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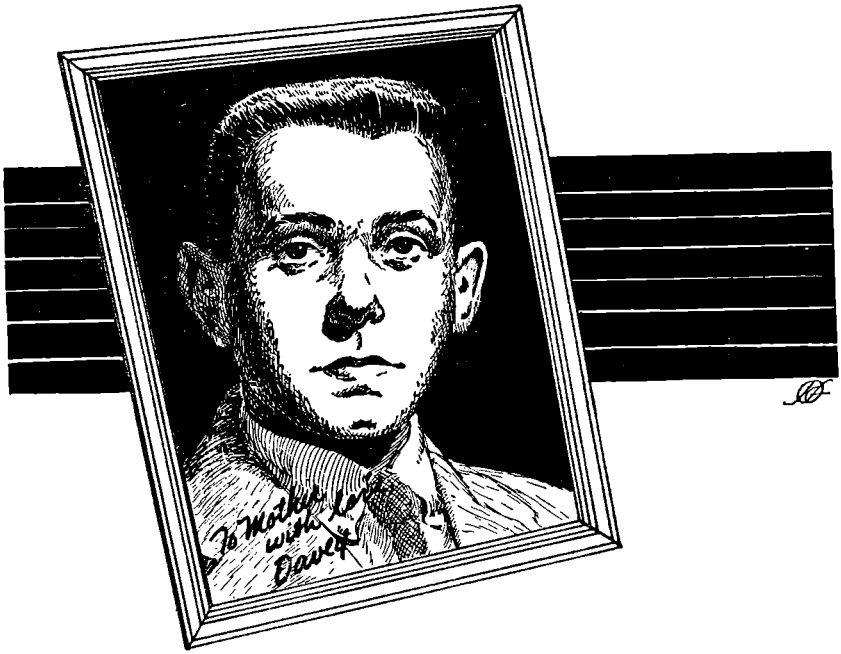


CLERICAL ERROR

The essence of getting Top Security clearance is, of course, a perfect record of absolute, undeviating orthodoxy. How, then, do you get the necessary unorthodox, original mind in to work on a totally unorthodox problem. . . . ?

BY MARK CLIFTON

Illustrated by Freas

The case of David Storm came to the attention of Dr. K. Heidrich Kingston when Dr. Ernest Moss, psychiatrist in charge of the Q Security wing of the government workers' mental hospital, recommended lobotomy. The recommendation was on the lead-off sheet in Storm's medical history file. It was expressed more in the terms of a declaration of intention than a request for permission.

"I had a little trouble in getting this complete file, doctor," Miss Verity said, as she laid it on his desk. "The fact is Dr. Moss simply brought in the recommendation and asked me to put your initials on it so he could go ahead. I told him that I was still just your secretary, and hadn't re-

placed you yet as Division Administrator."

Kingston visualized her aloof, almost unfriendly eyes and the faint sarcasm of her clipped speech as she respectfully told off Dr. Moss in the way an old time nurse learns to put doctors in their place, unmistakable but not quite insubordinate. He knew Miss Verity well; she had been with him for twenty years; they understood one another. His lips twitched with a wry grin of appreciation. He looked up at her as she stood beside his desk, waiting for his reaction.

"I gather he's testing the strength of my order that I must personally approve all lobotomies," Kingston commented dryly.

"I'm quite certain the staff already knows your basic opposition to the principle of lobotomy, doctor," she answered him formally. "You made it quite clear in an article you wrote several years ago, May 1958, to be exact, wherein you stated—"

"Yes, yes, I know," he interrupted, and quoted himself from the article, " 'The human brain is more than a mere machine to be disconnected if the attending psychiatrist just doesn't happen to like the way it operates.' I still feel that way, Miss Verity."

"I'm not questioning your medical or moral judgment, doctor," she answered, with a note of faint reproof, "merely your tactical. At the time you alienated a very large block of the profession, and they haven't forgotten it. Psychiatrists are particularly touchy about any public question of their omnipotent right and rightness. In view of our climb to power, that was a tactical error. I also feel the issuance of this order, so soon after taking over the administration of this department was a bit premature. Dr. Moss said he was not accustomed to being treated like an intern. He merely expressed what the whole staff is thinking, of course."

"So he's the patsy the staff is using to test my authority," Kingston mused. "He is in complete charge of the Q. S. wing. None of the rest of us, not even I, have the proper Security clearances to go into that wing, because we might hear the poor demented fellows mumbling secrets which are too important for us to know."

"You'll have to admit they've set a rather neat trap, doctor," Miss Verity said. A master of tactics, herself, she could admire an excellent stroke of the opposition. "Without a chance to see the patient and make a personal study, you can't very well override the recommendations of the psychiatrist in charge. You'd be the laughingstock of the entire profession if you tried it. You can't see the patient because I haven't been able to get Q. S. clearance for you, yet. And you can't ignore the Security program, because that's a sacred cow which no one dares question."

It was a clear summation, but Kingston knew she was also reproving him for having laid himself open to such a trap. She had advised against the order and he had insisted upon it anyway.

He pushed himself back from his

desk and got to his feet. He was not a big man, but he gave the impression of solid strength as he walked over to the window of his office. He looked out through the window and down the avenue toward various governmental office buildings which lined the street as far as he could see. His features were strong and serene, and, with his shock of prematurely white hair, gave him the characteristic look of a governmental administrator.

"I've not been in this government job every long," he said, as much to the occupants of the buildings down the street as to her, "but I've learned one thing already. When you don't want to face up to the consequences of a bad decision, you just promise to make an investigation." He turned around and faced his secretary. "Tell Dr. Moss," he said, "that I'll make an investigation of the . . . who is it? . . . the David Storm case."

Miss Verity looked as if she wanted to say something more, then clamped her thin lips shut. But at the door, leading out to her own office, she changed her mind.

"Doctor," she said with a mixture of exasperation and curiosity, "suppose you do find a way to make effective intercession in the David Storm case? After all, he's nobody. He's just another case. Suppose you are able to get another psychiatrist assigned to the case. Suppose Dr. Moss is wrong about him being an incurable, and you really get a cure. What have you gained?"

"I've got to start somewhere, Miss Verity," Kingston said gently, without resentment. "Have you had a recent look at the sharply rising incident of disturbance among these young scientists in government work, Miss Verity? The curing of Storm, if that could happen, might be only incidental, true—but it would be a start. I've got some suspicions about what's causing this rising incident. The Storm case may help to resolve them, or dismiss them. It's considerably more than merely making my orders stick. I've got to start somewhere. It might as well be with Storm."

"Very well, doctor," she answered, barely opening her lips. Obviously this was not the way she would have handled it. Even a cursory glance through the Storm file had shown her he was a person of no consequence. Even if Dr. Kingston succeeded, there was no tactical or publicity value to be gained from it. If Storm were a big-name scientist, then the issue would be different. A cause celebre could be made of it. But as it was, well, facing facts squarely, who would care? One way or the other?

The case history on David Storm was characteristic of Dr. Moss. It was the meticulous work of a thorough technician who had mastered the primary level of detachment. It recorded the various treatments and therapies which Dr. Moss had tried. It reported sundry rambling conversations, incoherent rantings and complaints of David Storm.

And it lacked comprehension.

Kingston, as he plowed through the dossier, felt the frustrated irritation, almost despair, of the creative administrator who must depend upon technicians who lack any basic feeling for the work they do. The work was all technically correct, but in the way a routine machinist would grind a piece of metal to the precise measurements of the specs.

"How does one go about criticizing a man for his total lack of any creative intuition?" Kingston mumbled angrily at the report. "He leaves no loopholes for technical criticism, and, in his frame of thinking, if you tried to go beyond that you'd merely be picking on vague generalities."

The work was all technically correct. There wasn't even a clerical error in it.

A vague idea, nothing more than a slight feeling of a hunch, stirred in Kingston's mind. In some of the arts you could say to a man, "Well, yes, you've mastered all the technicalities, but, man, you're just not an artist." But he couldn't tell Dr. Moss he wasn't a doctor, because Dr. Moss had a diploma which said he was. Men with minds of clerks could only understand error on a clerical level.

He tried to make the idea more vivid in his mind, but it refused to jell. It simply remained a commentary. The case history told a complete story, but David Storm never emerged from it as a human being. He remained nothing more than a case history. Kingston could get no feeling of the substance of the man. The report might as well have dealt with lengths of steel or gallons of chemical.

In a sort of self-defense, Kingston called in Miss Verity, away from her complex of administrative duties, and resorted to a practice they had established together, years before.

