

THE SERVANT PROBLEM

This was the day of complete control ...

Garomma, the Servant of All, the World's Drudge, the Slavey of Civilization, placed delicately scented finger-tips to his face, closed his eyes and allowed himself to luxuriate in the sensation of ultimate power, absolute power, power such as no human being had ever dared to dream of before this day.

Complete control. Complete . . .

Except for one man. One single ambitious maverick of a man. One very *useful* man. Should he be strangled at his desk this afternoon, that was the question, or should he be allowed a few more days, a few more weeks, of heavily supervised usefulness? His treason, his plots, were unquestionably coming to a head. Well, Garomma would decide that later. At leisure.

Meanwhile, in all other respects, with everyone else, there was control. Control not only of men's minds but of their glands as well. And those of their children.

And, if Moddo's estimates were correct, of their children's children.

"Yea," Garomma muttered to himself, suddenly re-remembering a fragment of the oral text his peasant father had taught him years ago, "yea, unto the seventh generation."

What ancient book, burned in some long ago educational fire, had that text come from?, he wondered. His father would not be able to tell him, nor would any of his father's friends and neighbors; they had all been wiped out after the Sixth District Peasant Uprising thirty years ago.

An uprising of a type that could never possibly occur again. Not with complete control.

Someone touched his knee gently, and his mind ceased its aimless foraging. Moddo, the Servant of Education, seated below him in the depths of the vehicle, gestured obsequiously at the transparent, missile-proof cupola that surrounded his leader down to the waist.

"The people," he stated in his peculiar half-stammer. "There. Outside."

Yes. They were rolling through the gates of the Hovel of Service and into the city proper. On both sides of the street and far into the furthest distance were shrieking crowds as black and dense and exuberant as ants on a piece of gray earthworm. Garomma, the Servant of All, could not be too obviously busy with his own thoughts; he was about to be viewed by those he served so mightily.

He crossed his arms upon his chest and bowed to right and left in the little dome that rose like a tower from the squat black conveyance. Bow right, bow left, and do it humbly. Right, left—and humbly, humbly. Remember, you are the Servant of All.

As the shrieks rose in volume, he caught a glimpse of Moddo nodding approval from beneath. Good old Moddo. This was his day of triumph as well. The achievement of complete control was most thoroughly and peculiarly the achievement of the Servant of Education. Yet Moddo sat in heavy-shadowed anonymity behind the driver with Garomma's personal bodyguards; sat and tasted his triumph only with his leader's tongue—as he had for more than twenty-five years now.

Fortunately for Moddo, such a taste was rich enough for his system.

Unfortunately, there were others—one oth-er at least—who required more ...

Garomma bowed to right and left and, as he bowed, looked curiously through the streaming webs of black-uniformed motorcycle police that surrounded his car. He looked at the people of Capital City, his people, his as everything and everyone on Earth was his. Jamming madly together on the sidewalks, they threw their arms wide as his car came abreast of them.

"Serve us, Garomma," they chanted. "Serve us! Serve us!"

He observed their contorted faces, the foam that ap-peared at the mouth-corners of many, the half-shut eyes and ecstatic expressions, the swaying men, the writhing women, the occasional individual who collapsed in an unnoticed climax of happiness. And he bowed. With his arms crossed upon his chest, he bowed. Right and left. Humbly.

Last week, when Moddo had requested his views on problems of ceremony and protocol relative to today's parade, the Servant of Education had commented smug-ly on the unusually high incidence of mob hysteria expected when his chief's face was seen. And Garomma had voiced a curiosity he'd been feeling for a long time.

"What goes on in their minds when they see me, Moddo? I know they worship and get exhilarated and all that. But what precisely do you fellows call the emo-tion when you talk about it in the labs and places such as the Education Center?"

The tall man slid his hand across his forehead in the gesture that long years had made thoroughly familiar to Garomma.

"They are experiencing a trigger release," he said slowly, staring over Garomma's shoulder as if he were working out the answer from the electronically pinpointed world map on the back wall. "All the tensions these people accumulate in their daily round of niggling little prohibi-tions and steady coercions, all the frustrations of 'don't do this and don't do this, do that' have been organized by the Service of Education to be released explosively the moment they see your picture or hear your voice."

"Trigger release. Hm! I've never thought of it quite *that way*."

Moddo held up a hand in rigid earnestness. "After all, you're the one man whose life is supposedly spent in an abject obedience beyond anything they've ever known. The man who holds the—the intricate strands of the world's coordination in his patient, unwearied fingers; the ultimate and hardest-worked employee; the—the scapegoat of the multitudes!"

Garomma had grinned at Moddo's scholarly eloquence. Now, however, as he observed his screaming folk from under submissive eyelids, he decided that the Servant of Education had been completely right.

On the Great Seal of the World State was it not written: "*All Men Must Serve Somebody, But Only Garom-ma Is the Servant of All*"?

Without him, they knew, and knew irrevocably, oceans would break through dikes and flood the land, infections would appear in men's bodies and grow rapidly into pes-tilences that could decimate whole districts, essential ser-vices would break down so that an entire city could die of thirst in a week, and local officials would oppress the people and engage in lunatic wars of massacre with each other. Without him, without Garomma working day and night to keep everything running smoothly,

to keep the titanic forces of nature and civilization under control. They knew, because these things happened whenever "Garomma was tired of serving."

What were the unpleasant interludes of their lives to the implacable dreary—but, oh, so essential!—toil of his? Here, in this slight, serious-looking man bowing humbly right and left, right and left, was not only the divinity that made it possible for Man to exist comfortably on Earth, but also the crystallization of all the sub-races that ever enabled an exploited people to feel that things could be worse, that relative to the societal muck beneath them, they were, in spite of their sufferings, as lords and monarchs in comparison.

No wonder they stretched their arms frantically to him, the Servant of All, the World's Drudge, the Slavey of Civilization, and screamed their triumphant demand with one breath, their fearful plea with the next: "Serve us, Garomma! Serve us, serve us, serve us!"

Didn't the docile sheep he had herded as a boy in the Sixth District mainland to the northwest, didn't the sheep also feel that he was their servant as he led them, and drove them to better pastures and cooler streams, as he protected them from enemies and removed pebbles from their feet, all to the end that their smoking flesh, would taste better on his father's table? But these so much; more useful herds of two-legged, well-brained sheep were as thoroughly domesticated. And on the simple principle they'd absorbed that government was the servant of the people and the highest power in the government was the most abysmal servant.

