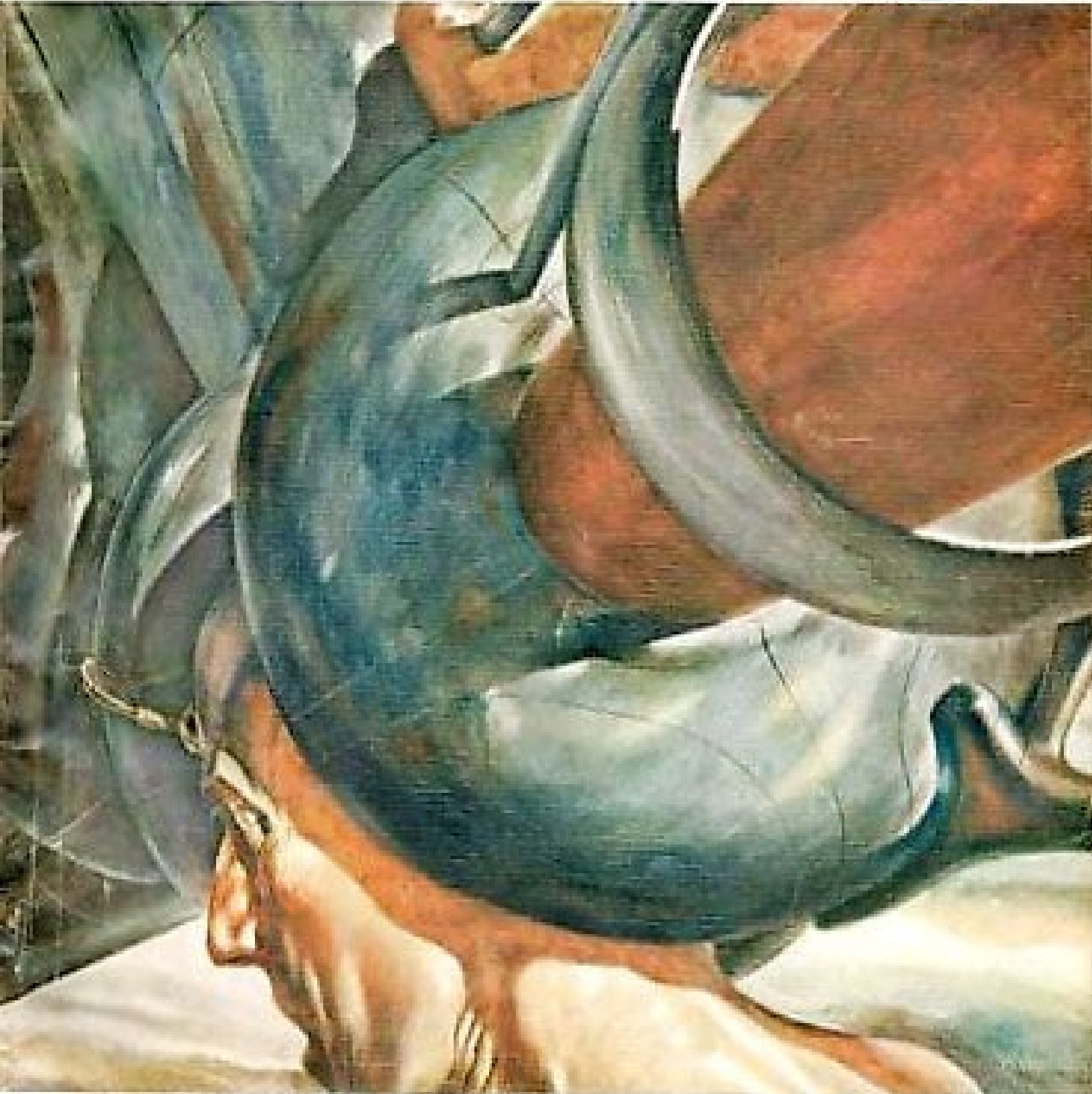


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TAKE THE REASON PRISONER | BY JOHN J. MCGUIRE

Project Gutenberg's Take the Reason Prisoner, by John Joseph McGuire

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TAKE THE REASON PRISONER

No process is perfect ...
but some men always feel unalterably convinced
that their system is the Be all and End all.
Psychology now,
should make prisons absolutely escape-proof,
and cure all aberrations....

JOHN J. McGUIRE

Illustrated by George Schelling

Major general (Ret.) James J. Bennington had both professional admiration and personal distaste for the way the politicians maneuvered him.

The party celebrating his arrival as the new warden of Duncannon Processing Prison had begun to mellow. As in any group of men with a common interest, the conversation and jokes centered on that interest. The representatives and senators of the six states which sent criminals to Duncannon, holding glasses more suited to Martini-drinking elephants than human beings, naturally turned their attention to the vagaries in the business of being and remaining elected.

Senator Giles from Pennsylvania and Representative Culpepper of Connecticut accomplished the maneuver. Together they smoothly cut the general out of the group comparing the present tax structure to rape, past the group lamenting the heavy penalties in the latest conflict-of-interest law, into a comparatively quiet corner.

"Well general, no need to tell you that we are all as happy to have you here as Dr. Thornberry seemed to be," Senator Giles said.

Bennington nodded politely, though he had not been much impressed by the lean, high-voiced man who had greeted him with such open delight. Dr. Thornberry had expressed too much burbling joy when he had been relieved of his administrative job as Acting Warden, had been overly-happy about resuming his normal duties as Assistant Warden and Chief Psychologist.

"I'm very much interested in some of your ideas on reducing the overhead here, general," Culpepper said, "although I'm also wondering if they may not cost my good friend, the senator, some votes in his district."

"That will be no real worry," Giles said thoughtfully, "if I can show the changes are real economies. Today that's the way to gain votes and I'd come up with more than I'd lose."

"But your turnover," Culpepper said. "I can see that in a regular prison, where they have the men a long time, it's easy to train them in kitchen work and supply. But here.... How long do you plan to keep them, general?"

"I'll try to get back to the original purpose in setting up Duncannon as quickly as possible," Bennington said. "Dr. Thornberry agreed that five days is the maximum time his sections need to complete the analysis of a prisoner and decide what prison he should go to. After that, we will have sound reason to start charging the individual states for each day we have to keep their consignment."

"Complicated," Giles said. "I mean, the bookkeeping."

"Not at all. I'll either hold the next top-sergeant that comes through here or borrow one from Carlisle or Indiantown Gap. He can set up a sort of morning-report system, and when the states learn they will have to pay us to handle the men *they* should be feeding, we will soon see ... well, there won't be six hundred and fifty men, women and children stuffed into barracks designed to hold three hundred and fifty."

Bennington had spoken calmly and he lifted his glass casually. But over the rim of his drink he caught the eye of another old soldier.

Ferguson, who had been a private when Bennington had been only a captain in Korea, eased himself to within earshot.

The two had risen in rank and grade together. Thirty-three years had taught them the value of an unobtrusive witness to the general's conversations.



"But with personnel changing so rapidly—frankly, I didn't understand your reference to a reple-depot," Culpepper confessed.

"A reple-depot," Bennington said, calling deep on his reserve of patience, "is the place to which all persons called up for military service must go first. There, they go through a process similar to the one we use here: a complete physical, a complete mental, a complete skill-testing, all used to decide where the man

himself can best be used—or imprisoned. Then they are forwarded to that assignment."

Culpepper nodded, but he still seemed puzzled.

"You could waste an awful lot of men on just handling the food and equipment that such a command needs, unless you used the men passing through," Bennington went on. "But, if you have a small permanent cadre who know what to do and how to do it, they can handle large groups of untrained men.

"And you'll not only save money, you'll give these men something to do while they are here," he added.

When Giles and Culpepper exchanged glances, Bennington was immediately and almost totally certain that his explanation had not been needed.

"Seems to me you could economize even more if a part of that permanent cadre were trusties," Giles said.

"I would think so," Culpepper said, "but of course you would have to pick the men very carefully."

Giles approved of that idea. "Responsible men, not hardened criminals. Men who once held a prominent position in their communities, but made a mistake and now would sincerely like a chance to redeem themselves."

"Take the example of Mike Rooney," Culpepper said. "A tragic case, that. He's lost a good government job and with it all his pension and retirement rights. And how? By simply having an accident with a government helicopter when he was using it on a combination of government and personal business.

"Rooney—" Giles said thoughtfully. "Yes, I know him very well. Wonderful chap, nice family of growing boys. Now there is the sort of man who would make you a good trusty, general. I would recommend him very highly."

"I feel the same way," Culpepper said.

Bennington signaled to Ferguson, used the excuse of freshening his drink to cover his thoughts. Rooney ... Rooney ... oh, yes, the Internal Revenue official with the odd ideas about whose tax should be collected and whose should be neglected ... and coming here for processing on a minor charge.

The old run-around, Bennington decided: Put the man in jail on a minor charge

until the hullabaloo over his major crime no longer made big headlines.

If word had gotten down to the State level that Rooney was to be taken care of, the former tax collector must be sitting on a lot of hot stuff.

The right phrase here will buy a lot of co-operation, Bennington told himself, remembering the overcrowded barracks, among the long list of things needing a change before this place operated properly.

On a short-term basis, the answer was clear....

"Gentlemen, I have no doubt that anyone you recommend for special consideration would, in some way, deserve that consideration," he said. "I am further aware that one hand washes another and that if I expect some favors from you, I should expect to do some for you."

He held down his temper while the politicians exchanged glances of mutual congratulation.

"But," he said, "if I establish a trusty system, it will be an honorable one. I would be seen in hell first before I would allow any man to use the setup as a place to hide in comfort during a short rap when he should be sweating out a long one.

"Your friend Rooney will get exactly what he deserves. And not a thing more."

Giles had slowly turned a turkey purple, but his voice remained calm and even. "I think you stated the proposition fairly, general. You will get from us the same amount of consideration that you give us."

The party had been over for an hour, but Ferguson was still at work on the debris. And his old sergeant had, Bennington estimated out of long experience with cleaning up after stag parties, at least another hour's work ahead of him.

The general returned to staring out the big picture window overlooking the prison compound.

Something was wrong....

It wasn't Giles and Culpepper. A call to a friend in the Bureau of Internal Revenue, a few words to each of the six governors who had concurred in his appointment, either or both of these would take care of those gentlemen, very thoroughly.

Something else was wrong....

He knew the basis of his feeling. He had led troops too many years not to have learned how rapidly a commander can establish a feeling of empathy, even on the first day of a new command.

He knew the basis for the feeling, but he couldn't pinpoint an exact reason.

Or could he?

Why were there absolutely no lights at all in the prison compound?

He spoke over his shoulder to Ferguson, "I'm going for a little walk."

"Want me with you, sir?"

"No, I don't think I'll need you. Keep going and finish up in here."

"Right, sir. You've got your pistol."

The old master sergeant was stating a fact, not asking a question.

"Ha!"

Bennington's barked reply arose from memory of his first argument with Thornberry. The assistant warden-chief psychologist had been astounded to learn that the general did not trust the conditioning process as a solid basis for prison security. Beginning there, the opening engagement in the battle of ideas, their contrasting philosophies had deployed and made the entire prison a battleground.

But Bennington dismissed his chief assistant from his thoughts as soon as he stood in the darkness on the little knoll outside his house. He concentrated on orienting himself.



The camp had not been changed much when it had been made over from a ground-to-air missile station, protecting the freight yards of Harrisburg, into the processing prison for six states.

They had tapped the Juniata a few hundred yards northwest of where it joined the Susquehanna, for the water that filled the moat encircling three sides of the prison. The union of the two rivers formed the water barrier on the east.