He had started his technique with simple gestalt exercises in empathy; such as the deliberate psychosomatic stimulation of pain in one's own arm to better understand the pain in some other person's broken arm. Through the years it had been possible to progress to the higher gestalt empathies of personality identification with a patient. Like other dark areas of the unknown in sciences, there had been many ludicrous mistakes, some danger, and discouragement amounting to despair. But in the long run he had found a technique for a significant increase in his effectiveness as a psychiatrist.

The expression on Miss Verity's face, when she sat down at the side of his desk with her notebook, was interesting. They were both big wheels now, he and she, and she resented taking time out from her control over hundreds of lesser wheels. Yet she was a part of the pattern of empathy. Her hard and unyielding core of practicality, realism, provided a background to contrast, in sharp relief, to the patterns of madness. Obscurely, she derived a pleasure from this contrast; and a nostalgic pleasure, also, from a return to the old days when he had been a young and struggling psychiatrist

and she, his nurse, had believed in him enough to stick by him. Kingston wondered if Miss Verity really knew what she did want out of life. He pushed the speculation aside and began his dictation.

As a student, David Storm represented the all too common phenomenon of a young man who takes up the study of a science because it is the socially accepted thing to do, rather than because he had the basic instincts of the true scientist.

Kingston felt himself slipping away into the familiar sensation syndrome of true empathy with his subject. As always, he had to play a dual role. It was insufficient to enter into the other person's mind and senses, feel and see as he felt and saw. No, at the same time he must also reconstruct the individual's life pattern to show the conflicts inherent in that framework which would later lead him into such frustrations as to mature into psychosis.

In the Storm case this was particularly important. A great deal more than just an obscure patient was at stake. By building up a typical framework of conflict, using Storm as merely the focal point, he might be better able to understand this trend which was proving so dangerous to young men in science. And since our total culture had become irrevocably tied to progress in science, he might be better able to prevent a blight from destroying that culture.

His own office furniture faded away. He was there; Miss Verity was there; the precise and empty notes of Dr. Moss were there in front of him; but, to him, these things became shadows, and in the way a motion picture or television screen takes over the senses of reality, he went back to the college classrooms where David Storm had received instruction.

It was unfortunate that the real fire of science did not burn in any of his college instructors, either. Instead, they were also the all too common phenomenon of small souls who had grasped frantically at a few "proved" facts, and had clung to these with the desperate tenacity of drowning men in seas of chaos. "You cannot cheat science," these instructors were fond of saying with much didactic positiveness. "If you will follow the procedures we give you, exactly, your experiment will work. That is proof we are right!"

"If it works, it must be right" was so obviously true to Storm that he simply could not have thought of any reason or way to doubt it. He graduated without ever having been handed the most necessary tool in all science, skepticism, much less instructed in its dangers and its wise uses. For there are true-believer fanatics to be found in science, also.

Under normal conditions, Storm would have found some mediocre and unimportant niche he deserved. For some young graduates in science the routine technician's job in a laboratory or shop is simply an opening wedge, a foot on the first rung of his ladder. For David Storm's kind, that same job is a haven, a lifetime of small but secure wage. Under such conditions the conflicts, leading to psychosis, would not have occurred.

But these are not normal times. We have science allied to big government, and controlled by individuals who have neither the instincts nor the knowledge of what science really is. This has given birth to a Security program which places more value upon a stainless past and an innocuous mind than upon real talent

and ability. It was the socially acceptable and the secure thing for Storm to seek work in government-controlled research. With his record of complete and unquestioning conformity, it was as inevitable as sunrise that he should be favored.

It was as normal as gravity that his Security ratings should increase into the higher echelons of secrecy as he continued to prove complaisant, and, therefore, trustworthy. The young man with a true instinct for science is a doubter, a dissenter, and, therefore, a trouble maker. He, therefore, cannot be trusted with real importance. Under this condition, it was as natural as rain that when a time came for someone to head up a research section, Storm was the only man available.

It was after this promotion into the ranks of the Q. S. men that the falsity of the whole framework began to make itself felt. He had proved to be a good second man, who always did what he was told, who followed instructions faithfully and to the letter. But now he found himself in a position where there were no ready-made instructions for him to follow.

Kingston took up the Moss report and turned some pages to find the exact reference he wanted. Miss Verity remained passively poised, ready to speed into her shorthand notes again. Kingston found the sheet he wanted and resumed his dictation.

Storm got no satisfaction from his section administrator. "You're the expert," his boss told him. "You're supposed to *tell* us the answers, not *ask* us for them." His tentative questions of other research men got him no satisfaction. Either they were in the same boat as he, and as confused, or they weren't talking to this new breed who called himself a research scientist.

But one old fellow did talk, a little. He asked Storm, with disdain, if he expected the universe to furnish him with printed instructions on how it was put together. He commented, acidly, that in his opinion we were handing the fate of our civilization to a bunch of cookbook technicians.

Storm was furious, of course. He debated with himself as to whether he should, as a good loyal citizen, report the old fellow to the loyalty board. But he didn't. Something stopped him, something quite horrible—a thought all his own. This man was a world-famous scientist. He had once been a professor of science at a great university. Storm had been trained to believe what professors said. What if this one were right?

The doubts that our wise men have already found all the necessary right answers, which should have disturbed him by the time he was a sophomore in high school, began now to trouble him. The questions he should have begun to ask by the time he was a freshman in college began to seep through the tiny cracks that were opening in his tight little framework of inadequate certainties.

Kingston looked up from the report in his hands; thought for a moment; flipped a few pages of the dossier; failed to find what he wanted; turned back a couple of pages; and skimmed down the closely written record of Storm's demented ravings. "Oh yes, here it is," he said, when he found the reference.

It was about that time that Storm began to think about something else he would have preferred to forget. It had been one of those beer-drinking and pipe-smoking bull sessions which act as a sort of teething ring upon which college men exercise their gums in preparation for idea maturity. The guy who was dominating the talking already had a reputation for being a radical; and Storm had listened with the censor's self-

assurance that it was all right for *him* to listen so he would be better able to protect others, with inferior minds and weaker wills, from such exposures.

"The great danger to our culture," this fellow was holding forth, "doesn't come from the nuclear bomb, the guided missile, germ warfare, or even internal subversion. Granted there's reason why our culture should endure, there's a much greater danger, and one, apparently quite unexpected.

"Let's take our diplomatic attitudes and moves as a cross section of the best thinking our culture, as a whole, can produce. For surely here, at this oritical level, the finest minds, skilled in the science of statecraft, are at work. And there is no question but that our best is no higher than a grammar-school level. A kid draws a line with his toe across the sidewalk and dares, double dares, his challenger to step across it. 'My father can lick your father' is not removed, in substance, from 'My air force can lick your air force.' What is our Security program but the childish chanting of 'I've got a secret! I've got a secret!'? Add to that the tendency to assemble a gang so that one can feel safer when he talks tough, the tendency to indiscriminate name calling, the inability to think in other terms than 'good guys' and 'bad guys.' Here you have the classical picture of the grammar-school level of thinking —and an exact parallel with our diplomacy.

"Now, sure, it's true that one kid of grammar-school mental age can pretty well hold his own with another of his own kind and strength. But here's the real danger. He doesn't stand a chance if he comes up against a mature adult. What if our opponent, whoever he may be, should grow up before we do? There's the real danger!"

Storm had considered the diatribe ridiculous at the time, and agreed with some of the other fellows that the guy should be locked up, or at least kicked off the campus. But now he began to wonder about certain aspects which he had simply overlooked before. "Consider the evidence, gentlemen," one of his instructors had repeated, like a parrot, at each stage of some experiment. Only now it occurred to Storm that the old boy had invariably selected, with considerable care, the particular evidence he wanted them to consider.

With equal care our statecraft had presented us with the evidence that over there, in the enemy territory, science was forced to follow the party line or get itself purged. And the party line was totally false and wrong. Therefore their notions of science must be equally wrong. And you can't cheat science. If a thing is wrong it won't work. Yet the evidence also showed that they, too, had successful nuclear fission, guided missiles, and all the rest.

This led Storm into another cycle of questions. What parts of the evidence could a man elect to believe, and what interpretations of that evidence might he dispute and still remain a totally loyal citizen, still retain his right to highest Security confidence? This posed another problem, for he was still accustomed to turning to higher authority for instruction. But of whom could he ask such questions as these? Not his associates, for they were as wary of him as he of them. In such an atmosphere where it becomes habitual for a man to guard his tongue against any and all slips, there is an automatic complex of suspicions built up to freeze out all real exchange of ideas.

Every problem has a solution. He found the only solution open to him. He went on asking such questions of himself. But, as usual, the solution to one problem merely opened the door to a host of greater ones. The very act of admitting, openly acknowledging, such questions to himself, and knowing he dared not ask them of anyone else, filled him with an overpowering sense of furtive shame and guilt. It was an axiom of the Security framework that you were

either totally loyal, or you were potentially a subversive. Had he any right to keep his Security ratings when these doubts were a turmoil in his mind?