His sheep. He smiled at them paternally, possessively, as his special vehicle rolled along the howling, face-filled mile between the Hovel of Service and the Educational, Center. His sheep. And these policemen on motorcycles, these policemen on foot whose arms were locked against; the straining crowds every step of the way, these were his sheepdogs. Another kind of domesticated animal.

That's all he had been, thirty-three years ago, when he'd landed on this island fresh from a rural Service of Security training school to take his first government job as a policeman in Capital City. A clumsy, over-excited sheepdog. One of the least important sheep-dogs of the previous regime's Servant of All.

But three years later, the peasant revolt in his own district had given him his chance. With his special knowledge of the issues involved as well as the identity of the real leaders, he'd been able to play an important role in crushing the rebellion. And then, his new and important place in the Service of Security had enabled him to meet promising youngsters in the other services — Moddo, particularly, the first and most useful human he had personally domesticated.

With Moddo's excellent administrative mind at his disposal, he had become an expert at the gracious art of political throat-cutting, so that when his superior made his bid for the highest office in the world, Garomma had been in the best possible position to sell him out and become the new Servant of Security. And from that point, with Moddo puffing along in his wake and working out the minutiae of strategy, it had been a matter of a few years before he had been able to celebrate his own successful bid in the sizzling wreckage of the preceding administration's Hovel of Service.

But the lesson he had taught the occupants of that blasted, projectile-ridden place he had determined never to forget himself. He couldn't know how many Servants of

Security before him had used their office to reach the mighty wooden stool of the Servant of All: after all, the history books, and all other books, were rewritten thoroughly at the beginning of every new regime; and the Oral Tradition, usually a good guide to the past if you could sift the facts out properly, was silent on this subject. It was obvious, however, that what he had done, another could do—that the Servant of Security was the logical, self-made heir to the Servant of All.

And the trouble was you couldn't do anything about the danger but be watchful.

He remembered when his father had called him away from childhood games and led him out to the hills to tend the sheep. How he had hated the lonesome, tiresome work! The old man had realized it and, for once, had softened sufficiently to attempt an explanation.

"You see, son, sheep are what they call domestic animals. So are dogs. Well, we can domesticate sheep and we can domesticate dogs to guard the sheep, but for a smart, wide-awake shepherd who'll know what to do when something real unusual comes up and will be able to tell us about it, well, for that we need a man."

"Gee, Pa," he had said, kicking disconsolately at the enormous shepherd's crook they'd given him, "then why don't you—whatdoyoucallit--*domesticate* a man?"

His father had chuckled and then stared out heavily over the shaggy brow of the hill. "Well, there are people trying to do that, too, and they're getting better at it all the time. The only trouble, once you've got him domesticated, he isn't worth beans as a shepherd. He isn't sharp and excited once he's tamed. He isn't interested enough to be any use at all."

That was the problem in a nutshell, Garomma reflected. The Servant of Security, by the very nature of his duties, could not be a domesticated animal.

He had tried using sheepdogs at the head of Security; over and over again he had tried them. But they were always inadequate and had to be replaced by men. And—one year, three years, five years in office—men sooner or later struck for supreme power and had to be regretfully destroyed.

As the current Servant of Security was about to be destroyed. The only trouble—the man was so damned useful! You had to time these things perfectly to get the maximum length of service from the rare, imaginative individual who filled the post to perfection and yet cut him down the moment the danger outweighed the value. And since, with the right man, the danger existed from the very start, you had to watch the scale carefully, unremittingly ...

Garomma sighed. This problem was the only annoyance in a world that had been virtually machined to give him pleasure. But it was, inevitably, a problem that was with him always, even in his dreams. Last night had been positively awful.

Moddo touched his knee again to remind him that he was on exhibition. He shook himself and smiled his gratitude. One had to remember that dreams were only dreams.

They had the crowds behind them now. Ahead, the great metal gate of the Educational Center swung slowly open and his car rumbled inside. As the motorcycle policemen swung off their two-wheelers with a smart side-wise flourish, the armed guards of the Service of Education in their crisp white tunics came to attention. Garomma, helped nervously by Moddo, clambered out of the car just as the Center Band, backed by the Center Choir, swung into the roaring, thrilling credo

of *Humanity's Hymn*:

*Garomma works day and night,
Garomma's tasks are never light;
Garomma lives in drudgery,
For the sake of me, for the sake of thee ..."*

After five verses, protocol having been satisfied, the band began *The Song of Education* and the Assistant Servant of Education, a poised, well-bred young man, came down the steps of the building. His arm-spread and "Serve us, Garomma," while perfunctory, was thorough-ly correct. He stood to one side so that Garomma and Moddo could start up the steps and then swung in, straightbacked, behind them. The choirmaster held the song on a high, worshipping note.

They walked through the great archway with its carved motto, *All Must Learn from the Servant of All*, and down the great central corridor of the immense building. The gray rags that Garomma and Moddo wore flapped about them. The walls were lined with minor employees chant-ing, "Serve us, Garomma. Serve us! Serve us! Serve us!"

Not quite the insane fervor of the street mobs, Garom-ma reflected, but entirely satisfactory paroxysms none-theless. He bowed and stole a glance at Moddo beside him. He barely restrained a smile. The Servant of Educa-tion looked as nervous, as uncertain as ever. Poor Moddo! He was just not meant for such a high position. He carried his tall, husky body with all the elan of a tired berry-picker. He looked like anything but the most important official in the establishment.

And that was one of the things that made him indis-pensable. Moddo was just bright enough to know his own inadequacy. Without Garomma, he'd still be checking sta-tistical abstracts for interesting discrepancies in some minor department of the Service of Education. He *knew* he wasn't strong enough to stand by himself. Nor was he sufficiently outgoing to make useful alliances. And so Moddo, alone of all the Servants in the Cabinet, could be trusted completely.

In response to Moddo's diffident touch on his shoulder, he walked into the large room that had been so extrav-agantly prepared for him and climbed the little cloth-of--gold platform at one end. He sat down on the rough wooden stool at the top; a moment later, Moddo took the chair that was one step down, and the Assistant Servant of Education took the chair a further step below. The chief executives of the Educational Center, dressed in white tunics of the richest, most flowing cut, filed in slowly and stood before them. Garomma's per-sonal bodyguards lined up in front of the platform.

