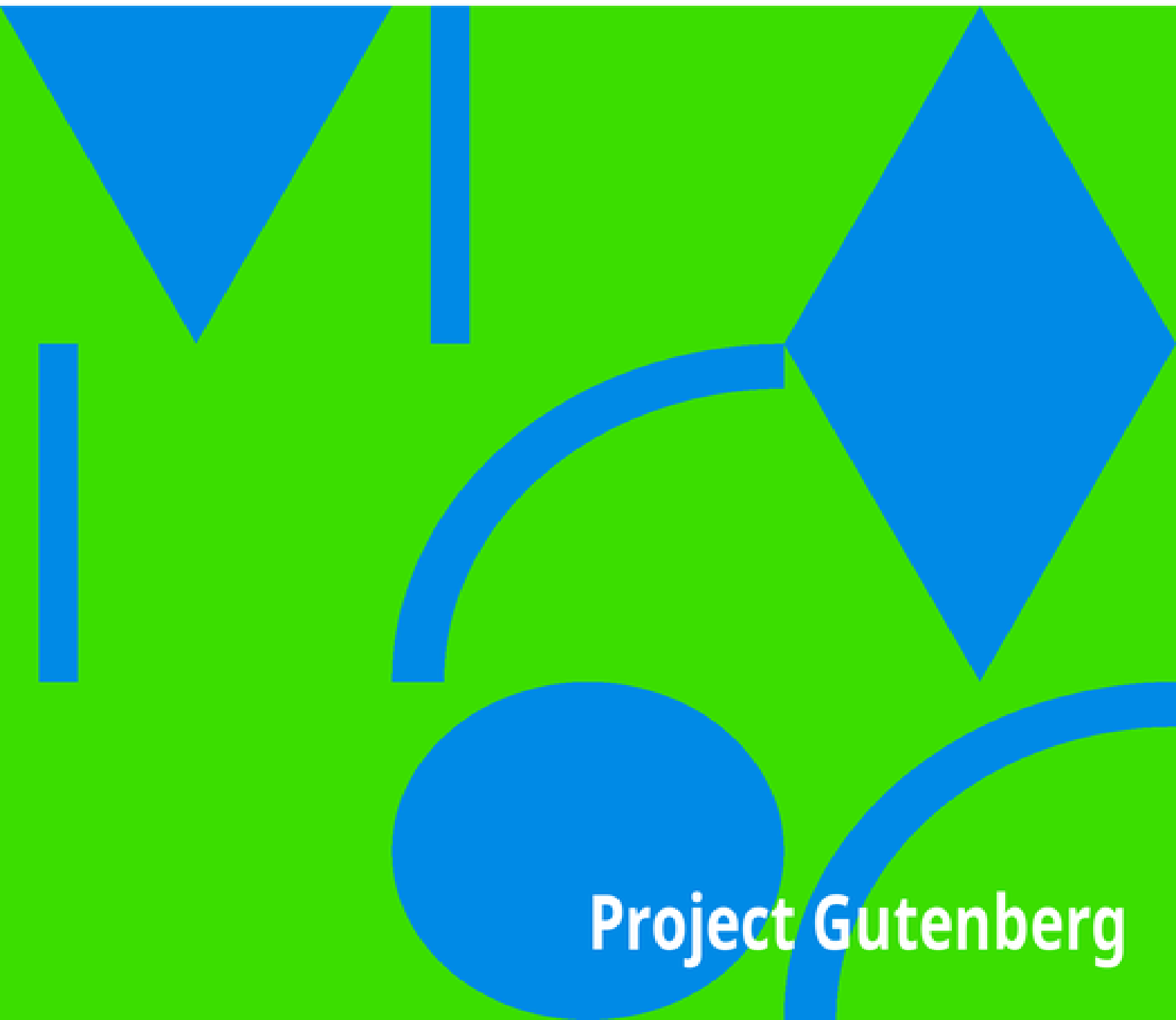


Status Quo

Mack Reynolds

An abstract geometric pattern featuring various blue shapes on a green background. The shapes include a large inverted triangle on the left, a vertical bar, a curved bar, a diamond shape on the right, a circle at the bottom, and another curved bar at the bottom right.

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK STATUS QUO

Status Quo

by Mack Reynolds

Illustrated by John Schoenherr

Analog Science Fact & Fiction

August 1961

[pg 004]

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In his income bracket and in the suburb in which he lived, government employees in the twenty-five to thirty-five age group were currently wearing tweeds. Tweeds were in. Not to wear tweeds was Non-U.

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

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

Woolford slid under the wheel, dropped the lift lever, depressed gently the thrust pedal and took off for downtown Greater Washington. Theoretically, he had another four days of vacation coming to him. He wondered [pg 006] what the Boss wanted. That was the trouble in being one of the Boss' favorite trouble shooters, when trouble arose you wound up in the middle of it. Lawrence Woolford was to the point where he was thinking in terms of graduating out of field work and taking on a desk job which meant promotion in status and pay.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Larry Woolford took it and found himself a comfortable chair. He examined the bill, front and back. It was a fifty dollar note, almost new.

Finally the Boss, a stocky but impeccable career bureaucrat of the ultra-latest school, scribbled his initials on the report and tossed it into an Out chute. He said to Woolford, "I am sorry to cut short your vacation, Lawrence. I considered giving Walter Foster the assignment, but I think you're the better choice."

Larry decided the faint praise routine was the best tactic, said earnestly about his closest rival. "Walt's a good man, sir." And then, "What's the crisis?"

“What do you think of that fifty?”

His trouble shooter looked down at it. “What is there to think about it?”

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

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

“Observe the serial numbers,” the Boss said impatiently.

They were identical.

Woolford looked up. “Counterfeit. Which one is the bad one?”

[pg 007]

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

Larry Woolford stared at his superior, blinked and then examined the bills again. “A beautiful job,” he said, “but what's it got to do with us, sir? This is Secret Service jurisdiction, counterfeiting.”

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

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

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

“I was just a kid.”

“I thought you might have read about it. At any rate, obviously a government—with all its resources—could counterfeit perfectly any currency in the world. It would have the skills, the equipment, the funds to accomplish the task. The Germans turned out hundreds of millions of

dollars and pounds with the idea of confounding the Allied financial basics.”

“And why didn't it work?”

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

Woolford was frowning. “What's this got to do with our current situation?”

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

“Yes, sir.” Woolford said. He got up and examined the two bills again. “How'd they ever detect that one was bad?”

“Pure fortune. A bank clerk with an all but eidetic memory was going through a batch of fifties. It's not too commonly used a denomination, you know. Coincidence was involved since in that same sheaf the serial number was duplicated.”

“And then?”

“The reproduction was so perfect that Secret Service was in an immediate uproar. Short of the Nazi effort, there has never been anything like it. A perfect duplication of engraving and paper identically the same. The counterfeiters have even evidently gone to the extent of putting a certain amount of artificial wear on the bills before putting them into circulation.”

Larry Woolford said, “This is out of my line. How were they able to check further, and how many more did they turn up?”

[pg 008]

“The new I.B.M. sorters help. Secret Service checked every fifty dollar bill in every institution in town both banking and governmental. Thus far, they have located ten bills in all.”

“And other cities?”

“None. They've all been passed in Greater Washington, which is suspicious in itself. The amount of expense that has gone into the manufacture of these bills does not allow for only a handful of them being passed. They should be turning up in number. Lawrence, this reproduction is such that a pusher could walk into a bank and have his false currency changed by any clerk.”

“Wow,” Larry whistled.

“Indeed.”

“So you want me to work with Secret Service on this on the off chance that the Soviet Complex is doing us deliberate dirt.”

“That is exactly the idea, Lawrence. Get to work, please, and keep in touch with me. If you need support, I can assign Walter Foster or some of the other operatives to assist you. This might have endless ramifications.”

Back in the anteroom, Woolford said to the Boss' receptionist, “I'm on a local job, LaVerne, how about assigning me a girl?”

“Can do,” she said.

“And, look, tell her to get hold of every available work on counterfeiting and pile it on my desk.”

“Right. Thinking of going into business, Larry?”

He grinned down at her. “That's the idea. Keeping up with the Jones clan in this man's town costs roughly twice my income.”

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

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

She flushed—and damn prettily, Larry Woolford decided. She could be an attractive item if it wasn't for obviously getting her kicks out of being individualistic.

Larry said suddenly, "Look, promise like a good girl not to make us conspicuous and I'll take you to the Swank Room for dinner tonight."

"Is that where all the bright young men currently have to be seen once or twice a week?" she snapped back at him. "Get lost, Larry. Being a healthy, normal woman I'm interested in men, but not necessarily in walking status-symbols."

It was his turn to flush, and, he decided wryly, he probably didn't do it as prettily as she did.

On his way to his office, he wondered why the Boss kept her on. Classically, a secretary-receptionist should have every pore in place, but in her time LaVerne Polk must have caused more than one bureaucratic eyebrow to raise. Efficiency was probably the answer; the Boss couldn't afford to let her go.

[pg 009]

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

Had he known it, this was hardly going to be routine.

He flicked the phone finally and asked for an outline. He dialed three numbers before getting his subject. The phone screen remained blank.

“Hans?” he said. “Lawrence Woolford.”

The Teutonic accent was heavy, the voice bluff. “Ah, Larry! you need some assistance to make your vacation? Perhaps a sinister, exotic young lady, complete with long cigarette holder?”

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

The other laughed. “You know better than to ask that, my friend.”

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

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

“Don't you though? Look, Hans, what's new in the Russkie camp?”

The heartiness was gone. “How do you mean?”

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

“Well now—” the other's voice drifted away.

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

“All right, all right,” the German said. “Let me think a moment. Can you give me an idea of what you're looking for?” There was an undernote of interest in the voice now.

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

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

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

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

After Woolford had hung up, he scowled at the phone. He wondered if Hans Distelmayer was lying. The German commanded the largest professional spy ring in the world. It was possible, but difficult, for anything in espionage to develop without his having an inkling.

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

Hackett said, “Woolford, you coming [pg 010] over? I understand you've been assigned to get in our hair on this job.”

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

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

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

At this time of day, parking would have been a problem, in spite of automation of the streets. He left his car in the departmental lot and took a cab.

The Counterfeit Division of the Secret Service occupied an impressive section of an impressive governmental building. Larry Woolford flashed his credentials here and there, explained to guards and receptionists here and

there, and finally wound up in Steve Hackett's office which was all but a duplicate of his own in size and decor.

Steve Hackett himself was a fairly accurate carbon copy of Woolford, barring facial resemblance alone. The fact was, Steve was almost Lincolnesque in his ugliness. Career man, about thirty, good university, crew cut, six foot, one hundred and seventy, earnest of eye. He wore Harris tweed. Larry Woolford made a note of that; possibly herringbone was coming back in. He winced at the thought of a major change in his wardrobe; it'd cost a fortune.

They'd worked on a few cases together before when Steve Hackett had been assigned to the presidential bodyguard and co-operated well.

