection when I suggested that we go to a place I had discovered. It was a little restaurant, patronized almost entirely by Nulls, which had the least suggestion of engineering it was possible to find. Waiters—good, solid human beings—served the food and drinks. I had been in the kitchen and they had a chef instead of a fully automatic range. Instead of a leased wire from the Communications Department's Music Sector, they had a five-piece orchestra.

Ordinarily it wasn't a good idea for anyone from SAC to be seen frequenting a place that was such an anachronism, but it was already a part of my record and hadn't done me any harm. So that was where I took Nancy. We both needed all the relaxation we could get.

"Two double martinis," I told the waiter as soon as we were seated. "Very dry."

"We know how you like them, Mr. Leeds," he said and departed at a fast pace. I guess he could see by looking at me how badly I needed the drink. They knew in the restaurant that I was from SAC, but they treated me almost as if it weren't true.

He was soon back with the drinks, putting them in front of us and fading quietly away. I lifted mine and I felt something close to love as I gazed at the almost clear color with the two olives nestling at the bottom.

"To D. I. Day," I said, keeping the irony out of my voice.

Nancy gazed at her own drink. "Olives?" she said uncertainly.

"Olives instead of lemon peel," I said firmly. "Like the old joke, if I wanted a lemonade, that's what I'd order. Don't worry. Our cameras will record the existence of the olives and Herbie will conclude that we're mild aberrationists, but it won't really hurt our records."

She wasn't amused by the joke, but there was no reason why she should have been. She lifted her glass and took a drink. It was the first time I'd brought her here and she looked surprised when she tasted it. "It's very good," she said.

"Sure," I said. "Engineers can build machines that will do damn near everything except make a good martini."

She frowned, but she didn't say anything. She finished her drink and some of the tension went out of her face—but it was still in her eyes. I ordered two more martinis.

I continued to watch Nancy as she sipped her second drink. She was a beautiful girl. A little less education and she might have been a TV performer. She'd been at SAC for two years, coming in right from the university. She had a social engineering degree, of course—she wouldn't have gotten near SAC if she hadn't—but she must have graduated well down toward the foot of her class. Otherwise she wouldn't have been a sequence clerk, a handmaiden to Herbie. But that was about all I really knew about her. Except that she had a beautiful body, sweet mouth and an affectionate nature.

I had been dating Nancy occasionally for almost two months. She seldom talked about anything but her job and I didn't encourage that. She had the same type of faith that Roger Dillon did, but she was shorter on brains.

That didn't bother me. Ours had been a physical relationship from the beginning. Neither of us objected to having it remain on that plane. And as long as that was all it was, Herbie would approve, too.

Even among the general population, careful conditioning had done wonders in removing sexual repressions and taboos. It was, of course, necessary. Sexual expression is an important key to people and it was difficult to do much snooping in that field as long as people had their old inhibitions. Much had been accomplished. There was a minor influence on the other side by the few churches still in existence, but a few more years would remove that. Or at least that's what Herbie predicted.

Social engineers, however, had all progressed beyond the old moralities. If they didn't, they didn't get their degrees. Marriage—if Herbie said it was a *good* marriage—still had fairly rigid codes, but under certain conditions even they could be relaxed. If you were single—as Nancy and I both were—then Herbie approved of a little physical activity. I often thought that Herbie's electronic tubes beamed on such occasions.

Nancy winced and I guessed the reason. I had left my special receiver with my hat in the checkroom, but she was still wearing hers beneath her hair and the announcer had just reminded her again it was D. I. Day.

"What did he say?" I asked.

"Just a reminder that D. I. Day is half over," she said automatically. Then the sense of my question penetrated and she looked at me in surprise.

"Yes," I said, answering the unspoken question. "I left mine with my hat. Why don't you slip yours off?"

"Oh, I couldn't do that," she protested.

"Sure you could," I said. "I'll turn my camera away and Herbie will never know. I don't think it would be

serious anyway. You're entitled at least to eat dinner in peace. You can put it on again later, if you must."

It took a little more to convince her, but she finally gave in. I pretended to straighten my coat, flipping the lapel camera over in the direction of the orchestra while she took out the receiver and put it in her lap. She immediately looked guilty.

"Tough day at the office today?" I asked, more to get her attention than because I was interested.

She nodded. "In a way," she said. "It's always busier on D. I. Day. Then I had a shock this afternoon."

"Short circuit in Herbie?" I asked.

She took it literally. "Oh, no," she said. "It was the girl who works at the next desk to mine. Sue Blane. She was handling the sequence on that poor fellow who got sick today—Shell, I think his name was. When he tore off his analyzer and camera and ran, she said she hoped he'd get away. I guess she didn't think I'd hear it, but I was shocked."

"Naturally," I said drily. "What did you do?"

"The only thing I could do," she said. "I fed the information to Herbie, coded for her file bank."

For a minute I disliked Nancy. Then I felt sorry for her. "How did you happen to come into SAC?" I asked her.

Her face brightened. "My father," she said, "was one of the first expediters when SAC was formed. He was killed by a criminal in the days before our methods were perfected. He was always so enthusiastic, I felt I just had to take social engineering and try to finish his work." She frowned. "But I just don't seem to be equipped for the social end of SAC. Do you suppose there's something wrong with me, Jerry?"

"In what way?"

"Well, I don't seem good for anything but sequence

clerking and I'm always afraid I'll do something wrong. Sometimes I think I may have some kind of congenital communication block. I offered to go for a voluntary examination by the psycho-calculator, but Mr. Dillon said he didn't think it was necessary."

"Rog very seldom makes mistakes," I said.

"But if I did have," she said fiercely, "I'd want to be purged of it quickly before it could make me do something awful like that poor Mr. Shell. I couldn't stand that." Her hand was shaking as she lifted her glass to finish the drink.

As we ate, I turned the conversation away from the office and asked her to tell me about her father. She grew even more relaxed, almost animated, as she talked about him. He had been one of the pioneers in social engineering and before that had been with one of the big advertising agencies. It was strange to believe that this girl could accept the reality around her for the realization of her father's visions, as she related them.

"What do you want to do?" I asked her when we'd finished dinner. "Go to the apartment or out on the town?"

"To the apartment," she said without hesitation. There was an implied desire in her choice that might have been flattering if I hadn't remembered Glamorones.

I paid the check and while I was turned to face the waiter, she slipped the receiver back in under her hair. I could see all of her tension returning as it went into place.

We left the restaurant and took a cab to my apartment. Our entrance automatically snapped on the ceiling camera. It was part of the normal equipment of the apartment of a SAC employee. It had to be turned on only during the twenty-four hours of D. I. Day—and could be ordered on in emergencies—but it was always there.

"Take your receiver off," I said, tossing my hat on the table. "If Herbie wants to speak to us he can now do it through the closed channel. It's not quite as bad as that voice whispering through your ear-bones. Want anything?"

"A drink," she said. Her voice was tight and jerky.

I went into the kitchen and mixed two drinks. There was a built-in autobar, but I preferred to mix them myself even when it was no more than rye and soda. I carried the drinks in to Nancy. She was already in the bedroom, just standing and staring at the TV set as though she were waiting for it to speak.

I handed her a drink. "What's the matter, Nancy?" I asked.

"I don't know," she said. "I keep thinking I must have done—something. It just doesn't seem possible I could have gone through the whole day without doing something wrong. But I don't know what it was."

"Relax," I said, setting my drink down. "D. I. Day will soon be over and then you'll have a whole year in which to make mistakes in peace." I could see she was close to the breaking point, but it was probably no more than the strain of knowing that ten floors of electronic tubes were waiting to make something out of every drop of sweat and every shaky flutter of her pulse. I'd seen it happen to a lot of them.

Once she was past this stage, I was thinking, it might be time to see that she learned something about Uns.

She took one sip from her drink and set the glass down on the TV set. She turned and came swiftly into my arms. There was a strange frenzy in the way she pressed her mouth against mine, in the hard thrust of her body.

Glamorones, I thought, and my first reaction was to push her away. But her frenetic desire carried its own infection and it was the thought that I shoved away. I picked

her up and carried her across the room.

Later, I lit two cigarettes and passed one to her. The brief forgetfulness of D. I. Day was passing and I was aware of the analyzer clamped around my arm like a Judas-bracelet. I'd been staring at the ceiling for several minutes before I realized that I was looking at the spot where the concealed lens was built in. I thought of all the other concealed cameras in hundreds of other apartments, the thousands of feet of silently running film, and I chuckled to myself. If Herbie were only a little more human, I thought, he could probably make a fortune with the film that was exposed the night of each D. I. Day.

There was a musical note from the TV screen and the soft voice invaded the apartment. It was almost soothing, if you ignored the content.

"By this time, many of you must be home, relaxing and enjoying yourselves—getting into the mood of the end of a perfect D. I. Day. At least, I hope that's what you're doing. I hope you're not sitting there nervously, waiting and wondering if there's going to be a knock on your door. There's no need for anyone to have fear. Communications is just one big happy family—a bunch of sweet guys and dolls. Think of D. I. Day as no different than the day you go to see your family doctor. If you're sick, we'll look after you with loving care." There was a pause and then the voice took on a brisker note. "I know you will all be interested to know that as of the moment we have discovered only four persons with communication blocks. That's on a nation wide basis. Percentage-wise, it means only .00026 per cent. A fine record. . . . Let's keep it like that. Relax and then *you* won't be the fifth."

The voice died out, but you could almost hear it going on. Beside me, I could feel Nancy trembling. I reached

over and put my hand on her leg, trying to will the fear out of her muscles.

That was when the knock came on the door.

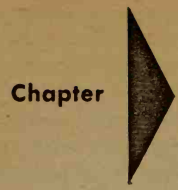
Nancy came out of the bed with a single leap that carried her a good two feet into the middle of the room. She stood there on tiptoe, her eyes wide, her head thrown back, her body arched rigidly. The position, the fear that etched every muscle beneath her skin, brought a new beauty to her body—but it was a terrible beauty that hurt the eye.

I looked away from her. Even as I felt pity for her, I was aware that her reaction was making my own less acute. I put on my robe and started for the door without looking at her again.

The knock was repeated as I crossed the living room. I felt a flash of irritation at their impatience. Then I reached the door and threw it open.

There were two of them: big men in antiseptically white uniforms. The infinity symbol, like a sprawling, lazy eight, was the bright red of fresh blood.

It was the Clinic Squad.



FOR A MOMENT I stared at the two men, my mind racing frantically over the events of the day, wondering if I had slipped up somewhere. My heart pounded painfully and for once I had no cover up; it was all going down on some tape in Herbie as my reaction to the Clinic Squad and nothing else. My first thought was to slam the door in their faces and make a break for it, but I quickly realized that would have been a mistake. I had no proof that they had come to arrest me.

"Yes?" I asked and was glad to discover that my voice was under control.

"Expediter Gerald Leeds?" one of them asked.

"Yes," I said.

"We understand that Sequence Clerk Nancy Harper is here."

So it was Nancy and not me. Some of the tension left my body, but my heart still pounded. I was remembering how nervous she'd been all evening. But that seemed hardly enough to have brought the Clinic Squad; it should have resulted in no more than a visit to Roger Dillon's office the following morning and a discussion of why she'd felt that way. Her only extreme reaction had come with the

knock on the door.

"Yes," I said, "she's here. What's the trouble?"

"Communication block. We have an order here if you'd care to see it."

"No," I said. There was no point in going through the formality. They'd take her anyway and they'd feed a report on it into Herbie. I automatically repeated the slogan that was engraved over the entrance to the headquarters of the Clinic Squad. "The healthy individual is the beginning of the healthy state. Come on in."

They walked in past me and I followed them into the other room.

Nancy still stood as I had left her, her body a statue of frozen flesh.

"Sequence Clerk Nancy Harper," one of the men intoned, "Code Number 7-3-5496-14-321-3-922, we have a report that you are suffering from a communication block. Do you consent to therapy?"

For the first time, she moved. Her head turned, the cords in her neck standing out as though the effort was too much. "Oh, yes," she said eagerly. "I know I'm sick. I know it, I know it. Please help me."

Government by consent, therapy by consent, maybe even pre-frontal lobotomy by consent, I thought bitterly. We all knew what would have happened if she had refused the kind offer of therapy. They simply would have decided she was too sick to give her consent and the state would have given it for her.

"Very well," one of the men said. "Put on your clothes and come with us."

She moved and the rigidity left her body as though it had been deflated. She picked up her clothes and began putting them on. I watched with a kind of horror. One of the things that had first attracted me to Nancy was the

grace and beauty of her body. Now that was all gone. There was a jerkiness to her movements. She was feeling the after-effects of the shock and all co-ordination was gone.

"I am ready," she said when she was dressed. She hadn't looked at me once since they had arrived. She'd forgotten I was there. There were only herself and the two men who waited to lead her to her new destiny.

"Come," the Squad man said. He looked briefly at me. "Your co-operation, Expediter Leeds, will be reported."

"Thanks," I said drily. "Will she be examined tonight?"

"No. The results are better if the patient is rested."

"Perhaps," I said, trying to sound casual, "I'll drop by in the morning and look in on the examination." I didn't want to—I had never watched a psycho-calculator examination—yet I felt compelled to do something. It was as though a magic gesture might remove the feeling of deserting her.

"All right," the man said. He saw nothing unusual in it; expediters often followed up a case they had delivered to the Clinic Squad.

With Nancy between the white uniforms, they walked out of my apartment. The door closed, chopping her out of my life—and out of her own, I thought—and my thoughts slowly struggled back to myself.

My pulse was still abnormal. It would be difficult for me to calm down in a reasonable length of time. Some reaction to what had happened to Nancy would be natural, but I had been frightened for *myself,* too. And it would be several hours before morning when I could remove the analyzer from my arm.

I went into the kitchen, out of range of the camera. I took a box of crackers from the shelf and reached inside. Taped against the side of the box there was a thin enve-

lope filled with Trexamyl tablets, put there for just such an emergency. Trexamyl was a euphoric, guaranteed to take away all feelings of anxiety, nervousness and fatigue. They were usually available only on a prescription from the National Co-ordinator of SAC. They were issued—one at a time—to executives of the rank of expediter or higher when it was necessary to work abnormally long hours. But there were members of the underground in the largest pharmaceutical laboratories, so we always had a few on hand.

I took a glass of milk and swallowed one of the tablets. It wouldn't have been safe to take one earlier in the day for it would have forced all of my emotional reactions below normal and Herbie would have spotted something wrong. But I would soon be going to sleep and I could probably get away with it.

Carrying the glass of milk and a few crackers, to explain what I'd been doing in the kitchen, I went back and sat on the edge of the bed. I waited, and slowly I calmed down as the euphoric invaded my system. My pulse slowed and the muscles of my stomach relaxed. I tested it by forcing myself to think in detail of what Nancy would be facing in the morning. I felt sorry for her, but I had no emotional reaction. I undressed and went to bed.

The pillow still held the odor of Nancy's perfume and I was grateful for a science that could keep my pulse from leaping with a sympathetic fear. My mind chewed at the thought until I finally fell asleep.

I was up early the next morning. The closed channel was broadcasting as I opened my eyes.

"D. I. Day is over," the voice was saying. "You can put away your kits now. And I want you all to know that SAC is proud of you. The number of communication blocks

was very low. You will get a full report later when all the figures are tabulated."

I took the analyzer from my arm even before I got out of bed. Then I got up and tucked it away in the drawer with the lapel camera and the receiver. It would be another year before I took them out. If I were lucky. . . .

There was a bad taste in my mouth from the euphoric, but otherwise I felt pretty good. I went into the kitchen and ordered the stove to make some coffee. By the time I had showered and dressed it was ready. I gulped it down, so I would have time to stop by the Clinic Building before going to work.

The Clinic Squad occupied a large building directly behind SAC. I climbed out of a cab and went inside. I showed my identification and told the receptionist the case I was interested in.

"I think they're just starting," she said. She summoned an interne-officer and told him to take me to the tenth floor.

I stepped out of the elevator on the tenth floor into a world of antiseptic whiteness. The only relief from the dead whiteness was the occasional scarlet infinity symbol. In some way, they had managed to make it look exactly like a combination hospital and prison. Or perhaps that was my imagination.

"Ward Eight," my guide said and stepped back into the elevator.

I walked down the white corridor to the eighth door, opened it and went inside. I was in a small room equipped with a number of comfortable chairs. Paper, pencils, and ashtrays were beside each chair. All of them faced toward a large glass window looking in on another, smaller room. That one contained one straight-backed chair, a plain leather couch, and the psycho-calculator which was built

into one wall. At the moment, it also contained Nancy Harper.

She wore a loose, white robe with the infinity symbol on the back. She was seated in front of the calculator, her hands fitting various-shaped blocks into one section of the machine. She wore no make-up and her face looked pale. The mechanical voice of the giant brain called out coded numbers over a loudspeaker.

There were two men seated in the first room, both wearing the Clinic Squad uniform.

"Expediter Leeds," I said. "I was with her when she was picked up."

They both nodded in a friendly fashion. I dropped into a chair near them. Neither of them seemed to be paying much attention to the coded numbers.

"What was the communication block that caused her to be picked up?" I asked.

The one nearest me glanced over. "She worked in your department?"

I nodded.

"Yesterday," he said, "she reported a communication block in a fellow worker, one Sue Blane. When a report came in on a member of our Squad who bolted after being exposed, the Blane girl said, 'I hope he gets away.' This one—" with a nod toward the glass window—"very properly plugged into Herbie to report it. But her first words were, 'I hope he gets away, too.' She immediately corrected to give the information on the Blane girl, but, of course, the reaction was fed into the memory bank containing her file. Later, during the automatic check on the bank, Herbie recommended therapy."

Poor Nancy, I thought. She'd been tricked by something so deep within herself that she had no awareness of it. She must have had genuine amnesia on her unconscious

slip, but some remnant of memory had lingered to make her afraid. That was why she'd jumped when the knock came on the door the night before.

I was aware of movement beyond the glass and turned to watch her. She had walked over to the couch and was stretching out on it. Her weight on the cushions activated the calculator.

"Name?" asked the mechanical voice.

"Nancy Harper," she said. Her voice sounded tired and lifeless.

"Sex?"

"Female."

"Status?"

"Single . . ." Her voice seemed to trail off as though she knew more was expected but she was reluctant to give it.

"Sexual status?" the voice insisted.

"Non-virginal."

"Classification?"

"Sequence Clerk, Security Secretariat, Security and Consent."

"Code Number?"

"7-3-5496-14-321-3-922."

"Last night you were given an injection of sodium pentothal. Please report any unusual reactions."

She hesitated. "I don't remember anything unusual," she said. "I had a dream, but it was one I've had many times before."

This time it was the machine that paused, while its electronic units picked out the proper piece of tape. "Please relate the dream."

"There wasn't much to it," she said. Her voice came thinly through the loudspeaker with a sleep-talking quality to it. "I dreamed I was at a banquet. There were lots of other people there—hundreds of them—only none of

them had a face. None of them paid any attention to me—it was as if I didn't exist. They seemed to be waiting very impatiently for the food to be brought in. But when the waiters did carry in heaping platters of ham, roast beef, chicken and turkey, they paid no attention to it. As if they couldn't see it. Then, suddenly, all the food was whisked away and the table was empty again except for one huge platter right in the center. I—I don't know how it happened but then I was on the platter—all curled up with sprigs of parsley on me. And—and they were reaching for me—and their mouths were open—" Her voice broke off in sobs.

"Funny," one of the men said, leaning over toward me. "We've been finding similar dreams—that is, of being eaten—among more than eighty per cent of those with communication blocks. Some new insecurity, I guess—maybe a fear of Russia. I think the Communists must have found some way to reach them with propaganda."

"There is another theory," the second man said, leaning forward to peer past his comrade. "Those who have communication blocks are the weakest members of the race; they may have residual racial memories of the time when their ancestors were cannibals."

"What does Herbie say?" I asked.

"Not enough data to give a decision," they both said as with one voice. "Very funny," the first one added.

I didn't think it was funny. Many of those who had been recruited into the Uns had similar dreams and fears. Usually they decreased after they started taking part in the underground. But I also knew that it wasn't new; even before the social engineers had taken over, there had been a widespread feeling of being used by the culture, of being devoured, as it were. The literature of the pre-CAD period had even produced a large number of stories based on the

assumption that people were property. It was a fear that had certainly been increased by the social engineers.

"Go on with the dream," the machine said when it was obvious that she wasn't continuing.

"That's all there is to it," she said. "Then I woke up, crying. I—I always do."

"Why do you hate the State?" the machine asked.

"Oh, but I don't," she cried.

"Hatred," said the machine, "leads to communication blocks, the withholding of your consent to be governed in the way that is best for you. When you expressed the wish that a sick man escape, you were withholding consent to be so governed. You realize this, don't you?"

"I—guess so . . ."

"We will try a free association test," the machine announced. "What comes into your mind when you think of the State?"

"My father," she said promptly. "I knew he did everything for my own good even when I didn't like it—"

I'd had enough. Nothing much had happened, but my stomach was already churning. I got up and slipped out of the room. I could imagine what the rest of it was going to be like. There'd be test after test, probe after probe, with no pause and no trace of human sympathy, until Nancy's mind was virtually torn to shreds. *She* was wrong, the machine was right; *she* was imperfect, the machine was perfect. That theme would be repeated with infinite variations until she believed it implicitly, as she half wanted to now. At the end she'd be a machine herself, or a pitiful shred of what had once been a lovely human being. I didn't want to see it and I didn't want to think about it.

I checked in at the SAC Building and went up to my floor. I saw there were two new girls in the clerks' department. One replacing Nancy and the other the girl Nancy

had reported. Despite the two substitutions, everyone was looking happier today. D. I. Day was over and we all had another year of grace.

I went into my own office. There was a single white card in the red emergency basket. I picked it up. *See me as soon as you come in* was the message on it. It was signed *Rog.*

This time I didn't have to worry about my reactions being recorded in Herbie. All I had to worry about was why Roger Dillon wanted to see me so soon. The ax could still fall, I knew. They didn't always pick you up as quickly as they took Nancy.

I lit a cigarette and went down the hall to Rog's office. The door opened to my touch and I went in. He sat at his desk going through a mound of reports from Herbie. I knew that before he was finished, he would look at the reports on everyone in the national office and on the key figures throughout the country. He was a man whose existence was bound on all sides by an electronic brain.

I sneaked a look at the wall of lights. Ten of them were not burning. That meant ten SAC employees who were through. I knew about three of them: the man from the Clinic Squad, Nancy and the girl who had worked beside her. Three out of ten from the national office. The odds were against there being any more from our office. I breathed a little easier even though there was no guarantee as yet about myself.

"Good morning, Jerry," Roger Dillon said. "How's the boy this morning?"

He sounded happy. Part of it was undoubtedly due to the low number of casualties, since that made him look good. But I was convinced that he was always happier the day after D. I. Day, regardless of how many turned up missing; it was the day when, through Herbie's reports,

he could peer into everybody's nervous system. He was a Peeping Tom at heart.

"Fine," I said, taking the chair beside his desk. I looked more openly at the lights. "Looks like a good record."

"Great," he said enthusiastically. "Only ten communication blocks on a nation-wide basis." He paused, staring at me with bright eyes. "Only four of the ten from this office."

More cat-and-mouse stuff. There had been a slight emphasis on the *four*. He would know that I knew about three. He also knew that the mysterious fourth would worry me until I knew it wasn't me.

"Happy, happy," I said. It was the kind of response that always threw Roger. He looked at me sharply and I knew it was at such times that he wondered if Herbie had a communication block about me. But he never put such subversive thoughts into words because it represented a possibility he couldn't face.

"Too bad about Nancy," he said, glancing at the reports. "You were fond of her, weren't you?"

"It was a shock," I agreed. I threw in a little free information, knowing that he either had it or would get it before the day was over. "I stopped by her ward this morning. She seems to be co-operating nicely so I imagine the therapy will be successful."

"Naturally," he said. He poked at the reports with his finger. "I've been going over Herbie's evaluation of you."

I knew he'd string it out as long as he could. He always did.

"He says I have a sterling character, no doubt," I said lightly. My heart was beating a little faster, but its rhythm was no longer being fed into a memory bank. Lightness was always the best defense against Roger; he could never understand it.

"Ummm," he said. "There was one point on which Herbie seemed to think that you should be questioned. You had quite an emotional reaction when the Clinic Squad showed up at your apartment for Nancy."

He looked up and waited.

"It was a shock," I repeated, "As you say, I was fond of Nancy. It just never occurred to me that there was anything wrong with her. You know how it is, Rog—you're around someone a lot and you begin to accept her at face value. Then when the knock came on the door she went all to pieces. I still didn't get it. When I went to the door and saw the men from the Clinic Squad, all the pieces fell into place. But it was a real shock."

"Didn't think they'd come for you, eh?" he asked. He made it sound like a joke, but he was watching me closely.

I laughed and hoped that it sounded convincing. "Me?" I said. "You mean guilt by osmosis?"

He grinned. "I guess it would be a shock," he admitted. "The important thing is that your pulse rate dropped very soon after they left. Herbie had some other things to say about you."

"Nice, I hope," I said brightly. "I've always thought of Herbie as a rather avuncular machine and I'd hate to have my illusion shattered."

Roger didn't approve of jokes about our giant electronic brain, but there was no rule against it, so he merely expressed his disapproval by ignoring my remark. "For one thing," he said, glancing at a report, "this business of being an accident prone. That first showed up when you were at Harvard, but did you know it has been getting worse?"

"No," I said. It was the truth, although I was not surprised. There had been more things to cover in recent years and so I had found it necessary to have more "accidents" such as burning myself with the cigarette the day

before.

"Not that your rating on that point is dangerous yet," he said, "but it's something to keep in mind. Herbie suggests that you might consider voluntary therapy on that one point before it gets much worse. How do you feel about that?"

I felt a flash of resentment, but suppressed it. I didn't like a machine suggesting that I be analyzed by another machine. On the other hand, the evidence that I had fooled Herbie successfully was a relief.

"No, thanks," I said. "Seriously, Rog, I don't think I need it. I've noticed it only gets worse with fatigue and you'll admit that I've been working pretty hard recently."

"Haven't we all? We're carrying an overload, but there isn't much we can do about it just now. The university isn't turning out as many first-class graduates as normally."

"Why?"

"Don't know. We've got Herbie working on it but he keeps reporting that there's not enough data. But so much for that—it's the headache of the upper echelon anyway. Let's get back to you."

"There's more?"

He leaned back in his chair and grinned at me. If he were relaxing that much I knew the worst was over.

"Herbie," he said, "is worried about your sex life."

"Herbie's too nosey," I retorted. "He should go get a sex life of his own. A sweet, little, cuddlesome adding machine. Or maybe one of those new automatic garbage trucks. To haul his ashes," I added to be sure I made it clear.

That wiped the grin off his face. He frowned. "Seriously," he said. "Herbie gave you a pretty low rating this time on Erotic Stability. He especially noted a high emotional reaction when you looked at a—some picture in

your desk and when you were kissed by a girl in New York. The recommendation is: marriage."

"Herbie's flipped his tubes," I said.

His expression grew sterner. "We all know that SOCIAC is incapable of error so long as it is functioning properly."

"On most things I agree," I said, "but when it comes to an individual's sexual drive, I think we should take Herbie's word with a grain of salt. Or perhaps a grain of Glamorones."

That brought the grin back to his face. "You saw the new ads, eh?" he said. "No wonder you hated losing Nancy. But speaking of your sex life, Jerry, I hope you're going to remember to call Mrs. Randall about tonight."

I remembered the pretty, dark-haired woman I'd met in his office the day before. "Is that a suggestion or an order?" I asked.

"An order."

I'd known it, of course, but I hadn't expected him to be so blunt. "Why?" I asked.

"Her husband," Roger Dillon said, "is George Randall. He's an expediter here in this office, although I don't think you know him too well. Been here about the same length of time you have. His ratings were not anything special in the beginning, but they've been coming up the last two years. He's a damn good man."

I began to get it. "You mean he's slated for promotion?"

He nodded. "State Co-ordinator very soon. Herbie's picked him to become one of my assistants as soon as he's had the executive experience."

"And his wife doesn't fit into the new picture?"

"She never did fit into the picture, but it didn't make any difference before. I think I mentioned she's never come to any of the official parties. Herbie rates her as generally unstable, with a lack of interest in her husband's

work. Now that he's moving up, George Randall needs a wife who'll be one of the team."