And the ceremonies began. The ceremonies attendant upon complete control.

First, the oldest official in the Service of Education recited the appropriate passages from the Oral Tradition. How every year, in every regime, far back almost to prehistoric democratic times, a psychometric sampling had been taken of elementary school graduating classes all over the world to determine exactly how successful the children's political conditioning had been.

How every year there had been an overwhelming ma-jority disclosed which believed the current ruler was the very pivot of human welfare, the mainspring of

daily life, and a small minority—five per cent, seven per cent, three per cent—which had successfully resisted indoctrination and which, as adults, were to be carefully watched as potential sources of disaffection.

How with the ascension of Garomma and his Servant of Education, Moddo, twenty-five years ago, a new era of intensive mass-conditioning, based on much more ambitious goals, had begun.

The old man finished, bowed and moved back into the crowd. The Assistant Servant of Education rose and turned gracefully to face Garomma. He described these new goals which might be summed up in the phrase "complete control," as opposed to previous administrations' outdated satisfaction with 97% or 95% control, and discussed the new extensive fear mechanisms and stepped-up psychometric spot-checks in the earlier grades—by which they were to be achieved. These techniques had all been worked out by Moddo—"under the never failing inspiration and constant guidance of Garomma, the Servant of All"—and had, in a few years, resulted in a sampling which showed the number of independent juvenile minds to be less than one per cent. All others worshipped Garomma with every breath they took.

Thereafter, progress had been slower. They had absorbed the most brilliant children with the new conditioning process, but had hit the hard bedrock of the essential deviates, the psychological misfits whose personal maladjustments made it impossible for them to accept the prevailing attitudes of their social milieu, whatever these attitudes should happen to be. Over the years, techniques of conditioning had been painfully worked out which enabled even misfits to fit into society in the one respect of Garomma-worship and, over the years, the samplings indicated the negative doctrinal responses to be receding in the direction of zero: .016%, .007%, .0002%.

And *this* year. Well! The Assistant Servant of Education paused and took a deep breath. Five weeks ago, the Uniform Educational System of Earth had graduated a new crop of youngsters from the elementary schools. The customary planet-wide sampling had been taken on graduation day; collation and verification had just been completed. The results: negative response was zero to the very last decimal place! Control was complete.

Spontaneous applause broke out in the room, applause in which even Garomma joined. Then he leaned forward and placed his hand paternally, possessively on Moddo's head of unruly brown hair. At this unusual honor to their chief, the officials in the room cheered.

Under the noise, Garomma took the opportunity to ask Moddo, "What does the population in general know about this? What exactly are you telling them?"

Moddo turned his nervous, large-jawed face around. "Mostly just that it's a holiday. A lot of obscure stuff about you achieving complete control of the human environment all to the end of human betterment. Barely enough so that they can know it's something you like and can rejoice with you."

"In their own slavery. I like that." Garomma tasted the sweet flavor of unlimited rulership for a long moment. Then the taste went sour and he remembered. "Moddo, I want to take care of the Servant of Security matter this afternoon. We'll go over it as soon as we start back."

The Servant of Education nodded. "I have a few thoughts. It's not so simple, you

know. There's the prob-lem of the successor."

"Yes. There's always that. Well, maybe in a few more years, if we can sustain this sampling and spread the techniques to the maladjusted elements in the older adult population, we'll be able to start dispensing with Security altogether."

"Maybe. Strongly set attitudes are much harder to adjust, though. And you'll always need a security system in the top ranks of officialdom. But I'll do the best—I'll do the best I can."

Garomma nodded and sat back, satisfied. Moddo would always do his best. And on a purely routine level, that was pretty good. He raised a hand negligently. The cheering and the applause stopped. Another Education executive came forward to describe the sampling method in detail. The ceremony went on.

This was the day of complete control . . .

Moddo, the Servant of Education, the Ragged Teacher of Mankind, rubbed his aching forehead with huge, well-manicured fingers and allowed himself to luxuriate in the sensation of ultimate power, absolute power, power such as no human being had even dared to dream of before this day.

Complete control. Complete ...

There was the one remaining problem of the succes-sor to the Servant of Security. Garomma would want a decision from him as soon as they started back to the Hovel of Service; and he was nowhere near a decision. Either one of the two Assistant Servants of Security would be able to fill the job admirably, but that wasn't the question.

The question was which one of the two men would be most likely to maintain at high pitch in Garomma the fears that Moddo had conditioned him to feel over a period of thirty years?

That, so far as Moddo was concerned, was the whole function of the Servant of Security; to serve as primary punching bag for the Servant of All's fear-ridden sub-conscious until such time as the mental conflicts reached a periodic crisis. Then, by removing the man around whom they had been trained to revolve, the pres-sure would be temporarily eased.

It was a little like fishing, Moddo decided. You fed the fish extra line by killing off the Servant of Security, and then you reeled it in quietly, steadily, in the next few years by surreptitiously dropping hints about the manifest ambitions of his successor. Only you never wanted to land the fish. You merely wanted to keep it hooked and constantly under your control.

The Servant of Education smiled an inch or two behind his face, as he had trained himself to smile since early boyhood. Landing the fish? That would be the equivalent of becoming Servant of All himself. And what intelligent man could satisfy his lust for power with such an idi-otic goal?

No, leave that to his colleagues, the ragged high officials in the Hovel of Service, forever scheming and plotting, making alliances and counter-alliances. The Servant of Industry, the Servant of Agriculture, the Servant of Science and the rest of those highly important fools.

To be the Servant of All meant being the target of plots, the very bull's eye of attention. An able man in this society must inevitably recognize that power—me

matter how veiled or disguised—was the only valid aim in life. And the Servant of All—veiled and disguised though he might be in a hundred humbling ways—was power incarnate.

No. Far better to be known as the nervous, uncertain underling whose knees shook beneath the weight of re-sponsibilities far beyond his abilities. Hadn't he heard their contemptuous voices behind his back?

"... Garomma's administrative toy . . ."

"... Garomma's fool of a spiritual valet . . ."

"... nothing but a footstool, a very ubiquitous footstool, mind you, but a footstool nonetheless on which rests Garomma's mighty heel ..."

