

No Fire Burns

[by Avram Davidson](#)

Doctor Colles was a thin, pale man with receding hair. Mr. Melchior's chauffeured car had picked him up at his stuffy little office, crowded with papers. He had begun to talk almost at once, and he was still at it now. While waiting for the traffic light to change and listening to Doctor Colles' conversation, Mr. Melchior took a long green cigar from his case and lit it.

"A breakdown of function and structure," said Colles. "An absolute lack of communication. Isn't it so?" Mr. Taylor, a trim, blond young man, who looked like an ad for expensive shirts, listened carefully, said nothing. Melchior looked impressed—and uncomprehending. Colles took his arm just above the elbow, pressed it. "Look at that fellow over there," he said. "The one in the brown suit—see? Now: can I communicate with him? Or can you? On any save the most primitive level? No. Impossible, I assure you. I've only to look at him to know." The crowd flowed across the street. The men in the car watched the vanishing brown suit.

"We think of, let us say, world problems. *He* thinks of bowling. We discuss art and letters. He watches the dog acts on TV. We are concerned with our vanishing natural resources. He wonders if he can put a dollar-fifty cab bill on his swindle sheet. Am I correct?" The car moved forward. "What do *you* think?"

Mr. Melchior thought he agreed one hundred percent. Taylor smiled faintly. "Just the same," Melchior said, "there has to be some way of reaching these type people, getting inside of them."

Dr. Colles cleared his throat. "Psychology," he began.

"Good!" said Melchior. "Good. Go ahead—Oh. Here we are. You'll have to explain this to me when we're inside, Doctor."

They went up the steps of what appeared to be a small parochial school, but which was, in fact, a club—and not the sort at which members were fined for not using first names in addressing one another. The guests' dining room was small and dark. "A brandy to begin with, Doctor?"

"I hold with the ancient grammarian," Dr. Colles said, suddenly jovial. "It is better to decline six nouns than one drink. Ha Ha!"

Melchior rolled his eyes toward Taylor, who nodded. It was so ordered. "Would you believe it, Doctor," said Melchior, after the second sip, "I never tasted brandy till I was twenty-five years old? Times change ... Ah. Good. Here's the menu. Anything you especially like."

The food came. They ate slowly, with grave pleasure appropriate. "Times change," Melchior repeated, presently. "Take, for example, business: When my business began to get too big for me to handle the paper work myself, I hired my brother-in-law's cousin to keep the books. But that family-style operation is outmoded. So now I have my personnel manager, Mr. Taylor here, he's a college man himself, help me select the top men from the accountants' college for Melchior Enterprises. Taylor knows what the score is."

Dr. Colles inquired the precise nature of these enterprises. His host said that they included importing, manufacturing and distributing.

"Well, that covers just about the whole range of commerce, doesn't it? Except for credit."

"We do that, too."

Colles chuckled, but seeing his host react with faint surprise, coughed. "Now, about these tests," he said. And he proceeded to talk about the tests with young Mr. Taylor, while Mr. Melchior listened, nodding. After a while the personnel manager said, "Well, that seems to be all right, then, about the standard tests. Now, Mr. Melchior would like to discuss with you the possibility of setting up another test, one which would have to be personally constructed."

"Oh?" Dr. Colles raised his eyebrows. "A *special* test. *Well.*"

Melchior rubbed his thin lips with his napkin. "We got—" He paused. "We have certain problems concerned with personnel procurement—maybe *dis*procurement is the right word, huh, Taylor? And we think you might be just the man to deal with them."

"Well, that's very flattering. 'Disprocurement'? Ha ha. And challenging, too. Go on, go on."

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Joe Clock looked up from his lathe. It was that pest, Aberdeen, again. "Whaddaya want, Ab?" he asked. "*Come on, come on—*"

Ab smiled ingratiatingly. "Whaddaya *want*, for crysake?" Joe demanded.

The man looked around, nervously. "Uh. Look Joe, when you told me you needed that money couple weeks ago, you said you needed it so bad, I told you that I, uh, I, uh, could let you have it, sure, I mean, glad to help, I, uh—"

"Will ya quit needling me, for crysake? I told ya I'd pay it back."