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

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

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

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

"I can see you're going to be a lot of help. Have you got anywhere at all on the possibility that the stuff might be coming from abroad?"

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

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

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

“That's not what I'm talking about now. Let me give you a run down on standard counterfeiting.” The Secret [pg 011] Service agent pushed back in his swivel chair, lit a cigarette, and propped his feet onto the edge of a partly open desk drawer. “Briefly, it goes like this. Some smart lad gets himself a set of plates and a platen press and—”

Larry interrupted, “Where does he get the plates?”

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

Larry pursed his lips. “Quite a discount.”

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

“And these are the fellows that pass it, eh?”

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

Larry Woolford shifted in his chair. “So what are you building up to?”

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

Woolford scowled at him.

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

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

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

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

“I didn't say it was being *made* by amateurs. It's being *pushed* by amateurs—or maybe amateur is the better word.”

“How do you know?”

“For one thing, most professionals won't touch anything bigger than a twenty. Tens are better, fives better still. When you pass a fifty, the person you give it to is apt to remember [pg 012] where he got it.” Steve Hackett said slowly, “Particularly if you give one as a tip to the *maître d'hôtel* in a first-class restaurant. A *maître d'* holds his job on the strength of his ability to remember faces and names.”

Illustration.

“What else makes you think your pushers are amateurs?”

“Amateur,” Hackett corrected. “Ideally, a pusher is an inconspicuous type. The kind of person whose face you'd never remember. It's never a teenage girl who's blowing money.”

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

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

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

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

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

The phone rang and Steve flicked the switch and grumbled, “Yeah? Steven Hackett speaking.”

[pg 013]

He listened for a moment then banged the phone off and jumped to his feet. “Come on, Larry,” he snapped. “This is it.”

Larry stood, too. “Who was that?”

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

La Calvados was the swankiest French restaurant in Greater Washington, a city not devoid of swank restaurants. Only the upper-echelons in governmental circles could afford its tariffs; the clientele was more apt to consist of business mucky-mucks and lobbyists on the make. Larry Woolford had eaten here exactly twice. You could get a reputation spending money far beyond your obvious pay status.

Fredrick, the *maître de hôtel*, however, was able to greet them both by name. “Monsieur Hackett, Monsieur Woolford,” he bowed. He obviously didn't approve of La Calvados being used as a hangout where counterfeiters were picked up the authorities.

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

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

Steve looked at him impatiently. “We don't exactly beat them over the head with blackjacks, slip the bracelets on and drag them screaming to the paddywagon.”

“Of course not, monsieur, but—”

Larry Woolford's chief dined here several times a week and was probably on the best of terms with Fredrick whose decisions on tables and whose degree of servility had a good deal of influence on a man's status in Greater Washington. Larry said wearily, “We can wait until she leaves. Where is she?”

Fredrick had taken them to one side.

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

It was a teenager, all right. A youngster up to her eyebrows in the attempt to project sophistication.

Steve said, “Do you know who she is?”

“No,” Fredrick said. “Hardly our usual clientele.”

“Oh?” Larry said. “She looks like money.”

Fredrick said, “The dress appears as though it is of Chez Marie, but she wears it as though it came from Klein's. Her perfume is Chanel, but she has used approximately three times the quantity one would expect.”

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

“Why not at the bar here, Messieurs?”

“Why not?” Larry said. “I could use a drink.”

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

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

[pg 014]

Larry took out his wallet. “However, we have a certain leeway on expenses on this assignment and appreciate your co-operation.” He handed two twenties and a ten to the *maître d'*. Fredrick bowed low, the money disappearing into his clothes magically. “*Merci bien, monsieur.*”

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

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

“Vodka martini,” Steve told the bartender. “Polish vodka, of course.”

“Of course, sir.”

Larry said, “Same for me.”

The bartender left and Steve muttered, “I hate vodka.”

“Yeah,” Larry said, “But what're you going to do in a place like this, order some weird drink?”

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

She walked with her head held high, hauteur in every step. Ignoring the peasants at the tables she passed.

"Holy smokes," Steve grunted. "It's a wonder Fredrick let her in."

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

Fifty feet below La Calvados, Steve said, "Let's go, Woolford."

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

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

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

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

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

She was about five foot four in her heels, had obviously been on a round of beauty shops and had obviously instructed them to glamorize her. It hadn't come off. She still looked as though she'd be more at home as cheerleader of the junior class in small town high school. She was honey blond, green-blue of eye, and had that complexion they seldom carry even into the twenties.

"I ... I don't know what you're talking about." Her chin began to tremble.

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

“Well ... like what?” She was [pg 015] going to be blinking back tears in a moment. At least Larry hoped she'd blink them back. He'd hate to have her start howling here in public.

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

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

In the cab, Larry said, “Suppose we go over to my office, Steve?”

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

“It's Zusanette. Well, really, Susan.”

“Susan what?”

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

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

“Oh, what a mean thing to say,” she sputtered.

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

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

“Why, Larry!”

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

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

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

"Sure enough, Larry."

He followed Steve and the girl to his office.

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

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

Steve came up with a thick sheaf of bills, the top ones, at least, all fifties and tossed them to Larry's desk. He took out a school pass and read, "Susan Self, Elwood Avenue." He looked up at Larry and said, "That's right off Eastern, near Paterson Park in the Baltimore section of town, isn't it?"

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

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

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

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

She tightened her lips, and the trembling of her chin disappeared. "I ... I can't tell you that. But it's [pg 016] not counterfeit. Daddy ... my father said it was as good as any money the government prints."

“That it is,” Steve said sourly. “But it's still counterfeit, which makes it very illegal indeed to spend, Miss Self.”

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

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

“I can't. I promised”

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

“It didn't belong to anybody.”

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

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

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

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

Steve grunted skepticism. “I think we ought to arrest her,” he said.

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

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

They both looked at her.

Steve said finally, “What movement?”

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

“Who's they?” Steve snapped nastily.

“I ... I don't know.”

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

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

Larry said encouragingly, “Well, we might as well go on. Who else is a member of this Movement besides your father?”

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

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

He left.

Larry said, "Don't worry about him, Zusanette. Now then, this *movement*. That's kind of a funny name, isn't it? What does it mean?"

She was evidently glad that the less than handsome Steve Hackett had left the room. Her words flowed more freely. "Well, Daddy says that they [pg 017] call it the Movement rather than a revolution...."

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

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

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

"Oh, no."

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

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

Steve Hackett came back into the office. He said to Larry, "I sent a couple of the boys out to pick him up."

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

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

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

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

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

"Where's headquarters?" Larry said trying to keep his voice soothing.

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

"But where did you find the money, Zusannette?" Larry said.

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

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

She was proudly definite. “I mean [pg 018] tons and tons. A ton is two thousand pounds.”

“Look, Zusanette,” Larry said reasonably. “I don't know how much money weighs, exactly, but let's say a pound would be, say, a thousand bills.” He took up a pencil and scribbled on a pad before him. “A pound of fifties would be \$50,000. Then if you multiply that by 2,000 pounds to make a ton, you'd have \$100,000,000. And you say there's tons and tons?”

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

“I don't think there's quite a thousand bills in a pound,” Steve said weakly.

Larry said, “How much other money is there?”

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

Larry said, “Look, Zusanette, I don't think you're in any position to be telling us whoppers. This whole story doesn't make much sense, does it?”

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

Which was when the phone rang.

“I have an idea that's for me,” Steve said.

The screen lit up and LaVerne Polk said, “Call for Steve Hackett, Larry.”

Larry pushed the phone around so Steve could look into it. LaVerne flicked off and was replaced by a stranger in uniform. Steve said, “Yeah?”

The cop said, “He's flown the coop, sir. Must have got out just minutes before we arrived. Couldn't have taken more than a suitcase. Few papers scattered around the room he used for an office.”

Susan gasped, “You mean Daddy?”

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

Larry said, “Look Zusanette, everything's going to be all right. Nothing will happen to you. You say you managed to pick up two packets of all this money they have at headquarters. O.K. So you thought it wouldn't be missed and you've always wanted to spend money the way you see the stars do on TriD and in the movies.”

She looked at him, taken back. “How did you know?”

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

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

Steve said, carefully, “Professor who?”

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

[pg 019]

Larry summed it up for the Boss later.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The other shook his head tolerantly. "See here, Lawrence, when you begin scheming a social revolution you can't plan on an organization composed of a small number of persons who keep their existence secret. In spite of what a good many persons seem to believe, revolutions are not accomplished by handfuls of conspirators hiding in cellars and eventually overthrowing society by dramatically shooting the President, or King, or Czar, or whoever. Revolutions are precipitated by masses of people. People who have ample cause to be against whatever the current government happens to be. Usually, they are on the point of actual starvation. Have you ever read Machiavelli?"

Niccolo Machiavelli was currently *the thing* to read. Larry said with a certain dignity, "I've gone through 'The Prince,' the 'Discourses' and currently I'm amusing myself with his 'History of Florence.' "

"Anybody who can amuse himself reading Machiavelli," the Boss said dryly, "has a macabre sense of humor. At any rate, what I was alluding to was where he stated that the Prince cannot rule indefinitely in the face of the active opposition of his people. Therefore, the people always get a

government that lies within the limits of their tolerance. It may be on one edge or the other of their limits of tolerance—but it's always within their tolerance zone.”

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

The Boss said patiently, “I'm just observing that cultures aren't overthrown by little handfults of secret conspirators. You might eliminate a few individuals in that manner, in other words change the personnel of [pg 020] the government, but you aren't going to alter a socio-economic system. That can't be done until your people have been pushed outside their limits of tolerance. Very well then. A revolutionary organization must get out and propagandize. It has got to convince the people that they are being pushed beyond endurance. You have got to get the *masses* to moving. You have to give speeches, print newspapers, books, pamphlets, you have got to send your organizers out to intensify interest in your program.”

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

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

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

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

His trouble shooter cleared his throat. "I suppose you're right, sir." He added hesitantly. "We could always give Susan Self a few drops of Scop-Serum, sir."

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

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

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

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

However, he was clear of it now. Let Steve Hackett and his people take over. He, Lawrence Woolford, was due for a quick return to Astor, Florida [pg 021] and the bass fishing on the St. John's River.

He stopped at LaVerne's desk and gave her his address to be, now that his vacation was resumed.

She said, smiling up at him. "Right. The boss already told me to get in touch with Secret Service and let them know we're pulling out. What happened to Susan Self?"

Larry looked at her. "How'd you know about Susan?"

Her tone was deprecating. “Remember? You had me cut some tapes on you and that hulking Steve Hackett grilling the poor kid.”

Larry snorted. “Poor kid, yet. With her tastes for living-it-up, and that father she has, she'll probably spend the rest of her life getting in Steve's hair as a counterfeit pusher.”

“What are they going to do with her? She's just a child.”

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

“Why, Larry Woolford! How nice of you to ask me. Poor Little, Non-U me. What do you have in mind? I understand Mort Lenny's at one of the night clubs.”

Larry winced. “You know what he's been saying about the administration.”