"... poor, colorless, jittery slob ..."

"... when Garomma sneezes, Moddo snuffles . . ."

But from that menial, despised position, to be the real source of all policy, the maker and breaker of men, the *de facto* dictator of the human race ...

He brought his hand up once more and smoothed at his forehead. The headache was getting worse. And the official celebration of complete control was likely to take another hour yet. He should be able to steal away for twenty or thirty minutes with Loob the Healer, without getting Garomma too upset. The Servant of All had to be handled with especial care at these crisis points. The jit-ters that had been induced in him were likely to become so overpowering that he might try to make a frantic decision for himself. And that possibility, while fantastically dim, must not be given a chance to develop. It was too dangerous.

For a moment, Moddo listened to the young man in front of them rattle on about modes and means, skew curves and correlation coefficients, all the statistical jargon that concealed the brilliance of the psychological revolution that he, Moddo, had wrought. Yes, they would be there another hour yet.

Thirty-five years ago, while doing his thesis in the Central Service of Education Post-Graduate Training School, he had found a magnificent nugget in the accumulated slag of several centuries of mass-conditioning statistics; the concept of *individual* application.

For a long while, he had found the concept incredibly difficult to close with: when all your training has been directed toward the efficient handling of human attitudes in terms of millions, the consideration of one man's attitudes and emotions is as slippery a proposition as an eel, freshly caught and moribundly energetic.

But after his thesis had been completed and accepted—the thesis on suggested techniques for the achievement of complete control which the previous administration had duly filed and forgotten—he had turned once more to the problem of individual conditioning.

And in the next few years, while working at his dull job in the Applied Statistics Bureau of the Service of Education, he had addressed himself to the task of refining the individual from the group, of reducing the major to the minor.

One thing became apparent. The younger your material, the easier your task—exactly as in mass-conditioning. But if you started with a child, it would be years before he would be able to operate effectively in the world on your behalf. And with a child you were faced with the constant counter-barrage of political conditioning which filled the early school years.

What was needed was a young man who already had a place of sorts in the government, but who, for some reason or other, had a good deal of unrealized—and *un-conditioned*—potential. Preferably, also, somebody whose background had created a personality with fears and desires of a type which could serve as adequate steer-ing handles.

Moddo began to work nights, going over the records of his office in search of that man. He had found two or three who looked good. That brilliant fellow in the Ser-vice of Transport, he reminisced, had seemed awfully interesting for a time. Then he had come across Garom-ma's papers.

And Garomma had been perfect. From the first. He was a directorial type, he was likable, he was clever—and he was very receptive.

"I could learn an awful lot from you," he had told Moddo shyly at their first meeting. "This is such a big, complicated place—Capital Island. So much going on all the time. I get confused just thinking about it. But you were born here. You really seem to know your way around all the swamps and bogs and snakepits."

Due to sloppy work on the part of the Sixth District Conditioning Commissioner, Garomma's home neighborhood had developed a surprising number of quasi-inde-pendent minds on all levels of intelligence. Most of them tended to revolution, especially after a decade of near-famine crops and exorbitant taxation. But Garomma had been ambitious; he had turned against his peasant background and entered the lower echelons of the Service of Security.

This meant that when the Sixth District Peasant Upris-ing occurred, his usefulness in its immediate suppression had earned him a much higher place. More important, it had given him freedom from the surveillance and extra adult conditioning which a man of his suspicious family associations might normally have expected.

It also meant that, once Moddo had maneuvered an introduction and created a friendship, he had at his dis-posal not only a rising star but a personality that was superb in its plasticity.

A personality upon which he could laboriously create the impress of his own image.

First, there had been that wonderful business of Ga-romma's guilt about disobeying his father that had even-tually led to his leaving the farm altogether—and later to his becoming an informer against his own family and neighbors. This guilt, which had resulted in fear and therefore hatred for everything associated with its orig-inal objects, was easy to redirect to the person of his superior, the Servant of Security, and make that the new father-image.

Later, when Garomma had become Servant of All, he still retained—under Moddo's tireless ministrations—the same guilt and the same omnipresent fear of punish-ment toward whoever was the reigning Head of Security. Which was necessary if he was not to realize that his real master was the large man who sat at his right hand, constantly looking nervous and uncertain ...

Then there had been education. And re-education. From the beginning, Moddo had realized the necessity of feeding Garomma's petty peasant arrogance and had abased himself before it. He gave the other man the impression that the subversive thoughts he was now acquir-ing were of his own creation, even leading him to believe that he was domesticating Moddo—curious how the fel-low never escaped

from his agricultural origins even in his metaphors!—instead of the other way around.

Because Moddo was now laying plans for a tremendous future, and he didn't want them upset some day by the cumulative resentment one may develop toward a master and teacher; on the contrary, he wanted the plans reinforced by the affection one feels toward a pet dog whose nuzzling dependence constantly feeds the ego and creates a more ferocious counter-dependence than the owner ever suspects.

The shock that Garomma had exhibited when he began to realize that the Servant of All was actually the Dictator of All! Moddo almost smiled with his lips at the memory. Well, after all, when his own parents had suggested the idea years ago in the course of a private sailing trip they took together pursuant to his father's duties as a minor official in the Service of Fisheries and Marine—hadn't he been so upset that he'd let go of the tiller and vomited over the side? Losing your religion is a hard thing at any age, but it gets much harder as you get older.

On the other hand, Moddo had lost not only his religion at the age of six, but also his parents. They had done too much loose talking to too many people under the incorrect assumption that the then Servant of Security was going to be lax forever.

He rubbed his knuckles into the side of his head. This headache was one of the worst he'd had in days! He needed fifteen minutes at least—surely he could get away for fifteen minutes—with Loob. The Healer would set him up for the rest of the day, which, on all appearances, was going to be a tiring one. And he had to get away from Garomma, anyway, long enough to come to a clear-headed, personal decision on who was to be the next Servant of Security.

Moddo, the Servant of Education, the Ragged Teacher of Mankind, took advantage of a pause between speakers to lean back and say to Garomma: "I have a few administrative matters to check here before we start back. May I be excused? It — it won't take more than about twenty or twenty-five minutes."

Garomma scowled imperiously straight ahead. "Can't they wait? This is your day as much as mine. I'd like to have you near me."

