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# Day After Tomorrow

**Mack Reynolds**

## I

Government employees in his income bracket and the suburb in which he lived were currently wearing tweeds. Tweeds were all the thing. Tweeds were in. You weren't with it if you wore anything else.

Lawrence Woolford consequently wore tweeds. His suit, this morning, had first seen the light of day on a hand loom in Donegal, Ireland. It had been cut by a Swede widely patronized by serious young career men in Lawrence Woolford's status group. These days, English tailors were out and Italians absolutely unheard of.

Woolford sauntered down the walk before his auto-bungalow, scowling at the sportscar at the curb—wrong year, wrong make. Thanks to the powers that be, it was still the right three-tone color. But he'd have to trade it in on a new model. It was a shame in a way—he liked the car. However, he had no desire to get a reputation as a weird among colleagues and friends. What was it Senator Carey McArthur had said the other day? Show me a weird and I'll show you a person who has taken the first step toward being a Commie.

Woolford slid under the wheel, dropped the lift lever, depressed the thrust pedal gently and took off for downtown Greater Washington. Theoretically, he had another four days of vacation coming to him. He wondered what the Boss wanted. That was the trouble in being one of the Boss' favorite trouble-shooters; when trouble arose you wound up in the middle of it. Whether you wanted to or not. Lawrence Woolford was to the point where he was thinking in terms of graduating out of field work and taking a desk job, which meant promotion in status and pay. He *had* to like it.

He turned over his car to a parker at the departmental parking lot and made his way through the entrance utilized by secondgrade departmental officials. In another year, he told himself, he'd be using that other door.

The Boss' secretary looked up when Lawrence Woolford entered the anteroom where she presided. "Hello, Larry," she said. "Hear they called your vacation short. Darn shame."

LaVerne Polk was a cute little whiz of efficiency. Like Napoleon and his army, she knew the name of every member of the department and was on a first name basis with all. However, she was definitely a weird. For instance, styles might come and styles might go, but LaVerne dressed basically for comfort, did her hair the way she thought it looked best, and wore low-heeled walking shoes on the job. In fact, she was willing and able to snarl at anyone, no matter how kindly intentioned, who even hinted that her nonconformity didn't help her promotion prospects.

Woolford said, "Hi, LaVerne. I think the Boss is expecting me."

"That he is. Go right in, Larry."

She looked after him when he turned and left her desk. Lawrence Woolford cut a pleasant figure as thirty-year-old bachelors go.

The Boss looked up from a report which he had been frowning at, nodded to his ace field man and said, "Sit down Lawrence. I'll be with you in a minute. Please take a look at this while you're waiting." He handed over a banknote.

Larry Woolford took it and found himself a comfortable chair. He examined the bill, front and back. It was a fifty dollar note, almost new. He couldn't see anything special about it.

Finally, the Boss, a stocky, tight-faced, domineering but impeccable career bureaucrat, scribbled his initials on the report and tossed it into an Out chute. He said to Woolford, "I am sorry to cut short your vacation, Lawrence. I considered giving Walter Foster the assignment, but I think you're the better choice. It might take quite a bit of thinking on your feet."

Larry decided that faint praise was the best tactic. He spoke earnestly, though he detested Foster, his closest rival, "Walt's a good man, sir. One of the best when you're in the clutch." And then, "What's the crisis?"

"What do you think of that fifty?" The Boss indicated it with a thumb.

His troubleshooter looked down at it. "What is there to think about it?"

The Boss grunted, slid open a desk drawer and brought forth another bill. "Here, look at this, please."

It was another fifty. Larry Woolford frowned at it, not getting whatever was going on.

"The serial numbers," the Boss said impatiently.

They were identical. Larry Woolford whistled softly and looked up. "Counterfeit. Which one is the bad one?"

"That is exactly what we would like to know," the Boss said.

Larry stared at his superior, blinked and then examined the bills again. "A beautiful job," he said. "But what's it got to do with us, sir? Counterfeiting is Secret Service jurisdiction."

"They called us in on it. They think it might have international ramifications."

Now they were getting somewhere. Larry Woolford put the two bills back on the Boss' desk and leaned back in his chair, waiting.

His superior said, "Remember the Nazis turning out American and British banknotes during the Second War?"

"Before my time, of course, but I've read about it, somewhere or other."

"At any rate, obviously a government with all its resources could

perfectly counterfeit any currency in the world. It would have the skills, the equipment, the funds to accomplish the task. The Germans turned out hundreds of millions of dollars and pounds with the idea of confounding the Allied financial base. They also used it to pay off some of their spies." The bureau head grunted a laugh. "That was a dirty trick."

"And why didn't it work—the upsetting of the Allied financial base?"

The other nodded. "The difficulty of getting it into circulation, for one thing. However, they did actually use a quantity. For a time our people were so alarmed that they wouldn't allow any bills to come into this country from Mexico except the two dollar bills—the one denomination the Germans hadn't bothered to duplicate. Oh, they had the Secret Service in a dither for a time."

Woolford was frowning. "What's this got to do with our current situation, sir?"

The Boss said, "It is only a conjecture. One of those bills is counterfeit, but such an excellent reproduction that the skill involved is beyond the resources of any known counterfeiters. The Secret Service wishes to know if it might be coming from abroad, and, if so, from where. If it's a government project, particularly a Soviet Complex one, then it comes into the ken of our own particular cloak-and-dagger department."

"Yes, sir," Woolford said. He got up and examined the two bills again. "How'd they ever detect that one was bad? It's not my field, but I'd accept either one."

"Partly luck," his superior told him. "A bank clerk on a computer was going through a batch of fifties. It's not too commonly used a denomination, you know. In the sheaf he was working on the serial number was duplicated. The computer picked the fact up."

"Couldn't the mistake have been made at the mint? Two bills with the same serial number?"

The other shook his head. "No. Evidently impossible."

"All right. And then?"

"The reproduction was so perfect that the Secret Service was in an

immediate uproar. Short of the Nazi effort, there has never been anything like it. A perfect duplication of engraving, and paper. The counterfeiters have evidently even gone to the extent of putting a certain amount of artificial wear on the bills before putting them into circulation."

Larry Woolford said, "Once again, this is out of my line. How were they able to check further, and how many more of these did they turn up?"

"The new computers helped. Secret Service checked out every fifty dollar bill in every institution in town, both banking and governmental. Thus far, they have located ten bills in all."

"And other cities?"

"They checked them next. The whole country. None. They've all been passed in Greater Washington, which is suspicious in itself. The amount of expense that has gone into the manufacture of these bills does not allow for only a handful of them being passed. They should be turning up in great quantity. Lawrence, this reproduction is such that a pusher—I think they call them that—could walk into a bank and have his false currency changed by any teller. Why they haven't done it, we have no idea. A pusher could go into a bank with a packet of fifty of these, and immediately have it changed into any other denomination he asked for."

"Wow," Larry muttered.

"Indeed."

Larry said, "Do you want me to work with Secret Service on this, on the off chance that the Soviet Complex is doing us deliberate dirt? I thought that currently the Cold War was supposedly all warmed up."

"So did we," the other said sourly. "But that is exactly the idea, Lawrence. Get to work please and keep in touch with me. If you need support, I can assign Walter Foster or some of the other agents to assist you. This might have endless ramifications, and there are no limits in regard to personnel or budget."

Larry came to his feet and snapped a snappy, "Yes, sir. I'll get on it right this minute."

Back in the anteroom, Woolford said to the Boss' receptionist, "I'm on a

local job, LaVerne. How about assigning me a secretary, somebody who can handle off-beat assignments?"

"Can do," she said.

He thought about it. "And look; tell her to get hold of every available work on counterfeiting and pile it on my desk."

"Right. Thinking of going into business, Larry?"

He grinned down at her. "That's the idea. Keeping up with the Jones clan in this man's town costs roughly twice my income. I'm thinking of augmenting it."

LaVerne said sarcastically, "Then why not give up this battle to equal the Joneses? With the classification you've got, a single man ought to be able to save half his pay." She added, more quietly, "Or get married and support a family."

"Save half my pay?" Larry snorted. "And get a far out reputation, eh? No thanks. You can't afford to be a weird these days."

She flushed—and damned prettily, Larry Woolford decided. He took her in, all over again. She wore a minus-skirt, so that her legs could be seen all the way up to the pinkness of her inner thighs and didn't leave much to the imagination on what dark, warm wonders lay beyond. She could be an attractive item if it wasn't for obviously getting her kicks out of being individualistic. Minus-skirts were out in Paris, Budapest and Copenhagen, this season. The nipples, cosmetically touched up, were currently the come-on.

Larry said suddenly, "Look, promise to be a good girl and not to make us conspicuous and I'll take you to the Swank Room for dinner tonight. After that, a few drinks in one of the latest spots and then back to my place for a friendly roll in the hay. For a long time I've wondered what you've got on the ball."

"The Swank Room," she said sceptically. "Is that where all the bright young men currently have to be seen once or twice a week? Get lost, Larry. Being a healthy, normal woman, I'm interested in men, but I don't necessarily spread my legs for every walking status symbol."

It was his turn to flush, and, he decided wryly, he probably didn't do it as prettily as she did. He wondered about her. Did she go all-out in bed? He'd bet that she'd be a wizard at Roman fashion.

He tried to keep it light, though, and said, "You'll be sorry. I've picked up some new bed techniques, imported from Sweden. Guaranteed to send you out of this world and far beyond. You've got to have a chandelier, even to start."

She snorted. "I'll bet. However, I'm an old-fashioned girl and stick to only the more normal perversions."

"What's a normal perversion?" Larry said. He was intrigued.

"I'll never tell."

On his way to his office, he wondered why the Boss kept her on. Classically, a secretary-receptionist should have every hair in place, every pore. But in her time LaVerne Polk must have caused more than one bureaucratic eyebrow to raise. Efficiency was probably the answer. The Boss couldn't afford to let her go. The old boy probably wasn't even laying the girl. Larry got the impression she wasn't exactly an easy lay.

## II

Ilya Simonov was an excellent driver. He drove with the same care and efficiency that he expended upon all of his activities. Now he tooted his Zil aircushion convertible along the edge of Red Square, paralleling the gigantic eyesore which was the GUM department store, and opposite the red marble tomb of Lenin. He turned right just before St. Basil's Cathedral and took the Moskvoretski bridge over the Moscow River.

He merged into the largely automated traffic of Pyatniskaya and at Dobryninskaya Square blended west into the traffic that led to Gorki Park. He sped along the edge of the park on Kaluga until he came to the Czarist baroque palace which was the headquarters of the ministry of which he had been a member for almost all his adult life.

Theoretically, there was no parking before the ministry. However, he pulled up to the curb and the two guards, staring directly ahead, snapped to the saluts. Ilya Simonov flicked them a return with the swagger stick he carried. It was an anachronism.

Not since the days before the revolution had a Russian officer carried a swagger stick. It was, in a way, his trademark. A good many persons, on both sides of the Iron Curtain knew Colonel Simonov on sight, although they had never seen him before, by the swagger stick.

He was tall for a Cossack, slightly slanted of eye, due to his Siberian heritage, black of hair, and obviously iron of body. He had an air of intensity and dedication about him, and, instinctively, there were few who dared thwart him.

The building was an anachronism as well. It had once belonged to the Yusopov family, the last prince of which had earned immortality by finishing off the mad monk, Rasputin. Simonov knew it well and strode along the corridors ignoring the antiquities, the marble statues, pre-World War One paintings, and marble benches. No one had ever bothered to remove them since the days when Grand Dukes strode the halls.

There were armed guards spotted, here, there, at all crucial turnings, at all doors. They wore the uniform of the KGB, the Committee of State Security.

Ilya Simonov began to stride past a group of three of the guards, two captains and a lieutenant. Suddenly he snapped to a halt. They came to attention, a ramrod attention.

He looked them up and down, his face empty except for bleak eyes, and said to the one in the middle, "What is your name, lieutenant?"

The other clicked heels. "*Captain* Nicolai Ilyichev, Comrade Colonel."

"Never contradict me, sergeant," Simonov said. "When did you shave last?"

The other paled slightly. "This morning, Comrade Colonel."

"Never lie to me, corporal," Simonov said, his voice as empty as his face.



"What was it, vodka or a woman, that kept you from getting to your post I properly presentable?"

Nicolai Ilyichev looked at him with sick blankness.

"Comrade Colonel," he said desperately. "I carry the Soviet Hero's Combat Award. It is a great privilege to be assigned to the Security Guard of the Minister."

"All members of the Minister's Security Guard carry the Hero's Combat Award," Simonov snapped. "Do not try to impress me, infantryman. If you are so sloppy that you come on duty in unpresentable condition, what would happen if the emergency to which your life is dedicated manifested itself? Would you be in the physical shape to meet it? I am afraid that the Moscow climate does not agree with you, infantryman. Perhaps you are more suited to the Eastern Provinces."

"Comrade Colonel...!",

But Ilya Simonov had strode on.

The former Captain Ilyichev bug-eyed after him. He turned to the lieutenant flanking him, desperately. "Perhaps he'll forget."

"Ilya Simonov never forgets," the lieutenant said unhappily. "It's no mistake that he's the minister's top hatchetman. He's killed more people than malaria. He's certainly a bad one to have down on you."

"But what did I do? Why *me*?"

The other captain, who was just relaxing from the rigid attention to which he had been standing during the quick interrogation, said, "Nicolai, it wasn't you, in particular. There are fifty-five officers and men assigned to the minister's security guard. This sort of discipline will insure, for at least a couple of years, that no one will come on duty with the slightest of hangovers, or anything else that might dull the edge of perception. You'd better go pack, Nicolai. If I know the colonel, you'll be on your way to some post above the Arctic Circle before the day is out."

The captain took a deep breath. "He'll have you reduced to private, but you're a good man, Ilyichev, and you carry the Hero's award, as I well know, since I am only here as a result of your conduct. Promotion is faster

in Siberia than it is in Moscow. You'll soon regain your rank."

His words were meaningless to the other. Captain Nicolai Ilyichev had planned to be married the following week. He and his bride to be had been consumating their marriage a bit prematurely the night before. The colonel had been correct. He hadn't shaved.

Ilya Simonov continued down the corridor. He came to a halt at the reception desk before the ornate door of the Minister's office. Another captain sat before it. The Soviet agent didn't know him. The other took in the swagger stick.

Simonov said, "I have no appointment but the Minister is probably expecting me."

"Yes, Comrade Colonel Simonov," the other nodded respectfully. He flicked a switch and spoke into an inter-office communicator screen.

He flicked another switch and the door behind him automatically opened. Ilya Simonov marched on through.

Minister Kliment Blagonravov was at the huge desk at the far end of the room. There was a smaller desk to one side which accommodated an aide. The Minister snapped his fingers at the aide, who immediately came to his feet and left the room.

"Sit down, Ilya," Blagonravov said. "I was expecting you. Don't you ever take a day or two off after completing an assignment?"

"Sometimes," Simonov said, finding a chair and turning back to his ultimate superior.

Blagonravov was a heavy man, heavy of face, heavy-set and his head was completely shaven in the manner no longer much affected by Russian ministers and ranking army officers. He was one of those who sweat if the weather is even mildly warm. As usual, his tunic was off, his collar loosened. After the dressing down his field man had given the untidy captain out in the corridor, he could hardly have approved the appearance of his superior. But he was, after all, the minister, and possibly the most powerful, and the most feared, minister in the Soviet Complex.

Blagonravov said, "A drink?"

Simonov shook his head. "A bit too early for me. Besides, I am afraid I celebrated a bit too much last night upon my return from Irkutsk. I dislike Siberia."

His superior had swung in his swivel chair to a small bar behind him. He opened the refrigerator door and brought forth a liter of highly chilled vodka, pulled the cork with his teeth and took up a tall shot glass and filled it. He put the bottle on the top of the bar rather than returning it to the refrigerator.

He said, "Ah, yes. Vladimir gave you an assignment in the East while I was in Rumania. How did it go, Ilya?"

His top operative shrugged. "The usual. Took a couple of weeks in all."

"What was it all about?"

"The men in the mines there were trying to start a union."

The minister knocked back his vodka with a practiced stiff-wristed toss. "Union?" he said in surprise. "Surely they already have a union. Miners? Of course they have a union."

"I do not mean the State union," Simonov said, crossing his legs. "They were trying to establish a union independent of control by the State. They had various grievances, including a desire for better housing and medical care. They even had plans for a strike."

His superior poured himself another drink. "What's it coming to?" he growled. "You'd think we were in the West. What did you do?"

Ilya Simonov grunted his version of humor. "Well, I could hardly send the ringleaders to Siberia, in view of the fact that they were already there. So I arranged for a bit of an accident."

Blagonravov pursed fat lips. "Was it necessary to be so drastic? Number One has suggested that we, ah, cool it a bit, as the Yankees say. Things are no longer as desperate as they were in the old days."

"I thought it was necessary," Simonov said. "A thing like that can get out of control, can spread like wildfire, can grow like a geometric progression. And if we allowed such action to the miners, who can say

where else free unions might not spring up?

"Yes, yes, of course, Ilya," his boss said. "You can always be counted upon to take the correct action." He finished off his second vodka, then looked over at his favorite field man. He said, "How long has it been since you have been in the United States?"

Simonov thought back. "Perhaps as much as ten years." He cleared his throat. "I am not exactly popular in America."

The *Chrezvychnaya Komissiya* head chuckled heavily. "No, of course not. The last time we retrieved you only by making a swap with the C.I.A. Two of their arrested agents for you." He chuckled again. "It was a bargain, especially since one of their two was a double agent that they didn't get onto for almost three years. But at any rate, this will be a milk-run, as the Yankees call it. There should be no danger."

Simonov contemplated his superior quizzically.

"Most likely," Blagonravov said, "it could be handled by the attachés at the Embassy in Greater Washington. However, I trust you most explicitly, and want your experienced opinion."

His field man waited for him to go on.

The minister leaned back in his chair and looked thoughtful. He said slowly, "There is the danger of a very fundamental change taking place in America."

"A fundamental change, Kliment?" the operative said. He was the only man in the ministry who dared call the chief by his first name.

"Yes, a very basic change, if our meager information is correct."

"Good!"

"No, bad. It is a change we do not wish to see, if I have any idea whatsoever about what is going on, and I sometimes wonder."

His trouble shooter waited patiently.

"In the way of background," the minister said, "let me go back a bit. The situation that prevails in the States these days had its roots back

possibly in the last century. The tendency has been accelerating, and, frankly, it is to the advantage of the Soviet Complex to have it continue to accelerate."

"Tendency?" Simonov scowled.

"Yes. Let me use an example. Some decades ago, a rather incompetent American lieutenant-colonel came under the observation of representatives of some of the largest American multi-national corporations—IBM, that sort of thing. Although not particularly intelligent, he evidently had a fantastic personality. They were far-seeing people and decided to groom our lieutenant-colonel for the presidency. At the time he was unknown. This was their first problem, to give him status. Bringing pressure to bear, they had him rapidly promoted until he became, first, commander of the American European theatre of operations, in the Hitler war, and then supreme commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, although he had never been in combat in his life, had never commanded troops in action. But still more status was needed if he was to be considered for the presidency. When the war ended, he was made head of the occupation troops in Germany.

"But being the country's top soldier was not quite enough, particularly when the presidency of General U.S. Grant was recalled. He resigned his rank and was made president of Columbia University. An indication of the man was found when the reporters interviewing him got through his aides. One asked what his background was in education that he should hold such a post. And he replied that he didn't have any. That they would have to brief him on his duties. The next day or so the reporters got to him again and one asked him what his favorite newspapers were and he returned that he never read the newspapers. 'If anything important happens, they tell me about it.' He didn't mention who *they* were."

Blagonravov chuckled heavily before going on, he was a compulsive chuckler. "Still later in the week, the reporters managed to get him aside once more and one asked what his favorite type of books were and he replied that he hadn't read a book in fourteen years. You begin to realize our hero's capabilities. At any rate—after his sponsors began shielding him from the newspaper people—he took leave of absence from his Columbia University post and became supreme commander of the Allied powers in Europe, and was given credit for the organizing of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. By now his status was considered

adequate and they ran him for President of the United States and he easily won. He remained in the position for eight years, spending most of his time playing golf. He was probably one of the most inadequate presidents the United States has ever had, and, as all know, they've had some unbelievably inadequate presidents."

Ilya Simonov shifted in his chair. "I fail to see your point, Kliment."

The other nodded. "The point is, that it is to the advantage of the Soviet Complex that the Americans continue to elect to their highest offices men whose sole claim to such office is their holding of status symbols. It is to our advantage to have their corporations headed by such men, their institutions of learning, their laboratories, their hospitals."

"I fail to see what all this has got to do with my going to Greater Washington."

The minister poured himself still another vodka and bolted it back as he had the others.

He squinted at his field man and said, "There seems to be some sort of underground among the Americans who seek to change this, Ilya. We do not want it changed. Your task is to find out more about the group and to come up with some plan to frustrate them."

"You mean that I, a Party member from youth, am to attempt to undermine a revolutionary organization?"

"That is correct, Ilya."

"I'll have that drink," Ilya Simonov said grimly.

### III

Larry Woolford's office wasn't much bigger than a cubicle. He sat down at the desk and banged a drawer or two open and closed. He liked to work, liked the department, but theoretically he still had several days of vacation

and hated to get back into routine.

He flicked on the phone finally and asked for an outline. He punched three different numbers before getting his subject. The phone screen remained blank, although Larry knew the other could see him.

"Hans?" he said. "Lawrence Woolford here."

The Teutonic accent was heavy, the voice bluff. "Ah, Larry! You need some assistance to make your vacation? Perhaps a sinister, exotic young lady, complete with a long cigarette holder and a knowledge of some of the most fantastic positions recently discovered in China?"

Larry Woolford growled, "How'd you know I was on vacation?"

The other laughed. "You know better than to ask that, my friend. I am in the business of knowing things."

Larry said, "The vacation is over, Hans. I need some information."

The voice was more guarded now. "I owe you a favor or two."

"Don't you though," Larry said sarcastically. "Look, Hans, what's new in the Russkie camp?"

The heartiness was gone. "How do you mean, my friend?"

"Is there anything big stirring? Is there anyone new in this country from the Soviet Complex?"

"Well, now..." the other's voice drifted away.

Larry Woolford said impatiently, "Look, Hans, let's don't waste time going round and around. You run a clearing agency for, ah, information. You're strictly a businessman, nonpartisan, so to speak. Hell, you'd better be. Fine, thus far our department has tolerated you. Perhaps we'll continue to. Perhaps the reason is that we figure we get more out of your existence than we lose. The Russkies evidently figure the same way, the proof being that you're still alive and have branches in the capitals of every power on Earth."

"All right, all right," the German said. "Let me think for a moment. Can you give me any idea of what you're looking for?" There was an undernote

of interest in his voice now.

"No. I just want to know if you've heard anything new anti-my-side from the other side. Or if you know of any fresh personnel recently from there."

"Frankly, I haven't. If you could give me a hint."

"I can't," Larry said. "Look, Hans, like you say, you owe me a favor or two. If something comes up, let me know. Then I'll owe you one."

The voice was jovial again. "It's a bargain, my friend."

After Woolford had hung up, he scowled at the phone. He wondered if Hans Distelmayer was lying. The German commanded the largest professional spy ring in the world. It was possible, but difficult, for anything in the way of espionage-counter-espionage to develop without his having an inkling. Well, at least he had planted a bug in the other's ear, perhaps he would come up with something.

The phone rang back. It was Steve Hackett of Secret Service on the screen.