Through the months, especially during the nights, as he lay in miserable sleeplessness, he pondered these obvious flaws in his own nature, turning them over and over like a squirrel in a cage. Then, one night, there came a whole series of questions that were even more terrifying.

What if it were not he, but the culture, which contained the basic flaw? Who, in or out of science, is so immutably right that he can pass judgment on what man is meant to know and what he may never question? If we are not to ask questions beyond accepted dogma, be it textbook or statecraft, from where is man's further knowledge and advancement to come? What if these questions which filled him with such maddening doubts were the very ones most necessary to answer? Indeed, what if our very survival depended upon just such questions and answers? Would he then be giving his utmost in loyalty if he did *not* ask them?

The walls of his too narrow framework of thinking had broken away, and he felt himself drowning in a flood of dilemmas he was unprepared to solve. When a man, in a dream, finds his life in deadly peril an automatic function takes over—the man wakes up. There is also an automatic function which takes over when the problems of reality become a deadly peril.

Storm withdrew from reality.

Kingston was silent for a moment, then his consciousness returned to the surroundings of his office, and the desk in front of him. He looked over at Miss Verity.

"Well, now," he said. "I think we begin to understand our young man a little better."

"But are you sure his conflict is typical?" Miss Verity asked.

"Consider the evidence," Kingston said with deliberate irony. "Science can progress, even exist, only where there is free exchange of ideas, and minds completely open to variant ideas. When by law, or social custom, we forbid this, we stop scientific development. Consider the evidence!" he said again. "There is already a great deal of it to show that our science is beginning to go around in circles, developing the details of the frameworks already acceptable, but not reaching out to reveal new and totally unexpected frameworks."

"I'll type this up, in case you want to review it," Miss Verity answered dryly. She did not go along with him, at all, in these flights of fancy. Certainly she saw no tactical advantage to be gained from taking such attitudes. On the contrary, if he didn't learn to curb his tongue better, all she had worked so hard to gain for the both of them could be threatened.

Kingston watched her reactions with an inward smile. It apparently had never occurred to her that his ability in gestalt empathy could be directed toward her.

There might be quite a simple solution to the Storm matter. Too many government administrators and personnel had come to regard an act under general Security regulations to be a dictum straight from Heaven. It was possible that Storm's section had already written him off as a total loss in their minds, and no one

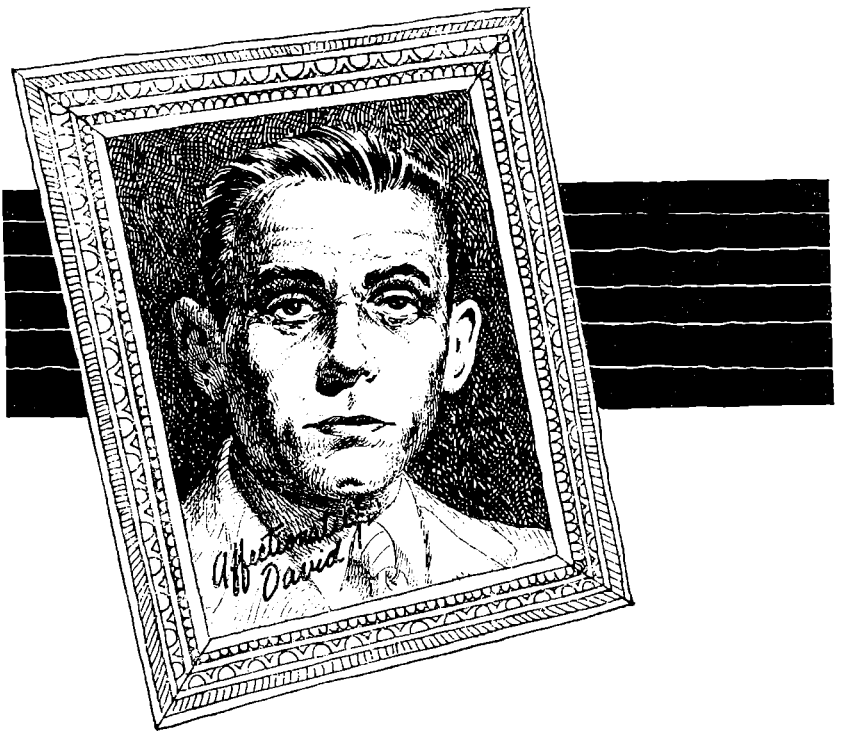
had taken the trouble to get him declassified. Kingston felt he should explore that possibility first.

He made an appointment to see Logan Maxfield, Chief Administrator of the section where Storm had worked.

His first glance, when he walked into Maxfield's office, put a damper on his confidence. Here was a man who was more of a politician than a scientist, probably a capable enough administrator within his given boundaries, but the strained cautiousness of his greeting told Kingston he would not take any unusual risks to his own safety and reputation. He belonged to that large and ever growing class of job holders in government whose safety lies in preserving the status quo, who would desperately police and defend things as they are, for any change might be a threat.

It would take unusual tactics to jar him out of his secure rightness in attitude. Kingston was prepared to employ unusual tactics.

"Storm has been electrocuted," he said quietly, "with a charge just barely short of that used on murderers. Not once, of course, but again and again. Then, also, we've stunned him



over and over with hypos jabbed down through his skull into his brain. We've sent him into numerous bone-crushing and muscle-tearing spasms with drugs. But," he sighed heavily, "he's obstinate. He refuses to be cured by these healing therapies."

Maxfield's face turned a shade whiter, and his eyes fixed uncertainly on his pudgy hands lying on top of his desk. He looked over toward his special water cooler, as if he longed for a drink, but he did not get out of his chair. A silence grew. It was obvious he felt called upon to make some comment. He tried to make it jocular, man to man.

"Of course I don't know anything about the science of psychiatry, doctor," he said at last, "but in the physical sciences we feel that methods which don't work may not be entirely scientific."

"Man," Kingston exploded with heavy irony, "you imply that psychiatry isn't an exact science? Of course it is a science! Why, man, we have all sorts of intricate laboratories, and arrays of nice shiny tools, and flashing lights on electronic screens, and mechanical pencils drawing jagged lines on revolving drums of paper, and charts and graphs, and statistics. And theory? Why, man, we've got more theory than you ever dreamed of in physical science! Of course it's a science. Any rational man has to agree that the psychiatrist is a scientist. We ought to know. We are the ones who define rationality!"

Maxfield could apparently find no answer to that bit of reasoning. Along with many others he saw no particular fallacy in defining a thing in terms of itself.

"What do you want me to do?" he asked finally.

"Here's the problem," Kingston answered, in the tone of one administrator to another. "It is unethical for one doctor to question the techniques of another doctor, so let's put it this way. Suppose you had a mathematician in your department who took up a sledge hammer and deliberately wrecked his calculating machines because they would not answer a question *he did not know how to ask*. Then failing to get the answer, suppose he recommended just disconnecting what was left of the machines and abandoning them. What would you do?"

"I think I'd get myself another mathematician," Maxfield said with a sickly attempt at lightness.

"Well, now that's a problem, too," Kingston answered easily. "I'm not questioning the methods of Dr. Moss, and obviously his attitudes are the right ones, because he's the only available psychiatrist who had been cleared to treat all these fellows you keep sending over to us under Q. S. secrecy. But there's a way out of that," he said with the attitude of a salesman on television who will now let you in on the panacea for all your troubles. "If you lifted the Security on Storm, then we could move him to another ward and try a different kind of therapy. We might even find a man who did know

how to ask the question which would get the right answer."

"Absolutely impossible," Maxfield said with finality.

"Now look at it this way," Kingston said in a tone of reasonableness. "If Storm just chose to quit his job, you'd have to declassify him, wouldn't you?"

"That's different," Maxfield said. "There are proper procedures for that."

"I know," Kingston said, a little wearily. "The parting interview to impress him with the need for continued secrecy, the terrible weight of knowing that bolt number seventy-two in motor XYZ has a three eights thread instead of a five eights. So why can't you consider that Storm has left his job and declassify him in absentia. Then we could remove him to an ordinary ward and give him what may be a more effective treatment. I really don't think he can endure very much more of his present therapy."

Kingston leaned back in his chair and spoke in a tone of speculation.

"There's a theory that this treatment isn't really torture, Mr. Maxfield, because an insane person doesn't know what is happening to him. But I'm afraid that theory is fallacious. I believe the so-called insane person does know what is happening, and feels all the exquisite torture we use in trying to drive the devils out of his soul."