"I know that, Garomma, and I'm grateful for the need. But"—and now he touched the Servant of All's knee in supplication—"I beg of you to let me attend to them. They are very pressing. One of them has to do—it has to do indirectly with the Servant of Security and may help you decide whether you want to dispense with him at this particular time."

Garomma's face immediately lost its bleakness. "In that case, by all means. But get back before the ceremony is over. I want us to leave together."

The tall man nodded and rose. He turned to face his leader. "Serve us, Garomma," he said with outstretched arms. "Serve us, serve us, serve us." He backed out of the room, always facing the Servant of All.

Out in the corridor, he strode rapidly through the saluting Center of Education guards and into his private elevator. He pressed the third-floor button. And then, as the door swept shut and the car began to rise, he permitted himself a single, gentle, mouth-curling smile.

The trouble he had taken to pound that one concept into Garomma's thick head: the basic principle in modern scientific government is to keep the government so unobtrusive as to appear non-existent, to use the illusion of freedom as a kind of

lubricant for slipping on invisible shackles—above all, to rule in the name of anything but rulership!

Garomma himself had phrased it in his own laborious fashion one day when, shortly after their great coup, they stood together—both still uncomfortable in the rags of greatness—and watched the construction of the new Hovel of Service in the charred place where the old one had stood for almost half a century. A huge, colorful, re-volving sign on top of the unfinished building told the populace that FROM HERE WILL YOUR EVERY WANT AND NEED BE ATTENDED TO, FROM HERE WILL YOU BE SERVED MORE EFFICIENTLY AND PLEASANTLY THAN EVER BEFORE.

Garomma had stared at the sign which was being flashed on the video receivers of the world—in the homes as well as in factories, offices, schools and compulsory com-munal gatherings—every hour on the hour.

"It's like my father used to say," he told Moddo at last with the peculiar heavy chuckle he used to identify a thought he felt was entirely original; "the right kind of salesman, if he talks long enough and hard enough, can convince a man that the thickest thorns feel as soft as roses. All he has to do is keep calling them roses, hey, Moddo?"

Moddo had nodded slowly, pretending to be overcome by the brilliance of the analysis and savoring its com-plexities for a few moments. Then, as always, merely appearing to be conducting an examination of the various latent possibilities in Garomma's ideas, he had proceeded to give the new Servant of All a further lesson.

He had underlined the necessity of avoiding all outward show of pomp and luxury, something the so-recently dead officials of the previous administration had tended to forget in the years before their fall. He had pointed out that the Servants of Mankind must constantly appear to be just that—the humble instruments of the larger mass will. Then anyone who acted contrary to Garomma's whim would be punished, not for disobeying his ruler, but for acting against the overwhelming majority of the human race.

And he had suggested an innovation that had been in his mind for a long time; the occasional creation of dis-asters in regions that had been uninterruptedly loyal and obedient. This would accentuate the fact that the Ser-vant of All was very human indeed, that his tasks were overwhelming and that he occasionally grew tired.

This would intensify the impression that the job of co-ordinating the world's goods and services had almost grown too complex to be handled successfully. It would spur the various Districts on to uncalled-for prodigies of frantic loyalty and self-regimentation, so that they at least would have the Servant of All's maximum attention.

"Of course," Garomma had agreed. "That's what I said. The whole point is not to let them know that you're run-ning their lives and that they're helping you do it. You're getting the idea."

He was getting the idea! He, Moddo, who ever since his adolescence had been studying a concept that had originated centuries ago when mankind had begun to emerge from the primitive chaos of self-rule and personal decision into the organized social universe of modern times . . . he was getting the idea!

He had smirked gratefully. But he had continued applying to Garomma himself the techniques that he was teaching Garomma to apply to the mass of men as a whole. Year in, year out, seemingly absorbed in the immensities of the project he had undertaken on behalf of the Service of Education, he had actually left its planning in the hands of subordinates while he concentrated on Garomma.

And today, while superficially acquiring complete control over the minds of an entire generation of human beings, he had tasted for the first time complete control over Garomma. For the past five years, he had been attempting to crystallize his ascendancy in a form that was simpler to use than complicated need-mechanisms and statement-patterns.

Today, for the first time, the weary hours of delicate, stealthy conditioning had begun to work out perfectly. The hand-signal, the touch-stimulus that he had organized Garomma's mind to respond to, had resulted in the desired responses every single time!

As he walked down the third-floor corridor to Loob's modest office, he searched for an adequate expression. It was like, he decided, being able to turn a whole vast liner by one touch on the wheel. The wheel activated the steering engine, the steering engine pushed against the enormous weight of rudder, and the rudder's movements eventually forced the great ship to swing about and change its course.

No, he reflected, let Garomma have his glorious moments and open adulation, his secret palaces and multi-tudes of concubines. He, Moddo, would settle for the single, occasional touch . . . and complete control.

The anteroom to Loob's office was empty. He stood there impatiently for a moment, then called out: "Loob! Isn't anyone taking care of this place? I'm in a hurry!"

A plump little man with a tiny pointed beard on his chin came scurrying out of the other room. "My secretary—everyone had to go downstairs when the Servant of All entered—things are so disrupted—she hasn't returned yet. But I was careful," he went on, catching up to his own breath, "to cancel all my appointments with other patients while you were in the building. Please come in."

Moddo stretched himself out on the couch in the Healer's office. "I can only spare about—about fifteen minutes. I have a very important decision to make, and I have a headache that's gouging out my—my brains."

Loob's fingers circled Moddo's neck and began massaging the back of his head with a serene purposefulness. "I'll do what I can. Now try to relax. Relax. That's right. Relax. Doesn't this help?"

"A lot," Moddo sighed. He must find some way of working Loob into his personal entourage, to be with him whenever he had to travel with Garomma. The man was invaluable. It would be wonderful to have him always available in person. Just a matter of conditioning Garomma to the thought. And now that could be handled with the same suggestion. "Do you mind if I just talk?" he inquired. "I don't feel very much—very much like free association."

Loob sat down in the heavily upholstered chair behind the desk. "Do whatever you want. If you care to, go into what's troubling you at the moment. All we can hope to do in fifteen minutes is help you relax."

Moddo began to talk.

This was the day of complete control . . .