Hackett said, "Woolford, you coming over? I understand you've been assigned to get in our hair on this job."

"Huh," Larry grunted. "The way I hear it, your whole department has given up, so I'm assigned to help you out of your usual fumble-fingered confusion."

Hackett snorted. "At any rate, can you drop over? I'm to work in liaison with you."

"Coming," Larry said. He flicked off the phone, got to his feet and headed for the door. If they could crack this thing the first day, he'd take up that vacation where it had been interrupted and possibly be able to wangle a few more days out of the Boss to boot.

At this time of day, parking would have been a problem, in spite of automated traffic in the streets. Looking up and down in a quick check to see if anyone he knew was around to see him, he ducked down into the underground. It was a slight drop in status for someone on his level to take



the subway. He took a line that delivered him to the high-rise that housed Secret Service.

The Counterfeit Division of the Secret Service occupied an impressive section of the governmental building. Larry Woolford flashed his credentials here and there, explained to guards and receptionists here and there, and finally wound up in Steve Hackett's office, which was all but a duplicate of his own in size and decor.

Steve Hackett himself was a fairly accurate carbon copy of Woolford, barring facial resemblance alone. He wore Harris tweed, instead of Donegal. Larry Woolford made a note of that. Possibly herringbone was coming back in. He winced at the thought of a major change in his wardrobe; it'd cost a fortune. However, you couldn't get the reputation for being out of style.

They had worked on a few cases before when Steve Hackett had been assigned to the presidential bodyguard, and although they weren't good friends, they cooperated well.

Steve came to his feet and shook hands. "Thought you were going to be down in Florida bass fishing this month. You like your work so well you can't stay away, or is it a matter of trying to impress your chief?"

Larry growled, "Fine thing, fine thing. Secret Service bogs down and they've got to call me in to clean up the mess."

Steve motioned him to a chair and immediately went serious. "Do you know anything about pushing queer, Woolford?"

"That means passing counterfeit money, doesn't it? All I know is what's in the Tri-Di crime shows."

"Oh, great. I can see you're going to be one hell of a lot of help. Have you gotten anywhere at all on the possibility that the stuff might be coming in from abroad?"

"Nothing positive," Larry said. "Are you people accomplishing anything?"

"We're just getting underway. There's something awfully off-trail about this deal, Woolford. It doesn't fit into routine."

Larry said, "I wouldn't think so if the stuff is so good not even a bank teller can tell the difference."

"That's not what I'm talking about now, although that curls our hair too. Let me give you a rundown on standard counterfeiting." The Secret Service man pushed back in his swivel chair, lit a cigarette and propped his feet onto the edge of a partly open desk drawer. "Briefly, it goes like this. Some smart lad gets himself a set of plates and a platen press and—"

Larry interrupted. "Where does he get the plates?"

"That doesn't matter for the moment," Steve said. "Various ways. Maybe he makes them himself, sometimes he buys them from a crooked engraver. But I'm talking about pushing green goods once it's printed. Anyway, our boy runs off, say, a million dollars worth of fives, face value. But he doesn't even try to push them himself. He wholesales them around getting, say, fifty thousand dollars. In other words, he sells twenty dollars in counterfeit for one good dollar."

Larry pursed his lips. "Quite a discount."

"Ummm. But that's safest from his angle. The half dozen or so distributors he sold it to don't try to pass it either. They also are playing it carefully. They peddle it at, say, ten to one, to the next rung down the ladder."

"And these are the fellows that pass it, eh?"

"Not even then, usually. These small timers take it and pass it on at five to one to the suckers in the trade who take the biggest risks. Most of these are professional pushers of the queer, as the term goes. Some, however, are comparative amateurs. Sailors, for instance, who buy with the idea of passing it in some foreign port where seamen's money flows fast."

Larry Woolford shifted in his chair and said, "So what are you building up to?"

Steve Hackett rubbed the end of his pug nose with a forefinger, in quick irritation. "Like I say, that's standard counterfeiting procedure. We're all set up to meet it, and do a pretty good job. Where we have our difficulties is with amateurs."

Woolford scowled at him, lacking comprehension.

Hackett said, "Some guy who makes and passes it himself, for instance. He's unknown to the stool-pigeons, has no criminal record, does up comparatively small amounts and dribbles his product onto the market over a period of time. We had one old devil up in New York once who actually drew one dollar bills. He was a tremendous artist. It took us years to get him."

Larry Woolford said, "Well, why go into all this? We're hardly dealing with amateurs now."

Steve looked at him. "That's the trouble. We are."

"Are you batty? Not even your own experts can tell this product from real money."

"I didn't say it was being made by amateurs. It's being passed by amateurs—or maybe amateur is the better word."

"How do you know?"

"For one thing, most professionals won't touch anything bigger than a twenty. Tens are better, fives better still. When you pass a fifty, the person you gave it to is apt to remember where he got it." Steve Hackett added slowly, "Particularly if you give one as a tip to the maitre d'hotel in a first class restaurant. A maitre d' holds his job on the strength of his ability to remember faces and names."

"What else makes you think your pushers are amateurs?"

"Amateur," Hackett corrected. "Ideally, a pusher is an inconspicuous type, the kind of person whose face you'd never remember. It's never a teenage girl who's blowing money at fifty dollars a crack."

It was time to stare now, and Larry Woolford obliged. "A teenager!"

"We've had four descriptions of her, one of them excellent. Fredrick, the maitre d' over at La Calvados, is the one that counts, but the others jibe. She's bought perfume and gloves at Michel Swiss, the swankest shop in town; a dress at Chez Marie— she passed three fifties there—and a hat at Paulette's over on Monroe street.

"That's another sign of the amateur, by the way. A competent pusher buys a small item and gets change for his counterfeit bill. Our girl's been buying expensive items, obviously more interested in the product than in her change."

"This doesn't seem to make much sense," Larry Woolford protested. "You have any ideas at all?"

"The question is," Hackett said, "where did she get it? Is she connected with one of the embassies and acquired the stuff overseas? If so, that puts it in your lap again, possibly—"

The phone rang and Steve flicked the switch and said, "Yeah? Steven Hackett speaking."

He listened for a moment then banged the phone off and jumped to his feet. "Come on, Larry," he snapped. "This is it." He fished down into a desk drawer, came up with a gyro-jet pistol, which he flicked expertly into a shoulder holster rig beneath his left arm.

Larry stood too. "What was that?"

"Fredrick, over at La Calvados. The girl has come in for lunch. Let's go!"

Larry followed him, saying mildly, "If it's just a teenage kid, why the shooter?"

Steve looked back at him, over his shoulder. "How do we know this crackpot kid didn't spend one of her fifties for a nice little pearl handled root-a-toot-tooter? A teenager can put just as big a hole in you as anybody else. Besides, maybe she's just a front for some guy who is in the background, letting her do the dirty work."

## IV

La Calvados was the swankest French restaurant in Greater Washington, a city not devoid of swank restaurants. It duplicated the

decor of Maxim's in Paris, and was very red carpeted and plush indeed. Only the upper echelons in government circles could afford its tariffs, the clientele was more apt to consist of business mucky-mucks and lobbyists on the make. Larry Woolford had eaten here exactly twice. You could get a reputation spending money far beyond your obvious pay status.

Fredrick, the maitre d' hotel, however, was able to greet them both by name. "Monsieur Hackett, Monsieur Woolford," he bowed. He obviously didn't approve of La Calvados being used as a hangout where counterfeiterers were picked up by the authorities.

"Where is she?" Steve said, looking out over the public dining room.

Fredrick said, unprofessionally agitated, "See here, Monsieur Hackett, you didn't expect to, ah, arrest the young lady here during our luncheon hour?"

Steve looked at him impatiently. "We don't exactly beat them over the head with blackjacks, slip the bracelets on and drag them screaming to the paddy-wagon."

"Of course not, Monsieur, but..." Larry Woolford's chief dined here several times a week and was possibly on the best of terms with Fredrick—whose decisions on tables and whose degree of servility had a good deal of influence on a man's prestige in Greater Washington. Larry said wearily, "We can wait until she leaves. Where is she?"

"Do you see the young lady over near the window on the park? The rather gauche type?"

It was a teenager, all right. A youngster up to her eyebrows in the attempt to project sophistication. Larry assumed she was a Tri-Di fan incomparable. Steve said, "Do you know who she is?"

"No," Fredrick said, nostrils high. "Hardly our usual clientele."

"Oh?" Larry said. "She looks like money."

Fredrick said, "Her clothing would seem to be derived from the Chez Marie but she wears it as though it came from Kleins, and she is much too young to wear a blouse so transparent as to reveal her bosom in such fashion. Her perfume is Chanel, but she has used approximately three

times the quantity one would expect. Besides, Chanel is not in now, it has lost status of recent date."

Larry hadn't known that last. He must remember not to give Chanel as a present.

"That's our girl, all right," Steve murmured. "Where can we keep an eye on her until she leaves?"

"Why not the bar here, Messieurs?"

"Why not?" Larry said. "I could use a drink."

Fredrick cleared his throat. "Ah, Messieurs, that fifty I turned over to you. I suppose it turned out to be spurious?"

Steve grinned at him. "Afraid so, Fredrick. The department is holding it."

Larry Woolford took out his wallet. "However, we have a certain leeway on expenses on this assignment and appreciate your cooperation." He handed two twenties and a ten to the maitre d'. Fredrick bowed low, the money disappearing into his clothes magically. "Merci bien, Monsieur."

At the bar, Steve scowled at his colleague. "Ha!" he said. "Why didn't I think of that first? He'll get down on his knees and bump his head each time he sees you in the joint from now on."

Larry Woolford wagged a finger at the other. "This is a status-conscious town, my boy. Prestige means everything. When I take over my Boss' job, maybe we can swing you a transfer and I'll give you a position suitable to your attainments." He pursed his lips judiciously. "Though come to think of it, that might mean a demotion from the job you're holding now."

"Vodka Martini," Steve told the bartender. "Polish vodka, of course."

"Of course," the bartender said.

Larry said. "Same for me."

The bartender left and Steve muttered, "I hate vodka."

"Yeah," Larry said. "But what are you going to do in a place like this, order some weird drink, like a highball or something? Vodka's in. Suppose somebody saw you drinking a gin cocktail."

Steve dug into his pocket for money. "We're not going to have to drink them anyway. Here she comes."

She walked with her head high, hauteur in every step, ignoring the peasants at the tables she passed. Her youthful breasts bobbed gently in her diaphanous blouse as she progressed. She looked like a young, prosperous, but unpracticed tart.

"Holy smokes," Steve grunted. "It's a wonder that Fredrick let her in. She looks like a young weird."

"He let her in when she crossed his palm with half a bill," Larry said cynically. "She has a nice pair of knockers, though."

Steve looked at him, even as he paid up for their untouched drinks. "You one of these types that goes for kids?"

"I go for anything that has one of those things," Larry leered back at him.

The girl hesitated momentarily before the doorway of the prestige restaurant, allowing the passers-by to realize that she had just emerged, and then turned to her right to promenade along the shopping street.

Larry and Steve trailed after her. Fifty feet below La Calvados, Steve said, "Okay, this is it. Let's go, Woolford."

One stepped to one elbow, the other the other. Steve said, "I wonder if we could ask you a few questions, Miss?"

Her eyebrows went up. "I *beg* your pardon!"

Steve sighed and displayed the badge pinned to his wallet, keeping it inconspicuous. "Secret Service, Miss," he murmured.

"Oh, devil," she said. She looked at at Larry Woolford, then back at Steve.

Steve said, "Among other things, we're in charge of counterfeit money."

She was about five foot four in her heels, had obviously been on a round of beauty shops and had obviously instructed them to glamourize her. It hadn't come off. She still looked as though she'd be more at home as cheerleader of the junior class in a small time school. She was honey blond, green-gray of eye, and had that complexion they seldom carry even into the twenties. Her figure wasn't at all bad, for her age. In another half-dozen years she was going to be one gorgeous dish.

She said, a trifle shrilly, "I... I don't know what you're talking about." Her chin began to tremble and she held her elbows tight against her sides, as though in rejection of this whole situation. The gesture seemed to make her young semi-bared breasts more prominent.

Larry said gently, "Don't worry, Miss. We just want to ask you some questions."

"Well... like what?" She was going to be blinking back tears in a moment. At least Larry hoped she'd blink them back. He'd hate to have her start howling here in public.

Larry said, "We think you can be of assistance to the government, and we'd like your help."

Steve rolled his eyes upward at that, but turned and waved for a street level cab.

In the cab, Larry said, "Suppose we go over to my office, Steve. It's closer."

"Okay with me," Steve muttered, "But by the looks of the young lady here, I think it's a false alarm from your angle. She's obviously an American. What's your name, Miss?"

"It's Zusanette. Well, really, Susan."

"Susan what?"

"I... I'm not sure I want to tell you. I... I want a lawyer."

"A lawyer!" Steve snorted. "You mean you want the juvenile authorities, don't you?"



"Oh, what a mean thing to say," she sputtered.

"Yeah, well, can't you cover up those two things?" Steve said, staring at her breasts, the nipples of which could clearly be made out through her Cretean revival blouse. "My friend, here, is lecherous."

"Oh, what a mean thing to say," Larry murmured.

In the corridor, outside the Boss' suite of offices, Larry said to Steve, "You take Miss... ah, Zusanette to my office, will you Steve? I'll be there in a minute."

He opened the door to the anteroom and said, "LaVerne, we've got a girl in my office—"

"Why, Larry! And what a place to take a girl. Why don't you go to a hotel?"

He glowered at her. "A suspect. I want a complete tape of everything said. As soon as we're through, have copies made, at least three or four."

"And who, Mr. Woolford, was your girl Friday last year?"

"This is important, honey. I suppose you've supplied me with a secretary, but I haven't even met her yet. Take care of it, will you?"

"Sure enough, Larry."

He followed Steve and the girl into his office.

Once seated, the girl and Steve in the only two extra chairs the cubicle boasted and Larry behind his desk, he looked at her in what he hoped was reassurance. "Just tell us where you got the money, Zusanette."

Steve Hackett reached out a hand suddenly and grabbed up her bag from her lap. She gasped and snatched at it, but he eluded her and she sat back, her chin trembling again.

The Secret Service man unsnapped the bag, put a hand in and came up with a thick sheaf of bills, the top ones, at least, all fifties. He tossed them to Larry's desk and resumed the search. He took out a school pass and read, "Susan Self, 418 Elwood Avenue." He looked up and said to Larry, "That's right off Eastern, near Paterson Park in the Baltimore section of

town, isn't it?"

Larry said to her, "Zusanette, I think you had better tell us where you got all this money."

"I found it," she said defiantly. "You can't do anything to me if I simply found it. Anybody can find money. Finders keepers and losers..."

"But if it's counterfeit," Steve interrupted dryly, "it might also be, finders weepers."

"Where did you find it, Zusanette?" Larry said gently.

She tightened her lips and the trembling of her chin disappeared. "I... I can't tell you that. But it's not counterfeit. Daddy... my father, said it was as good as any money the government prints."

"That it is." Steve's voice was sour. "But it's still counterfeit, which makes it very illegal indeed to spend, Miss Self."

She looked from one of them to the other, not clear about her position. She said to Larry, "You mean it's not real money?"

He kept his tone disarming, but shook his head. "I'm afraid not, Zusanette. Now, tell us, where did you find it?"

"I can't. I promised."

"I see. Then you don't know to whom it originally belonged?"

"It didn't belong to anybody."

Steve Hackett made with a disbelieving whistle. He was taking the part of the tough, suspicious cop; Larry the part of the understanding, sympathetic officer, trying to give the suspect a break.

Susan Self turned quickly on Steve. "Well, it didn't. You don't even know."

Larry said, "I think she's telling the truth, Steve. Give her a chance. She's playing fair." He looked back at the girl and frowned his puzzlement. "But all money belongs to somebody, doesn't it?"

She had them now. She said superiorly, "Not necessarily to *somebody*. It can belong to, like, an organization."

Steve grunted scepticism. "I think we ought to arrest her," he said.

Larry held up a hand, his face registering opposition. "I'll handle this," he said sharply. "Zusanette is doing everything she can to cooperate." He turned back to the girl. "Now, the question is, what organization did this money belong to?"

She looked triumphantly at Steve Hackett. "It belonged to the Movement."

They both looked at her.

Steve said finally, "What movement?"

She pouted in thought. "That's the only name they call it."

"Who's they?" Steve snapped nastily.

"I... I don't know."

Larry said, "Well, you already told us your father was a member, Zusanette."

Her eyes went wide. "I did? I shouldn't have said that." But she evidently took him at his word.

Larry said encouragingly, "We might as well go on. Who else is a member of this Movement besides your father?"

She shifted in her chair uncomfortably. "I don't know any of their names."

Steve looked down at the school pass he still held in his hands. He said to Larry, "I'd better make a phone call."

"Yeah, obviously," Larry said.

Steve left.

Larry said to the girl, "Don't worry about him, Zusanette. Now then,

this Movement. That's kind of a funny name, isn't it? What does it mean?"

She was evidently glad that the less than handsome Steve Hackett had left the office. Her words flowed more freely. "Well, Daddy says they call it the Movement rather than a revolution."

An ice cube manifested itself in the stomach of Lawrence Woolford.

## V

She was saying, "Because people get conditioned, like, to words. Like revolution. Everybody is against the word because they all think of killing and everything, and Daddy says that there doesn't have to be any shooting or killing or anything like that at all. It just means a fundamental change in society. And, Daddy says, take the word *propaganda*. Everybody's got to thinking that it automatically means lies, but it doesn't at all. It just means, like, the arguments you use to convince people that what you stand for is right and it might be lies or not. And, Daddy says, take the word *socialism*. So many people have the wrong idea of what it means that the socialists ought to scrap the word and start using something else to mean what they stand for."

Larry said gently, "Your father is a socialist?"

"Oh, no."

He nodded in understanding. "Oh, a Communist, eh?"

Susan Self was indignant. "Daddy thinks the Communists are strictly awful, really weird."

Steve Hackett came back into the office, obviously less than happy. He said to Larry, "I sent a couple of the boys out to pick him up in a jet-helio."

Susan was on her feet, a hand to mouth. "You mean my father! You're going to arrest him!"

Larry said soothingly. "Sit down, Zusanette. There's a lot of things about this that I'm sure your father can explain." He said to Steve, "She tells me that the money belonged to a Movement. A revolutionary Movement which doesn't use the term revolutionary because people react unfavorably to that word. It's not Commie."

Susan said indignantly, "It's American, not anything foreign!"

Steve growled. "Let's get back to the money. What's this movement doing with a lot of counterfeit bills and where did you find them?"

She evidently figured she'd gone too far now to make a stand. "It's not Daddy's fault," she told them. "He took me to headquarters twice."

"Where's headquarters?" Larry said, trying to keep his voice soothing. They were going to wind this up and he could get back to his vacation before the day was out.

She frowned. "Well, I don't know, really. Daddy was awfully silly about it. He tied his handkerchief around my eyes near the end. But the others complained about me anyway, and Daddy got awfully mad and said something about the young people of the country participating in their emancipation and all, but the others got mad too and said there wasn't any kind of help I could do around headquarters anyway, and I'd be better off in school. Everybody got awfully mad, but after the second time Daddy promised not to take me to headquarters any more."

"And where did you find the money, Zusanette?" Larry said.

"At headquarters. There's tons and tons of it there."

Larry cleared his throat and said, "When you say tons and tons, you mean a great deal of it, eh?"

She was proudly defiant. "I mean tons and tons. A ton is two thousand pounds."

"Now look, Zusanette," Larry said reasonably. "I don't know exactly how much money weighs, not exactly, but let's say a pound would be, say, a thousand bills." He took a pencil up from the desk and scribbled on a pad before him. "A pound of fifties would be \$50,000. Then if you multiplied that by 2,000 pounds to make a ton, you'd have \$100,000,000. And you

say there's tons and tons?"

"And that's just the fifties," Susan said triumphantly. "So you can see the two little packages I picked up aren't really important at all. It's just like I found them."

"I don't think there'd be anything like a thousand bills in a pound," Steve said weakly.

Larry said, "How much other money is there? I mean besides the fifties?"

"Oh, piles. Whole rooms. Rooms after rooms. And hundred dollar bills, and twenties, and fives and tens."

Larry said, "Look Zusanette, everything makes it obvious that you are in no position to be telling us whoppers. This whole story doesn't make sense, does it?"

Her mouth tightened. "I'm not going to say anything more until Daddy gets here anyway," she said.

Which was when the phone rang.

The screen lit up and LaVerne Polk said, "There's a call for Steve Hackett, Larry."

Larry pushed the phone screen around so that Steve could look into it. LaVerne was faded off and was replaced by a stranger in uniform. Steve said, "Yeah?"

"Flown the coop, sir. Must have got out just minutes before we arrived. Couldn't have taken more than a suitcase. Few papers scattered around the room he used for an office. By the looks of things he was ready to take off just any time at all."

Susan gasped. "You mean Daddy?"

Steve Hackett rubbed a hand over his flattened nose. "Holy smokes," he said. He thanked the cop and flicked off.

Larry said, "Look Zusanette, everything's going to be all right. Nothing is going to happen to you. You say you managed to pick up two packets of

all this money they have at headquarters. Okay. So you thought it wouldn't be missed and you thought it was real money, and you've always wanted to spend money the way you see the stars do on Tri-Di and in the movies.'

She looked at him, taken aback. "How did you know?"

Larry said dryly, "I've always wanted to myself. But I would like to know one more thing. The Movement. What was it going to do with all this money?"

That evidently puzzled her. "The Professor says they were going to spend it on chorus girls. I guess... I guess he was joking or something. But Daddy and I'd just been up to New York and we saw those famous precision dancers at the New Roxy Theatre and all and then when we got back the Professor and Daddy were talking and I heard him say it."

Steve said carefully, "Professor who?"

Susan said, "Just the Professor. That's all we ever call him." Her chin went to trembling again.

## VI

Steve Hackett looked at Larry. "What in the hell will we do with her?"

Larry thought about it. He turned to the girl. "How old are you... Zusanette."

"I'm... I'm nearly eighteen."

"You don't look it." His eyes went back to Steve Hackett. "She's too old for the juvenile authorities and too young to throw into the smasher with a bunch of addicts, prostitutes and lesbians. Besides, we'll want to go over her story some more. If we arrest her, how do we know what this so-called Movement might come up with? We don't want the Civil Liberties Union, or whoever, bailing her out."

"Yeah," Steve said, unhappily. "This professor and his boys probably control quite a bit of cash, not counting the counterfeit. They'd possibly have her out before the cell door clanked shut. But, on the other hand, we can't hold her without some kind of a charge."

Larry snorted. "Maybe your department can't. You'd be surprised what ours pulls off from time to time."

Susan Self was darting her eyes back and forth between them. She blurted, "What do you mean? What are you talking about? Aren't you going to let me go? You practically promised. You said all you wanted was to ask me a few questions to help the government."

"I better check this out with the chief," Steve said, eyeing Larry without pleasure.

"Tell you what," Larry said. "I'll take her over to the Hilton and put her in a suite. You check with your chief and find out what he wants to do. Obviously, there's no foreign angle here. It's a pure Secret Service matter. I'll stay with her until you check back with me."

"Right," Steve came to his feet. He said to Susan, his voice more kindly now. "Don't worry about it, kid. You're not under arrest. And you'll still be living it up as though that pile of fifties was still yours. The Greater Hilton is the biggest hotel in town and everything you eat or drink is on Uncle Sam. You should have the time of your life." He added wryly, "What with your tastes."