She smiled sweetly at him.

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

[pg 022]

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

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

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

“How about Dixieland?” he said. “It's all the thing now.”

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

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

“Get out of here, you vacant minded conformist! I *like* Mort Lenny, he makes me laugh; I *hate* vodka martinis, they give me sour stomach; I don't *like* the current women's styles, nor the men's either.” LaVerne spun back to her auto-typer and began to dictate into it.

Larry glared down at her. “All right. O.K. What *do* you like?”

She snapped back irrationally, “I like what *I* like.”

He laughed at her in ridicule.

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

He turned on his heel angrily. “O.K., O.K., it takes all sorts to make a world, weirds and all.”

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

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

He got his car from the parking lot and drove home at a high level. Ordinarily, the distance being what it was, he drove in the lower and slower traffic levels but now his frustration demanded some expression.

Back at his suburban auto-bungalow, he threw all except the high priority switch and went on down into his small second cellar den. He didn't really feel like a night on the town anyway. A few vodka martinis under his belt and he'd sleep late and he wanted to get up in time for an early start for Florida. Besides, in that [pg 023] respect he agreed with the irritating wench. Vermouth was never meant to mix with Polish vodka. He wished that Sidecars would come back.

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

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

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

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

He sat down in the chair, picked up the book and scowled at the cover. He ought to be reading that Florentine history of Machiavelli's, especially if the Boss had got to the point where he was quoting from the guy. But the heck with it, he was on vacation. He didn't think much of the Italian diplomat of the Renaissance anyway; how could you be that far back without being dated?

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was astonishingly short. *Records* seemed to have slipped up on this occasion. A rare occurrence. He considered requesting the full dossier, then changed his mind. Instead he dialed [pg 024] the number of the *Sun-Post* and asked for its science columnist.

Sam Sokolski's puffy face eventually faded in.

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

Sam looked at him patiently.

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

“I'm working. I thought you were on vacation.”

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

“That's right. Anything else, Larry?”

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

“Sure I've heard of him. Covered a hassle he got into some years ago. A nice guy.”

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

“Printing presses? Don't you remember the story about him?”

“Brief me,” Larry said.

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

Larry said, “You're being *too* brief. What d'ya mean, he sued? Why?”

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

“Had he?”

“Probably.”

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

Sam said, “Oh, the government boys had a good alibi. Crackpots turn up all over the place and you have to brush them off. Every cellar scientist who comes along and says he's got a new super-fuel developed from old coffee grounds can't be given the welcome mat. Something was wrong with his

math or something and they didn't pay much attention to him. Wouldn't even let him demonstrate it. But it was the same formula, all right."

Larry Woolford was scowling. "Something wrong with his math? What kind of a degree does he have?"

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

"No wonder they turned him down. No degree at all. You can't get anywhere in science like that."

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

"Who said that?"

"Professor Voss. Not that it makes any difference what he says. Another crackpot."

After Sam's less than handsome face [pg 025] was gone from the phone, Larry walked over to the bar with his empty glass and stared at the mixer for several minutes. He began to make himself another flip, but cut it short in the middle, put down the ingredients and went back to the phone to dial *Records* again.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Larry decided that sweet long drinks were fine, but that anyone who took several of them in a row needed to be candied. He grumbled into the phone, “All right, who is it?”

A Teutonic voice chuckled and said, “You're going to have to decide whether or not you're on vacation, my friend. At this time of day, why aren't you at work?”

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

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

“Yeah, yeah,” Larry said. He was fully awake now.

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

Eivazov! In various respects, Larry Woolford's counterpart. Hatchetman for the *Chrezvychainaya Komissiya*. Woolford had met him on occasion when they'd both been present at international summit meetings, busily working at counter-espionage for their respective superiors. Blandly [pg 026] shaking hands with each other, blandly drinking toasts to peace and international co-existence, blandly sizing each other up and wondering if it'd ever come to the point where one would *blandly* treat the other to a hole in the head, possibly in some dark alley in Havana or Singapore, Leopoldville or Saigon.

Larry said sharply, "Where is he? How'd he get in the country?"

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

Larry Woolford was impatient with himself for asking. He said now, "It's not important. If we want to locate Frol and pick him up, we'll probably not have too much trouble doing it."

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

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

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

“*What* underground?” Larry snapped.

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

Larry stared at the blank phone screen.

“What kind of a change?” he said finally. “You mean a change to the Soviet system?” Surely not even the self-deluding Russkies could think it possible to overthrow the American socio-economic system in favor of the Soviet brand.

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

“Then what's Frol Eivazov's interest, if they aren't engineering it?”

Distelmayer rumbled his characteristic chuckle with humor. “My dear friend, don't be naive. Anything that happens in America is of interest to the Soviets. There is delicate peace between you now that they have changed their direction and are occupying themselves largely with the economic and agricultural development of Asia and such portions of the world as have come under their hegemony, and while you put all efforts [pg 027] into modernizing the more backward countries among your satellites.”

Larry said automatically, “Our allies aren't satellites.”

The spy-master went on without contesting the statement. “There is immediate peace but surely governmental officials on both sides keep careful watch on the internal developments of the other. True, the current heads of the Soviet Complex would like to see the governments of all the Western powers changed—but only if they are changed in the direction of

communism. They are hardly interested in seeing changes made which would strengthen the West in the, ah, Battle For Men's Minds.”

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

The German interrupted smoothly, “Evidently, that's what Frol seems to be here for, Larry. To find out more about this movement and—”

“This *what?*” Larry blurted.

“The term seems to be *movement*.”

Larry Woolford held a long silence before saying, “And Frol is actually here in this country to buck this ... this movement.”

“Not necessarily,” the other said impatiently. “He is here to find out more about it. Evidently Peking and Moscow have heard just enough to make them nervous.”

Larry said, “You have anything more, Hans?”

“I'm afraid that's about it.”

“All right,” Larry said. He added absently, “Thanks, Hans.”

“Thank me some day with deeds, not with words,” the German chuckled.

Larry Woolford looked at his watch and grimaced. He was either going to get going now or forget about doing any fishing in Florida this afternoon.

Grudgingly, he dialed the phone company's Personal Service and said to the impossibly cheerful blonde who answered, "Where can I find Professor Peter Voss who teaches over at the University in Baltimore? I don't want to talk with him, just want to know where he'll be an hour from now."

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

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

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

The Professor's house, he noted, was of an earlier day and located on the opposite side of Paterson Park from Elwood avenue, the street on which Susan Self and her father had resided. That didn't necessarily hold significance, the park was a large one and the Professor's section a well-to-do [pg 028] neighborhood, while Self's was just short of a slum these days.

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

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

It was obviously the Professor himself who answered.

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

A weird, Larry decided immediately. He wondered at the University, one of the nation's best, keeping on such a figure.

"Professor Voss?" he said. "Lawrence Woolford." He brought forth his identification.

The Professor blinked down at it. "I see," he said. "Won't you come in?"

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

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

Larry cleared his throat without saying anything. This was a weird one, all right.

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

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

The Professor took up a battered [pg 029] humidor. "Cigar?" he said. "Manila. Hard to get these days."

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

"Thanks, no," Larry said. "I smoke a pipe."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"He's disappeared," Larry said.

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

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

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

Larry Woolford was feeling his way. Now he said mildly, "I was under the impression that American free enterprise gave the individual the best opportunity to prove himself and that if he had it on the ball he'd get to the top."

"Were you really?" the Professor said snappishly. "And did you know that Edison died a comparatively poor man with an estate somewhere in the vicinity of a hundred thousand dollars? An amount that might sound like a good deal to you or me, but, when you consider his contributions, shockingly little. Did you know that Eli Whitney realized little, if [pg 030] anything, from the cotton gin? Or that McCormick didn't invent the reaper but gained it in a dubious court victory? Or take Robert Goddard, one of the best examples of modern times. He developed the basics of rocket technology—gyroscopic stabilizers, fuel pumps, self-cooling motors,

landing devices. He died in 1945 leaving behind twenty-two volumes of records that proved priceless. What did he get out of his researches? Nothing. It was fifteen years later that his widow won her suit against the government for patent infringements!”

Illustration.

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

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

“Ernest Self holds none of the status labels that count. The fact that he is a genius means nothing. He is supposedly qualified no more than to hold a janitor's position in laboratories [pg 031] where his inferiors conduct experiments in fields where he is a dozenfold more capable than they. No one is interested in his genius, they want to know what status labels are pinned to him. Ernest has no respect for labels.”

Larry Woolford figured he was picking up background and didn't force a change of subject. “Just what do you mean by intuitive scientist?”

“It's a term I have used loosely,” the Professor admitted. “Possibly a scientist who makes a break-through in his field, destroying formerly held positions—in Self's case, without the math, without the accepted theories to back him. He finds something that works, possibly without knowing why or how and by using unorthodox analytical techniques. An intuitive scientist, if I may use the term, is a thorn in the side of our theoretical physicists laden

down with their burden of a status label but who are themselves short of the makings of a Leonardo, a Newton, a Galileo, or even a Nicholas Christofilos.”

“I’m afraid that last name escapes me,” Larry said.

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

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

The Professor snorted his contempt. “Tell me,” he said, “to which class do you consider yourself to belong?”

Larry Woolford shrugged. “I suppose individuals in my bracket are usually thought of as being middle-middle class.”

“And you have no feeling of revolt in having such a label hung on you? Consider this system for a moment. You have lower-lower, middle-lower, and upper-lower; then you have lower-middle, middle-middle, upper-middle; then you have lower-upper, middle-upper, and finally we achieve to upper-upper class. Now tell me, when we get to that rarified category, who do we find? Do we find an Einstein, a Schweitzer, a Picasso; outstanding scientists, humanitarians, the great writers, artists and musicians of our day? Certainly not. We find ultra-wealthy playboys and girls, a former king and his duchess who eke out their income by accepting fees to attend [pg 032]

parties, the international born set, bearers of meaningless feudalistic titles. These are your upper-upper class!"

Larry laughed.

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

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

Larry stared at him blankly.

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

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

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

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

"When you knew him, evidently he was working on rocket fuels. Have you any idea whether he later developed a method of producing perfect counterfeit?"

[pg 033]

The Professor said, "Ernest Self? Surely you are jesting."

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

"Movement?" the Professor said emptily.

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

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

"Certainly not," Woolford shook his head.

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

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

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

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

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

Larry sipped the strong coffee. "It seems there might be a connection."

The Professor shook his head. "It's hard to imagine Ernest Self being connected with a criminal pursuit."

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

The Professor gaped at him.

Larry chuckled uncomfortably.

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

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

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

Larry said unhappily, “She used the term *the Professor*.”

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

Larry said, “In my profession, Professor [pg 034] Voss, we track down every possible clue. Thus far, you are the only professor of whom we know who was connected with Ernest Self.”

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

Larry Woolford decided that he wasn't doing too well and that he'd need more ammunition if he was going to return to this particular attack. He was surprised that the old boy hadn't already ordered him from the house.