Loob, the Healer of Minds, the Assistant to the Third Assistant Servant of Education, threaded his fingers through the small, triangular beard that was his professional badge and allowed himself to luxuriate in the sensation of ultimate power, absolute power, power such as no human being had ever dared to dream of before this day.

Complete control. Complete . . .

It would have been extremely satisfying to have handled the Servant of Security matter directly, but such pleasures would come in time. His technicians in the Bureau of Healing Research had almost solved the problem he had set them. Meanwhile he still had revenge and the enjoyment of unlimited dominion.

He listened to Moddo talking of his difficulties in a carefully guarded, non-specific fashion and held up a round fat hand to cover his grin. The man actually believed that after seven years of close therapeutic relationship, he could conceal such details from Loob!

But of course. He had to believe it. Loob had spent the first two years restructuring his entire psyche upon that belief, and then—and only then—had begun to effect transference on a total basis. While the emotions Moddo felt toward his parents in childhood were being duplicated relative to the Healer, Loob had begun to probe in the now unsuspecting mind. At first he hadn't believed what the evidence suggested. Then, as he got to know the patient much better he became completely convinced and almost breathless at the scope of his windfall.

For more than twenty-five years, Garomma, as the Servant of All, had ruled the human race, and for longer than that, Moddo, as a sort of glorified personal secretary, had controlled Garomma in every important respect.

So, for the past five years, he, Loob, as psychotherapist and indispensable crutch to an uncertain, broken ego, had guided Moddo and thus reigned over the world, undisputed, unchallenged—and thoroughly unsuspected.

The man behind the man behind the throne. What could be safer than that?

Of course, it would be more efficient to fasten his therapeutic grip directly on Garomma. But that would bring him out in the open far too much. Being the Servant of All's personal mental physician would make him the object of jealous scrutiny by every scheming high-echelon cabal.

No, it was better to be the one who had custody of the custodian, especially when the custodian appeared to be the most insignificant man in all the Hovel of Service officialdom.

And then, some day, when his technicians had come up with the answer he required, he might dispose of the Servant of Education and control Garomma at firsthand, with the new method.

He listened with amusement to Moddo discussing the Servant of Security matter in terms of a hypothetical individual in his own department who was about to be replaced. The question was which one of two extremely able subordinates should be given his job?

Loob wondered if the patient had any idea how transparent his subterfuges were. No, they rarely did. This was a man whose upset mind had been so manipulated that

its continued sanity depended on two factors: the overpowering need to consult Loob whenever anything even mildly delicate came up, and the belief that he could be consulted without revealing the actual data of the situation.

When the voice on the couch had come to the end of its ragged, wandering summation, Loob took over. Smoothly, quietly, almost tonelessly, he reviewed what Moddo had said. On the surface, he was merely restating the concepts of his patient in a more coherent way. Actually, he was reformulating them so that, considering his personal problems and basic attitudes, the Servant of Education would have no alternative. He would have to select the younger of the two candidates, the one whose background had included the least opposition to the Healers Guild.

Not that it made very much difference. The important thing was the proof of complete control. That was implicit in having made Moddo convince Garomma of the necessity of getting rid of a Servant of Security at a time when the Servant of All faced no particular mental crisis. When, in fact, his euphoria was at its height.

But there was, admittedly, the additional pleasure in finally destroying the man who, years ago as Chief of the Forty-seventh District's Security, had been responsible for the execution of Loob's only brother. The double achievement was as delicious as one of those two-flavor tarts for which the Healer's birthplace was famous. He sighed reminiscently.

Moddo sat up on the couch. He pressed his large, spreading hands into the fabric on either side and stretched. "You'd be amazed how much help this one short session has been, Loob. The—the headache's gone, the—the confusion's gone. Just talking about it seems to clarify everything. I know exactly what I have to do now."

"Good," drawled Loob the Healer in a gentle, carefully detached voice.

"I'll try to get back tomorrow for a full hour. And I've been thinking of having you transferred to my personal staff, so that you can straighten out—straighten out the kinks at the time they occur. I haven't reached a decision on it yet, though."

Loob shrugged and escorted his patient to the door. "That's entirely up to you. However you feel I can help you most."

He watched the tall, husky man walking down the corridor to the elevator. "*I haven't reached a decision on it yet, though.*" Well, he wouldn't—not until Loob did. Loob had put the idea into his mind six months ago, but had deferred having him take action on it. He wasn't sure that it would be a good idea to get even that close to the Servant of All as yet. And there was that wonderful little project in the Bureau of Healing Research which he still wanted to give maximum daily attention.

His secretary came in and went right to work at her typewriter. Loob decided to go downstairs and check on what had been done today. With all the fanfare attendant upon the Servant of All's arrival to celebrate complete control, the researchers' routine had no doubt been seriously interrupted. Still, the solution might come at any time. And he liked to examine their lines of investigation for potential fruitfulness: these technicians were blunderingly unimaginative!

As he walked down to the main floor, he wondered if Moddo, anywhere in the secret depths of his psyche, had any idea of how much he had come to depend on the Healer, how thoroughly he needed him. The fellow was such a tangle of anxiety and uncertainty—losing his parents as a child, the way he had, of course had not

helped too much, but his many repressions had been in existence even then. He had never even remotely suspected that the reason he wanted Garomma to be the ostensible leader was because he was afraid of taking personal re-sponsibility for anything. That the fake personality he was proud of presenting to the world was his real per-sonality, the difference being that he had learned to use his fears and timidity in a positive fashion. But only up to a point. Seven years ago, when he had looked up Loob ("a fast bit of psychotherapy for some minor problems I've been having"), he'd been on the point of complete collapse. Loob had repaired the vast flapping structure on a temporary basis and given it slightly different func-tions. Functions for Loob.

He couldn't help wondering further if the ancients would have been able to do anything basic for Moddo. The ancients, according to the Oral Tradition at least, had developed, just before the beginning of the modern era, a psychotherapy that accomplished wonders of change and personal reorganization for the individual.

But to what end? No serious attempt to use the method for its obvious purpose, for the only purpose of any method . . . *power*. Loob shook his head. Those ancients had been so incredibly naive! And so much of their useful knowledge had been lost. Concepts like super-ego merely existed in the Oral Tradition of the Healers Guild as words; there was no clue as to their original mean-ing. They might be very useful today, properly applied.