Susan said, "What I'd really like is to go home."

Steve shook his head. "Look, your father isn't even there. You'd be alone."

Larry stood too. "Let's go, Zusanette." He took her arm and ushered her from the small office.

Susan Self was impressed by the Greater Hilton. She should have been. Short of, possibly, Versailles, Louis the 14th's pad, there had probably never been a palace in more luxurious bad taste in history. This was not the first time Larry Woolford had kept someone under wraps in the swank



hotel. His department maintained several suites on a full time basis. There was no need even for him to register. He led Susan directly across the lobby to the elevator banks.

The departmental suites were on the 18th floor. He led her down the ornate, all but gaudy, hall to Suite 18 and stood before the identity screen on the door.

The door opened and a lanky, yawning operative was there. He was dressed in tweeds, of course, Larry noted. Harris tweeds, rather than Donegal, and Larry wondered again if Donegal was going out. He'd have to check with his tailor. Damn it, he had just bought the suit he was wearing two weeks ago.

The other gave Susan Self the once over then turned his eyes back to Larry. He said, "Hi, Larry, what's up? Damn it, you know we're not supposed to bring broads here. Besides, aren't you robbing the cradle?"

"Don't be silly," Larry Woolford said, escorting Susan inside and closing the door behind them. He saw her to the couch in the lavish living room before turning back to the other. He wondered if the girl knew what 'robbing the cradle' meant. Probably. Her generation knew everything. But she was probably too upset to think about it.

He said, "Listen, Art, this girl's a kingpin in an operation we're cooperating with Secret Service on. Whether or not we stay on it, I don't know. At any rate, we'll be hearing from Steve Hackett, shortly. You know Steve, don't you? Meanwhile, post yourself out in the hall. Nobody but Steve gets in unless you clear it with me first."

Art had raised his eyebrows, but now he said, "Right, Larry." He drew his Gyro-jet from the holster beneath his left arm, threw the magazine, checked it, heeled it back into the the butt of the gun, threw a cartridge into the chamber, returned the deadly weapon to its nest and left for the corridor to stand guard.

Larry lowered himself into a chair across from her. "Well, here we are," he said. "We'll probably have a couple of hours or so before we hear from Mr. Hackett. Steven's boss isn't the easiest man in the world to get to see."

Her under lip trembled slightly again. "You aren't going to let me go?"

He said soothingly, "Possibly a little later, Zusanette. There are some other people who will probably want to talk to you."

She said hesitantly, "You could let me go... if you wanted to? I mean, you're the one in charge? I heard the superior way you talked to that other one—Steve."

"Sure, sure. You can depend on me. Meanwhile, this isn't as bad as all that. Let me show you around. There's a king-size Tri-Di set over there in that wall. And lots of books there on the shelves. If you want anything to eat or drink, just phone for it. This is the most ritzy hotel in Greater Washington. There's a delivery box in the kitchen over there. They'll send up everything you want. Consider yourself a guest of the government, Zusanette."

He led her about the suite. Two bedrooms, two baths, two dressing rooms, a dining room, a kitchen.

It was very well done, actually, though somewhat ostentatious. Which he assumed wouldn't bother her at all. Some real VIPs had stayed here on more than one occasion—usually complete with call girls.

"It's very nice," Susan Self said lowly. "But I'd rather go home."

"Your father isn't even there, you know, Zusanette," Larry said patiently.

They were in one of the bedrooms. She turned to him and swallowed. Then her fingers went to the buttons of her blouse and she slowly, obviously trying to be provocative, unbuttoned it.

Larry Woolford rather doubted that the girl was the nearly eighteen she claimed to be, but whether or not, her breasts were lush. She wore no brassiere, of course, and needed none. Her face was possibly overly made-up but her body could not be corrupted by her gauche efforts to appear sophisticated.

She stood there for a moment in silence, then she flushed and said, "You... you like me?"

His throat felt thick. Steve Hackett had been quite correct when he had accused Larry Woolford of going for the young stuff. He said, "Yes, of course. But what in the world do you think you're doing, pretending that

I'm trying to compromise you?"

Her fingers went to the side of her skirt. She said, her voice embarrassed, as though he might reject her offerings, "Don't you want me to lay for you?"

She stepped out of the skirt, remaining in nothing more than shoes, stocking, garter belt and the flimsiest of bikini type briefs.

He goggled at her. "Lay for me? Aren't you a little on the young side to be climbing out of your clothes in a bedroom with a man?"

Susan Self stood there, a touch of pride in her highly held head now. She said, "I've... I've done it ever so many times. If a girl doesn't put out for a boy these days, she never gets any dates."

He licked a dry lower lip. "I... well... why not?"

He supposed that he should be feeling like a son of a bitch, but he didn't. Hell, the girl had asked for it. Asked for it? Hell, she'd grabbed it. He went into the bathroom to clean himself up a bit, and when he returned began to dress.

She was still on the bed, completely nude. She blinked at him as he climbed into his pants. She said, "Didn't you want to... to do me again?"

He regarded her sceptically. "Now I know you're telling the truth, that you've never been with an older man. But that's not all of it, Susan. You'd better get dressed and see if you can remake that bed, a bit. It might be awhile until Steve gets back here, but you never know."

She got up from the bed, a pathetic quality there. She took up her bikini briefs and said wistfully, "You mean... you mean you're not going to let me go?"

At the room's dresser he retied his tie, avoiding looking into her face through the mirror. He said reproachfully, "Now Zusanette, you know better than that. I'm in no position to let you go home. There are a good many questions various people will undoubtedly want to ask you."

"But you said..."

"No I didn't."

"But I laid for you and all." Her voice was broken.

He said disgustedly, "What would Steve Hackett say when he came back, if I let you go?"

She blinked and said, "I could put out for him, too."

He shook his head and muttered, "What a way to solve all problems." And then louder. "I doubt it. Steve's married. He undoubtedly gets all he wants."

She said, "Some men cheat on their wives. I could let him do me and go on home. And then you two could pretend that you'd never caught me."

He sighed. "Zusanette, our conversation down at my office was taped. There's no way of pretending we never caught you." His voice became something more curt. "You're involved in one of the biggest counterfeiting romps in history. You don't buy yourself out of that with a couple of rolls in the hay."

"You don't?"

"No, you don't. Now get your clothes on and remake the bed and come on back into the other room. We'll order something to eat and drink. Do you drink? God knows, you kids seem to do everything else these days."

She said lowly, getting into her skirt, "Daddy lets me drink wine with our meals."

## VII

Larry Woolford summed it up for the Boss later after Steve had returned and taken over.

His chief scowled his disbelief, and said, "The child is full of dreams, Lawrence. It comes from seeing an over-abundance of these Tri-Di shows. I have a girl the same age. I don't know what is happening to the country. They have no sense of reality."

Larry Woolford said mildly, "Well, she might be full of nonsense but she did have the fifties and she's our only connection with whoever printed them, whether it's a movement to overthrow the government, or what."

The Boss said tolerantly, "Movement indeed. Obviously, her father produced them and she purloined a quantity before he was ready to attempt to pass them. Have you a run down on him as yet?"

"Susan Self says her father, Ernest Self, is an inventor. Steve Hackett is working on locating him."

"He's an inventor indeed. Evidently, he has invented a perfect counterfeiting device. However, that is the Secret Service's headache, not ours. Do you wish to resume that vacation of yours, Lawrence?"

His operative twisted his face in a grimace. "Sure I do, sir, but I'm not happy about this. What happens if there really is an organization, a Movement, like she said? That brings it back under our jurisdiction, anti-subversion."

The other shook his head tolerantly. "See here, Lawrence, when you begin scheming a social revolution you can't plan on an organization composed of a small number of persons who keep their existence secret. In spite of what a good many persons seem to believe, revolutions are not accomplished by little groups of conspirators hiding in cellars and eventually overthrowing society by dramatically shooting the President, or King, or Czar, or whoever. Revolutions are precipitated by masses of people. People who have ample cause to be dissatisfied, possibly having been pushed to the brink of starvation, though other things can sometimes be the cause of revolt. Have you ever read Machiavelli?"

Niccolo Machiavelli was currently *the thing* to read.

Larry said with a certain dignity, "I've gone through 'The Prince,' the 'Discourses' and currently I'm amusing myself with his 'History of Florence.'

"Anybody who can amuse himself reading Machiavelli," the Boss said wryly, "has a macabre sense of humor. At any rate what I was alluding to was where he stated that the Prince cannot rule indefinitely in the face of the active opposition of his people. Therefore, the people always get a government that lies within the limits of their tolerance. It may be on one edge or the other of their limits of toleration—but it's always within their tolerance zone."

Larry frowned and said, "Well, what's your point, sir?"

The Boss said patiently, "I'm just observing that cultures aren't overthrown by little handfuls of secret conspirators. You might eliminate a few individuals in that manner, in other words change the personnel of the government, but you aren't going to alter a socio-economic system. That can't be done until your people have been pushed outside their limits of tolerance. Very well then. A revolutionary organization must get out and propagandize. It has got to convince the people that they are being pushed beyond endurance. You have got to get the *masses* to moving. You have got to give speeches, print newspapers, books, pamphlets, you have got to send your organizers out to intensify interest in your program."

Larry said, "I see what you mean. If this so-called Movement actually existed it couldn't expect to get anywhere as long as it remained secret."

The Boss nodded. "That is correct. The leaders of a revolutionary movement might be intellectuals, social scientists, scholars—in fact they usually are—take our own American Revolution with Jefferson, Madison, Franklin, Paine. Or the French Revolution with Robespierre, Danton, Marat. For that matter take Marx, Engels, Lenin. All were well educated intellectuals from the middle class. But the revolution itself, once it starts, comes from below, from the masses of people pushed beyond tolerance."

It came to Lawrence Woolford that his superior had achieved his prominent office not through any fluke. He knew what he was talking about.

The Boss wound it up. "If there was such an organization as this Movement, then this department would know about it. You don't keep a revolutionary movement secret. It doesn't make sense to even try. Even if it is forced underground, it makes as much noise as it can."

His troubleshooter cleared his throat. "I suppose you're right, sir." He

added hesitantly, "We could always give Susan Self a few drops of Scop-Serum, sir."

The Boss scowled disapprovingly. "You know how the Supreme Court ruled on that, Lawrence. And particularly since the medics revealed its effect on reducing sexual inhibitions. It's one of the most effective aphrodisiacs ever come upon. No, Mr. Hackett and Secret Service will have to get the truth out of the girl by some other means. At any rate, it is out of our hands."

Larry came to his feet. "Well, then, I'll resume my vacation, eh?"

His chief took up a report from his desk and frowned at it, his attention already passing to other matters. He grunted, "Clear it with LaVerne, please. Tell her I said to take another week to make up for our intruding on you in this manner."

In the back of his head, Larry Woolford had misgivings. For one thing, where had the kid, who on the face of her performance was no great brain even as teenagers go, picked up such ideas as the fact that people developed prejudices against words like revolution and propaganda?

However, he was clear of it now. Let Steve Hackett and his people take over. He, Lawrence Woolford, was due for a quick return to Astor, Florida and the bass fishing there which was, in his book, the best in the world. A ten-pound large-mouthed bass, practically unknown elsewhere, was an ordinary thing on the St. Johns. In his time, Larry had landed bass that went as high as fourteen pounds and they were by no means record breakers. He stopped at LaVerne's desk and gave her his address to be, now that his vacation was resumed.

She said, smiling up at him, the warm smile that was LaVerne Polk when she wasn't in one of her needling moods, "Right. The Boss told me to get in touch with Secret Service and let them know that we're pulling out. What happened to Susan Self?"

Larry looked at her quizzically. "How do you know about Susan Self?"

Her tone was deprecating. "Don't you remember? You had me cut some tapes on you and that hulking Steve Hackett grilling the poor kid."

Larry snorted. "Poor kid, yet. With her tastes for living it up, and that

father she has, she'll probably spend the rest of her life getting in Steve's hair as a counterfeit pusher."

LaVerne didn't like it. She said, "What are they going to do with her? She's just a child."

The agent shrugged. "I feel sorry for her, too, LaVerne. Steve's got her over in one of our suites at the Greater Washington Hilton, until things are cleared up. They don't want the newspapers to get wind of this until they've got that inventor father of hers and whatever he's cooked up to turn out perfect reproductions of Uncle Sam's money. Look, I won't be leaving until tomorrow. What'd you say we get out on the town tonight?"

"Why, Larry Woolford," she gushed. "How nice of you to ask me. What did you have in mind for a weird type like myself? I understand that Mort Lenny's at one of the night clubs."

Larry winced. "You know what he's been saying about the administration. That so called stand-up comedian is one of the biggest weirds in town." She smiled sweetly at him.

Larry said, "Look, we could take in the Brahms concert, then we could—"

Still sweetly, she said, "Do you like Brahms? I go for popular music myself. Preferably the sort of thing they wrote back in the 1930s. Something you can dance to; something you know the words to. Corny, they used to call it. Remember 'Sunny Side of the Street,' and 'Just the Way You Look Tonight'?"

Larry winced again. He said, "Look, I admit, I don't go for concerts either but it doesn't hurt you to—"

"I know," she said sweetly. "It doesn't for a bright young bureaucrat to be seen at concerts."

"How about Dixieland?" he said. "It's rapidly becoming all the thing now."

"I like corn. Besides, my wardrobe is all out of style. Paris, London and Rome just got in a huddle a couple of months ago and antiquated everything I own. You wouldn't want to be seen with a girl a few weeks out



of date, would you?"

"Oh, now, LaVerne, get off my back." He thought about it. "Look, you must have *something* you could wear."

"Get out of here, you vacant-minded conformist! I *like* Mort Lenny, he makes me laugh. I *hate* vodka martinis, they give me a sour stomach. I *don't like* the current women's styles, they look ridiculous and are uncomfortable. And I don't like the men's styles either; they're too boyish." LaVerne spun back to her auto-typer and began to dictate into it.

Larry glared down at her. "All right, okay. What *do* you like?"

She snapped back irrationally, "I like what *I* like."

He laughed at her in ridicule.

This time it was she who glared at him. "That makes more sense than you're capable of assimilating, Mr. Walking Status Symbol. My likes and dislikes aren't dictated by someone else. If I like corny music, I'll listen to it and the devil with Brahms or Dixieland or anything else that somebody else tells me is all the thing!"

He turned on his heel angrily. "Okay, okay, it takes all sorts to make a world, weirds and all."

"One more label to hang on people," she snarled after him. "Everything's labels. Be sure and never come to any judgements of your own!"

What a woman! He wondered why he had ever bothered to ask her for a date. There were so many women in this town you waded through them. And most were happy and anxious to be laid. And here he was exposing himself to be seen in public with a girl that everybody in the department knew was as weird as they came. It didn't do your standing any good to be seen around with the type. He wondered all over again why the boss tolerated her as his receptionist-secretary.

Well, he wouldn't have minded screwing her. LaVerne Polk had one of the pertist bodies he'd ever admired.

He got his car from the parking lot and drove home on a high level. Ordinarily, the distance being what it was, he drove in the lower and

slower traffic levels but now his frustration demanded some expression.

## VIII

Back at his suburban auto-bungalow, he threw all except the high priority switch and went on down into his small cellar den. He didn't really feel like a night on the town anyway. A few vodka martinis under his belt and he'd sleep late and he wanted to get up in time for an early start for Astor, Florida and his bass fishing. Besides, in that respect he agreed with that irritating wench, LaVerne Polk. Vermouth was never meant to mix with Polish vodka. He wished that Sidecars would come back into popularity.

In his den, he shucked off his tweed jacket, kicked off his shoes and shuffled into Moroccan slippers. He went over to his reading rack and scowled at the paperbacks there. His status books were upstairs where they could be seen. He pulled out a suspense yarn, tossed it over to the cocktail table that sat next to his favorite chair, and then went over to the bar.

Up above in his living room, he had one of the new auto-bars. You could dial any of more than thirty drinks. Auto-bars were all the rage. The Boss had one that gave a selection of a hundred different drinks, running from Absinth Coolers to Zombis. But what difference did it make when nobody but eccentric old-timers of flighty blondes drank anything except vodka martinis? He didn't like auto-bars anyway. A well mixed drink is a personal thing, a work of competence, instinct and art, not something measured to the drop, iced to the degree, shaken or stirred to a mathematical formula.

Out of the tiny refrigerator he brought a four-ounce cube of frozen pineapple juice, touched the edge with his thumbnail and let the ultra thin plastic peel away. He tossed the cube into his mixer, took up a bottle of light rum and poured in about two ounces. He brought an egg from the refrigerator and added that. An ounce of whole milk followed and a teaspoon of powdered sugar. He flicked the switch and let the conglomeration froth together.

He poured it into a king-size highball glass and took it over to his chair. Vodka martinis be damned, he liked a slightly sweet long drink.

He sat down in the chair, picked up the suspense novel and scowled at the cover. He ought to be reading that Florentine history of Machiavelli's, especially if the Boss had gotten to the point where he was quoting from the guy. But the hell with it, he was on vacation. He didn't think much of the Italian diplomat anyway.

He couldn't get beyond the first page or two.

And when you can't concentrate on a suspense yarn, you just can't concentrate.

He finished his drink, went over to his phone and dialed *Department of Records* and then *Information*. When the bright young thing answered, he said, "I'd like the brief on an Ernest Self who lives on Elwood Avenue, Baltimore section of Greater Washington. I don't know his code number."

She did things with switches and buttons for a moment and then brought forth a sheet from a delivery chute. "Do you want me to read it to you, sir?"

"No, I'll scan it," Larry said.

Her face faded to be replaced by the brief on Ernest Self.

It was astonishingly short. *Records* seemed to have slipped up on this occasion. A rare occurrence. He considered requesting the full dossier, then changed his mind. Instead, he dialed the number of the *Sun-Post* and asked for its science columnist.

Sam Sokolski's puffy face eventually faded it.

Larry said to him sourly, "You drink too much. You can begin to see veins breaking in your nose."

Sam looked at him patiently.

Larry said, "How'd you like to come over and toss back a few tonight?"

"I'm working. I thought you were going on a vacation down to Florida, or someplace."

Larry sighed. "I am," he said. "Okay, so you can't take a night off and lift a few with an old buddy."

"That's right, I can't," the columnist told him. "Anything else, Larry?"

"Yes. Look, have you ever heard of an inventor named Ernest Self?"

The other nodded. "Sure I've heard of him. I covered a hassle he got into some years ago. A nice guy."

"I'll bet," Larry said. "What does he invent, something to do with printing presses, or something?"

"Printing presses?" Sokolski's expression was blank. "Don't you remember the story about him?"

"Brief me," Larry said.

"Well—briefly does it. It got out a couple of years back that some of our rocketeers had bought a solid fuel formula from an Italian research outfit for the star probe project. Paid them a big hunk of Uncle's change for it. So Ernest Self sued."

Larry said, "You're being *too* brief. What do you mean, he sued. Why?"

"Because he claimed he'd submitted the same formula to the same agency a full eighteen months earlier and they'd turned him down."

"Had he?"

"Probably."

Larry didn't get it. "Then why'd they turn him down?"

Sam said, "Oh, the government boys had a good alibi. Crackpots turn up all over the place and you have to brush them off. Every cellar scientist who comes along and says he's got a new super-fuel developed from old coffee grounds can't be given the welcome mat. Something was wrong with Self's math or something and they didn't pay much attention to him. They wouldn't even let him demonstrate it. But it was the same formula, all right."

Larry Woolford was scowling. Science wasn't his cup of tea. He said,

"Something wrong with his math? What kind of a degree does he have?"

Sam grinned in memory. "I got a good quote on that. He doesn't have any degree. He said he learned to read by the time he'd reached high school and since then he figured spending time in classrooms was a matter of interfering with his education."

"No wonder they turned him down. He sounds like a weird to me. No degree at all. You can't get anywhere in science like that."

Sam said, "The courts rejected his suit but he got a certain amount of support here and there. Peter Voss, over at the university, claims he's one of the great intuitive scientists, whatever that is, of our generation."

"Who said that?"

"Professor Voss. Not that it makes a great deal of difference what he says. Another crackpot. A weird if there ever was one."

Larry wound it up. "Okay. Thanks, Sam. Take care. You worry me with all the boozing you do."

Sam snorted. After his less than handsome face was gone from the phone screen, Larry walked back to the bar with his empty glass and stared at the mixer for several minutes. He began to build himself another flip, but cut it short in the middle, put down the ingredients and went back to the phone to dial *Records* again.

He went through first the brief and then the full dossier on Professor Peter Luther Voss. Aside from his academic accomplishments, particularly in the fields of political economy and international law, and the dozen or so books accredited to him, there wasn't anything particularly noteworthy. A bachelor in his fifties. No criminal record of any kind, of course, and no military career. No known political affiliations. Evidently a strong predilection for Thorsten Veblen's theories. And he'd been a friend of Henry Mencken in his youth, back when that old nonconformist was tearing down contemporary society seemingly largely for the fun involved in the tearing.

On the face of it, the man was no radical, and the term "crackpot" which Sam had applied was hardly called for.

Larry Woolford went back to the bar and resumed the job of building his own version of a rum flip.

But his heart wasn't in it. *The Professor*, Susan had said.

## IX

Ilya Simonov entered the United States quite openly. He landed at the International Supersonic Airport, built in the ocean ten miles off the coast of New York. He was dressed in mufti and his passport was completely correct, up too and including both photograph and fingerprints, save that he used his second name, Alex, rather than Ilya.

It was a diplomatic passport, which, of course, was immediately noticed by the Immigrations inspector who said, "Welcome to the United States, Mr. Simonov. In what capacity are you assigned to your Embassy?"

"Military attaché," Ilya Simonov said easily. "I shall clear my position, of course, as soon as I arrive in Greater Washington and complete my accreditation."

"Of course." The other stamped the Soviet Complex passport and returned it to its owner. "I hope you enjoy America, sir," he said politely.

Simonov nodded his thanks. "Certainly. I have been here before, you know." He didn't bother to add that the last time he had spent some months in jail as a Russian spy.

He took the regular shuttle jet-helio to Long Island and then a jet plane to Greater Washington, without bothering to go into New York City, a place he loathed. The supersonic planes which crossed the Atlantic were not allowed over the mainland of the United States, the sonic bomb aspects of the craft having never been licked. It seemed a bit complicated, but it still saved time. One flew to England, took a ferry plane or hoverboat out to the supersonic airport anchored half way between England and France off Brighton. There one took the supersonic to the airport anchored off Long Island, and from there the jet-helio to New York, or, if

one was going elsewhere than New York, to the airport. In spite of all the switching about, one still saved considerable time over the old transatlantic jet planes.

Ilya was mildly amused and a bit proud of the fact that the supersonic planes were Russian in origin. The United States had never caught up in the race for ultra-speed. But, for that matter, it hadn't particularly tried.

At the airport of Greater Washington, he hired a hover-car and drove out to the Soviet Complex Embassy to the southwest of town, an area that accommodated most of the larger embassies. There was no difficulty anywhere along the way.

At the embassy entrance he received no more than a quick passing scrutiny on the part of the two American plainclothesmen stationed there. Such was fame, he thought wryly. Here he was, supposedly the most notorious operative of the *Chrezvychainija Komissiya*, penetrating the capital city of his nation's most powerful rival as easily as if he had been a tourist. He wondered if it was equally as easy for an American agent of, say, the C.I.A. to penetrate Moscow.

At the reception desk in the large and overly ornate entrada, Ilya Simonov identified himself and asked to see the ambassador as soon as possible. Evidently, the clerk had heard of the famous hatchetman of Minister Blagonravov. He made quick motions with his hands and spoke into a phone screen.