He finished the coffee preparatory to coming to his feet. “Then you think it's out of the question, Ernest Self belonging to a revolutionary organization?”

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

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

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

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

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

Larry Woolford began to say, “Are you sure that you aren't interested in this *move*—”

But it was then that the knockout drops hit him.

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

Steve Hackett, far away, said, “He's snapping out of it.”

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

“What happened?” he muttered.

“Now that's an original question,” Steve said.

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

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

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

Steve said sarcastically, “You've been slipped a mickey, my cloak and dagger friend, and the bird has flown.”

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

[pg 035]

“Humor we get, yet,” Hackett said, his ugly face scowling. “Listen, I thought you people had pulled out of this case.”

Larry sat up and swung his two feet around to the floor. “So did I,” he moaned, “but there were two or three things that bothered me and I thought I’d tidy them up before leaving.”

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

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

Steve growled to him, “Give the place the works. He’s probably left some clues around that’ll give us a line.”

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

Larry shook his head for clarity and looked at him. “Susan? What are you talking about? You don’t have any aspirin, do you?”

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

“Who’s Betsy Hughes?”

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

Larry stared at him. Finally he said, "What time is it?"

"About two o'clock."

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

It was Steve Hackett's turn to stare.

"You mean your department doesn't have Susan Self?"

"Not so far as I know. The Boss told me yesterday that we were pulling out, that it was all in your hands. What would we want with Susan?"

"Oh, great," Steve snarled. "There goes our last contact. Ernest Self, Professor Voss, and now Susan Self; they've all disappeared."

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

Steve snorted sarcastically. "If you can foul things up this well when [pg 036] you're off the case, God only knows what you'll accomplish using your facilities on an all-out basis."

The Boss said slowly, "Whoever we are working against evidently isn't short of resources. Abducting that young lady was no simple matter." The career diplomat worked his lips in and out, in all but a pout.

Larry Woolford, who'd taken time out to go home, shower, change clothes and medicate himself out of his dope induced hangover, sat across the desk from him, flanked by Steve Hackett.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[pg 037]

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

The Boss was shaking his head. “You're not thinking clearly, Lawrence. Revolution, *per se*, is not illegal in the United States. Our Constitution was probably the first document of its kind which allowed for its own amendment. The men who wrote it provided for changing it either slightly or *in toto*. Whenever the majority of the American people decide completely to abandon the Constitution and govern themselves by new laws, they have the right to do it.”

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

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

“What are we getting at, sir?” Steve Hackett said, impatiently.

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

Larry said, desperately, "Sir, you just pointed out a few minutes ago that this Movement is a secret organization trying to make changes in some unique manner. In short, they don't figure on using the ballot to put over their revolution. That makes them as illegal as the Commies, doesn't it?"

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

Steve Hackett snorted, "Secret Service does! If those bales of money the Self kid told us about are ever put into circulation, there'll be hell to pay."

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

[pg 038]

On awakening in the morning, Larry Woolford stared glumly at the ceiling for long moments before dragging himself from bed. This was, he decided, the strangest assignment he'd ever been on. In his day he'd trekked through South America, Common Europe, a dozen African states, and even areas of Southern Asia, combatting Commie pressures here, fellow-traveler organizations there, disrupting plots hatched in the Soviet Complex in the other place. On his home grounds in the United States he'd covered everything from out and out Soviet espionage, to exposing Communist activities of complexions from the faintest of pinks to the rosiest Trotskyite red. But, he decided he'd never expected to wind up after a bunch of weirds whose sole actionable activity to date seemed to be the counterfeiting of a fantastic amount of legal tender which thus far they were making no attempt to pass.

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

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

He needed a new angle on which to work. Steve Hackett was undoubtedly handling the tracing down of the counterfeit with all the resources of the Secret Service. Possibly there was some way of detecting the source of the paper they'd used.

He finished his final cup of coffee in the living room and took up the [pg 039] pipe he was currently breaking in. He loaded it automatically from a humidor and lit it with his pocket lighter. Three drags, and he tossed it back to the table, fumbled in a drawer and located a pack of cigarettes. Possibly his status group was currently smoking British briars in public, but, let's face it, he hated the confounded things.

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

Sam said, "You shouldn't drink alone. Listen, Larry, why don't you get in touch with Alcoholics Anonymous. It's a great outfit."

"You ought to know," Larry growled. "Look, Sam, as science columnist for that rag you work for you probably come in touch with a lot of eggheads."

"Laddy-buck, you have said it," Sam said.

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

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

Larry Woolford stared at him. “Are you kidding, Sam?”

The other was mystified. “Why should I kid you? As a matter of fact, [pg 040] I was thinking of doing a column one of these days on Voss and this Movement of his.”

“*Voss* and this movement of his!”

“Sure,” Sam said, “he's the top leader.”

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

“I seem to spend half my time briefing you in information any semi-moron ought to be up on,” Sam said nastily. “However, *briefly*, they're in revolt against social-label judgments. They think it's fouling up the country and that eventually it'll result in the Russkies passing us in all the fields that really count.”

“I keep running into this term,” Larry complained. “What do you mean, social-label judgments, and how can they possibly louse up the country?”

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

“Everybody today wants to be rated on a (1) personal, or, (2) social-label basis, depending on which basis is to his greatest advantage. The Negro who is a no-good, lazy, obnoxious person demands to be accepted because Negroes should not be discriminated against. The highly competent, hard working, honest and productive Negro wants to be accepted because he is hard-working, honest and productive—and should be so accepted.

“See what I mean? This social-label system is intended to relieve the individual of the necessity of judging, and the consequences of being judged. If you have poor judgment, and are forced to rely on your own judgment, you're almost sure to go under. So persons of poor judgment

support our social-label system. If you're a louse, and are correctly judged as being a louse, you'd prefer that the social dictum 'Human beings are never lice' should apply."

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

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

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

"According to members of the Movement, today the tribesman type [pg 041] is seeking to reduce civilization back to ritual-taboo tribalism wherein no one man's judgment is of any value. The union wants advancement based on seniority, not on ability and judgment. The persons with whom you associate socially judge you by the amount of money you possess, the family from which you come, the degrees you hold, by social-labels—not by your proven abilities. Down with judgment! is the cry."

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

Sam shrugged. "There's a lot of sense in it. What the Movement wants is to develop a socio-economic system in which judgment produces a maximum advantage."

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

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

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

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

"And that is?"

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

Larry thought about it for a moment.

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

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

"At his home, I imagine, or at the University."

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

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

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

Sam thought about it. “There's Frank Nostrand. You know, that rocket [pg 042] expert who was fired when he got in the big hassle with Senator McCord.”

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

Illustration.

One result, he decided glumly, of labeling everything contrary to the *status quo* as *weird* and dismissing it with contempt. Admittedly, that would have been his own reaction only a week ago.

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

Larry snorted and dialed the Department of Records. He'd never heard of Frank Nostrand before, so he got Information.

The bright young thing who answered seemed to have a harried expression untypical of Records employees. Larry said to her, "I'd like the brief on a Mr. Frank Nostrand who is evidently an expert on rockets. The only other thing I know about him is that he recently got in the news as the result of a controversy with Senator McCord."

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

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

“Mr. Franklin Howard Nostrand,” she said, “currently employed by Madison Air as a rocket research technician.”

“That must be him,” Larry said. “I’m in a hurry, Miss. What’s his background?”

Her eyes rounded. “It says ... it says he’s an Archbishop of the Anglican Church.”

Larry Woolford looked at her.

She looked back, pleadingly.

Larry scowled and said, “His university degrees, please.”

Her eyes darted to the report and she swallowed. “A bachelor in Home Economics, sir.”

“Look here, Miss, how could a Home Economics degree result in his becoming either an Archbishop or a rocket technician?”

“I’m sorry, sir. That’s what it says.”

Larry was fuming but there was no point in taking it out on this junior employee of the Department of Records. He snapped, “Just give me his address, please.”

She said agonizingly, “Sir, it says, Lhasa, Tibet.”

A red light flicked at the side of his phone and he said to her, “I’ll call you back. I’m getting a priority call.”

[pg 043]

He flicked her off, and flicked the incoming call in. It was LaVerne Polk. She seemed to be on the harried side, too.

“Larry,” she said, “you better get over here right away.”

“What's up, LaVerne?”

“This Movement,” she said, “it seems to have started moving! The Boss says to get over here soonest.”

The top of his car was retracted. Larry Woolford slammed down the walk of his auto-bungalow and vaulted over the side and into the seat. He banged the start button, dropped the lift lever, depressed the thrust pedal and took off at maximum acceleration.

He took the police level for maximum speed and was in downtown Greater Washington in flat minutes.

So the Movement had started moving. That could mean almost anything. It was just enough to keep him stewing until he got to the Boss and found out what was going on.

He turned his car over to a parker and made his way to the entrance utilized by the second-grade department officials. In another year, or at most two, he told himself all over again, he'd be using that other door. He had an intuitive feeling that if he licked this current assignment it'd be the opening wedge he needed and he'd wind up in a status bracket unique for his age.

LaVerne looked up when he hurried into her anteroom. She evidently had two or three calls going on at once, taking orders from one phone, giving them in another. Something was obviously erupting. She didn't speak to him, merely nodded her head at the inner office.

In the Boss' office were six or eight others besides Larry's superior. Their expressions and attitudes ran from bewilderment to shock. They weren't the men you'd expect to have such reactions. At least not those that Larry Woolford recognized. Three of them, Ben Ruthenberg, Bill Fraina and Dave Moskowitz were F.B.I. men with whom Larry had worked on occasion. One

of the others he recognized as being a supervisor with the C.I.A. Walt Foster, Larry's rival in the Boss' affections, was also present.

The Boss growled at him, "Where in the heavens have you been, Lawrence?"

"Following our leads on this so-called Movement, sir," Larry told him. "What's going on?"

Ruthenberg, the Department of Justice man, grunted sour amusement. "So-called Movement, isn't exactly the correct phrase. It's a Movement, all right."

The Boss said, "Please dial Records and get your dossier, Lawrence. That'll be the quickest way to bring you up on developments."

Mystified, but already with a growing premonition, Larry dialed Records. Knowing his own classification code, he had no need of Information this time. He got the hundred-word brief and stared at it as it filled the screen. The only items really correct were his name and present occupation. Otherwise his education was [pg 044] listed as grammar school only. His military career had him ending the war as a General of the Armies, and his criminal career record included four years on Alcatraz for molesting small children.

Blankly, he faded the brief and dialed his full dossier. It failed to duplicate the brief, but that was no advantage. This time he had an M.D. degree from Johns Hopkins, but his military career listed him as a dishonorable discharge from the navy where he'd served in the steward department. His criminal record was happily nil, but his religion was listed as Holy Roller. Political affiliations had him down as a member of the Dixiecrats.

The others were looking at him, most of them blankly, although there were grins on the faces of Moskowitz and the C.I.A. man.

Moskowitz said, "With a name like mine, yet, they have me a Bishop of the Orthodox Greek Catholic Church."