What was it Thornberry had said about the moat? Oh, yes, not to keep the poor misguided inmates imprisoned, but to keep unwanted people out....

When his eyes were accustomed to the darkness, Bennington walked east and came to the first of the two new additions to the camp. A long building, used by psychological and medical men to determine the total amount of usefulness to society left in a man convicted of a crime.

Beyond it, the second addition, a barbed-wire-enclosed building called The Cage, where prisoners were first received and conditioned.

He turned and began retracing his steps, at the same time mentally following what happened to a prisoner in each of the two buildings. When the official party accompanying him to his new post had arrived late yesterday, for the second time he had followed a man through the procedure.

The quick frisking and the slow interview with two purposes, by visual, oral and written tests determining the amount of suggestibility to hypnotic conditioning plus the quicker giving of a card to denote a temporary classification.

Light gray for minor offenses; yellow for major crimes; pink for lifers, psychos and killers; blues for juvenile delinquents; green for all females, with a colored clip-tab denoting the weight of the offense.

A temporary classification it had to be, Bennington decided, for the weight of the offense in itself never measured the man. How many repeaters, men inevitable to a life of crime, had come here to be handed a light gray card in The Cage, while other, different men, once-upon-a-timers, had come out carrying the yellow or pink?

Could and did happen, the general knew, could and did happen even in his former military life, where consideration of a man's record was a prerequisite to deciding the sentence, with review and review and review automatic not a matter of initiated appeal.

However, here, in the psycho-med building, was what might be called re-judgment, for here, assisted by the latest advances that could trickle down through the long bureaucracy above—and aided by ideas that yeasted up, not down—Dr. Thornberry's staff went back to basics with the question, what is reclaimable, for the man and for us, in this man?

But not the first day ... that was routine.

Strip and change to prison clothes.

Mental memo: What happened to the civilian clothes that the prisoners surrendered? Was there the smell of a small but lucrative racket here?

Then, on the basis of that preliminary in The Cage, through one of two doors. A few went into the room where a massive injection of sedatives made them virtually vegetables. Most of them, however, were sent into the room where Judkins, the new technician who had also arrived only yesterday, would fit the "tank," the big helmet, down over the prisoner's head and conditioned the man with mechanical and oral hypnosis.

The results, from drugging or hypnosis, were the same. From either room the prisoner came with his face a blank.

Mud-faces, or in a new use of the words from the Original World War, "doughboys".

Those two rooms were harder to get into than to leave. The security precautions of The Cage extended to the moment the prisoner was led to the door and started out of those rooms. But from there on....

No, Bennington decided, let's drop security for a moment. Something had happened in the rest of the processing he and the committee had watched and the meaning of that something had emerged only tonight at the party.

Not in the physical ... and that had been good, as complete as the most expensive clinic Bennington had ever seen, a thorough probing for a structural reason behind the crime or crimes....

But the second mental, that quick recheck of the completeness of the drugging or the hypnosis.... It had been there that both Giles and Culpepper had been very, very interested to learn if anything a prisoner said at this point was admissible in a court of law.

The general now understood their relief at Thornberry's explanation: Anything a man said while under the influence of psychological conditioning was considered as obtained under duress.



Bennington was still meditating on what Rooney could reveal as he walked around the mess hall in the center of the compound. Then he turned to consider again his prison's routine.

He leaned against the south wall of the mess hall and looked across at the four barrack buildings bulking against the darkness. They were the two-story type the Army erects for temporary purposes and uses permanently.

The smell from the overcrowded buildings hit his nose again as strongly as it had in the afternoon.

And sounds hit his ears, soft sounds that had been muffled by the long mess hall between him and their source, low sounds further kept from him by the light wind from the north.

The lights in the barracks had been off since 2100, except, of course, for the eerie-blue night lights, and the prisoners should be in their bunks, asleep or at least silent, immobile.

But why were all the lights off in the compound, and Bennington damned himself for not seeking the answer to the question before.

Thornberry would tell me there is no need for light; that the prisoners can't escape because their drugging has made them unable, or their conditioning has made them afraid, to leave the prison.

The sounds, the flickering like fireflies or carefully thumbed flashlights, didn't come from his near right, Number One, minor crimes, or Number Two, major crimes exclusive of murder.

They came from between Three and Four.

Number Three. Psychos, sex deviates and murderers, with a couple of padded cells and barred windows needed upstairs, even though the inmates were conditioned.

Number Four changed by the addition of an extra latrine for the second floor. Females on the first, juvenile delinquents on the second.

Bennington had learned to move like a ghost, move quietly or die, on the almost forgotten battlefields of a police action in Korea. He had had a post-graduate course in the South-East Asian jungles. On the Chilean desert he had added to

his skills.

He moved now as he had then.

But there was little reason for caution. The guards were too busy collecting their fees, the juvenile delinquents were too busy acting as ushers, with even the sex deviates from Number Three busy.

The customers, of course, were far too interested in what they were buying.

And there was nothing to be done tonight. Bennington snarled to himself, as he carefully made his way back to the house.

But tomorrow morning....



A good breakfast inside of him, the early morning sun brightening the scene before him, not even combined could they dispel any of Bennington's bitter anger at the memory of last night's saturnalia.

He marched across the twenty-five feet separating his house from the Administration Building, a long, two-story structure on the western end of the compound.

The entire end nearest his house was taken up by Message Center, the one room which had had Bennington's full approval on his tour of inspection both times he had seen the prison. Internally, the separate parts of the prison were linked together by telephone, a P.A. system, and intercom. The outside world could be reached or could come to them by 'phone, radio, teletype, and facsimile reproduction.

Bennington opened the door, glanced up to check his wristwatch with the big clock on the wall.

0800.

He stepped inside, closed the door, looked around.

The man on night duty was sound asleep.

Bennington coughed once, loudly. The man raised his head and looked sleepily

around.

"Are you the only one here?"

"The others come in around nine," the clerk said, yawning, bleary-eyed.

"I see. Did anything come in last night?"

"That stuff." A wave toward a roll of yellow teletype paper.

Bennington stared at the man, continued to stare until the clerk flushed a deep red. Finally the night man straightened in his chair, then stood up. He picked up the roll of paper and came around his desk.

"Sir," he said "this report came in last night. It is a list of the prisoners we can expect to receive today and the probable time of their arrival."

"Thank you," Bennington said, accepting the roll. "I will be in my office if anyone is looking for me."

"Sir...." The clerk gulped, hesitated, forced out the words. "That's the only copy."

Bennington looked the man directly in the eyes. "You must have been very busy last night." He returned the roll of paper. "I'll be in my office."

"Yes, sir!"

Bennington started to walk away, but before he reached the door, the clerk, a man Bennington remembered as being on day duty on his first visit, began to sputter, "Sir, the quickest way to your office—"

The general glanced over his shoulder, then continued on his way.

Before he could get to the door he had chosen, he heard behind him the electrotyper chattering away like an automatic weapon with a weak sear spring.



Bennington could have left by a door leading into Dr. Thornberry's office and gone on through another door into his own big office. But he wanted to check on the availability of the rest of the staff.

The door he opened led into a long hallway. On the left was the long room where

Thornberry's psych-med staff had their personal desks and permanent records. On the right, a door leading to Thornberry's office, but none into his own. His room was reached only through the office of a clerk-receptionist or Thornberry's.

Down the hall, past the wide main entrance with its glimpse of the flagpole outside and inside the stairs leading to the second floor, where a large part of the permanent staff were given rent-free quarters.

The armory, on his left just beyond the entrance, a room as long as the med-staff's, but unlike the other—and who had the brains to do this—locked.

Across from the armory, a big room for the rest of the administrative staff, but no one on duty.

The supply room, corresponding in size and location to the Message Center on the other end, unlocked and no one in it; with everything the prison received on open shelves, available to any reaching hand.

Bennington went back the hall, through his secretary's room into his own office.

One sleepy clerk and himself on duty—he looked at his watch—0815.

... There were going to be some changes made....

He spun his chair around and looked out the big window directly behind his desk. He noted the fact that about twenty feet away the land dropped into a very deep slant to the western arm of the moat, but the fact recorded itself only because he always made subconscious notes of the military aspects of terrain.

Consciously, he was wondering why the vast expanse of good, rich earth, north, west and south of the prison, acres of fine land that had been and still were a part of this former military post, had never been put to productive use.

How easily Duncannon could become more self-supporting—and even though Giles and Culpepper wanted to make a racket of the idea, there was much to be said for a trusty system.

Hold it, he told himself, those ideas and where we'll set up a laundry—it's utterly ridiculous that we have to send everything into Harrisburg!—can come later. Right now let's think about an appointment list ... and the first name is my good assistant warden's, Dr. Thornberry.

Still looking out the window, he leaned back in his chair and felt again the slow

boil of anger.

A gentle rap on his office door, the one opening from his secretary's office.

Bennington swung around to face his desk again. "Come in."

The Message Center clerk, with a neat stack of papers. "Sir, this is your copy of the report received last night. The original is on file in Message Center and other copies are on the desks of the people who will need them."

"Thank you," Bennington said. "I am sure that this procedure will be followed in the future."

"Yes, sir!"

It will be in your case, Bennington decided, then turned his attention to the report.

The distribution list in the upper righthand corner was—h-m-m-m, good. Himself, Chief Psychologist, Chief Guard, Kitchen, Supply. Probably set up by the same man who had designed Message Center itself.

The report was not good.

The first paragraph was a summary and it was almost all bad news. Total: 35. No women, no juveniles, the only good reading. But they were coming from all six states and all but one of them Barracks Two and Three cases. Assembled at Philadelphia, by train to Harrisburg, by truck to here, but not arriving until 1530.

Two and Three were overcrowded now. With their communications so good, why couldn't they move the processed men out faster?

And this new group would arrive so late. Couldn't even begin processing them. Or could they?

Might have to.

Let's look at the details.

Connecticut: Musto, John, and his brothers, Ralph and Pietro. Murders. Following those names, five others of the gang that had terrorized the banks in

that area for two years. Capturing all of them at once by putting a sleep-gas bomb in a basket of groceries delivered to their hideout, that had been a neat bit of police work. But till those boys were conditioned or drugged, they would need special guards.

Delaware: Clarens, Walter. Murders. The name was familiar—Oh yes, three killings, one of them a little girl with whose blood Clarens had written at the scene. "For God's sake, catch me before I kill again." Well, Thornberry would be happy.

Maryland: Major crimes, but no killers.

New Jersey: The usual list from the waterfronts and the usual wide variety of manslaughter and homicide.

New York: Dalton, Harry. Let's see, haven't I ... yes. "The Man No Jail Can Hold." Another special guard.

Pennsylvania:...

The name jumped out. *Rooney, Michael.*

The intercom on his desk buzzed and he flipped the switch. "Go ahead, Bennington here," he said, and realized only after he had spoken how the thought of Rooney had made his voice a growl.

"Dr. Thornberry, sir. May I see you?"

"By all means," Bennington said. "The sooner, the better."



Thornberry started talking as soon as he opened the door between the two offices.

"General, did you see the list of new arrivals? Of all people, Dalton! And arriving too late to be conditioned!"

Bennington said nothing until the psychologist had seated himself. He simply watched his chief assistant and tried to find some reason to like the man.

"What do you mean," he finally said, "too late to be conditioned?"

Having just considered this problem, Bennington's question was a testing of Thornberry, not a request for information.

Thornberry was looking aggrieved, as if the fact was so obvious even the general could understand it. "Processing takes all day, sir, and this group does not arrive until late afternoon."

"Does the processing have to be continuous?" Bennington hoped his chief assistant would show a little flexibility.