He said, "Just a moment, Comrade Colonel."

"Of course," Simonov said patiently.

A nattily dressed embassy official came hurrying out. He introduced himself and said, "We received word of your arrival, Comrade Simonov, on the scrambler. You've been assigned an apartment on the third floor. Your bags...?"

"Bag," Ilya Simonov said. "It's out in the car."

"I'll send a man for it immediately. Would you like me to show you up to your quarters? I assume you'd like to freshen up?"

"I cleaned up in the aircraft," Simonov said. "I'd like to see the

ambassador immediately. I haven't the slightest idea of how long I'll be able to be here before my cover is blown, and I wish to get to work."

"Of course, Comrade Colonel Simonov. Would you come this way? I've already notified the ambassador of your arrival."

Simonov followed him down a hall for a short distance, to a heavy wooden door which the other rapped upon. It opened and Ilya Simonov strode through into the large office. The ambassador was behind a king-sized antique desk which looked as though it had probably been shipped over from Russia and probably went back to Czarist days. He came to his feet on the entrance of the secret police agent and came around the desk to shake hands energetically.

He was, Ilya Simonov had found out, Leonid Mikoyan, son of one of the few Old Bolsheviks who hadn't been purged by Stalin. Leonid Mikoyan owed his position, which he reputedly was incompetent to hold down, to the fact that being the son of an Old Bolshevik in the Soviet Complex was a status symbol unrivaled. At the age of nine he had become a Young Pioneer, another status symbol in Russia; you were a nobody if, as a child, you had not been a Young Pioneer. At the age of fourteen he became a member of the Young Communist League, attaining more merit in the eyes of the elite. And at the age of twenty-six he was made a full fledged party member. One attains little in the way of position in the Soviet Complex, no matter how competent, unless he is a member of the Party. The Soviet Complex was not free of the worship of status symbols, though her system differed from that of the Americans.

Ilya Simonov was contemptuous of the man.

He shook hands and then looked suggestively at his guide.

Leonid Mikoyan said hurriedly, "Vyacheslav, if you'll just leave us now..."

The younger man bowed out, closing the door softly behind him.

The ambassador hurriedly saw his caller to a chair. Ilya Simonov was inwardly amused. He realized that the other was somewhat afraid of him.

Undoubtedly, Moscow hadn't mentioned, in the scrambler message, the purpose of his visit to Greater Washington. Even a scrambler beam could



possibly be tapped. Mikoyan didn't know why he was here and thought it might be something personal. Blagonravov's top field man wasn't sent on missions of small import.

To put the man at his ease, Simonov came directly to the point. And drew a blank.

Ambassador Leonid Mikoyan hadn't the vaguest idea of what he was talking about.

"You do read the American papers and other publications, don't you?" the operative said testily.

"Yes, yes of course. But I have not heard of this organization of which you speak." His tone of voice was almost apologetic. Ilya Simonov made a mental note to have the ambassador looked into. He appeared and sounded as though he had something on his mind.

He thought about it for a moment, then said, "How many KGB men do you have assigned here?"

"Three, all military attaches."

"Have I been assigned an office?"

"Unless I am mistaken, it is part of your suite."

Ilya Simonov stood. He said, "Would you be so kind as to ask them to report to me there?"

"Of course," the ambassador said. He seemed relieved to see his awesome caller departing. "Will my wife and I have the pleasure of your company at dinner tonight?"

"I doubt it," Simonov said. "I've got to plow into this immediately. I have old friends here in Greater Washington in the C.I.A. and the F.B.I., among other organizations, and it's just a matter of time before they stumble on the fact of my presence. I have no doubt but that this embassy is either bugged or that we have American agents on our staff—or both. Some opinion to the contrary, they are not necessarily incompetent."

The ambassador did his best to hide the fact that his invitation being

refused did not completely displease him.

Up in his suite, behind his desk, Ilya Simonov ran his eyes over the three Committee of State Security men. He knew none of them but that didn't surprise him. He hadn't operated in the United States for a decade, and there were tens of thousands of KGB men on this level. They knew him, however. Or, at least, they knew of him. And they, like the ambassador, were slightly queasy in his presence.

He didn't offer them seats.

He told them the same story as he had the ambassador and received in return the same blankness.

He glowered at them. "Do you mean to tell me that you, three trained KGB men, are assigned to this country and don't even know of subversive organizations here?"

One of them, his name was Mikhail Aristov, if Simonov recalled correctly, said anxiously, "There are a good many organizations in America that are considered subversive, Comrade Colonel. There is, of course, our Communist Party, which is not very strong in the United States, and the Mao Communist Party which is even smaller. There is the Socialist Labor Party, the oldest of the radical parties in this country, going back to before 1900. There are the Socialist Workers Party, who are Trotskests. There is Socialist Reconstruction. There is the Progressive Party. And there is the IWW, the Industrial Workers of the World, a union rather than a political organization. Then there is—"

Simonov held up a hand. "This is not a Marxist group that I am investigating."

One of the three said, "Then it is a right wing organization? Something like the John Birch Society or the Ku Klux Klan?"

Ilya Simonov shook his head in irritation. "We don't know. All we know about them is that they are trying to increase the efficiency of the Yankee socioeconomic system. And that, obviously, is not to our interest."

He took them in and said slowly, "Now here are your instructions. Get out and locate some of these people, however you can. Find out the details of just what it is they want. Find out how they expect to obtain their goals.

Find out the names of the top leaders, their theoreticians and so forth. You'll have to be my legmen. I don't dare leave the embassy grounds. I might be spotted. We can put off, for a time, undoubtedly, my having to go through the red tape of accreditation, but when this does come up, undoubtedly they will be upon me and refuse my presence in the country."

After they had left, Ilya Simonov sat there for a long moment. Finally, he looked up a number and dialed it on the phone. The screen didn't light up, but he had expected that.

A heavy Teutonic voice said, "Ah, Colonel Simonov, I had heard that you were in the country. Rather bold of you, wouldn't you say?"

Simonov growled, "Don't try to impress me with your efficiency, Herr Distelmayer. You know very well that you didn't know I was here in America."

The German chuckled without humor. "You entered by supersonic from England. You have a diplomatic passport under the name Alex, rather than Ilya. You are supposedly a new military attaché for your embassy."

Ilya Simonov didn't like it. If Distelmayer's organization had already cracked his cover, there was no reason why the Americans couldn't as well, and he needed time.

He said, "And why am I really here?"

For once, the German spy master's voice was puzzled. "That I don't know, my friend. Tell me, why?"

Ilya Simonov said, obviously reluctantly, "Ordinarily, we don't like to use your services, Hans Distelmayer, but on this occasion I am afraid time might be of the essence, and you have a large organization."

"Yours to command," the other said jovially.

Ilya Simonov told him the purpose of his visit, mentioning the fact that neither the ambassador nor his three KGB men had ever heard of the organization in which Minister Blagonravov was interested.

"Where did Blagonravov hear about it?" the German spy master said interestedly.

"I don't know. The Minister has a good many irons in the fire."

When Simonov had finished the German held silence for a moment, then said, "Interesting situation. That is, your government's involvement. Very well, I shall have a report for you shortly. If you have been apprehended by then, or have flown the country by that time, where shall I send it?"

"Directly to the Ministry in Moscow."

"Very well. And payment, Colonel?"

"The usual. In gold, from Moscow, to your offices in Basel, Switzerland, immediately upon the receipt of your bill. But speed is important, Distelmayer."

"It usually is," the other chuckled.

## X

Steve Hackett rubbed the end of his pug nose irritably. He looked up and down the street, before going into the underground. He couldn't see anyone he knew, so down he went into the public transit system. Like Larry Woolford, he knew it wasn't the thing to do in this status-conscious town, but he had left his car with Ruth that morning, her own being in the garage.

He took the subway to Alexandria and stared morosely out the window, though there was nothing to see in the tunnel. Steve Hackett was very unhappy.

He had done everything he could think of to do, and had assigned half a dozen others to assist him.

They had checked out every stoolpigeon within a fifty mile radius, men who had fingered pushers for them before. The world of the counterfeiter is small and its inhabitants even more prone to be susceptible to official

pressure than other criminal elements. You caught a lower echelon pusher, made a deal with him to escape prosecution, freed him and then for the rest of all time you could twist his arm when you needed information. It was a dirty way to handle the business, perhaps, but no one had ever figured out another way.

His men had brought in a score of these contemptible informers. They had been worthless.

He remembered the first one. A stoolie who would probably wind up dead one of these days. He had been informing on his colleagues for some ten years now. It was a typical case. The other was still pushing himself; he probably knew no other manner of making a living, had probably been doing it from youth—whatever kind of youth he might have had. Steve took it easy on him. It was much better to have a pusher netting possibly a hundred dollars a week in your pocket and to have an informer who might finger for you the next echelon up, or two echelons, than to have him in prison. Hell, you could always throw him into prison if he became worthless to you so far as seeking out his superiors was concerned.

When the informer had entered his office, Steve had been even colder than usual. He had ignored the hand the other had hesitantly extended. Steve's ugliness was an attribute in his trade. He wasn't, but he had the reputation of being the most vicious, cold-blooded agent in Secret Service. People were afraid of him.

"Sit down," he said.

"Yeah, sure." The other's name was Mike Edmonds. Steve had caught him, initially. The fool had been spending some of the crudest five dollar bills Steve had ever seen. The only reason he had survived at all was that he made a practice of passing the bills only in a very dim atmosphere—bars, dimly-lit restaurants, taxi-cabs, whorehouses; or sometimes in markets, at stands owned by immigrants, those less acquainted with the currency than the average.

More recently, Steve knew, Edmonds had been trying a new angle. He was pushing tens. He'd start off at about one o'clock in the morning and made the round of the cheaper bars down in the port area. He'd strike up an acquaintance, buy the other a drink, fish into his wallet and say, "Hey, you wouldn't have two fives for a ten would you? I got this broad I'm screwing regular and always slip her a fiver, but if I didn't have a five, I'd

have to wind up giving her a ten."

It usually didn't occur to the sucker to suggest that Edmonds ask the bartender for the change, at this time of the morning he was too far gone. If he had two fives, they usually were passed on for the phoney ten. There were so many bars of this type in the area that Edmonds could keep on operating indefinitely.

But Steve wasn't basically interested in Mike Edmonds. Not at this stage, at least. He knew where Edmonds stood. On the lowest rungs of the ladder. If the other—who wasn't completely bright, or he wouldn't be in this sucker game—graduated to the higher counterfeit echelons, then Steve would move in on him. But now? He was of more value as a stoolie than he would be in jail, where he belonged.

Steve eyed him now, very coldly.

Edmonds said nervously, "What's up... Steve?"

"Mr. Hackett."

"Oh, yeah, well, sure. But the last time I seen you we was calling each other by first names."

Steve Hackett eyed him coldly for a long, long moment, and the other became increasingly nervous.

Steve said finally, "I gave you a break ten years ago, Edmonds. I've given you more than one other break, down through the years. How much time have you spent in the slammer, since I've been cooperating with you, giving you breaks you don't deserve?"

Mike Edmonds licked nervous lips. "Only a year or so... Mr. Hackett."

"Right. And now that something big has come up, you lay low."

"Something big... Mr. Hackett?"

"Don't give me that crap, Edmonds. If anybody in the racket would know, you would. There's not a man in this town who knows more about pushing green goods than you do."

The other wiped a moist hand over his mouth nervously. He knew very

well that the man across the desk could send him over for as much as twenty years.

He stuttered, "I don't know what you're talking about, Mr. Hackett. You know I've always cooperated with you, like. I got a hard time these days. The old lady's sick and all, and—"

"Listen, I don't have my violin with me, Edmonds, or I'd be glad to play some sad gypsy music for you."

"Look, Mr. Hackett, I don't know..."

Steve Hackett pulled out a drawer and brought forth a fifty dollar bill, one of those he had taken from Susan Self. He handed it over.

Mike Edmonds was now on his own grounds. He looked at it carefully. In particular he looked at the eyes of the portrait. He rubbed the bill between his fingers to get the texture. He held it up the window, to peer through the composition of the paper. Finally, he looked up at the man who could send him to prison for the rest of his life, or, at least, that portion of it that made any difference.

He shook his head definitely. "This here ain't green goods, Mr. Hackett."

"It's queer as chicken shit."

The counterfeit passer's face went blank and he looked at the bill again, carefully, fully. Steve Hackett held his peace.

The other shook his head again, again definitely. "If it is, I never seen nothing like it."

"Where'd it come from?"

Edmonds stared at him. "How would I know? I still don't think it's queer. I never seen nothing like this. I been around a long time, Mr. Hackett. I never seen any queer like this—if it's queer." He had enough animal courage to stick to his guns in his own field.

Steve sighed. "All right, Mike. I tell you this. You tell me where these half-a-bill things are coming from before the week is out, or into the slammer you go. You know how much I've got in my files on you. As a

matter of fact, you don't. I've got more than you know about. I can send you over, Mike, for the rest of your days."

"Listen, Mr. Hackett. I got a wife and two kids."

"Those kids will be orphans unless I know where those fifties came from before the week is out."

The counterfeit pusher stared at the bill, which he had returned to the surface of the desk. He shook his head. "Could I take it along, for a sample?"

Steve said, "You smart-assed son of a bitch. You'd pass it at the first bank you came across. It's perfect."

"Yes, sir, that's what I've been telling you. Is it all in fifties? The boys don't run off much fifties."

Steve Hackett said, "We've only seen the fifties, but we've been told there are also fives, tens and twenties."

Mike Edmonds came to his feet. "I'll circulate around, Mr. Hackett and see what I hear. But you wanta know something?"

"What?"

"I don't think any of the regulars are turning this green goods out. It's gotta be somebody new. Somebody with a lot of, like resources, not some guy down in a cellar with his own engraving outfit and a platen press."

Steve Hackett had stared after him, when the other had left, with a feeling of frustration. He didn't know why, but he was inclined to agree with the little pusher's final statement. He called for the next stool pigeon, and drew another blank. And another. There seemed to be no question about it. The counterfeit pushing professionals in the Greater Washington area knew nothing about this job.

He tried to track down the ink. If Susan Self was even partially right about the amount of phony money she had seen, it would have taken a great deal of the type ink involved to have printed it. But he drew a big round zero on the ink.



He tried to track down the source of the paper.

The type paper utilized was identical to that used by the government in printing real money. It was of a quality never used for other purposes. If Susan was right, that there were rooms and rooms of the fake dollars, then tons of expensive paper were involved. But he drew another blank. He could find no records of paper of this type being sold to any source save the government printing plants of the Treasury. Could it have come from abroad? But, if so, where? He had no manner in which to check foreign paper manufacturers. Besides, if it had originated in some other country, how had the counterfeiters got it over the border? It's one thing smuggling a suitcase full of contraband, but tons?

Now, on the subway, he shook his head in despair. Of course, there was always the possibility that, although the counterfeit money was now here in Washington, that this was basically an out of town operation. He had sent men to New York, Chicago and Los Angeles to check with local police and further stoolies, but he had a strong intuition that they were not going to do any better in those cities than they had here.

In Alexandria, he left the public transport system tube at the station nearest to his house, and set out on foot. It was an older part of town and in its day had been the proudest section of the city. He loved it for its relative quiet, its relatively little traffic, the large trees which lined the streets, the quaint oldness of the mansions.

He strode up the steps of his home, crossed the porch and allowed the identity screen on the door to pick him up. He had hated to have the device installed in the beautiful, heavy door, but Ruth had insisted. Everybody, but *everybody*, had identity screens on their doors. They'd be the talk of the neighborhood if they didn't have one. He wouldn't want to get the reputation of being a weird, would he?

The door opened automatically before him and he went on in, down the hall and to the living room.

Ruth was sitting there, her mouth pursed. He recognized the expression from of old. Something was on her mind that she feared he wasn't going to like and she was getting into a frame of mind for the fray.

Ruth was a tall girl with every pore in place. Her hair was in the very latest style from Budapest, hair style center of Europe, this year. Her

make-up was perfect, which was to be expected, he reflected glumly, in view of the time she spent at it. Her clothing was the most chic available from Copenhagen. Scandinavian styles were all the thing this year. The French and Italian dressing houses must be starving to death.

He said, "Hello, darling. Sorry I'm a little late this evening. We're on a big case. Probably the biggest one I've ever seen." He went over to the auto-bar. "How about a drink? I could use one."

She shook her head, and said, "Steve, there's something I have to talk to you about."

"All right." He dialed for a vodka martini, telling himself grimly that he was going to learn to like to drink the damn things if it killed him,

"Ben and Tessy were here this afternoon."

"Oh?" He brought the drink back and sat down on the couch beside her. "What did they have to say?"

"It wasn't what they said. It was their attitude," she said, and her mouth pursed again.

He fixed his eyes on her but held his peace.

She said, "They've recently moved into a new apartment in the Druid Hill section of Baltimore. It's the name area now. Just everybody is moving there. You're simply not with it, these days, unless you live near Druid Hill Park."

"I don't like Baltimore," he muttered.

"What's that got to do with it? Steve, we've simply got to take an apartment there. Houses have become old hat. We'll be nobodies unless we move to a Baltimore apartment."

"Those damn plastic and glass fish bowls? Good God, Ruthie, this house is *comfortable*. It has that lived-in feeling. The rooms are large, the furniture comfortable. The climate is relatively nice here. The neighborhood's quiet. Most of the neighbors are old families; they've known we Hacketts for generations. Known us, respected us, liked us. It's something you can't buy. We have a pride of place here. It's our turf."

"That's all you ever think about, your own comfort," she said hotly. "It means nothing to you that I've become a social leper, in the circles in which we move.

"Oh, come off of it, Ruth," he said wearily. He finished his drink and got to his feet disgustedly to go for another one. "For one thing, we own this house. So it's rent free. If we had to pay rent these days, particularly in a prestige part of town, it'd cost so much that your budget would be half what it is now. What did you pay for those clothes you're wearing?"

"We could sell this old monstrosity of a house and buy an apartment!"

He came back with his fresh drink. "No, we couldn't. By the terms of the will, we have to live in it, or it reverts to the trust. This house was built by my great-grandfather back in Civil War days. Our family has lived in it ever since. When you and I die, it goes to our children, if any, or reverts to the trust to be assigned to some other family branch. But it remains in the family. I'm not allowed to sell it."

"Good heavens, what the hell kind of a will is that? What you're saying is we don't really own this ramshackle joint."

"The kind of will my great-grandfather set up," he said dryly. "At any rate, there'll be no moving to Baltimore because it's the latest thing to do."

"We'll be ostrasized," she said coldly.

"Sorry. Anything on for tonight? I'm going to have to get to the office early in the morning." He wanted to get off the subject before the whine came into her voice.

She said, "Yes. We've been invited to the Calahan's, Bess and Fred, to join their swap club."

"Swap club?" he said. "What's a swap club?"

"It's becoming all the rage. You simply have to belong to at least one swap club or you're nobody."

"I'm sure it's all the rage, or you wouldn't want to join one. Frankly, I've never heard of them."

"They've just been introduced from Common Europe. Everybody who is anybody belongs to one on the Continent."

"But what do you do in a swap club?"

"Oh, don't be silly. Isn't it obvious? You swap."

"Swap *what*?"

"Husbands and wives. You trade bed companions. Each week, you swap with somebody else. Just for one night, of course."

"Great Gods! And you want us to join something like that?"

"I *told* you. It's a must these days. Just everybody belongs to at least one swap club. Bess and Fred have been kind enough to invite us to join theirs, in spite of the fact that we're hasbeens, living in this neighborhood."

## XI

Before he had gone to bed the night before, Larry Woolford had ordered a seat on the shuttle jet for Jacksonville and a hover-cab there to take him to Astor, on the St. Johns River. And he'd requested to be wakened in ample time to get to the shuttle-port.

But it wasn't the saccharine pleasant face of the Personal Service operator which confronted him when he grumpily answered the phone in the morning. In fact, the screen remained blank.

Larry decided that sweet long drinks were fine but that anyone who took several of them in a row needed to be candled. His mouth felt as though he had been eating dirty dish cloths, and he suspected he was bleeding to death through the eyes.

He grumbled into the phone, "All right. Who is it?"

A Teutonic voice chuckled and said, "You are going to have to decide

whether or not you are on vacation, my friend. At this time of day, why aren't you at work?"

Larry Woolford was waking up. He said, "What can I do for you, Distelmayer?" The German merchant of espionage wasn't the type to make personal calls.

"Have you forgotten so soon, my friend?" the other chuckled. "It was I who was going to do you a favor." He hesitated momentarily before adding, "In possible return for future favors on your part."

"Yeah, yeah," Larry said. He was fully awake now. "So the favor you're doing me?"

The German said slowly, "You asked if any of your friends from, ah, abroad were newly in the country. Ilya Simonov has recently appeared on the scene."

Simonov! In various respects, Larry Woolford's counterpart. Chief hatchetman for the *Chrezvychainaya Komissiya*; right hand man of Minister Blagonravov. Woolford had met him on occasion when they had both been present at international summit meetings, busily working at counter-espionage for their respective superiors. Blandly shaking hands with each other, blandly smiling, blandly drinking toasts to peace and international coexistence, blandly sizing each other up and wondering if it'd ever come to the point where one would *blandly* treat the other to a hole in the head, possibly in some dark alley in Havana or Singapore, Leopoldville or Saigon.

Larry said sharply, "Where is he? How did he get into the country?"

"My friend, my friend," the German grunted in heavy good humor. "You know better than to ask me the first question. As for the second, Ilya's command of American-English is at least as good as your own. Do you think his *Komissiya* less capable than your own department and unable to do him up suitable papers so that he could be, perhaps, a 'returning tourist' from Europe?"

Larry Woolford was impatient with himself for having asked. He said now, "It's not important. If we want to locate Ilya and pick him up, we'll probably not have too much trouble doing it. We've caught him before."

"I wouldn't think so," the other said humorously. "Since 1919, when they were first organized, the so-called Communists in this country from the lowest to the highest echelons, have been so riddled with police agents that a federal judge in New England once refused to prosecute a case against them on the grounds that the party was a United States government agency."

Larry was in no frame of mind for the other's heavy humor. "Look, Hans," he said, "what I want to know is what Ilya is over here for."

"Of course you do," Hans Distelmayer said, unable evidently to keep a note of puzzlement from his voice. "Larry," he said, "I assume your people know of the new American underground."

"*What* underground?" Larry snapped.

The professional spy chief said, his voice strange, "The Soviets seem to have picked up an idea somewhere, possibly through their membership in this country, that something is abrewing in the States, that a change is being engineered."

Larry stared at the blank phone screen.

"What kind of a change?" he said finally. "You mean a change to the Soviet system, to what they call communism, but which obviously isn't?" Surely not even the self-deluding Russkies could think it possible to overthrow the American socioeconomic system in favor of the Soviet brand.

"No, no, no," the German chuckled. "Of course not. It's not of their working at all."

"Then what's Ilya Simonov's interest, if they aren't engineering it?"

Distelmayer rumbled his characteristic chuckle which held nothing in common with humor. "My dear friend, don't be so naive. Anything that happens in America is of interest to the Soviets. There is delicate peace between you now that they have changed their direction and are occupying themselves largely with the economic and agricultural development of Asia and such portions of the world as have come under their hegemony while you put all efforts into modernizing the more backward countries among *your* satellites."

Larry said automatically, "Our allies aren't satellites."