"Absolutely impossible," Maxfield repeated. "Although you are not a Q. S. man"—this with a certain smugness—"I'll tell you this much." He leaned forward and placed his fingertips together in his most impressive air of administrative deliberation. "We have reason to believe that David Storm was on the trail of something big. *Big,* Dr. Kingston. So big, indeed, that perhaps the very survival of the nation depends upon it!"

He hesitated a few seconds, to let the gravity of his statement sink in. Then he unlocked a desk drawer and took out a file folder.

"I had this file sent in when you made the appointment to see me," he explained. "As you no doubt know, we must have inspectors who are constantly observing our scientists, although unseen, themselves. Here is a sentence from one of our most trusted inspectors. 'Subject repeats over and over, under great emotional stress, to himself, aloud, that our very survival depends upon his finding the answers to a series of questions!' There, Dr. Kingston, does that sound like no more than the knowledge of a three eights thread on a bolt, No, doctor," he answered his own rhetoric, "this can only mean something of monumental significance—with the fate of a world, our world, hanging in the balance. Now you see why we couldn't take chances with declassifying him!"

Kingston was on the verge of telling him what the pattern of Storm's questions really was, then better judgment prevailed. First the

Security board would become more than a little alarmed that he, a non Q.S. man, had already learned what was on Storm's mind, and pass some more silly rules trying to put a man's mind in solitary confinement. Second, Maxfield was convinced these questions must be concerned with some super gadget, and wouldn't believe his revealment of their true nature. And anyway, what business does a scientist have, asking such questions? Any sympathy he might have gained for Storm would be lost. Serves the fellow right for not sticking strictly to his slide rules and Bunsen burners!

"Mr. Maxfield," Kingston said gravely, patiently. "It is our experience that a disturbed patient often considers something entirely trivial to be of world-shaking importance. The momentous question Storm feels he must solve may be no more than some nonsensical conundrum—such as why does a chicken cross the road. It may mean nothing whatever."

"And then again it may," Maxfield answered. "We can't take the chance. You must remember, doctor, this statement was overheard and recorded while Storm was still a sane man."

"Before he was committed, you mean," Kingston corrected softly.

"At any rate, it must have been something quite terrible to drive a man insane, just the thought of it," Maxfield argued.

"I'll not deny that possibility," Kingston agreed seriously. "The questions could have terrified him, and the rest of us, too, if we really stopped to think about them. Wouldn't it be worth the risk of say my own doubtful loyalty to make a genuine effort to find out what they were, and deal with them, instead of torturing him to drive them out of his mind?"

"I'm not sure I know what you mean," Maxfield faltered. This doctor seemed to have the most callous way of describing beneficial therapies!

"Mr. Maxfield," Kingston said with an air of candor, "I'll let you in on a trade secret. Up until now psychiatry has fitted all the descriptions applicable to a cult, and few indeed applicable to a science. We try to tailor the mind to fit the theory. But some of us, even in the field of psychiatry, are beginning to ask questions—the first dawn of any science. Do you know anything about psychosomatic medicine?"

"Very little, just an idea of what it means," Maxfield answered cautiously.

"Enough," Kingston conceded. "You know that the human body-mind may take on very real symptoms and pains of an illness as overt objection to an untenable environment. Now we are starting to ask the question: Can it be possible that our so-called cures, brought about through electro and drug shock, are a type of psychosomatic response to unendurable torture?

"I see a mind frantically darting from framework to framework, pursued inexorably by the vengeful psy-

chiatrist with the implements of torture in his hands—the mind desperately trying to find a framework which the psychiatrist will approve and so slacken the torture. We have called that a return to sanity. But is it really anything more than a psychosomatic escape from an impossible situation? A compounded withdrawal from withdrawal?

"As I say, a few of us are beginning to ask ourselves these questions. But most continue to practice the cult rituals which can be duplicated point by point, item by item, with the rites of a savage witch doctor attempting to drive out devils from some poor unfortunate of the tribe."

From the stricken look on Maxfield's face, there was no doubt he had finally scored. The man stood up as if to indicate he could take no more. He was distressed by the problem, so distressed, in fact, that he obviously wished this psychiatrist would leave his office and just forget the whole thing.

"I . . . I want to be reasonable, doctor," he faltered through trembling lips. "I want to do the right thing." Then his face cleared. He saw a way out. "I'll tell you what I can do. I'll make another investigation of the matter!"

"Thank you, Mr. Maxfield," Kingston said gravely, without showing the bitterness of his defeat. "I thought that is what you might do."

When he got back to his office, Kingston learned that Dr. Moss had not been content merely to lay a neat little professional trap. His indignation over being thwarted in his intention to perform a lobotomy on Storm had apparently got the better of his judgment. In a rage, he had insisted upon a meeting with a loyalty board at top level. In the avid atmosphere of Government by Informers, they had shown themselves eager to hear what he might say against his superior.

But a private review of the Storm file reminded them of those mysterious and fearful questions in his deranged mind, questions which might forever be lost through lobotomy. So they advised Moss that Dr. Kingston's opposition was purely a medical matter, and did not necessarily constitute subversion.

In the report of this meeting which lay on his desk, some clerk along the way had underscored the word "necessarily" as if, gently, to remind him to watch his step in the future.

"God save our country from the clerical mind," he murmured. And then the solution to his problem began to unfold for him.

His first step in putting his plan into operation had all the appearances of being a very stupid move. It was the first of a series of equally obvious stupidities, which, in total, might add up to a solution. For stupid people are perpetually on guard against cleverness, but will fall in with and further a pattern of stupidity as if they had a natural affinity for it.

His first move was to send Dr.

Moss out to the West Coast to make a survey of mental hospitals in that area.

"This memorandum certainly surprised me," Dr. Moss said curiously, as he came through Kingston's office door, waving the paper in his hand. He seated himself rather tentatively on the edge of a chair, and looked piercingly across the desk, to see if he could fathom the ulterior motives behind the move. "It is true that my section is in good order, and my patients can be adequately cared for by the attendants for a couple of weeks or so. But that you should ask me to make the survey of West Coast conditions for you—"

He let the statement trail off into the air, demanding an explanation.

"Why not you?" Kingston asked, as if surprised by the question.

"I . . . ah . . . feared our little differences in the . . . ah . . . Storm matter might prejudice you against me," Moss said, with the attitude of a man laying his cards on the table. Kingston surmised there were cards not laid out for inspection also. The move had two obvious implications. It could be a bribe, a sort of promotion, to regain Moss' good will. Or, more subtly, it could be a threat—"You see I can transfer you out of my way, any time I may want to."

"Oh, the Storm matter," Kingston said with some astonishment. "Frankly, doctor, I hadn't connected up the two. I've been most impressed with your attention to detail, and the fine points of organization. It seemed to me you were the most logical one on the staff to spot any operational flaws out there. The fact that you can confidently leave your section in the care of your attendants, is proof of that."

Moss gave a slight smirk at this praise, and said nothing.

"Now I'd be a rather poor executive administrator if I let a minor difference of professional opinion stand in the way of the total efficient organization, wouldn't I?" Kingston asked, with an amiable smile.

"Dr. Kingston," Moss began, and hesitated. Then he decided to be frank. "I . . . ah . . . the staff has felt that your appointment to this position was purely political. I begin to see it might also have been because of your ability, and your capacity to rise above small differences of . . . ah . . . opinion."

Kingston let that pass. If he happened to rise a little in the estimation of his staff through these maneuvers, that would be simply a side benefit.

"Now you're sure I'm not interrupting a course of vital treatment of your patients, Dr. Moss?" he asked.

"Most of my patients are totally and completely incurable, doctor," Moss said with finality. "Not that I don't keep trying. I do try. I try everything known to the science of psychiatry to get them thinking rationally again. But let's face it. Most of them will progress—or regress—equally well with simple human care. I fear my orderlies, guards, nurses regard me as something of a tyrant,"

he said with obvious satisfaction. "And it isn't likely that in the space of a couple of weeks they'll let down during my absence. You needn't worry, I'll set up the proper measures."

Kingston breathed a small sigh of relief as the man left his office. That would get Dr. Moss off the scene for a while.

Equally important, but not so easily accomplished, he must get Miss Verity away at the same time. And Miss Verity was anything but stupid.

"Has it occurred to you, Miss Verity," he asked with the grin of a man who has a nice surprise up his sleeve, "that this month you will have been with me for twenty-five years?" It was probably a foolish question. Miss Verity would know the years, months, days, hours. Not for any special reason, except that she always knew everything down to the last decimal. The stern lines of her martinet face did not relax, but her pale blue eyes showed a flicker of pleasure that he would remember.