But the question threw the bureaucratic psychologist into mental dishevelment. "I beg your pardon?"

"All we have to worry about is keeping them quiet tonight, then you can slip them back to normal in the morning and run them through as if they had arrived tomorrow."

Thornberry pursed his lips. "But that would mean—"

"A little extra work on the part of very few men," Bennington snapped. "We'll keep them away from the rest tonight by sleeping them in The Cage. A couple of men in Supply can move cots and blankets over there now. Feed them coffee and sandwiches. Call the Mess Hall and get them made up. At the same time I know you'll find three or four men who want the overtime for dishing it out.

"How long do you need to know if you can use hypnosis or if you need drugs, and wouldn't it be simpler to drug the whole lot?"

"No, definitely not the last," and for the first time Thornberry was being positive, "because we have to use a massive dose and they can't shake it till—day after tomorrow, at the best tomorrow afternoon."

"The Army can decide to hypno in two minutes with a spin-dizzy wheel and some lights. How long for you?"

Thornberry bridled. "The same, especially if *I* do it."

"Good. So now you need a doctor to drug the ones who need it, a psychologist to decide who gets what, one machine moved and one technician." Bennington snapped on his intercom, said to his secretary, "Get Judkins in here."

"Yes, *sir!*"

The word seems to be getting around, Bennington decided, but this will take a moment.

He started on his next problem. "Have you ever inspected the prison grounds at night?"

"No, sir! That is Slater's duty!"

Thornberry was again the proper bureaucrat, horrified at the thought of invading another's domain.

"Judkins here," came from the intercom.

"Bennington speaking. You know the corridor between the reception and interview rooms in The Cage?"

"Yes, sir."

"Get your equipment over close to there. We have a group of prisoners arriving around 1530, too late for complete processing. But at least you can condition them against escape."

The intercom was silent a moment, then, "But how will I know who I'm working on?"

Bennington questioned Thornberry with a raised eyebrow.

The psych-expert shook his head, no.

"This time you don't need to know," Bennington said. "Get your equipment set up and report to me when it's ready."

Another long silence, then, "Yes, sir."

"He should know who he has under the hood," Thornberry said thoughtfully, after Bennington had silenced the intercom, "especially since the group includes a man like Dalton—"

"We have something more important to discuss," Bennington cut in, dismissing the subject. "Last night I inspected the prison compound."

He described what he had found, then leaned back to hear Thornberry's reaction.

"That's not in the least what I told him he could do," the psychologist said.

"*What! This is your idea?*"

Thornberry was equally astounded at Bennington's reaction. "Yes, of course. As soon as I took over as Acting Warden, I told Slater that social visits between the prisoners were entirely permissible until Lights Out. But this—"

The psychologist shook his head, then appeared to reconsider and his face brightened. "But it's a step in the right direction. Naturally, I prefer the Mexican system where the wife is permitted regular, very private, visits to her husband—"

"Let me get this straight," Bennington felt like a man lost in a maze. "You told the Chief Guard that the prisoners could visit each other—"

"No, not all of them," Thornberry interrupted. "I never meant that some of the problem cases, like a few of those in Number Three, should have complete social relationships."

"Just exactly what were you thinking of when you gave that order?"

"Thinking of? Why, sir, I was thinking of our poor patients here. Society has ordered them confined, yes, but need we necessarily deprive them of *all* human rights?"

Thornberry seemed ready to orate for an hour, but Bennington stopped him with a gesture. "All right, I've handled POW camps, maybe in one way I can see your point. But we can take up the philosophy of this later.

"Right now, this is the essential fact, that Slater has taken your order and twisted it into a racket.

"So let's talk to Slater."

But the intercom said, "He hasn't come on duty yet."

"He has the room at the head of the stairs," Thornberry said.

The door was locked, but the psychologist produced a set of master keys.

"I want a set of those, too," Bennington said.

The room was heavy with the smells of cheap whiskey, stale cigarette smoke and human sweat. Two figures were sprawled on the bed. A hairy, bearlike man, Slater; a big well-built brunette.

Thornberry squinted through the gloom, then turned on the lights. "That's Mona Sitwell," he said, "and I'm sure she was supposed to be on orders to leave here two weeks ago."

Bennington remembered the case, the spinster who had found her parents a hindrance to her extensive enjoyment of male companionship. She had literally chopped up their objections.

"Follow through on the orders you give sometime," Bennington said dryly. "You may meet a few more surprises."

The man on the bed stirred, threw his arm up over his eyes. "What do you want?" he mumbled sleepily.

Bennington mentally cursed the Civil Service regulations which tied his hands, and left him only one thing to say: "Your immediate resignation."



"Message Center, sir."

"Go ahead." The general looked at the desk clock. 1515. He could guess what they wanted to tell him.

"Sir, the new consignment will be here in about ten minutes."

"Thanks. Pass the word along to Dr. Thornberry and add, I'll meet him at the flagpole in five minutes."

Bennington pushed back his chair, slowly stood up. This had already been a full day's work.

Slater had been worse sober than he had been sleepy and half-drunk. His covering barrage of threats on leaving the prison had been equally divided between the general's personal health and the entire prison setup.

Thornberry had screened the other guards. And, after sitting in on only two sessions, Bennington had at last found one small reason to like his chief

assistant. The psych-expert could spot a liar almost before the man opened his mouth.

But right now, and, at the wages offered, probably for a long time, Duncannon was very short of guards.

Judkins was ready in The Cage. An efficient man, but he had been a little resentful at the extra work involved in moving his equipment.

The prisoners would remain in The Cage overnight, except for their trips to the Mess Hall. A reorganized supply room had disgorged more than enough cots and blankets to convert The Cage into a temporary dormitory.

Bennington riffled the papers on his desk showing when the prisoners on hand had been received and how long they had been ready to go to their assigned prison. This matter took top priority. Some of the people had been here over a month. If he could push through the plan to charge the states for every day Duncannon kept a prisoner after the criminal was ready for shipment, then the various states should each pay, as a rough estimate showed....

But the clock on the desk showed 1520, time to meet Thornberry. With longer than usual steps, Bennington strode out of his office and out the main door of the Administration Building.



Thornberry was pacing around the flagpole directly opposite the main entrance.

"This man, Dalton," the psychologist said, falling in step with the general, "you know he escaped from us twice."

"Make him the first through," and Bennington dismissed the subject. "I'm more interested in this. Are there any ex-service men among the group?"

Thornberry sniffed, "Still worried about our conditioning and our security, general? I repeat, even though we do not use the lobotomies and other techniques of our cold-war competitors, we can nevertheless condition anyone sent to us so that he will not make any trouble."

Bennington shrugged, "I'd like to see you work on a para-commando. Or one of the General Staff."

Thornberry, now leading the way through the Processing Building, called back over his shoulder. "How many of them end up in prison? I mean, from the General Staff? The para-coms do, of course, they just can't adjust to civilian life and I think the Army should do something about that before they discharge them. But they never come here without an accompanying court order allowing us to use the eyeball technique."

Along the short path, enclosed by barbed wire, from Processing into The Cage. Swiftly along the corridor behind the one-way vision mirrors, down the walk to the gate in the barbed wire.

Bennington looked around and nodded approval: his reception committee for the new arrivals was waiting.

He looked across the river toward Harrisburg. Yes, just turning into the bridge approach, two tractor-trailer combos, preceded and followed by white cars.

Bennington glanced around again. From the roof of The Cage, Ferguson, drafted as a guard for this emergency, waved and lovingly patted the butt of his submachine gun.

One of the regular guards gave the general a sound-powered megaphone. He nodded thanks, lifted it.

"Give me your attention!"

"The procedure is as usual except that, when the prisoners go into The Cage, they are going to get an overnight conditioning treatment.

"But until they've had that treatment, you must be alert! These are all dangerous men."

Beside the general, Thornberry whispered hearty agreement. "Yes, yes! Except for Rooney, everyone on that list is here for armed robbery or murder and usually both."

Bennington lowered his megaphone. "I almost forgot to tell you. I added a complete physical search to your metal-detectors, we're doing it right inside the door to the corridor.

"And we're keeping all their personal effects. That was bad, Dr. Thornberry, letting them have their money. As long as a prisoner has cash, you can't trust any

guard."

Thornberry froze. "As prison psychologist, I protest. I consider those procedures an unwarranted invasion of physical privacy and a forcing of a man into dependency with traumatic effects—"

"I would much rather make a prisoner dependent on my good will than have him bribe my guards, doctor. And I would much rather invade his privacy than have him invade my stomach with a knife made out of bone.

"A metal-spotter is, perhaps, good, but too many killing tools can get by them."

Thornberry seemed more than willing to continue the discussion, but the tractor-trailers were pulling off the bridge. After a moment's jockeying, they turned so that the back of the trailers pointed toward The Cage.

A corporal eased out of the white car that had led the convoy. He shifted his shotgun to his left arm, saluted, said, "General Bennington? Corporal Forester, with thirty-four prisoners."

"Thirty-four? We expected thirty-five."

"Ralph Musto tried to get another idea in the Harrisburg terminal. He'll be in the hospital about ten days."

"Musto?" For a moment, the name meant nothing to Bennington.

"Connecticut, sir, one of the murder and bank cases. Are you prepared to accept delivery of the others?"

"Yes, we are. But we are unfortunately a little short-handed today...."

"We always stay around till the boys are in The Cage, sir," the corporal said.

"Thanks. Start unloading."

Corporal Forester saluted again and turned to face the vans. He waved his arm and another trooper unlocked the door of the trailer to the general's left. A group of men slowly jumped out and stood blinking in the sun.

A trooper opened a large compartment beneath the van and yanked out several large bags, all locked, all bulging, all the type Bennington had known too well

since the Second War.

The prisoners' personal effects, Bennington decided, and lifted his megaphone.

"Form a single line facing the gate," he commanded.

There was an excess of shuffling movement, but at last a line was formed.

Corporal Forester waved his hand again. The doors of the trailer were locked and it started across the bridge.

Then the second trailer was unloaded and sent away. When its cargo had added themselves to the line, the corporal again approached Bennington.

"Want a roll call, sir?"

"The count is correct, but a roll call will help get them in order, in the right frame of mind." Bennington raised his megaphone to his lips. "Now get this! When your name is called, sound out HERE and run for that gate. Then walk up the path and through the open door.

"John Musto."

A stockily-built, dark-faced man stepped from the line and with an exaggerated slowness dawdled toward the gate. His pose lasted only a moment. One of the Duncannon guards stepped forward and smacked his rifle barrel across Musto's kidneys. The bank robber and murderer pitched headlong to his knees, got up slowly with a snarl. But when the guard gestured again with his rifle, Musto broke into a shambling run.

Bennington waited until the first of the brothers stood panting at the gate, then called, "Pietro Musto."

One example had been enough. Pietro took off on the double. In five minutes the last man had vanished into The Cage.

"You get these, too, sir." Corporal Forester, with a bundle of papers.

"Right. And thanks for staying, corporal. By the way, isn't there something I sign?"

The trooper produced a form and a pen. Bennington signed and they saluted each other. The corporal grinned, then his expression sobered. "That's a real bunch there, sir."

"We're conditioning them immediately, corporal."

"Good idea, sir. The sooner, the better!"

With another salute, the corporal turned to his car and Bennington started toward The Cage.



Inside The Cage, Bennington went into the corridor that led behind the mirrors. He wanted to watch the weapons-check and the conditioning; he found Thornberry waiting for him.