Larry said, "What's it all about?"

Ruthenberg said unhappily, "It started early this morning. We don't know exactly when as yet." Which didn't seem to answer the question.

Larry said, "I don't get it. Obviously, the Records department is fouled up in some manner. How, and why?"

"How, we know," the Boss rumbled disgustedly. "Why is another matter. You've spent more time than anyone else on this assignment, Lawrence. Perhaps you can tell us." He grabbed up a pipe from his desk, tried to light it noisily, noticed finally that it held no tobacco and threw it to the desk again. "Evidently, a large group of these Movement individuals either already worked in Records or wriggled themselves into key positions in the technical end of the department. Now they've sabotaged the files."

"We've caught most of them already," one of the F.B.I. men growled, "but damn little good that does us at this point."

The C.I.A. supervisor made a gesture indicating that he gave it all up. "Not only here but in Chicago and San Francisco as well. All at once. Evidently perfectly rehearsed. Personnel records from coast to coast are bollixed. Why?"

Larry said slowly, "I think I know that now. Yesterday, I wouldn't have but I've been picking up odds and ends."

They all looked at him.

Larry sat down and ran a hand back through his hair. "The general idea is to change the country's reliance on social-label judgments."

"On *what*," the Boss barked.

"On one person judging another according to social-labels. Voss and the others—"

“Who did you say?” Ruthenberg snapped.

“Voss. Professor Peter Voss from the University over in Baltimore section. He's the ring leader.”

Ruthenberg snapped to Fraina, “Get on the phone and send out a pick-up order for him.”

Fraina was on his feet. “What charge, Ben?”

[pg 045]

Ben Ruthenberg snorted. “Rape, or something. Get moving, we'll figure out a charge later. The guy's a fruitcake.”

Larry said wearily, “He's evidently gone into hiding. I've been trying to locate him. He managed to slip me some knockout drops and got away yesterday.”

The Boss looked at him in disgust.

Ruthenberg said evenly, “We've had men go into hiding before. Get going, Fraina.”

Fraina left the office and the others looked back to Larry.

The Boss said, “About this social-label nonsense—”

Larry said, “They think the country is going to pot because of it. People hold high office or places of responsibility not because of superior intelligence, or even acquired skill, but because of the social-labels they've accumulated, and these can be based on something as flimsy—from the Movement's viewpoint—as who your grandparents were, what school you attended, how much seniority you have on the job, what part of town you live in, or what tailor cuts your clothes.”

Their expressions ran from scowls and frowns to complete puzzlement.

Walt Foster grumbled, “What's all this got to do with sabotaging the country's Records tapes?”

Larry shrugged. "I don't have the complete picture, but one thing is sure. It's going to be harder for a while to base your opinions on a quick hundred-word brief on a man. Yesterday, an employer, considering hiring somebody, could dial the man's dossier, check it, and form his opinions by the status labels the would-be employee could produce. Today, he's damn well going to have to exercise his own judgment."

LaVerne's face lit up the screen on the Boss' desk and she said, "Those two members of the Movement who were picked up in Alexandria are here, sir."

"Send them in," the Boss rumbled. He looked at Larry. "The F.B.I. managed to arrest almost everyone directly involved in the sabotage."

The two prisoners seemed more amused than otherwise. They were young men, in their early thirties—well dressed and obviously intelligent. The Boss had them seated side by side and glared at them for a long moment before speaking. Larry and the others took chairs in various parts of the room and added their own stares to the barrage.

The Boss said, "Your situation is an unhappy one, gentlemen."

One of the two shrugged.

The Boss said, "You can, ah, hedge your bets, by co-operating with us. It might make the difference between a year or two in prison—and life."

One of them grinned and then yawned. "I doubt it," he said.

The Boss tried a slightly different tack. "You have no reason to maintain a feeling of obligation to Voss and the others. You have obviously been abandoned. Had they any feeling for you there would have been more efficacious arrangements for your escape."

[pg 046]

The more articulate of the two shrugged again. "We were expendable," he said. "However, it won't be long before we're free again."

"You think so?" Ruthenberg grunted.

The revolutionist looked at him. "Yes, I do," he said. "Six months from now and we'll be heroes since by that time the Movement will have been a success."

The Boss snorted. "Just because you deranged the Records? Why that's but temporary."

"Not so temporary as you think," the technician replied. "This country has allowed itself to get deeply enmeshed in punch-card and tape records. Oh, it made sense enough. With the population we have, and the endless files that result from our ultra-complicated society, it was simply a matter finally of developing a standardized system of records for the nation as a whole. Now, for all practical purposes, *all* of our records these days are kept with the Department of Records, confidential as well as public records. Why should a university, for instance, keep literally tons of files, with all the expense and space and time involved, when it can merely file the same records with the governmental department and have them safe and easily available at any time? Now, the Movement has completely and irrevocably destroyed almost all files that deal with the social-labels to which we object. An excellent first step, in forcing our country back into judgment based on ability and intelligence."

"First step!" Larry blurted.

The two prisoners looked at him. "That's right," the quieter of the two said. "This is just the first step."

"Don't kid yourselves," Ben Ruthenberg snapped at them. "It's also the last!"

The two members of the Movement grinned at him.

When the others had gone, the Boss looked at Larry Woolford. He said sourly, "When this department was being formed, I doubt anyone had in mind this particular type of subversion, Lawrence."

Larry grunted. "Give me a good old-fashioned Commie, any time. Look, sir, what are the Department of Justice boys going to do with those prisoners?"

"Hold them on any of various charges. We've conflicted with the F.B.I. in the past on overlapping jurisdiction, but thank heavens for them now. Their manpower is needed."

Larry leaned forward. "Sir, we ought to take all members of the Movement we've already arrested, feed them a dose of Scop-Serum, and pressure them to open up on the organization's operations."

His superior looked at him, waiting for him to continue.

Larry said urgently, "Those two we just had in here thought the whole thing was a big joke. The first step, they called it. Sir, there's something considerably bigger than this cooking. Uncle Sam might pride himself on the personal liberties guaranteed [pg 047] by this country, but unless we break this organization, and do it fast, there's going to be trouble that will make this fouling of the records look like the minor matter those two jokers seemed to think it."

The Boss thought about that. He said slowly, "Lawrence, the Supreme Court ruled against the use of Scop-Serum. Not that it is over efficient, anyway. Largely, these so-called truth serums don't accomplish much more than to lower resistance, slacken natural inhibitions, weaken the will."

"Sure," Larry said. "But give a man a good dose of Scop-Serum and he'd betray his own mother. Not because he's helpless to tell a lie, but because under the influence of the drug he figures it just isn't important enough to bother about. Sir, Supreme Court or not, I think those two ought to be given Scop-Serum along with all other Movement members we've picked up."

The Boss was shaking his head. "Lawrence, these men are not wide-eyed radicals picked up in a street demonstration. They're highly respected members of our society. They're educators, scientists, engineers, technicians. Anything done to them is going to make headlines. Those that were actually involved in the sabotage will have criminal charges brought

against them, but they're going to get a considerable amount of publicity, and we're going to be in no position to alienate any of their constitutional rights.”

Larry stood up, approached his chief's desk and leaned over it urgently. “Sir, that's fine, but we've got to move and move fast. Something's up and we don't even know what! Take that counterfeit money. From Susan Self's description, there's actually billions of dollars worth of it.”

“Oh, come now, Lawrence. The child exaggerated. Besides, that's a problem for Steven Hackett and the Secret Service, we have enough on our hands as it is. Forget about the counterfeit, Lawrence. I think I shall put you in complete control of field work on this, to co-operate in liaison with Ben Ruthenberg and the F.B.I. So far as we're concerned, the counterfeit angle belongs to Secret Service, we're working on subversion, and until the Civil Liberties Union or whoever else proves otherwise, we'll consider this Movement an organization attempting to subvert the country by illegal means.”

Larry Woolford made a hard decision quickly. He was shaking his head. “Sir, I'd rather you gave the administrative end to someone else and let me continue in the field. I've got some leads—I think. If I get bogged down in interdepartmental red tape, and in paper work here at headquarters, I'll never get to the heart of this and I'm laying bets that we either crack this within days or there are going to be some awfully big changes in this country.”

The Boss glared at him. “You mean you're refusing this assignment, Woolford. Confound it, don't you realize it's a promotion?”

Larry was worriedly dogged. “Sir, I'd rather stay in the field.”

[pg 048]

“Very well,” the other snapped disgustedly, “I hope you deliver some results, Woolford, otherwise I am afraid I won't feel particularly happy about your somewhat cavalier rejection of this opportunity.” He flicked on the phone and snapped to LaVerne Polk, “Miss Polk, locate Walter Foster for me. He is to take over our end of this Movement matter.”

LaVerne said, "Yes, sir," and her face was gone.

The Boss looked up, still scowling. "What are you waiting for, Woolford?"

"Yes, sir," Larry said. It was just coming home to him now, what he'd done. There possibly went his yearned for promotion in the department. There went his chance of an upgrading in status. And Walt Foster, of all people, in his place.

At LaVerne's desk, Larry stopped off long enough to say, "Did you ever assign that secretary to me?"

LaVerne shook her head at him. "She's come and gone, Larry. She sat around for a couple of days, after seeing you not even once, and then I gave her another assignment."

"Well, bring her back again, will you? I want her to do up briefs for me on all the information we accumulate on the Movement. It'll be coming in from all sides now. From the Press, from those members we've arrested, from our F.B.I. pals, now that they're interested, and so forth."

"I'll give you Irene Day," LaVerne said. "Where are you off to now, Larry?"

"Probably a wild goose chase," Larry growled. "Which reminds me. Do me a favor, LaVerne. Call Personal Service and find out where Frank Nostrand is. He's some kind of rocket technician at Madison Air Laboratories. I'll be in my office."

"Frank Nostrand," LaVerne said briskly. "Will do, Larry."

Back in his own cubicle, Larry stood for a moment in thought. He was increasingly aware of the uncomfortable feeling that time was running out on them. That things were coming to a dangerous head.

He stared down at the dozen or more books and pamphlets that his never seen secretary had heaped up for him. Well, he certainly didn't have time for

them now.

He sat down at the desk and dialed an inter-office number.

The harassed looking face of Walter Foster faded in. On seeing Larry Woolford he growled accusingly, "My pal. You've let them dump this whole thing into my lap."

Larry grinned at him. "Better you than me, old buddy. Besides, it's a promotion. Pull this off and you'll be the Boss' right-hand man."

"That's a laugh," Foster said. "It's a madhouse. This Movement gang is as weird as they come."

"I bleed for you," Larry said. "However, here's a tip. Frol Eivazov, of the *Chrezvychainaya Komissiya* is somewhere in the country."

"Frol Eivazov!" Foster blurted. "What've the Commies got to do with this? Is this something the Boss knows about?"

[pg 049]

"Haven't had time to go into it with him," Larry said. "However, it seems that friend Frol is here to find out what the Movement is all about. Evidently the big boys in Peking and Moscow are nervous about any changes that might take place over here. I suggest you have him picked up, Walt."