So it was just a job after all. I'd had such assignments before. Not that I liked them, but Herbie had picked me a number of times. What it meant was that I was supposed to take her out and then escort her home. When we got there, the camera in their place would be on. I didn't have to go too far; just far enough so that the resulting film would give George Randall sufficient evidence for a divorce.

George Randall would never know for sure that it wasn't on the level. He'd get divorced and then pretty soon he'd marry again, this time a girl picked by Herbie. He'd either marry the one picked by Herbie or he'd be on his way back down the ladder. But he'd never know for sure that she'd been picked for him any more than he'd know that I'd been ordered to provide divorce evidence against his present wife.

It was being done, of course, for George's own good—and for the good of the State, which Herbie would say was the same thing. It was always neatly planned and efficiently executed.

The victim of the execution was the wife. George would go on to bigger and better things; even if he loved his wife, he'd be involved in so many new responsibilities he'd soon forget. But the wife didn't have any place to go. Unless she'd had some profession before she married him, she'd have to take something like a sales job and become just another Consumer. The sexes being equal in Herbie's electronic eyes, there was never any alimony.

She would have one other alternative. It would depend on her. But usually what the State called an unstable personality would be stable enough if steered in the right direction—away from the State. Sometimes I had been able

to do that end of the job, too. Several discarded wives had become important members of the underground.

"Objections?" Roger Dillon asked softly and I realized I'd been thinking about the black-haired girl instead of talking.

"No," I said. "I was thinking about something else. Considering how Herbie feels about my erotic rating, I was wondering if he licked his lips—electronically speaking—when he picked me for this assignment."

"Herbie knows what he's doing," Roger said firmly. "I wouldn't always make the choices he makes, but it always turns out that Herbie was right. For example . . . You working on anything important right now?"

So Herbie had picked me for another job. I shook my head and raised my eyebrows questioningly.

"Give whatever you have to Harold Ammerson," he said. "This is a big one. You'll be in charge of the whole project from our end and you'll work along with the Consent Secretariat."

It did sound big. I wondered if it were another drive at the underground. "Sounds important," I said. "Good thing I'm not married or I'd have to tell my wife to beware of stray expediters. What is it?"

"It's big," he repeated. He put the tips of his fingers together and stared owlishly over the peak they formed. "You recall that yesterday I mentioned the problem of the Uns?"

I nodded.

"There is no doubt," he said, "that the supporters of the group which childishly calls itself the United Nations is growing. Despite a lack of data, Herbie indicates that this it true and that it constitutes a national communication block which may become serious. We've had Herbie working on this every spare moment and the analysis is that

we're not getting an awareness of the danger across to the public. We have to change our method of attack."

I nodded again to show I was listening. I was paying more attention than he could even guess. I'd want to report this in detail at the first opportunity.

"The one thing we do know from those who have been examined is that the members of Uns are deviates. They seem to insist on being individuals, different in every way from others. It is believed that this accounts for the peculiar food and clothing tastes we found among those who have been examined."

So Herbie wasn't omnipotent, I thought. He hadn't discovered that those particular traits were our means of camouflage, as much as they were genuine characteristics.

"Furthermore," Roger continued, "this may explain why the majority of them have joined the Uns. Withholding their consent to be governed, refusing a rational communication with their government, may represent the ultimate in difference."

"You mean they unconsciously want to feel they're a persecuted minority?" I asked innocently.

"Exactly. Now, this should be their weakness. If our message on the danger of these people was getting across, it would be easy for the healthy people to recognize them and report them to the nearest Clinic. Since none of the Uns has been apprehended through being reported, we can only assume that there has been a communication breakdown between us and the people."

"It seems a natural assumption," I agreed.

"We have only one thing with which to make a comparison. That is the Communist situation. There, I think I can safely say, we have had one hundred per cent success. Why? Because our approach has been completely scientific, under rigid control, and consequently we've been

able to be exact in teaching people to recognize a communist."

There were other reasons, but I didn't bother trying to explain them to him.

"Did you know that Russia has been having another spy trial?" he asked.

I shook my head. I didn't know, but there was nothing surprising about it. About three times a year Russia had a trial of "American capitalist spies" who'd been trying to overthrow the Soviet states. About the same number of times each year we tried "Russian Communist spies" on similar charges. I strongly suspected that the Russian capitalists were as carefully home-grown as were our Communists.

"Consequently, we've decided to step up our next public trial. We'll hold it about one month from now."

"But what does that have to do with the Uns?"

"Everything," he said. "Unfortunately we cannot exert the rigid control over the Uns that we can over the Communists. Herbie has therefore chosen, after a careful analysis of all possible actions, the course of tying the Uns in with the Communists. If we can associate the two in the minds of the people, the battle will be half won."

A thrill of fear hit me that was as bad as any I'd felt the day before. This, I knew, was a serious threat. "I don't understand," I said.

"You'll get detailed instructions tomorrow morning," he said. "You've never been briefed on the Free State, have you?"

"No," I said. "In fact, I know very little about it."

"Few people do," he said with a little smile. "Roughly, the Free State consists of the western half of the old state of South Dakota. It includes the Black Hills, the Bad Lands and Wind Cave National Park. That's where we've

kept all our Communists since we came into power. The only time a Communist gets out is when we want one to escape. An important Communist is going to escape the day after tomorrow. You're going to meet him and get to know him. Afterward, you will keep track of him, meanwhile working with the account executives and the consent engineers on the campaign until it is time to capture him."

"Campaign?"

"Yes. The campaign which will definitely prove to the public that the Uns and the Communists are linked together. It will be prepared for all media and should run for about a month before you capture him. We'll give you a list of suspected underground centers and you'll see to it that he does most of his hiding in those spots. By the time he confesses to co-operating with the Uns, the public will believe it."

"The Communists hate the Uns," I exclaimed. I stopped myself in time from adding "as much as the social engineers do." It was official policy that social engineers didn't hate anybody. "He'll never confess to that."

"By the time we're through with him, he will," Roger said grimly. "That's all for now, Jerry, boy. Get everything in order and I'll brief you tomorrow before you leave."

"Right," I said. I got up and walked to the door.

"Don't forget Meg Randall," he said. "I expect to see you both tonight."

"I'll remember," I said. I was surprised to realize that I would, and not entirely because it was an order. I found it easy to remember the dark-haired girl who'd been in his office the day before. I wondered if she had any idea of what was going on. It seemed to me that there had been an unhappy expression in her eyes when I met her.

I went back to my office. There were a few things in my

input basket, mostly routine. There were four personnel problems to feed to Herbie and follow up if necessary; there was a routine check to be made on the Third Secretary of the State Department; there was a similar check to be made on a congressman from the Mutual Electric Corporation; and there was a report on forged transfer permits that had to be investigated. I carried them all in and dumped them on the desk of the expediter who had the office next to mine. Then I went back to my own office.

The new attack was a serious matter. If they could succeed in identifying the Uns with the Communists, the damage would be great. Although there were several thousand of us in the Uns underground, our rebellion was one of individual man against the formation of the mass mind. This put us as much in opposition to the Communists as to the social engineers. And we had been careful to foster no violence. Our philosophical fount was Thoreau rather than Marx. This was the reason why the propaganda of the government had failed; the worst they could accuse us of was deviating toward individualism, of being "sick." It didn't make us dramatically dangerous enough to everyone else to turn the public against us.

The new approach might undo all this. Knowledge of it would have to be spread as quickly as possible so that the underground could prepare itself. That was largely my job, but I couldn't do anything about it immediately. Except for Peter Stacey, I'd had only one direct contact with another member of the Uns since the one who had recruited me. I received instructions from him and contacted him when there was information to pass on. But except for real emergencies, it could be done only at midnight. But I'd definitely have to get in touch with him tonight.

I called the Clinic Squad and asked about Nancy Har-

per. I was assured that she was doing nicely and that they had every hope that she would be cured without resorting to lobotomy. I tried to arrange visiting hours, but the request was refused.

Throwing the switch that connected me with Herbie, I gave my code number and requested the latest report on myself. Then I waited, imagining the wheels clicking and electronic tubes flicking on and off in Herbie's ten-floor brain. Finally a coded report sheet popped out of the slot in the wall and dropped into my input basket. I picked it up and started decoding it.

I didn't learn much that Roger Dillon hadn't already told me. Most of my ratings were the same as they'd always been. A couple were higher. But I was lower on both Emotional and Erotic Stability. The same was true of my Accident rating. And I'd dropped a half point on Deviation Tendencies. Roger hadn't mentioned that. I wondered if he had deliberately left it out.

There were no recommendations at the bottom of the list. With four ratings somewhat lower than the year before, Herbie would have made recommendations. Roger had mentioned that Herbie suggested voluntary therapy, but there had probably been other suggestions. I thought of asking Herbie, but I knew it would be useless. I'd merely get a form slip telling me that I was unauthorized to receive the information.

I told myself to stop worrying. If there'd been anything serious, Herbie wouldn't have picked me for any important assignments. And if I was under suspicion, there wasn't anything I could do about it. I rolled up the report and shoved it in the incinerator-tube.

Finally I picked up the phone and called Meg Randall.

"Jerry Leeds," I said when she answered, "George back yet?"

"No," she said. "I had a message from him this morning saying he wouldn't be back for another three days."

"Too bad," I said. "How about the ball tonight?"

"I don't know," she said. She hesitated. "George's message urged me to go tonight. And this morning Mr. Dillon called to remind me that I'd promised to go tonight. Now you. Mr. Leeds, why is everyone so anxious for me to be there? I've never gone to any of the Department parties."

Was there a trace of worry in her voice? I couldn't decide. I wondered what the Department would do if she did catch on and refused to play.

"Security and Consent," I said lightly, "is just one big happy family. Roger Dillon likes to be sure that everyone remembers it. What time shall I pick you up?"

She still hesitated.

"If you're worried about me," I said, "come down to the office and I'll have Herbie show you my predatory rating."

"No," she said. Her voice was suddenly sharp. "I don't want that—that machine to show me anything."

"Why?"

"I—I don't know. I get the chills whenever I think of that machine squatting there and passing judgment on people—condemning some and praising others, telling you and George and everybody else what to do and when to do it. I—" she seemed to realize that she was saying things which would be better unsaid and broke off quickly. When she spoke again, her voice was once more under control. "I'll be ready by eight o'clock, Mr. Leeds."

"Fine," I said cheerfully. "I'll be there."

When I'd hung up, I reflected for a moment that she sounded like good Uns material, then called Roger on the intercom and told him that she had said yes. He chuckled.

"I was sure she would," he said. "We ran her card

through Herbie three days ago. He said she'd go with you, but not with anybody else."

"Herbie's getting too goddam smart," I said, but not until after I'd broken the connection.

I had nothing to do until evening and I couldn't get in touch with my Uns contact until midnight, so I left the SAC building at lunchtime and stayed out. I spent the afternoon wandering through the National Zoological Gardens. I felt nervous and jumpy. Part of it, I knew, was from the drug I'd taken the night before. But only part of it. I didn't like either of the two jobs facing me.

I kept thinking of Meg Randall, the way she'd looked the day before, the way she'd sounded on the phone. I'd never liked the divorce assignments, but this one was bothering me more than the others had. I thought she'd be better off in the Uns, but it still bothered me.

The other assignment had me worried. I had a double reason for wanting to report it. I was hoping that they'd tell me not to go through with it; that I could just vanish into the underground as I knew others had when faced with a job that might harm the Uns. To undertake the job of linking the Communists and the Uns and to do it so that I wouldn't be caught and yet also wouldn't hurt the Uns was more of a tight-rope act than I felt up to. Besides, I'd played a lone hand for a long time; I wanted to get into the real heart of things.

The gardens did little to soothe me, but they did keep me from running into anyone I knew. When it was evening, I left and took a cab back to my apartment. I had a couple of fast drinks and a light dinner. Then I showered and dressed. A call to Personnel in SAC, giving my code number, supplied George Randall's address.

It was two minutes before eight when I stood in front of

the Randall apartment and knocked on the door. It opened almost at once.

I had thought Meg Randall beautiful when I first saw her; now she was breath-taking. She wore a scarlet evening gown, caught up over one shoulder and fastened with a gold clasp in the shape of the infinity symbol. There was another gold clasp at her waist; that was all the jewelry she wore. A small scarlet ribbon gleamed against her black hair.

"Beautiful," I murmured. I felt a stab of guilt, thinking of my reason for being there, but I got rid of it by telling myself that she'd be better off. Maybe the guilt was because I was really beginning to want her. . . .

"Thank you," she said. "How about a drink before we go?" She smiled wryly. "I could use one. This is my first official party, you know."

"A good idea," I said, stepping into the apartment. "Not because it's your first one, but because all official parties are dull."

I followed her into the kitchen.

"What will you have?" she asked.

"Rye and soda."

She smiled at me as though she were laughing at a secret joke. "Soda? You're sure?"

"Positive. If you have it."

"Oh, we have it," she said. She was still smiling. "George always drinks rye and branch water. I rather got the impression that soda was taboo in the sacrosanct hall of Security and Consent." Her tone sounded bitter, but there was no way of telling whether this was an old bitterness or a new one.

"I have it on the highest authority," I said lightly, "that I have deviation tendencies. Liking soda is one of those."

"You mean it's dangerous for me to go out with you?"

she asked.

Her eyes were too bright and she was skirting too close to the real reason I was there. Maybe that was only my imagination again, but I didn't like it.

"Very dangerous," I said gravely. "But it seems to work both ways. For instance, a man could die of thirst waiting for a drink here."

She laughed and turned away. She took bottles and glasses from a shelf. "I hope you don't mind if I mix the drinks myself? I loathe the drink-mixer."

"Why?"

"Oh, I'm aware that we should admire our great mechanical gadgets," she said. Her voice was bitter again. "As the wife of an expediter, I've been told often enough that we'd still have a hit-and-miss government if it weren't for them. But—but I think that at least our drinks ought to be mixed by someone who can make mistakes and talk back." She threw ice cubes into the glasses.

"You should visit my apartment," I said.

For the first time she looked at me in the way a woman looks at a man. "Maybe I will some day," she said. The intimacy left her eyes and was replaced by something I didn't recognize. "Why should I?"

"I have a drink-mixer and a kitchen range that both talk back."

"Really?" She splashed whiskey and soda into the two glasses. "You see? No exact, scientific measures. What machine can say the same?" She stared gravely at the whiskey bottle, then splashed more rye in each drink. "I also like rye and soda. Does that give us something in common, Mr. Leeds?"

"I hope so."

She handed me one of the glasses. "To what shall we drink? The evening? Or should we drink to Security and

Consent and then break the glasses?"

"To this evening," I said lightly and drank.

She emptied her glass without taking it from her lips. "Another one?" she asked.

I shook my head. "There'll be plenty at the party. And we won't have to mix it with branch water."

"Really?" she asked. Her voice was too high, like a taut violin string. "Won't they call us Communists or Uns or something like that and turn us over to the Clinic Squad?"

I grinned. "Some of the more careful ones may edge away from us, but that will be all."

She looked at me with those too-bright black eyes. "You must be very important, Mr. Leeds. George has never dared to take chances. Even little ones."

I didn't want to talk about George. I liked this assignment less the more I got into it. While I disliked myself for my share in it, I disliked George even more. I didn't know him well but I didn't have to. I'd known many other Georges in the department. Even if he guessed the evidence against his wife was framed, he'd play the role assigned to him. If Roger Dillon didn't already know that much about him, he would never have been picked for promotion.

"Not important," I said. "Just not ambitious. Shall we go?"

She stared at me for a minute and her eyes dulled with compliance. "Why not?" she said flatly. "We must go to the party and enjoy ourselves. Isn't that what Mr. Dillon ordered us to do?"

I didn't answer and she went in and got her wrap.

The annual SAC ball was held in the largest hotel in Washington. Even so, it was already crowded when we arrived. This was one time that all the SAC employees

turned out. With wives and husbands and boy or girl friends. Not only because it was a must; after the rigors of D. I. Day, everyone wanted a release.

There were two live orchestras in two connecting ballrooms, not the usual taped music featured at other parties. There were at least twenty party-size drink-mixers, all of them doing a big business. Meg Randall and I lined up at one of them. When it came our turn, I made the adjustments and we had our rye and sodas.

"The man did it," she said, sipping at her drink.

It wasn't long before the two orchestras were stilled and we all crowded into the larger ballroom. The lights were dimmed and the spotlights blazed on a stage in front of us. There were three men there. Two of them might have been easily recognized by anyone, the third only by those more familiar with the government. The first two were President Robert Hatshaw and General Manager Bruce Layton. The third was Bradley Bernard, Vice President in charge of Communications. Although the General Manager had wide executive powers, it was Bernard who was the real power in the government, for it was he who appointed the Manager. He also controlled the more important departments. But only a few people realized he was any more important than other vice presidents.

The speeches were short. They were carefully made up of clichés calculated—by Herbie, of course—to make everyone in SAC feel pretty special. Nothing was meant to be said in the speeches; it was just a soothing appearance of the top brass to help everyone relax after the strain of the day before. It was soon over and everyone went back to the serious business of dancing and getting drunk.

Roger Dillon showed up to claim one dance with Meg Randall; after that I had her to myself.

"It was like dancing with an electronic calculator," she said. She giggled at the thought. She'd just had her fifth drink and was getting a little high.

Whether it was the party or the liquor, her mood changed. She laughed more and the lines left her face. But her tension stayed with her; I could feel it in her body when we danced.

The party would go on until the small hours of the morning. This was one night when anyone in SAC could get as drunk as he liked without its going on the record; in fact, Herbie recommended it. But I wanted to be sure of getting back to my apartment by midnight. At eleven o'clock I suggested that we leave. She agreed.

As we were leaving, I caught a brief glimpse of Roger Dillon watching us. He was grinning, but I suddenly realized it looked a lot more like a leer. I wondered if Herbie was leering too—or doing whatever it was that electronic tubes did in anticipation. It seemed perfectly logical to think of Herbie leering for I was sure that Roger Dillon wouldn't have been doing it unless he were fairly certain that the giant brain approved.

We took a taxi back to Meg's apartment and I walked in with her. She handed me her key and I unlocked the door.

"A night cap?" she asked.

I nodded. If she hadn't asked me, I would have invited myself. My mouth was dry and I was as nervous as a kid on his first date. Mentally, I was cursing Roger Dillon and Herbie as I followed her inside and closed the door.

She took off her wrap and handed it to me. "Hang it up, please," she asked.

She indicated a door with a wave of her hand. I walked through it. The lights went on automatically as I passed through the doorway. It was the bedroom. I found the concealed closet and hung up the wrap. When I turned

around, Meg was standing right behind me.

She came into my arms with a little rush, her face lifted to meet mine. Her lips were warm and eager.

My intentions had been—perhaps not honorable, but at least limited. All that was required under the circumstances was that the ceiling-camera catch shots of her in my arms. That would be enough to provide the divorce that SAC wanted. I had intended to go just that far and no further, but I had neglected to consider that Meg might have something to say about it. When I tried to pull away from her, her arms tightened around my neck, pulling my lips back down to hers.

It wasn't much of a struggle. Even that first touch had started something between us; the second time I kissed her it got out of hand, sweeping all thoughts of SAC and assignments away before it. I picked her up and carried her across the room. As I bent over her, I could feel the impending explosion of the tension that had been building up all evening. I moved in to meet it.

It was later—much later—when I reached for two cigarettes. I lit them and placed one gently between her lips. She took it without opening her eyes. I propped myself up on one elbow and looked at her. Her hair flooded darkly over the pillow, making a frame for her delicate face. As I watched, I saw a tear creep from beneath one eyelid and stagger down her cheek. It brought me rudely back to reality.

I put a hand on her shoulder, hoping it would carry part of what I felt. I knew words wouldn't, but I tried. "Meg—" I began.

Her eyes opened, staring straight up at the ceiling.

"Is it still turned on?" she asked.

I knew what she meant. The camera, its wide-focus lens

built into the decorations of the ceiling—as it was in the rooms of every one who worked in SAC. I wasn't even startled by her reference to it. Somehow I'd guessed all along that she knew what was happening.

"I don't think so," I said. There was no way of being sure, but I thought it was probably turned off as soon as they had all the film they wanted. "You knew all about it?"

She nodded without looking at me. "George often told me about it—in reference to other people," she said. "Then a couple of weeks ago, George told me that he had seen Mr. Dillon and thought there might be a chance he'd be promoted. This was in the thoughts of both of us then—for I've never liked mixing with the people from the office—but neither of us said anything. Then, yesterday, when Mr. Dillon asked me into the office and insisted that I go tonight—I knew."

"If you knew about it," I said, "then you must also have known how little was required. Why didn't you let me leave when I started to? Why?" I looked at her and repeated it. "Why?"

Her gaze shifted to me and something that might have been anger stirred in her eyes. "Did *anybody* think about me in this?" she demanded. "Did anybody stop to consider what I might want? Maybe I made you stay because I wanted you to." Her eyes dulled again. "Now I want you to leave."

"But—" I said.

"Please," she said. "Just leave. Maybe later—when it's all over—I'll want to see you again. But not now. Now I don't ever want to see you again. Please go."

"All right, Meg," I said.

When I was ready to leave, I turned to look at her again. She was lying on her side with her face turned to the wall.

"Meg," I said, "any way you look at it, I feel pretty cheap right now, but there's one thing I want you to know. Maybe this started as an assignment, but it didn't end that way. I'm sorry about the assignment part—but I'm not a bit sorry about the part that was my own idea. I'd hate to think it was going to stop there."

She didn't say anything.

"Meg," I said softly, "will I see you again?"

When she answered, her voice was rigidly controlled. "I don't know," she said. "Please go, Jerry. Now."

I turned and walked out of her apartment.

It was two minutes past midnight when I got back to my own place. I went straight to the phone and called my contact. He was the owner of a small drugstore only three or four blocks from my apartment. I rarely saw him, although I had talked to him on the phone several times in the last seven years. Late at night he ran the store all by himself and that was the only time I could call—at least on Uns business. I also ordered all my drugs from him so that the special calls wouldn't stand out if anyone looked at my phone tapes.

"Gram's Pharmacy," he said, answering the phone.

"This is Gerald Leeds," I said. "I've been working pretty hard and I think I've got a little hypertension. Do you have any hexamethonium chloride?"

It was a code, but one I'd never used before. Hypertension and hexamethonium chloride meant an emergency.

"Hexamethonium chloride," he repeated calmly. "We don't have many calls for that particular drug. I may not have it in stock. Would tomorrow morning be all right?"

"No. I may be leaving town in the morning."

"I'll have to check on it, Mr. Leeds," he said, "and

call you back. Or I may have another supplier call you."

"As long as I get delivery tonight," I said and hung up.

I went into the kitchen and mixed myself a drink. Then I went back into the living room to wait for my call.

I wondered who Gram would put me in touch with. I had been a member of the Uns underground for eight years but, with the exception of those I'd induced to join, I had known only two other members. The first one had been a man at the university who had recruited me; the second was Gram. All of my instructions had come through Gram, just as all of my reports had gone to him. But this was the first time that anything unusual had come up. Gram's remarks had indicated that someone else would get in touch with me.

The phone rang. I glanced at my watch. It was only a half hour since I'd called the drugstore. Thinking that Gram had worked fast, I picked up the phone and said hello.

"Jerry, boy. How'd it go?" It was Roger Dillon.

"All right," I said shortly. I didn't like being reminded of Meg just then.

"Great," he said. He chuckled. "You expediters get all the breaks. Sometimes, when I have assignments like that to pass out, I think of demoting myself."

I swallowed my anger and waited for him to get on with it. I knew he hadn't called to find out what had happened with Meg. He could have gotten that from Herbie.

"What are you doing, Jerry, boy?" he asked.

"Nothing. Just getting ready to go to bed."

"You'll have to postpone it, boy. There'll be a car there any minute to pick you up."

"Why?"

"Command appearance," he said. "The G.M. wants to see you."

"The General Manager?" I exclaimed. "At this time of night?"

"Sure. You don't think a man like that keeps an eight-hour day, do you? As a matter of fact, he works every night. Most interviews are around this time. What's the matter, Jerry, boy? Nervous?"

"Why should I be?" I retorted. "What does he want?"

"He didn't see fit to tell me," Roger said. "He just called up and said he was sending a car around for you. But I imagine he's seen the Department report and knows about the assignment you're going on tomorrow. He probably wants to have a little chat with you about it."

"Why?" I asked bluntly. I was very much disturbed, as well as tired, and couldn't even try to be diplomatic.

He sounded amused. "The General Manager is the direct executive representative of the Pros. They are naturally concerned about the Communist menace. In fact, they've always been a little nervous about the Free State. So the G.M. probably wants to be able to tell his friends that he talked to the expediter who's on the job."

"Why can't I see him tomorrow?" I asked.

"Jerry, boy," he said, sounding shocked. "When the General Manager of the United States wants to see you, you don't argue."

"Okay," I said wearily.

"One more thing," Roger said. I knew by his tone that what he was about to say was the real reason he'd called. "The General Manager holds the highest working executive office in the government, so it goes without saying that no one argues with him. On the other hand, he does not have access to all of the information and plans of Security and Consent. For example, he knows that we are going to have another Communist trial, but that's all he knows. I would suggest that you do not volunteer any

information."

Maybe it sounded like a suggestion, but it was an order.

"Okay," I said.

"Have fun, boy. See you in the morning." He hung up.

Cursing Roger Dillon, SAC and the G.M., I quickly made a phone-tape requesting any caller to keep calling back every hour until I was there to answer. I had barely slipped it into the phone when the knock came on my door.

I threw the door open, and couldn't keep my nerves from jumping. There were two of them, members of the Clinic Squad. The only thing that kept it from being just like the night of D.I. Day was the fact that they wore the scarlet uniforms and white insignia that marked them as being on special executive duty.

"Expediter Leeds," one of them said, "we are here to take you to the White House."

I walked out with them. Suddenly I was acutely aware that at another time they might be taking me in the opposite direction. Maybe even before the night was over.

THE CAR SWEPT IN through the big gates and up to the brilliantly lighted White House. The two scarlet uniforms took me inside where they turned me over to a woman who looked as if she might be a better guard than both of them. She motioned for me to follow and led the way to a small elevator. I'd never been in the White House before, but I knew from what I'd heard that we were heading for the rear part of the mansion.

On the third floor, I followed her down the corridor. Finally, she stopped in front of a door. She lifted her hand to knock, then looked at me sourly. "Don't you stay too long," she said. "People would talk to him all night so he couldn't do his work if they had their way."

"I'll sneak right out the minute he goes to sleep," I said.

She glared at me and knocked on the door. Then she opened it enough to put her head in. "Expediter Leeds is here, sir."

A voice rumbled an answer from inside the room. She pushed the door open and stood to one side.

"Remember what I said," she hissed as I went in.

General Manager Bruce Layton sat behind a large desk

with a pile of papers in front of him. He looked up and smiled. "Thanks for coming, Leeds," he said. He waved at the chair beside his desk. "Will you pardon me for just a moment?" He turned back to his papers before I was in the chair.

I'd seen him many times on the screen and a few hours earlier I'd listened to him getting off a lot of stuffy remarks at the ball, but this was the first time I'd seen him at close range. He was probably about fifty, a little on the heavy side, but still in good condition.

There was something, however, that seemed different about him this time. It took me a minute to realize what it was. Every time I'd seen him before he'd been making a public appearance and had looked pretty much like all the others. Now he was busy at his desk, seemingly indifferent to my presence. He was deeply immersed in his work and he seemed to like it. Then I realized the difference. His face revealed intelligence rather than the vacuity I'd come to associate with the General Manager of the United States.

Finally he pushed the papers to one side and looked at me with a smile. "I am sorry to make you wait," he said, "but I had to go through those. My secretary is very strict with me."

I laughed. "I noticed," I said. "She warned me not to talk to you long."

"Oh yes," he sighed. "I believe she thinks me rather weak-willed and considers herself the power behind the throne—such as it is." He opened a box of cigarettes and held it out to me, and provided lights for both of us from a desk lighter. "I feel I should also apologize, Mr. Leeds, for the hour which I asked you to call upon me. You wondered about that?"

"Some," I admitted.