The spy-master went on without contesting the statement. "There is immediate peace but surely governmental officials on both sides keep careful watch on the internal developments of the other. True, the current heads of the Soviet Complex would like to see the governments of all the Western powers changed—but only if they are changed in the direction of communism. They are hardly interested in seeing changes made which would strengthen the West in the, ah, Battle for Men's Minds."

Larry snorted his disgust. "What sort of change in government would strengthen the United States in—"

The German interrupted smoothly, "Evidently, that's what Ilya seems to be here for, Larry. To find out more about this Movement and—"

"This *what?*" Larry blurted.

"The term seems to be *Movement*."

Larry Woolford held a long silence before saying, "And Ilya is actually here in this country to buck this... this Movement?"

"Not necessarily," the other said impatiently. "If I understand it correctly, he is here to find out more about it. Evidently Moscow and Peking both have heard just enough to make them nervous."

Larry said, "You have anything more, Hans?"

"I'm afraid that's about it at this point."

"All right," Larry said. He added, absently, "Thanks, Hans."

"Thank me some day with deeds, rather than words," the German chuckled.

Larry flicked the phone screen off, looked at his watch and grimaced. He was either going to get going now or forget about doing any fishing in Florida this afternoon.

Grudgingly, he dialed the phone company's Personal Service and said to the impossibly cheerful blonde who answered, "Where can I find Professor Peter Voss who teaches over at the University in Baltimore? I don't want

to talk with him, but just want to know where he'll be an hour from now."

While waiting for his information, he dressed, deciding inwardly that he hated his job, the department in which he was employed, the Boss and Greater Washington. On top of that, he hated himself. He had already been taken off this assignment, why couldn't he leave it lay?

The blonde rang him back. Professor Peter Voss was at home. He had no classes today. She gave him the address.

Larry Woolford raised his car from his auto-bungalow in the Brandywine suburb and headed northwest at a high level for the old Baltimore section of the city.

The Professor's house, he noted, was of an earlier day and located on the opposite side of Paterson Park from Elwood Avenue, the street on which Susan Self and her father resided. That didn't necessarily hold significance; the park was a large one and the Professor's section a well-to-do neighborhood, while Self's was just short of a slum these days.

He brought his car down to street level before the scholar's three story brick house. Baltimore-like, it was identical to every other house in the block. Larry wondered vaguely how anybody ever managed to find his own place when it was very dark out— or very drunk out.

There was an old-fashioned bell at the side of the entrance and Larry Woolford pushed it. There was no identification screen on the door, which made it necessary for the inhabitants to open up to see who was calling, a tiring chore if you were on the far side of the house and the caller nothing more than a salesman.

It was obviously the Professor himself who answered.

He was in shirtsleeves, tieless and with age-old slippers on his stockingless feet. He evidently hadn't bothered to shave this morning and he held a dog-eared pamphlet in his right hand, his forefinger tucked in it to mark his place. He wore thick-lensed, gold rimmed glasses through which he blinked at Larry Woolford questioningly, without speaking. Professor Peter Voss was a man in his mid-fifties and, on the face of it, couldn't care less right now about his physical appearance.

A weird, Larry decided immediately. He wondered at the University,



one of the nations best, keeping such a figure on the faculty.

"Professor Voss?" he said. "Lawrence Woolford." He brought forth his wallet and opened it to display his badge.

The Professor blinked down at it. "I see," he said. "Would you come in?"

The house was old, all right. From the outside, quite acceptable, but the interior boasted few of the latest amenities which made all the difference in modern existence. Larry was taken back by the fact that the phone which he spotted in the entrada hadn't even a screen—an old model for voice only.

The Professor noticed his glance and said dryly, "The advantages of combining television and telephone have never seemed valid to me. In my own home, I feel free to relax, as you can observe. Had I a screen on my phone, it would be necessary for me to maintain the same appearance as I must on the screen or before my classes."

Larry cleared his throat before saying anything. This was a weird, all right.

The living room was comfortable in a blatantly primitive way. Three or four paintings were on the walls and by the looks of them were originals, Larry decided, and should have been in museums. Not an abstract among them. A Grant Wood, a Marin and that over there could only be a Grandma Moses. The sort of thing you might keep in your private den, but hardly to be seen as culture symbols.

The chairs were large, of leather, and comfortable and probably belonged to the period before the Second World War. Peter Voss, obviously, was little short of an exhibitionist.

The Professor took up a battered humidor. "Cigar?" he said. "Manila. They're hard to get these days."

A cigar? Good grief, the man would be offering him a chaw of tobacco next.

"Thanks, no," Larry said. "I smoke a pipe. An Irish briar, of course. British briars are out this year."

"I see," the Professor said, lighting his stogie. "Do you really like a pipe? Personally, I've always thought the cigar by far the most satisfactory method of taking tobacco."

What can you say to a question like that? Larry ignored it, as though it was rhetorical. Actually, he smoked cigarettes in the privacy of his den, a habit which was on the proletarian side and not consistent with his status level.

He said, to get things under way, "Professor Voss, what is an intuitive scientist?"

The Professor exhaled blue smoke, shook out the old-time kitchen match with which he had lit up, and tossed the matchstick into an ashtray. "Intuitive scientist?"

"You once called Ernest Self a great intuitive scientist."

"Oh, Self. Yes, indeed. What is he doing these days?"

Larry said, "That's what I came to ask you about."

The Professor was puzzled. "I'm afraid you came to the wrong place, Mr. Woolford. I haven't seen Ernest Self for quite a time. Why?"

Larry said carefully, "Some of his researches seem to have taken him rather far afield. Actually, I know practically nothing about him. I wonder if you could fill me in a bit."

Peter Voss looked at the ash on the end of his cigar. "I really don't know the man that well. He lives across the park. Why don't you—"

"He's disappeared," Larry said.

The Professor blinked. "I see," he said. "And in view of the fact that you are a security officer, I assume under strange circumstances." Larry Woolford said nothing to that and the Professor sank back into his chair and pursed his lips. "I can't really tell you much. I became interested in Self two or three years ago when gathering material for a paper on the inadequate manner in which our country rewards its inventors."

Larry said, "I've heard about his suit against the government."

The Professor became more animated. "Ha!" he snorted. "One example among many. Self is not alone. Our culture is such that the genius is smothered. The great contributors to our society are ignored, or worse."

Larry Woolford was feeling his way. Now he said mildly, "I was under the impression that American free enterprise, or capitalism, if you will, gave the individual the best opportunity to prove himself and that if he had it on the ball he would get to the top, no matter what the obstacles."

"Were you really?" the Professor said snappishly. "And did you know that Edison died a comparatively poor man with an estate somewhere in the vicinity of a hundred thousand dollars? An amount that might sound like a good deal to you or me, but, when you consider his contributions, shockingly little. Did you know that Eli Whitney realized little, if anything, from the cotton gin? Or that McCormack didn't invent the reaper but gained it in a dubious court victory? Or take Robert Goddard, one of the best examples of modern times. He developed the basics of rocket technology—gyroscopic stabilizers, fuel pumps, self-cooling motors, landing devices. He died in 1945 leaving behind twenty-two volumes of records that proved priceless. What did he get out of his researches? Nothing. It was fifteen years later that his widow won her suit against the government for patent infringements."

Larry held up a hand. "Really," he said. "My interest is in Ernest Self."

The Professor relaxed. "Sorry, Mr. Woolford, I'm afraid I get carried away on this subject. Self, to get back to your original question, is a great intuitive scientist. Unfortunately for him, society being what it is today, he fits into few grooves. Our educational system was little more than an irritation to him and consequently he holds no degrees. Needless to say, this interfered with his gaining employment with the universities and the large corporations which dominate our country's research, not to mention governmental agencies.

"Ernest Self holds none of the status labels that count. The fact that he is a genius means nothing. He is supposedly qualified no more than to hold a janitor's position in laboratories where his inferiors conduct experiments in fields where he is a dozenfold more capable than they. No one is interested in his genius, they want to know what status labels are pinned to him. Ernest Self has no respect for labels."

Larry Woolford figured he was picking up background and didn't

change the subject. "Just what do you mean by an intuitive scientist?"

"It's a term I have used loosely, I am afraid," the Professor admitted. "Possibly a scientist who makes a breakthrough in his field, destroying formerly held positions—in Self's case, without the math, without the accepted theories to back him. He finds something that works, possibly without knowing how or why, and by using unorthodox analytical techniques. An intuitive scientist, if I may use the term, is a thorn in the side of our theoretical physicists laden down with their burden of status labels but who are themselves short of the makings of a Leonardo, a Newton, a Galileo, or even a Nicholas Christofilos."

"I'm afraid that last name escapes me," Larry said.

"Similar to Self's case and Robert Goddard's," Voss said, his voice bitter. "Although his story has a better ending. Christofilos invented the strong-focusing principle that made possible the multi-billion-volt particle accelerators currently so widely used in nuclear physics experimentation. However, he was nothing but a Greek electrical systems engineer and the supposed experts turned him down on the grounds that his math was faulty. It seems that he submitted the idea in straight-algebra terms instead of differential equations. He finally won through after patenting the discovery and rubbing their noses in it. Previously, none of the physics journals would publish his paper—he didn't have the right status labels to impress them."

Larry said, almost with amusement, "You seem to have quite a phobia against the status label, as you call it. However, I don't see how as complicated a world as ours could get along without it."

The Professor snorted his contempt of that opinion. "Tell me," he said, "to which class do you consider yourself to belong? What social strata?"

Larry Woolford shrugged. "I suppose individuals in my bracket, with my education, and my job are usually thought of as being middle-middle class. Given luck, as I grow older possibly I'll be able to work myself up to upper-middle class."

The other snorted again. "And you have no feeling of revolt in having such a label hung on you? Consider this system for a moment. You have lower-lower, middle-lower, and upper lower. Then you have lower-middle, middle-middle, upper-middle. Then you have lower-upper, middle-upper,

and finally we achieve to upper-upper class. Now tell me, when we get to that rarified category, who do we find? Do we find an Einstein, a Schweitzer, a Picasso; outstanding scientists, humanitarians, the great writers, artists and musicians of our day? Certainly not. We find ultra-wealthy playboys and girls, a former king and his duchess who eke out their income by accepting fees to attend parties. We find the international bum set, bearers of meaningless feudalistic titles, or we find millionaires and billionaires, who achieved their wealth by inheriting it. These are your upper-upper class!"

Larry laughed.

The professor snapped, "You think it funny? Let me give you another example of our status label culture. I have a friend whom I have known since childhood. I would estimate that Charles has an I.Q. of approximately 90, certainly no more. His family, however, took such necessary steps as were needed to get Charles through public school. No great matter these days, you'll admit, although on occasion he needed a bit of tutoring to pass his grades. On graduation, they recognized that the really better schools might be a bit difficult for Charles so he was entered in a college with a good name but without—shall we say—the highest of scholastic ratings. Charles plodded along, had some more tutoring, probably had his thesis ghosted, and eventually graduated with his first degree. At that point an uncle died and left a rather strange will. He left Charles an indefinite amount of money to be used in furthering his education to any extent he wished to go. Charles, probably motivated by the desire to avoid obtaining a job and competing with his fellow man, managed to wrangle himself into a medical school and eventually even graduated. Since funds were still available, he continued his studies abroad, largely in Vienna."

The Professor wound it up. "Eventually, he ran out of schools, or his uncle's estate ran out—I don't know which came first. At any rate, my friend Charles, laden down with status labels, is today practicing as a psychiatrist in this fair city of ours."

Larry stared at him blankly.

The Professor said snappishly, "So any time you feel you need to have your brains unscrambled, you can go to his office and expend fifty dollars an hour or so. His reputation is of the highest." The Professor grunted his contempt. "He doesn't know the difference between an aspirin tablet and a

Rorschach test."

Larry Woolford stirred in his chair. "We seem to have gotten off the subject. What has all this got to do with Ernest Self?"

The Professor seemed angry. "I repeat, I'm afraid I get carried away on this subject. I'm in revolt against a culture based on the status label. It eliminates the need to judge a man on his merits. To judge a person by the clothes he wears, the amount of money he possesses, the car he drives, the neighborhood in which he lives, the society he keeps, or even his ancestry, is out of the question in a vital, growing society. You wind up with nonentities as the leaders of your nation. In these days, we can't afford it."

He smiled suddenly, rather elfishly, at the security agent. "But admittedly, this deals with Ernest Self only as one of many victims of a culture based on status labels. Just what was it you wanted to know about Ernest?"

Larry said, "When you knew him, evidently he was working on rocket fuels. Have you any idea whether or not he later developed a method of producing perfect counterfeit?"

The Professor said, "You mean counterfeit money? Ernest Self? Surely you are jesting."

Larry said unhappily, "Then here's another question. Have you ever heard him mention belonging to a movement, or, I think, he might word it *The Movement*."

"Movement?" the Professor said, scowling.

"Evidently a revolutionary group interested in the overthrow of the government."

"Good heavens," the Professor said. "Just a moment, Mr. Woolford. You interrupted me just as I was having my second cup of coffee. Do you mind if I..."

"Certainly not," Larry Woolford shook his head.

"I simply can't get along until after my third cup," the Professor said. "You just wait a moment and I'll bring the pot in here."

He left Larry to sit in the combined study and living room while he shuffled off in his slippers to the kitchen. Larry Woolford decided that in his school days he had had some far-out professors himself, but it would really be something to study under this one. Not that the old boy didn't have some points, of course. Almost all nonconformists base their particular peeves on some actuality, but in this case, what was the percentage? How could you buck the system? Particularly when, largely, it worked.

The Professor returned with an old-fashioned coffeepot, two cups, and sugar and cream on a tray. He put them on a side table and said to Larry, "You'll join me? How do you take it?"

Larry still had the slightest of hangovers from his solitary drinking of the night before. "Thanks. Make it black," he said.

The Professor poured, served, then did up a cup for himself. He returned to his chair and said, "Now, where were we? Something about a revolutionary group. What has that to do with counterfeiting?"

Larry sipped the strong brew. "It seems that there might be some connection."

The Professor shook his head. "It's hard to imagine Ernest Self being connected with a criminal pursuit. It simply is not in his character."

Larry said carefully, sipping at the still overly hot coffee, "Susan seemed to be of the opinion that you knew about a large amount of counterfeit currency that this Movement had on hand and that you were in favor of spending it on chorus girls."

The Professor gaped at him.

Larry chuckled uncomfortably.

Professor Peter Voss said finally, his voice very even, "My dear sir, I am afraid that evidently I can be of little assistance to you."

"Admittedly, it doesn't seem to make much sense."

"Susan—you mean that little sixteen-year-old?— said *I* was in favor of spending counterfeit money on chorus girls?"

Larry said, "She used the term *The Professor*." He wasn't at all happy about the way this was going.

"And why did you assume that the title must necessarily allude to me? Even if any of the rest of the fantastic story was true?"

Larry said, "In my profession, Professor Voss, we track down every possible clue. Thus far, you are the only professor of whom we know who was connected with Ernest Self."

Voss said stiffly, "I can only say, sir, that in my estimation, Mr. Self is a man of the highest integrity. And, in addition, that I have never spent a penny on a chorus girl in my life and have no intention of beginning, counterfeit or otherwise."

Larry Woolford decided that he wasn't doing too well and that he'd need more ammunition if he was going to return to this particular attack. He was surprised that the old boy hadn't already ordered him from the house. In which case, he would have to go, of course; he was here by invitation.

He finished the coffee, preparatory to coming to his feet. He said, "Then you think it is out of the question, Ernest Self belonging to a revolutionary organization?"

The Professor protested. "I didn't say that at all. Mr. Self is a man of ideals. I can well see him belonging to such an organization."

Larry Woolford decided that he'd better hang on for a few more words. "You don't seem to think, yourself, that a subversive organization is undesirable in this country."

The Professor's voice was reasonable. "Isn't that according to what it means to subvert?"

"You know what I mean," Woolford said in irritation. "I don't usually think of revolutionists, even when they call themselves simply members of a *Movement*, as exactly idealists."

"Then you are wrong," the Professor said definitely, pouring himself another cup of coffee. "History bears out that almost invariably revolutionists are men of idealism. The fact that they might be either right or wrong in their revolutionary program is beside the point. I cite in our



own revolution such men as Jefferson. Robespierre we might abhor for the Reign of Terror, but he was an idealist. Even Lenin."

Larry Woolford began to say, "Are you sure than you aren't interested in this *Move*—"

Then the knockout drops hit him.

## XII

He came out of the fog feeling nausea and with his head splitting. He groaned and opened one eye experimentally.

Steve Hackett's voice said, "The cloddy is snapping out of it." He sounded far away.

Larry groaned again, opened the other eye and attempted to focus.

"What happened?" he muttered.

"Oh, great. What happened, he says. Now that's an original question," Steve said in disgust.

Larry Woolford struggled up into a sitting position. He'd been stretched out on a couch in the Professor's combined living room and study.

Steve Hackett, his hands on his hips, was looking down at him sarcastically. There were three or four others, one of whom Larry vaguely remembered as being a Secret Service colleague of Steve's, going about and in and out of the room.

Larry said, his fingers pressing into his forehead. "My head's killing me. Damn it, what's going on?"

Steve said sarcastically, "You've been slipped a mickey, my cloak and dagger friend, and the bird has flown. And evidently, what a bird."

"You mean the Professor? He's a bird all right."

"Leave us depart the field of humor," Hackett said, his ugly face scowling. "Listen, I thought you people had pulled out of this case."

Larry sat up and swung his two feet around to the floor. "So did I," he said, or rather moaned. "But there were two or three things that bothered me and I thought I'd tidy them up before leaving."

"You tidied them up, all right," Steve grumbled. "This Professor Voss was practically the only lead I've been able to discover. An old friend of Self's. And you allowed him to get away before we even got here."

One of Hackett's men came up and said, "Not a sign of him, Steve. He evidently burned a few papers, packed a suitcase, and took off. His things look suspiciously like he was ready to go into hiding at a moment's notice."

Steve growled at him, "Give the place the works. Let's hope he's left some clues around that'll give us a line."

The other went off and Steve Hackett sat down on one of the leather chairs and glowered at Larry Woolford. "Listen," he said, "what did you people want with Susan Self?"

Larry shook his head for clarity and took the other in. He said, "Susan? What are you talking about? You don't have any aspirin, do you?"

"No. What do you mean, what am I talking about? You called Betsy Hughes and then sent a couple of men over to pick the Self kid up."

"Who's Betsy Hughes?" Larry Woolford complained. "I've never heard of her."

Steve shook his head. "I don't know what kind of knockout drops the old boy gave you, but they sure as hell worked. Betsy's the operative we put on to mind Susan Self in the Greater Washington Hilton. About an hour ago you got her on the phone, said your department wanted to question Susan, and that you were sending two men over to pick her up. The two men turned up with an order from you, and took the girl. Now do you remember?"

Larry gawked at him. Finally he said, "Listen, Steve, what time is it?"

Steve looked at his watch. "It's almost two o'clock."

Larry said, "I came into this house in the morning. I talked to the Professor for about half an hour and then was silly enough to let him give me some loaded coffee. He was such a weird old buzzard that it never occurred to me that he might be dangerous. At any rate, I've been unconscious for several hours. I *couldn't* have called this Betsy Hughes operative of yours, and I sure as hell didn't write any order to turn Susan over to two men from our department."

It was Steve Hackett's turn to stare. "Do you mean to tell me that you people don't have Susan Self?"

Larry shook his head, which he found to be a mistake since the motion increased his splitting headache. He said, "Not so far as I know. The Boss told me yesterday that we were pulling out, that it was all in your hands. What in the devil would we want with Susan?"

"Oh, great," Steve snarled. "There goes our last contact. Ernest Self, Professor Voss, and now Susan Self; they've all disappeared. And if they've gone to ground, we'll have our work cut out finding them. None of them have a criminal record. We don't even have their fingerprints."

"Look," Larry said, suppressing a groan, "let's get me some aspirin and then let's go and see my chief. I have a sneaking suspicion that our department is back on this case."

Steve snorted his sarcasm. "If you can foul things up this well when you're off the case, God only knows what you'll accomplish using your facilities on an all-out basis."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," Larry told him.

The Boss said slowly, "Whoever we are working against evidently isn't short of resources. Abducting that young lady right out from under our noses was no simple matter. I hope the farce doesn't ever get into the newspapers. Both of our departments would look awfully inefficient." The career bureaucrat worked his lips in and out in the nearest thing to a pout his heavy face was capable of.

Larry Woolford, who had taken the time to go home, shower, change clothes and medicate himself out of his dope induced hangover, sat across

the desk from him, flanked by Steve Hackett.

The Boss said sourly, "It would seem that I was in error. That our young Susan Self was not spouting fantasy. There evidently is an underground movement interested in changing our institutions." He stirred in his chair and his scowl went deeper. "And evidently working on a basis never conceived of by subversive organizations in the past. The fact that they have successfully remained secret even to this department is the prime indication that they are attempting to make their revolutionary changes in a unique manner."

Larry said, "The trouble is, sir, that we don't even know what it is they want."

"However," his superior said slowly, "we are be— beginning to get some inklings."

Steve Hackett said, "What inklings, sir? This sort of thing might be routine for you people, but my field is counterfeit. I, frankly, don't know what its all about."

The Boss turned his eyes to the Secret Service man. "We have a clue or two, Mr. Hackett. For one thing, we know that this Movement of ours has no affiliation with the Soviet Complex, nor, so far as we know, any foreign element whatsoever. If we take Miss Self's word, it is strictly an American phenomenon. From what little we know of Ernest Self and Peter Voss they might be in revolt against some of our current institutions but there is no reason to believe them, ah, *un-American* in the usually accepted sense of the word."

The two younger men looked at him as though he was joking.

He shook his heavy head negatively. "Actually, what do we have on this so-called Movement thus far? Aside from treating Lawrence, here, to some knockout drops—and let us remember that Lawrence was present in the Professor's home without a warrant—all we have is the suspicion that they have manufactured a quantity of counterfeit."

"A quantity is right," Steve Hackett blurted. "If we're expected to accept what that Self kid told us, they have a few billion dollars worth of perfect bills on hand."

A strange amount for counterfeiters to produce," the Boss said uncomfortably. "That is what puzzles me. Any revolutionary movement needs funds. Remember Stalin as a young man? He used to be in charge of the Bolshevik gang which robbed banks to raise funds for their underground newspapers and other activities. But a billion dollars? What in the world can they expect to need that amount for?"

Larry said, "Sir, you keep talking as though these characters were a bunch of idealistic do-gooders bleeding for the sake of the country. Actually, from what we know, they're nothing but a bunch of revolutionists."

The Boss shook his head. "You're not thinking clearly, Lawrence. Revolution, per se, is not illegal in the United States. Our Constitution was probably the first document of its kind which allowed for its own amendment. The men who wrote it provided for changing it either slightly or *en toto*. Whenever the majority of the American people decide completely to abandon the Constitution and govern themselves by new laws, no matter how revolutionary they might be by present standards, they have the right to do it."

"Then what's the whole purpose of this department, sir?" Larry argued. "Why have we been formed to combat foreign and domestic subversion?"

His chief sighed. "You shouldn't have to ask that, Lawrence. The present government cannot oppose the will of the majority if it votes, by constitutional methods, to make any changes it wishes. But we can, and do, unmask the activities of anyone trying to overthrow the government by force and violence, or any other method not consistent with the Constitution. Any culture protects itself against that."

"What are we getting at, sir?" Steve Hackett said, impatient.

The Boss shrugged lardly shoulders. "I'm trying to point out that so far as my department is concerned, thus far we have little against this Movement. Secret Service may have, what with this wholesale counterfeiting, even though thus far they seem to have made no attempt to pass the currency they have allegedly manufactured. We wouldn't even know of it, if it weren't for our young Susan pilfering an amount."