Illustration.

Walt Foster said, "O.K. I'll put some people on it. Maybe the F.B.I. can help."

Larry flicked off as he saw the red priority light on his phone shining. He pushed it and LaVerne's face faded in.

She said, "This Franklin Nostrand you wanted to know about. He's evidently working at the laboratories over in Newport News, Larry. He'll be

on the job until five this afternoon.”

“Fine,” he said. Larry grinned at her. “When are we going to have that date, LaVerne?”

She made a face. “Some day when the program involves having fun instead of parading around in the right places, driving the right model car, dressed in exactly the right clothes, and above all associating with the right people.”

It was his turn to grimace. “I’m beginning to think you ought to sign up with Voss and this Movement of his. You’d be right at home with his weirds.”

She stuck out her tongue at him, and flicked off.

He looked at the empty screen and chuckled. He had half a mind to get a record of their conversation, strip out [pg 050] just the section where she’d stuck out her tongue, and then play it back to her. She’d be taken aback by being confronted by her own image making faces at her.

As he made his way to the parking lot for his car, something in their conversation nagged at him, but he couldn’t put his finger on it. He considered the girl, all over again. She had almost all the qualities he looked for. She was attractive, without being overly so. He disliked women out of the ordinarily beautiful, it became too much to live up to. She was sharp, but not objectionably so. Not to the point of giving you an inferiority complex.

But, Holy Smokes, she’d never do as a career man’s wife. He could just see the Boss’ ultraconservative better half inviting them to dinner. It would happen exactly once, never again.

He obtained his car, lifted it to one of the higher levels and headed for Newport News. It was a half-hour trip and he wasn’t particularly expectant of results. The tip Sam Sokolski had given him, wasn’t much to go by. Evidently, Frank Nostrand was a friend of the Professor’s but that didn’t necessarily mean he was connected with the movement, or that he knew Voss’ whereabouts.

He might have saved himself the trip.

The bird had flown again. Not only was Frank Nostrand not at the Madison Air Laboratories, but he wasn't at home either. Larry Woolford, mindful of his departmental chief's words on the prestige these people carried, took a full hour in acquiring a search warrant before breaking into the Nostrand home.

Nostrand was supposedly a bachelor, but the auto-bungalow, similar to Larry Woolford's own, showed signs of double occupancy, and there was little indication that the guest had been a woman.

Disgruntled, Larry Woolford dialed the offices, asked for Walt Foster. It took nearly ten minutes before his colleague faded in.

"I'm up to my eyebrows, Larry. What'd you want?"

Larry gave him Frank Nostrand's address. "This guy's disappeared, Walt."

"So?"

"He was a close friend of Professor Voss. I got a warrant to search his house. It shows signs that he had a guest. Possibly it was the Professor. Do you want to get some of the boys down here to go through the place? Possibly there's some clue to where they took off for. The Professor's on the run and he's no professional at this. If we can pick *him* up, I've got a sneaking suspicion we'll have the so-called Movement licked."

Walt Foster slapped a hand to his face in anguish. "You knew where the Professor was hiding, and you tried to pick him up on your own and let him get away. Why didn't you discuss this with either the Boss or me? I'm in charge of this operation! I would have had a dozen men down there. You've fouled this up!"

Larry stared at him. Already Walt [pg 051] Foster was making sounds like an enraged superior.

He said mildly, "Sorry, Walt. I came down here on a very meager tip. I didn't really expect it to pan out."

"Well, in the future, clear with either me or the Boss before running off half cocked into something, Woolford. Yesterday, you had this whole assignment on your own. Today, it's no longer a minor matter. Our department has fifty people on it. The F.B.I. must have five times as many and that's not even counting the Secret Service's interest. It's no longer your individual baby."

"Sorry," Larry repeated mildly. Then, "I don't imagine you've got hold of Frol Eivazov yet?"

The other was disgusted. "You think we're magicians? We just put out the call for him a few hours ago. He's no amateur. If he doesn't want to be picked up, he'll go to ground and we'll have our work cut out for us finding him. I can't see that it's particularly important anyway."

"Maybe you're right," Larry said. "But you never know. He might know things we don't. See you later."

Walt Foster stared at him for a moment as though about to say something, but then tightened his lips and faded off.

Larry looked at the phone screen for a moment. "Did that phony expect me to call him *sir*," he muttered.

The next two days dissolved into routine.

Frustrated, Larry Woolford spent most of his time in his office digesting developments, trying to find a new line of attack.

For want of something else, he put his new secretary, a brightly efficient girl, as style and status conscious as LaVerne Polk wasn't, to work typing up the tapes he'd had cut on Susan Self and the various phone calls he'd had

with Hans Distelmayer and Sam Sokolski. From memory, he dictated to her his conversation with Professor Peter Voss.

He carefully read the typed sheets over and over again. He continually had the feeling in this case that there were loose ends dangling around. Several important points he should be able to put his finger upon.

On the morning of the third day he dialed Steve Hackett and on seeing the other's worried, pug-ugly face fade in on the phone, decided that if nothing else the Movement was undermining the United States government by dispensing ulcers to its employees.

Steve growled, "What is it Woolford? I'm as busy as a whirling dervish in a revolving door."

"This is just the glimmer of an idea, Steve. Look, remember that conversation with Susan, when she described her father taking her to headquarters?"

"So?" Steve said impatiently.

"Remember her description of headquarters?"

"Go on," Steve rapped.

"What did it remind you of?"

"What are you leading to?"

[pg 052]

"This is just a hunch," Larry persisted, "but the way she described the manner in which her father took her to headquarters suggests they're in the Greater Washington area."

Steve was staring at him disgustedly. How obvious could you get?

Larry hurried on. "What's the biggest business in this area, Steve?"

"Government."

“Right. And the way she described headquarters of the Movement, was rooms, after rooms, after rooms into which they'd stored the money.”

“And?”

Larry said urgently, “Steve, I think in some way the Movement has taken over some governmental buildings, or storage warehouse. Possibly some older buildings no longer in use. It would be a perfect hideout. Who would expect a subversive organization to be in governmental buildings? All they'd need would be a few officials here and there who were on their side and—”

Steve said wearily, “You couldn't have thought of this two days ago.”

Larry cut himself off sharply, “Eh?”

Steve said, “We found their headquarters. One of their members cracked. Ben Ruthenberg of the F.B.I. found he had a morals rap against him some years ago and scared him into talking by threats of exposure. At any rate, you're right. They had established themselves in some government buildings going back to Spanish-American War days. We've arrested eight or ten officials that were involved.”

“But the money?”

“The money was gone,” Steve said bitterly. “But Susan was right. There had evidently been room after room of it, stacked to the ceiling. Literally billions of dollars. They'd moved out hurriedly, but they left kicking around enough loose hundreds, fifties, twenties, tens and fives to give us an idea. Look, Woolford, I thought you'd been pulled off this case and that Walt Foster was handling it.”

Larry said sourly, “I'm beginning to think so, too. They're evidently not even bothering to let me know about developments like this. See you later, Steve.”

The other's face faded off.

Larry Woolford looked across the double desk at Irene Day. “Look,” he said, “when you're offered a promotion, take it. If you don't, someone else will and you'll be out in the cold.”

Irene Day said brightly, “I've always know that, sir.”

He looked at her. The typical eager beaver. Sharp as a whip. Bright as a button. “I'll bet you have,” he muttered.

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Woolford?”

The phone lit as LaVerne said, “The Boss wants to talk to you, Larry.” Her face faded and Larry's superior was scowling at him.

He snapped, “Did you get anything on this medical records thing, Woolford?”

“Medical records?” Larry said blankly.

The Boss grunted in deprecation. [pg 053] “No, I suppose you haven't. I wish you would snap into it, Woolford. I don't know what has happened to you of late. I used to think that you were a good field man.” He flicked off abruptly.

Larry dialed LaVerne Polk. “What in the world was the Boss just talking about, LaVerne? About medical records?”

LaVerne said, frowning, “Didn't you know? The Movement's been at it again. They've fouled up the records of the State Medical Licensing bureaus, at the same time sabotaging the remaining records of most, if not all, of the country's medical schools. They struck simultaneously, throughout the country.”

He looked at her, expressionlessly.

LaVerne said, “We've caught several hundred of those responsible. It's the same thing. Attack of the social-label. From now on, if a man tells you he's an Ear, Eye and Throat specialist, you'd better do some investigation before letting him amputate your tongue. You'd better use your judgment before

letting *any* doctor you don't really know about, work on you. It's a madhouse, Larry.”

Larry Woolford, for long moments after LaVerne had broken the connection, stared unseeingly at his secretary across from him until she stirred.

He brought his eyes back to the present. "Another preliminary move, not the important thing, yet. Not the big explosion they're figuring on. Where have they taken that money, and why?"

Irene Day blinked at him. "I don't know, I'm sure, sir."

Larry said, "Get me Mr. Foster on the phone, Irene."

When Walt Foster's unhappy face faded in, Larry said, "Walt did you get Frol Eivazov?"

"Eivazov?" the other said impatiently. "No. We haven't spent much effort on it. I think this hunch of yours is like the other ones you've been having lately, Woolford. Frol Eivazov was last reported by our operatives as being in North Korea."

"It wasn't a hunch," Larry said tightly. "He's in this country on an assignment dealing with the Movement."

"Well, that's your opinion," Foster said snappishly. "I'm busy, Woolford. See here, at present you're under my orders on this job. In the way of something to do, instead of sitting around in that office, why don't you follow up this Eivazov thing yourself?" He considered it a moment. "That's an order, Woolford. Even if you don't locate him, it'll keep you out of our hair."

After the other was gone, Larry Woolford leaned back in his chair, his face flushed as though the other had slapped it. In a way, he had.

Larry said slowly, "Miss Day, dial me Hans Distelmayer. His offices are over in the Belmont Building."

As always, the screen remained blank as the German spy master spoke.

Larry said, "Hans, I want to talk to Frol Eivazov."

"Ah?"

[pg 054]

"I want to know where I can find him."

The German's voice was humorously gruff. "My friend, my friend."

Larry said impatiently, "I'm not interested in arresting him at this time. I want to talk to him."

The other said heavily. "This goes beyond favors, my friend. On the face of it, I am not in business for my health. And what you ask is dangerous from my viewpoint. You realize that upon occasion my organization does small tasks for the Soviets...."

"Ha!" Larry said bitterly.

"... And," the German continued, unruffled, "it is hardly to my interest to gain the reputation of betraying my sometimes employers. Were you on an assignment in, say, Bulgaria or Hungary, would you expect me to betray you to the *Chrezvychainaya Komissiya*?"

"Not unless somebody paid you enough to make it worth while," Larry said dryly.

"Exactly," the espionage chief said.

"Look," Larry said. "Send your bill to this department, Hans. I've been given carte blanche on this matter and I want to talk to Frol. Now, where is

he?”

The German chuckled heavily. “At the Soviet Embassy.”