"There's a lot of work on this job," he said. "I find I get more done if I do it at night. There are other advantages, too. Not so many people around. Not so many people to peer over my shoulder or listen to what's going on." He leaned back and smiled at me. "At night, like this, I've even got a pretty good chance of seeing that there's no wire leading into Herbie—isn't that what you call the calculator over in SAC?"

"That's Herbie," I said.

I waited for him to go on, but he didn't say anything immediately. He just sat there, smoking and looking at me.

"So," he said finally, "you are Paul Revere."

It was a minute before it hit me. Then my stomach knotted up. My glance raked around the room, trying to locate the possible exits, then swung back to the door. I expected to see the Clinic Squad charging through. A chuckle from the General Manager brought my attention back to him.

"Is there not a sort of blood shed when the conscience is wounded?" he asked.

It was my second shock, for this was the first half of a quotation from Henry Thoreau which served as a recognition code between members of the Uns.

"Through this wound a man's real manhood and immortality flow out, and he bleeds to an everlasting death," I replied automatically.

Some of my surprise must have been showing on my face for he chuckled again. "I am glad to meet you finally, Mr. Leeds," he said. "I have, of course, long been familiar with the work of Paul Revere. It is a pleasure to sit down with you. I often think that it is unfortunate that the people in our organization can't meet each other more often."

"You?" I said inanely. My vocabulary was still limited by my surprise.

He nodded again. "Mr. Gram telephoned me immediately. Since we know that you are not inclined to yell emergency, I decided I'd better see you myself. I'm sorry to have surprised you, but it seemed better to have you sent to me through channels. I am naturally in possession of the report that you are being assigned to the next Communist trial and it is normal for me to be concerned about how that will be conducted. Now, what is the emergency?"

I quickly outlined to him what Roger Dillon had told me about tying the Uns in with the Communists.

"Yes," he said when I'd finished, "we had expected that sooner or later they might resort to such methods. It might succeed, too, if we were unaware of it. We're lucky that you were assigned to it."

"You mean nothing of this was in the reports forwarded to your office?" I asked.

He smiled. "You forget," he said, "that the General Manager of the United States is little more than an office boy. I am appointed by the social engineers—specifically by the Vice President in charge of Communications—and charged with managing the business affairs of the nation. But in doing so, I must operate on the information which the social engineers see fit to give me. You may be sure that they are very careful in what they let me know."

"What shall I do?" I asked. "I'd like to walk out and go underground."

"No," he said. "That is the one thing you must not do. You are the only member we have in Security and Consent. We're trying to get others in, but it's extremely difficult. The loss would be great if you were to walk out. And they would only replace you with someone else who

would do the job efficiently. No, you must go ahead with the assignment."

"And try to sabotage it as I go along?"

"Not directly. At this point we can only guess what they plan. But I imagine they intend to drive the fugitive Communist into spots where they can prove he's been protected by us. They may have a few of us spotted or they may merely set up some of their own expendable people as 'members' of Uns. Indirectly, you may be able to do a number of things."

"Such as?"

"You won't be able to do much planning," he said wryly. "You'll have to take things as they come up. But I'm sure you can handle it. We'll give you all the help we can. You say that you're to be in charge of or at least in on the propaganda?"

"That's what Dillon said."

"That means dramatic pieces, novels, poetry, everything," he said thoughtfully. "I doubt if much can be done in TV, unless we resort to interference with transmission. But on the planning of, say, a novel, you'll be in position to help suggest ideas. Suppose a popular novelist is lined up to do a book in which a member of the Uns is finally revealed as a Communist. You might exert a little pressure to have it milked for suspense, with the denouément coming in the last two or three pages. We have some people in a number of the printing plants around the country. After the final approval of foundry proofs, we might have one of our men substitute the last two or three plates so that the ending will glorify the Uns. That's rough, and there'd be plenty of problems—review copies, for instance—but we might be able to work it. Once, at least."

I nodded. Privately I didn't feel so sure.

"Of course," he went on, "we'd have to get that member out of the country immediately, but it might be worth it. In the meantime, we'll be working on something to upset the final show." He looked at me sharply. "Are you aware that there may also be a trap for you in this somewhere?"

"The thought had occurred to me," I said drily.

"We may have thrown them off of connecting you with the code name Paul Revere," he said, "but there's still a possibility there is some suspicion of you."

"So you had a hand in that Paul Revere escape?"

"I ordered it," he said. "They picked up a member last week who had seen some of the reports on Paul Revere. He didn't know the identity, but he did know more than anyone they've captured before. I thought it best not to take chances."

"What about Stacey?" I asked.

"Peter?" There was fondness in his voice. "Peter was one of the original members of Uns, you know. He insisted on sacrificing himself, since he had once undergone therapy."

"How is he?"

"All right, so far," Layton said. "We have a minor technician in the Clinic Squad. He's reported that Stacey has once again escaped lobotomy. As soon as we can we'll rescue him and send him away."

"Australia?"

"Yes." He ran one hand over his head and I noticed that his short-clipped hair was beginning to gray. "You'll be amused to know that SAC is soon going to start an overall effort on our behalf."

"What do you mean?"

"For some time," he said, "we've had a more general counter-propaganda idea in mind. As you know, the phil-

osophy back of Uns is derived mostly from Henry Thoreau. He would like to give a wide distribution to his essay on *Civil Disobedience*. But the problem has been one of giving Thoreau authority. He's never been well known here in his own country and is even less so now. By this time most people have also forgotten Ghandi of India or the fact that he was heavily indebted to Thoreau. So this was our problem, until we thought of using SAC."

"I can hardly imagine SAC fostering civil disobedience."

"Neither can I, but they're going to promote Thoreau. Last year, I started a back-to-nature movement for tired businessmen. As General Manager, I am automatically the Honorary President of the League of Industrial Executives. I talked the League into building a number of retreats in isolated spots. The retreats would have represented luxury to Thoreau, but in modern terms people who use them are roughing it. The idea was a huge success. And the number of gripes against the government by businessmen dropped over forty per cent."

"So you sold the idea to SAC for the whole country?"

"Right. They're going to build camps out in the woods and practically everyone is going to be taking woodsy vacations whether they want to or not."

"Where does Thoreau come in?"

He grinned. "I sold them Thoreau along with it. The great American writer who believed in getting out and digging around in the ground, you know. SAC is bringing out a special edition of Thoreau's *Walden*—with all offending individualistic remarks expurgated, of course—and it will be required reading. They're even referring to camp life as *Waldenating*. By the time we're ready to distribute his essay, Thoreau will be the established authority."

"How are you going to distribute it?"

"We'll pick on the newest book of one of our most popular, and most acceptable, novelists and when the book goes on the presses, *Civil Disobedience* will be right in the middle of it."

"Clever," I agreed.

He brought out the cigarettes again. "We think it'll work," he said. "Tell me about yourself, Jerry. I don't know much about you except that you were the one to discover how to fool the calculators. How long have you been with us? Seven years?"

"Eight," I said. "I've been in SAC for seven years—since I left the university, I joined the Uns a year before that. Actually. I discovered that calculators could be tripped up over a year before I knew anything about the underground."

"How?"

"Quite by accident. I was monitoring the university calculator one night and it was a pretty boring job. Just to amuse myself, I started making all sorts of experiments, wiping them out of the memory banks as soon as I finished each one. I was trying, for instance, to see what would happen if I introduced completely contradictory factors into questions about my fellow students—but the calculator simply refused to answer, or called for additional data. Then, while punching out one question, I accidently burned myself on my cigarette. When I wound up the night punching out an analysis on myself, the machine indicated that I'd been frightened by that question. I connected it up with the burn and after that my experimenting had a purpose to it."

"And you didn't report it?"

"I intended to do a paper on it," I said, thinking back over the years, "but I hesitated because I was afraid it

would be interpreted as deviationism on my part. Besides, I had developed a kind of horror of the way machines were being used to shape men's lives, and I kept thinking that if I wrote the paper they'd correct the flaw in the calculators. So I kept putting it off."

"You must have been getting rid of your earlier conditioning in a hurry," Layton said idly. "Was there any special reason why?"

I grinned a bit ruefully. "Again, it was largely my peculiar talents for accidents that started it off," I admitted. "In my freshman year, I became very close friends with a fellow named David Klepperman. At the beginning of the second year, he was on the list of those who'd flunked out. I tried to get in touch with him—we'd had a game of three-dimensional chess with some original variations of our own going on almost endlessy, for one thing, and I wanted to finish it—and was finally told by the university officials that he'd become a secret courier for the State Department and couldn't be reached. It sounds funny now, but he was so brilliant that it was plausible at the time. I more or less forgot about him.

"Then came the accident: I broke my arm during a physical ed session. They kept me in the hospital just long enough for me to get restless, and one night I wandered out of my ward and onto another floor. Imagine my surprise when I ran right into David. But—well, he wasn't David any more. His mind was completely gone. . . ."

I hesitated as the memories flooded back. Layton nodded sympathetically. "I know," he said softly. "Lots of people prove too brilliant to accept the training for security engineering. And they flunk out, just as sure as the dumb ones. Naturally, they just can't be turned loose into the ordinary world with their special knowledge, so they have to be re-conditioned immediately and drasti-

cally. And if re-conditioning doesn't take, their minds must be deliberately destroyed. It's the only way SAC can protect itself."

We were both silent for a moment. "It's a horrible thing any way you look at it," I said at last. "And it's an unfortunate thing for the Uns. The system has made it virtually impossible for anyone with the slightest tendency to think as an individual to go through the training and get his degree. Virtually impossible, that is, for the Uns to place any agents in SAC itself."

Layton smiled slightly. "Except for a person with as unique a combination of talents as yours," he said.

I shrugged. "Anyway, seeing David that way set me to thinking hard, and I added a lot of things together. The result was that I was ripe for the plucking by any Uns agent that came along. And after I was recruited, by the manager of a small old-fashioned theater near the university, I somehow managed to slide through and graduate in spite of my 'subversive' ideas. It seemed at the time that there was nothing else to do, incidentally; I often felt like dropping out or flunking on purpose, but then I'd think of David. I could go on into a job with SAC, I could return to being part of the mass mind—or I could become mindless. So I went on."

"And a good thing," Layton said. "The ideas you've since developed on individual deviation and electronic computors have already saved a lot of lives, and I suspect they will be the big factor in the final showdown."

"Which is drawing closer," I murmured.

"It certainly is," he said. "This is the fight to the finish between mass man and individual man. The fight's been going on for a long time. It was a pretty even match until the advent of controlled mass communication. Then the giant electronic brains completely tipped the scales. I

certainly don't have to tell you that there is no difference in reality between the social engineers here and those in Russia. Both are out to turn the world into one of mass men—everyone conforming in ever single way. And they've damn near succeeded."

"Too near," I said. "I 'still think we Uns need a few calculators of our own."

"Not to use the way they're using them," he said, shaking his head. "Despite the old cliché, you can't fight fire by building more fires. Electronic brains can help to make this a better world, but not when they're used to shape men's minds. And we must not stoop to their methods, no matter how much it slows us up. That is the reason that the Uns are the only hope left in the world, for we are the only ones left who deny that the end justifies the means. We must win through the dignity and the justness of the individual. Any other victory will ultimately be a defeat. Do you remember Thoreau's definition of government?"

I admitted that I didn't.

" 'Government is an expedient by which men would fain succeed in letting one another alone; . . . when it is most expedient, the governed are most let alone by it.' He also said, and we should all remember it, that 'There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power and treats him accordingly.' But we can't expect to bring that about until we *are* individuals." He struck the desk with the palm of his hand, then laughed ruefully. "Sorry, boy, I didn't mean to start making speeches to you."

"I don't mind," I said, grinning. "Sometimes I think we could do with a few more speeches—or at least more communication. Unfortunately, if we did, it would make

it easier for Herbie to find us." I glanced at my watch. It was two o'clock. "I think I'd better go. You must have work to do."

"I suppose so," he said. He was silent for a minute and I could see the composure returning to his face. "There are just two things, Jerry. On the assignment, you'll just have to go ahead and take things as they come up. Keep in touch with Gram and we'll work it out as we go along. Secondly, you'd better have a story for Dillon. He'll be after you to find out what I wanted. Tell him that I wanted you to provide me with a day-to-day itinerary of the escaped Communist so that I could warn the industrialists in the affected areas. You can say that you told me that such permission will have to come from the National Co-ordinator. I'll put in a formal request tomorrow to make it legitimate."

"Right," I said. I stood up.

"Good luck, Jerry," he said, holding out his hand. I shook it and left.

The sour-faced secretary was waiting outside. Grumbling to herself, she led me back to the elevator and downstairs where she turned me over to the two guards. They drove me back to my apartment.

There was only one message on the phone-tape. Call Roger Dillon at home when I returned. I dialed his number. There was a robot-answering service on his phone. It was a miniature Herbie, recognizing the names of those Roger would talk to and putting them through to him; anyone else would get a quick, mechanical brush-off. Its relays clucked thoughtfully over my name and put me through.

"Jerry, boy," Roger said, sounding just too damn cheerful for two-thirty in the morning. "How'd it go with the G.M.?"

"Okay," I said.

"What did he want?"

"There was a lot of long-winded talk," I said, knowing he might be curious about the length of time I'd been at the White House. "When he finally got around to the point, he wanted me to give him a daily location report on our Communist. His big shots are afraid their factories will get blown up."

"I thought it was something like that. What did you tell him?"

"To see you."

"That's the boy. Well, I'll see you tomorrow, Jerry, boy. Come in late, if you like. Nothing to do tomorrow except get briefed. You won't take off for the Free State until tomorrow night."

"Thanks," I said. I hung up and went to bed.

I awakened at my usual time the next morning, but I reminded myself of what Roger had said and went back to sleep. It was almost noon when I finally climbed out of bed. I had a quick shower and a shave, then I went into the kitchen and told the range what I wanted for breakfast. While it was busy cooking, I went into the living room and snapped on the fax-news machine. A moment later it delivered a facsimile copy of the latest edition of the Washington *Engineer*. The sheet was privately published, but it reflected the official view of SAC. Its viewpoints could usually be found in most other papers twenty-four hours later.

While I was eating my ham and eggs, I glanced at the paper. There were two stories that interested me. The first one was headlined: PERMANENT COMMITTEE ON SUBVERSION TO ACT SOON. The story stated that there was evidence of a new Communist conspiracy

and that the Senate Committee was digging into it. Buried in the body of the story there was one significant sentence: "It is believed that the Communists have been getting help outside of their own ranks." That, I knew, was the key to the new line.

On page four there was a small story that continued to set the tone for the new program. It told of the arrest and examinaion of an Uns. Again, one sentence contained the key: "Under therapeutic examination, he confessed to being a member of the subversive, treasonable organization known as the United Nations, and admitted that he'd been in constant communication with a foreign government." That was all—but it was enough for the beginning. From there on it would be developed in a lot of fancy ways.

I dumped the dishes in the washer and was ready to go. But first I stood in front of the phone for a good ten minutes having a debate with myself. I wanted to call Meg Randall even though I knew she'd probably hang up on me. Finally I talked myself out of it; it would be better to wait, but I wasn't happy about it. This wasn't just guilt either. When I'd taken her in my arms the night before something had happened that hadn't been in anyone's script—something that an electronic brain like Herbie couldn't know about. I didn't even have a word for it yet myself; all I knew was that I wanted to see her again.

I slammed the door behind me and took a cab to the office.

Roger Dillon was waiting for me. "Pretty soft," he said as I came in. "To work by noon. I guess I should have refused promotion."

"Sure," I grunted. "Late to work once in seven years. Not to mention the fact that I was working last night."

"You call that work?" he scoffed.

I dropped into the chair beside his desk and busied myself lighting a cigarette so he wouldn't see my anger. "What us expediters need," I said, to change the subject, "is an old-fashioned trade union." I laughed so he'd know I was joking. That's the only way he could recognize a joke. And I didn't want to betray myself now, of all times.

He screwed his face up in an expression that was supposed to mean that he knew I was kidding but didn't entirely approve. "You ready for your homework?" he asked.

I nodded.

He pressed a button on his desk and one wall of his office became a huge map of the area that once had been South Dakota. The right half of it was colored green and the left red.

"I'd better start at the beginning," he said, "since most of it is more or less restricted information. The Free State represents one of our most ambitious experiments and I think it can be called a very profitable one. It started shortly after we took over the government."

He picked up a pointer from his desk and walked over to the map. "First," he said, "we drew an imaginary line through South Dakota, running from Pollock down through Pierre right to the Nebraska border. We moved the entire population that had been living west of that line into the eastern half. We then spent two years and several million dollars preparing the new state we'd carved out of the western half of South Dakota."

"What kind of preparations?" I asked when he showed no inclination to elaborate.

"We planted detecting and recording instruments of various sorts all over, all connected with a concealed calculator which we built into the lower levels of the old Homestake gold mine in the Black Hills. That calculator is connected directly to Herbie. Finally we built a metal

fence, ten feet high and going five feet below the ground, around the entire Free State. We moved in everything needed, in an industrial sense, to make the area self-sufficient. We did a few other things you'll hear about in a minute."

"A ten-foot fence," I said, "wouldn't be much of a barrier if anyone really wanted to get out."

He grinned. "It's all the barrier needed," he said. "The fence itself broadcasts supersonic sound. You can't hear it, but anybody getting within a hundred yards of the fence, on either side, will think he's been hit by a ten-ton truck."

"Nice," I said.

He missed the tone of my answer. "You bet," he said. "During that same two years, we were busy lining up all the dissidents. You can be sure that we got everyone, too. Not a single subversive escaped our roundup."

I couldn't resist the opportunity. "Except those who clung to the idea of a United Nations," I said innocently.

He scowled. "Technically you're correct, of course," he admitted. "Although at that time we weren't aware there was any problem in that quarter. The first Herbie we had here wasn't quite as efficient as the present one. . . . Now, where was I?"

"You'd just rounded up all the dissidents," I said flatly.

He looked at me a moment, then continued. "Oh yes. Well, we took the lot of them—Communists, Socialists, Trotskyites, Lovestoneites, Titoists, Stalinists, Technochats, Silver Shirts, Single Taxers, Burnamites, Humanists, Neo-Taftians, General Semanticists, Scientologists, the works—and dumped them in there. When we switched on the fence they were on their own."

"Sounds like quite a stew."

He grinned boyishly. "I believe it was for a while. But

the Communists easily outnumbered all the others put together and it wasn't long before they had control of the situation. Which was exactly what we expected. They tried and executed a lot of the minority groups." He indicated the lower portion of the Free State. "The rest escaped down here in the section that used to be known as the bad lands. You'll notice that they've renamed it The Trotsky Plains. Quite a few of them still exist there as nomadic bands, fighting each other and fighting off the Communist police."

"You mean the Communists have a working government?"

"Oh, yes. Quite an efficient one. They've given new names to everything. You might as well become familiar with those. You should know them."

"Why?"

"You'll see," he said flatly. "The Free State itself is called the Union of Soviet Socialist Counties of America. Pierre, the old capital of South Dakota, is now Malenkovia. The Black Hills are called Marx Hills and Harney Peak is Stalin Peak. Wind Cave National Park is now The Engels People's Park. There's a lot more you probably should know, but I'll just hit the high spots for you; you'll take a sleep-training before you leave."

"How does this escaping Communist get out?" I asked.

"There's a tunnel leading into Wyoming. The entrance to it is in Wind Cave. The Communists have always known about it but don't know that we put it there deliberately. They believe, also, that it is a dangerous trip, so they've only used it when they felt it necessary."

"Is it dangerous?"

"When we want it to be. We have ways of making it dangerous from what seem to be natural causes. The entrance to the tunnel is covered by television scanners so

that we know when someone is going to make the try. If it's someone who hasn't been cleared by Herbie through the calculator under the Black Hills, he has a tough time."

"But suppose they decide to send a whole group through at once?" I asked.

I could have sworn that Dillon licked his lips slightly. "Such a group would be expendable, to say the least, as far as we were concerned," he said. "It would serve no useful purpose to let a lot of them get free. So we'd see to it that they—failed. Actually, it's never happened; they feel safer where they are until they're ready for a real revolution. Probably they hope that Russia will take over the Americas before that happens."

"What do you do in a case like this? Just wait until one of them decides to take a stroll through the tunnel?"

He shook his head. "You're not using the old think-tank, Jerry, boy. We wouldn't be where we are if we just left everything to chance. A Communist named James Parker is coming out. He's going to be expecting you to meet him at the exit in Wyoming."

"Me?" I asked in surprise.

"Yes. He's expecting Gerald Leeds, Expediter from the office of Security and Consent."

"You wouldn't mind explaining it to me?"

Roger was enjoying himself. "He thinks you're a traitor to the American government," he said. Did he pause overly long or was it my over-active imagination again? "It's really very simple, Jerry, boy. You're not noodling this one yet or you would've guessed it."

"All right, then, you noodle it for me," I said sourly.

"We did one other thing when we set up the Free State. We let the Communists think some of their number escaped the roundup, so they believe there are several

Communist cells throughout the states. Individuals, supposedly from those cells, have kept in touch throughout the years by short-wave radio. One of the reasons Communists have kept coming out of the Free State is to help their comrades in the underground. James Parker thinks he is coming out to attend an underground party congress."

"With me?" I asked.

He nodded. "For the last five years James Parker has been in contact with a man he believes to be a Communist spy here in Washington. Of course, it's been one of our men. James Parker has known this man only as Comrade Paul, a code name. He's known that this comrade was in the government, which was why he never took a chance on revealing his actual identity. But yesterday, in a coded message, Comrade Paul admitted to Comrade Parker that he is Gerald Leeds, an expediter in the Security and Consent Department of Communications."

I asked the obvious question. "Why?"

"We want you to get to know Parker. He must have confidence in you. Then, during his fugitive period, if any special guidance is needed he will be inclined to follow your suggestions."

"All right," I said, "but I still don't like being such a clay pigeon."

He laughed, almost a shrill giggle. It happened so seldom it was startling. "Don't worry, boy. We know you're not a Communist and it doesn't make any difference what the Communists think."

"Yeah," I said, "but just be sure that Herbie doesn't get amnesia. So I meet the comrade in Wyoming. Then what?"

"Drive him down to Cheyenne and get him settled with a family named Longstreet. He'll think they're part of

the underground. They're SAC people. Once you've settled him, come back here."

"And start the campaign?"

"Exactly. On all levels. We're assigning some of our best consent engineers and account executives to the program and you'll work closely with them. At the same time, through Herbie, you'll keep a watch on Parker."

"In Cheyenne?"

"He won't be there long," he said with a grin. "Shortly after you leave, he'll almost be caught. He'll escape but he won't know how to get in touch with you. So far as he knows, the Longstreets will be under arrest. He'll be on his own. Then the problem will be to keep a watch on him, and to steer him along the right course. You know how—a little pressure here will send him off in that direction, counter pressure will turn him back."

Oh, yes, I knew how it worked. I'd seen it done with other fugitives so that they were like rats being prodded through a maze with electric rods. I began to feel sorry for Parker, Communist though he was.

"I know," I said. "Where is it you want him to go?"

"Herbie has spotted what we think are a number of areas where there are concentrations of Uns. We'll want Parker run into those areas and, if possible, brought into contact with suspected Uns. If that's impossible, we'll set up some who'll pass as Uns. This trial has got to look good."

"Sounds like everything is well planned," I said, "Except for one thing."

"What's that?"

"You say that Parker has been talking to one of your men for five years. He's liable to discover quickly that I'm not the one."

"Not a chance, Jerry, boy. The sleep-training will take

care of that. We're throwing in tapes on the conversations as well as enough Communist dogma to see you through. *Everything* is well planned. As usual."

I had to admit he was right. Everything was always well planned in SAC. It was one of the moments—and I'd had many of them in the past seven years—when it seemed to me that the United Nations was facing an impossible task. We were armed with nothing but a stubborn refusal to be submerged in a slavery of conformity; the social engineers had everything else, including scientific methods that could anticipate every move a human might make. Creativity versus science. It was an old argument, but one which science had been winning steadily for a good many years. On one side the handful of human brains and on the other an army of giant mechanical brains presided over by Herbie—whose brain occupied ten floors and an annex.

If one thought in terms of the usual historical pattern, then an Uns victory *was* impossible. The world was now divided into two parts, communistic and democratic—although the original meaning of both words had long ago been lost. Each faction was headed by men who ruled through the giant calculators. The idea of men planning a revolution against machines, which could perform in seconds calculations that would take human minds a lifetime, was laughable. The machines of each country cancelled each other out. The dissidents of both countries, such as the Communists in our Free State, were unarmed men butting their heads against electronic tubes.

The plan of the Uns was different. Ours was not a revolution, but a rebellion. We suffered from too much revolution. The Communists in Russia had won a revolution; the social engineers in America had won a more peaceful but no less effective one. There had never been a revolu-

ionist who did not insist that the individual must be ubmissive to a central committee—but we believed that entral committees must always be submissive to the in- ividuals.

There is no limit to what may be done to the individual n the name of the revolution. Rebellion, on the other and, springs from a recognition that there are limits to vhat can be done to any individual. Rebellion consists f saying: beyond this point we will *not* go. It carries, too, he awareness that there is something in the individual vhich must not be destroyed. Once you realize that this s true of one individual—yourself—then you must see that t's true of all individuals. You do not seek to destroy he enemy, for he is partly yourself; you seek only to do way with his ability to destroy you.

Every individual is naturally a rebel; he becomes a rev- olutionary, or the victim of revolutionaries, when he eases to be an individual. This, then, was our goal—to waken creatively the rebel that existed within every erson. If we succeeded, tyranny, no matter what its name, vould melt away.

I became aware that Roger Dillon was speaking—had been speaking for some time.

"If it's not too much strain," he said bitingly, "you might wait until the sleep-training period before going to sleep."

"Sorry," I said. I knew he was waiting for some explana- tion. "I was thinking how foolish the Communists in the Free State are to believe they can promote a successful conspiracy."

"The United Nations, too?" he asked lightly. It was the kind of question he often slipped into conversations—as though Herbie's efforts weren't enough and he had to sup- plement them with his own.

"Naturally," I said easily. "But I'm not dropping in on Australia this trip, so I was thinking about the Communists."

"Okay," he said, grinning. "Just keeping you on your toes, boy. Well, run along. See me after the sleep-training."

"Which room?" I asked.

"Seventeen hundred."

I nodded and left. I took the elevator up to the educational floor and went to room seventeen hundred. There was a young interne there who gave me a shot in the arm and prepared me for the sleep-training.

Three hours later, when I came out of it, the interne fired a few questions at me to make sure the sleep-training had taken. I was suddenly filled with quotations from Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Malenkov and Premier Bashikoff. And I was able to "remember" the many conversations I'd had with James Parker. When he was satisfied, he waved me out of the room and I went back downstairs.

"All set?" Rog said cheerfully as I came in. "Clinic reports that it was a good take."

"Yeah," I said. "Only one thing bothers me. What do I do with all this information after the campaign is over? Come back and start a revolution with Herbie and his friends? Arise, ye prisoners of retardation. You have nothing to lose but your chains—although in this case I guess it would be electronic tubes instead of chains."

Roger Dillon was examining me with the bright look of a rapacious bird. "You know, Jerry, boy," he said, "in some ways you're a throwback. Your sense of humor, for example. It's the sort of thing which has pretty much vanished—at least among the social engineers. Destructive humor, I call it. It was prevalent in the old regime. I've often thought that was why they couldn't retain power."

"They laughed when I sat down in the electric chair," said.

"Precisely," he said crisply. "It's a problem I'm going o feed into Herbie one of these days. A more careful an- lysis of it might help us to spot future dissidents." Again, t seemed there was the hint of a threat in his tone of oice.

"Good idea," I said. "Only what happens if Herbie tarts laughing at the mother-in-law jokes?"

He looked shocked and quickly bent over the papers on his desk. "We'll see," he said. "Now, you'll take a plane out of here for Cheyenne. When you get there, report to he local SAC office and they'll have a car for you. Here's a map and marked on it is the spot where Parker will exit. From now on it's your baby, Jerry, boy."

Yes, I thought as I left the room, it seemed to be my baby whether I wanted it or not. And I had strong doubts about my ability to handle any baby that had Rog Dillon for a father and Herbie for a mother.

THERE WERE ALMOST two hours before flight time. I tried to reach Meg Randall but there was no answer, not even a taped message. I checked with the Clinic Squad again about Nancy Harper. They reported that she was still in therapy but that they couldn't release any information about her progress. I went home and packed my clothes and headed for the airport.