"It has been my pleasure to serve you, doctor," she said formally. That formality between them had never been relaxed, and probably never would be since both of them wanted it. It was not an unusual relationship either in medicine or industry—as if the man should never become too apparent through the image of the executive, lest both parties lose confidence and falter.

"We've come a long way in a quarter of a century," he said reminiscently, "from that little two-room office in Seattle. And if it weren't for you, we might still be there." Rigidly he suppressed any tone which would betray any implication that he might have been happier remaining obscure.

"Oh no, doctor," she said instantly. "A man with your ability—"

"Ability is not enough," he cut in. "Ability has to be combined with ambition. I didn't have the ambition. I simply wanted to learn, to go on learning perpetually, I suppose. You know how it was before you came with me. Patients didn't pay me. I didn't check to see what their bank account or social position was before I took them on. I was getting the reputation for being a poor man's psychiatrist, before you took charge of my office and changed all that."

"That's true," she agreed candidly, with a small secret smile. "But I looked at it this way: You were . . . you are . . . a great man dedicated to the service of humanity. I felt it would do no harm for the Right People to know about it. You can cure a disturbed rich man as easily as you can cure a poor one. And as long as your job was to listen to secrets, they might as well be important secrets—those of industrialists, statesmen, people who really matter."

She looked about the well appointed office, and out of the window toward the great governmental buildings rising in view, as if to survey the concrete results of his

policies in managing his affairs. Kingston wondered how much of her ambition had been for him, and how much for herself. In the strange hierarchy of castes among government workers, she was certainly not without stature.

That remark about secrets. He knew her ability to rationalize. He wondered how much of his phenomenal rise, and his position now, was due to polite and delicate pressures she had applied in the right places.

"So now I want to do something I've put off too long," he said, letting the grin come back on his face. "I want you to take a month's vacation, all expenses paid."

She half arose out of her chair, then settled back into it again. He had never seen her so perturbed.

"I couldn't do that," she said with a rising tone of incredulity. "There are too many things of importance. We've just barely got things organized since taking over this position. You . . . you . . . why a dozen times a day there are things coming up you wouldn't know how to handle. You . . . I don't mean to sound disrespectful, doctor, but . . . well . . . you make mistakes. A great man, such as you, well, you live in another world, and without somebody to shield you, constantly—"

She broke off and smiled at him placatingly. All at once she was a tyrant mother with an adored son who has made an independent decision; a wife with a well broken husband who has unexpectedly asserted a remnant of the manhood he once had; a career secretary who believes her boss to be a fool—a woman whose Security depended upon her indispensability.

Then her face calmed. Her expression was easily readable. The accepted more of our culture is that men exist for the benefit of women. But they can be stubborn creatures at times. The often repeated lessons in the female magazines was that they can be driven where you want them to go only so long as they think they are leading the way there. She must go cautiously.

"Right now, particularly, I shouldn't leave," she said with more composure. "I'm trying, very hard, to get you cleared for a Q. S. As you know, the Justice Department has a rather complete file folder on anybody in the country of any consequence. They have gone back through your life. They have interviewed numerous patients you have treated. I am trying to convince the Loyalty Board that a psychiatrist must, at times, make statements to his patients which he may not necessarily believe. I am trying to convince them that the statements of neurotic and psychotic patients are not necessarily an indication of a man's loyalty to his country.

"Then, too," she continued with faint reproach, "you've made public statements questioning the basic foundations upon which modern psychology is built. You've questioned the value of considering everyone who doesn't blend in with the average norm as being aberrated."

"I still question that," he said firmly.

"I know, I know," she said impatiently. "But do you have to say such things—in public?"

"Well, now, Miss Verity," he said reasonably, "if a scientist must shape his opinions to suit the standards of the Loyalty Board or Justice Department before he is allowed to serve his country—"

"They don't say you are disloyal, doctor," she said impatiently. "They just say: Why take a chance? I'm campaigning to get the right Important People to vouch for you."

"I think the work of setting up organization has been a very great strain on you," he answered with the attitude of a doctor toward a patient. "And there's a great deal more to be done. I want to make many changes. I think you should have some rest before we undertake it."

There had been more, much more. But in the end he had won a partial victory. She consented to a week's vacation. He had to be satisfied with that. If Storm were really badly demented, he could certainly make little progress in that time. But on the other hand, he would have ac-

complished his main purpose. He would have seen Storm, talked with him, contaminated him through letting him talk to a non-Q.S. man.

Miss Verity departed for a week's vacation with her brothers and sisters and their families—all of whom she detested.

Kingston did not try to push his plan too fast. He had a certain document in mind, and nothing must be done to call any special attention to it.

It was the following day after the simultaneous departure of Dr. Moss and Miss Verity, in the early afternoon, that he sat at his desk and signed a stack of documents in front of him.

Because of Miss Verity's martinet tactics in gearing up the department to prompt handling of all matters, the paper which interested him above all others should be in this stack.

While he signed one routine authorization after another, he grew conscious that his mind had been going back over the maneuvers and interviews he had taken thus far in the Storm case. The emotional impatience at their blind slavery to proper and safe procedure rekindled in him, and he found himself signing at a furious rate. Deliberately he slowed himself down. In event someone should begin wondering at a series of coincidences at some later date, his signature must betray no unusual mood.

It was vital to the success of his plan that the document go through proper channels for execution as a completely routine matter. So vital that, even here, alone in the privacy of his office, he would not permit himself to riff down through the stack to see if the paper which really mattered had cleared the typing section.

He felt his hand shaking slightly at the thought he might have miscalculated the mentality of the typists, that someone might have noticed the wild discrepancy and pulled the work sheet he had written out for further question.

Just how far could a man bank on the pattern of stupidity? If the document were prematurely discovered, his only hope to escape serious consequences with the Loyalty Board was to claim a simple clerical error—the designation of the wrong form number at the top of the work sheet. He could probably win, before or after the event, because it would be obvious to anyone that a ridiculous clerical error was the only possible explanation.

A psychiatrist simply does not commit himself to be confined as an insane person.

He lay down his pen, to compose himself until all traces of any muscular waver would disappear from his signature. He tried to reassure himself that nothing could have gone wrong. The girls who filled in the spaces of the forms were only routine typists. They had the clerical mind. They checked the number on the form with the number on the work sheet. They dealt with dozens and

hundreds of forms, numerically stored in supply cabinets. Probably they didn't even read the printed words on such forms—merely filled in blank spaces. If the numbered items on the work sheet corresponded with the numbered blanks on the forms, that was all they needed to go ahead.

That was also the frame of mind of those who would carry out the instructions on the documents. Make sure the proper signature authorizes the act, and do it. If the action is wrong it is the signer's neck, not theirs. They simply did what they were told. And it was doubtful that such a vast machine as government could function if it were otherwise, if every clerk took it upon himself to question the wisdom of each move of the higher echelons.

Of course, under normal procedures, someone did check the documents before they were placed on his desk to sign. There again, if the signer took the time to check the accuracy of how the spaces were filled in, government would never get done. There had to be a checker, and in the case of his department that was a job Miss Verity had kept for herself. Her eagle eye would have caught the error immediately, and in contempt with such incompetence she would have bounced into the typing pool with fire in her eye to find out who would do such a stupid thing as this.

He had his answer ready, of course, just in case anybody did discover the mistake. He had closed out his apartment, where he lived alone, and booked a suite in a hotel. The work sheet was an order to have his things transferred to his new room number. The scribbled information was the same, and, obviously, he had simply designated the wrong form number.

But Miss Verity was away on her vacation, and there wasn't anybody to catch the mistake.

He lifted his eyes from the signature space on the paper in front of him at the rapidly dwindling stack. The document was next on top.

There it was, neatly typed, bearing no special marks to segregate it from other routine matters, and thereby call attention to it. There were no typing errors, no erasures, nothing to indicate that the typist might have been startled at what she was typing. Nothing to indicate it had been anything more than a piece of paper for her to thread into her machine, fill in, and thread out again with assembly-line regularity.

He lifted the paper off the stack and placed it in front of himself, in position for signature. He sighed, a deep and gasping sigh, almost a groan. Then he grinned in self derision. Was he already regretting his wild action, an action not yet taken?

All right then, tear up the document. Forget about David Storm and his problem. Forget about trying to buck the system. Miss Verity was quite right. Storm was a nobody. As compared with the other events of the world, it didn't matter whether

Storm got cured, or had his intellect disconnected through lobotomy, or just rotted there in his cell because he had asked some impertinent questions of the culture in which he lived.

Never mind that the trap into which Storm had fallen was symbolic of the trap which was miring down modern science in the same manner. By freeing the symbol, he would in no way be moving to free all science from its dilemma.