Bennington looked through the mirrors at the men standing as he and his party had stood yesterday. Room One of The Cage was marked off into numbered squares. Each man stood on a number, separated from his brother cons by about ten square feet. They knew they were being watched, although the men behind the mirrors were invisible to the prisoners. They stirred restlessly, standing first on one foot, then on the other, looking uneasily in all directions and seeing nothing but their own reflections.

"Dalton is on Ten," Thornberry said.

Bennington looked and saw an exceedingly average-looking man. Wouldn't notice him in a crowd, the general thought and realized that he had learned one reason for Dalton's success.

"Start the random sequence with him," he said. The system was set up so that no prisoner knew when he would be summoned.

"I told them to do that," Thornberry said.

"Number Ten", the loud-speaker boomed.

The general moved down the corridor until he was looking into the hallway between Room One and Room Two. Until yesterday, the prisoners had simply walked down the corridor while detectors checked them for the presence of metals. They had then been held at the end of the hallway until they had stripped themselves of everything that had registered on the screens.

Today was different. Inside the door Dalton was being thoroughly and

completely searched. Nothing was found, but Bennington could sense Thornberry's grim disapproval of the procedure.

Dalton was then shoved around the first of the hastily-erected screens and ordered into a chair. A doctor beside the chair was ready with an injection so smoothly and quickly that Dalton was under mild sedation almost before he was aware of the needle's sting.

Across from Dalton, seated at a small table behind a spin-dizzy wheel of flickering lights and ever-centering spiral, one of Thornberry's psych-staff waited for a nod from the doctor. Then he started the wheel spinning and Bennington could see his lips move.

After a moment, the psychologist turned his head to the doctor and Bennington lip-read the word, "hypno." The doctor slowly put down one of the biggest hypodermic needles Bennington had ever seen.

Less roughly, the guard led Dalton around the second screen.

At the end of the corridor Judkins was ready. He adjusted the big hood over Dalton's head.

And Bennington turned away.

He had seen too much of the conditioning process, beginning in its early days when the Army had realized its value in reducing the manpower needed to watch the refuse of the cold war.

The POWS from the battle of the little undeclared wars; the refugee camps, with their possible and probable subversives; the Army disciplinary stations....

He waited farther down the corridor where he could look into Room Two. In a few minutes Dalton entered. His face was subtly changed. A guard gestured toward the piles of cots and blankets.

Dalton took one of the cots and two of the blankets, moved to Square Number Ten on this side of the building and began making up his bed. When the job was completed he sat down.

His back was toward the general and Bennington found himself wishing he could see the prisoner's face. In the other room, Dalton had been carefully, thoughtfully staring around.

His posture now spoke of a total lack of interest in his present surroundings.

Bennington glanced at his watch and estimated the time needed on Dalton. Hm-m-m, little better than five minutes. Of course, if a prisoner was given that second shot.... Well, the average would still be about five minutes.

Might as well go back to the office and work out how much each state owed the prison.



Thornberry's call came at 1915. "We've finished, general, and we're ready to feed them. Of course, we still have some things to put away over here—"

"Skip it," Bennington said. "We can have that done tomorrow morning."

"Judkins has asked permission to go to Harrisburg tonight. He wants to see his sister about an apartment there. Several of the permanent personnel do that. It's easy to get back and forth, and there's more to do—"

"Tell him to take off. And let's see, we'll need him in the morning, but maybe we can give him the afternoon off in return for his overtime work tonight."

"I like that, general, and I'll do it. Now, I'm going to see that the prisoners are fed, then I'd like to see you in your office."

"I want to see you, too, Dr. Thornberry. Tell Ferguson to arrange supper for two over here—I haven't eaten either."

"I'll be with you in about fifteen minutes."



Because the office was sound-conditioned, Bennington did not know that the riot had started until the door slammed open and three men jammed the doorway, all three trying to get in at once.

Acting by reflex, Bennington shot the man in the center. The other two, entangled with the dead man, also tumbled to the floor.

The general promptly shot twice more.

Then he paused to think.

One glance told him his instinctive action had been correct. The man in the center had been Pietro Musto, carrying a carving knife. The other two ... yes, they had been in the group that had arrived this afternoon.

But what was wrong? He had watched these men being conditioned....

A burst from a submachine gun echoed through the open door.

First thought: *They've got the armory!*

Second thought: *This is no place for me!*

He picked up his desk chair and smashed the picture window looking out over the moat on the west side. Then he smashed with the chair again to remove the fragments that stuck up like jagged knives.

A quick leap over the sill into the darkness, a twenty-foot sprint, and he was able to throw himself down on the steep slope that five feet farther on became the moat.

Just in time, he discovered. When he peered through the sparse grass, he could see two men in his office. One had a shotgun, the other a rifle. The man with the rifle lifted it to his shoulder and fired into the ceiling.

Most of the staff, all but six of the guards up there, Bennington thought.

Resting his right hand against his left arm, he took careful aim and fired. The man with the rifle staggered and fell. The one with the shotgun dropped completely out of sight.

Bennington heard someone shouting hoarsely about the lights.

The first floor blacked out.

He took a deep breath, held it, slowly released it. Then he was able to think.

How this had started was for the moment unimportant. First came the problem of regaining control.

To regain control, he needed help. To get help he had to reach the nearest visiphone.

Glass tinkled to his right. Almost too late Bennington remembered how his white hair could reflect the lights from the second-story windows. He rolled rapidly to his left and a little more down the slope.

The dew-wet grass chilled his face and hands. His long legs felt the water of the moat creep up past his knees.

A semiautomatic rifle with carefully timed shots searched the area where he had been. "Good man," he noted professionally and replied with a pistol shot. He rolled again back to where he had been, but still further down the slope.

The rifle spoke copper-coated syllables once more, with a sequence of shots that started where he had fired from. But this time the sequence hunted further to both right and left.

This could go on all night.

He *had* to get to a visiphone. Yet he couldn't leave here. The moment he did, the convicts has a wide-open road to freedom.

The man with the rifle was good, Bennington noted again. His shots were grass-clippers that could have substituted for a lawn mower.

Then a submachine gun chuckled crisply from Bennington's left. There was a howl of pain. The rifle stopped looking for the general.

Bennington began crawling along the edge of the moat. That submachine gun had spoken for his side of the argument and he had a big need for the author who had used its words so well. He stopped crawling. Someone was coming toward him.

"General?"

"Ferguson!"

"Yes, sir. You all right?"

"Yes. And you?"

"Fine, sir, but it was close for a minute."

"Tell me."

"I was coming in the door to Message Center, going to put my gun back in the

armory, then get your supper from the kitchen. I heard someone screeching down the hall and then a couple of shots. The clerk on duty got up and started toward the hall door. But it banged open in his face and someone emptied a pistol into him. I let loose a burst and jumped back. The guy with the pistol came through the door, still hollering. I gave him a belly-full, then waited a moment to see if anyone was behind him. Nobody was. I remembered hearing a window smash, so I looked around this way for you."

"You've got how much ammo?"

"About half a clip, sir."

"We need help. I know they've got Message Centre, but—"

"The private line from the house, sir?"

"Right. And you'll stay here."

Ferguson understood. "No one will get out this way, sir, but I'll go with you part way so I can cover the door out of Message Center, too."

No more words. Not even a handshake.

These two had worked together, fought together, before. Speeches weren't needed.



Bennington's house was dark and, because it was still new to him, he barked his shins twice before he found the visiphone. To save time and avoid any lights, he first cut out the visual circuit and then he simply dialed "0".

"Operator," a lilting voice replied.

"Connect me with the nearest State Police Barracks, please. Warden of Duncannon Prison speaking."

"One moment, please." Not a change in the lilt.

Silence; then, "State Police Barracks, Private Andrews speaking."

"Warden Bennington, Duncannon Prison. We're having trouble here and I need help. About thirty prisoners have seized control of our Administration Building,

which includes the armory."

"Riot? Duncannon? Impossible! Those men are con—"

"It may be impossible, but it's happening. Now, how much help can you give me?"

"Let me check, sir." The phone was silent, except for heavy breathing from Private Endrews. "Here it is, sir. In less than fifteen minutes, three cars—that's six men and they've got full equipment in those cars—will be at The Cage."

"That all?"

"No, sir. In twenty minutes I'll have the riot-control copter over the prison. It's got floodlights on its belly and the pilot knows the prison."

"Good. What else?"

"For at least two hours, that's all, sir. Standard Operating Procedure calls for the immediate establishment of a cordon at fixed points, roving patrols on the countryside west of you and blocks on all railroads, bus and air terminals—"

"Someone will be in the parking lot. Give me what you have and get it moving!"

It wouldn't be enough. Half of the permanent staff as hostages, enough weapons and ammo in the armory to fight a war...

He dialed again. "Operator? I want the Commanding General at Indiantown Gap. Now!"

"One moment; sir." The lilt was gone from the voice.

She had been listening in, the general decided.

"Duty Officer, Indiantown Gap. Major Smith speaking."

"Smith? Connect me immediately with General Mosby!"

"I'm sorry, but the general is—"

"Major, get off the line and get Mossback on before—"

There was a click, another telephone rang three times, then a calm voice, "General Mosby".

"Bennington here!"

"Jim! You old—"

"No time, Mossback, I need help. I'm down at Duncannon Prison. Got a riot on my hands, two gateguards plus myself and Ferguson to handle it. The State police can give me only another six men, in the next two hours."

"One moment, Jim. Duty Officer! The First Battalion, riot-armed, on the field and in their copters in twenty minutes!"

"Second and Third Battalions fully-armed, with all support sections, ready to roll in forty minutes!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Give me the whole picture, Jim. And by the way, I've visited the prison."

Bennington gave the details in less than a minute, then added, "Thanks, Mossback."

While he had been talking, Bennington had also been listening. From Mosby's end of the line came clearly that most reassuring sound, the great bull-speakers thundering out of orders that meant for a few moments rapid running and confusion, then in a few moments more the resolution of the confusion into disciplined movement.

Knowing Mosby, Bennington also knew that the copters would be loaded in twenty minutes.

"Thanks again," he said.

"Thank you, Jim. I've been moaning for a chance to check our training. See you in half an hour."

"You'll see me—"

"Sure. Don't think I'd miss a real shootin' match, do you? Hang on till then." The line was dead.

Hang on till then.

Easier said than done.

Well, step number one, survey the situation and the terrain.

A glance at his watch startled him. Though his combat experience had taught him how time could compress and stretch, the fact that only seven minutes ago he had been considering supper in his office came as a shock.

He took no chances but left his house as he had come, by the back door. Then stepping quietly but quickly, he went to the south side of the Processing Building at the corner nearest the Administration Building. All the offices were dark. Only scratches of light—probably matches to cigarette tips—flickered briefly out of the windows of the second-story where the staff was housed.

The mess hall was also dark but as Bennington watched, a short burst of submachine gun fire traced across the darkness from the kitchen toward the armory.

"Listen, you screws, listen to this!"

The gigantic voice thundered through every corner of the compound. For a second Bennington was startled, then he remembered. The rioters controlled Message Center and the PA system.

"Stop shooting at us. Don't forget that half your staff is in here. Every time you shoot one of us, we are shooting one of them."

The words came through on only part of Bennington's attention. They registered, but he was also studying the seventy feet of open ground between him and the nearest door into the mess hall.

The big voice again filled the compound.

"We want to talk to the warden if he's still alive. Or whoever can take his place if he ain't. You got five minutes to call us on the intercom."

I can talk to them from the kitchen if I can get there, Bennington thought.

He glanced back over his shoulder. The moon, thought full, was only part-way up.

I'm sixty-five, but maybe I've got one fast run still left.

He did. He made it without a shot being fired.