I was booked on one of the regular Beta-Jet passenger flights. They were already loading so I turned my luggage over at the counter and went to the personnel gate. That was another advantage to being with SAC. The ordinary passengers had to file through a regular gate, have their tickets taken and their identity cards and work transfers or vacation permits machine-examined, and then be photographed as they walked through. The photograph was flashed to the sector calculator where it was electronically compared to photographs on file. If there was any doubt at all, the photograph and papers were then flashed to Herbie for a final decision. The whole process took several minutes. Being an expediter, all I had to do was go to the personnel gate, press my identification card against the scanner and climb aboard.

The plane took off on time, going almost straight up ntil the White House looked like a gaudy sugar palace n a wedding cake. Then it leveled off and sped west-ard.

I was met in Cheyenne by a sector expediter. They had reservation for me at a hotel. I discouraged the local an's attempts to get into a long conversation and went o bed soon after arriving. I was up early the next morn-ng and went to the local SAC building, where they had car ready for me. I signed for it and was soon driving orth.

It was the middle of the afternoon when I reached my lestination, near the border between Wyoming and the ree State, just north of Nebraska. I drove up a winding, precarious road until I came to the place marked on the nap. It was just north of a little town called Clifton, a light widening in the road marked by two giant fir trees. pulled off the road and killed the engine.

Straight ahead the sun flashed from the metal fence hat marked the boundaries of the Communist state. Be-ond the fence I could see the Black Hills off to the left, ut that's all there was to see. I found myself being curious bout what went on behind the metal and sound barrier.

To my right, down the slight incline, I could see the mouth and crumbling timbers of an old abandoned cop-per mine. This was also marked on the map. It was called the Two Ghost Mine. There were probably legends about it. I wondered if the legends weren't still being kept alive, because that was the spot where the tunnel from the Free State ended. Who was going to start nosing around a mine that was worthless and ghost-ridden? Herbie might blow a tube at the suggestion that there were ghosts, but plenty of people still believed in them.

It was a half hour before I saw a flicker of movement in the mouth of the mine. I pretended not to notice and waited. Parker had a description of me and the car I'd be in, so I let him take his time and make sure. It took him fifteen minutes. Then he emerged from the mine and started walking up the hill toward me. I turned and watched him curiously.

As he drew nearer, I could see that he was a young man, probably somewhere in his twenties. He was wearing blue jeans and a blue shirt. They were the clothes of a working man—the kind of working man that had almost vanished with our technical advances—but his face was that of an intellectual. His black hair was untidy; deliberately so, I suspected.

He didn't look at me until he was almost up to the car. Then he lifted his head with a sudden gesture. There was a mixture of fear and defiance in his eyes as they stared into mine.

"The hour is late," he said.

I remembered some of the information that had been fed into me during the sleep-training. "But never too late for a new beginning," I said gravely.

He lifted his right hand, the fingers clenched into a fist. "Comrade Leeds," he said.

Feeling foolish, I imitated his gesture. "Comrade Parker," I said.

I opened the door of the car and he climbed in. I started the motor and got the car turned around after numerous twistings and turnings. We started back down the tortuous road.

"The trip through the tunnel went all right, eh?" I asked.

"Excellent, Comrade," he said. He gave me a tense grin. "Although I admit I half expected the dirty Cos-

sacks to be waiting for me when I came out on this side. How is it that they haven't discovered the exit?"

"You know how stupid they are," I said lightly. "Then I think there are legends about ghosts in the mine. That helps to keep anyone from exploring it."

His laughter was a sharp, nervous bark. "Just like the degenerate capitalists," he said. "In the Union of Soviet Socialist Counties the only legends we have are those of sacrifices for the proletariat. You have no idea how wonderful that is, Comrade Leeds."

I swung the car around another hairpin curve. "There are two immediate things," I said. "First, we'll stop at the first store we get to and buy you some clothes. The ones you have on are too suspicious. Second, we must both refrain from using the word comrade. You'd better call me Jerry and I'll call you Jim."

"I can see the wisdom of not calling each other comrade," he said, "but what's wrong with my clothes? They're good honest working clothes."

"Sure, but there are so few manual laborers now that they will call attention to you."

"No workers," he said indignantly. "You mean they're being starved out, the whole working class?"

"Something like that," I murmured. I wasn't going to bother trying to explain the whole system to him. Besides, if I did, he might begin to suspect that I wasn't a Communist. All classes of people in America except the social engineers were starving, but not in the way he thought. It seemed simpler to let him retain his illusions as long as he could.

I stopped at the first town we reached that had a clothing store. Parker told me his sizes and I bought him some clothes. He changed in the back of the car as soon as we were out of town.

"Tell me, Com—Jerry," he said, "how it goes in *the* country of socialism? Knowledge is what we need most in the Soviet Counties. We've built a number of radio stations powerful enough to reach Russia, but there seems to be so much interference so that we've never been able to get through."

I knew about that. When the Communists had built the first powerful station, the social engineers had been ready for them and every attempt to reach Russia had been jammed. The actual existence of the Free State was, of course, no secret. Russia knew about it. So any broadcasts coming from the other direction were also jammed.

"Tough," I said. I quickly went over my memory of the short-wave talks between Parker and the SAC man who was supposed to have been me. Not every sentence had been fed to me in the sleep-training, but the gist of the talks had been and I could now recall them. "We don't get too much news from Russia ourselves. Everything that we can get our hands on is pretty well screened. I've given you most of the news I could get when we've had our talks."

"The bastards," he said bitterly. "That's the way they keep the people exploited—by not letting them know how wonderful it is in a country that's thrown off the yoke of capitalism. I suppose in a way, Russia has one of the same problems the Soviet Counties do—she's completely surrounded by imperialist nations which are determined to destroy her very existence."

I pictured a map of the world and thought how wrong he was in his idea of poor, persecuted Russia. It was true that Russia and America were poised at each other's throats, but you could hardly say that either one was surrounded. England, Spain, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Norway and Sweden were independent, but they weren't

threats to anyone. Neither did they have anything to offer or they would have been swallowed up long before. Australia was a threat only because of the United Nations, but so far neither country had dared make a grab for her. China was also independent, siding with no one, but had been left alone—her vastness was her greatest defense. But everything else on one side of the world was now part of Russia and everything on the other side was part of America. Neither was surrounded except by the dry-rot of mass conformity.

I murmured something that sounded like agreement and turned the conversation to the Free State. I was genuinely curious and judging by the sleep-training the conversations had never dealt much with it.

The picture was about as I might have expected. The social engineers seldom did things without a maximum of efficiency. When they had transplanted all the subversives to the Free State, they'd made sure that certain skills were not possessed by any of the people and that the State was established in an area that had a minimum of natural resources. There was plenty of gold, but there's not much you can make with gold except ornaments. There was a little iron ore but not enough to permit much steel production. As a result, the state was primarily agricultural. They had managed to develop a few combustion engines, but the few they had were needed to keep up their food production. They had no cars and no planes. The bicycle was their most modern means of transportation. They had plenty to eat and plenty to wear; they had radios but no TV, and that was about all.

They also had guns, but in very limited quantities. That was why they hadn't been able to wipe out all the renegades, as Parker called them, who were living as nomadic bands in the Bad Lands.

Uncomfortable as things sounded in the Free State, I was willing to bet that they were better off than the Russians. It was, I suspected, a good thing they couldn't get in touch with Russia. The disillusionment might have been more than they could take. They had done much better in a short time than Russia had done in three-quarters of a century. I guessed that it was due partly to the fact that they had a certain security, locked inside that barrier of metal and sound, and, for the rest, since they couldn't go in for expansion or a weapons race their energies had gone into supplying themselves with things that they needed.

Parker obviously thought otherwise. "I feel that we have achieved so little," he said when he had finished, "in comparison with what must have been going on in Russia. It must be a proletarian paradise now with everything the people can want."

"Well—almost," I said carefully. "There are, I believe, a few shortages. And there's not too much individual liberty." Those were things he'd probably find out anyway so there was no harm in mentioning them. Even the Russians admitted the shortages. They were known as the heroic sacrifices of the Soviet Man.

He looked startled, but his face quickly brightened. "Of course," he said. "Why, even the great Lenin said, 'It is true that liberty is precious—so precious that it must be rationed.' "

"Yeah," I said drily. "Hobbyhorses."

"What?"

"Hobbyhorses," I repeated. "Did you know that it is now almost two generations since hobbyhorses have been sold in toy stores in either Russia or the United States?"

"I'm afraid I don't understand," he said doubtfully.

"I'm not sure why hobbyhorses withered away in the

Soviet," I said, "but the ban was started here by the play-school consultants, who were influenced by the social engineers long before the latter came into power. They put the finger on hobbyhorses on the grounds that they did not develop the group spirit." I thought I'd better not add that I'd often thought of writing an essay on the place of the hobbyhorse in modern politics.

He nodded thoughtfully. "Of course. But you realize that it meant different things in the two countries. Here the group spirit was used to build fascism while in Russia and the Soviet Counties it was used to build a people's world."

Again I grunted agreeably and let it go at that. There was no point in trying to explain to him, any more than to Roger Dillon, that there was no actual difference between a Social Engineer and a Socialist Engineer. Both were out to destroy the individual by conditioning him to be like everyone else.

"We'd better stop our political discussions," I said. "From here on, it will be more and more dangerous to mention such things in public."

"I understand," he said. "The Secret Police. What is the plan of action?"

"I'm taking you to the home of a trustworthy family in Cheyenne. It's comparatively safe to move around inside this state, but you'd better lie fairly low. Then I'm going east and make arrangements for you to be smuggled through to New York for the party convention. I will either come back for you or send another comrade."

"Good," he said. "I'm anxious to meet more of the comrades and to hear of the glorious work you're carrying on."

After that we did little talking, except for occasional remarks about the scenery. It was late at night when we

finally arrived in Cheyenne. I had the address of the Longstreet family and drove directly there. Despite the hour, they had arranged a little party for their guest. There were seven or eight men and women, seated around a table in the basement. It all looked very daring and mysterious. They were SAC employees, but they were introduced as the members of an underground cell of the Communist Party. We sat around and talked in resounding clichés and pathetically soon James Parker was at home.

I also spent the night at Longstreet's. Early the following morning, I returned the car to the SAC sector building and caught a plane back to Washington.

I went directly to my office and dictated a report to Herbie. Then I went in to repeat it to Roger Dillon. He'd get the report from Herbie, but he always liked personal reports on special cases. He listened carefully while I told him about James Parker.

"Good, good," he said when I'd finished. "The Longstreets will keep him occupied until we're ready to pull our raid. In the meantime, the big job is to get the educational program set up. Did I mention that you'll be in charge of that?"

"You did."

"This is your chance, Jerry, boy. Do a good job on it and you might come out of it as one of my vice co-ordinators, or, at very least, a State Co-ordinator."

It was an obvious lie. As long as I had a high instability rating I could never be promoted. Nobody knew that better than Roger Dillon. I wondered what was in his mind.

"Okay," I said. "What do I do now?"

"I don't know what they're planning over in Consent," he said. This was another little fantasy; nothing went on

anywhere in SAC without his knowing about it in advance. "You might as well knock off for the rest of the day. Run over to Consent in the morning. See either Dale Carr or Lester Sand. Dale is the consent engineer and Les is the account executive. They're noodling this one and you can pitch in with them. When it's really rolling, we'll pull the raid in Cheyenne." He waved one hand as a sign of dismissal and went back to the papers on his desk.

I tried to call Meg Randall, there was no answer. I took a cab to my apartment, unpacked and mixed myself a drink. When that was finished I tried calling her again. It became a ritual of calling and drinking. There wasn't anyone else I wanted to see and I kept it up, without any luck. Finally, I went to bed a little potted—a condition in which, theoretically, no social engineer would ever be.

The next morning I went to SAC and up to the Consent Bureau, where I cooled my heels in a waiting room decorated with murals of what a brass plate identified as part of the "visual education on consent to annex Mexico." For an hour I looked at smiling peasant faces; then I got in to see Dale Carr. He was with another man who turned out to be Lester Sand. They were very friendly but in a way that made it clear they were more important than any mere expediter.

This was the first time I'd ever been over in Consent. I began to wonder about the efficiency of the system. I spent the next four days with them without seeing anything happen. We went downstairs for morning coffee. We had two-hour luncheons, long conferences in the paneled conference room, cocktails at the approved bars and even one business dinner. We talked about everything but the program that was supposed to get started.

Every night I called Meg, always with the same result.

Through Gram, I made my undernourished reports. I was beginning to feel that I was in a rut.

On the fifth day it changed. I went into the Consent offices prepared to swill more coffee in defense of my country. As usual, Carr and Sand were together in Carr's office.

"Coffee, anyone?" I said brightly. "I'm offering a handicap of two lumps of sugar."

"Maybe later," Carr said shortly. "Look, on this Uns Project—we've been sleeping on it."

"I knew we'd been sleeping," I said, "but I didn't know what it was on."

"Sharp," said Sand. "The boy's sharp this morning."

"An operator," Carr said in agreement. "This is the way it shapes up, Jerry, boy. This is going to be on all levels and in all media, you know?"

I nodded.

"The creative end of it can best be handled from the New York office and we'll start with that. You go on in to New York tomorrow and get it under way. In the meantime, we'll be shaping up things here on the industrial end so that by the time you get back we'll be ready to roll. After you've approved of everything, of course."

"Of course," I said drily. I was bitterly disappointed, although I'd expected this. I was nominally in charge of the whole project, but obviously they'd maneuver it so that I always had to approve of what they'd already decided on. It looked as if there'd be no opportunities to sabotage their propaganda or replace it with our own. All I could do was keep on spying out their plans and groping for ideas to defeat them. It didn't sound like enough.

"That's about the way it looks," Carr said, leaning back in his chair. "This is going to be big, boy. Rog has every confidence in you. So does Herbie, I might add.

That's good enough for Les and me. Right, Les?"

"Right as Monopolated Steel," Sand said promptly. "Blue ribbon."

"Top drawer," Carr said, nodding. He looked at me. "Did we tell you about the over-all gimmick one of our boys thought up?"

"No," I said. There was probably no point in adding they hadn't shown me anything.

"It's great," he said. "Herbie's already estimated that it'll probably be more successful than anything else we do. Naturally you'll pass on it after you come back from New York, but I thought you might like an advance peek."

If Herbie had already put his electronic stamp on it, it wouldn't make much difference whether I passed on it or not, but I said nothing while Carr dug a large display card out of a stack on a table behind his desk.

"As you know," he continued, "the word 'communist' appears quite frequently in newspapers, on TV and in ads. The idea is that every time it appears, it should look like this."

He held up the card so that I could see the one word lettered on it.

commUNist

"Get it?" he asked.

I got it all right. The letters UN appeared in most of the underground literature. Such a campaign might well succeed in making too many people think that UN was merely part of the word communist.

"We set it up and ran it through Herbie for analysis," he said happily, "and the report shows that we'll get a maximum penetration on it. Just running it like that

with no explanation or anything. You know, a thing like that justifies my whole belief in the Consent Bureau. Makes life worth living. Well, we'll kick it around some more when you get back from the big city. Knock them dead, kid."

It was clearly a dismissal.

That night as I was packing for the trip the following day my phone rang. I debated letting it ring, but then I thought it might be official so I answered. It was Meg Randall.

"You're a welcome spot in a dull day," I said. "I've been calling you every few hours for the past week. Where have you been?"

"Becoming a free woman," she said gaily. "It's quite an experience."

"Did you have to go away? Don't they have any freedom in Washington?"

"Very little," she said. "Besides it's the smart thing to go to Las Vegas. And why shouldn't I be smart—especially since Security and Consent paid all the expenses?"

"SAC?" I asked. That didn't sound like Roger Dillon. "I thought your husband was the injured party."

She laughed. "That was the general idea, but there was a small mix-up. George came home, and before anyone could inform him of the yeoman service done on his behalf while he was gone, he confessed to me that he had dallied with a blonde. Furnished by SAC, I believe. Anyway, this complicated matters. I went and explained the whole thing to that nice Mr. Dillon in SAC and, you know, he not only arranged for me to get the divorce and to pay for it, but I am to receive what you might call a pension."

"Smart girl," I said. I grinned happily at the picture of

Roger Dillon being blackmailed politely. "How was Las Vegas?"

"Delightfully boring. Jerry, have you ever been divorced?"

"Not that I recall," I said. "I understand that it's customary to be married first."

"A trifle," she said. "You should try it. First you go to a miniature Herbie and recite all your woes into a microphone. Little Herbie consults with Big Herbie and after a few minutes you get two cards punched full of holes. Stamped on it is the date for your hearing. You wait until the day stamped on your cards, then go to a building which contains nothing but hearing rooms and a medium-sized Herbie. You feed the two cards into slots and all the little electronic relays snap and jingle and after a while your divorce is spit out through another slot."

"And for this there was an Industrial Revolution," I said. "Now what gives?"

"I said I'd phone you when I felt like seeing you again," she said.

"I'm glad you didn't forget," I said. "Tomorrow I have to go to New York for a few days, but that still leaves tonight."

"Pick me up at seven."

"Same apartment?" I asked. I knew that most divorced women could not afford to maintain their old standard of living.

"The same," she said. She laughed again. "You might say that the pension is generous. See you at seven, darling." She broke the connection.

I finished my packing in a burst of good spirits and got ready. Just before seven I climbed into a cab and directed the driver to her address.

She was as beautiful as I remembered her, perhaps even

more so. But as the evening wore on I had the same feeling of not being able to reach her I'd had on our first date. Then, I had since deduced, it was because she had guessed what was being done to her and was hurt and bitter. Now, I wasn't sure of the cause, but I couldn't believe that this was her natural state. She was too brittle, too gay. I'd have been willing to bet ten years of my life that ordinarily she was a gentle and warm person. I wondered what was bothering her.

Even so it was a wonderful evening. After a good dinner, in a place practically devoid of robotics, we went dancing. I was acutely aware of the warm grace of her body as we danced, but we both kept the conversation light and away from the personal.

It was almost two in the morning when we arrived back at her apartment. She handed me her key and I unlocked the door. I stood aside for her to enter, but she stopped at the sill, took the key from my hand and smiled up at me.

"It was a lovely evening, Jerry," she said. "Thanks."

"Wait a minute," I said. "It's still early and—"

"No, Jerry," she interrupted. "I don't want you to come in tonight. I like you. I think maybe I like you very much."

"Then—"

Her hair danced across her face as she shook her head. "I'd like to find out how I really feel about you," she said, "without its getting any more complicated. On our first meeting, I pushed things a little farther than they were supposed to go, and—well, they got somewhat out of hand. I—I wasn't as detached as I intended to be. Now I want to think this out without any distractions."

"Okay," I said. "If that's the way you want it, that's the way it'll be."

"You're sweet," she said. "Call me when you get back

from New York and we'll see. And thank you again for a wonderful evening." She stood on tiptoe and gave me a brief kiss on the lips. Then she was gone into the apartment and the door had closed with finality.

The next day I took an early morning plane to New York. It was a short flight and I was there just after the regular beginning of the working day. I had a second breakfast and went downtown. The Consent Bureau was in a separate building from the other SAC offices, one which it shared with a number of advertising agencies.

The usual beautiful blonde was at the reception desk. She took a look at my identification and consulted something on her desk.

"You are expected," she said brightly. "You're to see Mr. Negley. He said to show you right in as soon as you arrived. His office is the third one on the right." She indicated the door through which I was to go.

I walked down the corridor until I came to the third office. The name *Clifford Negley* was lettered on it. The lettering was Gothic and small, so I knew that he was important. I opened the door and stepped into an elegant office.

There was a young man about my own age sitting behind the desk. He was wearing the narrow-shouldered dark suit that was almost a uniform among the young men of his department. He looked up as I entered.

"I'm Jerry Leeds," I said. "Expediter. Washington office."

"Of course," he said, leaping to his feet. "I've been expecting you. Told them to send you right in. Been looking forward to meeting you for a long time. I'm Cliff Negley." He came halfway across the office to shake my hand. Then he steered me to an ultra-comfortable chair

beside his desk.

"Drink?" he asked, waving to a mahogany autobar against one of the paneled walls.

"Not yet," I said.

"Part of the system here," he said. "No creative office is complete without its bar. We inherited a slogan from our predecessors. No drink—no think."

"What's Herbie's opinion of this?" I asked drily.

"Approves. For the creative branch of consent engineers only." He laughed. "There's even a family joke about it. The theory is that Herbie was asked if it were all right for the talent to stay oiled and that he took the slang expression literally and thought it very intelligent that some humans were smart enough to oil themselves."

I laughed dutifully since he seemed to expect it. "This is my first excursion into the Consent Bureau. I'm afraid I don't know much about it."

"What's to know?" he said. "The Consent Bureau is divided into two parts. One section formulates rules for and keeps records on newspapers, newscasts, advertising, product manufacturing, science, legal opinions, medical homilies and social habits. The main office for those activities is in Washington. The other section—this one—is the creative end of the field. Our province includes books, both fiction and non-fiction, plays, TV shows exclusive of the commercials, poetry, painting, sculpture, music, dancing, criticism, designing and architecture. Everything, in a word, that is creative."

"Sounds interesting."

"Interesting? Why, man, it's terrific. And you'd be surprised at the talent we have in here. This, you know, is our main office, and we're loaded with talent. You'll see as we get this new program under way. There's only one way of getting into this section. After you get your degree

in Consent Engineering, you're given a trial assignment. After that, if you produce acceptable creative work, you have a chance of being transferred in here."

"And start turning directives into art?" I asked, keeping all emotion out of my voice.

"More or less. After all, we are here to use our creative talents in the best interests of the State. Oh, we do have a few standard rules, but there aren't many. Take the general outline of the romantic novel. It used to be boy gets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl. We believe a more artistic conception is that boy gets girl, boy loses girl, boy realizes that girl wasn't right for him in the first place, then boy correctly gets girl who *is* right for him. That sort of thing. There's plenty of room for flexibility, as long as we stick to the general specifications laid down by SOCIAC."

"Interesting," I said, "when do we go to work?"

"Right away," he said. "We've already got a lot of ideas to be kicked around. Want to look at the prospectus?" He hefted a portfolio that looked about six inches thick.

"No, thanks. You can tell me about it or I can pick it up as we go along."

"We've got some terrific stuff," he said. He opened the portfolio and glanced at it. "We've got Maurice Fenimore lined up. He's had novels on the best-seller list every year for the past three years. You'll have to check on it, of course, but I think you'll like what he's going to whip up for us. It's a story of modern corruption. The protagonist is a Null historical scholar who, in the beginning, seems to be well-adjusted and a great fighter against Communism. But then we see more and more of the corruption and finally in the last chapter we learn that he's a member of the Uns *and* the Communists. Great, eh?"

"Great," I said drily.

"Knew you'd like it. Then we have three or four novels by lesser writers. A good romance. A fine mystery-suspense novel in which the expediter is chasing an escaped Communist all through the book. It looks as if the Communist was just too clever to be caught, but at the end we find that members of the United Nations who didn't want the Communist to be caught had been planting red herrings. There's a comic novel, I believe, and perhaps another adventure story. While there isn't much of a mass market for poetry, I thought we'd see two or three volumes out—one in a popular vein and one or two from the avant-garde."

"I should think that would be a little difficult," I said.

"Not at all." He flipped a few more pages in the portfolio. "Ronald Vane is about the most successful of the popular poets. I had a talk with him the other day and he came up with an idea. Here's a sample:

There's a Commie bird in each U. N. tree,
Singing wild songs about liberty.
He wants everyone to have his due;
The food for him, the droppings for you.

"A catchy little number, isn't it? Then we have Harriet Traynor lined up. She's the best of the Impressionists. She's going to do a volume called *The Face in the Communist Mirror.* She has a small audience but they go for everything she does."

He turned more pages. "Naturally, we'll put out a few non-fiction titles. I thought, perhaps, a couple of general books with titles like *Uns and Guns* and *One World of Slaves.* Then a study of the present leaders of the Uns called *Traitors in Exile.* And a volume of confessions to be published as *I Was a U. N. Communist.*"

"I suppose all of these have already been checked with Herbie?" I asked.

"Not Herbie, but our sector calculator. All of them came out with very high ratings. This is all tentative, of course. We understand that you've been placed in charge and may want to make some changes."

That was a laugh, I thought. If I tried to make any serious changes, they'd merely run the whole thing through Herbie and a punched card would indicate anti-social behavior and recommend therapy for me. I had never felt so defeated in my life.

"We've got two top song-writing teams," he continued, "working on songs." He hummed a few bars of music. "That's the tune for one of them. *Moon Over the Internationale.* Then we've commissioned Copley, our top serious composer, to do a *Death to the U.N.* concerto. From what I know of Copley's work, our biggest concern will be to keep it from starting a wave of lynchings.

"We'll be doing a few things in the other arts, too, but our main effort will naturally go into TV. We're starting a couple of daytime serials. One, to be called *John's Other Life,* will be the story of a man who is a loyal American by day and a member of the U.N.-Communist conspiracy at night. The other, *Mary Tuttle's Revenge,* deals with the fate of a girl who is tricked into marriage with an Uns-Commie. Of course, we'll spot a lot of single dramatic bits on shows and we're lining up all the comedians."

"What about architecture?" I asked drily. "Seems to me that you've covered almost everything else. Can't you figure out some way to build an anti-U.N. house?"

"We could if we had enough time," he said promptly. "I told you that we're loaded with talent here. But our mission should be accomplished before we could put up enough homes. We are going to have a few articles in

architectural magazines and popular home magazines on the similarity of Communist and Uns architecture and contrast this with the free style of architecture under social engineering. In fact, we have one very interesting piece coming up by Conan Smythe. We have some good aerial photographs of Australia and Smythe analyzes the buildings that have been put up there by the Uns and *proves* that every line is filled with hatred and mental sickness. Oh, we've got the project on the run."

"Yeah. But I would like to know how you can pour concrete so that it shows hatred."

He gave me a quick, bright glance. "That's the trouble with you boys in Security. You have no creative imagination."

"I knew there was something wrong with us," I said lightly. "When do we go to work?"

"Right now," he said with a grin.

It was a mild exaggeration. We went to another office and spent two hours talking about what a great program it was. By that time, we had to go to lunch. Later there was a conference, after which we finally started seeing an assorted lot of writers, painters, musicians, directors, producers and general idea men.

I had a full week of this, covering in detail the territory that Negley and I had discussed in the first meeting. I accepted everything that passed in front of me and merely concentrated on memorizing as much as I could so that I could report it to the underground. There was nothing else I could do. Even getting drunk at night couldn't remove my bitter feeling of frustration.

At the end of the week I flew back to Washington. It was late in the afternoon when I landed, so I decided to let SAC and Roger Dillon wait until the next morning. I called Meg Randall and we went out on the town.

It was a totally pleasant evening; the ending had been changed since the last time I'd been with her.

The next morning I reported to Roger Dillon. I gave him a brief picture of what had happened in New York.

"Sounds like it was shaping up fine," he said. "We're moving you into a temporary office over in Consent since you'll have to be working with them for some time. You'll move back to your old office when you've finished this project."

"Okay," I said. "What about the Communist in Cheyenne?"

"By this time enough information should have been collected on him so that Herbie will have a complete index. We'll arrange the escape immediately. We'll feed the information into all of the sector calculators and anything that shows up will be fed into Herbie. I'll give Herbie instructions to pass everything along to your office."

"How long do you want him to be loose and where do you want him to go?"

"I think we might keep the chase up for about a month," he said. "As for the spots, you'll find several maps in your office with those marked on it. There's one family in Cheyenne, but he may contact them on his own. The Longstreets have told him about them and he believes them sympathetic to Communism. We're pretty sure they're Uns. They in turn have seen a pro-Uns manuscript signed with Parker's name—we arranged that so it looked like an accident, of course—and think he's merely an individual rebel. If he does go to them for help they'll probably sympathize with him at least long enough for our purposes. After that, he should be driven out of Cheyenne. From there on, you can work out the methods for pushing him into contact with the suspects marked on the maps."

"That's all?"

"That's about it. Back to the salt mines, boy."