He pushed himself back, away from his desk, and got to his feet. He walked over to the window and looked down the avenue of government buildings. Skyscrapers of offices, as far as his eye could reach. How many of them held men whose state of mind matched his own? How many men quietly, desperately wanted to do a good job, but were already beaten by the pattern for frustration, the inability to take independent action?

There was one of the more curious of the psychological curiosities. In private an individual may confess to highly intelligent sympathies, but when he gets on a board or a panel or a committee, he has not the courage to stand up against what he thinks to be the mass temper or mores.

Courage, that was the element lacking. The courage to fight for progress, enlightenment, against the belief that one's neighbors may not think the same way. The courage to fight over the issue, for the sake of the issue, rather than for the votes one's action is calculated to win.

And in that sense David Storm was not unimportant. Kingston confessed to himself, standing there in front of the window, that he had begun this gambit in a sort of petty defiance—defiance of the efforts of Moss and the rest of his staff to thwart his instructions, defiance of Miss Verity's efforts to make him into an important figurehead, defiance of the whole ridiculous dilemma that the Loyalty program had become.

He wondered if he had ever really intended to go through with his plan. Hadn't he kept the reservation, in the back of his mind, that as long as he hadn't signed the order, as long as it wasn't released for implementation, he could withdraw? Why make such an issue over such a triviality as this Storm fellow?

Yet wasn't that the essence? Wasn't that the question every true scientist had to ask himself every day? To buck the accepted and the acceptable, or to swing along with it and rush with the tide of man toward oblivion?

In the popular books courage was always embodied in a well-muscled, handsome, well-intentioned, and rather stupid young man. But what about that wispy little unhandsome fellow, behind the thick glasses perhaps, who, against ridicule, calumny, misunderstanding, poverty, ignorance, kept on with his intent to find an aspect of truth?

Resolutely he walked over to his desk, picked up his pen again, and signed the document. There! He was insane! The document said so! And the document was signed by the

Chief Administrator of Psychiatric Division, Bureau of Science Co-ordination. That should be enough authority for anybody!

He tossed it into the outgoing basket, where it would be picked up by the mail clerk and routed for further handling. Rapidly now, he continued signing other papers, tossing them into the same basket, covering the vital one so that it was down in the middle of the stack, unlikely to call special attention to itself.

They came for him at six o'clock the next morning. That was what the order had stipulated, that they make the pickup at this early hour. Two of them walked into his room, through the door which he had left unlocked, and immediately separated so that they could come at him from either side. Two burly young men who had a job to do, and who knew how to do that job. He couldn't remember having seen either of them before, and there was no look of recognition on their faces either.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?" he said loudly, in alarm. His intonation sounded like something from a rather bad melodrama. "How dare you walk into my room!" He sat up in bed and pulled the covers up around his neck.

"There, there, Buster," one of them said soothingly. "Take it easy now. We're not going to hurt you." With a lithe grace they moved into position. One of them stood near the foot of his bed, the other came up to the head, and with a swirling motion, almost too quick to follow, slipped his hands under Kingston's armpits.

"Time to get up, Buster," the man said, and propelled him upward and outward. The covers fell away from him, and he found himself standing on his feet, without quite knowing how he got there. The second man was already eying his clothes, which he had hung over a chair the night before. They were beautifully trained, he'd have to give Moss that much credit. It spoke well for the routine administration of the Q. S. wing if all the attendants were as experienced in being firm, yet gentle. It wasn't that psychiatry was intentionally sadistic, just mistaken in its idea of treatment.

"What is the meaning of this?" he spluttered again. "Do you know who I am?" He tried to draw himself up proudly, but found it somewhat difficult with his head being slipped through a singlet undershirt.

"Sure, sure, your majesty," one of them said soothingly. "Sure we know."

"I am not 'your majesty,' " Kingston said bitingly. "I am Dr. K. Heidrich Kingston!"

"Oh, pardon me," the fellow said apologetically, and flipped Kingston's feet into the air just long enough for his helper to slip trousers onto his legs. "I'm pleased to meet you."

"Kingston!" the other fellow said in an awed voice. "That's the big shot, the wheel, himself."

"Well," the first one said, as he

slipped suspenders over the shoulders, "at least he's not Napoleon." From somewhere underneath his uniform jacket he suddenly whipped out a canvas garment, a shapeless thing Kingston might not have recognized as a strait jacket if he hadn't been experienced. "You gonna cooperate, Dr. Kingston, or will we have to put this on you?"

"Oh, he's not so bad," the other fellow said. "This must be his up cycle. You're not going to give us any trouble at all, are you Dr. Kingston? You're going to go over to the hospital with us nicely, aren't you?" It was a statement, a soothing persuasive statement, not a question. "They need you over at the hospital, Dr. Kingston. That's why we came for you."

He looked at them suspiciously, craftily. Then he smoothed his face into arrogant lines of overweening ego.

"Of course," he said firmly. "Let's go to the hospital. They'll soon tell you over there who I am!"

"Sure they will, Dr. Kingston," the first attendant said. "We don't doubt it for a minute."

"Let's go," the other one said.

They walked him out the door, in perfect timing. They seemed relaxed, but their fingertips on his arms where they held him were tense, ready for an expected explosion of insane violence. They'd been all through this before, many times, and their faces seemed to say that you can always expect the unexpected. Why, he might even surprise them and go all the way to his cell without trying to murder six people in the process. It just depended on how long his up cycle lasted, and what period of the phase he was in when they came for him. Probably that was the real reason why the real Dr. Kingston had specified this early hour; probably knew when this nut was in and out of his phases.

"Wonder what it's like to be such a big shot that some poor dope goes nuts thinking he's you?" one of them asked the other as they took him out of the apartment house door and down the steps to the ambulance waiting at the curb.

"I don't think I'd like to find out," the other answered.

"I tell you for the last time, I am Dr. Kingston!" Kingston insisted and allowed the right amount of exasperation to mingle with a note of fear.

"I hope it's the last time, doctor," the first one said. "It gets kinda tiresome telling you that we already know who you are. You don't have to keep telling us, you know. We believe you."

The way they got him into the body of the ambulance couldn't exactly be called a pull and a push. At one instant they were standing on either side of him at the back door, and in the next instant one of them was in front of him and the other behind him—and there they were, all sitting in a row inside the ambulance. The driver didn't even look back at him.

He kept silent all the way over to the hospital buildings. He had made his point. He had offered the reactions of a normal man caught up in a mistake, but certain it would all get straightened out without making a fuss about it. They had responded to the reactions of an insane man, and they hoped they could get him all straightened out and nicely deposited in his cell before he began to kick up a fuss about it. It just depended on the framework from which you viewed it, and he neither wanted to overdo nor underplay his part to jar them out of their frame with discrepancies.

But the vital check point was yet to come. There was nothing in the commitment form about him being a Q. S. man, but he had assigned David Storm's cell number in the Q. S. wing. He'd had to check a half dozen hotels before he'd found one with an open room of the same number, so that the clerical error would stand up all the way down the line.

The guards of the Q. S. wing were pretty stuffy about keeping non Q. S. men out. He might still fail in the first phase of his solution to the problem, to provide David Storm with a doctor, one who might be able to help him.

The attendants wasted no time with red tape. The document didn't call for pre-examinations, or quarantine, or anything. It just said put him into room number 1782. So they went through a side door and by-passed all the usual routines. They were good boys who always did what the coach said. And the document, signed by the Chief Coach, himself, Dr. Kingston, said put the patient in cell 1782. They were doing what they were told.

Would the two guards at the entrance of the Q. S. wing be equally good boys?

"You're taking me to my office, I assume," he said as they were walking down the corridor toward the cell wing.

"Sure, doctor," one of them said. "Nice warm cozy office. Just for you."

They turned a corner, and the two guards got up from chairs where they had been sitting at a hallway desk. One of the attendants pulled out the document from his inner jacket pocket and handed it to the guard.

"Got another customer for you," he said laconically. "For *Office* number 1782." He winked broadly.

"That cell's . . . er . . . office's already occupied." the guard said instantly. "Must be a mistake."

"Maybe they're starting to double them up, now," the attendant said. "You wanna go up to the Big Chief's office and tell him he's made a mistake? He signed it, you know."

"I don't know what you men are up to!" Kingston burst out. "This whole thing is a mistake. I tell you I am Dr. Kingston. I'll have all your jobs for this . . . this . . . this practical joke! You are not taking me any farther! I refuse to go any farther!"

He laid them out for five min-

utes, calling upon strings of profanity, heard again and again from the lips of uncontrolled minds, that would make an old time mariner blush for shame. The four of them looked at him at first with admiration, then with disgust.

"You'd better get him into his cell," one of the guards mumbled to the attendants. "Before he really blows his stack."