Ab smirked, weakly. "Yeah, but, uh, Joe, I told you then it was the, uh, *rent* money, so I'd, uh, I'd need it back in a week. And that was the truth, I mean ... well, Joe, the, uh, the rent, I mean it was due a, a week ago, and I got to have it Joe. So—"

Joe turned back to his lathe. "You'll get it. Tell ya landlord to keep his pants on, because I don't have it now. So quit needling me."

Ab started to protest, explain, plead, but Joe wasn't paying any attention to him. Finally, with a helpless shrug he moved off, looking back over his shoulder with a puzzled expression, at the oblivious Joe Clock, who—after the other man was well out of sight—took a stroll down to the drinking fountain.

He was greeted there by a man with a wart between his eyes. "You get them new power tools for your cellar yet, that you were talking about?" the man asked.

Joe wiped his dripping mouth. "Yeah. Ordered 'em two weeks ago and they finally came couple a days ago," he said. "Beautiful stuff. Come on down and have a look some Sundy."

The man with the wart between his eyes said, thanks, he might do that. "What was Aberdeen doing over at your machine just now?" he asked. "He look like he was gonna bust out crying."

Joe frowned. "Who? Oh, Aberdeen. Aah, *I* dunno what he wanted." He nodded, moved off. In the

corner of his mind was a faint recollection of what Aberdeen wanted, but it was too much trouble to remember. Hell with 'm.

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"Did you read in the papers, last month," Mr. Melchior asked, over the fresh fruit cup, "about a fellow who worked for Atlantic Coast Canning—"

Dr. Colles said that he believed he did. "Shot the foreman and—"

"Not the foreman, no, but that's the case. They were both in line to become foreman, but only one could get the job, so this man, Grubacher, he invited Kelly—that was his competitor—to take a ride back from work in his car; then he killed him. Might've gotten away with it, too, only they traced the gun."

Atlantic Coast Canning, it seemed, was an affiliate of Melchior Enterprises, and the incident had disturbed Mr. Melchior a good deal. Dr. Colles was a psychologist; did he understand what would make a man, who had seemed perfectly normal—a good employee—a good husband—do something like that? There had to be something wrong with him, didn't there? ("Obviously," said Dr. C.) Well, they didn't want a repetition of the Grubacher case. They wanted Dr. Colles to help them weed out people like that beforehand.

The psychologist smiled. Society as a whole, and not just Mr. Melchior, he pointed out, would be glad to find a way to do that. But his host waved his hand and shook his head, respectfully impatient.

"No, no, Doctor. Don't be modest," he said. "These tests which you and Mr. Taylor are going to set up for our personnel department—you said before that what's wrong with our society is 'lack of communication,' yes? Well, these *tests* communicate, don't they? They help weed out all kinds of unfit people, don't they? *But they don't go far enough!* A man who thinks he hears voices and tells people that spies from outer space are after him, well, you can tell right away there's something wrong with him, and we tell him that we'll keep his name on file; don't call us, we'll call you ..."

But Grubacher hadn't been that type. He didn't have hallucinations, he didn't mutter. In no way, either from his work record or his family life or from his friends, could the ordinary lay person have foreseen that he would kill a man in cold blood. When he was caught and his alibi broken down and—confronted with the ballistics test results—he confessed, he was asked (oh, most vain of all questions!) if he wasn't sorry. Grubacher seemed a little surprised. He was sorry he was *caught*, sure. But for the act itself? A bit surprised, answering what he obviously considered a foolish question, the killer said, no ... what was there to be sorry about? It was the only thing to do: Kelly stood in his way.

Dr. Colles tapped his glasses on the tablecloth. He nodded rapidly. "This fellow would seem to be obviously a psychopath," he said. "An individual with an underdeveloped superego. They don't go around muttering or bubbling their lips, they don't often run amuck; generally speaking, they are calm—cool—and collected. They simply lack what we are accustomed to call conscience. To your man, his fellow-worker wasn't a being with equal rights, he was simply an obstacle. The sensible thing was to remove him."

A cigar came out of Mr. Melchior's case. He flicked his gold cigarette lighter. "All right," he said. "Now that we know what they *are*—how do we find them out in time?"

With a smile, "The FBI would like to know too, Mr. Melchior."

"Yes, but the FBI isn't asking you. Anthony Melchior is asking you. I have been very impressed with everything you've told us, and I feel quite confident you can do it."