I went over to Consent. They had an office already fixed up for me—name on the door and all. It was slightly larger than my old office. In addition to the regular hoppers for messages from Herbie, one wall held a TV screen. That was for the chase. Whenever Parker was spotted while on the run the picture would be flashed on my screen. That would be often, for all over the nation there were concealed TV cameras that were swung into use when there was a hunt on. Many of them, at travel terminals, in big stores and restaurants and in planes and trains, were on continuously. Electronic cells could quickly identify anyone whose index had been fed into them; when they spotted Parker, my screen would come alive. At the same time, Herbie would start spitting out whatever information was being gathered.

The only thing on my desk was a memo saying that Mr. Carr would be glad to have me drop into his office.

I didn't like any part of it. For years I'd been living, intellectually and emotionally, in two tight little compartments. I'd been able to lock off my real feelings while I did my job in Security. There had been relatively little conflict. This was no longer true. Working as part of the project against the underground was playing directly on my emotions. I was beginning to feel as jumpy as a cat with its tail on fire.

It wasn't entirely the emotional conflict. There was also the feeling that my luck might run out at any moment. That, and the fact that I could do nothing to stop the high-powered propaganda campaign that would link the Uns with the Commies. And now that I was back in Washington, I felt that everything was just a little different—the atmosphere around the office, Roger Dillon's remarks,

the way I was being given all the dope on the program but almost no actual work. I couldn't see why Herbie had given me this assignment in the first place unless it concealed a trap. I was beginning to wish I had a few handy exits.

I got Roger Dillon on the inter-bureau phone. "Rog," I said, "I forgot one thing. When Parker escapes, I may need the help of a number of expediters, not only from the sectors but also from the national office."

"Sure," he said. "Use as many as you need. Check through Herbie for those that are available."

I disconnected and plugged into Herbie. I asked for copies of the identification cards and information on all available national expediters and for the same on the sector expediters in an area of ten states around Wyoming. After they arrived I went into Carr's office, feeling a little more secure.

Sand and Carr were together, but this time they seemed more willing to discuss the project. It was, however, merely a repetition of what had happened in New York. They had everything thoroughly planned and the discussion with me was a formality.

I had to admit they had planned well. There was hardly a phase of life that hadn't been covered. One of the biggest fields was toys and games for children. They had worked out dozens of games in which Uns and the Communists were linked together as villians. The "bad guys" were all Uns-Communists, while the "good guys" were social engineers or in some way representative of "the American way of life."

They showed me the plans for new editions of school books from the first grade on. In previous ones, the conditioning had been on Communists only; the writers had ignored the United Nations, apparently in the hope it

would die a natural death. Now this was to be changed. The program even included arithmetic, in which two Uns plus two Communists equaled four traitors. Or; "If in a village of fifty persons there were five Uns-Communists and one of them was given a transorbital lobotomy, how many loyal Americans and how many traitors were left?"

They had even carried it into the naming of commercial products. They had worked out the design and advertising approach for a new rodent killer which was to be called *Stun-Uns* and the advertising would stress the fact that once this had been used "the American Way" would prevail. The advertising copy for a reducing medicine would admonish everyone not to be "slothful and fat like the Uns and the Communists."

The number of "public service" ads was enormous. They pounded at the idea that Uns-Communists were listening to every word and watching every action in the hope that they could split up every family and turn American against American—that every citizen must watch every other citizen for the telltale signs.

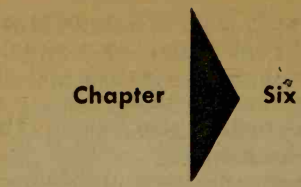
It was a thorough campaign. There was no doubt that, carried on long enough, it would condition almost everyone to exist in a permanent state of fear and hatred and that every move of the United Nations would be offset before it was made. This was the first all-out campaign to get us and when I stopped to think about it I didn't see how we had a chance.

Each day I spent the hours going over these projects with Carr and Sands. In the evening, I would write out all the details and get in touch with Gram's Pharmacy or one of my other contacts—I had several now, all in innocent-looking stores—and arrange to deliver my notes or have them picked up. Then I would go out with Meg and try to forget the day, losing myself in the warmth of our rela-

tionship. There was still a certain amount of strain in Meg, and moments when she would seem swamped in sadness. But that seemed natural enough, and at the same time we were moving closer together. I began to feel that she was the only person with whom I could relax.

When I had been back from New York for a week, I walked into my office one morning and found a message from Herbie in the emergency hopper. It was simple and to the point.

The Communist James Parker escaped this morning.



IT WAS A SIGNAL. Up to now everything had been fairly theoretical. The escape of James Parker was the flicking of a switch that would start the action. For one or two weeks everything would be concentrated on the hunt for Parker. The poor man would be hounded and driven from spot to spot, electronic eyes peering and searching for him wherever he went, then waves of expediters and the white-clad Clinic Squad rolling in toward him and deliberately leaving the one tiny rat-hole through which he could escape to run a little longer.

The newspapers and newscasts would be filled with the chase. It would be milked for every drop of excitement. Then the other part of the campaign would gradually be developed. Every American would have each waking hour filled with the suggestion that Uns and Communists were the same and that they were a terrifying threat. There would be more stories on the fugitive, with stronger and stronger hints that he was being helped by members of the United Nations; then there would be proof. Everything would be neatly and stoutly sewn together.

Somehow the underground would have to find a way to rip out those threads as fast as they were sewn, or soon there

would be no escape for anyone. I didn't know how—and I wasn't even sure that I still believed it could be done. The underground was as invisible to me as it was to the government. The only underground I really knew was the man in Gram's Pharmacy, Bruce Layton in the White House, my few new contacts, and myself.

For a moment I felt the throttling grip of panic. My gaze swept around the office and was stopped by the sheet of paper that popped through the slot in the wall and dropped into the hopper. I reached for it and made myself concentrate on the neatly typed lines.

JAMES PARKER, COMMUNIST

CODE: FC-11-6347-76-891-420-5
STATUS: Fugitive.
REMARKS: Subject escaped (Executive Order FC-2759-4308) during raid on home of Horace Longstreet, Senior Clerk in SAC. Longstreet and family ostensibly arrested as Communists. They will remain at Security Retreat, State of Canada, until after trial and conviction of subject.

Subject was supplied with enough money to last about two weeks. Also has the name and address of Stephen Wayne, living at 119 Hoover Street in Cheyenne. Subject believes Wayne to be sympathetic to Communist cause. Evidence on file (File Record UN-62534-87639-4231) indicates Wayne is member of United Nations underground organization.

Subject has been under observation for almost three weeks and full index has been compiled. This has been fed into all Observation Machines, both visual and statistical, within a radius of one hundred sectors. It is estimated that it will be impossible for

subject to escape observation for more than two consecutive hours.

Unusual habits which will help in identification: Subject's preference in clothes is what he calls "work clothes"—i.e., cheap, rough twill in dark colors such as affected by many of the executives who join Thoreau Vacation Clubs. Refuses to have his hair cut in the robot shops. Shaves himself, using old-style razor, blades for which can be bought in specialty shops today. Wears shoes with the heels built up slightly which makes his stride about one inch shorter than would be normal.

Subject is a heavy cigarette smoker. Has tried several brands since coming out of the Free State, but seems to have settled on *Whippets,* a brand which is not a big seller. His favorite breakfast is bacon and eggs, with special insistence on the eggs being boiled exactly three minutes, but he seems to be surprised that they are available. At mealtime, he always seems amazed by the number of items on the menu and will often ask questions about them. At night he often orders steak and insists on its being overcooked. Subject is attracted by any news concerning Russia. . . .

There was a lot more, but I wasn't in the mood to wade through all of it. There was no need for me to read it since it merely listed all the things about Parker which would help to spot him. This information had been fed into the calculating machines. Everything that went on in the country was also fed into the machines: every food ordered in every restaurant, every purchase in every store. Anything that coincided with Parker's habits would start electronic brains to checking and within seconds they'd know

whether it was Parker or someone with one or more of Parker's habits.

Even as I was thinking about it, the screen in my office flared into life and there was Parker. He was riding on a monorail train. A code number in one corner of the picture identified it as being in Cheyenne. A camera must have picked him up as he went through the turnstiles. He had quickly been identified, and, the cameras in the cars of that train had been activated. Relays had clicked and whirred as the photograph of Parker was compared with each passenger until he'd been spotted, and then one camera had remained on him. When he finally left the train, every camera in the neighborhood of the exit would be alerted.

Parker was hunched over in his seat with a newspaper held up to cover the lower part of his face. He was pretending to read it, but I could see this was only an act and not a very good one. He was frightened and I felt sorry for him, not, of course, because he was a Communist, but because he was a terrified and hounded human being. Even worse, I realized that this man was also a personal threat to me. I had to manipulate his destruction, and if in the process my own feelings were revealed, I would also be manipulating the end of Gerald Leeds—not to mention Paul Revere. I wondered if Parker had any idea of how scientifically he was being tracked wherever he went.

In spite of the fact that I had no active part in the chase at the moment, I spent the day in my office watching. It had the fascination of the horrible, and I couldn't stop myself.

He went to the Wayne house first, but there was no one home. I had expected that. I had passed along the news through Gram that Parker would be arriving and that it

was a trap. Apparently Wayne had been told, so he undoubtedly was a member of the underground.

When he drew a blank there, Parker wandered around aimlessly for a while, sticking mostly to the less prosperous part of the city. The cameras caught him once as he stopped for lunch and there was a location report when he bought a package of cigarettes. He appeared on the screen again when he approached a monorail turnstile, but then he changed his mind and hurried off.

This went on for a couple of hours, with enough pick-ups to show that he was sticking to an area of about ten blocks. Then there was almost an hour when nothing came in. I guessed that he was probably holed up in some small shop where there was no camera and where whatever he bought, such as coffee, wouldn't mean anything, while he thought over the situation.

When we next picked him up, it looked as if my guess had been right. He'd been thinking and had come up with what he thought was a solution. He went into a barber shop—a modern one, not one of the old style. The camera picked him up for my screen almost as soon as he was seated in the chair. The robot barber started snipping off big hunks of hair. He was having it cut very short, which would change the shape of his head somewhat. Apparently he had at least a hint that there were cameras searching for him.

From the barber shop he went to one of the sporting goods stores and bought a change of clothes. He was still sticking to rough, casual clothes, but he was smart enough to get them in color and cut a little different from his old ones.

Afterwards, he got on the monorail and rode to the end of the line. The turnstile camera stayed on him until he walked out of sight, heading for the highway that led out

of the city. It looked as if he realized that the only safe way to leave was on foot. The change in his appearance might have been enough to fool men, but not the new photographs of him that had already replaced the old ones. It would still be just as easy to spot him.

He'd been heading for Carpenter, not far from the Colorado border. There'd be no more reports on him until he reached there or showed up in some other urban center.

I was limp and exhausted when I left the office that afternoon. It was as though I was the one who was the fugitive. I realized that to a great degree I had identified with Parker, probably out of my fear that it might soon happen to me.

I went straight from the office to Meg's apartment. I'd been seeing her every night since my return from New York and it had reached the point where these meetings were a total necessity for me.

Our relationship was somewhat odd. We had grown very close, yet there was some kind of barrier between us. A dozen times I'd been on the point of telling her how I was beginning to feel about her, but she always seemed to sense it and would become artificially gay and talkative. She was becoming more tense, too, although some of that could have been reaction to my tensions.

She opened the door almost as soon as I'd pressed the buzzer. She was wearing a tan and black dress that clung to her figure like it was afraid of being lost.

"Hi, honey," I said. "You look like the answer to a tired bureaucrat's prayer."

She laughed. "Is it me or what you guessed I was holding in my hand?" she asked. She brought her right hand into view and it held a tall glass, with ice cubes floating in the amber contents and tiny beads of water on the outside.

I leaned over and kissed her. At first her lips responded

fully, then there was a barely perceptible tensing as she withdrew some inner part of herself. It was always like that. The difference was so slight that I suspected she was unaware of it herself.

I took the glass and grinned at her over the top of it. "It's times like this," I said, "that make me realize how much Herbie is missing. If he only knew how wonderful it is to be greeted by a cold drink and a warm girl, he'd blow several thousand tubes."

"Careful," she said. "Herbie might be listening."

"Herbie's always listening," I said sourly. "Herbie hears all, sees all and knows not a damn thing. Herbie is the electronic equivalent of a Mongoloid idiot."

"Jerry," she said warningly. She laughed nervously. "It's just that you never know when they might be listening in." She glanced apprehensively around the apartment. "Don't forget that this was the apartment of an expediter and was wired accordingly."

"Relax, honey," I said. I went over and dropped into a chair. "So maybe they're eavesdropping." I didn't really believe that or I wouldn't have been saying it. Meg Randall, now that she was divorced from George Randall, certainly wasn't important enough to attract much attention from SAC. I wondered why Herbie permitted *me* to see her so often, if I was getting as important as I was supposed to think. "Honey, I'm not only a tired bureaucrat, I'm a completely pooped one."

"Hard day at the office," she asked, "expediting things back and forth? Or did they hand you a whole flock of divorce assignments today?"

I wagged the glass at her. "That was a low blow, girl."

"I'm sorry, Jerry. I didn't mean it the way it sounded."

"Is that what's wrong with us, Meg?"

For a minute I thought she was going to break down and

tell me what was wrong with us, but then I saw her face harden again. "I don't know what you're talking about," she said. "But I do know that you're talking so much I'm not getting a drink. Be right back." She vanished in the direction of the kitchen.

When she came back she had herself well in hand. "Now, tell me," she said, "why my big Security and Consent man is pooped."

"I've been looking over Herbie's shoulder," I said. "It's a sight to unnerve a bigger man than I."

"Peeping into bedrooms?"

"What is apt to become the favorite armchair sport of the century," I said. "I've been chasing a Communist."

"Actually?" she asked.

"Actually, but not physically." I told her about James Parker and about the way I'd spent the day.

Her face was pale and drawn as I finished. "He—he is a Communist, after all," she said. I recognized the tone. She was talking to herself, not to me.

"Sure," I said. "He's just a Communist. What he believes in is one side of a two-headed coin. There's a lot of that kind of money around today. But that isn't the point."

"What is the point?"

"I felt sorry for the poor devil," I said. "He's a Communist but he's also human, an individual. I think that what got me was his complete unawareness of the giant eyes and ears of an overgrown clockwork toy that was invading his privacy and destroying what little free will he has left. Frankenstein's monster couldn't hold a candle to Herbie and all his little connected brains."

"Who's Frankenstein?" she asked.

"A social engineer who didn't know he was one," I said drily. "You know, I think the chief thing that struck me as I watched him starting to run—with all the little wheels

clicking off everything he did and the little relays chuckling among themselves at his helplessness—was that it could happen to any of us. There, but for the grace of Herbie, Harvard tech and plenty of luck, go I."

"Luck?" she said. "No, Jerry—"

"Yes," I said. I wanted to break down the barriers between us and talk to her in the way that two people should, but some remnant of caution made me hold back. Free communication between individuals, even between those in love, had almost vanished from the world. So I kept my tone light and skirted around the things I wanted to tell her. "Even Herbie admits the existence of luck. His tubes blush at the admission, but he makes it. But let's talk about something that Herbie wouldn't understand even if he should eavesdrop."

"What?"

"Us," I said. I put down the glass. "By this time, even though we haven't mentioned it, you must know that I'm in love with you."

Her eyes were too bright. "I love you, too, darling," she said lightly. "Now, how about taking me out somewhere that will provide our love with some good solid food?"

"I thought maybe we'd stay in tonight."

"The man talks about love," she said, "and wants to turn me into a kitchen drudge."

"Whispering orders into a robot-stove is hardly drudgery," I said. "We could stay in and have a nice friendly evening instead of rushing around and seeing how much alcohol we can consume and how many phony jokes we can laugh at."

"You're getting old and grumpy," she said. "Come on."

I looked at her as she moved nervously about the room. "Meg, what are you trying to run away from?"

She moved into the foyer where there was a full-length

mirror and looked at herself, smoothing the dress down over the firm flesh of her hips. She seemed more interested in the image of herself than in what I'd said, but I felt that was only a pose.

"What?" she said. "Running away? Why, from boredom, darling. What else is there to run away from?"

"Yourself, for one thing," I said quietly. "And there's something about *us* that frightens you. That's why I—"

She came swiftly across the room and stopped me with her lips against mine. Then her mouth slid away and brushed across my cheek.

"Jerry," she said softly, "take me out now. We'll come home early, but now I want to go where there are soft lights and people and laughter. Please, Jerry."

I gave up the struggle. "Okay, honey," I said. "We'll go add to Herbie's statistics on the pleasure drive."

"And no more shop talk," she said, pulling me toward the door. "Promise me, Jerry. You talk too much."

"It's the one advantage I have over Herbie," I said. But I followed her out of the apartment.

It was a repetition of all the other evenings. We had dinner in a place where to see and be seen was as important as the food. We drank too much. We laughed too much at jokes that weren't funny. We danced until we were going through the motions like two robots. Then we went back to the apartment and made love with a frenzy that left no room for thinking and left us completely worn out.

When I arrived at the office the next morning James Parker had already crossed the border into Colorado. He had slipped over some time during the night, successfully avoiding the identification stations. Early in the morning he'd apparently caught a ride, for he suddenly turned up some fifty miles below the border. He was heading for

Fort Morgan.

A glance at the map told me that he was going in the wrong direction. SAC wanted him to go to Denver before heading east. I studied the map for a minute and then gave Herbie orders to relay to the Colorado Sector. Within a matter of minutes men from the Clinic Squad would be flown to Kersey where they would set up a road block. There was a good chance that Parker would get some hint of the activity, but to make certain we sent an expediter down the road disguised as a farmer. He would pick up Parker and let him know, in casual conversation, about the road block ahead. That should do the trick.

For the moment there was no information coming through and I waited it out. Then about thirty minutes later there was a flash picture of him from Gilcrest. That was on the road to Denver, so he'd been turned all right. I sent the Clinic Squad down ahead of him to Brighton where they could be used quickly if he struck off at another tangent.

I waited for the next pick-up. I was as deeply caught up in the hunt as I had been the day before, all of my attention focused on this lone figure who unknowingly was pitting himself against an army of giant brains. I knew he couldn't win, but I kept hoping he would.

The light went on the inter-bureau phone. It was Roger Dillon.

"How's it going?" he asked.

"Okay," I said. "He's headed for Denver now. He'll be there some time today."

"It'll take him a few hours," Rog said, "and there won't be much for you to do until he does hit Denver. I've got a little errand you can run for the Bureau."

"What?"

"Let me see," he said musingly, "you knew Nancy

Harper, didn't you?"

"Yes." I realized, with a feeling of shame, that I hadn't even thought of Nancy during the last two or three weeks.

"That's right," he said. "I remember now. They came for her in your apartment, didn't they?" You could bet that he had all the information at his fingertips, but he liked to pretend he was vague on the facts.

"Yes. What about Nancy?"

"It's really too bad," he said. "You know, Jerry, boy, I personally feel a great sadness when anything goes wrong with one of the people in SAC. It's like having something happen to a member of my family. I want you to know that's the way I feel about Nancy."

"What about her?" I asked, trying to keep the irritation out of my voice. Rog always annoyed me when he struck that attitude, but now I had even less patience with it.

"Therapy failed," he said. "The poor girl realized it herself and has signed a request for lobotomy."

"That's silly," I said without thinking. "That girl is no more a traitor to her government than you are. She not only is incapable of rebelling, she hero-worshipped the whole idea of social engineering."

"My dear boy," he drawled, "you mustn't get so upset even though you were more or less involved with her for a time. Nothing is being done against her will. We're going to help her. She has within her a small, hard core of resistance that is ruining her efficiency and making her unhappy. We're going to remove it. After the lobotomy she'll be at peace with herself, a happy and placid citizen."

Well, that was one word for it. The lobotomy cases were certainly placid. They walked around like fleshy robots and had just about as much volition. Because some little spark of life had burned in Nancy Harper and for one moment she hadn't wanted to see another individual

prodded into a trap like a rat, they were going to slice around in her brain until they snuffed out that spark.

"Sure," I said bitterly.

"She'll come out of it a better woman," he said cheerfully. "Anyway, they're performing the lobotomy today—in about thirty minutes, to be exact. Since she was working in our department, it's necessary that we have someone there to witness it. I had intended to go myself—I felt it was the least I could do for the poor girl—but something has come up and I won't be able to make it. So if you'll run over to the operating rooms . . ."

"No," I said.

He went on as if he hadn't heard me. "I don't suppose she'll be conscious when you get there, but if she should be, tell her how I feel, will you? And tell her we'll still have a job for her. Probably something down in the sorting room wouldn't be too difficult for her when this is over. . . . Did you say something, Jerry, boy?"

"I'd rather not go," I said, putting it a little more diplomatically this time.

"I understand exactly how you feel, but this is no time for sentiment. It would probably cheer her up no end to know you were standing by. And we do have to have an observer there. Besides, my boy, you've never done anything like this before. I'd like you to start getting a wider knowledge of what goes on in the bureau. You never know what the future holds for you, Jerry, boy."

Was there a veiled threat in his last sentence? I could no longer be sure.

"But this business of James Parker," I started.

"Nothing will happen while you're gone that Herbie can't handle automatically," he said. "You'd better run along now. Drop in on your way back and let me know how it went."

He broke the connection before I could think of any more arguments. Not that they would have done any good, I realized. I'd worked with him long enough to know when he was giving a firm order, no matter how obliquely he phrased it. There was no way out of it unless I wanted to be next in line for the same operating room.

I did something I'd never done before. I hurried downstairs and had two quick drinks before going to the Clinic Squad building directly behind the SAC headquarters. My identity card admitted me to the operating floor without any question.

It was my first visit there and the sight of the corridor did nothing to make me feel any better. Judging by the blinking lights over each door the operating rooms were all busy. I had a moment's vision of lobotomy cases coming out of there in an unbroken line—and they all had the faces of Nancy and David. I shuddered.

An interne guided me to the proper room and I entered the observation studio. There was a large glass window through which I could see the operating room with its long white table. Crouched over it, like some prehistoric monster, was a machine with several long metallic arms hanging loosely. In the interest of medical tradition, I suppose, the machine was all white.

Even as I looked a door opened and two internes wheeled a stretcher into the operating room. Nancy Harper was on it. She seemed to be unconscious, her face so pale it was almost invisible against the sheet. The internes lifted her from the stretcher and began strapping her to the table.

The interne had followed me into the observation room. "That's the girl from Security, isn't it?" he asked.

"Yes," I said and was surprised to find that my voice worked at all.

"An interesting case," he said. "I remember her. Usu-

ally, you know, patients don't take kindly to the idea of lobotomy, but this girl seemed to be eager for it from the start. She kept insisting that there was something wrong within her and she wanted it cut out. She was right, too. Therapy didn't do a bit of good."

"Is she unconscious?" I asked.

He nodded. "Shallow pentathol anesthesia."

I pointed to the machine that hovered over the table. "Is the operation done by a machine?"

"Oh, yes."

"What's happened to surgeons?" I asked. "Have we put them to slicing sandwich meats?"

If he caught the irony in my voice, he ignored it. "We still need them," he said. "But we're pretty busy up here. If we had to use an individual surgeon for each case we'd never get done. The machine does the operation—and actually does it much neater than a human could—on instructions from the surgeon. That way one doctor can be doing up to a dozen operations at a time. He's in a central control room, with screens in front of him so that he can see each operation. He feeds the operating orders into a keyboard, and the machines merely follow orders. When there are students or other observers watching, as in this case, he also repeats the instructions into a microphone. You'll be able to hear him in here."

"That's nice," I said drily.

The two internes had finished strapping Nancy to the table and now they left the room. I thought I saw a quiver of motion from the machine, but I probably only imagined that it was eager to begin.

"It's time for it to start," the interne said.

"Make ready to operate," a voice suddenly said over the loudspeaker. "Carefully elevate the upper eyelid of the right eye."

One of the arms of the machine came to life and snaked down toward the figure on the operating table. I hastily looked somewhere else.

"Insert the transorbital leukotome into the superior conjunctival sac. Direct the point of the leukotome against the orbital plate to the point of its greatest convexity. Holding the shaft in the plane of the nasal bone, drive the leukotome through the orbital plate to a depth of five centimeters from the upper eyelid."

"A superb technique," the interne whispered.

I made a noise in my throat, which I hoped he would take for agreement, and continued to stare at the opposite wall. It didn't help much. My imagination was still lively enough for me to have too good a picture of the knife slipping past her eye and plunging into her brain.

"Now," continued the voice on the loudspeaker, "draw the handle of the leukotome laterally in the same plane until the shaft impinges on the lateral margin of the bony orbit. Return it to the midline position. Now drive the leukotome in another two centimeters to a total depth of seven centimeters from the margin of the upper eyelid."

There was a twitching muscle in my right eyelid and I knew I was going to be sick.

The voice droned on. "Move the handle of the leukotome gently toward the midline until it is parallel to the ala of the nose. Then draw it laterally to the same angle, or to a total of thirty degrees. Now, with the handle of the leukotome in this lateral position, elevate the leukotome until the shaft impinges upon the superior orbital ridge so that the point of the instrument is in close proximity to the floor of the frontal fossa. Withdraw the leukotome rapidly and apply pressure to the upper eyelid with a sterile sponge."

"Wonderful," breathed the interne.

I tried to concentrate on the wall.

"Now, carefully elevate the upper eyelid of the left eye," the voice said.

The wall wasn't enough. I plucked at the sleeve of the interne. "A bathroom," I said. "Where is one?"

He looked at me with amusement. "Second door to the right. Better hurry or you'll miss the second transorbital insertion."

I glared at him and hurried out of the room. I barely made it. Afterwards I felt a little better, but not much. I went slowly back to the observation room, hoping that I wasn't arriving too soon.

The operation was obviously over when I arrived and I heaved a sigh of relief. The interne was still amused.

"I thought you expediters were supposed to be tough guys," he said. "Nerves of iron and that sort of thing."

"So they're a little rusty," I muttered. "Besides, I knew her."

"Oh, that," he said. His face took on a leer. "Don't worry. She'll be just as good in that department as ever."

I felt a flush of anger, but was feeling too rocky to think of a suitable reply. "But—otherwise?" I asked.

"She'll be fine," he said cheerfully. "They always are. Oh, maybe a little less quick on the trigger. A little slow on the uptake. And there'll be a lot of jobs she can't do. But she'll be able to do any simple work and she won't have any more conflicts that'll make her unhappy."

"Dr. Herbie's nostrum," I said, "guaranteed to cure man or beast. Well, I'll see you around."

"Maybe you will at that," he said thoughtfully.

I walked out and took the elevator downstairs. I stopped in and had another drink. A large drink—and a strong one. I needed it even more than I had earlier. All I felt like doing was to start running and not stop. After the

second drink I felt a little better, but not much.

I entered the SAC building and went up to Roger Dillon's office. He was waiting—like a happy little spider in his web, I thought.

"How'd it go?" he asked.

"Rippingly," I said.

He raised one eyebrow questioningly.

"They're a bunch of cut-ups over there," I said. I suspected I was sounding a little hysterical. I wouldn't quarrel with the suspicion. I felt hysterical.

"It's hardly a subject for levity," he said primly. "Tell me about it."

I gave him as brief a run-down as I thought I could get away with.

"A wonderful thing, lobotomy," he said. "Think of all the sick people who'd be wandering around if it weren't for that. First one you ever saw?"

I nodded.

"What was your reaction?"

"Sick," I said honestly.

"The trouble with you, Jerry, boy, is that you think too much," he said. "Too much imagination. Now you probably imagined yourself in her place, feeling the whole thing. That's foolish. I would say, offhand, that there's very little chance of your ever needing a lobotomy."

"Thanks for nothing," I said. "Is that a promise?"

"Just a personal opinion. Of course, such matters are decided by Herbie. But you watch yourself and you'll have nothing to worry about. I like you, Jerry, boy."

"And I like you, Rog, old pal," I said just as promptly. I meant it about as much as he did.

"Okay," he said with a grin. "Back to the salt mines."

I went back to my little office in Consent. I wasn't even interested in what was happening to James Parker. I sat

down in the chair and lit a fresh cigarette from my old one. I was so nervous I could hardly sit still. There might not have been much logic in my thinking just then, but the combination of the operation and Rog's way of talking had left me feeling that they were breathing right down the back of my neck.