But he stayed on his belly just outside the door, remembering the submachine gun. From the shadow of the step into the mess hall, he used his command voice to get safe passage.

"Thornberry!"

"General Bennington!"

The psychologist almost twisted Bennington's hand off before he could speak. Then his first words puzzled the general. "We've got to find Judkins."

"Why?"

"I want to know what went wrong—"

"That can wait. Let's put the fire out first, then learn how it started. Who's here with you?"

"The two guards. Rayburne! Householder! Come here!"

"Only those two? Where's the kitchen staff?"

"Dead," said Thornberry soberly.

There was a roaring in the skies and through a window Bennington could see the compound was almost as brightly lit up as it was by day.

"The riot-copter, and before I expected it," the general said, "I've been in touch with the State police. And the Army."

There was another short burst of submachine fire. Bennington mentally placed it as behind the Administration Building. *Someone trying to sneak out the back way....*

"Stop that shooting!" The PA confirmed his thoughts. "No one else is going to try to leave here. Warden, get on that intercom!"

Got to hurry, Bennington thought, *I've got to get them talking and keep them talking.*

"Householder and Rayburne, get over to the parking lot. The State police are coming there. Bring five of the six over here. Keep the other man by his car

radio. If he can switch to the Army frequency, or can get in touch with the Army copters thorough his Headquarters, guide their planes to land behind Barracks Four. Tell General Mosby where I am. Tell him before he lands, so that he can plan his deployment.

"Take off. Thornberry, come with me."



The two of them clambered over the counter and carefully, to avoid stepping on the dead, made their way to the kitchen office in the southwest corner of the mess hall. Thorough one of its windows, the Administration Building could be clearly seen.

The intercom was directly in front of the window.

Bennington seated himself and turned the intercom switch to Message Center.

"This is General Bennington, the warden of this prison," he said clearly. "I am in the kitchen office. To show my confidence in the fact that we can arrange a bargain, I am turning on the light in this room. You will be able to see me clearly."

"No!" broke out Thornberry, staring at Bennington.

"Turn them on," said Bennington.

Thornberry hesitated for a heartbeat, obeyed the order. Then, moving with deliberation, he seated himself beside the general.

"This is Musto," came from the intercom. "I'm boss over here. You've got guts, Bennington, I've read about you. But don't forget, two of my boys have you and the other guy on line down the sights of their rifles. Any sign of something screwy, and you two get it first."

"There has to be mutual trust for any kind of bargaining," Bennington replied. "This is mine, right out where you can see it."

"O.K. Now, first, get that copter off the top of this building."

Musto spoke with the assurance that his order would be obeyed.

"Go to hell," said Bennington easily.

"WHAT!"

"That copter above you, and the Army battalion that will be here in a few minutes, are for me what those rifles you have aimed are for you. You can knock me off, sure. But how long are you going to live to enjoy the thrill?"

"Well, I'll be—" and Musto described his relationship to a female dog.

"I can't confirm or deny your opinion of yourself," Bennington said, and forced himself to chuckle. "Now, let's get down to business. What do you want?"

"Pardons. For all of us. For all crimes."

Bennington whistled. "That's a big order. And in return?"

"Your staff stays alive."

Flatly. There was no question Musto meant what he said.

"That means I'll have to talk with the governors of six states," Bennington temporized.

"That's your worry."

The general sighed. "All right, you've got Message Center. Connect this phone with the outside. Remember, this is going to take a while."

"That don't worry us, general. Add up how much time we've got coming due over here. It's all you need and then some."

Bennington lifted the phone on the desk and waited. He could see an irregular flickering, like a cigarette lighter, in the Message Center Room. Then the familiar buzzing sounded in his ears.

Once more he dialed "0". "Operator? This is Warden Bennington of Duncannon Prison. Please arrange, with top priority, a person-to-person conference line with this prison and the governors of Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, Maryland, New Jersey and Connecticut. Yes, call me, when the connection is completed."

"And don't forget, we'll be listening," came simultaneously from the intercom and the telephone.

"I expect you to," Bennington said promptly and hung up. At the same time, he switched off the intercom.

He leaned back in his chair and, for the first time in years, found himself aware of a long-forgotten feeling. The center of his forehead tingled as if it were being brushed by a silky feather.

He knew the sensation, had felt it before. Someone had a gun on him. And that someone was a mere thirty yards away.

The general turned his chair toward Thornberry, felt that feather tingle along the nerves of his scalp. The psychologist was sitting stiffly erect, his hands firmly clenched together in his lap.

"Tell me what happened after I left you," Bennington said. He kept a wary eye on his assistant warden. The man seemed in the civilian equivalent of battle shock.

Thornberry sat at attention, as if he were delivering a formal report. "The guards lined up the prisoners in columns of twos and marched them to the mess hall. There they split the column. The left half went to the south door, the right half

went to the north door. I followed the line to the north door. They seemed to be piled in fast. When most of them were in on my side, I squeezed by the rest and went to the back of the hall. Rayburne and Householder, of course, stayed outside."

Thornberry's hands were slowly unclenching. Telling what happened seemed to relieve his tension.

"Both lines moved quickly, except for the last man in the south line. I thought he seemed to be dragging deliberately so. And for some reason or the other, all the prisoners—even those at the tables, except the drugged ones, hadn't started eating—watched him. But I could see no reason for alarm.

"I was at the back and the two guards, with their guns, were at each door. There was a counter between the prisoners and the kitchen, and, most important, these men had been conditioned or drugged. Then the one who was dragging got to the coffee urn with his tray."

Thornberry shivered and then slumped in his chair. "It was the most shocking thing I have ever experienced because what happened was against everything that I have ever learned. Those conditioned men in the mess hall went mad. Before the guards could fire more than a couple of shots, all the conditioned ones had thrown their trays at me, at the guards, or the people behind the counter, and then started scrambling across the counter. In a moment they were so mixed up with our kitchen personnel that the guards didn't dare do any more shooting. And just as suddenly as it had started, they were gone. Except for me and two guards, everyone else in the mess hall was either dead or dying, or one of the drugged men."



Bennington lit a cigarette and wished that he had one of Ferguson's stout drinks.

"Let me get this straight. They threw trays at you and the guards, right? But nothing more. That is, they didn't run toward you?"

"No, first the trays and then directly over the counter into the kitchen and out its two back doors."

"In other words, they knew where they were going."

Thornberry's face showed sharp surprise. "Why, yes, they did. They did seem to have a purpose, a definite sense of direction in the way they left the mess hall."

"For once I must completely agree with one of your statements, Thornberry. As soon as we can, we've got to get hold of Judkins, but we can't do it from here, dammit."

"Tell me who he is and we'll get him for you," a voice whispered from the floor.

Though educated in different professions, both Bennington and Thornberry had been well trained in the value of not showing astonishment. Out of the corner of his eyes, the general could see a uniformed State trooper lying flat on the floor. The head lifted, Bennington recognized Trooper Forester.

"This is your party," the corporal continued. "How does the entertainment shape up?"

"We've got to keep the customers happy," the general said, "by making them think that the main show is just about to start."

"While you figure out some way to take them before they start throwing rocks at your supporting cast. Right? Well, Life Can Be Beautiful and I wish it would start right now. What can I do?"

"Get in touch with the governors. All of them. New York and Pennsylvania and the rest. Tell them that when they talk to me, they have to pull a good legitimate stall. Maybe they can refer to the laws they operate under. They might have to get an opinion from their attorneys general. Anything, as long as it sounds good."

"Can do. Will do. And after that?"

"A good question, Corporal Forester. We'll discuss that after the break."

From the floor, a low laugh. "I had a year at the Fort Benning School for Infantry Boys, sir. Oh, how about this Judkins?"

Thornberry took over with an exceedingly accurate description of the wanted Judkins and his probable habits.

The corporal gave a low appreciative whistle. "With that we'll have him in a couple of hours, sir."

"I'll let a man outside this door on his belly like I am. By the way, we *are* in touch with the army. We're set to guide them in. Good luck, sir."

Bennington and Thornberry looked at each other.

We'll need more than luck, Bennington thought.



In the middle of his next cigarette, Bennington heard a familiar voice speaking outside the office door.

"When can I start shooting, Jim?"

"Mossback!"

"In person." A low laugh. "Wish the men you taught cover and concealment could take a look at you now."

"Here's the situation, Jim. I'm deployed in a looping L around the Administration Building. Your prisoners in One and Two have been moved out under guard into the open space beside Number Four where my copters dropped.

"The short end of my L touches the moat near your house. And by the way, Ferguson is all right. We relieved him. He says three prisoners tried to get out, but he thinks he got one of the three."

"The long end of my L goes just far enough toward Barracks One so that we won't be shooting each other."

"For a change, I didn't hear your copters come in, Mossback."

Another laugh, touched with pride. "Jim, for once, the Army is ahead of the civilian population. Our new jobs are even quieter than the night mail delivery for the suburbs. I put a squad on the roof of the building."

"*You did?*"

"No hopes, Jim. Doesn't mean a thing. I've had the report. But listen, I've got a civilian here who may be able to help."

With Mosby's words Bennington had felt his hopes rise, fall, and rise again. "Tell him to start talking."

"Slater, sir."

Bennington choked down his first words.

"I know what you were going to say, sir, and I deserve it, but this time I think I can help."

"How did you find out about this?"

"I was in a squad car on a drunk and disorderly charge. The story came over their radio. They brought me here."

"All right, go ahead."

"General Mosby was smart, sir. He brought along some sleep gas."

"So? Not surprising." Bennington knew sleep gas was standard precaution for riot control.

"The mess hall is the center of the compound. Because of that, in its cellar are the furnaces which heat the other buildings."

"What does that mean?"

"You have a forced-draft, hot-air system here, sir—"

The telephone rang, the intercom spoke. "Warden, those governors are on the line."

"Our only chance," Bennington said, "and now is the time. They'll all be listening to this phone call over there."

He hoped the man with the rifle trained on him was very susceptible to sleep gas.



"Jim, you haven't lost your touch with a pistol." General Mosby pointed to his meaning with the toe of his boot. "But you'll need a new carpet in your office here."

Bennington glanced at the three dead men, the broken window, and added them to his mental list of things to be done. But he put them among the minor

problems; he had enough major ones already.

The news services were besieging The Cage. A couple of ambitious photographers had been caught attempting to cross the moat. The civilian dead in the mess hall had to be identified and the next of kin notified. His entire staff was disorganized: imprisoned as hostages, knocked out along with the rioters by sleep-gas, brusquely revived by Mosby's aid-men—Well, he might be able to get some work out of them tomorrow.

The rioters still slept, but what to do about those supposedly conditioned men when the gas wore off ... a new hypno-tech, from somewhere, by tomorrow morning.

Add six governors who think I have nothing to do but tell them every detail, he thought grimly.

"You had better eat, sir."

Ferguson, with a gigantic sandwich and a mug of coffee.

Bennington abruptly realized that he had not eaten since noon. Then, in the middle of his second bite, he was aware of still another problem.

He swallowed hastily. "Mossback, did you bring the entire battalion? Are you completely set up for independent battalion operation?"

"Yes, of course. Why?"

"I've got a compound full of prisoners and a staff to feed."

Mosby turned to his aide, but the captain has already started for the door. Mosby swung back to Bennington, rubbed his hands together gleefully. "Better and better. Just as if we had captured and had to use an enemy installation. Prisoners to guard, dead men and a couple of wounded to take care of.... Jim, I can't thank you enough."

"You're welcome, but how long can I keep you?"

Mosby sobered. Like all good general officers, he was acutely sensitive to the political significance of his actions.