"Well, thank you very much. But ... let me ask you ... why are you interested in weeding out only *psychopaths*? Why not people with other defects—paranoiacs, let's say?"

His employer seeming somewhat at a loss to answer this, Edward Taylor stepped almost instantly into the breach. "Mr. Melchior feels that men who suffer from more obvious defects are much more likely to be noticed. It is the man who *appears* to be all right, who *seems* to function normally, who is actually more in need of being detected. Once found out, our task would naturally be to see that this man is given the proper help. We see it as a three-fold program: discover him—remove him—help him." He smiled; his smile was rather charming, but it came and went too quickly.

Melchior nodded vigorously; Colles, more slowly. Was it a matter of time? he was asked. A matter of money? Neither factor should dissuade him: Melchior Enterprises would assist him one hundred percent. Dr. Colles smiled, pursed his lips, shook his head. Then he frowned. He rubbed his eyes with his fingers.

"It would be an interesting project," he said, "it might be a very fruitful one. I could try ... I would promise you nothing in the way of results. But I could try—if I were to take on fewer projects with other corporations, perhaps ..."

His host's thin lips stretched in a brief smile. "Good. Very good. And so now, just for a start—" He took out a gold fountain pen and a checkbook. Dr. Colles looked at the moving hand until the last letter of the signature was done; then—missing Mr. Melchior's upturned glance by a shaved second—he fixed his look on the wall. The check changed hands.

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Dr. Colles told his assistant not to make any more appointments for him until further notice. "I'm going to be working on a private research project which will be taking up a great deal of my time," he explained. "You'll have to do some legwork for me ... I'll have a list of books for you to get, and quite a number of articles published in professional journals. Then, too, these men are to be phoned—you see: Dr. Sherwind, of the Department of Correction, and so on—and you ask them if you can drop by and pick up case histories for me, as noted here."

The assistant was an unmarried and intelligent young woman, who had been (and had looked) a good bit younger when she first came to work for Dr. Colles. He had talked at one time about marriage—not during the past few years, however. Why buy milk if you're friendly with the cow?

"The Psychopathic Personality Among Prisoners ..." she read aloud from the list, pinching her lip: two unlovely habits she'd developed. It occurred to her employer that it would probably be easier (and wiser) to break himself of the habit of her, than to try to break her of any of her own habits.

He hummed a bit when she had gone. After all, the world was *full* of cows—He took out his bankbook and regarded with favor both the latest entry and the considerable amount in cash folded neatly inside the little book. He had stopped off at the bank directly after leaving Mr. Melchior. The business baron had seemed quite in earnest, but, still, one never knew ...

Dr. Colles was a prudent man.

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The test had been going on for most of the day. First one section went down to take it, then another. There had been some apprehension at first, but this vanished, by lunchtime, in a rumble of laughter which ran through the whole plant: "So he hands back the papers when he's finished, and he says to the guy from Personnel, 'Hey, Mac, how come they wanna know is my sex-life satisfactory: they plannin' t' use me f' stud purposes?' "

When Joe Clock finally reached the head of the line, the girl there gave him a sheaf of papers and a pencil. "Take any seat at one of the tables and fill these out, please," she said.

Joe's eyes traveled from her to the papers and back again. Her hair, it was obvious, was not naturally red, and her expression was discontented. But she was young, and her figure—"If I had a nickel for every one of these I filled out, I'd be rich," he said.

For a moment their eyes met. "And if I had a nickel for every guy who said that, I'd be rich, too." Not too bad a beginning. He rapidly calculated his finances, took a breath, and was about to ask her what she was doing that night. But her eyes went past him, she picked up a sheaf of papers and a pencil, handed them to the man behind him. "Take any seat—" she began.

Joe Clock sighed, sat down at the table and took up the pencil. If they wanted to pay him to play school for an hour instead of running the lathe, it was all right with him. And it was easier on the feet. So now let's see ... *I like mechanics magazines.* Yes. No. What a question to ask a machinist! Sure he liked them. You knew where you were with a mechanics magazine. It showed you what to do and how to do it. No dopey stories to figure out, why the guy acts so dopey trying to get the girl. There's an obstruction in the pipe, ream it out. Another guy steps out with the girl, kick him in the crotch. Joe circled the *Yes*. Next. *I have a good appetite.* Hell, *Yes*. Then a real stupid one: *I would rather collect stamps than go fishing.* Joe put a heavy circle around the *No*. He relaxed. Collect *stamps*, for crysake! This was going to be easy. *Eskimos live in Europe.* Joe almost had to laugh at that one, another *No*; good thing he didn't have to say where they *did* live: Aleutia, or some place like that. Well ...