Finally, I turned my attention to James Parker. There were some typed reports in the hopper, but before I could look at them, the screen lighted up. Parker had just reached the edge of Denver and had stopped at a restaurant. In the close-up view, it was obvious that the strain was beginning to tell on him. Deep lines of worry etched his face as he fumbled nervously with his coffee cup. It was obvious that he hadn't been able to get much, if any, sleep.

I checked with the map again. There were two sections of Denver into which we wanted Parker to go. I'd have to organize a set-up that would drive him into them. It would take several squads of expediters and men from the local Clinic Squad. A series of street searches and patrols would make him go in the desired direction.

I already had it partially mapped out when I looked at the screen again and got a fresh surprise. Sitting at the table across from Parker was a sallow chap wearing horn-rimmed glasses. The two were engaged in animated conversation. Parker seemed to have acquired new life since the last time I had looked at him.

It was only a few moments before the two rose and left the restaurant together. As the screen darkened, my phone rang.

There was a sharp note in Roger Dillon's voice. "Jerry!" he said. "Jerry, for Pete's sake, did you see what happened?"

I was puzzled, but I could see no reason for quite so

much excitement. "I was awake, Rog," I said slowly. "Who was the fellow with Parker?"

There was a brief strangling sound from the phone. "Damn!" Dillon exploded finally. "It's the worst thing that could have happened! That fellow was Morton Arnold, a—another Commie we allowed to escape from the Free State months ago. Obviously he and Parker knew each other. And we've been having trouble keeping Arnold spotted, so he must have friends in Denver, a hiding place, a . . . . Jerry, boy, you've got to *do* something!"

I didn't say anything. This could be one of the first breaks the Uns had had in a long time. If Parker could manage to hole up safely with people who were really sympathetic to his ideas, an essential segment of the plot to link Uns and Commies would collapse. If . . .

"Jerry, are you *there?*" Rog broke in. "We've got no time to waste on this, fellow! Get moving and hop a plane for Denver. Parker has to be split off from Arnold or we're really sunk!"

"Listen, Rog," I started. "Let's take it easy. What can I do out there that I can't do better from here?"

"Don't argue, dammit!" Rog howled. "Parker knows you and trusts you! Nobody else will be able to approach him now that he has a friend to steer him around. You've got to get there in a hurry and ride herd on Parker while the Clinic Squad captures Arnold. Then you can give Parker a shove in the right direction and get back here. But get moving, boy, get moving!"

He hung up before I could frame any further protests. It wouldn't have done any good to argue in any case. I'd have to go, and work out the problem as I went along. If I couldn't solve it, I'd have to throw Parker to the wolves again. But if I could pull all the strings just right, I might be able to get him into a nice safe hole where he wouldn't

do Herbie's little plot any good at all. It was worth taking some chances for.

Working swiftly, I checked out all the equipment that I might need on the job. Then I went through my desk and pocketed some of the cards I had hidden away there. From now on, I decided, I'd carry them wherever I went as a safety precaution—there was no telling when I'd have to do some running myself. Finally, I ordered a plane to be made ready and got one of the SAC cars to drive me out to the airport.

Strangely enough, the activity proved to be good for me. Thinking of the probable dangers and possible solutions somehow took my mind off myself as a person, and made me feel more like an important cog in the Uns machinery again. When the plane landed in Denver I felt ready to tackle anything.

I was met by a small army of expediters and Clinic Squad men. They whisked me into a car which tore away from the airport with terrific acceleration. Even while I was catching my breath, the excited expediter beside me was filling me in on intervening events.

It was a short drive, since Parker and Arnold had remained on the outskirts of the city. It was an old section, rapidly becoming a slum, so probably Arnold's refuge was in the immediate area. But there must have been some reason why he didn't want to approach it immediately, because the two had concealed themselves temporarily in —of all places—an old-fashioned moving picture theater.

There were so many expediters spotted around the inside of the place that I was surprised neither of the Commies had noticed them. The new, efficient-looking cut of the SAC men's clothing certainly didn't fit in with the tone of the place at all, nor did their alert postures and expressions. But apparently Parker and Arnold were com-

pletely wrapped up in a discussion of their problems and plans.

I waited until there was an empty seat next to them, and slid into it. Settling back as if to watch the flickering, jumpy movie—the quality of the film had been poor to begin with, and after all possible thought-provoking scenes and dialogue had been censored out it was a mess—I carefully nudged Parker's knee with my own.

I put a warning finger to my lips as Parker gave a startled jump. He remained in his seat, but the look he gave me was full of wonder and—was it fear? The hardest part, I knew, was coming: I'd have to make my explanation of how I happened to be in Denver and how I happened to have noticed Parker in the movie house very convincing indeed.

But there was a moment's delay. Arnold, sitting on the other side of Parker, uttered a sharp question. My Communist "comrade" turned to him, apparently with an explanation of who I was. Then, suddenly, Arnold was leaning over towards me.

"When and where was our beloved ex-leader Malenkov born?" he whispered urgently.

It was obviously a test—but was the answer he wanted the correct one or some kind of a trick phrase? I hadn't learned of any such question being used as a code in my sleep-training, but it might be something even Herbie didn't know about. There was, however, only one thing to do. I gave a straight answer.

"January 5, 1902. Orenburg," I whispered back.

His reaction told me immediately that I had been wrong. He grabbed Parker's arm, snapped a command, and started fighting his way along the row of seats in the opposite direction. I barked out one word, "Wait!"— and realized I'd never be able to convince Arnold I was a

friend. There was only one way left to play it, and I'd have to salvage whatever I could out of the situation later on.

I stood up and waved my arm. Expediters came charging down every aisle, and after a moment or two all the lights in the place blazed on. Parker and Arnold plunged toward an exit, but there was a solid row of grim-faced men blocking their path.

And one of those men wasn't as grim as he looked. One of them, in fact, must have been completely green in this kind of action. There was a sharp flash and a high whining sound, and a surprised young expediter was looking from Arnold's slowly crumpling body to the fading glow of the gun in his own hand.

Amazingly enough, the others in his little group kept their heads. Parker had hesitated only for a moment, then he plunged up the aisle towards them again. They estimated the elements of the problem quickly and correctly, and started falling all over themselves, apparently trying to stop Parker but actually getting in each other's way enough to let him escape. It was a pretty corny job of acting, but Parker wasn't being critical just then. He dove through the curtains at the exit and his footsteps clattered away in the distance.

The SAC men he'd escaped straightened themselves out and formed a knot around the body in the aisle. Others were moving through the theater, doing their best to calm the panicky audience. I was trembing myself as one of them came up to me, and it wasn't simple reaction to the excitement. I was disgusted with myself for having failed so miserably in the task I'd set myself; all I'd accomplished was to flush Parker out of his hole so the hounds could get on his trail again. My first real opportunity to monkey-wrench the Uns-Commie propaganda

plot had failed miserably, and I was disgusted at myself for allowing it to happen. And on top of that, I had been directly responsible for the death of a fellow human being—a Communist, it was true, but still a human being and a potential thinking individual. It gave me a sick, empty feeling. I hated myself just then, and if I had been a little less stunned I think I would have thrown caution to the winds, turned on the expediters with any weapon handy, and gone down fighting.

"Nice," the Denver man in front of me grinned. "A little messy, perhaps, but nice. Parker's out in the open again, and even more scared than ever. He'll be easy to steer now."

With a supreme effort, I calmed my jangling nerves somewhat. But I couldn't smile back. "Let's get out of here," I said brusquely. And I pushed on past and left him standing there, with the smile on his face beginning to look a little foolish.

On the plane back to Washington, I did a lot of thinking. It wasn't all clear-headed and logical, but at least the quantity was large. I stopped blaming myself entirely for what had happened, but I couldn't get over feeling sick and depressed about it. And I knew the time had come for me to make a major decision. There was nothing to be gained for the United Nations cause by my going on in the same old rut. The propaganda machinery had all been set up. Any further details I might learn about it would be superfluous, and I hadn't progressed an inch toward finding a way to sabotage it. I didn't know if I could be of more value to the underground in some other job, but I knew that for my own peace of mind I'd have to find another—a more active and honest one. If I didn't I'd probably turn into a babbling idiot.

The funny part was, none of this seemed to be due to fear. For the first time in weeks, I didn't feel afraid for my own neck. Apparently it had taken a shock to make me re-discover that there were more important things than my own neck.

We got back to Washington at just about the time I would normally leave the office. I thought of going back to the Consent Bureau to see if Rog Dillon had been waiting to talk to me, but decided to hell with it. I felt too much like punching Dillon's fat face to take a chance on seeing him at all. I could turn in the equipment I'd checked out and hadn't used in the morning, unless I'd found some way of leaving SAC for good by then.

Besides, I wanted to see Meg. I took a cab to her apartment. As usual, she met me at the door with a drink and a kiss. The only thing to mar it was that she was once more dressed to go out. And I was determined, among other things, to stay in and talk to her.

I took the drink and headed for a chair. I knew that the situation was approaching a crisis, and that I might be taking an awful chance by blowing my stack now. But the human values still came first in Uns philosophy, and human values were at stake here. If everything was going to blow up in my face, I was at least going to square myself away with Meg first.

"How is my tired bureaucrat tonight?" she asked.

"Tired," I said. "And bureaucratic. And somewhat bitter. Where's your drink?"

"In the kitchen."

"Get it."

Her eyebrows went up at the corners. "All men are beasts," she said as she left the room.

She was soon back with her drink. "I've wondered when you'd start beating me," she said lightly. "I guess this is

it."

I grinned at her, but I could feel the tightness in my own lips. "Maybe," I said. "Maybe you'll think it's worse than being beaten. I want to talk to you."

"Not again," she said in mock horror. "You mean the home-cooked meal, the long serious lecture, everything?"

"Not everything. I'll take you out, if you still want to go, after we've had the talk."

"Please, Jerry. I couldn't bear it. There'll be time to talk when we're old. Let's have fun while we can."

"We haven't been having fun," I said. "We've been kidding ourselves. Let's stop it."

She put her drink down and came across to my chair. She perched on the arm and bent to kiss me. I forced myself to pull away.

"Please, Jerry," she said again.

She had the magic for me, but this time I wasn't going to give in to it. I knew now how I was going to approach the subject.

"Later," I said firmly.

"All right," she said. She moved impatiently, half turning her back to me. "What do you want to talk about?" I couldn't see her face, but I could hear fear in her voice and I wondered why.

"I told you last night that I love you," I said.

"I believe you did mention something about it," she said casually. "Should I have been paying more attention?"

"You should have," I said, "but I'll get around to it again. You and I have been seeing a lot of each other recently, Meg. It's true that our relationship has been pretty much on the surface. Every time we started to crack the enamel, you shied away. That bothers me, frankly, but I'm sure that I love you, very much, in fact."

She didn't say anything or look around.

"In spite of the way you act most of the time," I said, "I think you love me. At least, a little."

"I do love you, Jerry," she said. Her voice was so low I could hardly hear her.

"Then why do you keep running away from it? Why does it frighten you?"

"I can't tell you," she said.

"Why?"

"I can't tell you, Jerry," she said. The fear was stronger still in her voice.

"Okay," I said. "If we can't talk about you, we'll talk about me."

"Let's go out, Jerry," she said pleadingly.

"No," I said. "You say you're in love with me. Well, what do you know about the man you're in love with?"

"What do I need to know?" she asked. She was still speaking in almost a whisper. "Except that I love him?"

"That's just it. You need to know a lot more."

All the reasons for and against stood out clearly in my mind. I had two strong reasons for telling her. One, the biggest, was that finding myself in love with her was bringing together the two things that were most important in my life and it was better to find out right away if they could stand being together. If she hated the U.N. and the idea of rebellion, our love could never do anything except make us both miserable. It was better to find out about that right away.

As I had drawn closer to Meg I had realized that I had never been in love before. I'd thought I had, but this was so different that I knew the others had only been surface scratches. And instinctively I knew other things about it. Now it was mostly sex and the beginning of a special communication, but it would grow to be a lot more than

hat. And a deep love, I believed, could only grow where here was honesty. Her love for me could never grow in a healthy way if there was a major part of my life concealed from her. And my love for her would also be stunted if I had to conceal things from her.

The other reason was simply that if I was going to disappear into the underground, I wanted to take her with me.

"If that's the way you're going to talk I'll like it," she said. She was attempting to recapture the light note, but it wasn't very successful.

I reached out and took her hand. "Falling in love with a social engineer can be a very serious matter," I said lightly.

"You mean the elite of the elite," she said. There was a note of bitterness in her voice. "George used to tell me how damned elite all the social engineers were. Or did you mean that social engineers think they also have the right to redesign the human soul? George tried that with me, too. It was what first marred my love for him. I—I didn't love him at the end, you know."

"No, I didn't mean that. I'm sorry, Meg—that was meant to be a light opening line instead of some kind of a reminder. . . . Although it happens to be a serious matter in the case of this particular social engineer."

"Why?" she asked tightly.

"It happens to be a pretty long story," I said, "and it started when I was still at Harvard Tech. I got into Social Engineering School the way everyone else did—as a result of the general tests given to everyone when I was still in junior high. I suppose that in a vague way I was glad because it meant certain privileges, but I didn't feel any divine calling the way some did as soon as they found out they were destined to be part of the elite. In fact,

even after I was in Harvard Tech I found most of the stuff pretty boring."

"Jerry," she said.

"It's all right, honey," I told her. "I could shout this part out on the street. It's in Herbie's records anyway. Besides, this is basic talk for us, so keep quiet.

"Part of the story is that because of the boredom I did a lot of fooling around with the mechanical brains in school. Another part is what happened to my best friend. But I'll tell you all that another time. More important, while I was at school I met a member of the United Nations underground and—"

She twisted suddenly on the arm of the chair and slid off into my lap. Her arms went around my neck and her lips brushed across my cheek and started nibbling at my ear.

"Darling," she said urgently, "please take me out. Anywhere. You can talk all you want to when we're out—we'll go to the park or anywhere you say—only please get me out of this apartment."

I pulled my head back far enough so I could see her face. It was alive with fear. "What's wrong, Meg?" I asked.

"Just take me out of here," she said.

I guessed at a reason for her reaction, taking the first thing that popped into my mind. "Honey, how did you get so conditioned to be afraid of the Uns?" I asked. I decided to edit some of the long talk and get right to the point. It would be a greater shock but it might be better for both of us. "There's no reason to fear the United Nations or its underground movement. I'm part of it myself. That's what I was starting to tell you."

She drew back suddenly and looked at me. The color had drained from her face, leaving it a dead white beneath

he black hair. Her body twisted, sliding from my lap to he floor. Her hands gripped my knees convulsively. Her ace, staring up at me, seemed to be all eyes—frightened yes.

"Jerry," she said, "you've got to listen to me and be- ieve me. There isn't much time. I do love you, Jerry—I ove you more than I ever thought it possible to love omeone—that's what makes this so horrible."

"What?"

"Shhh," she said. "Don't talk any more. Just listen. When I came back from the divorce—before I knew I was going to love you—I was feeling bitter towards everyone, even you. I—I agreed to help Roger Dillon when he said he wanted to test you. They've been listening every time we've been here, Jerry! I tried to stop you from talking—and now it's too late!"

For a minute, I was quiet, digesting what she'd said. Thinking what it meant. I knew that it was probably even later than she thought. If Roger Dillon had suspected me enough to set this trap, then everything would have been in readiness for a long time. It wouldn't take long for the Clinic Squad to reach the apartment once they'd heard my admission over the loudspeaker.

There was one funny thing about it and strangely enough I almost laughed. This was what I'd been vaguely afraid of for several days. I'd come away from the lobotomy operation earlier feeling sure that they were closing in on me. And I'd been badly frightened—so badly it had been all I could do to keep from cutting and running. Since the incident in Denver, I had felt no fear at all. But this was the crisis, and there was still no fear. Only a mild excitement and a kind of relief at no longer being a part of Security and Consent.

But I was glad I'd been afraid earlier, and that my fear

had made me take the one precaution I had. It might make the difference between freedom and capture.

The first thing was to delay the Clinic Squad. I got up quickly and went to the door. I took from my pocket a small heat-ray, loaded with a super-energy pack in the handle. It was one of the things I'd drawn for the trip to Denver and hadn't yet returned. I inserted the nozzle in the lip of the lock on her door and pulled the trigger. There was a smell of burning metal.

The inside of the lock was now melted so that the Clinic Squad couldn't unlock it. It was unlikely they would know that I had a heat-ray. Even if they did, this would delay them at least ten minutes, which might be enough. And if they *didn't* know, it might delay them a half hour while they sent back for a heat-ray large enough to burn through the door.

I turned back to Meg. She was still slumped on the floor in front of the chair. I went to her and lifted her head. Her eyes were blank and hopeless.

"Come on, honey," I said gently. "We're getting out of here."

"Didn't you hear what I told you?" she asked.

"I heard you," I said.

"I agreed to betray you—I did betray you," she said dully. "I didn't want to any more—I've tried to think of a way out for days now—that's why I never wanted us to stay in the apartment. I—I even tried to get Roger Dillon to call it off—I swore to him that you were loyal—I even offered to be his mistress, but he only laughed at me."

Rage at Roger Dillon—some of it an accumulation of seven years—gripped me so hard that I shook, but I fought it down. There wasn't much time and Meg needed me. She had judged and condemned herself for what had happened. But it would have happened anyway, and

ow she was in as much danger as I was.

I knelt beside her on the floor and put my arms around er. "Meg," I said, "listen to me. They'll be here soon nd there won't be time to say it again. You must not unish yourself for what has happened. You've got to me with me and you'll need all your strength for that."

"Come with you?" she asked. "You want me to—now?"

"Yes."

"I betrayed you," she said again. "Can you forgive me r that?"

"There is nothing to forgive," I said. "Meg, if there is al love between two people then there can never be any uestion of forgiveness. There is nothing to forgive or to ot forgive—there are only things to understand. If I am urt it is a hurt which you share because of loving me; you are hurt I share the pain for the same reason. ove itself means a communication so complete that either person can condemn himself without condemning ne other. When it exists, there is no room for anything se. Now, smile and tell me that you love me."

"I do love you," she said, "and I'm so sorry—"

"Shhh," I said. "If you want to talk about it later you an, but it isn't necessary. Let's go."

I pulled her to her feet and kissed her gently on the nouth.

There was a heavy rapping on the door. Her head came p sharply, fear struggling in her eyes.

Chapter Seven

We stood there for a brief moment while the sound of the knocking echoed in the room. Meg was rigid with strain. I put my arm around her and held her close.

"What'll we do?" she whispered.

"The best idea would be to get away," I said. "We've got at least ten minutes, maybe more."

They knocked on the door again, this time a little harder.

"How can we?" she asked hopelessly. "They'll be all around the building."

She was right about that. I knew enough about the Clinic Squad to know that they'd have men on the roof of the building as well as on the street below. All of the ordinary exits would be covered.

"There's one way," I said. "Come on."

She followed me through the apartment to the kitchen. There was no more noise from the door, but I knew they were probably busy with an electronic lock reader and they'd soon find that the lock was past picking.

"There's one exit they never think of covering," I said. "Probably because most people don't even know about it. I did some reconverting in my own kitchen and that's

how I discovered it. I've always kept it in mind for something like this."

"An exit—in the kitchen?" she asked, looking around.

"I'll show you." I knelt down beside the kitchen range and loosened the screws that held it to the floor. A push on one corner and the stove swung around on a pivot, revealing the storage bin below. This was where food of all kinds was stored to be used by the stove when orders were punched into it.

"Were you thinking of hiding in there?" Meg asked.

I shook my head, remembering how long this method of escape had been in my mind. I'd often thought of it and then accused myself of being melodramatic. Now it was the only way.

"You're like everyone else," I told Meg, "in this age of machines that do our thinking for us. Food arrives in the storage bin so that it is never empty, but you all seem to think it just materializes there. Look."

I dropped into the storage bin and yanked up the trapdoor in its floor. Below it there was a long tunnel leading down through the center of the apartment house and then away underground. There was an endless belt carrier which brought the food up as needed.

"Where does that go?" Meg asked.

"To the warehouse that serves this section," I said. "It's like this in every house. When your stove gets low on supplies a built-in detector punches out orders to a mechanical brain in the warehouse. The machinery there loads the needed supplies on that belt and they're rushed up here."

"Can we crawl through there?" she asked dubiously.

"Don't have to," I said. "We lie down, hold on and get a free ride."

"How?"

"You know the overload gadget on every stove so that oversupplies and garbage can be returned," I said. "All I have to do is set it manually and we're in business. Go ahead and lie down. Just remember to hang on when the belt takes a vertical drop."

She approached it gingerly, scooting down onto the belt and holding on to the sides. She looked up at me, her expression half trust and half fear.

"Won't they know where we've gone and be waiting at the warehouse?"

I shook my head. "I can't be sure of the exact time on this one, but the average isn't more than five minutes from stove to warehouse. We may not have any time to spare, but we'll make it." I wasn't as certain as I sounded, but we'd soon know. "Ready?"

"I—I guess so."

I reached over to the back of the stove and flipped on the overload switch. The belt began to move. As soon as there was room, I stepped onto it and quickly stretched out.

There was a weird feeling in being carried down into the darkness. Soon the entrance into the kitchen was merely a distant blur of light and all around us it was so dark you couldn't see the sides of the tunnel.

"Jerry," Meg said, her voice floating back from the black void ahead of me, "I'm frightened. Where are you?"

"Just reach over your head," I said, "and you'll be able to feel my foot."

I felt her hand fumbling at my foot. Then it reached farther and her fingers curled around my ankle. She gave a convulsive shudder when the belt nosedived to drop below the street level. That helped warn me, and I hung on tightly until we leveled off again.

There was no way to estimate the time. The situation's

urgency probably made the dark tunnel seem twice as long as it was. But finally there was a lightening of the gloom ahead of us and within a few seconds more we were in the warehouse, the belt moving along a loading platform.

"We'd better roll off here," I said. "We don't want to end up in a garbage bin. We're lucky nobody dumped the remains of a meal on us on the way."

She tumbled off the belt. I followed, bumping into her feet as I hit the platform. Relieved of weight, the belt stopped.

I quickly scrambled to my feet and reached down to pull her up. She still looked frightened, but the fact that we were doing something had brought the color back to her cheeks. Clinging to me, she stared apprehensively around.

"Won't somebody see us here?" she asked.

"Nobody around to see us," I told her. "The only things we have to worry about are mechanical eyes and I think we can lick them. The thing to do is go out the back way, which should be in the direction that the belt is going. Let's try it."

I actually didn't have the slightest idea of the warehouse's layout, but I acted confident for her sake. We turned and walked down the platform which soon led into a narrow corridor. After a couple of hundred yards, we came to a door.

"Now take it easy," I said. "There's no reason for halls or anterooms, so this door should open directly onto the street. The only mechanical watchdog will be an electronic counter on this side which records how many people enter and leave each day. As long as the number is right, nobody gets excited. Let's see."

I stooped down in the corridor and after a moment

spotted the tiny "eyes" on each side of the door. One of them sent a beam of light and the other received it; when the light beam was broken a mechanical counter clicked off a number. I was equipped for that, too. I took out a tiny flashlight and trained it on the receiving "eye."

"Okay, honey," I said. "We go through."

I reached over and pushed the door open. Head up, her back stiff with strain, Meg walked out. I heard her gasp, but it sounded like relief so I didn't pay any attention. I edged past the beam of light, switched off the flash and stepped through after her.

We were on the street. There were plenty of other people going by but no one paid any attention to us.

"What were you gasping about?" I asked her.

"We're only three blocks from my apartment," she said. "Won't they find us any minute?"

"They'll try to," I said lightly, "but it'll take them a while to reach the warehouse, and since the counter hasn't clicked they'll think we're still inside and waste more time searching it." Secretly I wished I believed it.

I took her arm and we walked down the street. At the corner, we turned down Twenty-First Street and walked rapidly for four blocks. Then I slowed down and began looking around.

"Jerry," she said, clutching my arm, "what are we going to do? We don't have a chance of getting away. Remember what you were saying only last night about that Communist you were chasing?"

"This is different," I said. "Just try to hold on to yourself a little longer. I'll explain all the reasons why I think we can get away with it, but we've got to do two things first."

"What?"

"The first thing is a phone call. We'll go over there."

I started steering her toward a public building across the street.

"The cameras," she said.

"That," I said, "is an art gallery and one of the few places where they don't have cameras turned on all the time. Come on along—and trust me."

This time I was telling the literal truth, although it was somewhat paradoxical. Art galleries were patronized almost entirely by Nulls, and the Nulls did represent a danger of a very minor sort. But that danger became real only when a Null tried to corrupt the more numerous Cons, and at that point the Clinic Squad swung into quick action. When they stuck to their own pursuits—such as looking at old pictures in a musty gallery—the Nulls were entirely harmless, and could be left alone. SAC had such complete files on all of them that there seemed no necessity to add their tastes in painting to the records, anyway.

We went in.

"All right," she said. I could see her stiffening herself to go through with it.

"I love you," I whispered.

She flashed me a smile and her lips formed the same words as I moved away from her toward a public phone booth.

From inside the booth I could see her pause in front of a group of paintings and study them. She was going to be all right, for the time being, at least. I slipped money into the phone and punched the number I wanted.

"Gram's Pharmacy," said the answering voice.

"I'm sorry to bother you," I said, "but my doctor has been called out of town and I wonder if you could make up a special prescription for me? It's phenobarbital, hyoscyamine sulfate, atropine sulfate and hyoscine hydrobromide. I can give you the proportions."

It was the first time I'd used this code although I had carried it around in my head since I'd first come to Washington and been given the pharmacy as a contact point.

"Just a minute," the voice said. "Where are you?"

I gave him the number of the booth. "On second thought," I said, "I won't be staying here. Suppose I call you back within the half hour?"

"Fine."

We both hung up. I sat in the booth and waited. My last sentence, when translated, had told him to go out of his store to the nearest public booth to call me back. Later I'd call again to ask about the prescription. Although all the calls would be recorded, the procedure would provide enough concealment so that the calculator wouldn't make any dangerous deductions.

In a moment, the phone rang. I picked it up and said hello.

"Who is this?" the same voice asked.

"Paul Revere," I said, giving my underground code name with a new sense of pride. I went on and told him quickly what had happened and what I'd done about it so far. Unconsciously I played down Meg's part in it.

"What about the woman?" he asked.

"She's all right. I'll stake my life on it."

"That's what you will be doing," he said. "Strangely enough, I was talking to a higher authority—" I knew he probably meant Bruce Layton—"this afternoon and he said that he'd caught a hint that a trap had been set for someone important. He was afraid it might be you. It's too bad. We needed you on the inside of the campaign."

"There's nothing left but the execution of it now," I said. "All the plans are made. In fact, I'm beginning to understand that I was part of the plan." I was thinking of how Roger Dillon had had a man in communication

with the Communist James Parker for some time and that Parker was supposed to think I was that man. The name used had been Comrade Paul. The connection between Comrade Paul and Paul Revere could be made easily, especially if they got the Communist to testify by making him think I had doublecrossed him. That way, they could "prove" I was a Commie. And they probably had real proof that I was an Uns. . . .

"Do you think you can get away?" the voice asked. "We can give you some help, but not much. We need every person desperately now."

"I think I can make it without help," I said. "I had a hunch all day that something might happen and I made some preparation."

"Good," he said. "We'd hate to see you sacrificed. Try to make it to Florida as fast as you can. There's a way out if you can get there within the week. You know how to make a contact once you reach there?"

"Yes."

"They'll be watching for you. Good luck."

"Thanks," I said. I hung up and went out to stand beside Meg and pretend to admire a painting that was all green and brown splotches.

"Well?" she said nervously.

"Okay," I said. "The phone call wasn't supposed to bring a miracle. I merely had to report. But if we can make it to Florida, we can get out of the country."

"And can we get to Florida?"

"We can," I said with a lot more confidence than I felt. "Come on. We've had enough art."

As we left the gallery, I checked the time. Only twenty minutes since we'd left her apartment. If we were lucky, they still hadn't discovered that we'd escaped. But even without luck we still had a slight margin of safety. If they

had managed to get into the apartment within five to ten minutes after we'd gone, they would have just about discovered that we'd gone through the warehouse. Counting all the moves necessary, it would take another twenty minutes or so for Herbie to collate all the information and pictures on Meg and me and feed them to all the machines covering Washington.

"We're looking for a shop," I told Meg as we went down the street. "A sports shop."