On the other hand, were most of the members of his own modern Healers Guild across the wide sea, any less naive, including his father and the uncle who was now its reigning head? From the day when he had passed the Guild's final examinations and begun to grow the trian-gular beard of master status, Loob had seen that the am-bitions of his fellow-members were ridiculously limited. Here, in this very city, where, according to legend, the Guild of the Healers of Minds had originated, each mem-ber asked no more of life than to use his laboriously learned skill at transference to acquire power over the lives of ten or fifteen wealthy patients.

Loob had laughed at these sparse objectives. He had seen the obvious goal which his colleagues had been over-looking for years. The more powerful the individual whom you subjected to transference and in whom you created a complete dependence, the more power you, as his heal-er, enjoyed. The world's power center was on Capital Island across the great ocean to the east. And it was there that Loob determined to go.

It hadn't been easy. The strict rules of custom against changing your residence except on official business had stood in his way for a decade. But once the wife of the Forty-seventh District's Communications Commissioner had become his patient, it got easier. When the commis-sioner had been called to Capital Island for promotion to the Second Assistant Servantship of Communication, Loob had gone with the family; he was now indispensable. Through them he had secured a minor job in the Service of Education. Through that job, practicing his profession on the side, he had achieved enough notice to come to the august attention of the Servant of Education himself.

He hadn't really expected to go this far. But a little luck, a great deal of skill and constant, unwinking alert-ness had made an irresistible combination. Forty-five minutes after Moddo had first stretched out on his couch, Loob had realized that he,

with all of his smallness and plumpness and lack of distinction, was destined to rule the world.

Now the only question was what to do with that rule. With wealth and power unlimited.

Well, for one thing there was his little research project. That was very interesting, and it would serve, once it came to fruition, chiefly to consolidate and insure his power. There were dozens of little pleasures and properties that were now his, but their enjoyment tended to wear off with their acquisition. And finally there was knowledge.

Knowledge. Especially forbidden knowledge. He could now enjoy it with impunity. He could collate the various Oral Traditions into one intelligible whole and be the only man in the world who knew what had really happened in the past. He had already discovered, through the several teams of workers he had set at the task, such tidbits as the original name of his birthplace, lost years ago in a numbering system that had been created to destroy pa-triotic associations inimical to the world state. Long before it had been the Fifth City of the Forty-seventh Dis-trict, he had learned, it had been Austria, the glorious capital of the proud Viennese Empire. And this island on which he stood had been Havanacuba, no doubt once a great empire in its own right which had established hegem-ony over all other empires somewhere in the dim war-filled beginnings of modern times.

Well, these were highly personal satisfactions. He doubted very much if Garomma, for example, would be interested to know that he hailed, not from the Twen-tieth Agricultural Region of the Sixth District, but from a place called Canada, one of the fifty constituent republics of the ancient Northern United States of Amer-ica. But he, Loob, was interested. Every additional bit of knowledge gave you additional power over your fellow-men, that some day, some way, would be usable.

Why, if Moddo had had any real knowledge of the transference techniques taught in the upper lodges of the Guild of the Healers of Minds, he might still be running the world himself! But no. It was inevitable that a Garom-ma should actually be no more than a creature, a thing, of Moddo. It was inevitable that a Moddo, given the pe-culiar forces that had formed him, should inexorably have had to come to Loob and pass under his control. It was also inevitable that Loob, with his specialized knowledge of what could be done with the human mind, should be the only independent man on Earth today. It was also very pleasant.

He wriggled a little bit, very satisfied with himself, gave his beard a final finger-comb, and pushed into the Bu-reau of Healing Research.

The chief of the bureau came up rapidly and bowed. "Nothing new to report today." He gestured at the tiny cubicles in which the technicians sat at old books or performed experiments on animals and criminally convicted humans. "It took them a while to get back to work, after the Servant of All arrived. Everyone was ordered out into the main corridor for regulation empathizing with Garom-ma."

"I know," Loob told him. "I don't expect much prog-ress on a day like this. Just so you keep them at it. It's a big problem."

The other man shrugged enormously. "A problem which, as far as we can tell, has never been solved before. The ancient manuscripts we've discovered are all in ter-rible shape, of course. But those that mention hypno-tism all agree that it can't

occur under any of the three conditions you want: against the individual's will, contrary to his personal desires and best judgment, and maintaining him over a long period of time in the original state of subjection without need for new applications. I'm not saying it's impossible, but—"

"But it's very difficult. Well, you've had three and a half years to work on it, and you'll have as much more time as you need. *And* equipment. *And* personnel. Just ask. Meanwhile, I'll wander around and see how your men are doing. You needn't come with me. I like to ask my own questions."

The bureau chief bowed again and turned back to his desk in the rear of the room. Loob, the Healer of Minds, the Assistant to the Third Assistant Servant of Education, walked slowly from cubicle to cubicle, watching the work, asking questions, but mostly noting the personal quality of the psychological technician in each cubicle.

He was convinced that the right man could solve the problem. And it was just a matter of finding the right man and giving him maximum facilities. The right man would be clever enough and persistent enough to follow up the right lines of research, but too unimaginative to be appalled by a goal which had eluded the best minds for ages.

And once the problem was solved—then in one short interview with Garomma, he could place the Servant of All under his direct, personal control for the rest of his life and dispense with the complications of long therapeutic sessions with Moddo where he constantly had to suggest, and suggest in roundabout fashion, rather than give simple, clear and unambiguous orders. Once the problem was solved—

He came to the last cubicle. The pimply-faced young man who sat at the plain brown table studying a ripped and damp-rotted volume didn't hear him come in. Loob studied him for a moment.

What frustrated, bleak lives these young technicians must lead! You could see it in the tightly set lines of their all-too-similar faces. Growing up in one of the most rigidly organized versions of the world state that a ruler had yet contrived, they didn't have a thought that was in any way their own, could not dream of tasting a joy that had not been officially allotted to them.

And yet this fellow was the brightest of the lot. If any one in the Bureau of Healing Research could develop the kind of perfect hypnotic technique Loob required, he could. Loob had been watching him with growing hope for a long time now.

"How is it coming, Sidothi?" he asked.

Sidothi looked up from his book.

"Shut the door," he said.

Loob shut the door.

This was the day of complete control ...

Sidothi, the Laboratory Assistant, Psychological Technician Fifth Class, snapped his fingers in Loob's face and allowed himself to luxuriate in the sensation of ultimate power, absolute power, power such as no human being had even dared to dream of before this day.