"Yeah," the attendant agreed. "Looks like he's going into phase two, and we have not as yet got phase one typed. No telling what phase three might be like."

The guards stepped back. The attendants took him on down the hall of the Q. S. wing.

All the way up the elevator, to the seventeenth floor, and down the hall to the doorway of Storm's cell, Kingston kept wondering if any of them had ever heard of the Uncle Remus story of Bre'er Rabbit and the Briar Patch. "Oh don't throw me in the briar patch, Bre'er Fox. Don't throw me in the briar patch!"

Stupid people resist clever moves but willingly carry out stupid patterns. These guards and attendants were keyed to keeping out anyone who tried to get in—but if someone tried to keep out, obviously he must be forced to go in.

There hadn't even been a question about a lack of Q. S. rating on the form. His vitriolic diatribe had driven it out of their minds for a moment, and if they happened to check it before they stamped the order completed, well, the damage would already have been done.

He would have talked with David Storm.

But Storm was not quite that cooperative. His eyes flared with wild resentment, suspicion, when the attendants ushered Kingston into the cell.

"You see, doctor," one of the attendants said with soothing irony, and not too concealed humor, "we provide you with a patient and everything. We'll move in another couch, and you two can just lie back, relax, and just tell each other all about what's in your subconscious."

"Oh, no you don't," Storm said instantly, and backed into a corner of the cell with an attitude of exaggerated rejection. "That's an old trick. Pretending to be a cell mate so you can learn my secret. That's an old trick, an old, old, old, old, o-l-d—" His lips kept moving, but the sound of his voice trailed away.

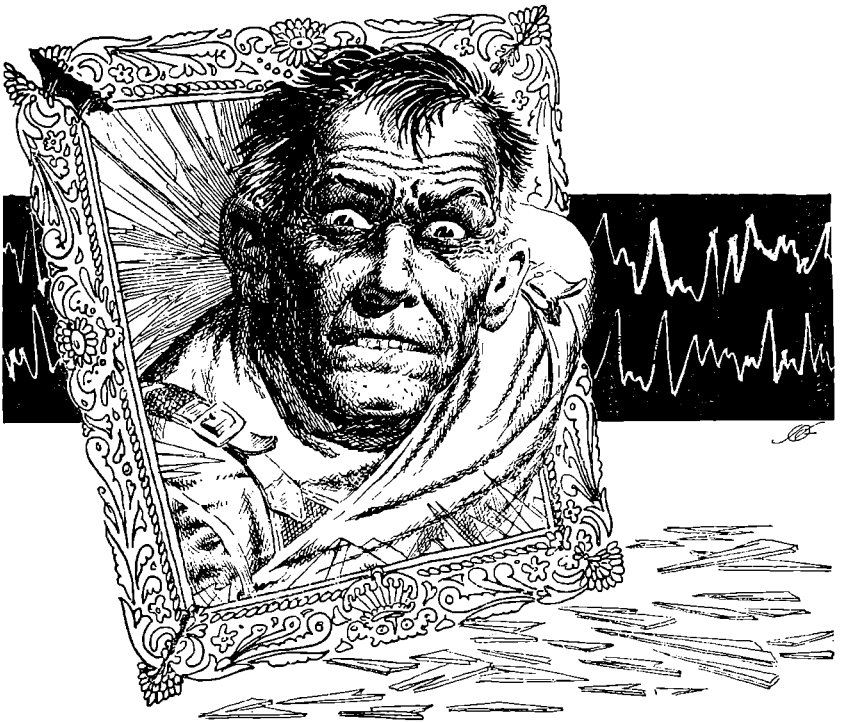
"You needn't think you're going to make me listen to your troubles," Kingston snapped at him. "I've got troubles of my own."

Storm's lips ceased moving, and he stared at Kingston without blinking.

"You big-shot scientists try to get along with one another," one of the attendants said as they went out the door.

"Scientists just argue," the other attendant commented. "They never *do* anything."

But Kingston hardly heard them,



and hardly noticed them when, a few minutes later, they brought in a cot for him and placed it on the opposite side of the cell from Storm's cot. He was busy analyzing Storm's first reactions. Yes, the pattern was disturbed, possibly demented, certainly regressive—and yet, it was not so much irrational as adolescent, the bitterness of the adolescent when he first begins to really realize that the merchandise of humanity is not living up to the advertising under which it has been sold to him.

Under the attendants' watchful eyes, Kingston changed into the shapeless garments of the inmates. He flared up at them once again, carrying out his pattern of indignation that they should do this to him, but he didn't put much heart into it. No point in overdoing the act.

"Looks like he might have passed his peak," one of the attendants muttered. "He's calming down again. Maybe he won't be too hard to handle." They went out the door again with the admonishment: "Now you fellows be quiet, and you'll get breakfast pretty soon. But if you get naughty—" With his fist and thumb he made an exaggerated motion of

working a hypodermic syringe. Storm cowered back into his corner of the cell.

"I've given up trying to convince you numskulls," Kingston said with contempt. "I'll just wait now until my office hears about this."

"Yeah," the attendant said. "Yeah, you just sit tight and wait. Just keep waiting—and quiet!"

The sound of their steps receded down the hallway. Kingston lay back on his couch and said nothing. He knew Storm's eyes were on him, watching him, as nervous, excited, and wary as an animal. The cell was barren, containing only the cots covered with a tough plastic which defied tearing with the bare fingers, and a water closet. There wasn't a seat on the latter because that can be torn off and used as a weapon either against one's self or others. In the wards there would be books, magazines, games, implements of various skills and physical therapies, all under the eyes of watchful attendants; but in these cells there was nothing, because there weren't enough attendants to watch the occupants of each cell.

Kingston lay on his couch and waited. In a little while Storm came out of his corner and sat down on the edge of his own couch. His attitude was half wary, half belligerent.

"You needn't be afraid of me," Kingston said softly, and kept looking upward at the ceiling. "I really am Dr. Heidrich Kingston. I'm a psychiatrist. And I already know all about you and your secrets."

He heard a faint whimper, the rustling of garments on the plastic couch cover, as if Storm were shrinking back against the wall, as if he expected this to be the prelude to more punishment for having such secret thoughts. Then a form of reasoning seemed to prevail, and Kingston could feel the tension relaxing in the room.

"You're as crazy as I am," Storm said loudly. There was relief in his voice, and yet regret.

Kingston said nothing. There was no point in pushing it. If his luck held, he would have several days. Miss Verity could be counted on to cut her vacation short and come back ahead of time, but even with that, he should have at least three days. And while Storm was badly disoriented, he could be reached.

"And that's an old, old trick, too," Storm said in a bitter singsong. "Pretending you already know, so I'll talk. Well I'm not a commie! I'm not a traitor! I'm not any of those things. I just think—" He broke off abruptly. "Oh, no you don't!" he exclaimed. "You can't trick me into telling you what I think. That's an old, old, old, old—"

It was quite clear why the therapies used by Moss hadn't worked. Storm was obsessed with guilt. He had been working in the highest echelons of Loyalty and at the same time had been harboring secret doubts that the framework was right. The Moss therapies then were simply punishments for his guilt, punishments which he felt he deserved, punish-

ments which confirmed his wrongdoing. And Moss would be so convinced that Storm's thoughts were entirely wrong, that he couldn't possibly use the technique of agreement to lead Storm out of his syndrome. That was why Moss' past was stainless, why the Security Board trusted him with a Q.S.; he was as narrow in his estimate of right and wrong as they.

"Old, old, old, old—" Storm kept repeating. He was stuck in the adolescent groove of bitter cynicism, not yet progressed to the point of realizing that in spite of its faults and hypocrisies, there were some elements in humanity worth a man's respect and faith. Even a thinking man.

It was a full day later before Kingston attempted the first significant move in reaching through to Storm. The previous day had confirmed the pattern of the attendants: A breakfast of adequate but plain food. Moss would never get caught on the technicality so prevalent in many institutions where the inmates can't help themselves—chiseling on food and pocketing the difference. After breakfast a clean-up of the cells and their persons. Four hours alone. Lunch. Carefully supervised and highly limited exercise period. Back to the cell again for another four hours. Supper. And soon, lights out.

It varied, somewhat, from most mental hospital routine; but these were all Q. S. men, each bearing terrible secrets which had snapped their minds. They musn't be allowed to talk to one another. It varied, too, from patient to patient. It varied mainly in that the cells were largely soundproof; they had little of the screaming, raging, cursing, strangling, choking bedlam common in many such institutions.

Moss was a good administrator. He had his wing under thorough control. It was as humane as his limited point of view could make it. There were too few attendants, but then that was always the case in mental hospitals. In this instance it worked in Kingston's favor. There would be little chance of interruption, excepted at the planned times. In going into another person's mind that was a hazard to be guarded against, as potentially disastrous as a disruption of a major operation.