"Why?"

"We need clothes. Especially you. You can't go tramping around for the next several days in an evening frock. But we'll both get some things."

"But," she protested, "that's too dangerous. George told me once that all the stores had cameras. And they report everything about the purchases that are made."

"True," I said. "But I'm certain there's no 'wanted' out on us yet. Our pictures and our purchases will go into the regular sector files. Tomorrow they'll be added to the merchandising banks in Herbie for processing. At that time, the search will be on and Herbie will yank them out of the banks and they'll know what kind of new clothes we bought and where we bought them, but by then we should be far away from here. Now, do me one favor?"

"What?" she asked promptly.

"Just trust me for the time being," I said. "Even with the new clothes, it's going to be a tight squeeze to get out of Washington. I'm not going to have time to explain everything to you, but I think we can make it. Don't forget that I know where spotters are to be found and how they're used on a hunt. I've got one other advantage and once we're out of this I'll explain everything to you. But for the time being, trust me and do what I tell you to even

f it seems pretty silly."

"All right, Jerry."

"Good girl," I said, giving her a hug and a grin. "Do ou have your identification card with you?"

Her hand went to her mouth. "I left it in the apart-ient. Oh, Jerry, how stupid! What will we do?"

I grinned. She was having the typical reaction of one vho had lived all her life in a world ruled by cards that old the authorities who she was, where she could go and vhat she could do.

"Leave it there," I said. "Actually, it's better not to ave it. You might accidentally drop it or something. We'll kip most of the spots that call for cards and if we have o go through any I have an out." Again I was thankful hat I'd been frightened earlier. If I hadn't been, I vouldn't have put in my pocket the dozen facsimilies of dentification cards of other expediters. And further back, ear had been my reason for telling Roger I might have o call on other expediters for help. I'd pulled out copies n all the expediters who resembled me enough to fool nyone making a quick check.

Many stores were already closed for the night, but sev-ral blocks from the gallery we found a sports shop that vas still open. We went in and I picked out some colored lenim slacks, shirts and jackets—matching costumes for oth of us.

"Vacations, eh?" the clerk asked as he handed the lothes to a robot-wrapper and punched the sales record.

"No," I said, knowing that a vacation would require nore than we had bought. "My wife and I just joined a iew vacation club and we thought we'd try a few weekends f roughing it before we tackled the big one."

"Good idea," he said. "It's amazing, though, how many f the executives are Waldenating this year. We're doing

a big business on those numbers you bought."

"It sounds exciting," I said. "We haven't started reading the Thoreau book yet, but just the idea of getting out in the country has us pretty excited. Away from the old grind, you know."

"I know," the clerk said. "Confidentially, I've started reading the book myself. There's a rumor around that next year they're going to build a few Walden Camps for Consumers. Would you know anything about that, sir?"

"Sounds like a good idea," I said. Privately, I was sure they wouldn't. The social engineers didn't believe in giving the rest of the people anything unless there was a handsome profit in it. "Since it is a good idea, I'm sure they will get around to it. The government's always on its toes."

"That's what I always say, sir. Something like that would go a long way toward curing some of the sick people we always seem to have around like them Communists and Uns. I see where they're after some big Communist out in the west right now."

"Yeah," I said. But I was beginning to dislike the trend of the conversation. I took the package and left. I had sighted public rest rooms a block away and we headed for them so that we could change clothes.

"What was that about?" Meg asked. "Do you think he got suspicious of us?"

"Only that we might be from Security and Consent, I think. You know, I have an idea that everybody in government has been so far removed from the rest of the people that you could almost say they're living in fantasy. They depend almost entirely on machines for their information and they may learn that machine communication doesn't tell them as much as they think. I doubt if there are many Communists around, but there may be a

hell of a lot more people with subversive thoughts than Herbie has guessed."

"Why do you say that?"

"Partly because of that clerk's attitude. He looked almost wistful when he mentioned Communists and Uns. And from what I saw in the hospital, the number of therapy and lobotomy cases is running into the thousands, with no end in sight."

"What about the Uns?" she asked, her voice almost a whisper. "How many are there, and what have they accomplished?"

"I don't know," I said truthfully. "I've been with the organization eight years and for most of that time I've talked to only one other. But I suspect it's grown a lot. I do know that we're heading for some kind of showdown, which must mean that the leaders feel strong enough to stand a chance. But no more on that. Remember that the whole set-up is designed to promote individualism, not mass action."

We went into the rest rooms. I changed quickly and stuffed my old clothes into the wall incinerator. I went outside and Meg soon joined me. I had deliberately picked our clothes in a light blue with her in mind, but when I saw her in them she looked incredibly lovely. I almost forgot the danger we were in.

She must have seen the look in my eyes, for she came to me with a little smile and lifted her face to be kissed.

"Thanks for answering my question before I asked it," she said.

I squeezed her arm, guiding her toward the street. "Now we take a taxi," I said. A cab swerved into the curb in answer to my summons.

"What if a newscast goes out while we're in the cab?" she asked.

"You'll see," I said. I helped her into the cab. "Lincoln Monument," I told the driver.

The cab got under way with a lurch. I settled back in my seat and looked at the TV screen. One of the popular comics was on the air. He was just beginning a long and (I thought) tiresome joke about a Consumer who didn't like the way his wife was constructed. That was as good a time as any, I thought. I reached in my pocket and flicked the switch on my jammer.

The image on the screen stayed as it was, but the sound was suddenly filled with static. It was impossible to make out a word.

"That's funny," the driver said. He scowled over his shoulder at the set. "That set's supposed to be checked every time the car gets gas and oil." His gaze flicked over us briefly and a new note came into his voice. "I don't suppose you'd know anything about them gadgets, would you?"

"Not a thing," I said cheerfully, "except that they make a lot of noise."

"That they do," he said. "But you hear a lot of interesting things on them, too. Don't you?"

"I guess so," I said drily. "But don't worry about it. I rather like it this way. The joke was a lousy one anyway."

"Yeah," he said. "But still—" He didn't finish the sentence but concentrated on his driving.

"What did you do?" Meg whispered to me.

"Interfered," I said. I couldn't explain any more to her just then. What had done the trick was a tiny short-wave jammer. Its chief purpose was to jam any sort of illegal electronic device for detecting the approach of expediters or men from the Clinic Squad, but it would work just as well with TV. Now if there were a newscast, the driver would hear none of it. The only trouble was, he seemed

unnaturally suspicious anyway.

We sat in silence, except for the static, watching the grimacing face of the wordless comic, until the cab reached the Lincoln Monument.

"Any particular corner?" the driver asked.

"No," I said. "Anywhere. We're just going to walk around for a while."

I was getting somewhat jumpy again, and it seemed to me that he was studying us closely as I paid him and we got out. The huge Lincoln Monument reared skyward directly in front of us. There were soft lights playing over it. There were a few other couples strolling around, most of them young and obviously belonging to the Consumer class. I was aware that we might be a little conspicuous there; strolling around and looking at national monuments was something that social engineers seldom did. The new clothes we'd bought would mark us as being at least executives of some sort, for no one else was allowed to go in for the new fad of Waldenating. But we wouldn't be staying long, so it wouldn't make too much difference.

"You don't really intend to just stroll around and hold hands?" Meg asked. "Not that I wouldn't like it—under slightly different circumstances."

"I'd like it under any circumstances," I said, "but that's not what we're going to do. We're going to take another cab soon. I wanted to change cabs and I thought this might be a good symbolic place."

"Why?"

I waved at the monument. "Lincoln. He was a great believer in freedom. So are we. Maybe he'll give us his blessing—I seem to remember from my childhood that there was a legend that if lovers came around to Lincoln's statue and if they were really in love he'd bend over and touch them."

She smiled. "That's a perfectly lovely thought. And exactly the kind of which Herbie would approve least."

"You certainly wouldn't find it in the history books any more," I agreed. "Sometimes I'm surprised that they've left his monument standing."

We walked around the monument and over to Daniel C. French Drive. We waited there for a few minutes before a cruising cab came by. I hailed it and it pulled over. We got in and I told the driver to take us to Fourteenth Street and Independence Avenue.

Again I used the jammer in my pocket and once more a driver cursed his TV set.

This time it was lucky that I used it. The regular show was interrupted for a newscast and the newscaster looked very grim when he came on. We couldn't tell what he was saying, but after a few words, pictures of Meg and myself were flashed on the screen. Fortunately, it was impossible for the driver to see the screen. He'd catch the news on the next cast, but maybe then he wouldn't connect it with his two recent passengers.

A few minutes later the taxi let us out on the corner near the Bureau of Engraving. We stood on the street and watched the cab drive away. I reached out to touch Meg and felt that she was shivering.

"What is it, honey?" I asked.

"They're after us," she whispered. "Everyone watching a TV screen saw our pictures. Should we even be out here on the street?"

"I don't say it will be easy," I admitted. "But our biggest worry is not someone who might recognize us from a picture, but a camera which will damn well recognize us. That's why it's safer out in the open."

"What do we do now?"

"Walk back up a block and catch the monorail at Jef-

ferson and Fourteenth. We'll take the monorail out to Four Mile Run, right near the Pentagon. I'm afraid that'll be the end of our riding. We'll have to start walking then."

"If we get there," she said. "How can we possibly ride the monorail without being caught? Everyone is covered, and by the time we get to our destination the Clinic Squad will be waiting for us."

"Maybe," I said. "But *every* way out of Washington is covered by cameras. This way, at least, we've got a chance. The ride to the end of the line from here is approximately twenty minutes. I think we can work it so they won't spot the fact that we're on the train for at least thirty minutes. We might even fool them longer. We'll have to buy a few things first. Then I'll show you."

There was one thing I was carefully neglecting to mention. I *thought* I could fool Herbie and his various tentacles, but Herbie knew a terrifying amount about the *way* I thought—perhaps even more than I knew myself about the subject. When he really went into high gear, he might well be able to predict all the tricks I'd think up to fool him, the escape route I'd be most likely to take, everything and anything I'd do from any given point on. It was a horrible idea, but there was no use in ignoring it.

"Could we get something to eat, too?" Meg asked suddenly.

Until then I'd completely forgotten that neither of us had had any dinner. But when she mentioned it I realized that I was also hungry.

We walked up the street until I spotted what I was looking for. It was a little restaurant which I knew didn't have a camera installed in it. There would still be reports on whatever was ordered and when a hunt was on a fugitive might be spotted from that alone. If, for example,

you liked pancakes with chocolate syrup on them that would be unusual enough. As information, coded on punched cards, came into a sector calculator it would flip out all cases of orders for pancakes with chocolate syrup. However many there were, they'd all be investigated quickly.

We went in and picked a small table in a dark corner. It was a place with complete robot-service and two menus with order blanks and pencils popped up out of the service slot as we sat down. I handed one of the menus to Meg, but I kept the order blanks.

"See anything you like?" I asked.

"Mmmm—yes," she said. "I didn't realize how hungry I was. I'll have steak, rare, with a double order of french fried onions—do you mind if I eat onions, darling?"

"If you mean personally, no," I said. "But how do you like corned beef hash?" I asked her.

She looked at me in astonishment. "I hate it," she said.

"Good," I told her. "That's what you're having. And spinach?"

"I loathe it."

"Spinach," I said, checking it off. "And a plain lettuce salad with vinegar dressing. Afterwards, you can have milk and bread pudding."

She sat up straight, glaring at me. "Jerry Leeds, I hate you. Aren't things bad enough without making me eat a dinner which doesn't include a single thing that I like?"

"And I," I said, starting to check boxes on the second order blank, "will have liver, spinach, turnips au gratin, then tea and tapioca pudding. I can't see anything on here that looks less appetizing than those."

"I don't know what's got into you," she said. She looked almost on the verge of tears. "Do you want to get rid of me or something?"

"In a way," I said, grinning at her. "The *you* that Herbie will recognize, that is. We've got to eat because we need the energy. On the other hand if we order any of the things we really like, we might find the Clinic Squad waiting at the doorway for us when we leave. Don't forget they have complete files on us and all the things we like. So from now on, honey, we're not eating any of the things that we especially like. Maybe we can relax it a little more than this, but not much." I slipped the orders into the service slot and they were whisked away.

"I'll starve," she said grimly. But she didn't look quite as unhappy as she had.

It was a relief to see her recover however slightly from her depression. I was going to have enough to think about without keeping up a steady patter to amuse her and keep her mind off our very real and serious danger.

There was a warning buzz from the table as the center of it opened and our dinners slowly came into view. We undoubtedly shared a feeling of revulsion as we stared at the food I had ordered. Then we ate in silence, for what is there to be said in the face of food one hates?

When we left the restaurant, I led the way down the street to a small variety store which was still open. Meg looked on in amazement as I bought a pair of rubber heels, glue, a package of hair pins, some adhesive tape and a big bagful of bubble gum.

"What on earth is that for?" she asked when we were once more on the street.

"We're going to give Herbie a problem," I said. We were walking up a deserted back street toward Jefferson. I handed her the hair pins. "First, put up your hair in some fashion or other. Pile it on top of your head."

"Disguises?" she said. She looked dubious, but she followed instructions.

"Slight ones," I said. I handed her some bubble gum. "Start chewing."

She stuffed it into her mouth and said something that sounded vaguely like "Why?"

"The camera at the monorail turnstile will take pictures of us as we go through. Those will be transmitted immediately to the sector calculator where they will be superimposed over the photographs of anyone on the wanted list. We talk about the calculators 'seeing' but that is not exactly true, you know. An electronic comparison is made. The machine can tell if one picture is identical to another, and will even allow for slight margins of error, but that is all. If it finds that we are wanted, it alerts the cameras covering each monorail car. When one of them locates us in a specific car and reports, the sector calculator alerts the Clinic Squad. The whole process takes two or three minutes.

"Now," I continued, after stuffing more bubble gum into my own mouth, "let us suppose that we are able to change certain lines of our faces so that when the comparison is made there's a thirty per cent margin of difference. The sector calculator will be uncertain—much more uncertain than a human observer would be. It checks over again more carefully and finds the same margin. This similarity could be a natural accident—in fact, all sectors will be picking up many people who resemble us enough to make that first check uncertain.

"The calculator will do pretty much what a human would do in a similar case. It passes the decision along to a higher authority, in this case Herbie. But Herbie has a lot of these similarities coming in, as well as being occupied with other decisions, some of them having priority. The problem is still handled speedily, but now it may be twenty-five or thirty minutes before Herbie reaches a def-

inite conclusion about us. By that time, we are off the monorail. See?"

"I think so," she said. "But will these disguises be enough?"

"Enough to fool the cameras," I said, hoping it was true. "And not unusual enough to be noticed by any human observers. Your new hairdo makes a lot of difference. A little adhesive tape can change the contours of the ears considerably. I'm going to glue these extra heels on my shoes, which will make me a trifle taller and shorten my stride."

As I talked, I was working rapidly. "Next, layers of bubble gum beneath our upper lips will alter the lines of our faces. Start working it in as soon as it's soft enough."

I watched while she prodded the gum around in her mouth, until finally no sign of the stuff itself was visible but its effects were. "Okay," I said finally. "Let's go."

We walked on up the street until we reached Jefferson and turned down to the monorail station. I sent Meg in through the turnstiles ahead of me and then followed after several others had crowded through. I caught up with her as she was entering one of the cars and we sat down across from each other. A moment later the doors clanged shut and the train started picking up speed.

I knew that our margin of safety might be closer than I had estimated, but it was still our best bet. This was an express run and there weren't many stops. It was practically the only way of crossing over into the state of Virginia without a card check. It would take us as far as Four Mile Run on the Jefferson Davis Highway. After that, there would be new problems—including several I didn't have any idea how to solve yet.

Finally the train pulled into the Four Mile Run station. I didn't see any white uniforms in the station, but

that didn't mean they weren't there. I pulled Meg after me and reached the doors before the other passengers. When the doors opened, we were the first ones out on the platform. We went through the turnstiles almost running and plunged down to the street. There was no Clinic Squad in sight and I drew my first free breath.

Jefferson Davis Highway was also Route 1, the main road to the south. My idea was to go down it a few miles until we hit an alternate route which carried very little travel, most of it commercial. Once we hit it, the going would be a little easier. The check points would be much farther apart and it would be easier to avoid road blocks if they were set up.

We started walking down the highway and were soon away from the residential area. There was little traffic on the road, the few cars sweeping past us swiftly. We had little to fear from them. I knew from experience that the average person might be afraid to help a fugitive, but that he would also do little to hinder one. Any deviation from the normal might lead to therapy. But that didn't mean the drivers wouldn't report us when they reached their destinations.

I glanced at my watch as one of the cars went by. It seemed like days since my violent break with the past, but it was still considerably before midnight. Above us the sky was clear, the stars scattered across it like sprinkled sugar. I realized that it had been years since I had looked at the sky for more than the briefest instant.

Meg's fingers stole into my hand.

"Jerry," she said, "is it going to be all right?"

"It's going to be all right," I said. "Forget this afternoon and what led up to it. This—now and here—is the beginning of something new."

"But what are we going to *do?*"

"Go to Florida. And when we get there, I imagine there will be a ship to take us to Australia. Then we can go to work for humanity in earnest and openly—"

I stopped abruptly. A thought had struck me for the first time. I chuckled, and for the first time in many weeks it was a genuine sign of amusement. "At least," I went on, "*I* can go to work. It just occurred to me that I haven't bothered to ask you whether or not you want to join the Uns, too. Which shows you how efficient I am: recruiting is supposed to be one of my major duties."

Meg sighed in the darkness beside me. "Whatever you want is what I want, Jerry," she said. "But—shouldn't it be *if* we get to Florida?"

My sudden impulse to confess my inadequacies passed. It was still more important to keep her courage up than to be entirely frank. "We will," I said. "We've done pretty well so far. Don't get me wrong; I'm not bragging. I haven't performed any superhuman feats, and never will. But it hasn't been pure luck, either. We've gotten this far because we've allowed ourselves to be real individuals, instead of slaves or robots. And machines will never catch up completely with individual people—because people have emotions, complexity, deep subconscious drives—*souls*, if you want to put it that way. The machines humans build may seem to turn against them occasionally, but the humans will always be a step ahead."

"But the machines are so powerful, Jerry." There was a trace of desperation in her voice. "They can be so efficient, so coldly logical, so ruthless. Like—like when they took George away from me. I'm sure we would have separated anyway, but it would have been a human decision. It might even have been more painful, but it wouldn't have been as cold-blooded. Can we really beat machines that can do things like that?"

I squeezed her hand gently. "It isn't exactly a matter of beating the machines," I told her. "The idea is to beat the destructive uses to which the machines are put. Even the electronic brains can be good things, if they're used to serve individuals and not to create a mass man. And eventually, they'll have to be. Because individualism is the one thing that machines can't digest."

"I don't understand."

"It's simple: be yourself. If each person concentrates on being himself and refusing to conform to the mass, then the machine can't set up a norm for several hundred million people, each one of whom is unique and individual. To oversimplify, if I like molasses on my cereal one day and the next day rub it in my hair, the mechanical brain can't work out a sure formula which will enable manufacturers to sell me more molasses or to substitute vinegar for molasses. Enough eccentrics would give Herbie a nervous breakdown."

She giggled. "I like the idea of you rubbing molasses in your hair," she said. "Are we walking all the way to Florida?"

"I don't know. I want to keep going until we can head off this main highway. Then we'll stop for the night."

There was the buzzing of a motor high overhead.

"What's that?" she asked.

I hesitated. "A helicopter," I finally said. My reluctance, I realized, was because in the past few minutes I'd heard several such motors passing overhead. Helicopters were used almost exclusively by Security agents. It could mean a gathering of the forces somewhere ahead.

"Is something wrong?" she asked.

"I don't think so," I said slowly.

Another car came along behind us, its headlights throwing long ungainly shadows ahead of us. The beat of its

motor fell off and I realized that it was slowing down. I put my hand in the pocket where I had the paralyzer and waited tensely. As if the situation weren't bad enough, I had to choose that moment to remember that the special batteries on which the paralyzer operated lost their charge quickly, and that I'd been carrying this one for about twelve hours. In a sudden emergency, it would be practically worthless as a weapon.

The car coasted to a stop beside us.

"May I offer you a ride?" a pleasant voice asked.

I turned and looked at the car. There was a pale backwash of light from the pavement. The car was an old one, and a model that had not been expensive even when new. The driver was the only person in it. He was no more than a shadowy figure behind the steering buttons.

"Thank you," I said. I reached out and opened the rear door. I helped Meg in and followed her. "We're not going far," I added. That would cover us if I sighted a road block and wanted to get out before we reached it.

"Even on short trips, companionship has its value," the man said. As the car started, I caught a brief glimpse of his profile against the lights ahead. It was a pleasant, relaxed face. There was a mane of white hair above it, and something odd about the clothing below—I couldn't decide exactly what.

We rode in silence for a few minutes. Then, somewhere a few miles ahead, there was a streaking stab of light. It flashed from the sky to the ground and winked out as quickly as it had appeared.

"What was that?" Meg asked involuntarily.

"I think it was a searchlight from a helicopter," said our driver. "I imagine the pilot is looking for a place to land."

The very quickness with which the light had flashed on

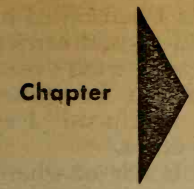
and off had convinced me that it was a Security plane. There could be only one explanation of why they were landing up ahead. Identification must have been made about the time we got off the monorail. I doubted if they had spotted us since, but they'd certainly made a probabilities run through Herbie by now. I was suddenly horribly certain that they were setting up a trap on the highway.

The light had seemed to be two or three miles ahead. I decided that we'd better not ride too near. I leaned forward, intending to tell our driver that we would get out in about another mile.

"Probably a Clinic Squad," he said. "They must be setting up a road block."

I heard Meg's breath catch in her throat and I reached over and took her hand in mine.

The driver kept looking straight ahead, his voice still friendly and relaxed. "I hope you'll pardon me for my inquisitiveness," he said, "but you're the two they're looking for, aren't you? Jerry Leeds and Meg Randall?"



THERE WAS A LONG moment of silence after he spoke. Meg was gripping my fingers so tightly they ached. Only the faint purr of the car's motor continued as if nothing had happened.

"Oh dear," the driver said, and now there was a new, high-pitched note in his voice. "I've alarmed you needlessy. Please forgive me. I may be able to help you."

"Why?" I asked bluntly. "If we *are* fugitives, why should you take a chance on helping us?"

I could see his shoulders move in a shrug. "Call it a deeper belief in my fellow men than in the instruments of the state."

It was a strange answer—at least strange to my ears. There was nothing to go on except the sound of his voice, yet I had the feeling that he meant it.

"Forgive me, again, if I'm being overly melodramatic," his soft voice continued. "In a way you might say that it's an occupational disease. You see, I'm a minister—a man of God, if I may call it that. And I don't mind if you stare: I realize that I'm a member of a vanishing tribe."

There was something about him that wouldn't allow me to doubt. He was probably a damned good minister—I

wondered how he'd feel if I had called him that aloud—because everything he did or said carried a tremendous conviction with it. Even so, I wasn't ready to believe in miracles yet, and our present fix seemed to call for a miracle. "But how can *you* help us?" I asked, trying not to make the question too blunt.

"About a mile or so this side of where I estimate the road block to be there is another road which provides a shortcut to my home. It is a road which is seldom traveled and I doubt if they will think of looking there at once."

"Sounds all right," I said.

"Had you made any plans for the night?" he asked.

"Nothing definite."

"I can provide you with a place to sleep which I think will be safe. I gather from the newscasts that there won't be many safe places tonight. They are most anxious to get you. They don't seem so anxious about the young lady, but they have put a rather large reward on your head."

"How large?" I asked curiously.

"Ten thousand dollars."

"It doesn't tempt you?" I asked.

"No." He said it quietly, but there was a reproach in his voice, a reproach so mild that I wouldn't have been sure it was there if I hadn't felt a twinge of guilt as soon as I'd asked the question. "The things of the world have never tempted me—though I'm certainly not adverse to making this world a better one to live in.

"No, Jerry Leeds, that kind of reward doesn't tempt me. I choose my own kind of reward. I've done things like this before, you know. In the past, I've been able to help a sufficient number of your United Nations colleagues so that your organization has become aware of my existence, and informs me immediately if there is likely to be someone within reach of my hand who needs help—

as they did in your case. You must understand that I'd be glad to help anyone, friend or foe, who seemed to need me. I must say that the principles of your group appeal to me. But as for rewards, I reap my own, in my own no doubt peculiar way."

It was a windy and pompous speech, but I found myself liking him immensely. I realized more sharply than ever that, except for arrests, I had not been in actual contact with anyone except other Social Engineers. It was rather horrifying to think that I was part of a movement that was supposed to represent the people and yet I knew none of them.

"Why aren't you a member of Uns?" I asked. "Does your order forbid it?"

He'd been peering ahead through the windshield and suddenly the car swerved and headed off on a narrow road almost at right angles to the highway.

"A good question," he answered softly. "It's one that might be asked of many people. The answer is complicated. No, my order doesn't forbid it. But for one thing, I've never been asked."

I must have unconsciously made a noise of protest in my throat for he turned his head and looked at me for a second.

"You've probably had your nose too close to the grindstone," he said, "to see how the other half lives. I've seen some of the United Nations literature and I get the impression that they'd rather too many people didn't join them until what they feel is the right time. It would mean increased risks. This is especially true of someone like myself who has 'second class citizen' stamped on his identification."

I had known there were second class citizens, a sub-division of the Nulls. It consisted mostly of those who in-

sisted on clinging to religion. The churches had not been outlawed, but everything else had been done to put them out of business. I couldn't think of anything to say.

"Yes," he said. "You may not have thought about it, Jerry Leeds, but our situation today is not new—only the the thinking machines are. There have been many times when men of evil possessed power and used it to make the majority bow to their rule. Tyranny by consent has operated many times. An ancestor of mine opposed such rule, in much the same fashion as I do, more than two thousand years ago. You might say that God has had a lot of experience with being an underground movement."

I knew of no answer to that, either, and didn't try to make one. We rode on for perhaps another five miles in silence. Finally, he turned the car into a driveway and stopped beside a small house. On the other side of the driveway there was a larger, squat building. The larger building seemed to have some triangular design over the doorway.

"I heard a newscast just before I picked you up," he said, "and they knew you were heading down Route One. When the road block fails to turn up anything, they will know that you've turned off on one of the side roads. I imagine they will make a fairly complete search for you."

"I'm sure of it," I said. "We'd hate to get you into any trouble, so we'll take our own chances now. Thanks."

"That wasn't my idea," he said quickly. "I was thinking that they will likely come to our house and it might be dangerous for you to be there. But we can make you quite comfortable here—in God's Temple. It would be a difficult place for them to search completely, and I think I can steer them away from it for one night at least. Even if I have to stretch the truth a bit and tell them I saw you heading in another direction." He was smiling happily.

I had a sudden idea and the more I thought of it the better I liked it. Religion was not something that I had ever known or thought much about, yet our new friend had somehow made it a symbol for me. I turned to Meg, still sitting in the car.

"Meg," I said, "there's no opportunity to ask you the way I should—but will you marry me?"

"Of course," she said softly. "But how can we, Jerry?"

"I just remembered something. There was a time when gentlemen such as this married people. The State has taken over that function, but I have a feeling that the State might refuse to marry us. Maybe we could persuade our friend here to do one more favor for us. I think it would be a fine way to start that new life we mentioned."

He must have sensed that I was looking at him. "I can do it," he said. "I often marry people now after they've had the State process. But are you sure you want me to do it? My religion might be different from the one you will adopt—if you do."

"You mentioned a belief in your fellow men," I said. "That's good enough for me. Meg?"

"Yes, Jerry," she said. She sounded happy.

"Come into the house," he said. He sounded almost as happy as Meg had. "Marriages, I might tell you, are a happy part of my calling, for it was written in the old days that the unmarried person lives without joy, without blessing and without good."

We followed him into the house and he called his wife to act as a witness. Neither Meg nor I had ever known any marriage ceremony except that of the State—where two cards were dropped into a machine and, if the machine approved of their records, it ejected a card showing their owners were married—and we were excited as we stood in front of him.

The words meant little to us and yet the way he spoke them was moving. At one point, he called for a ring, and I had no idea of what he was talking about, but his wife handed me a ring and told me to put it on the third finger of Meg's left hand. I did so, and he pronounced us man and wife.