A sensible man takes what he can get in this world. Isn't that the truth, though! Every damn time, and all you can get, too. Hell, yes. *Canada belongs to England.* That was right. The damn Canadian money has the King of England's face on it and you got to be careful because once Joe had got stuck with some of that English money from Canada, only he passed it on damn quick, too. *It is important to help a friend.* What do they mean, "a friend"? He paused, peered at the next one. *It is not so important to help a stranger.* He hesitantly put *Yes* for the first, *No* for the second. *It makes good sense to worry about a stranger.* He snorted. The hell it does. Catch a stranger worrying about *you!* A guy that you, like, want to borrow his car, now—but a *stranger?*

Henry Ford played a major role in developing ... Molasses is made from ... A sensible man does what he is paid to do. Of course he does. *Yes.*

I sleep well and wake up fresh and rested. Sure. *Yes.* *A stranger will risk his life to help you.* What a laugh. A guy'd have to be crazy! *No!*

There are lots worse crimes than murder. Probably ... Sure. Lots worse. *The average person will*

do anything for money. Absolutely right they would. Why not, if you can get away with it? Sure. And the same way, that's why you got to watch out for yourself.

There are worse things than losing your home. What? Catching leprosy?

*And then the way to answer the question changed. Now you had to pick out an answer. Like, *Most people who hit someone with their car at night would (a) report to the police first (b) give first aid (c) make a getaway if possible.* Well, any damn fool would know it was the last. In fact, anyone but a damn fool would do just that. That's what *he* did that time. (c)*

*Now, a dope like Aberdeen: he'd probably stop *his* car. Stick his nose in someone else's tough luck. Anybody stupid enough to lend his rent money—*

If you saw a man about to jump in the river, would you (a) move his clothes so he wouldn't trip on them (b) call your friends to watch (c) get something to eat afterwards (d) none of these things.

The important thing with women is (a) have a knife in your pocket (b) make sure your hair is combed (c) drive a red car (d) something else.

Bright lights are a sign of (a) rain (b) foreign domination (c) poisoned drinking water (d) none of these things.

National security means (a) warmer weather than we used to have (b) television programs (c) political influence (d) something else.

The main point in criminal activity is (a) dressing real warm if it's cold (b) not to get caught (c) keep in your own lane on the highway (d) avoid such activity.

Test was kind of interesting, Joe thought, as he handed in the papers. And now—back to the lathe. Go around the long way, avoid Aberdeen's machine. Gahdamn pest.

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Dr. Colles took a good look around his office. It had never seemed so cramped and grubby before. Once again he found himself wondering if he ought not to get out of test construction and evaluation—way out—into some more lucrative field of psychology. Not many clients paid so well as Melchior Enterprises; in plain fact, none of them had. Not by a long shot. And his work for them was about over now, anyway. A competent personnel man like Taylor could carry on the tests without the constructionist. There was something about Taylor ... smooth, knowing ... without too much eagerness, he considered asking the young man to send him follow-up reports on how the psychopaths turned up by the special test were responding to treatment. Of course, some of them were bound to reject treatment. And they couldn't be obliged to accept, either, worse luck. Well, that wasn't his responsibility. He didn't even know who was doing the therapy.

Except that they would get the credit. But that was how it went. Therapy, therapy, that was all the public thought about. How many articles in general publications did you ever see about test constructionists? Let alone movies or TV. "I do the work, others get the credit," Dr. Colles thought with some bitterness.

Feeling the inevitable postproject let-down, Colles' eyes wandered over the top of his desk. Mail ...

He'd checked through the mail: nothing of interest. Idly, he picked up a brochure-like thing on glossy paper. It had failed to attract his preoccupied attention earlier.