“What! You mean they've got the gall to house their top spy right in—”

Distelmayer interrupted him. “Friend Eivazov is currently accredited as a military attaché and quite correctly. He holds the rank of colonel, you know. He entered this country quite legally, the only precaution taken was to use his second name, Kliment, instead of Frol, on his papers. Evidently, your people passed him by without a second look. Ah, I understand he went to the trouble of making some minor changes in his facial appearance.”

“We'll expect your bill, Distelmayer,” Larry said. “Good-by.”

He got up and reached for his hat, saying to Irene Day, “I don't know how long I'll be gone.” He added, wryly, “If either Foster or the Boss try to get in touch with me, tell them I'm carrying out orders.”

He drove over to the Soviet Embassy, parked his car directly before the building.

The American plainclothesmen stationed near the entrance, gave him only a quick onceover as he passed. Inside the gates, the impassive Russian guards didn't bother to flicker an eyelid.

At the reception desk in the immense entrada, he identified himself. “I'd like to see Colonel Frol Eivazov.”

“I am afraid—” the clerk began stiffly.

“I suppose you have him on the records as Kliment Eivazov.”

The clerk had evidently touched a concealed button. A door opened and a junior embassy official approached them.

Larry restated his desire. The other began to open his mouth in denial, then shrugged. "Just a moment," he said.

He was gone a full twenty minutes. [pg 055] When he returned, he said briefly, "This way, please."

Frol Eivazov was in an inner office, in full uniform. He came to his feet when Larry Woolford entered and said to the clerk, "That will be all, Vova." He was a tall man, as Slavs go, but heavy of build and heavy of face.

He shook hands with Larry. "It's been a long time," he said in perfect English. "That conference in Warsaw, wasn't it? Have a chair, Mr. Woolford."

Larry took the offered chair and said, "How in the world did you expect to get by with this nonsense? We'll have you declared *persona non grata* in a matter of hours."

"It's not important," Eivazov shrugged. "I have found what I came to find. I was about to return to report any way."

"We won't do anything to hinder you, colonel," Larry said dryly.

Eivazov snapped his fingers. "It's all amusing," he said. "In our country we would quickly deal with this Movement nonsense. You Americans with your pseudo-democracy, your labels without reality, your—"

Larry said wearily, "Please, Frol, I promise not to convert you if you promise not to convert me. Needless to say, my department isn't happy about your presence in this country. You'll be watched from now on. We've been busy with other matters...."

Here the Russian laughed.

"... Or we'd already have flushed you." He allowed his voice to go curious. "We've wondered about your interest in this phase of our internal affairs."

The Russian agent let his facade slip over farther, his heavy lips sneering. "We are interested in all phases of your antiquated socio-economic system,

Mr. Woolford. In the present peaceful economic competition between East and West, we would simply *loathe* to see anything happen to your present culture.” He hesitated deliberately. “If you can call it a culture.”

Larry said, unprovoked, “If I understand you correctly, you are not in favor of the changes the Movement advocates.”

The Russian shrugged hugely. “I doubt if they are possible of achievement. The organization is a sloppy one. Revolutionary? Nonsense,” he scoffed. “They have no plans to change the government. No plans for overthrowing the regime. Ultimately, what this country needs is true Communism. This so-called Movement doesn't have that as its eventual goal. It is laughable.”

Larry said, interestedly, “Then perhaps you'll tell me what little you've found out about the group.”

“Why not?” The Russian pursed his lips. “They are composed of impractical idealists. Scientists, intellectuals, a few admitted scholars and even a few potential leaders. Their sabotage of your Department of Records was an amusing farce, but, frankly, I have been unable to discover the purpose of their interest in rockets. For a time I contemplated [pg 056] the possibility that they had a scheme to develop a nuclear bomb, and to explode it over Greater Washington in the belief that in the resulting confusion they might seize power. But, on the face of it their membership is incapable of such an effort.”

“Their interest in rockets?” Larry said softly.

“Yes, as you've undoubtedly discovered, half the rocket technicians of your country seem to have joined with them. We got the tip through”—the Russian cleared his throat—“several of our converts who happen to be connected with your space efforts groups.”

“Is that so?” Larry said. “I wondered what you thought about their interest in money.”

It was the other's turn to look blank. “Money?” he said.

“That's right. Large quantities of money.”

The Russian said, frowning, “I suppose most citizens in your capitalist countries are interested largely in money. One of your basic failings.”

Driving back to the office, Larry Woolford let it pile up on him.

Ernest Self had been a specialist in solid fuel for rockets. When Larry had questioned Professor Voss that worthy had particularly stressed his indignation at how Professor Goddard, the rocket pioneer, had been treated by his contemporaries. Franklin Nostrand had been employed as a technician on rocket research at Madison Air Laboratories. It was too darn much for coincidence.

And now something else that had been nagging away at the back of his mind suddenly came clear.

Susan Self had said that she and her father had seen the precision dancers at the New Roxy Theater in New York and later the Professor had said they were going to spend the money on chorus girls. Susan had got it wrong. The Rockettes—the precision chorus girls. The Professor had said they were going to spend the money on *rockets*, and Susan had misunderstood.

But billions of dollars expended on rockets? How? But, above all, to what end?

If he'd only been able to hold onto Susan, or her father; or to Voss or Nostrand, for that matter. Someone to work on. But each had slipped through his fingers.

Which brought something else up from his subconscious. Something which had been tugging at him.

At the office, Irene Day was packing her things as he entered. Packing as though she was leaving for good.

“What goes on?” Larry growled. “I’m going to be needing you. Things are coming to a head.”

She said, a bit snippishly, Larry thought, “Miss Polk, in the Boss’ office, said for you to see her as soon as you came in, Mr. Woolford.”

“Oh?”

He made his way to LaVerne’s office, his attention actually on the ideas churning in his mind.

She looked up when he entered.

Larry said, “The Boss wanted to see me?”

[pg 057]

LaVerne ducked her head, as though embarrassed. “Not exactly, Larry.”

He gestured with his thumb in the direction of his own cubicle office. “Irene just said you wanted me.”

LaVerne looked up into his face. “The Boss and Mr. Foster, too, are boiling about your authorizing that Distelmayer man to bill this department for information he gave you. The Boss hit the roof. Something about the Senate Appropriations Committee getting down on him if it came out that we bought information from professional espionage agents.”

Larry said, “It was information we needed, and Foster gave me the go ahead on locating Frol Eivazov. Maybe I’d better see the Boss.”

LaVerne said, “I don’t think he wants to see you, Larry. They’re up to their ears in this Movement thing. It’s in the papers *now* and nobody knows what to do next. The President is going to make a speech on TriD, and the Boss has to supply the information. His orders are for you to resume your vacation. To take a month off and then see him when you get back.”

Larry sank down into a chair. “I see,” he said, “And at that time he’ll probably transfer me to janitor service.”

“Larry,” LaVerne said, almost impatiently, “why in the world didn't you take that job Walt Foster has now when the Boss offered it to you?”

“Because I'm stupid, I suppose,” Larry said bitterly. “I thought I could do more working alone than at an administrative post tangled in red tape and bureaucratic routine.”

She said, “Sorry, Larry.” She sounded as though she meant it.

Larry stood up. “Well, tonight I'm going to hang one on, and tomorrow it's back to Florida.” He said in a rush, “Look LaVerne, how about that date we've been talking about for six months or more?”

She looked up at him. “I can't stand vodka martinis.”

“Neither can I,” he said glumly.

“And I don't get a kick out of prancing around, a stuffed shirt among fellow stuffed shirts, at some goings-on that supposedly improves my culture status.”

Larry said “At the house I have every known brand of drinkable, and a stack of ... what did you call it? ... corny music. We can mix our own drinks and dance all by ourselves.”

She tucked her head to one side and looked at him suspiciously. “Are your intentions honorable?”

“We can even discuss that later,” he said sourly.

She laughed. “It's a date, Larry.”

He picked her up after work, and they drove to his Brandywine auto-bungalow, largely quiet the whole way.

At one point she touched his hand with hers and said, "It'll work out, Larry."

"Yeah," he said sourly. "I've put ten years into ingratiating myself with the Boss. Now, overnight, he's [pg 058] got a new boy. I suppose there's some moral involved."

When they pulled up before his auto-bungalow, LaVerne whistled appreciatively. "Quite a neighborhood you're in."

He grunted. "A good address. What our friend Professor Voss would call one more status symbol, one more social-label. For it I pay about fifty per cent more rent than my budget can afford."

He ushered her inside and took her jacket. "Look," he said, indicating his living room with a sweep of hand. "See that volume of Klee reproductions there next to my reading chair? That proves I'm not a weird. Indicates my culture status. Actually, my appreciation of modern art doesn't go any further than the Impressionists. But don't tell anybody. See those books up on my shelves. Same thing. You'll find everything there that *ought* to be on the shelves of any ambitious young career man."

She looked at him from the side of her eyes. "You're really soured, Larry."

"Come along," he said. "I want to show you something."

He took her down the tiny elevator to his den.

"How hypocritical can you get?" he asked her. "This is where I really live. But I seldom bring anyone here. Wouldn't want to get a reputation as a weird. Sit down, LaVerne, I'll make a drink. How about a Sidecar?"

She sank onto the couch, kicked her [pg 059] shoes off and slipped her feet under her. "I'd love one," she said.

His back to her, he brought brandy and cointreau from his liquor cabinet, lemon and ice from the tiny refrigerator.

"What?" LaVerne said mockingly. "No auto-bar?"

“Upstairs with the rest of the status symbols,” Larry grunted.

He put her drink before her and turned and went to the record player.

“In the way of corny music, how do you like that old-timer, Nat Cole?”

“King Cole? Love him,” LaVerne said.

The strains of “For All We Know” penetrated the room.

Larry sat down across from her, finished half his drink in one swallow.

“I’m beginning to wonder whether or not this Movement doesn’t have something,” he said.

She didn’t answer that. They sat in silence for a while, appreciating the drink. Nat Cole was singing “The Very Thought of You” now. Larry got up and made two more cocktails. This time he sat next to her. He leaned his head back on the couch and closed his eyes.

Finally he said softly, “When Steve Hackett and I were questioning Susan, there was only one other person who knew that we’d picked her up. There was only one person other than Steve and me who could have warned Ernest Self to make a getaway. Later on, there was only one person who could have warned Frank Nostrand so that he and the Professor could find a new hideout.”

She said sleepily, “How long have you known about that, darling?”

“A while,” Larry said, his own voice quiet. “I figured it out when I also decided how Susan Self was spirited out of the Greater Washington Hilton, before we had the time to question her further. Somebody who had access to tapes made of me while I was making phone calls cut out a section and dubbed in a voice so that Betsy Hughes, the Secret Service matron who was watching Susan, was fooled into believing it was I ordering the girl to be turned over to the two Movement members who came to get her.”

LaVerne stirred comfortably and let her head sink onto his shoulder. “You’re so warm and ... comfortable,” she said.

Larry said softly, "What does the Movement expect to do with all that counterfeit money, LaVerne?"