Complete control. Complete ...

Still sitting, he snapped his fingers again.

He said: "Report."

The familiar glazed look came into Loob's eyes. His body stiffened. His arms hung limply at his sides. In a steady, toneless voice he began to deliver his report.

Magnificent. The Servant of Security would be dead in a few hours and the man Sidothi liked would take his place. For an experiment in complete control, it had worked out to perfection. That was all it had been; an attempt to find out if—by creating a feeling of venge-fulness in Loob for the sake of a non-existent brother—he could force the Healer to act on a level he always wanted to avoid; making Moddo do something that the Servant of Education had no interest at all in doing. That was to prod Garomma into an action against the Servant of Security at a time when Garomma was in no particular mental crisis.

The experiment had worked perfectly. He'd pushed a little domino named Loob three days ago, and a whole series of other little dominoes had begun to fall one right after the other. Today, when the Servant of Security was strangled at his desk, the last one would have fallen.

Yes, control was absolutely complete.

Of course, there had been another, minor reason why he had elected to conduct this experiment in terms of the Servant of Security's life. He didn't like the man. He'd seen him drink a liqueur in public four years ago. Sidothi didn't believe the Servants of Mankind should do such things. They should lead clean, simple, abstemious lives; they should be an example to the rest of the human race.

He'd never seen the Assistant Servant of Security whom he had ordered Loob to have promoted, but he had heard that the fellow lived very narrowly, without luxury even in private. Sidothi liked that. That was the way it should be.

Loob came to the end of his report and stood waiting. Sidothi wondered whether he should order him to give up this bad, boastful idea of controlling Garomma directly. No, that wouldn't do: that attitude led into the mechanism of coming down to the Bureau of Healing Research every day to check on progress. While a simple order to come in daily would suffice, still Sidothi felt that until he had examined all aspects of his power and become thoroughly familiar with its use, it was wise to leave original personality mechanisms in place, so long as they didn't get in the way of anything important.

And that reminded him. There was an interest of Loob's which was sheer time-wasting. Now, when he was certain of absolute control, was a good time to get rid of it.

"You will drop this research into historical facts," he ordered. "You will use the time thus freed for further detailed examination of Moddo's psychic weaknesses. And you will find that more interesting than studying the past. That is all."

He snapped his fingers in Loob's face, waited a moment, then snapped them again. The Healer of Minds took a deep breath, straightened and smiled.

"Well, keep at it," he said, encouragingly.

"Thank you, sir. I will," Sidothi assured him.

Loob opened the door of the cubicle and walked out, pompously, serenely. Sidothi stared after him. The idiotic assurance of the man—that once the process of complete control by hypnotic technique was discovered, it would be given to

Loob!

Sidothi had begun to reach the answer three years ago. He had immediately covered up, letting his work take a superficially different line. Then, when he had the tech-nique perfected, he'd used it on Loob himself. Natural-ly.

At first he'd been shocked, almost sickened, when he found out how Loob controlled Moddo, how Moddo controlled Garomma, the Servant of All. But after a while, he'd adjusted to the situation well enough. After all, ever since the primary grades, the only reality he and his contemporaries had accepted completely was the reality of power. Power in each class, in each club, in each and every gathering of human beings, was the only thing worth fighting for. And you chose an occupation not only because you were most fitted for it, but because it gave the greatest promise of power to a person of your particular interests and aptitudes.

But he'd never dreamed of, never imagined, this much power! Well, he had it. That was reality, and reality was to be respected above all else. Now the problem was what to do with his power.

And that was a very hard question to answer. But the answer would come in time. Meanwhile, there was the wonderful chance to make certain that everyone did his job right, that bad people were punished. He intended to stay in his menial job until the proper time came for promotion. There was no need at the moment to have a big title. If Garomma could rule as the Servant of All, he could rule Garomma at third or fourth hand as a simple Psychological Technician Fifth Class.

But in what way exactly did he want to rule Garom-ma? What important things did he want to make Garom-ma do?

A bell rang. A voice called out of a loudspeaker set high in the wall. "Attention! attention, all personnel! The Ser-vant of All will be leaving the Center in a few minutes. Everyone to the main corridor to beg for his continued service to mankind. Everyone—"

Sidothi joined the mob of technicians pouring out of the huge laboratory room. People were coming out of offices on both sides of them. He was swept up with a crowd constantly enlarging from the elevators and stairways to the main corridor where the Service of Educa-tion guards prodded them and jammed them against the walls.

He smiled. If they only knew whom they were push-ing! Their ruler, who could have any one of them exe-cuted. The only man in the world who could do anything he wanted to do. Anything.

There was sudden swirling movement and a cheer at the far distant end of the corridor. Everyone began to shuffle about nervously, everyone tried to stand on tip-toe in order to see better. Even the guards began to breathe faster.

The Servant of All was coming.

The cries grew more numerous, more loud. People in front of them were heaving about madly. And suddenly Sidothi saw him!

His arms went up and out in a flashing paroxysm of muscles. Something tremendous and delighted seemed to press on his chest and his voice screamed, "Serve us, Garomma! Serve us! Serve us! Serve us!" He was suffused with heaving waves of love, love such as he never knew anywhere else, love for Garomma, love for Garom-ma's parents, love for Garomma's children, love for anything and

everything connected with Garomma. His body writhed, almost without coordination, delicious flames licked up his thighs and out from his armpits, he twisted and turned, danced and hopped, his very stomach seem-ing to strain against his diaphragm in an attempt to express its devotion. None of which was very strange, con-sidering that these phenomena had been conditioned in him since early childhood.

"Serve us, Garomma!" he shrieked, bubbles of saliva growing out of one corner of his mouth. "Serve us! Serve us! Serve us!"

He fell forward, between two guards, and his out-stretched fingertips touched a rustling flapping rag just as the Servant of All strode by. His mind abruptly roared off into the furthest, most hidden places of ecsta-sy. He fainted, still babbling. "Serve us, O Garomma."

When it was all over, his fellow-technicians helped him back to the Bureau of Healing Research. They looked at him with awe. It wasn't every day you managed to touch one of Garomma's rags. What it must do to a person!

It took Sidothi almost half an hour to recover.

THIS WAS THE DAY OF COMPLETE CONTROL.