Ease-A-Just News Jottings. Published by and for the employees of Ease-A-Just Gear and Tool (a Melchior Enterprise). Oh, yes, he recalled talking to Taylor's assistant concerning a short piece about the test, for the house organs. He started to lay it aside, then opened it. Might be something about the test in there. Of course, the real reason hadn't been explained to the employees.

"Old friends of Mabel Quinn (formerly Stoltzfus), of the cafeteria staff, will be glad to learn that she and Patrolman Quinn are now the proud parents of twin boys. Congratulations, Mabel, we knew you had it in you!" Dr. Colles winced, turned a page. "Maintenance Wins Softball Tiff"—well, good for Maintenance ... No, nothing here. He started to toss it away once more, but something caught his eye and was gone before he could fix what it had been. This is annoying. With a sigh, he opened the paper again, began a systematic search. He had to find it, or it would haunt him. There: a name.

The box score:

Maintenance	AB	R	H	Machine Shop	AB	R	H
Smead cf	1	0	0	Guthrie 2b	2	0	1
Clock rf	2	0	0	Brandt ss	3	0	0
Dupont 1b	2	0	0	Rayan 1b	3	1	2

And the name was Clock. Frowning slightly, Dr. Colles repeated it. He muttered it again, as he took several files from the cabinet and leafed through the contents. *Clock!*

Dr. Colles whistled. Then, being a systematic man, he wrote down all the names in the *Ease-A-Just News Jottings*, rewrote them in alphabetical order; then began to compare them with the names in his files. He whistled again.

The door opened. His assistant said, "If you want me, Doctor, please call me by name. I'm not your dog; don't whistle."

For several seconds he stared at her, expressionless. Then he said, "My apologies, Miss Blick. It won't happen again. But, since you are here—Don't we subscribe to a clipping service on the various corporations which—We do. Thank you. Then, if you will be kind enough to bring me the clippings relating to Melchior Enterprise ... *Thank you, Miss Blick.*"

Most of the clippings were from the financial and industrial pages of the papers and did not long engage Dr. Colles' attention. Several, however, were from the news sections, and these he proceeded to read. Once or twice he pursed his lips as if to whistle, but each time he glanced at the door and restrained himself. Instead, he said, "Well, well ..."

Industrialist Linked to Forced Sales of Beer. "Well!" *Murdered Man Revealed As Former Melchior Employee*. "Well, well!" *Grand Jury Probes Alleged Tie-in of Melchior with Local* ... "Well, well, well!"

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Dr. Colles was coming out of the Personnel Office when he met Edward Taylor coming in. "Your assistant told me you wouldn't be in today," Colles said.

"I didn't expect to be in ... This is a rather large outfit, you know—not that it couldn't be larger if—yes, I've been occupied at another office. Can I help you?" He looked at Colles with cool gray eyes.

"No, I don't think so, but thank you. Your assistant was very helpful."

With smile swift as always, though perhaps a trifle less charming, Edward Taylor said he was glad of it. "Where are you heading for now? To see Mr. Melchior? Ah, yes. A. M. thinks a lot of you. As do I." His manner, as they parted, seemed rather thoughtful.

Doctor Colles, crossing the large expanse of floor between the door and Mr. Melchior's desk, had ample time to note and admire the quality of the thick rug and massive furniture. "You do me an honor," said the businessman, shaking hands. "If you'd told me you were coming, I'd've sent my car."

The psychiatrist waved his hand. "I found myself with no appointments today," he said. "So I decided to catch up on things I'd been putting off. I discharged my assistant. And I came out here." Melchior said, Oh? He inquired if the assistant hadn't given satisfaction. "Not for a long time," said Dr. Colles. "Anyway. Yes, I wanted to ask you—how are those tests working, which I devised for you? Are *they* giving satisfaction?"

"Perfectly, Doctor."

"I'm naturally gratified to hear that. I was wondering how the idea was working out. I was wondering, too, if you'd tell me the names of the gentlemen who are working on the rehabilitation end of the scheme. The ones who are treating the people whom my special test has turned up."

He looked expectantly at Mr. Melchior. The latter said, after a moment, "Well, I wouldn't know about those details, Doctor. Edward Taylor, being in charge of personnel, would be in a better position to know. He knows the men, and they know him. But I kind of have an idea that the other part of the plan is still in its planning stage. But you could write to Edward and I'm sure he'll be happy to give you the details."