Larry said, desperately, "Sir, you just pointed out a few minutes ago that this Movement is a secret organization trying to make changes in the

government in some unique manner. In short, they don't figure on using the ballot to put over their revolution. That makes them as illegal as the Commies, doesn't it?"

The Boss said, "That's the difficulty; we don't know what they want. From your conversations with Susan Self and especially with Professor Voss, evidently they think the country needs some basic changes. What these changes are, and how they expect to accomplish them, we don't know. Unless a foreign government is involved, or unless they plan to alter our institutions by violence, this department simply doesn't have much jurisdiction."

Steve Hackett snorted. "Secret Service has! If those bales of money are ever put into circulation, there'll be hell to pay."

The Boss sighed, "Well," he said, "Lawrence can continue on the assignment. If it develops that this department is justified in further investigation, we'll put more men on it. Meanwhile, it is obviously more a Secret Service matter. I am sorry to intrude upon your vacation again, Lawrence."

"Not at all, sir," Larry said nobly. It didn't do his credit with the old man any harm to make sacrifices for the sake of the department.

## XIII

On awakening in the morning, Larry Woolford stared glumly at the ceiling for long moments before dragging himself from bed. This was, he decided, the damnedest assignment he'd ever been on. In his day he had trekked through South America, Common Europe, a dozen African states, and even areas of Southern Asia, combatting Commie pressures here, fellow-traveler organizations there, disruptive plots hatched in the Soviet Complex in another place. On his home grounds in the United States he'd covered everything from out and out Soviet espionage to exposing Communist activities of complexions from the faintest of pinks to the rosiest Trotskyite red. But, he decided, he'd never expected to wind up after a bunch of weirds whose sole actionable activity to date seemed to be

the counterfeiting of a fantastic amount of legal tender which thus far they were making no attempt to pass.

He got out of bed and went through the rituals of showering, shaving and dressing, of coffee, sausages and eggs, toast and more coffee.

What amazed Larry Woolford was the shrug-it-off manner in which the Boss seemed to accept this underground Movement and its admittedly subversive goals—whatever they were. Carry the Boss' reasoning to its ultimate and subversion was perfectly all right, just so it didn't involve force and violence. If he was in his chief's position, he would have thrown the full resources of the department into tracking down these crackpots. As it was, he, Larry Woolford, was the only operative on the job.

He needed a new angle on which to work. Steve Hackett was undoubtedly handling the tracing down of the counterfeit with all of the resources of the Secret Service. Larry didn't know much about such activities.

He finished his final cup of coffee in the living room and took up the pipe he was currently breaking in. He loaded it automatically from the humidor and lit it with his pocket lighter. Three drags, and he tossed it back to the table, fumbled in a drawer and located a pack of cigarettes. His status group might be currently smoking Irish briars in public, but, let's face it, he hated the goddamned things. He couldn't keep himself from inhaling, and pipe tobacco was never built for inhaling, it was too strong.

He sat down before the phone screen and dialed the offices of the *Sun-Post*. Eventually he got Sam Sokolski who beat him to the punch this time.

Sam said, "You shouldn't drink alone. Listen, Larry, why don't you get in touch with Alcoholics Anonymous? It's a great outfit. Kind of a mutual masturbation society. You sit around and have kind of a circle jerk."

"You ought to know," Larry growled. "If you'd just stop sucking on bottles, you'd probably have prospects of becoming some sort of newspaper man. Look, as science columnist for that rag you work for, you probably come in touch with a lot of eggheads."

"Laddy-buck, you have said it," Sam said. "In my life there are more

eggheads than eggs, of which I eat two every morning."

"Fine. Now look, what I want to know is have you ever heard—even the slightest of rumors—about an organization called the Movement?"

"What'd'ya mean, slightest of rumors? Half the weirds I run into are interested in the outfit. Get two or three intellectuals, scientists, technicians, or what have you, together and they start knocking themselves out on the pros and cons of the Movement."

Larry Woolford goggled at him. "You must be kidding. I've never even heard of them until the last few days."

The other was mystified. "Why should I kid you? As a matter of fact, I was thinking of doing a column one of these days on Voss and this Movement of his."

"Voss and this movement of his!" Larry blurted. "What do you mean by that?"

"Sure," Sam said. "Professor Peter Voss, over at the university. He's the top leader."

"Oh, great," Larry growled. "Look, Sam, eventually there is probably a story in this for you. Right now, though, we're trying to keep the lid on it. Could you brief me a little on this Movement? What are they trying to put over? How do they expect to accomplish it?"

"I seem to spend half of my time briefing you on information any semi-moron ought to be up on," the newspaperman told him nastily. "However, *briefly*, they're in revolt against social-label judgements. They think it's fouling up the country and that eventually it'll result in the Russkies passing us in all the fields that really count, although the Russkies have a certain amount of the same situation themselves."

"I keep running into this term," Larry complained. "What do you mean, social-label judgements, and how can they possible louse up the country?"

Sam said, "I was present a month or so ago when Voss gave an informal lecture to a group of twenty or so. Here's one of the examples he used."

"Everybody wants to be rated on a (1) personal, or, (2) social-label basis,



depending on which basis is to his greater advantage. The Black who is a no-good, lazy, objectionable person demands to be accepted because Blacks should not be discriminated against. The highly competent, hard working, honest and productive Black wants to be accepted because he is hard-working, honest and productive—and should be so accepted.

"See what I mean? This social-label system is intended to relieve the individual of the necessity of judging, and the consequences of being judged. If you have poor judgement, and are forced to rely on your own judgement, you're almost sure to go under. So persons of poor judgement support our social-label system. If you're a louse, and are correctly judged as being a louse, you'd prefer that the social dictum 'Human beings are never lice' should apply."

Larry said impatiently, "What in the devil's this got to do with the race between this country and the Russkies?"

Sam said, his voice as patient as his caller's was the opposite, "Voss and the Movement he leads contend that a social-label system winds up with incompetents running the country in all fields. Often, incompetent scientists are in charge of our research; incompetent doctors in charge of our health; incompetent politicians run our government; incompetent teachers, laden with social-labels, teach our youth. Our young people are going to college to secure a degree, not an education. It's the label that counts, not the reality.

"Voss contends that it's getting progressively worse. That we're sinking into an equivalent of a ritual-taboo, tribal social-like situation. This is the system the low-level human wants, yearns for and seeks. A situation in which no one's judgement is of any use. Then *his* lack of judgement is no handicap to him."

The newspaperman went on. "According to members of the Movement, today the tribesman type is seeking to reduce civilization back to ritual-taboo tribalism wherein no one man's judgement is of any value. The union wants advancement based on seniority, not on ability and judgement. The persons with whom you associate judge you by the amount of money you possess, the family from which you come, the degrees you hold, by social-labels—not by your own proven abilities. Down with judgement! is the cry."

"It sounds awfully weird to me," Larry grumbled in deprecation.

Sam shrugged. "There's a lot of sense in it, so far as I'm concerned. What the Movement wants is to develop a socio-economic system in which judgement produces a maximum advantage."

Larry sighed and said, "What gets me is that you talk as though half the country was all caught up in debating this Movement. But I haven't even heard of it, neither has my department chief, nor any of my colleagues, so far as I know. Why isn't anything about it in the papers, or on the Tri-Di?"

Sam said, "As a matter of fact, I took in Mort Lenny's show the other night and he made some cracks about it. But it's not the sort of thing that's even meant to become popular with the man in the street. To put it bluntly, Voss and his people aren't particularly keen about the present conception of the democratic ideal. According to him, true democracy can only be exercised by peers and society today isn't composed of peers. If you have one hundred people, twenty of them competent, intelligent persons, eighty of them untrained, incompetent and less than intelligent, then it's ridiculous to have the eighty dictate to the twenty."

Larry looked accusingly at his long-time friend. "You know, Sam, you sound as though you approve of all this."

Sam said patiently, "I listen to it all, Larry my boy. And, like I said, I think there's a lot of sense in it. There's only one drawback."

"And that is?"

"How's it going to be put over? This social-label system the Movement complains about was bad enough ten years ago. But look how much worse it is today. It's a progressive thing. And, remember, it's to the advantage of the incompetent. Since the incompetents predominate, you're going to have a hard time starting up a system based on judgement and ability."

Larry thought about it for a moment.

Sam said, "Look, I'm working, Larry. Was there anything else?"

Larry said, "You wouldn't know where I could get hold of Voss, would you?"

"At his home, I imagine. If I recalled, he lives somewhere over in Baltimore. Not the swank apartment area around Druid Hill, but the older

section near Paterson Park. Or, you could probably contact him at the University."

"He's disappeared. We're looking for him."

Sam laughed. "Gone underground, eh? The old boy is getting romantic."

"Does he have any particular friends who might be putting him up?"

Sam thought that over for a moment. "There's Frank Nostrand. You know, that rocket expert who was fired when he got into the big hassle with Senator McCord."

When Sam Sokolski had flicked off, Larry stared at the vacant phone screen for a long moment, assimilating what the other had told him. He was astonished that an organization such as the Movement would have spread to the extent it evidently had through the country's intellectual circles, through the scientifically and technically trained, without his department being keenly aware of it.

One result, he decided glumly, of labeling everything contrary to the status quo as weird and dismissing it with contempt. Admittedly, that would have been his own reaction only a week ago. For that matter he still thought that Professor Peter Voss and his group were on the weird side. It wasn't as simple as all that, this being opposed to the status label. He'd worked hard for his own status labels, he told himself virtuously.

But suppose that he'd been at a cocktail party, and had drifted up to a group who were arguing about social labels judgements and the need to develop a movement to change society's use of them. The discussion would have gone in one ear and out the other and he would have muttered inwardly, "Weirds," and drifted away to get himself another vodka martini.

Larry snorted the subject away and dialed the Department of Records. He'd never heard of Frank Nostrand before, nor of his run-in with Senator McCord, the current top witch-hunter when it came to subversives, which was interesting in itself. Was Nostrand considered a subversive? He got information.

The bright young thing who answered seemed to have a harried expression untypical of Records employees. Larry said to her, "I'd like the

brief dossier of a Mr. Frank Nostrand who is evidently an expert on rocketry. The only other thing I know about him is that he recently got in the news as a result of a controversy with Senator McCord."

"Just a moment, sir," the bright young thing said.

She touched buttons and reached into a delivery chute. When her eyes came up to meet his again, they were more than ever harried. They were absolutely confused.

"Mr. Franklin Howard Nostrand," she said. "Currently employed by Madison Air as a rocket research technician."

"That must be him," Larry said. "I'm in a hurry, Miss. What is his background?"

Her eyes rounded. "It says... it says he's an Archbishop of the Anglican Church."

Larry Woolford looked at her.

She looked back, pleadingly.

Larry scowled and said, "His university degrees, please."

Her eyes darted to the report and she swallowed. "A bachelor in Home Economics, sir."

"Look here, Miss," Larry snarled. "How could a Home Economics degree result in his becoming either an Archbishop or a rocket technician?"

"I'm sorry, sir," she said, confused. "But that's what his dossier says."

Larry was fuming but there was not point in taking it out on this junior employee of the Department of Records. He snapped, "Just give me his address, please."

She said agonizingly, "Sir, it says, Lhasa, Tibet."

A red light flicked at the side of his phone and he said to her, "I'll call you back. I'm getting a priority call."

He flicked her off, and flicked the incoming call in. It was LaVerne Polk.

She seemed to be on the harried side, too.

"Larry," she said. "You'd better get over here soonest. Hellz-a-poppin'."

"What's up. LaVerne?"

"This Movement," she said. "It seems to have started moving! The Boss says to get over here right away."

## XIV

The top of his car was retracted. Larry Woolford slammed down the walk of his auto-bungalow and vaulted over the side and into the seat. He banged the start button, dropped the lift lever, depressed the thrust peddle and took off at maximum acceleration.

He took the police level for maximum speed and was in downtown Greater Washington in flat minutes.

So the Movement had started moving. That could mean almost anything. It was just enough to keep him stewing until he got to the Boss and found out what was going on. He turned his car over to a parker and made his way to the entrance utilized by the second-grade department officials. In another year, or at most two, he told himself all over again, he'd be using that other door. He had an intuitive feeling that if he licked this current assignment it'd be the opening wedge he needed and he'd wind up in a status bracket unique for his age. Yes, if he could just bring this Movement to bay, he'd have it made.

LaVerne looked up when he hurried into her anteroom. She seemingly had two or three calls going on at once, taking orders from one phone, giving them in another. Something was obviously erupting. She didn't speak to him, merely nodding her head at the inner office. He had never seen the efficient LaVerne Polk in this much of a dither. She was invariably cool and collected, no matter what the crisis. And this was a department of crises. The shit must have really hit the fan, he decided.

In the Boss' office were six or eight others besides Larry's ultimate superior. Their expressions and attitudes ran from bewilderment to shock. They weren't the men you'd expect to have such reactions. At least not those that Larry recognized. Three of them, Ben Ruthenberg, Bill Fraina and Dave Moskowitz were F.B.I. men, of high echelon, and with whom Larry had worked on occasion. One of the others he recognized as being a supervisor with the C.I.A. Walt Foster, Larry's rival for the affections of the Boss, was also present, his disgustingly fawning face—given Larry's viewpoint—continually on the superior.

The Boss growled at Larry, "Where in the name of heavens have you been, Lawrence?"

Larry tried to rise to the occasion manfully. "Following out leads on this so-called Movement, sir," he said. "Thin results, so far. What's going on?"

Ruthenberg, the Department of Justice man, grunted sour amusement at that. "So-called Movement isn't exactly the term, not the correct phrase. It's a Movement, all right, all right. I'll be a son-of-a-bitch."

The Boss said, "Please dial Records and get your brief dossier, Lawrence. That will be the quickest manner in which to bring you up on developments." His voice was grim.

Mystified, but with a growing premonition already, Larry dialed the Department of Records. Knowing his own classification code, he had no need of Information this time. He got the hundred odd word brief and stared at it as it filled the screen. The only items really correct were his name and present occupation. Otherwise, his education was listed as grammar school only, an initial cruel cut. His military career had him ending the Asian War as a General of the Armies and his criminal career record included four years on Alcatraz for molesting small children. Alcatraz! Hadn't it been closed down for years?

Blankly, he faded the brief and dialed his full dossier. It failed to duplicate the brief, but that was no great advantage. This time he had a M.D. degree from Johns Hopkins, but his military career listed him as a dishonorable discharge from the Navy where he had served in the steward department. His criminal career consisted of being a pusher of heroin and his religion was listed as Holy Roller. Political affiliations had him down as a member of the British Tory party.

The others were looking at him, most of them blankly, although there were grins on the faces of Moskowitz and the C.I.A. man. He suspected that they had gone through similar routines.

Moskowitz said, "With a name like mine, yet, they have me a Bishop of the Orthodox Greek Catholic Church."

Larry said, hopelessly, "What in the name of whatever is it all about?"

Ruthenberg said, resignation in voice, "It all started early this morning, so far as we know. As a matter of fact, we don't exactly know what in the hell has happened." Which didn't seem to answer the question.

Larry said, "I don't get it. Obviously, the Department of Records is fouled up in some manner. How and why?"

"How, we know, more or less," the Boss rumbled disgustedly. "Why, is another matter. You've spent more time than anyone else on this assignment, Lawrence. Perhaps you can tell us." He grabbed up a pipe from his desk, tried to light it noisily, noticed finally that it held no tobacco and threw it to the desk top again.

"Evidently, a large group of these Movement individuals either already worked in Records or wriggled themselves into Key positions in the technical end of the department. Now they've managed to sabotage the files."

"We've caught most of them already," one of the F.B.I. men growled, "but damn little good that does us at this stage of the game."

The C.I.A. supervisor made a gesture indicating that he gave it all up. He said, "Not only here, but it happened in Chicago and San Francisco as well. All at once. Evidently perfectly rehearsed. Personnel records from coast to coast are all boggled. The question is, why?"

Larry said slowly, "I think I know that now. Yesterday I wouldn't have but I've been picking up odds and ends from here and there."

They all fixed their eyes on him.

Larry sat down and ran a hand back through his hair. "The general idea is to change the country's reliance on social-label judgements."

"On *what?*" the Boss barked.

Larry viewed his chief. "Of one person judging another according to social-labels. Professor Voss and the others—"

"Who did you say?" Ruthenberg interrupted with a snap.

"Voss. Professor Peter Voss from the University over in the Baltimore section of town. He's the ring leader, the brains behind the Movement."

Ruthenberg snapped to Fraina, "Get on the phone and send out a pick-up order for him."

Fraina was on his feet. "What kind of a charge do I lay on him, Ben?"

Ben Ruthenberg said sarcastically, "Rape, or something. Get moving, well figure out a charge later. The guy's a fruitcake."

Larry said wearily, "He's already gone into hiding. I've been trying to locate him. He managed to slip me some knockout drops and got away yesterday."

The Boss looked at him in disgust. He said, "You mean a rank amateur managed to do you in?"

There was no answer to that.

Ruthenberg said, "We've had men go into hiding before. Get going, Fraina."

Fraina left the office and the others looked back to Larry, waiting for him to go on.

The Boss said, "About this social-label nonsense—"

Larry said, "They think the country is going to pot because of it. People hold high office or places of responsibility not because of superior intelligence, or even acquired skill, but because of the social-labels they've accumulated, and these can be based on something as flimsy—from the Movement's viewpoint—as who your grandparents were, how much seniority you have on the job, what part of town you live in, or what tailor cuts your clothes."



Their expressions ran from scowls and frowns to complete puzzlement.

Walt Foster, Larry's neck and neck rival, grumbled, "What's all this got to do with sabotaging the country's Records? You sure you know what you're talking about, Larry?"

Larry shrugged as he said, "I don't have the complete picture, but one thing is sure. It's going to be harder for a while to base your opinions on a quick hundred-word brief on a man. Yesterday, an employer, considering hiring somebody, could dial the man's dossier, check it, and form his opinions by the status labels the would-be employee could produce. Today, he's damn well going to have to exercise his own judgement."

LaVerne's face lit up the screen on the Boss' desk and she said, "Those two members of the Movement who were picked up in Alexandria are here, sir."

"Send them in," the Boss rumbled. He looked at Larry. "The F.B.I, managed to arrest almost everyone directly involved in the sabotage."

The two prisoners seemed more amused than otherwise. They were young men, in their early thirties—well-dressed and obviously intelligent. The Boss had them seated side by side and glared at them for a long moment before speaking. Larry and the others took chairs in various parts of the room and added their own stares to the barrage.

The Boss said, "Your situation is an unhappy one, gentlemen."

One of the two shrugged.

The Boss said, "You can, ah, hedge your bets by cooperating with us. It might make the difference between a year or two in prison—and life."

One of them grinned and said, "I doubt it."

The Boss tried a slightly different approach. "You have no reason to maintain a feeling of obligation to Professor Voss and the others. You've been let down. You have obviously been abandoned. Had they any feeling for you there would have been more efficacious arrangements for your escape."

The more articulate of the two shrugged again. "We were expendable,

and were fully aware of it," he said. "However, it won't be long before we are out."

"You think so?" Ruthenberg grunted.

The revolutionist looked at him. "Yes, I do," he said. "Six months from now and we'll be heroes. By that time the Movement will have been a success."

The Boss snorted. "Just because you deranged the Records? Why, that's but temporary."

"Not so temporary as you think," the technician replied. "This country allowed itself to get deeply immeshed in punch-card and tape records. Oh, it made sense enough. With the population we have, and the endless files that result from our ultra-complicated society, it was simply a matter of developing a standardized system of records for the nation as a whole. Now, for all practical purposes, *all* of our records these days are kept with the Department of Records, confidential as well as public records. Why should a university, for instance, keep literally tons of files, with all the expense and space and time involved, when it can merely file the same records with the government and have them safe and easily available at any time? Now, the Movement has completely and irrevocably destroyed almost all the files that deal with the social-labels to which we object. An excellent first step, in forcing our country back into judgement based on ability and intelligence."

"First step!" Larry blurted.

The two prisoners looked at him in obvious amusement. "That's right," the quieter of the two said. "This is just the first step. You didn't think we expected to achieve our purpose with nothing more than this, did you?"

"Don't kid yourselves," Ben Ruthenberg bit out. "It's also the last."

The two Members of the Movement grinned at him. Oh, they were enjoying themselves all right, all right.

When the others had gone, the Boss looked at Larry Woolford. He said sourly, "When this department was being formed, I doubt that anyone had in mind this particular type of subversion, Lawrence."

Larry grunted. "Give me a good old-fashioned Commie, any time. Look sir, what are the Department of Justice boys going to do with those two prisoners?"

"Hold them on various charges, I assume. They should be able to dream up a multitude of them. We've conflicted with the F.B.I, in the past on overlapping jurisdiction, but thank heavens for them now. Their manpower is needed.

Larry leaned forward. "Sir, we ought to take all members of the Movement we're already arrested, feed them a dose of Scop and pressure them to open up on the organization's operations."

His superior squinted at him, waiting for him to continue.

Larry said urgently, "Those two we just had in here thought the whole thing was a big joke. The first step, they called it. Sir, there's something considerably bigger than this cooking. Uncle Sam might pride himself on the personal liberties guaranteed by this country, but unless we break this organization, and do it fast, there's going to be trouble that will make this fouling of the dossier records look like the minor matter those two jokers seemed to think it."

The Boss thought about that. He said slowly, "Lawrence, the Supreme Court ruled against the use of Scop-Serum. Not that it is as efficient as all that anyway. Largely these so-called truth serums don't accomplish much more than to lower resistance, slacken natural inhibitions, weaken the will."

"Sure," Larry said. "But give a man a good dose of Scop-Serum and he'd betray his own mother. Not because he's helpless to tell a lie, but because under the influence of the drug he figures it just isn't important enough to bother about. Sir, Supreme Court or not, I think those two ought to be given Scop-Serum, along with all other Movement members we've picked up."

The Boss was shaking his head. "Lawrence, those men are not wide-eyed radicals picked up in a street demonstration. They're highly respected members of our society. They're educators, scientists, engineers, technicians. Anything done to them is going to make headlines. Those that were actually involved in the sabotage will have criminal charges brought against them, but they're going to get a considerable amount of publicity, and we're going to be in no position to alienate any of their constitutional rights. Scop-Serum is a highly effective and dangerous aphrodisiac, as well as being a truth serum. If it came out that we'd used it, the trials might be thrown out of court."

Larry stood up, approached his chiefs desk and leaned over it urgently. "Sir, that's fine, but we've got to move and move fast. Something's up and we don't even know what! Take that counterfeit money. From Susan Self's description, there actually billions of dollars worth of it."

"Oh, come now, Lawrence. The child exaggerated. Besides, that's a problem for Steve Hackett and the Secret Service, we have enough on our hands as it is. Forget about the counterfeit, Lawrence. I think I'll put you in complete control of field work on this, to cooperate in liaison with Ben Ruthenberg and the F.B.I. So far as we're concerned, the counterfeiting angle belongs to Secret Service. We're working on subversion and until the Civil Liberties Union or whoever else proves otherwise, well consider the Movement an organization attempting to change the country by illegal means."

Larry Woolford made a hard decision quickly. He was shaking his head. "Sir, I'd rather you gave the administrative end to someone else and let me continue in the field. I've got some leads—I think. If I get bogged down in interdepartmental red tape, and in paper work here at headquarters, I'll never get to the heart of this and I'm laying bets that we either crack this within days or there are going to be some awfully big changes in this country."