"We can get away with what we did tonight, Jim," he answered slowly. "But well, you know how the states have become the past couple of years, since they

started forming regional groups.

"Wait a minute! You got prisoners from six states, don't you?"

"Yes."

"You can have the whole command. And if the AG's office can't dig up at least six good precedents for my decision, we can always let slip the story of the hula girl and the hot cigarette butt. I may do that, anyhow. I always did think he went too far to get good pictures."

"I may need more," Bennington said soberly.

"What you need, you get, Jim, but why?"

"Two of them got away."

"Yes?" Mosby was interested, but not especially so.

"One was a very good escape artist—guy call Dalton. *Harry Dalton*."

"Um, yes," Mosby interrupted, "I recall that name. If I were his commanding officer, I would call him 'Always AWOL'."

"The other was a fairly young man named Clarens."



A silence grew. At last Mosby spoke, "I've heard of him, too. How did they get through the road blocks?"

"We had to use everything." The tired man standing at the door was Corporal Forester. "We used even trainees from the Academy, and those two must have gotten out of here as soon as the riot started.

"There was only one checkpoint between here and Harrisburg and the truck looked legitimate, full of clothes picked up around the countryside. There seemed to be only one man in it and he was a sort of everyday-looking fellow."

Bennington remembered his own impression of Dalton.

"I can't blame the trainees. Dalton's gotten by better men than they are yet," the corporal continued. "And they were looking for desperate criminals, not for

someone in a cleaning company's uniform who asked, when they stopped him, if they wanted some work done."

"Anybody been killed yet?" Thornberry asked.

Forester was a long time answering. "Not yet, doctor. But a man answering Clarens' description bought six steak knives near the railroad station tonight."

"Six steak knives?" Mosby asked.

"Yes," Forester answered. "Clarens and Dalton split the money the cleaning man was carrying."

"How do you know this?" Bennington asked.

"Dalton gave himself up," Forester answered. "He wanted nothing to do with Clarens when the boy started eying the knives."

"We've got to get to Harrisburg," Bennington said, "and the first thing we've got to do is to find Judkins."

"If only our files had not been shot up when the cons took over Message Center," Thornberry worried, "we could have gotten in touch with his sister-in-law."

"No," said Bennington and Forester together.

"No," agreed General Mosby.

The two generals looked at each other, then at the corporal.

Forester took the cue. "I think it's a planned job. The riot, that is. Someone wanted to disgrace you the first day you took over, general. Or, listen! This may be it: they wanted to be sure that someone here in prison didn't talk. I mean—" The trooper rubbed his hand across his forehead. "Thought I had something there."

"I think you do," Bennington said, "but first things first. Let's find Judkins. Then Clarens."

"We'll fly down," Mosby decided. "And let's do something I always wanted to do. We'll land on the Capitol grounds. Give me your phone, Jim. We will need more than the battalion I brought with me."

"And it's upstairs, ready and waiting."

Considering Harrisburg from above, Bennington decided the town, as a tactical problem in setting up patrols, offered unique difficulties. The way those railroad yards stretched up and down each side of the river....

The riot-control copter had moved ahead of them and was their guide to a relatively clear spot among the trees dotting the Capitol grounds.

Three dignitaries awaited their arrival, Governor Willoughby, Mayor Jordan and Chief of Police Scott.

"This way, sir," said Scott, elbowing aside the other two. "Formalities can wait, we've got work to do."

Introductions were performed on the way to another grove lanced with searchlights. A photographer was busy over the body of a middle-aged man.

"Some folks you can't tell anything," Scott said, "and especially when they're in heat. We never had any complaints about this guy, but we knew what he was. I myself told him that someday he would pick up the wrong man.

"And he sure did this time," he added unnecessarily.

Corporal Forester squatted beside the body. "He was kneeling, grabbed by his long hair, head pulled back, one good slash did the rest."

"Real nice slash," General Mosby agreed professionally. "I'd like to show that to some of my men." He pushed the head back so that the cut across the throat was more clearly visible. "Just one swipe."

"Clarens was a pre-med student," Thornberry stated.

Bennington noticed that his psych-expert had kept his gaze fixed on the trees after a glance at the body.

"No idea where he went from here, of course?" Mosby asked.

"None," Scott admitted, "but I've got patrols out."

"I've got another battalion upstairs," Mosby remarked, jabbing toward the stars with his thumb, "and the rest of the regiment on the way.

"You know this town. Tell me how you want them distributed."

"I'd like to." Scott meditated a moment. "But, I can't. I can't even swear them in. They're Federal troops."

"I've just declared martial law," Governor Willoughby emerged from the shadows.

"Thanks, sir." Scott looked like a man with a weight taken from his shoulders. "We'll need cars, of course."

"But we can stop them on the streets. Then have our men drive them home. With your help, General Mosby, we can cover this town like a blanket."

But the blanket was too late to stop the second murder.



The report came in after they had talked to Dalton.

"That's why I gave myself up," the convict said. "I wanted no part of that guy, so I figured my best alibi was a nice, quiet cell."

"How is Clarens dressed?" Scott demanded.

"He picked a double-breasted blue suit from the racks in the truck. Fitted him good, too."

Scott strode into the next room and through the open door Bennington saw the Chief of Police pick up a mike.

"This is important." Thornberry, intent, looking like a lean hound on a hot trail. "*What were you told when you were conditioned?*"

"I don't remember." Dalton was plainly baffled. "I just don't remember. Something about when a guy threw his tray.... You got me, I don't know."

"All right." The psychologist tried another tack. "What made you leave the others and take Clarens with you?"

"I didn't take him with me." Dalton's voice was weary, edged with anger. "I remember sitting down under the hypno-hood in The Cage. From there on, things are mixed up. I think there was running and yelling and that I ran and yelled, too."

"Then I came to and I was in a building with a lot of guys grabbing guns."

"I should have predicted it," the psychologist said, "that he would be commanded to forget what he had been told while under the hood."

"Can't you remove the block?" Chief Scott had returned in time to hear the last words.

Thornberry pursed his lips, then said, "It would take a very long time. Remember, I know Judkins, I interviewed him and watched him work before we hired him. He is a very, very good hypno-tech. And there's no machine anywhere near except at the prison.

"Let's hear the rest of his story. Go on, Dalton."

"You know my record, guns aren't for me. So I looked around and saw a busted window. This Clarens and another guy—a big fat one—had sort of stuck with me. I guess they didn't like guns either. When I went out the window, they were right behind. Clarens and I ran real fast. The fat guy behind us tried to run as fast, but he wheezed too much.

"Somebody lying on the edge of the moat cut loose with a subgun and Big Belly went down. Then Clarens and I were in the water. The other cons back in the building started shooting at the guy with the subgun. I guess he got too busy ducking to give us any more attention. Anyhow, he didn't swing any tracers after us.

"We ran across a couple of fields, toward Duncannon, and spotted a guy pulling a delivery truck into a farm lane. We sneaked in, found a wrench. When the driver came back, I gave him a gentle tap. Clarens and I stripped the fellow, tied him up and shoved him in one of the big baskets in the truck.

"In the uniform, it was a cinch to fool the troopers. They stopped us only once on the way into town. When we got there, I switched again from the driver's uniform into one of the suits from the racks. We had it made, hands down."

"Why didn't you turn Clarens in when you gave yourself up?" Scott demanded angrily.

"I tried to. Remember, I didn't know who the guy was until after we had looked in the railroad station and seen it full of cops. But when he started admiring the steak knives in the window, his name clicked with me. I said to him, 'I've got to

go to the little boy's room—I'll be back in a minute'. I found the nearest cop and turned myself in, but I couldn't make that thickhead believe there was a worse one than me down the street. At least, not until Clarens had got the knives and taken off."

Bennington wondered if he had ever heard anyone speak with such deep disgust. The call which took them to the Camp Hill area justified Dalton's condemnation.

The hysterical mother had been led away by a couple of consoling neighbors. Bennington, Scott and Thornberry stood looking down at the neatly dismembered body. Behind them General Mosby spoke to three of his soldiers.

"Good work, men. Keep it up and get back on your beats. You know now what you're hunting for. I'm sure you'll hunt even harder."

The slapping sounds of rifles saluting, the clicks of heels, the scrape of boots in an about-face and a scrap of conversation floated to Bennington. "Any mother who lets a kid out as late as this...."

Mosby joined them and picked up where the soldier had left off. "How did it happen, Scott?"

"It's hard to get anything out of the mother right now," Scott replied, "but I got this. They were waiting up for the father—he's on the swing shift—and the kid wanted ice cream. The store's just around the corner and the mother was busy ironing, so she gave the kid a quarter."

The chief of police turned away from the body, turned away from the lines written in blood on the wall—"PLEASE CATCH ME QUICK". He went to his car and switched its radio to one of the local stations.

"Stay off the streets. If you are in your car, do not stop for anything except—and listen carefully—at least three men in army or police uniforms. Do not stop for any man standing alone. Do not leave your home except on the most essential business. If you must leave do not go alone. Repeat: Do not leave the house alone...."

Scott switched back to the police band. "What we just heard is on every radio

and TV station covering Harrisburg."

Another police car drifted into the alley, emptied men and equipment.

"We can go," Scott said. "My men will take care of the routine."

All of them were silent as they crossed the Market Street Bridge into the central section of town, deserted except for police and army patrols.

"Belton Hotel," the radio squawked. "*Judkins has been picked up at the Belton.*"

"Now I'll find out what he has told them," Thornberry exulted, "and then we'll have no trouble finding Clarens."

"You know my name, you know my present address, and I'm not saying any more until I see my lawyer." Judkins had been saying that for half an hour and his words had not changed.

Mosby tugged at Bennington's sleeve. Together they moved to a corner of the hotel room, and at Mosby's nod, Scott and Thornberry joined them.

"Get out of here for five minutes. When you come back, he'll be glad to talk."

Mosby wasn't joking.

"I want to do the same thing," Scott said bitterly, "but I can't do it."

"You're under civil law," Mosby stated. "This town is under martial law. I might be able to get away with it."

"Not a chance," Governor Willoughby had joined them. "It would mean your career, general. Even the President couldn't protect you."

"Clarens is out there," Mosby argued, pointing out the window overlooking the city. "Did you see that little girl?"

"No, but I heard about it. And I saw the man," the governor answered.

"I was there," said Thornberry abruptly. "Will you gentlemen let me, *just* me, alone with Judkins for five minutes?"

All four of them, the two generals, the police chief, the governor, stared at the psychologist.

"Yes," Bennington decided for the group. "We will."

Doughboy...

Bennington stopped after his first step back into the room, was jostled by Mosby following closely behind. He moved forward to where he could see both Judkins and Thornberry.

The hypno-tech sat bolt upright, his face like that of a newly-conditioned prisoner, completely blank.

Thornberry's face radiated pride.

"These technicians are all alike," the psychologist sniffed. "Their work makes them especially sensitive to hypnosis."

Bennington looked at Judkins, then back to Thornberry. "You mean...."

"I mean that I can ask Judkins anything we want to know and he'll give a truthful answer." Another sniff. "I've forgotten more about hypnosis than he'll ever know."

"This won't hold in a court," Chief Scott warned.

"But it may save a life, maybe more than one," Bennington answered. "Thornberry, you did a good job of those guards. You question Judkins."

"Wait a minute," General Mosby said. "How fast can we get a tape recorder?"

"Why waste time?" asked Bennington. "You can't use this in court."

"Hell, Jim, stop thinking about courts-martial; there's more than *one* court. Let's fry these boys in the court of public opinion. The news services aren't bound by the rules of evidence. We can worry about other courts later."