She stirred against his shoulder, as though bothered by the need to talk. "Give it all away," she said. "Distribute it all over the country and destroy the nation's social currency."

It took him a long moment to assimilate that.

"What have the rockets to do with it?"

She stirred once again, as though wishing he'd be silent. "That's how it will be distributed. About twenty rockets, strategically placed, each with a *warhead* of a couple of tons of money. Fired to an altitude of a couple of hundred miles and then the money is spewed out. In falling, it will be distributed over cities and [pg 060] countryside, everywhere. Billions upon billions of dollars worth."

Larry said, so softly as hardly to be heard, "What will that accomplish?"

"Money is the greatest social-label of them all. The Professor believes that through this step the Movement will have accomplished its purpose. That people will be forced to utilize their judgment, rather than depend upon social-labels."

Larry didn't follow that, but he had no time to go further now. He said, still evenly soft, "And when is the Movement going to do this?"

La Verne moved comfortably. "The trucks go out to distribute the money tonight. The rockets are waiting. The firing will take place in a few days."

"And where is the Professor now?"

"Where the money and the trucks are hidden, darling. What difference does it make?" LaVerne said sleepily.

"And where is that?"

“At the Greater Washington Trucking Corporation. It's owned by one of the Movement's members.”

He said. “There's a password. What is it?”

“Judgment.”

Larry Woolford bounced to his feet. He looked down at her, then over at the phone. In three quick steps he was over to it. He grasped its wires and yanked them from the wall, silencing it. He slipped into the tiny elevator, locking the door to the den behind him.

As the door slid closed, her voice wailed, still sleepily husky, “Larry, darling, where are you—”

He ran down the walk of the house, vaulted into the car and snapped on its key. He slammed down the lift lever, kicked the thrust pedal and was thrown back against the seat by the acceleration.

Even while he was climbing, he flicked on the radio-phone, called Personal Service for the location of the Greater Washington Trucking Corporation.

Fifteen minutes later, he parked a block away from his destination, noting with satisfaction that it was still an hour or more to go until dark. His intuition, working doubletime now, told him that they'd probably wait until nightfall to start their money-laden trucks to rolling.

He hesitated momentarily before turning on the phone and dialing the Boss' home address.

When the other's face faded in, it failed to display pleasure when the caller's identity was established. His superior growled, “Confound it, Woolford, you know my privacy is to be respected. This phone is to be used only in extreme emergency.”

“Yes, sir,” Larry said briskly. “It's the Movement—”

The other's face darkened still further. “You're not on that assignment any longer, Woolford. Walter Foster has taken over and I'm sympathetic to his

complaints that you've proven more a hindrance than anything else.”

Larry ignored his words, “Sir, I've tracked them down. Professor Voss is at the Greater Washington Trucking Corporation garages here in the Alexandria section of town. Any moment [pg 061] now, they're going to start distribution of all that counterfeit money on some scatterbrain plan to disrupt the country's exchange system.”

Suddenly alert, the department chief snapped, “Where are you, Woolford?”

“Outside the garages, sir. But I'm going in now.”

“You stay where you are,” the other snapped. “I'll have every department man and every Secret Service man in town over there within twenty minutes. You hang on. Those people are lunatics, and probably desperate.”

Inwardly, Larry Woolford grinned. He wasn't going to lose this opportunity to finish up the job with him on top. He said flatly, “Sir, we can't chance it. They might escape. I'm going in!” He flicked off the set, dialed again and raised Sam Sokolski.

“Sam,” he said, his voice clipped. “I've cornered the Movement's leader and am going in for the finish. Maybe some of you journalist boys better get on over here.” He gave the other the address and flicked off before there were any questions.

From the dash compartment he brought a heavy automatic, and checked the clip. He put it in his hip pocket and left the car and walked toward the garages. Time was running out now.

He strode into the only open door, without shift of pace. Two men were posted nearby, neither of them truckmen by appearance. They looked at him in surprise.

Larry clipped out, "The password is *Judgment*. I've got to see Professor Voss immediately."

One of them frowned questioningly, but the other was taken up with the urgency in Woolford's voice. He nodded with his head. "He's over there in the office."

Now ignoring them completely, Larry strode past the long rows of sealed delivery vans toward the office.

He pushed the door open, entered and closed it behind him.

Professor Peter Voss was seated at a paper-littered desk. There was a cot with an army blanket in a corner of the room, some soiled clothing and two or three dirty dishes on a tray. The room was being lived in, obviously.

At the agent's entry, the little man looked up and blinked in distress through his heavy lenses.

Larry snapped, "You're under arrest, Voss."

The professor was obviously dismayed, but he said in as vigorous a voice as he could muster, "Nonsense! On what charge?"

"Counterfeiting, among many. Your whole scheme has fallen apart, Voss. You and your Movement, so-called, are finished."

The professor's eyes darted, left, right. To Larry Woolford's surprise, the Movement's leader was alone in here. Undoubtedly, he was awaiting others, drivers of the trucks, technicians involved in the rockets, other subordinates. But right now he was alone.

If Woolford correctly diagnosed [pg 062] the situation, Voss was playing for time, waiting for the others. Good enough, so was Larry Woolford. Had the Professor only known it, a shout would have brought at least two followers and the government agent would have had his work cut out for him.

Woodford played along. "Just what is this fantastic scheme of yours for raining down money over half the country, Voss? The very insanity of it

proves your whole outfit is composed of a bunch of nonconformist weirds.”

The Professor was indignant—and stalling for time. He said, “Nonconformists is correct! He who conforms in an incompetent society is an incompetent himself.”

Larry stood, his legs apart and hands on hips. He shook his head in simulated pity at the angry little man. “What's all this about raining money down over the country?”

“Don't you see?” the other said. “The perfect method for disrupting our present system of social-labels. With billions of dollars, perfect counterfeit, strewn the streets, the fields, the trees, available for anyone to pick up, all social currency becomes worthless. Utterly unusable. And it's no use to attempt to print more with another design, because we can duplicate it as well. Our experts are the world's best, we're not a group of sulking criminals but capable, trained, dedicated men.

“Very well! We will have made it absolutely impossible to have any form of mass-produced social currency.”

Larry stared at him. “It would completely foul the whole business system! You'd have chaos!”

“At first. Private individuals, once the value of money was seen to be zero, would have lost the amount of cash they had on hand. But banks and such institutions would lose little. They have accurate records that show the actual values they held at the time our money rains down.”

Larry was bewildered. “But what are you getting at? What do you expect to accomplish?”

The Professor, on his favorite subject, said triumphantly, “The only form of currency that can be used under these conditions is the *personal* check. It's not mass produced, and mass-production can't duplicate it. It's immune to the attack. Business has to go on, or people will starve—so personal checks will have to replace paper money. Credit cards and traveler's checks won't do—we can counterfeit them, too, and will, if necessary. Realize of course

that hard money will still be valid, but it can't be utilized practically for any but small transactions. Try taking enough silver dollars to buy a refrigerator down to the store with you.”

“But what's the purpose?” Larry demanded, flabbergasted.

“Isn't it obvious? Our whole Movement is devoted to the destruction of social-label judgments. It's all very well to say: *You should not judge your fellow men* but when it comes to accepting another man's personal check, friend, you damn well have to! The bum check artist might have a [pg 063] field day to begin with—but only to begin with.”

Larry shook his head in exasperation. “You people are a bunch of anarchists,” he accused.

“No,” the Professor denied. “Absolutely not. We are the antithesis of the anarchist. The anarchist says, ‘No man is capable of judging another.’ We say, ‘Each man must judge his fellow, must demand proper evaluation of him.’ To judge a man by his clothes, the amount of money he owns, the car he drives, the neighborhood in which he lives, or the society he keeps, is out of the question in a vital culture.”

Larry said sourly, “Well, whether or not you're right, Voss, you've lost. This place is surrounded. My men will be breaking in shortly.”

Voss laughed at him. “Nonsense. All you've done is prevent us from accomplishing this portion of our program. What will you do after my arrest? You'll bring me to trial. Do you remember the Scopes' Monkey Trial back in the 1920s which became a world appreciated farce and made Tennessee a laughingstock? Well, just wait until you get *me* into court backed by my organization's resources. We'll bring home to every thinking person, not only in this country, but in the world, the fantastic qualities of our existing culture. Why, Mr.-Secret-Agent-of-Anti-Subversive-Activity you aren't doing me an injury by giving me the opportunity to have my day in court. You're doing me a favor. Newspapers, radios, TriD will give me the chance to expound my program in the home of every thinking person in the world.”

There was a fiery dedication in the little man's eyes. "This will be my victory, not my defeat!"

There were sounds now, coming from the other rooms—the garages. Some shouts and scuffling. Faintly, Larry Woolford could hear Steve Hackett's voice.

He was staring at the Professor, his eyes narrower.

The Professor was on his feet. He said in defiant triumph, "You think that you'll win prestige and honor as a result of tracking the Movement down, don't you, Mr. Woolford? Well, let me tell you, you won't! In six months from now, Mr. Woolford, you'll be a laughingstock."

That did it.

Larry said, "You're under arrest. Turn around with your back to me."

The Professor snorted his contempt, turned his back and held up his hands, obviously expecting to be searched.

In a fluid motion, Larry Woolford drew his gun and fired twice. The other with no more than a grunt of surprise and pain, stumbled forward to his knees and then to the floor, his arms and legs akimbo.

The door broke open and Steve Hackett, gun in hand, burst in.

"Woolford!" he barked. "What's up?"

Larry indicated the body on the floor. "There you are, Steve," he said. "The head of the counterfeit ring. He was trying to escape. I had to shoot him."

[pg 064]

Behind Steve Hackett crowded Ben Ruthenberg of the F.B.I. and behind him half a dozen others of various departments.

The Boss came pushing his way through.

He glared down at the Professor's body, then up at Larry Woolford.

“Good work, Lawrence,” he said. “How did you bring it off?”

Larry replaced the gun in his holster and shrugged modestly. “The Polk girl gave me the final tip-off, sir. I gave her some Scop-Serum in a drink and she talked. Evidently, she was a member of the Movement.”

The Boss was nodding wisely. “I’ve had my eye on her, Lawrence. An obvious weird. But we will have to suppress that Scop-Serum angle.” He slapped his favorite field man on the arm jovially. “Well, boy, this means promotion, of course.”

Larry grinned. “Thanks, sir. All in a day's work. I don't think we'll have much trouble with the remnants of this Movement thing. The pitch is to treat them as counterfeiters, not subversives. Try them for that. Their silly explanations of what they were going to do with the money will never be taken seriously.” He looked down at the small corpse. “Particularly now that their kingpin is gone.”

A new wave of agents, F.B.I. men and prisoners washed into the room and Steve Hackett and Larry were for a moment pushed back into a corner by themselves.

Steve looked at him strangely and said, “There's one thing I'd like to know: Did you really have to shoot him, Woolford?”

Larry brushed it off. “What's the difference? He was as weird as they come, wasn't he?”

THE END

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