The Boss glared at him. "You mean you're refusing this assignment, Woolford? Confound it, don't you realize that it is a promotion?"

Larry was worriedly dogged, "Sir, I'd rather stay in the field. I think it's where I'll be most useful."

"Very well," the other snapped disgustedly. "I hope you deliver some results, Woolford, otherwise I am afraid I won't feel particularly happy

about your somewhat cavalier rejection of this opportunity." He flicked on one of the phones and said, "Miss Polk, locate Walter Foster for me. He is to take over our end of this Movement matter."

LaVerne said, "Yes, sir," and her face was gone.

The Boss looked up, still scowling. "What are you waiting for Woolford?" he said.

"Yes, sir," Larry said. It was just coming to him now, what he'd done. There possibly went his yearned-for promotion in the department. There went his chance of an upgrading in status. And Walt Foster, of all people, in his place.

At LaVerne's desk, Larry stopped off long enough to say, "Did you ever assign that secretary to me?"

"She's come and gone, Larry. She sat around for a couple of days, after seeing you not even once, and then I gave her another assignment."

"Well, bring her back again, or an equivalent. I want a girl to do up briefs for me on all the information we accumulate on the Movement. It'll be coming in from all sides now. From the Press, from those members we've arrested, from our F.B.I. pals, now that they're interested, and so forth."

"I'll give you Irene Day," LaVerne said. "Where are you off to now, Larry?"

"Probably a wild goose chase," Larry growled. "Which reminds me. Do me a favor, LaVerne, Call Personal Service and find out where Franklin Nostrand is. He's some kind of rocket technician at Madison Air Laboratories. Ill be in my office."

"Franklin Nostrand," LaVerne said briskly. "Will do, Larry."

Back in his own cubicle, Larry stood for a moment in thought. He was increasingly aware of the uncomfortable feeling that time was running out on them; that things were coming to a dangerous head.

He stared down at the dozen or more books and pamphlets that his never seen secretary had heaped up for him. Well, he certainly didn't have

any time for reading now, about counterfeiting or anything else.

He sat down at the desk and dialed an inter-office number.

The harassed looking face of Walter Foster faded in. On seeing Larry Woolford he growled accusingly, "My pal. You've let them dump this whole thing into my lap."

Larry grinned at him. "Better you than me, old buddy. Besides, it's a promotion. Pull this off and you'll be the Boss' right-hand man."

"That's a laugh," Foster said. "It's a madhouse. This Movement gang is as weird as they come."

"I bleed for you," Larry said. "However, here's a tip. Ilya Simonov, of the *Chrezvychainaya Komissiya* is somewhere in the country."

"Ilya Simonov!" Foster blurted. "What've the Commies got to do with this? Is it something the Boss knows about?"

"Haven't had time to go into it with him," Larry said. "However, it seems that friend Ilya is here to find out what the Movement is all about. Evidently, the big boys in Peking and Moscow are nervous about any changes that might take place over here. It might upset the applecart, or something. I suggest you have Ilya picked up, Walt."

Walt Foster said, "All right, I'll make a note to put some people on it. Maybe the F.B.I. can help."

Larry flicked off as he saw the red priority light on his phone shining. He pushed it and LaVerne's face faded in.

She said, "This Franklin Nostrand you wanted to know about. He's evidently working at the laboratories over in Newport News, Larry. He'll be on the job until five this afternoon."

"Fine," he said. Larry grinned at her. "When are we going to have that date, sweetie? I've always wanted to see how you looked in a nightgown, or, better still, out of one."

She made a face at him. "Ha! Some day when the program involves having fun instead of parading around in the right places, driving the

right model car, dressed in exactly the right clothes, and above all associating with the right people."

It was his turn to grimace. "I'm beginning to think you ought to sign up with Professor Voss and this Movement of his. You'd be right at home with his weirds. You're a hard lay, LaVerne Polk, and I resent it."

She stuck her tongue out at him and flicked off, after saying, "I'd only put out for a man—not a status symbol."

As he made his way to the parking lot for his car, something in their conversation nagged at him, but he couldn't put his finger on it. He considered the girl, all over again. She had almost all of the qualities he looked for in a woman. She was attractive, without being overly so. He disliked women who were out of the ordinarily beautiful, it became too much to live up to. She was sharp, but not objectionably so. Not to the point of giving you an inferiority complex.

But, Holy Smokes, she'd never do as a career man's wife. He could just see the Boss' ultraconservative wife inviting them out to dinner. It would happen exactly once, never again. And Larry had been buttering up to the Boss' better half for the better part of a decade now. He had won her over the hard way, and with just those status labels, status symbols, that the Movement was in such revolt against.

He obtained his car, lifted it to one of the higher levels and headed for Newport News. The former naval base and maritime center was shortly to be assimilated into Greater Washington but hadn't quite made it yet. It was a half hour trip and he wasn't particularly expectant of results. The tip Sam Sokolsld had given him wasn't much to go by. Seemingly, Frank Nostrand was a friend of the Professor's, but that didn't necessarily mean he was connected with the Movement, or that he was aware of Professor Voss' whereabouts.

He might have saved himself the trip.

The bird had flown again. In fact, two birds had flown. Not only was Frank Nostrand not at the Madison Air Laboratories, but he wasn't at home, either. Larry Woolford, mindful of his departmental chief's words on the prestige these people carried, and the need to avoid hanky-panky when they were involved, took a full hour in acquiring a search warrant before breaking into the Nostrand home.

Nostrand was supposedly a bachelor, but the auto-bungalow, similar to Larry Woolford's own, showed signs of double occupancy, and there was little indication that the guest had been a woman.

Disgruntled, Larry Woolford dialed the offices, asked for Walt Foster. It took nearly ten minutes before his colleague faded in.

He said, snappishly, "I'm up to my eyebrows, Larry. What in the hell do you want?"

Larry gave him Frank Nostrand's address. "This guy has disappeared, Walt."

"So?"

"He was a close friend of Professor Voss. I got a warrant to search his house. It shows signs he had a guest. Possibly it was the Professor. Do you want to get some of the boys down here to go through the place? Possibly there's some sort of clue to where they took off for. The Professor's on the run and he's no professional at this. If we can pick *him* up, I've got a sneaking suspicion we'll have the so-called Movement licked. It's as though you'd picked up Lenin, at the beginnings of the Bolshevik revolution."

Walt Foster slapped a hand to his face in anguish. "You knew where the Professor was hiding, and you tried to pick him up on your own and let him get away. Why didn't you discuss this with either the Boss or me? I'm in charge of this operation! I would have had a dozen men down there. You've really fouled this one up, Woolford!"

Larry stared at him. Already Walt Foster was making sounds like an enraged superior.

He said mildly, "Sorry, Walt. I came down here on a very meager tip. I didn't really expect it to pan out. It was one chance in a million."

"Well, in the future, for crissakes, clear it with either me or the Boss before running off half-cocked into something, Woolford. Yesterday, you had this whole assignment on your own. Today, it's no longer a minor matter. Our department alone has two hundred people on it, in Greater Washington alone. The F.B.I. must have five times that many and that's not even counting the Secret Service's interest. It's no longer your individual baby."



"Sorry," Larry repeated. Then, "I don't imagine you've got hold of Ilya Simonov yet."

The other was disgusted. "Do you think we're magicians? We just put out the call for him a few hours ago. He's no amateur. If he doesn't want to be picked up, and he obviously doesn't, he'll go to ground and we'll have our work cut out for us finding him. I can't see that it's particularly important anyway."

"Maybe you're right," Larry said. "But you never know. He might have learned some things that we're not up on. See you later, Walt."

Walter Foster stared at him for a moment as though about to say something, but then tightened his lips and faded off.

Larry looked at the phone screen for a moment. "Did that phony expect me to call him *sir*? he muttered.

## XVI

The next two days dissolved into routine.

Frustrated, Larry Woolford spent most of his time in his office digesting developments, trying to figure out a new line of attack. There had to be something, some manner in which to flush this Movement thing before they came up with their next step in disrupting the country's socioeconomic system.

For want of something else, he put his new secretary, a brightly efficient girl, as style and status conscious as LaVerne Polk wasn't, to work typing up the tapes he had cut on Susan Self and the various phone calls he'd had with Hans Distelmayer and Sam Sokolski. From memory, he dictated to her his conversation with Professor Peter Voss.

He carefully read the typed sheets over and over again. He continually had the feeling in this case that there were loose ends dangling around. There must be several important points he should be able to put his finger

upon.

On the morning of the third day he dialed Steve Hackett and on seeing the other's worried, pug-ugly face fade in on the phone screen, decided that if nothing else the Movement was undermining the United States government by dispensing ulcers to its employees.

Steve growled, "What is it, Woolford? I'm as busy as a whirling dervish in a revolving door."

"This is just the glimmer of an idea, Steve," Larry told him. "But look, remember that conversation with Susan, when she described her father taking her to headquarters?"

"Yeah, of course. So what? Go on," Steve said impatiently.

"Do you remember her description of headquarters?" Larry continued.

"Go on," Steve rapped.

"What did it remind you of?"

"What in the hell are you leading up to?" the Secret Service agent demanded.

"This is just a hunch," Larry went on, nibbling his lower lip thoughtfully, "but the way she described the manner in which her father took her to headquarters suggests that they're in the Greater Washington area."

Steve was taking him in with disgust. How obvious could you get?

Larry stuck to it, though. "What's the biggest business in this area, Steve?"

"Government."

"Right. And the way she described headquarters of the Movement, was rooms, after rooms, after rooms, in which they'd stored the money."

"And?"

Larry said urgently, "Steve, I think in some way the Movement has

taken over some governmental building, or storage warehouse. Possibly some older building, no longer in use. It would be a perfect hideout. Who would expect a subversive organization to be in a governmental building? All they'd need would be a few officials here and there who were on their side and—"

Steve said wearily, "You couldn't have thought of this two days ago, could you?"

Larry cut himself off sharply. "Eh?"

Steve said, "We found their headquarters. One of their captured members cracked. Ben Ruthenberg of the F.B.I. found he had a morals rap against him some years ago. Something to do with messing around with a very young boy. The homosexual bit, but with a young kid, instead of a consenting adult. So Ben scared the pants off him by talking about threats of exposure. At any rate, you're right. They had established themselves in some government buildings going back to Spanish-American War days. We've arrested eight or ten officials that were involved in letting the Movement take over the buildings."

"But the money?" Larry said.

"The money was gone," Steve said bitterly. "They'd gotten it out in time. But Susan Self was right. There had evidently been room after room of it, stacked to the ceilings. Literally billions of counterfeit dollars. They'd moved out hurriedly, but they left enough loose hundreds, fifties, twenties, tens and fives around to give us an idea. Look, Woolford, I thought you'd been pulled off this case and that Walt Foster was handling it."

Larry said sourly, "I'm beginning to think so too. They're evidently not even bothering to let me know about such developments as this. See you later, Steve."

The other's face faded off.

Larry Woolford looked across the double desk at Irene Day, his secretary. "Look," he said. "Be smart and when you're offered a promotion, take it, real quick. If you don't, someone else will and you'll be left out in the cold."

Irene Day said brightly, "I've always known that, sir."

He looked at her. The typical eager beaver. Sharp as a whip. Bright as a button. "I'll bet you have," he muttered.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Woolford?"

"Nothing," he said. He leaned back in his chair and tried to think of another angle. Nothing came.

The phone lit and LaVerne Polk said, "The Boss wants to talk to you, Larry." Her face faded and Larry's superior was scowling at him.

He snapped, "Did you get anything on this medical records thing, Woolford?"

"Medical records?" Larry said blankly. "What do you mean medical records, sir?"

The Boss grunted in deprecation. "No, I suppose you haven't. I wish you would snap into it, Woolford. I don't know what's happened to you of late. I used to think that you were a good field man. Now everything you do seems to be half-assed." He flicked off abruptly.

Larry dialed LaVerne Polk. "What in the world was the Boss just talking about, LaVerne? About medical records."

LaVerne said, frowning. "Didn't you know? The Movement's been at it again. They've fouled up the records of the State Medical Licensing bureaus, at the same time sabotaging the remaining records of most, if not all, of the country's medical schools. They struck simultaneously, throughout the country, and even in Alaska and Hawaii."

He looked at her expressionlessly, for the moment not getting it at all. Were these people completely mad?

LaVerne said, "We've caught several hundred of those responsible. It's the same thing as before, when they fouled up the dossiers of everybody. It's an attack on the social label. From now on, if a man tells you he's an Ear, Eye, Nose and Throat specialist, you'd better do some investigation before letting him amputate your tongue. You'd better use your judgement before letting any doctor work on you. The status labels pertaining to medicine are gone. It's a madhouse, Larry."

Her face faded off.

Larry thought about it. Walt was really giving him the works. He had deliberately failed to let his rival in on this development. It had made Larry look like a damn fool in the eyes of the Boss. Obviously, Foster was taking every opportunity to make him look bad. And he was succeeding.

For long moments, he stared unseeingly at his secretary across from him until she stirred.

He brought his eyes back to the present and shook his head. He said, "It's just another preliminary move, not the important thing, yet. Not the big explosion they're figuring on. They got something more up their sleeves. Where have they taken that money, and why?"

Irene Day blinked at him. She said hesitantly, "I don't know, I'm sure, sir."

Larry said, "Get me Mr. Foster on the phone, Irene."

When Walt Foster's unhappy face faded in, Larry said, "Walt, did you get Ilya Simonov?"

"Simonov?" the other said impatiently. "No. We haven't spent much effort on it. I think this hunch of yours, that Ilya Simonov is some how deep in this, is like the other ones you've been having lately, Woolford. Ilya Simonov was last reported by our operatives as being in Siberia."

"It wasn't a hunch," Larry said, his voice tight. "He's in this country on an assignment dealing with the Movement."

"Well, that's your opinion," Foster said, wasps in his own voice. "I'm busy, Woolford. See here. At present you're under my orders on this job. In the way of something to do, instead of sitting around in that office, why don't you follow up this Colonel Ilya Simonov thing yourself?" He considered it a moment. "Yeah. That's an order, Woolford. Even if you don't locate him, it'll keep you out of our hair."

After the other was gone, Larry leaned back in his chair again, his face flushed as though the other had slapped it. In a way he had. There was no two ways about it. Walt Foster was after his scalp, and was going to attempt to finish him off while he had the upper hand. Walt Foster not

only wished to down his rivals, but stomp them after they were down.

But he had to get on with it. He said to the girl, "Miss Day, dial me Hans Distelmayer. His offices are over in the Belmont Building."

As always, the screen remained blank as the German spy master spoke.

Larry said, "Hans, I want to talk to Ilya Simonov."

"Ah?"

"I want to know where I can find him."

The German's voice was humorously gruff. "My friend, my friend..."

Larry said impatiently, "I'm not interested in arresting him at this time. I simply want to talk to him. Possibly he might even welcome the opportunity."

The other said heavily, "This goes beyond favors, my friend, Larry. On the face of it, I am not in this business for my health. And what you ask is dangerous from my viewpoint. You realize that upon occasion my organization does small tasks for the Soviet Complex and—"

"Ha!" Larry said bitterly.

"... it is hardly in my interest to gain the reputation of betraying my sometimes employers," the German continued, unruffled. "Were you on an assignment in, say Bulgaria or Hungary, would you expect me to betray you to the *Chrezvychainaya Komissiya*?"

"Not unless somebody paid you enough to make it worth while," Larry said.

"Exactly," the espionage chief said.

"See here," Larry said. "Send your bill to this department, Hans. I've been given carte blanche on this matter and I want to talk to Ilya Simonov. Now, where is he?"

The German chuckled heavily. "He is at the Soviet Embassy, my friend Larry."

"What! You mean they've got the gall to house their top spy right in—"

Distelmayer interrupted him. "Friend Simonov is currently accredited as a military attache and quite correctly. He holds the rank of colonel, as you know. He entered this country quite openly and legally, the only precaution taken was to use his second name, rather than Ilya, on his papers. It would seem that your people passed him by without a second look. Ah, I understand, though I am not sure, that he went to the trouble of making some minor changes in his facial appearance. After all, he received quite a bit of journalistic coverage in that affair of his with your F.B.I, about a decade ago. I assume he didn't want to be *too* easily identified."

"We'll expect your bill, Hans," Larry said. "Goodbye."

"Good-bye, friend Larry," Distelmayer chuckled.

Larry Woolford got up and reached for his hat, saying to Irene Day, "I don't know how long I'll be gone." He added, wryly, "If either Foster or the Boss try to get in touch with me—which seems unlikely—tell them that I'm carrying out orders."

## XVII

He drove over to the Soviet Embassy, inwardly snarling and sneering at the traffic about him, and parked his car directly before the building.

The American plainclothesmen stationed near the entrance, gave him a cool, thorough once-over as he began to pass.

He said, from the side of his mouth, to the larger of the two, "Fuck you."

The other looked at him aggressively. "You want to be picked up, Buster? Let's see your identification?"

Larry Woolford grunted and brought forth his wallet and flashed his buzzer.

The plainclothesman, he was probably F.B.I., Larry figured, said quickly, "Sorry, sir."

Larry was feeling nasty. He snapped, "What's your name? Who's your immediate boss?"

"Roy Smith, sir. My superior is Gene Watergate."

"I'll mention your manners the next time Gene and I have a few quick ones," Larry said coldly.

He passed on by, feeling slightly like the ass he should feel. On the other hand, the lower echelon F.B.I. man should have known by Larry's clothes, his manner of carrying himself, that he was of higher status. Larry Woolford didn't appreciate being addressed as Buster.

The two impassive Russian guards within the gates, armed with submachine guns slung over their shoulders, didn't bother to flicker an eyelid. This, as an Embassy, was Russia territory. There was no reason why they shouldn't be armed, though there was no other embassy in Greater Washington where the gate guards were openly armed.

At the reception desk in the immense entrada, he brought forth his wallet and introduced himself. "I am Lawrence Woolford. I carry the official rank of major in American Security. As you probably know, we deal with subversion and with espionage and counter-espionage. I would like to interview Colonel Ilya Simonov."

"I am afraid—" the clerk began stiffly.

"I suppose you have him on the records under a different name," Larry said. "Nevertheless, I demand to see him."

The clerk had evidently touched a concealed button. A door opened and a junior embassy official approached them. He didn't look particularly pleased at Larry's presence.

Larry restated his desire. The newcomer began to open his mouth in denial.

Larry simply eyed him.



The other was a stocky, square-faced Ukrainian type, in an out of style, double-breasted serge suit. He finally shrugged and said, "Just a moment, please," and left the room by the same door he had entered.

He was gone a full twenty minutes. Larry Woolford patiently found a chair, brought forth his pipe and loaded it. The damn thing still wasn't really broken in, and burnt his tongue. But at least it gave him something to do besides stare at the clerk who had returned to his paper work.

The junior official returned and said briefly. "This way, if you please."

Larry followed him upstairs to what would seem an area of the extensive building devoted to living quarters. However, the room he was taken to was an office, moderately-sized.

Ilya Simonov was there, seated behind a desk. He was in the full uniform of a colonel. He came to his feet on Larry's entrance and picked up a swagger stick which had been lying on the desk surface.

He came around the desk, saying to the young embassy officer, "That will be all, Vovo."

Vovo left, closing the door behind him.

Ilya Simonov shook hands with Larry. "It's been a long time," he said in perfect English. "Let me see, that conference in Warsaw, wasn't it? Have a chair, Mr. Woolford. I am sure you didn't come to discuss old times, although there have been some interesting ones in which we both participated."

Larry took the offered chair and ignored the other pleasantries, knowing full well they were left-handed. He said, "How in the world did you expect to get by with this nonsense, Simonov? We'll have you declared *persona non grata* in a matter of hours."

"It is not important," the Russian said, returning to his swivel chair behind the desk, slapping his swagger stick against the side of his leg as he went. "I have found what I came to find out. I was about to return to report to my ministry in any event."

"We won't do anything to hinder you, Colonel," Larry Woolford said dryly.

Ilya Simonov tapped his swagger stick on the desk top several times and said, "In actuality, it is all very amusing. In our country we would deal quickly with this Movement nonsense. You Americans with your pseudo-democracy, your labels without reality, your—"

Larry said wearily, "Please, Simonov, I promise not to try to convert you, if you'll promise not to try and convert me. Needless to say, my department isn't happy about your presence in this country. You'll be watched from now on. We've been busy with other matters..." Here the Russian laughed.

"... or we'd already have flushed you." He allowed his voice to go curious. "We've wondered about your interest in this phase of our internal affairs."

The Russian agent let his facade slip a bit, his iron mouth almost sneering. He said, "We are interested in all phases of your antiquated socioeconomic system, Mr. Woolford. In the present peaceful economic competition between East and West, we would simply *loath* to see anything happen to your present culture." He hesitated deliberately, before adding, "That is, of course, if you can call it a culture."

Larry said, unprovoked, "If I understand you correctly, you are not in favor of the changes the Movement advocates."

The Russian shrugged his military-straight shoulders. "I doubt if they are possible of achievement, even if we did wish to see such changes. The organization is a sloppy one. Revolutionary? Nonsense," he grunted that last. "They have no plans to change the government. No plans for overthrowing the present regime. Ultimately, what this country really needs is true Communism. This so-called Movement doesn't have that as its eventual goal. It is laughable."

Larry said, interestedly, "Then perhaps you'll tell me what little you've found out about the group. I'd be interested in your viewpoint, as opposed to my own."

"Why not?" The Russian tapped his swagger stick on the top of the desk again, three or four little taps. "They are composed of impractical idealists. Scientists, intellectuals, a few admitted scholars and even a few potential leaders. Their sabotage of your Department of Records was an amusing farce, and of your medical records as well. But, frankly, I have been unable to discover the purpose of their interest in rockets. For a time

I contemplated the possibility that they had a scheme to develop a nuclear bomb and to explode it over Greater Washington in the belief that in the resulting confusion they might seize power. But, on the face of it, their membership is incapable of such direct action."

"Their interest in rockets?" Larry said softly. Oh God, was he beginning to hit pay dirt.

The Russian agent tapped the table top some more with his stick "Yes, of course. As you've undoubtedly discovered, half the rocket technicians of your country seem to have joined up with them. We got the tip through..." the Russian cleared his throat.

"... several of our converts who happen to be connected with your space efforts groups."

"Is that so?" Larry said. "I wondered what you thought about their interest in money."

It was Ilya Simonov's turn to look blank. "Money?" he said.

"That's right," Larry told him, his eyes narrower now. "Large quantities of money."

The Russian said, frowning puzzlement. "I suppose most citizens in your capitalist countries are interested largely in money, and above everything else. One of your basic failings."

Larry Woolford stood. "Well, I suppose that's about all, Simonov. We expect you to leave the United States by tomorrow at the latest. Otherwise, you'll be deported. Obviously, we will not accept you as a military attache. How in the world have you avoided going through the red tape at the State Department to be accredited?"

The Russian said humorously, perhaps mockingly, "We reported that I was indisposed, and too ill to report—diarrhea, as a result of change in the water or whatever."

Larry snorted. "You've got diarrhea, like I've got a halo," he said. "That alibi wouldn't have stood up very long."

"It didn't have to. A few days were all I needed. I accomplished my

mission. There is just one thing remaining to be done."

Larry had been about to turn to go, but now he came to a halt and scowled at the other.

"And just what is that?"

"As I told you, my superiors are not interested in seeing basic changes take place in the socioeconomic system of America. Besides finding out about this movement, I was to throw a monkey wrench in its workings. That's the Yankee term isn't it? Throw a monkey wrench in the works?"