"I can get you a tape recorder in two minutes," Scott stated. "Our patrol boys always carry them to take statements at accidents, before the victims get over their shock enough to start lying. And we keep one in the office, too."

Thornberry looked at Judkins and a self-satisfied smirk crept over his face. "No need to worry about lies from this one."

Judkins spoke in a low monotone not much louder than the soft hiss of the machine recording his words. Question by question—in Judkins' condition, each query had to be specific, Thornberry said—the pattern emerged.

Basing his request on his position as a member of the prison commission, Senator Giles had invited Judkins to lunch with him. The senator, however, despite his statement that he wanted only to be sure that Duncannon was getting the best personnel, had not confined his questions to Judkins' background.

Was the hypno-tech alone when he conditioned the men? Any set statement to be made? Could Judkins add to the instructions given each convict without the knowledge of the prison authorities?

The following day, both Senator Giles and Representative Culpepper had called upon Judkins at his sister-in-law's home. Bluntly, they offered ten thousand dollars if the technician could guarantee that Rooney would never be able to talk about the income tax racket.

When Judkins had explained that any conditioning he could give would be as easily removed by another tech, the two men had gone into a corner and consulted in whispers.

They had emerged from the corner with this offer: First, they would bargain with the new warden to get Rooney a job as a trusty. If that failed they offered Judkins twenty thousand dollars and a hideout in New York—until they could set him up outside the country—if he would condition a group of prisoners to riot and discredit Bennington immediately.

"What Rooney must be sitting on!" Mosby murmured in Bennington's ear.

"Was sitting on," Bennington said bitterly. "He was the fat belly with Dalton and Clarens, the one who didn't make it."

The story flowed on under Thornberry's skillful questioning.

At noon yesterday, a frightened and angry Giles had called Judkins, had boosted the bribe to thirty thousand and demanded immediate action.

"What did you tell the prisoners?" Thornberry's voice was as even as Judkins'.

"I was their friend and their only friend; every one else was their enemy. I told them they must be quiet and obey all orders until the last man received his coffee in the mess hall. They were then to throw their trays at the people around them. I told them where to go for guns. I told them that then they would forget all that I had said, that they would know how to take care of their enemies."

"Gentlemen, do you realize what this means, in terms of the constitutional psychopathic inferior? I refer to Clarens, not Dalton. Dalton reacted as Judkins directed, including to forget that he had been told everyone was his enemy. Dalton, we know from his record, actually disliked to use weapons even as a threat.

"But we can be sure that Clarens has not forgotten."

"Why not?" Mosby demanded.

"Because the instructions he received only intensified what he himself believed before Judkins worked on him. As soon as he had a chance he looked for his kind of weapons. How he got her there, we won't know until we catch him, but note that he killed the little girl in the equivalent of a cavern.

"And the man in the park, that, too, took place in what was necessarily an almost secret spot.

"Those orders Judkins gave, we *know* Clarens is still responding to them...."

Thornberry hesitated a moment, then completed his thought. "And so we must intensify our patrols on the darker streets. With this poor boy believing that every man's hand is turned against him, he is now looking for some dark place in which to feel safe. He is in essence retreating to the foetus—"

"Sounds good, but tell me the rest later, Doc."

"General Mosby, you and I want to call our roving patrols," and Scott headed for the door, Mosby right behind him.

"By the way, Doc," the chief called back over his shoulder, "when you're done with that guy, just tell one of my men. We've got a special, reserved, very

solitary cell for him."

More slowly, Bennington followed Scott and Mosby.

The area of the hunt had perhaps been narrowed. Their quarry—the beast with steel knives for talons—would be found in a dark, deserted place.



Bennington noted that Thornberry stayed with Judkins for about ten minutes before he joined the group around the map of Harrisburg in the Operations Office.

Personally, the warden was glad that his assistant was not present; the discussion would almost certainly have produced an explosion from the psychologist.

Scott began his gloomy analysis after both he and General Mosby had redirected their patrols to heavier concentrations in Harrisburg's dim-lit and winding side streets.

"I hate to hunt this kind," the chief said gloomily. "You just never know, never know anything, except that they're going to kill again."

"I just hope he has cooled off and that he wants to sleep a while."

Bennington noted with amused interest the startled glance General Mosby gave the Chief of Police. Mosby's greatest strength and greatest weakness, both in the field and garrison, was his complete refusal to accept or excuse aberration.

Scott had caught the glance, too, and continued. "I got a good lab, general, smart boys willing to pull extra duty. They've already told me that Clarens reached—after he killed the guy in the park—an emotional climax."

Bennington watched his former Division Commander's face harden as expected.

Scott continued: "That's why I said, I hope he's crawled off, wants to sleep a while. Every place he can get a bed in my town, I'll know the minute he wants to lie down."

"Then I'll take him, like this"—the big hand crushed upon itself—"dead or alive, and I hope I have to take him dead."

"Why *dead*?"

"General, sorry, *warden*—no, I'll go back to the way I know you best—General Bennington, Clarens simply isn't the business of any kind of normal living.

"You take a guy who cracked a safe, knocked off a payroll, robbed a bank, he's like any good business man taking a risk; he has insurance, he's got an out.

"He can buy me, he can talk to the D.A., he can get the court to go along if he's caught. He just says, I'll tell you where the stuff is if I get the minimum.

"O.K., we're wrong, we should go black-and-white, we should say no to any kind of deal, I shouldn't let a little guy go just because I'd rather grab the big one. Only, unconditional surrender doesn't work any better in my job than it does in yours on a battlefield."



"We've learned it doesn't work too well," Bennington agreed, "but what has this to do with Clarens?"

"General, you did the right thing up at Duncannon when you decided to talk to Musto. He was a man in business, with something to buy and something to sell. He could be dealt with.

"Now think this through: Suppose everybody in that Administration Building had been a Clarens. And I heard that you said this, General Bennington, that there has to be some sort of mutual trust for bargaining. You could deal with Musto because he is, and I'll make the point again, a sort of business man even though his business isn't legal.

"But Clarens...."

Chief Scott let the silence build while he lit a cigarette.

"But Clarens wants to be caught," Mosby said.

"He does?" Chief Scott pointed to the map. "General Mosby, you and I both know that all he has to do is sit down on the curb underneath any street light.

"Let me change that. We would have him ten minutes faster if he sat down on the curb of any dark street.

"No, he doesn't want caught, except maybe those first couple of minutes when he's almost human, those first couple of minutes after he's killed somebody. And if you have to kill someone to have human feelings yourself—that's not for most of us and that's why I hope he fights back and I have to take him—dead."

Chief Scott turned back to the map of Harrisburg. His forefinger ran down the river, pausing at each of the many bridges. Then he turned to the generals.

"Maybe we've got him pinned. We've had the bridges sealed tight and if Dr. Thornberry is right, he won't chase west because Pennsylvania land, especially around here, is selling real high and that's still very open country.

"And that's not for Clarens, he wants back into our little city, back where things feel close and he feels *inside*."

Bennington found himself looking at Mosby, with the glance returned.

Mosby spoke, reluctantly. "He could be through us, Chief Scott."

"How?"

"The same way my men come back to camp and it's a natural way that's rarely stopped."

"Clarens had no military experience!" Scott said.

"No, but he's read a lot—that came out at the trial—and he's under pressure, so he'll remember what he read," Bennington said.

"Tell me this way you can walk invisible across a lighted bridge," and Scott was still unconvinced.

"You don't walk over, you ride over," Mosby said. "I would work it this way.

"I would stop in a bar and buy a drink that made me smell five feet away. I would order and get rid of a couple more of them, very quickly, then I would tip the bartender to call me a cab.

"And by the way, of course I wouldn't be drinking any after the first one.

"But when the cabbie came, I'd offer him a drink, wave a big bill or two that meant a good tip, and give him a good address—for instance, the hotel that takes up the biggest space in the yellow pages of the telephone book.

"I would get into the back seat of the cab still holding on to the biggest bill or two out of those we took from the cleaning truck and I would pretend to fall asleep.

"With that cab driver convinced that he's hauling a drunk just aching to give away a big tip—and any normal human being perfectly sure that a wanted killer would never walk into a bar, get loaded and order a cab to take him to the biggest hotel in town—what are my chances, Chief Scott?"



The chief did not answer directly. Instead, "And I'll bet he wins that appeal he's got going, too."

"What did you say, Chief Scott?" Bennington asked.

"We got the word a while ago from Delaware by teletype. Clarens has three good lawyers fighting an appeal from the conviction on every grounds you can think of, including that the confession was beaten out of him.

"That's why I hope he wants to fight when I catch up with him, and that's what Delaware hopes, too.

"But here comes Dr. Thornberry, General Mosby. Let's ask him why Clarens hides so well when he says he wants to be caught."

Thornberry pursed his lips so tightly that his face became a skull's head, then he answered.

"In some areas of human behavior..." he began.

"Dalton," Bennington interrupted, "does he make a game out of getting away when he's caught?"

Thornberry's face became almost human with a big smile. "Oh, yes, obviously."

"Could that energy he puts into escaping be channeled, led, educated—in some way—to constructive thinking? Put it this way: could Dalton be led to thinking about making a jail escape-proof?"

"A most excellent therapy," and Thornberry was actually beaming. "General Bennington, I am beginning to have great hopes for our work together as we

start to see more and more eye to eye."

"Let's go back to Clarens," Bennington said. "Son of wealthy parents, a good education, the only child in a family who seemed to have everything, including parents who loved both each other and the child—why does he kill, ask to be caught, and then hide so well?"

"What therapy does your science have for him, Dr. Thornberry?"

Thornberry's lip-pursing again made his face a skeleton's.

"There are areas of human behavior—"



Bennington observed that Scott and Mosby had turned away from the conversation to the immediacies of patrol distribution. Scott was being eloquent on how lighting cut down crime and Mosby was analyzing the idea in terms of house-to-house combat at night under slow-dropping flares.

For further insurance of privacy, Bennington pulled Thornberry into the corner of the room most removed from the others.

"Doctor, let's forget about Clarens for a moment. I want to talk about Judkins."

"Yes, general."

"How did you hypnotize him? And don't hand me any of that stuff about him being sensitive because of his job."

Thornberry smiled. "You've seen too many conditioned men, and in a way I'm surprised that I got past Chief Scott with my ... General Mosby should have been more alert, too."

"You're right, it was his skin, not his job."

"I'm still puzzled."

"I won't go into the physical structure of the man, his character as revealed by his choice of profession, and so on. Briefly, he is hyper-sensitive to the thought of physical pain, that's all. So I gave him a simple choice. Talk to us in such a way that what he said could never be used against him, or go for a ride with you,

Chief Scott, and General Mosby.

"This is very odd, a fact I must further check into, that your name frightened him most."

"*You* threatened someone with violence!"

Thornberry sniffed. "It was no threat. I knew the man and simply appealed to him in the proper way. Then with the spray of cannabis indica that I carry, I speeded his willingness—"

"Marihuana!"

"Please don't be so shocked!" and Thornberry was horrified that Bennington should be shocked. "The prescription I use is a carefully compounded medical dosage specifically prepared to promote suggestibility...."

"Doctor, I am not in the least suggesting that you would use any method or drug not thoroughly commended by your profession.

"In addition, I am delighted beyond expression that you found some way to learn what we needed from Judkins.

"But, just as I was surprised that your profession did find a use for a drug previously condemned, I now want to be surprised in another way:

"*What can you do for someone like Clarens?*"

Thornberry's lips came together and his cheeks began to pull in. Bennington resigned himself to hearing again the phrase, "There are some areas of human behavior—"



"*Car 17, at M dash 9, Code Two Zero, times two. Standing by for instructions.*"

Bennington turned to watch Chief Scott's big fore-fingers travel a line from the side and a line from the top that brought them together on the big map. "Signs of breaking and entering, down on Hickory, where it's all big warehouses."