Dr. Colles nodded. "Odd sort of notion came to me this morning," he said. "Shall I tell you about it?"

Mr. Melchior, no longer quite so cordial, looked at his watch. "All right, if you want to," he said.

"You know, I was wondering how the whole idea was working out. So I called up your assistant personnel manager and asked to see the records. He told me to come over and help myself."

There was a pause. "He shouldn't have done that, Doctor," Mr. Melchior said. "Not without consulting me first. Those records are confidential."

Colles said he could understand that. He apologized, hoped it would not make any trouble for the assistant personnel manager. "I have a feeling, Mr. M.," he said, "that he was not fully aware of the implications of the testing scheme, anyway. May I elaborate? Thank you ... I do appreciate your not reminding me that you are a very busy man. Well." He cleared his throat. He waited, but as nothing else was offered, he continued, "Now, in regard to my own especially constructed test: only certain particular questions were used in the marking, as you know, the others being either window-dressing, or designed to lull the testee into a state of unawareness, so that the chances of getting true answers to the others were increased. What were the results? Thirty-three individuals scored above the ninetieth percentile, showing marked psychopathic tendencies. Of these, eleven were women, and I rather imagine that they

were sent packing pretty damned quick—though I hope in such a manner as not to hurt their feelings. The Mad Bomber and all that, eh, Mr. Melchior? Now, of the remaining twenty-two—a check of the records is in your personnel office, Mr. Taylor being fortuitously absent—*twenty are still employed*. What happened to the other two?" he shot the question.

"Quit," said Mr. Melchior. "We're planning to get rid of the others as soon as we can manage for them to get the treatment."

"Oh, I don't think you are," Colles said. There was a pause.

"No? Well ... what *do* you think, Doc?"

"What do I think?" Dr. Colles asked. "I combined the information I've just mentioned with certain intelligence gleaned from the newspapers, and I think that you, Mr. Melchior, are an Emperor of Crime—if I may wax a trifle purple in my prose—and that your purpose is not to weed the psychopaths *out*, but to weed them *in*."

The tycoon smiled a thin, cold smile. "Doc, you speak the most beautiful English I ever heard. But you flatter me. I'll level with you. An emperor? Not even a king. Maybe," he shrugged modestly, "a grand duke, let's say."

The doctor slowly let out his breath with a sound like that which Yoga calls *Sitali*, or serpent-hiss. He looked the other in the eyes. "But you will rise," he said. "You are bound to."

The grand duke said, calmly, that he hoped so. "Believe me, Doc, it isn't easy though. I got rivals. People with other territories would like to have mine. People who work for me would also like to have mine. But I figure I'll be OK. I move with the times. My father rode a mule. I ride a Cadillac." And he proceeded to explain.

Melchior Enterprises (he said) might be compared to an iceberg of which the greater mass is submerged. There were many similar icebergs in the country, some smaller, some bigger. They generally avoided coming in collision with others, but ships were not always so fortunate. In the crime business, of course, disputes could not be settled by an industry-wide arbitrator. In which case ...

"I'm not the only one who has personnel trouble, Doc," Melchior explained. "Lots of times the others get in touch with me: 'Anthony, I need somebody. Send somebody good.' Well, one hand washes the other, I like to help out. But it's *hard*, you know, Doc, to *get* somebody really good."

Dr. Colles said he could appreciate that.

It used to be, Melchior went on, that the syndicates got the tough boys from the slums. But they did not really suit the tempo of the times. They were not so dependable. They were conspicuous. They got into fights over matters which had nothing to do with business. Right after the war there had been a supply of combat veterans available, they had been generally satisfactory, but there weren't many around anymore. The turnover was rather high.

"You know what I want, Doc?" he said. "Or, better, what I don't want? I don't want guys who're outstanding. Guys with criminal records. Guys who kill for the fun of it, or to pay off grudges or they have no control of their tempers, and another acrobat grabs their girl in the wrong place. *Not* them.

"What I want are steady fellows. Dull types who live in tract houses and have small families. I don't care what their religion is, but only *small* families. Shows what I call prudence. Or maybe they live with a mother, or with a brother or sister who has the family. Now, people like this are working for me right

along, on the legitimate. Or applying for jobs with me. But how do you know who's suitable? How? You can't just ask a guy right out."