"Yes," Larry said flat. "And the monkey wrench you're about to throw to louse up the Movement?"

Ilya Simonov tapped the top of his desk and smiled. "One of the most influential members of the Movement is in your office. Through this person, the Movement has been tipped off time and again to your actions."

Larry Woolford's face went cold. "And who is this person?"

Ilya Simonov told him.

## XVIII

Driving back to the office, Larry let it pile up on him.

Ernest Self had been a specialist in solid fuel for rockets. Professor Voss had particularly stressed his indignation about Professor Goddard, the rocket pioneer, and how he had been treated by his contemporaries. Frank Nostrand had been employed as a technician on rocket research at Madison Air Laboratories. It was too damn much for coincidence.

And now something else that had been nagging away at the back of his head suddenly came clear.

Susan Self had said that she and her father had seen the precision dancers at the New Roxy Theater in New York and later the Professor had said they were going to spend the money on chorus girls. Susan had got it wrong. The Rockettes—the precision chorus girls. The Professor had said they were going to expend their money on *rockets*, and Susan had misunderstood.

But billions of dollars, counterfeit dollars at that, expended on rockets? How? But, above all, to what end? How could that possibly help the Movement?

As Ilya Simonov had said, Professor Voss and his people were hardly capable of bombing Greater Washington or whatever. Weirds they all might be but they weren't homicidal maniacs.

If he'd only been able to hold onto Susan, or her father; or to Voss or Nostrand, for that matter. Someone to work on. But each had slipped through his fingers.

Which brought something else up from his subconscious. Something which had been nagging at him. He pondered it for awhile, coming up with semi-answers.

At the office, Irene Day was packing her things as he entered. Packing as though she was leaving for good.

"What goes on?" Larry growled, rounding his desk and seating himself. "I'm going to be needing you more than ever. Things are coming to a head."

She said, a bit snippishly, Larry thought, "Miss Polk, in the Boss' office said for you to see her as soon as you came in, Mr. Woolford. She also gave me instructions to return to the secretary's pool for reassignment."

"Oh?" he said mystified.

He made his way to LaVerne's office, his attention actually on the ideas still churning in his mind.

She looked up when he entered and there was something in her face he didn't quite understand.

"Hi, Larry," she said, flicking off the phone screen, in her bank of phone screens, into which she had been talking.

Larry said, "The Boss wanted to see me?"

LaVerne ducked her head, as though embarrassed. "Well, not exactly, Larry."

He gestured with his thumb in the direction of his own cubicle office. "Irene just said you wanted to see me. She also said she was being pulled off her assignment with me, which is ridiculous. I'm just getting used to her. I don't want to have to break in another girl."

LaVerne looked up into his face. "The Boss and Mr. Foster, too, are boiling about your authorizing that Distelmayer man to bill this department for information he gave you. The Boss hit the roof. Something about the Senate Appropriations Committee getting down on him if it came out that we bought information from professional espionage agents, particularly material that this department is supposed to ferret out on its own."

Larry said, "It was information we needed and needed quickly, and Foster gave me the go ahead on locating Ilya Simonov. Maybe I'd better go in and see the Boss and explain the whole damned mess. I've got some other stuff I have to report to him, anyway."

LaVerne said, and there was apology in her voice, "I don't think he wants to see you, Larry. They're up to their ears in this Movement thing. It's in the papers now and nobody knows what to do next. The department is beginning to become a laughing stock, which is probably one of the things the Movement wanted to accomplish. The President is going to make a speech on Tri-Di, and the Boss has to supply the information for the speech writers. His orders are for you to resume your vacation and to take a full month off and then see him when you get back."

Larry sank down into a chair. "I see," he breathed. "And at that time he'll probably give me an assignment to mop out the men's room."

"Larry," LaVerne said, almost impatiently, "why in the world didn't you take that job Walt Foster has now when the Boss offered it to you?"

"Because I'm stupid, I suppose," Larry said bitterly. "I thought I could

do more working alone in the field than at an administrative post tangled in red tape and bureaucratic routine. If I'd taken the job I could now be slitting Walt's throat instead of his slitting mine."

She said, "Sorry, Larry." And she sounded as though she really meant it.

Larry stood up. "Well, tonight I'm going to hang one on, and tomorrow it's back to Astor, Florida and the bass fishing." He added, in a rush, "Look, LaVerne, how about that date we've been talking about for six months or more?"

She looked up at him, question in her eyes, wary question. "I can't stand vodka martinis."

"Neither can I," he said glumly.

"And I don't get a kick out of prancing around, a stuffed shirt among stuffed shirts, at some going-on that supposedly improves my culture status."

Larry said, "At the house, I have every known brand of drinkable, and a stack of... what did you call it?... corny music. We can mix our own drinks and dance all by ourselves. I even know some old time swing steps."

She tucked her head to one side and looked at him suspiciously. "Are your intentions honorable? A nice girl doesn't go to a man's home, all alone."

"We can even discuss that later," he said sourly. "How about it, LaVerne? You can help me drown my sorrows."

She laughed. "It's a date, Larry."

He picked her up after work and they drove to his Brandywine district auto-bungalow, and both of them remained largely quiet the whole way.

He didn't even comment when she said, "Walt Foster requested today that I locate him a new apartment in the Druid Hill section of Baltimore. It will double his rent, but I assume that he is expecting a raise."

At one point she touched his hand with hers and said, "It'll work out, Larry. Things have a way of always working out. It might even turn out for

the best.”

"Yeah," he said sourly. "I've put ten years into ingratiating myself with the Boss. Now, overnight, he's got a new boy. I suppose there's some moral involved."

When they pulled up before his auto-bungalow, LaVerne whistled appreciatively. "Quite a neighborhood you're in Larry. It must set you back considerably."

He grunted. "A good address. What our friend Professor Voss would call one more status symbol, one more social label. For it, I pay about fifty percent more than my budget can afford."

He ushered her inside and took her jacket.

"Look," he said, indicating his living room with a sweep of his hand. "See that volume of Klee reproductions there next to my reading chair? That proves I'm not a weird. Indicates my culture status. Actually, my appreciation of modern art doesn't go any further than the Impressionists. But don't tell anybody. See those books up on my shelves? Same thing. You'll find everything there that ought to be on the shelves of any ambitious young career man."

She looked at him from the side of her eyes. "You're really soured, Larry. As long as I've known you I don't believe I've ever heard you so bitter."

"Come along," he said. "I want to show you something. An inkling of just how bitter I can be."

He took her down the tiny elevator to his den. Off hand, he couldn't remember twenty people being down here in the five or six years he had lived in this house.

He said, "You're unique, LaVerne. You're the only girl I've ever shown my inner secrets to."

"Well, thank you," she said, not knowing exactly what sort of response was expected of her. "What are you going to do, beat me with whips?"

He ignored her attempt at levity, as though he hadn't heard it. "How hypocritical can you get?" he asked her. "This is where I really live. But I



seldom bring anyone down here. Except a couple of poker-playing pals such as Sam Sokolski over on the *Sun-Times*. We went to college together. I'm afraid to have anybody down here, except people as close as Sam. I wouldn't want to get a reputation as a weird, would I? Sit down, LaVerne. Ill make you a drink. How about a Sidecar?"

She said, "I'd love one. Hey, I like this room. It looks, well, *lived in*. Are you sure you've never had a woman down here before, young man?"

"Quite sure," he said wearily. "When I have a woman in my home we go through the usual bit, upstairs. Everything is the latest, from wherever the latest is from. And we usually wind up on the waterbed up above, from Finland. Why waterbeds have a status symbol when they come from Finland, I don't know. But they do. Frankly, I hate water-beds."

She was laughing a bit. "You mean you act the cad when you seduce a young lady to come to your home?"

He said, "I don't have to. It's all the thing, these days, if you have status labels, and she has status labels of approximately the same level, to climb into bed with each other, after a few vodka martinis."

His back to her, he brought forth brandy and Cointreau from his liquor cabinet, and lemon and ice from the tiny refrigerator. He also surreptitiously dropped a small white pill into one of the glasses.

She had kicked her shoes off and now tucked her legs under her, making a very attractive picture on the couch where she had sat herself.

"What?" she said accusingly. "No auto-bar? I thought an auto-bar was mandatory these days. How could an ambitious young bureaucrat get by without an auto-bar?"

Larry measured out ingredients efficiently and then stirred the drink briskly, until the shaker was frosted. "Upstairs with the rest of my status symbols," he said, pouring carefully into the champagne-sized glasses. "Down here, I live, up there, I conform." He took one of the drinks over to her, kept the other for himself.

He put his glass down on the cocktail table before her and went over to the tape recorder. She sipped the drink, appreciatively, and looked over at him. "My, you really can mix a cocktail. I haven't had anything as good as

this for ages."

"These days bartenders don't have to know how to make anything but vodka martinis," he said bitterly. "That's my own version of a Sidecar." He looked at his collection of tapes. "In the way of corny music, how do you like that old timer, Nat Cole?"

"King Cole? I love him," LaVerne said, taking another pull at her Sidecar.

He placed a tape in the recorder and activated it. The strains of "For All We Know" penetrated the room. Larry turned it low and then went over and sat down next to her. He picked up his drink from the cocktail table before them and finished half of it in one swallow.

"I'm beginning to wonder whether or not this Movement doesn't have something," he said.

She didn't answer that. They sat in silence for a while, appreciating the drink and the music. Nat Cole was singing "The Very Thought of You," now. Larry got up and made two more of the cocktails and returned with them. This time when he regained his seat next to her, he idly put an arm around her shoulders.

He said, "Did anyone ever tell you that you are a very pretty girl?"

LaVerne didn't resist. In fact, her breath seemed to be coming in little pants. She looked at him, her eyes a bit wide. "Not for a long time," she said. "It seems that in this day and age, men steer clear of girls who don't conform." Her voice trembled a little.

Larry put a finger under her chin and bent over and kissed her very gently. Her lips seemed hot. She responded enthusiastically. It hardly seemed like the prim, sharp-tongued LaVerne Polk. Evidently, the gentleness of his kiss wasn't called for.

He continued to kiss her, and put his right hand over one of her breasts. He could feel through the clothing that the nipple was already hard. She had ample breasts. He wondered how she looked in a bathing suit—or out of one, for that matter. She was probably stacked like a brick outhouse. She squirmed, but not in rejection. In fact, she pressed her mouth to his more firmly and opened her lips.

He let his hand go down to her knee, received no protest, and slid it up under her dress. She pretended to ignore it, continuing the hotness of her kisses.

He stopped kissing her long enough to say, "You're a virgin, LaVerne?"

She had her eyes closed. "Yes... yes, I am," she managed to get out. "I... hope you don't mind. Please, darling, don't stop. Don't stop now."

He kissed her again, stretched her out on the king-size couch and reached up and flicked the light to very dim.

She lay there, panting, and evidently a bit apprehensive, in spite of her passion. He folded her skirt up to her hips, took off her shoes, and gently pulled down her briefs. She made no protest whatsoever, indeed moved to help him in the rearranging of her clothing.

He tossed the panties to the floor and bent over her expertly for a moment. She squirmed and her breath became a series of gasps.

He sat erect for a moment and unzipped his fly...

He performed with her three times in all, finally deciding that she had reached saturation. Surely, he had. If she was not now completely relaxed, there was nothing he could do about it.

He rearranged their clothing, pulling her skirt back over her knees, and sat there on the couch with her, his arm affectionately over her shoulders. He reached up and flicked the lamp back to greater intensity; not to full brightness, but enough that he would be able to study her face. He leaned his head back and closed his eyes.

## **XIX**

Finally he said softly, only a murmur, "When Steve Hackett and I were

questioning Susan, there was only one other person who knew that we'd picked her up. There was, hence, only one person who could have warned Ernest Self to make a getaway. Later on, there was only one person who could have warned Frank Nostrand so that he and the Professor could find a new hideout."

She said sleepily, "How long have you known about that, darling?"

"A while," Larry said, his own voice kept deliberately low. "Partly, I figured it out when I also decided how Susan Self was spirited out of the Greater Washington Hilton before we had the time to question her further. Somebody who had access to tapes of me cut out a section and dubbed in a voice so that the Secret Service matron who was watching Susan was fooled into believing it was I ordering the girl to be turned over to the two Movement members."

LaVerne stirred comfortably and let her head sink onto his shoulder. "You're so warm and... comfortable," she said.

Larry said softly, "What does the Movement expect to do with all that counterfeit money, LaVerne?"

She stirred against his shoulder, as though bothered by the need to talk. "Give it all away," she said.

Inwardly he froze.

She went on sleepily. "Distribute it all over the country and destroy the nation's social currency."

It took him a long, unbelieving moment to assimilate that at all.

He said carefully, "What have the rockets to do with it? Where do they come in?"

She stirred once again, as though wishing he'd be silent and said sleepily, "That's how the money will be distributed. About twenty rockets, strategically placed, each with a *warhead* of a couple of tons of money. Fired to an altitude of a couple of hundred miles and then the money is spewed out. In falling, it will be distributed over cities and countryside, everywhere. Billions upon billions of dollars worth."

Larry said, so softly as hardly to be heard, "What will that accomplish?"

"Money is the greatest social-label of them all. The Professor believes that through this step the Movement will have accomplished its purpose. That people will be forced to utilize their judgement, rather than depend upon social-labels."

Larry didn't follow that, but he had no time to go further now. He said, still evenly soft, "And when is the Movement going to do this?"

LaVerne moved comfortably, sleepily, "The trucks go out to distribute the money tonight. The rockets are waiting. The firing will take place in a few days."

"And where is the Professor now?" Larry was doing his best to keep urgency from his voice.

"Where the money and trucks are hidden, darling. What difference does it make?"

"And where is that?"

"At the Greater Washington Trucking Corporation. It's owned by one of the Movement's members."

He said, "Undoubtedly, there's a password. What is it?"

"Judgement."

Larry Woolford bounced to his feet. He looked down at her, then over at the phone. In three quick steps he was over to it. He grasped its wires and yanked them from the wall, silencing it. He slipped into the tiny elevator, locking the door to the den behind him.

As the door slid closed, her voice wailed, still sleepily husky, "Larry, darling, where are you..."

He ran down the walk of the house, vaulted into the car and snapped on its key. He slammed down the lift lever, kicked the thrust pedal and was thrown back against the seat by the acceleration.

Even while he was climbing, he flicked on the radio-phone, called Personal Service for the location of the Greater Washington Trucking

Corporation.

Fifteen minutes later, he parked a block away from his destination, noting with satisfaction that it was still an hour or more to go until dark. His intuition, working doubletime now, told him that they'd probably wait until nightfall to start their money-laden trucks rolling.

He hesitated momentarily before turning on the phone and dialing the Boss' home address.

When the other's face faded in, it failed to display pleasure when the caller's identity was established. His superior growled, "Confound it, Woolford, you know my privacy is to be respected. This phone is to be used only in extreme emergency."

"Yes, Sir," Larry said briskly. "It's the Movement. They're moving again."

The other's face darkened still further. "You're not on that assignment any longer, Woolford. Walter Foster has taken over and I'm sympathetic to his complaints that you've proven more of a hinderance than anything else."

Larry ignored his words. "Sir, I've tracked them down. Professor Voss is at the Greater Washington Trucking Corporation here in the Alexandria section of town. Any moment now, they're going to start distributing all of that counterfeit money on some scatterbrained plan to disrupt the country's exchange system."

Suddenly alert, the department chief snapped, "Where are you, Woolford?"

"Outside the garages, Sir. But I'm going in now."

"You stay where you are," the other snapped. "I'll have every department man and every Secret Service man in town over there within twenty minutes. You hang on. Those people are lunatics and probably desperate."

Inwardly, Larry Woolford grinned. He wasn't going to lose this opportunity to finish up the job with him on top. He said, flatly, "Sir, we can't chance it. They might escape. I'm going in!"

He flicked off the set, dialed again and raised Sam Sokolski.

"Sam," he said, his voice clipped. "I've cornered the Movement's leader and am going in for the finish. Maybe some of you journalist boys better get over here. Tri-Di, too." He gave the other the address and flicked off before there were any questions.

## XX

From the dash compartment he brought a heavy automatic and checked the clip. He jacked a cartridge into the barrel and put the gun in his hip pocket, then left the car and walked toward the garages. Time was running out now.

He strode into the only open door, without shifting pace. Two men were posted nearby, neither of them truckmen by appearance. They looked at him in surprise.

Larry clipped out, "The password is *Judgement*. I've got to see Professor Voss immediately."

One of them frowned questioningly, but the other was taken up with the urgency in Woolford's voice. He nodded a direction. "He's over there in the office."

Now ignoring them completely, Larry strode past the low rows of sealed delivery vans toward the office.

He pushed the door open, entered and closed it behind him.

Professor Peter Voss was seated at a paper-littered desk. There was a cot with a rumpled army blanket in a corner of the room, some soiled clothing and two or three dirty dishes on a tray. The room was being lived in, obviously.

At the agent's entry, the little man looked up and blinked in distress through his heavy lenses.

Larry snapped, "You're under arrest, Voss."

The Professor was, on the face of it, dismayed, but he said in as vigorous a voice as he could muster, "Nonsense! On what charge?"

"Counterfeiting, among many. Your whole scheme has fallen apart, Voss. You and your Movement, so-called, are finished."

The Professor's eyes darted. To Larry Woolford's surprise, the Movement's leader was alone in here. Undoubtedly, he was awaiting others, drivers of the trucks, technicians involved in the rockets, other subordinates. But right now he was alone.

If Larry correctly diagnosed the situation, Voss was playing for time, waiting for the others. Good enough, so was Larry Woolford. Had the Professor only known it, a shout would have brought at least two of his followers on the run and the government agent would have had his troubles.

Woolford played along. "Just what is this fantastic scheme of yours for raining down money over half the country, Voss? The very insanity of it proves your whole outfit is composed of a bunch of nonconformist weirds."

The Professor was indignant—and stalling for time. He said, "Nonconformists is correct! He who conforms in an incompetent society is an incompetent himself."

Larry stood, his legs apart and hands on hips. He shook his head in simulated pity at the angry little man. "What's all this about raining money down over the country?"

"Don't you see?" the other said. "The perfect method for disrupting our present system of social-labels. With billions of dollars, perfect counterfeit, strewing the streets, the fields, the trees, the housetops, available for anyone to pick up, all social currency becomes worthless. Utterly unuseable. And it's no use to attempt to print more with another design, because we can duplicate it as well. Our experts are the world's best, we're not a bunch of sulking criminals, but capable, trained, dedicated men.

"Very well! We will have made it absolutely impossible to have any form of mass-produced social currency."



Larry stared at him. "It would completely foul the whole business system. You'd have chaos!"

"At first. Private individuals, once the value of money was seen to be zero, would have lost the amount of cash they had on hand. But banks and such institutions would lose little. They have accurate records that show the actual values they held at the time our money rains down."

Larry was bewildered. "But what are you getting at? What do you expect to accomplish?"

The Professor, on his favorite subject, said triumphantly, "The only form of currency that can be used under these conditions is the personal check. It's not mass-produced, and mass-production can't duplicate it. It's immune to the attack. Business has to go on or people will starve, so personal checks will have to replace paper money. Credit cards and traveler's checks won't do. We can counterfeit them too, and will, if necessary. Realize of course that hard money will still be valid, but it can't be utilized for any but small transactions. Try taking enough silver dollars to the store with you to buy a refrigerator."

"But what's the purpose?" Larry demanded, flabbergasted.

"Isn't it obvious? Our whole Movement is devoted to the destruction of social-label judgements. It's all very well to say: *You should not judge your fellow man* but when it comes to accepting another man's personal check, friend, you damn well have to! The bum check artist might have a field day to begin with—but only to begin with."

Larry shook his head in exasperation. "You people are a bunch of anarchists," he said.

"No," the Professor denied. "Absolutely not. We are the antithesis of the anarchist. The anarchist says, 'No man is capable of judging another.' We say, 'Each man must judge his fellow, must demand proper evaluation of him.' To judge a man by his clothes, the amount of money he owns, the car he drives, the neighborhood in which he lives, or the society he keeps, is out of the question in a vital culture."

Larry said sourly, "Well, whether or not you are right, Voss, you've lost. This place is surrounded. My men will be breaking in shortly."

Voss laughed at him. "Nonsense. All you've done is to prevent us from accomplishing this portion of our program. What will you do after my arrest? You'll bring me to trial. Do you remember the Scopes Monkey Trial back in the 1920s which became a world-appreciated farce and made Tennessee a laughingstock? Well, just wait until you get *me* into court backed with my organization's resources. We'll bring home to every thinking person, not only in this country but in the world, the fantastic qualities of our existing culture. Why, Mr-Secret-Agent-of-Anti-Subversive-Activity, you aren't doing me any injury by giving me the opportunity to have my day in court. You're doing me a favor. Newspapers, radios, Tri-Di will give me the chance to expound my program in the home of every thinking person in the world."

There was a fiery dedication in the little man's eyes. "This will be my victory, not my defeat!"

There were sounds now, coming from the other rooms—the garages. There were shouts and scuffling. Faintly, Larry could hear Steve Hackett's voice.

He was ogling the Professor, his eyes narrower.

The Professor was on his feet. He said in defiant triumph, "You think that you, personally, will win prestige and honor as a result of tracking the Movement down, don't you, Mr. Woolford? You probably figure on promotion. Well, let me tell you, you won't! In six months from now, Mr. Woolford, you'll be a laughingstock."

That did it.

Larry said, "You're under arrest. Turn around with your back to me."

The Professor snorted his contempt, turned his back and held up his hands, obviously expecting to be searched.

In a fluid motion, Larry Woolford drew his gun and fired twice. The other, with no more than a grunt of surprise and pain, stumbled forward to his knees and then to the floor, his arms and legs akimbo.

The door broke open and Steve Hackett, gun in hand, burst in.

"Woolford!" he barked. "What's up?"

Larry indicated the body on the floor. "There you are, Steve," he said. "The head of the counterfeit ring. He was trying to escape so I had to shoot him."

Behind Steve Hackett crowded Ben Ruthenberg of the F.B.I. and behind him half a dozen others of various departments.

The Boss came pushing his way through. He glared down at the Professor's body, then up at Larry Woolford.

"Good work, Lawrence," he said. "How did you bring it *off*?"

Larry replaced the gun in his hip pocket and shrugged modestly. "I got a bit of information on a leak in our office from Ilya Simonov, over the Soviet Complex Embassy. How he got it, I haven't the vaguest idea. At any rate, it was the Polk girl. I gave her some Scop-Serum in a drink and she talked. Evidently, she was a prominent member of the Movement."

The Boss was nodding wisely. "I've had an eye on her, Lawrence. An obvious weird. But we'll have to suppress that Scop-Serum angle. Knowing you, I can imagine you were discrete." He slapped his favorite field man on the arm jovially. "Well, boy, this means promotion, of course. I can use a right hand man."

Larry grinned. "Thanks, sir. All in a day's work. I don't think we'll have much trouble with the remnants of this Movement thing. The pitch is to treat them as counterfeiters, not subversives. Try them for that. Their silly explanations of what they were going to do with it, the money, will never be taken seriously."

He looked down at the small corpse. "Particularly now that their kingpin is gone."

A new wave of agents, F.B.I. men and prisoners washed into the room and Steve Hackett and Larry were for a moment pushed back into a corner by themselves.

Steve looked at him strangely and said, "Did you really have to shoot him, Woolford?"

Larry brushed it off. "What's the difference? He was as weird as they come, wasn't he?"

**The End**