No reverberation of alarm at his absence from his office reached this far, and Kingston doubted there would be much. Miss Verity was more efficient than Moss and the organization she had set up would run indefinitely during his absence and hers. Decisions, which only he could make, would pile up in the staff offices, but that was nothing unusual in government.

He didn't try to rush Storm. With a combination of the facts he had gleaned from the file and the empathy he possessed, he lay on his cot and talked quietly to the ceiling about Storm. His childhood, his days in school, his attitudes toward his parents, teachers, scout masters, all the carefully tailored and planned sociology surrounding growing youth

in respectable circumstances of today. It was called planned youth development, but it could better be called youth suppression, for its object was to quell any divergent tendencies, make the youth docile and complaisant—a good boy, which meant no trouble to anybody.

He translated the standard pattern into specifics about Storm, for obviously, until his breakup, David had been the epitome of a model boy. There are several standard patterns of reaction to this procedure. Eager credulity, where the individual is looking for a concrete father image to carry his burdens; rejective skepticism, where the individual seizes upon the slightest discrepancy to prove the speaker cannot know; occasionally superstitious fear and awe; and even less occasionally a comprehension of how gestalt empathy works. But whatever the pattern of reaction, it is the rare person, indeed, who can keep from listening to an analysis of himself.

Storm lay on his side on his cot, facing Kingston—a good sign because the previous day he had faced the wall—and watched the older man talk quietly and easily at the ceiling. Kingston knew when he came close to dangerous areas from the catch in Storm's breathing, but there was no other sign. Deliberately he broke off in the middle of telling Storm what his reactions had been at the bull session where the radical had been talking.

There was about ten minutes of silence. Several times there was an indrawn breath, as if Storm were starting to say something. But he kept quiet. Kingston picked up the thread and continued on, as if no time had elapsed.

He got his reward during the exercise period. Storm kept close to him, manifestly preferred his company to that of the attendants. They were among the less self-destructive few who were allowed a little time at handball. The previous day Storm had swung on the ball, wildly, angrily, as if to work off some terrible rage by hitting the ball. There hadn't been even the excuse of a game. Storm, younger and quicker, much more intense, had kept the ball to himself. Today Storm seemed the opposite. The few times he did hit the ball he deliberately placed it where Kingston could get it easily. Then he lost interest and sat down in a corner of the court. The attendants hustled them out quickly, to make room for others.

Back in the cell, Kingston picked up the thread again. Genuine accomplishment in gestalt empathy allows one to enter directly into another man's mind; his whole life is laid open for reading. Specific events are often obscure, but the man's pattern of reactions to events, the psychological reality of it, is open to view. Kingston narrated, with neither implied criticism nor praise, until, midafternoon, he sprang a bombshell.

"But you were wrong about one thing, Storm," he said abruptly. He felt Storm's instant withdrawal, the

return of hostility. "You thought you were alone. You thought you were the only one with this terrible flaw in your nature. But you were not alone, son. And you aren't alone now.

"You put your finger on the major dilemma facing science today."

Now, for the first time, he glanced over at Storm. The young man was up on his elbow, staring at Kingston with an expression of horror. As easily as that, his secret had come out. And he did not doubt that Kingston knew his thoughts. The rest of it had fitted, and this fitted, too. He began to weep, at first quietly, then with great, wracking sobs.

"Disgrace," he muttered. "Disgrace, disgrace, disgrace. My mother, my father—" He buried his face in his arms. His whole body shook. He turned his face to the wall.

"All over the world, the genuine men of science are fighting out these same problems, David," Kingston said. "You are not alone."

Storm started to put his hands over his ears—then took them away. Kingston appeared not to notice.

"Politicians, not only ours, but all over the world, have discovered that science is a tremendous weapon. As with any other weapon they have seized it and turned it to their use. But it would be a great mistake to cast the politician in the role of villain. He is not a villain. He simply operates in an entirely different framework from that of science.

"Science does not understand his framework. A man of science grows extremely cautious with his words. He makes no claims he cannot substantiate. He freely admits it when he does not know something. He would be horrified to recommend the imposition of a mere theory of conduct upon a culture. The politician is not bothered by any of this. He has no hesitancy in recommending what he believes be imposed upon a culture; whatever is necessary for him to get the votes he will say.

"The scientist states again and again that saying a thing is true will not make it true. In classical physics this may have been accurate, although there is doubt of its truth in relative physics, and it is manifestly untrue in the living sciences. For often the politician says a thing with such a positive strength of confidence that the people begin operating in a framework of its truth and so implement it that it does become true.

"The public follows the politician by preference. Most of us have never outgrown our emotional childhood, and when the silver cord, the apron strings are broken from our real parents, we set about trying to find parent substitutes to bear the responsibility for our lives. The scientist stands in uncertainty, without panaceas, without sure-fire solutions of how to have all we want and think we want. The politician admits to no such uncertainties. He becomes an excellent father substitute. He will take care of us, bear the brunt of responsibility for us.

"But this clash of frameworks goes much deeper than that. Just as the

scientist cannot understand the politician, so the politician does not understand science. Like most people, to him the scientist is just a super trained mechanic. He's learned how to manipulate some laboratory equipment. He has memorized some vague and mysterious higher math formulae. But he's just a highly skilled mechanic, and, as such, is employed by the politician to do a given job. He is not expected to meddle in things which are none of his concern.

"But in science we know this is a false estimation. For science is far more than the development of a skill. It is a frame of thought, a philosophy, a way of life. That was the source of your conflict, son. You were trying to operate in the field of science under the politician's estimation of what it is.

"The scientist is human. He loves his home, his flag, his country. Like any other man he wishes to protect and preserve them. But the political rules under which he is expected to do this come in direct conflict with his basic philosophy and approach to enlightenment. We have one framework, then, forced to make itself subservient to another framework, and the points of difference between the two are so great, that tremendous inner conflicts are aroused.

"The problem is not insuperable. Science has dealt with such problems before. Without risk to home, flag and country, science will find a way to deal with this dilemma, also. You are not alone."

There was a long silence, and then Storm spoke, quite rationally, from his cot.

"That's all very nice," he said, "but there's one thing wrong with it. You're just as crazy as I am, or you wouldn't be here."

Kingston looked over at him and laughed.

"Now you're thinking like the politician, Storm," he said. "You're taking the evidence and saying it can have only one possible interpretation." He was tempted to tell Storm the truth of why he was here, and to show him that science could find a way, without harm, to circumvent the too narrow restrictions placed upon it by the political mind. But that would be unwise. Better never to let anyone know how he had manipulated it so that a simple clerical error could account for the whole chain of events.

"I really am Dr. Heidrich Kingston," he said.

"Yeah," Storm agreed, too quickly. There was derision in his eyes, but there was also pity. That was a good sign, too. Storm was showing evidence that he could think of the plight of someone else, other than himself. "Yeah, sure you are." he added.

"You don't think so, now," Kingston laughed. "But tomorrow, or the next day, my secretary will come to the door, there, and get me out of here."

"Yeah, sure. Tomorrow—or the next day." Storm agreed. "You just

go on thinking that, fellow. It helps, believe me, it helps."

"And shortly afterwards you'll be released, too. Because there's no point now in keeping you locked up, incommunicado. I know all about your secrets, you see."

"Yeah," Storm breathed softly. "Tomorrow or the next day, or the day after that, or the day after— Yeah, I think I'll believe it, too, fellow. Yeah, got to believe in something."

In a limited fashion the patterns of human conduct can be accurately predicted. Cause leads to effect in the lives of human beings, just as it does in the physical sciences. The old fellow who had once told Storm that the universe does not hand out printed instructions on how it is put together was only literally correct. Figuratively, he was in error, for the universe does bear the imprints of precisely how it is put together and operates. It is the business of science to learn to read those imprints and know their meanings. Life is a part of the universe, bearing imprints of how it operates, too. And we already read them, after a limited fashion. We couldn't have an organized society, at all, if this were not true.

Kingston had made some movement beyond generalized quantum theory, and could predict the given movements of certain individuals in the total motion of human affairs.

Faithful to the last drawn line on the charted pattern, it was the next morning that Miss Verity, with clenched jaws and pale face, stepped through the cell door, followed by a very worried and incredulous guard.

"Dr. Kingston," she said firmly, then faltered. She stood silent for an instant, fighting to subdue her relief, anger, exasperation, tears. She won. She did not break through the reserve she treasured. She spoke then, quite in the secretarial manner, but she could not subdue a certain triumph in her eyes.

"Dr. Kingston," she repeated, "it seems that while I was on my vacation, you made a . . . ah . . . clerical error."

THE END