Colles said, "And so you came to me to help you find them. Exactly as you go to business school to find accountants. And I know just the type you mean." He nodded, smiled faintly.

"I pay a flat salary," Melchior said. "Plus a bonus in negotiable bonds. That's good for everybody, nothing shows on the books for taxes. But nothing spectacular. These men I want, they're not for the spectacular and it isn't for them."

"How right you are," Doctor Colles said.

The type Melchior wanted (Colles went on) was the distillation of the average man, except, of course, that he was killer-prone. *Why* will he kill? Why will he kill perfect strangers? "We were speaking, at our first meeting," he said, "of 'lack of communication.' We might add, 'lack of religion'—'lack of love'—of the capacity to really love. These men are the men who lack. There is something dead in them. They don't kill because a fire burns in them, but because *no* fire burns in them. The potential was always there—men like your Grubacher, who shot his rival for the foreman's place—but it took my test to discover it, to channel it." He paused. "*My* test," he said.

"Oh, yes, I know the type. Men who will calmly and coolly kill to get another twenty dollars a week. Who'll kill rather than cut down on their American Standard of Living, rather than change their way of life. Why, yes—I imagine that my twenty little discoveries were quite willing once it was shown how safe and profitable it was ... Yes, I imagine they perform their missions with dispatch, with no more excitement and as much efficiency as they would in repossessing a car, reading a gas meter, or serving a summons—and then try to cheat a little on their expense account—but just a little."

"So what now, Doc?"

"So what now? Melchior, when I'd calculated all this, and your role in it, I decided that you were by way of being one of those men-who-lack, yourself."

"Yeah?"

"And then, do you know what?"

"What?"

"Then I came to the conclusion that I was by way of being one of them, too."

The grand duke raised not only his eyebrows, but his eyelids. He made a little noise resembling a giggle. And again he asked, "So now what, Doc?"

"Why—" The psychologist considered. "Now I suggest that we discuss how I may be of further use to you. I rather think I will enjoy the Professor Moriarty bit. Is Taylor privy to—He is? Yes I see it now, never mind, he's young, and lacks what I—But before that, my dear Anthony: shall we discuss that bonus, payable in negotiable bonds? In advance, of course: you are certain to attain kingly rank, perhaps even imperial, but—the hazards of the chase, you know—so: in advance."

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Toward the close of that year, at late of night, two men came down the steps of Mr. Melchior's club. It was cold, and there was a noisy wind.

"Where is your car?" Dr. Colles asked, gazing up and down the empty street.

"I told him to be here at eleven-thirty," said Mr. Melchior. "He ought to be here any minute now. You want to go back in—?" But Colles suggested a walk around the block.

As they rounded the corner and turned up their coat collars, two men turned to them, one of whom said, "Excuse me, Mac: This the way to the Terminal?"

"Oh, no," said Dr. Colles, gesturing. "You go—" One of the men took a revolver from inside his brown suit and shot Dr. Colles in the head. He fell without further words.

"Has Taylor gone crazy?" hissed Melchior, aghast. "Not here, you fool! Not now!"

"Here *and* now," the man said, stepping to one side as his companion moved forward.

"Do you know who I am?" Melchior cried.

"It don't matter," said the second man. The wind tore away the sound of the second shot and the noise Melchior made when he went down. The two walked a block and hailed a cab.

"What is this, about an eighty-cent fare?" the man in the brown suit asked his companion, who had a wart between his eyes, as he peered at the passing street signs.

"About eighty, yeah. What do you think, Joe? Taylor won't check—we could make it, say, three dollars on the swindle sheet?" Joe said he thought they could get away with three.

"You going fishing Sundy?" his companion asked.

But Joe Clock shook his head. "Sattady might is the bowling turnamint," he pointed out. "So that means I be out too late to get up early enough for fishing. You know what a late night can do if you don't get your sleep: it takes all the strenth out of you."

The other man nodded his agreement. "Well, so Sundy you can do some work on them power-tools you got in your cellar. A quiet weekend at home is a good thing in lotsa ways."

And they gazed out of the windows of the cab with no great interest and they chewed their gum as if they tasted in it the mild, approaching flavor of the quiet weekend at home.

The End

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