Afterwards we all had wine. They insisted on our keeping the ring his wife had given us, in spite of our protests. Then he led us to the temple where his wife had made a bed.

Lying close to each other, Meg and I talked for hours. We had known each other now for several weeks, yet that day we became much closer than ever before. Much later, we fell asleep in each other's arms.

It was early in the morning, with the sun slanting through a stained glass window and painting Meg's cheeks, when we were awakened by the man who had married us.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I thought you would rather be awakened with the possibility of good news than just sleep and dream about the bad."

"Good news?" I asked. "You mean the Clinic Squad wasn't around last night?"

"Oh, they were around," he said cheerfully. "About two this morning. They looked through the house, but I managed to divert them from the temple. Somehow, they can't conceive of my—lying."

"I wouldn't bank on it too much," I said. "When they don't find us, they might decide to go over the territory again and check the spots they missed."

"It had occurred to me," he admitted. "I doubt if they will come back before tonight, if they do return. In the meantime, I have devoted thought and prayer to it and

I have decided to help you more."

"How?"

"I have refrained from asking you any questions," he said carefully, "because I felt it was none of my business. But now I wish to ask you if you have a definite destination in mind."

"Florida," I said.

He looked at me soberly. "Do you know how to fly a plane?" he asked.

"Fly a plane?" I repeated curiously. "I've never done anything like that. I suppose I could figure out the right buttons to push in a government helicopter, but—"

His face lit up. "That's not exactly what I mean," he said. "The plane I'm talking about is an old one, built before the radio traffic beams and automatic pilots were quite universal. It had a radio, of course, but it was strictly for audible signals—and I've removed even that. You see, the machine is one I purchased long ago in wrecked condition and rebuilt. It's been a sort of hobby of mine."

The subject was a fascinating one, but I didn't see how it could be of practical benefit. "I can't fly it and wouldn't want to take a chance on trying," I told him. "Besides, I couldn't take anything so valuable from you, when there's almost no chance of my being able to return it or pay for it."

He continued to smile. "In that case, there's only one thing to do," he said softly. "It's what I was counting on, in any case. I'll have to pilot you myself."

I wouldn't hear of it at first. We argued it back and forth for a long while, over breakfast and afterwards. Meg was on my side at first, but after a while she swung around to agree with him and I knew that I'd have to agree in the end.

There were many dangers, though. The advantage was

that we'd cover a lot of territory in a hurry. Opposed to that was the fact that we'd be using a strictly illegal vehicle and one that was highly noticeable by its nature as well as by its rarity. Our friend had only been able to test-fly the thing once or twice, it further developed; he was afraid the Clinic Squad would take it away from him if they discovered it was a real airplane that flew and not just a toy he could play with on the ground in his spare time.

All in all, I didn't expect to get very far by this route, and I hated to see our new friend put himself in danger along with us. But the novelty of the idea had its appeal, too, and in the end I gave in.

Late that afternoon we went out to the cleared field in back of his house, and he started untying the ropes that tethered the plane to the ground in a grove of trees. It was a peculiarly frail and ugly-looking piece of machinery as it squatted there. The fabric on the wings looked as if it might crumble to dust and blow away at any moment. But I couldn't bring myself to criticize, when our friend was so obviously proud of it.

He walked around it several times, poking it in various places and peering into its insides. Finally, he seemed satisfied that everything was all right—or at least as good as it could be. We all climbed in, Meg and I getting into a double seat directly behind his. He showed us how to fasten our safety belts, how to knock the side windows out in case of an emergency, and several other things. I absorbed very little of it; my nervousness had increased to the point where it was nearly uncontrollable. Meg, strangely enough, showed no emotions but pleasure and excitement. She buzzed around the plane like a child around his first bicycle, making small sounds of joy and admiration at every new discovery. Our friend, I noticed, was not immune to flattery; his smile stretched from ear to ear by the

time we were ready to take off.

The motor coughed and sputtered for a while, and finally caught with a terrible racket and a cloud of black smoke from the exhaust. The whole plane bucked and shuddered as if it would tear itself apart any minute. Our friend looked back at us, and his smile was a small, apologetic one now. "It would run a lot better," he said wistfully, "if I had the proper fuel. But all I have is what I can siphon out of my ground car, and the octane rating of that is much too low."

I didn't even know what octane rating meant, but I hung on grimly and tried to smile back. After a while the noise and vibration quieted down somewhat, but the motor still didn't sound reliable to me. Our friend must have been satisfied, however, for he taxied to the other end of the field, got the plane turned around with several stomach-wrenching bloops of the motor, gave it full speed ahead, and finally got us into the air.

Once we were up, it wasn't half as bad as I had expected. I couldn't call it exactly comfortable, and the sensation of motion was much greater than in a transport ship, but after several minutes of it I almost began to like it. Meg seemed to be enjoying the whole thing thoroughly, in any case, and I couldn't let it appear that my new bride was braver than I was.

Our friend flew high, to avoid the government helicopters which were flapping back and forth over the countryside scanning the ground below for any traces of us. I knew, too, that he must be avoiding the regular transport airlanes as much as possible. Occasionally we flew through wisps of cloud and were in a strange white world of our own. Hours passed while the engine droned on monotonously and our pilot sat stiff, straight, and obviously a bit proud, in the seat ahead of us. The sun sank on

the horizon and darkness began to close in. Without quite knowing what was happening, I fell asleep with my head on Meg's shoulder.

I was awakened by a shrill screaming and a blast of cold air hitting me in the face. My first thought was a ghastly one, and I almost screamed myself. "Meg!" I managed to control myself somewhat, but I couldn't orient my body or get used to the sickening sensations I was feeling. "Meg! Are you all right!"

Meg didn't speak, but she did clutch my arm tightly with both hands and try to smile. The plane, I saw now, was plunging earthward; the screaming sound was the shrill keening of the wind whistling past.

The motor was completely dead. In fact, I saw by craning my neck, something had smashed the cowling to bits, and the propeller was a shattering sliver dangling futilely in the nose.

With one arm around Meg and the other hand gripping the edge of the cockpit, I glanced desperately around. The cause of our trouble was not hard to locate. Circling us ominously, its huge vanes flapping like the wings of a hungry vampire bat, was a stark white helicopter with a red infinity symbol painted on its sides.

My heart sank, but then there wasn't even time to be discouraged. As the plane approached the ground, our friend somehow managed to straighten it out into a comparatively normal glide. We went charging for the edge of a small forest, and I tried to prepare myself for the crash that would end it all.

The crash, when it came, wasn't nearly as bad as I expected. We bounced several times, heeled over on one side, and went down with a thump. There was no explosion, only a series of grinding, tearing noises. When the dust settled enough for the moonlight to filter through, I

saw that we had pancaked in a small clearing. Our friend was standing up in the cockpit ahead of us, pulling and kicking at the debris that blocked our exit from the plane. I motioned to him and we both put our shoulders to the bent and twisted window frame. We heaved, it flew out, and we were free.

The man of God looked like a man of action now for fair. Crouching beside the wrecked plane of which he had been so proud, he nodded toward the helicopter that was settling down above us, its ominous shadow blotting out the moon. His teeth were bared in what was supposed to be a smile, there was a cut on his cheek, and his long white hair dangled in his face. "We'd better split up," he breathed heavily. "It'll confuse them. Hurry!"

I nodded. "Thanks," I said. I wanted to say more, but there was nothing else to say. I gripped his extended hand briefly, Meg impulsively kissed his cheek, and we turned away. "And God bless you," he whispered behind us.

As Meg and I reached the edge of the woods, I glanced back and got another shock. The helicopter had landed and men in Clinic Squad uniforms were alighting, heading for the wreck with guns drawn and ready. And our friend hadn't left! He was still standing there, defiantly and proudly, obviously intending to fight a delaying action as long as he could.

I started to turn back to help him, then realized there was nothing I could do and that this was the way he wanted it. My shoulders heaved, and I almost sobbed aloud, but I gripped Meg's hand and hauled her after me, away from the scene. Together, we plunged on into the woods and the darkness.

As we did so, I breathed something that must have been very close to a prayer for the safety of the best friend and noblest gentleman we were ever likely to know.

Then we walked. It became a pattern of hiding by day, getting what rest we could, and traveling by night, keeping to the woods and the open country to avoid detection. This went on for four days and four nights until finally—footsore and weary, hungry and filthy, but still alive and free—we reached our destination.

Hollywood, Florida, was a small but fairly successful resort town. As such, it drew a large percentage of social engineers and business executives. While none of them were exactly roughing it, I was glad to notice that many of them were wearing the same sort of sport clothes we'd bought. After we sneaked furtively into town late one night and cleaned ourselves up in public rest rooms, nobody gave us a second glance. But we'd have to stay out of places that were equipped with cameras and we wouldn't be able to check into any of the hotels.

We were both hungry, but I made Meg wait until we found a tiny coffee and sandwich bar that also had an enclosed public phone booth. Even then I made sure that neither of us ordered sandwiches that we'd normally like. While Meg tackled her sandwich, I went to the phone.

Miami, Florida, had long been an important spot in the network of the underground, for many of the ships to and from Australia worked out of there. Some of them, I knew, were disguised as fishing boats. Several years before I'd been given a contact for Miami in the event that I had to run for it with no time to call my Washington contact. It had never been changed, so I assumed that it was still operating. I punched the number into the phone.

The voice that answered was a woman's. "Lane's Antique Shop," she said. "I'm sorry, but the shop has already closed for the day."

"I'm sorry to have bothered you," I said. I hadn't been given a code for this contact, but had merely been told to

identify myself with my regular U.N. code name. That seemed dangerous now, since that name was part of the information the government had, but there was no other choice. "I have just arrived from the north and I was most anxious to find out if you could help me find a piece of Americana."

"What sort of piece?" she asked briskly.

"I have been told," I said, speaking slowly and carefully, "that there exists an interesting silver bowl made by Paul Revere in memory of the men who first resisted George the Third. I'd like to see someone about it."

There was a long silence and I could guess that she was trying to decide whether this was an Uns call or a real antique hunter on the prowl.

"I'm not sure," she said finally. "There aren't many Paul Revere pieces around."

"I know," I said. "In fact, this is the only one I have heard about. It is rare and, I understand, in great demand."

That seemed to decide it for her. "I could try to find out for you," she said. "We are in contact with a few experts. If I could call you back, Mr.—?"

"Silversmith," I said, using the first thing I could think of that seemed to apply to "Paul Revere."

"Could I call you in about a half hour?"

"I'm afraid not. I just arrived in Hollywood and I don't have a reservation, so I'm not sure where I will be. How would it be if I called you back in thirty minutes?"

"Fine," she said.

I hung up and went to join Meg. My coffee was almost cold, but I didn't mind. The fact that I'd made a contact was enough to cheer me up.

When we'd finished eating, we left the restaurant. There was still some time to kill, so we went into a small park and walked around beneath the palm trees. The park was

almost deserted. In the center of it there was a statue and I finally walked over to see who had been important enough to have a park in his honor but so unimportant that the park was this small.

The statue was that of some early American engineer named Scott. I'd never heard of him. I walked around it, looking it over idly. I noticed that somebody had been scribbling on one side of it with chalk. I grinned, thinking that small boys hadn't changed much even with social engineering, and bent over in the moonlight to see what was written there. When I saw it, I burst out laughing.

"What are you laughing at?" Meg asked, coming up beside me.

I pointed to where some adolescent had scrawled in chalk: *The Social Engineers stink!*

"There," I said, "is the spirit of rebellion. You know, I've had no contact with people—the millions of people must want the United Nations to win as badly as we do—and there used to be times when I wondered if they weren't happy with the rule of the social engineers and their mechanical brains. But now I've had answers from a religious man in Virginia and a nameless boy in Florida. They're about as different as they could be, but they're both on our side."

She smiled and slipped her arm through mine. "This one," she said, "might at least have said it more politely."

I shook my head. "No. This is the way he should have said it. If he said it politely, he might very well end up fat and satisfied, spending his days Waldenating. It's better this way."

It was time for me to call the antique shop back. We strolled on through the park and found a little place with a phone booth. I entered and punched the number.

"This is Silversmith," I said when the woman answered.

"Oh," she said and there was now a warmth in her voice that made me feel I had known her a long time, "you are in luck. A very important man—a government figure—just happens to be here on vacation. He is very interested in early Americana and believes he can help you in your search. He's just about to leave here for Hollywood and if you will call him at the Hollywood Hotel in about a half hour, he'll be very glad to see you."

"Who is he?" I asked.

"Mr. Bruce Layton, the General Manager of the United States."

I made the proper noises of being impressed. Actually I was very glad it was somebody I knew. At the same time I was rather surprised that he would run the risk of meeting a fugitive.

"I'll be there," I said.

"Fine. And I wish you good luck."

"Just one more thing," I said. "Tell Mr. Layton that Mrs. Silversmith will be with me."

She hesitated only a moment. "I understand," she said.

I hung up. Meg and I went back and walked in the park again and I insisted on going over once more and admiring the deathless prose of the small boy. I knew that on the following day some Security man would find it and wash it away, but just then I felt that it represented a spirit which even Herbie couldn't erase.

When the half hour was up, we went to the Hollywood Hotel. By the time we'd reached it, I'd worked out my next step. My first thought had been that if Layton wanted me to meet him at the hotel he planned to use his position to have all the usual checks eliminated. Then I realized this would be too dangerous, that he'd merely been confident that I would avoid them.

All hotels were, I knew, covered with cameras that "saw"

everyone who entered or left. If I just marched in, the local Clinic Squad would know about it within a few minutes. Layton was putting a lot of trust in me—almost too much.

The main entrance to the hotel would, of course, be covered by several cameras. But I reasoned that there must be a side entrance where there would only be one. When we reached the hotel, I scouted around and found it. There was a side door entering from the beach with a special elevator so that bathers could go directly to their rooms without parading through the lobby. I watched for a moment and located the single camera. The lens was concealed in some scroll work on one side of the corridor. Unfortunately, it was so placed that it was impossible to get near it without being photographed in the process.

Meg and I strolled down along the beach until we found a store where I could buy a bathing suit. Then just below the private beach, I rented a cabana and changed into the suit. I gave my other clothes to Meg and told her to meet me by the side entrance to the hotel. I took enough change to buy a newspaper. Then watching my chance, I slipped over to the hotel's private beach.

I tore off a six-inch square of newspaper and wet it in the ocean. I folded the newspaper, so that the wet piece was concealed, and strolled up the beach, reading the paper.

As I neared the hotel entrance, I idled along until I saw a bather heading out of the hotel. Then I quickened my pace, still reading the paper and holding it up so that my face was concealed. Charging into the hotel, I smashed directly into the man coming out. I lost my balance and staggered wildly across the corridor, crashing into the wall. I threw up my hands to try to break the impact, the newspaper still hiding my face from the camera.

When I finally regained my balance, a wet piece of news-

paper was plastered on the wall—exactly over the camera lens.

I apologized profusely to the angry guest and finally he went on his way. I gestured to Meg and she hurried in. For the moment, the corridor was empty and I quickly slipped my other clothes on over the bathing suit. Then I took Meg's arm and hurried her past the elevator toward the lobby.

It wouldn't take technicians long to arrive and find out what was obscuring the camera. But I felt sure that I had made the accident realistic enough so that they wouldn't be suspicious. The camera had caught all of it without once getting my head or face.

Once in the lobby, it was only a minute before we were shown up to Bruce Layton's suite. He was alone when we arrived. He came across the room and grasped my hand.

"I'm glad to see you, Jerry," he said warmly. He glanced at Meg. "This must be the girl who has become famous along with you. How are you, Mrs. Randall?"

"She's Mrs. Leeds now," I said quickly.

"Oh?" Some of the questioning went out of his gaze. "Not a state wedding, I should imagine?"

"Religious," I said.

He laughed. "I don't think Herbie would approve, but I see no reason not to. Best wishes, Mrs. Leeds."

"Thank you," Meg said.

Layton shot a keen glance at me. "How did you get into the hotel?"

I told him and he laughed. "I was sure you'd do it," he said.

"What if I hadn't?" I asked curiously.

"I took a chance of sacrificing you," he said. "But I did want to see you and meeting you outside somewhere was too risky. I suggested this, feeling sure you'd outwit the

cameras. But if you hadn't you would have been nabbed before you could even ask for me. Because of my presence, 'wanted' files have been fed directly into the cameras here so that transmission to the sector wouldn't have been necessary. That means about thirty seconds to identify someone."

"Great," I said. I wasn't sure whether to be glad he had that much confidence in me or annoyed because he'd taken a chance with my life. "The question now is how do we get out? Do I have to pass another miracle?"

"No. You'll leave with me. My valet is an Uns member who knows enough about make-up to disguise you sufficiently. And since I'm known to be avoiding reporters anyway, my party will be whisked out a special exit where there are no cameras. No one will be suspicious at all."

"That's better," I said. "By the way, what are you doing here?"

"Supposedly half vacationing and half attending a convention. But my real reason is that we're about to move."

"The U.N.?"

He nodded. "That's why it's so unfortunate that this had to happen to you just as it did. You are one of the most valuable men we have. I doubt if anyone knows as much about all the locations of calculators and their uses—and the ways to circumvent them. It's really too bad we have to whisk you out of the country."

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Meg open her mouth and I knew she was about to confess to her part in my revelation as a spy.

"Apparently," I said hurriedly, "they'd had the trap ready to spring on me for some time."

"Yes, it can't be helped," he said. "You are familiar, of course, because you've been working on it, with their all-out plan to tie us up with the Communists. That cam-

paign is scheduled, I believe, to move into high gear this week."

I nodded.

"We're going to get the jump on them. We've already prepared a stock of propaganda which will start going out almost at once. Much of it is concealed in State literature. Here, you might like to look at this one when you get a chance. Our message is in the last page." He handed me a small book and I saw that it was entitled: *Government: The Servant of the People.*

"That's one of the things," he said, "which will be bought by almost every home because they know it's dangerous not to. The last page which we added will appear in every copy except the first run that was made for government officials and reviewers. The most important thing, however, is that we're going to swing into action against the calculating machines with the plan which you originated."

I felt an involuntary thrill of excitement. "On how big a scale?"

"We have in this country, counting special men we've just smuggled in from Australia, about one hundred thousand active members of United Nations. Within two or three weeks, we expect it to be one hundred million. All of our reports indicate that as soon as we make the first moves and call on the people to join us, they will."

"I think so too," I said, remembering the minister and the nameless boy. "But how are you going to start?"

"We've picked special communities where we'll move in enough of our people to make a dent in all figures. Following your plan, we'll concentrate on complete eccentricity of behavior to throw the machines off."

"What does he mean?" Meg asked.

"What I was telling you," I said. "Every action will be

individualistic and eccentric. Buy molasses and put it on cereal. Then buy it and rub it in your hair. Buy it again and pour it in the street. Insist on buying a hat with a feather in it and then throw the feather away. Apply the principle to every single thing you do. The sector calculator must digest all of this and try to make predictions. No machine can do it. After so much it will have the equivalent of a nervous breakdown and refuse to function at all."

"We even have a special squad," Layton said, "who are to be caught. They've been trained by our best psychologists and we believe they can break down the psychocalculator. We think that a lot of people will join us at once; when they see what's happening to the machines they'll come in droves."

"And once the machines start quitting," I said, "the social engineers will start blowing up. They don't even know how to go to the bathroom without getting advice from a calculator."

"Something like that," Layton said, laughing. "It's going to be the big try and we could have used you. . . . But you do want to go to Australia?"

"Yes," I said. "It seems to be the best thing to do after what's happened."

"I suppose so," he said. He looked a little disappointed, but I felt I'd done my share. "There's a ship leaving tomorrow. It just came in today bringing some of the people we need from Australia. I'll take you down to it."

"How are you going to keep them out of the hands of the Clinic Squad?" I asked.

"It'll be tough for a few days," he said. "We'll probably lose some of them because they don't know what all to watch out for. And our biggest job is finding someone to lead them across the country. But once we've gotten the

plan under way, I think the machines and the social engineers will be too busy to look for fugitives."

"Probably," I agreed. "You've got them all holed up here?"

"In Miami, but separately. They're keeping in contact through the antique store until we're ready to move them. Well, shall we get ready?"

I nodded. He called in his valet, who did a deft make-up job. The four of us left the suite. Outside a number of Security men grouped themselves around us, but they paid no attention to Meg and me and I soon stopped worrying about them.

We went down a special elevator and out through some sort of service door. The General Manager's car was waiting there. Meg and I got in with him and the car got under way.

It was a short ride into Miami and we did little talking. Each of us was busy with his own thoughts.

The limousine finally stopped on a small, dark street.

"Two blocks down that way," Layton said, pointing, "will bring you to the docks. It's the freighter *Martha C.* They're expecting you. Good luck, Jerry."

I felt a lump in my throat as I gripped his hand. "I won't need it now," I said. "Good luck to you."

"We may need that, too," he said soberly. "But it's something more than that that will win for us—if we win. No, the easy days of merely living two lives are over for a lot of us. But I think we'll do it. Now, good-by."

Meg and I said good-by and got out of the car. We stood, hand in hand, and watched it drive away. Then we started walking down the street. As we reached the streetlight, I became aware that I was holding the book Layton had given me. I stopped, opened it to the last page, and read:

The earlier part of this book presents what the social engineers have to say about government. Here is what Henry David Thoreau, a great American, had to say about the same subject. (This page has been inserted by the United Nations.)

"The authority of government, even such as I am willing to submit to,—for I will cheerfully obey those who know and can do better than I, and in many things even those who neither know nor can do so well,—is still an impure one: to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed. It can have no pure right over my person and property but what I concede to it. The progress from an absolute to a limited monarchy, from a limited monarchy to a democracy, is a progress toward a true respect for the individual. Even the Chinese philosopher was wise enough to regard the individual as the basis of the empire. Is a democracy, such as we know it, the last improvement possible in government? Is it not possible to take a step farther towards recognizing and organizing the rights of man? There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. I please myself with imagining a State at last which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow men. A State which bore this kind

of fruit, and suffered it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious State, which also I have imagined, but not yet anywhere seen."

Meg was reading with me over my shoulder. When we finished, I closed the book and we walked on in silence. Two blocks farther on, with the salt air strong in our nostrils, we came upon a freighter sitting low in the water. The name *Martha C.* was lettered across its bow. The gangplank was down. Up on the deck, we could see the red glow of a smoking cigarette.

"Meg," I said.

"Yes, Jerry?"

"I've got to go back," I said hurriedly. "I'm needed because I'm the best equipped of all of them to avoid traps. I can lead those men across the country to where they must go. But it's more than that. I have to go back partly because I love you. I have to continue the fight to make men individuals. As long as there are men who are trying to destroy individuals and create an easily-controlled mass man, such an individual thing as love can't be secure. And —and besides, I'd like to get a chance to punch Roger Dillon's fat face in. You go on to Australia and when I can I'll come and get you—to bring you back here."

"I knew you were going to say that," she said. Her voice was so low I had to bend to hear her. "I love you, too, Jerry. I don't want to lose you just as I've found you—I want you to stay. But go quickly—before I lose my courage."

I bent and kissed her. Then I turned and hurried back along the street we had walked together—hurried without looking back for I was afraid that if I did it would be fatal.

Three blocks away I found a public phone booth. I

stepped in and punched the number of the antique shop.

"This is Mr. Silversmith," I said when the woman answered. "Would you tell Mr. Layton that I've found that Paul Revere work and that I think it is something he might like to see before he leaves town."

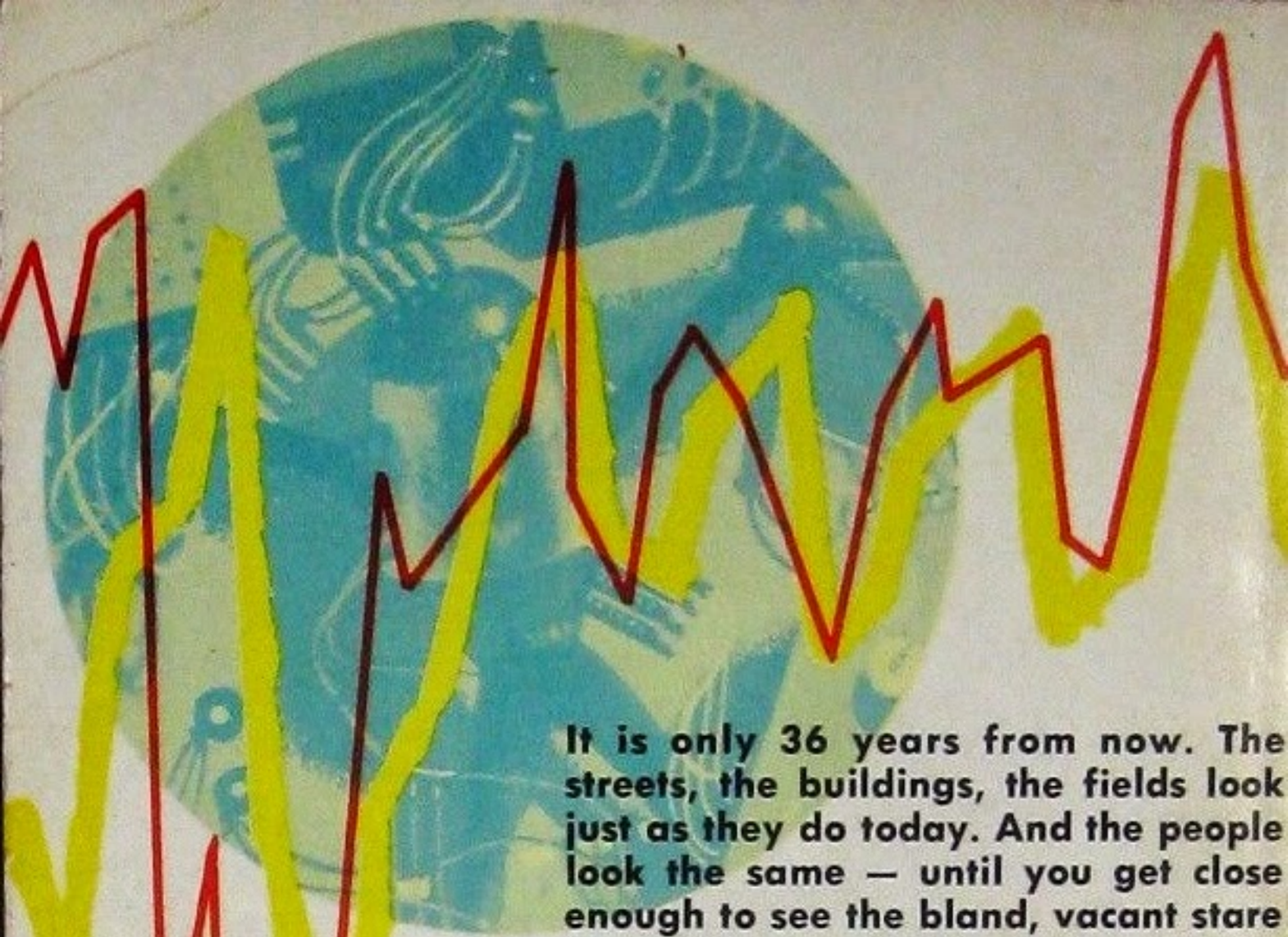
"Where are you?" she asked.

I told her.

"Mr. Layton," she said, "thought that you might phone back. He told me to tell you that his car is parked on Independence Street, only one block from where you now are."

I hung up and walked out to the street. From somewhere behind me a ship hooted and seconds later another answered. I had always thought that ships' horns made lonely sounds, but these didn't. They sounded warm and friendly and promising—like a communication between two individuals who had found themselves.

Ahead of me I saw the long black limousine parked. I quickened my pace.



SECURITY A.D. 1990

It is only 36 years from now. The streets, the buildings, the fields look just as they do today. And the people look the same — until you get close enough to see the bland, vacant stare in their eyes, to hear the empty, guarded quality of their voices.

They are victims of a gigantic con game. Free will, the right of dissent have been washed away in a sea of slogans coined by the public-relations manipulators who have taken over the government. The rare ones who momentarily forget they are no longer individuals have their symptoms recorded by an enormous mechanical brain in Washington. The real dissenters, the incorrigible rebels, have their "sickness" cured by a simple surgical operation . . .

This is the year of consent. And this is the story of a man who fought back.