Thornberry leaped to the chief's side. "Lonely at this time of night? Dark? Not too many people?"

"Right on every count," Scott said. "Only a few night watchmen."

"This should be carefully checked," and Thornberry started for the door.

Scott turned to the dispatcher. "Tell them just to keep the place under observation until I get there."

There was an odd eagerness about the chief, odd until Bennington remembered Scott's grim analysis of Clarens' behavior, the chief's hope that Clarens would resist arrest.

And why do I now recall that time in Burma when I followed the wounded tiger into the cave?

What was I thinking of at the time?

Thornberry had disappeared into the corridor, but for once even the prospect of immediate action was not enough to get the impetuous Mosby out the door ahead of Scott.

Was I thinking of mercy, that I could not let a wounded beast which could not destroy itself live with continual pain? Thornberry would never agree, but Clarens is certainly both wounded and incapable of self-destruction.

Thornberry was already seated in the back of the car. Mosby was ready to seat himself in the front, Scott was opening the door to slide in behind the driver's wheel, but Bennington did not change his steady pace.

Retribution and punishment, because the tiger had killed human beings? No, no and never no, for these are worthless without understanding by the person upon whom they are visited. A baby understands not the reason why, but only the whack across its buttocks when its fingers or its life are in danger, and that action is thence forward "reject"; but Clarens is not a baby and a baby is not a tiger, with all three having only this in common, that 'don't do this' is a mystery....

Bennington seated himself beside Thornberry in the rear of Scott's sedan, more aware of his thoughts than his movements.

For a moment the whine of the turbine was high, the gleam of the headlights low, then they were on their way.



Hickory Street was a fast three-minute run from the police station.

"Nothing but warehouses," Scott said. "We're a big trans-shipment center."

The narrow, one-way streets and the broad-shouldered bulk of the big buildings emphasized what the chief had said. The railroads and the rivers were still the most economical way to ship the space-taking stuff, coal, steel, grain. Harrisburg was a crossroads where the east-west and north-south main lines met, with a natural growth of the long warehouses at the intersection.

Scott spun the driver's wheel to the left and cut the car lights. "Hickory Street."

It is a lonely place at night, Bennington decided.

Thornberry leaned forward from the back seat of the car, leaned forward so far between Scott and Mosby that his thin nose almost touched the front window.

"Ideal, ideal, just the way Clarens would be thinking."

"Thank God we found Judkins," Mosby said, "but say, that reminds me. Why didn't he take the first plane or train out of town? He had plenty of time before we knew we wanted him."

Thornberry pulled himself back, re-condensed his lean frame in the left corner of the back seat. "He was waiting for Senator Giles to pay him off and tell him where to hide out."

Chief Scott idled his car to a halt beside another dark-blue sedan almost invisible in the shadowed street.

A figure loomed large in the shadows, came forward and identified itself.

"Patrolman Whelton, sir, and Sergeant Kerr is in the back."

Somehow Scott managed to return the salute while at the same time disentangling himself from his seat-belt and from behind the driver's wheel.

"What did you spot?"

"According to orders, we were riding the alleys and we saw that the window had been broken since our last inspection."

They were in a tight group around the young patrolman because Whelton had spoken in a soft, church-going whisper. Now Mosby walked away from the

group, thoughtfully fingering the ivory-handled butts of his revolvers, but returning to the group when Scott began speaking.

"Thanks, General Mosby. They couldn't have checked the alleys as often as they did without your men helping out on the streets. This way, we caught it fast."

"Sir, we can't find the watchman for this area," and Patrolman Whelton was very worried.

"Watchman?" Mosby asked.

"Fire-warden would be more accurate," Scott said. "He isn't here to prevent theft. The stuff in these buildings is too big to steal without a convoy of trucks that would awaken the whole town. But he does have a definite route, with fixed posts where he clocks in."

Two more cars drifted to a halt, disgorged men armed with shotguns and submachine guns.

Scott rubbed his chin thoughtfully, gave his orders carefully, obviously aware that he had two renowned tacticians with him.

His car and one of the newly-arrived ones were to remain in front of the warehouse. The other patrol car would pull around the block and join Sergeant Kerr in the alley. At Scott's signal, they would flood the building with light.

And not until much later did Bennington remember to laugh at the way they had all followed the elephantine Whelton's example and gone on tiptoe down the walk between the two concrete-walled warehouses, into the alley behind.



The broken window was in a small door, part of the large door which let trucks in and out.

"Nice eye," Scott said to Whelton.

Bennington agreed.

The break in the window was just big enough to allow a hand through the door, a small hand through the pane to the lock on the inside of the door.

Scott stretched out his arm to try to slide his big, freckled hand through the break in the window, but abruptly Thornberry stepped forward, catching the chief's hand in mid-gesture.

"One moment, Chief Scott!"

The chief was startled. "What's up?"

"This isn't your job, it's mine. If that poor boy *is* in there, he needs a doctor, not a bullet."

"Whatthehell—" Scott sputtered, the phrase emerging as a single word.

"Thornberry's right, Chief Scott, though he's right for the wrong reason. Clarens is our job."

Following the tiger had been a simple act of necessity in two ways. To rid the tiger of the pain it could not remove from itself and to rid society of the menace the beast had been and would continue to be until it was destroyed.

With his words to Scott, with that last thought, Bennington shook the lethargy, the stillness of deep thought that had contained and enveloped him since the report of this breaking and entering.

Now, as in that dash to the mess hall, he was ready for the fast sprint, the decisive action.

Before Scott could answer and possibly object, Thornberry had taken the flashlight from the chief's hand, was fumbling through the open pane for the lock inside.

"Give me a flashlight, too," Bennington said.

Patrolman Whelton responded.

At the same time, Mosby reversed the grip on the pistol in his right hand and offered the ivory butt to Bennington.

"What do you think I am, a psychologist?"

Bennington had kept his voice to a whisper, but he had made that whisper a snarl. He further emphasized that snap in his tone by pulling out his own pistol, throwing the beam of the flashlight on his hand, making both the sight and sound of the safety going off clear to the eyes and ears of those around him.

Then he followed Thornberry into the black cave of the warehouse.



Before them stretched a long aisle formed by big boxes piled fifteen feet high. Side aisles branched at ten-foot intervals.

They moved slowly, used their lights carefully, in quick flickers on and off. Each branching from the main corridor had to be approached cautiously. Each, when checked by a rapid finger of light, showed only the sides of boxes marked by stenciled words and the blank walls of the warehouse.

A flash of light, a few steps forward, another flash, a few more steps ... until they were halfway down the warehouse.

Bennington saw it first and halted Thornberry with a touch on the arm: the last row of boxes on the left was outlined by a faint glow of light.

Together they walked rapidly, quietly, toward the glow. When they reached the end of the aisle, Bennington tried to take the lead. But Thornberry deliberately shoved himself ahead of the general and turned the corner first.

The space from the last row of boxes to the front doors of the warehouse was big enough for a truck and trailer to maneuver in. The feeble glow of light came from an electric lantern on a small desk. Beside the desk, leaning his chair against the warehouse wall, a palefaced young man sat looking down at his hands. His long fingers played with a knife.

The shadow of the desk spread across the floor and in that shadow bulked a large, unmoving blackness. Bennington flicked the beam of his light on and off quickly. One glimpse was enough. The unmoving blackness was a middle-aged man in work clothes and boots, lying on his back, with the slash across the throat standing out clearly.

"Walter."

Thornberry spoke softly, moved slowly, easily toward the young man.

At the sound of his name, Clarens looked up, his face calm and composed, his posture expressing complete disinterest in the fact that someone was approaching him.

"Walter: I am Dr. Thornberry. I am a friend of yours. I am here to help you. You need help. I am here to help you."

As Thornberry spoke, he continued to move forward slowly.

Bennington followed, two strides behind and one to the left of the psychologist. He kept his point of aim fixed on Walter's face.

"I am your friend. I am here to help you."

"You are my friend?" Walter asked, and there was doubt in his tone.

"You can be sure of that, Walter. I want to help you. I am here to help you, Walter."

Thornberry, who had stopped when Clarens had spoken, now moved forward again.

"Put down the knife, Walter. You don't need the knife any more. Put the knife down and come for a little walk with me. Come out of this dark place with me. Out of the darkness into the world where you belong. Let us take a walk together, out of the darkness into the world where you belong."

Bennington felt his own tense watchfulness relaxing in the smooth flow of Thornberry's words. Before them, Clarens' disinterest had gradually become absorbed attention. His hands no longer played with the knife, but simply held it loosely.

In another minute, he'll put down the knife and come with us, Bennington decided. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Thornberry take a plastic squeeze-bottle from his pocket.

Without any gathering of facial or body muscle to signal his intention, Clarens launched himself from his chair. As he jumped, he shrilled hoarsely, "Not into the light again!"

Only Thornberry's height saved him; Clarens' leap could not quite reach the psych-expert's scrawny throat. But the doctor did stumble backwards, did fall on his back with Clarens on top of him.

The killer's right arm swung back. The edge of the knife blade danced brightly in the dim light.

Bennington took no chances with fancy shooting. He dropped his point of aim and his first shot smashed into Clarens' chest, driving the young man back onto his haunches. The general's second and third shots were also into the body.

Then before Bennington's inner eye two scenes flashed fleetingly, one of a

darkened garage, the other of an almost-as-dark jungle trail. In both the figure was a weeping mother above a child's still form. Deliberately, with three carefully-aimed shots through Clarens' head, Bennington killed the wounded tiger again.

Out of ingrained habit, he reloaded his pistol before moving forward to help Thornberry to his feet.

But the psychologist was already standing, was turning toward Bennington, wild anger on his face, in his voice.

"What did you shoot him for? Why did you kill this poor, misguided boy?"

Bennington looked at his assistant warden and saw that the man was deadly serious. Then the general looked at Clarens sprawled grotesquely on his back, with his shattered head resting against the dead night watchman's feet, with his right hand still gripping the knife.

I know seven languages, Bennington thought, with maybe knowing some of them only well enough to swear in, but right now I don't know the words to answer this man.



Bennington looked at the face reflected in the mirror in Chief Scott's private bathroom. The face was gray and lined with fatigue, needed a shave and the bristle of the beard was more white than brown.

His throat was raw from too much smoking, from answering too many questions, and a long, long day was still ahead.

Judkins was in jail, and glad to be in a solitary cell because he was handwriting a full confession. The knowledge of what Clarens had done during his few hours of freedom had scared the hypno-tech into almost incoherent co-operation.

The chief of Harrisburg's police was showing less signs of wear than anyone else. Scott was exulting in his position as supervisor of the city search for Giles, glorying in his position as relayer of the details of the state search for the errant politician.

Bennington opened the door into Scott's office, meditating gratefully on one

blessing, that the six governors who had agreed on his appointment had also finally agreed to sleep.

Of course they had all assured him of complete concurrence with his suggested reforms for Duncannon Prison ... but what else could they have done?

Mosby was just outside the bathroom door, standing big enough to insure a half-circle of privacy between the general and the reporters.

"Had a call from Washington, Jim. That Rooney tax mess is getting top priority."

"Good."

"The AG called, too."

Bennington found himself companioning Mosby's faint smile. "You had a cigarette in your ashtray?"

"I did, and he's got six good precedents to back us up, Jim. But the next time he wants us to call him first: my men aren't the only ones who need practical training."

Bennington did not hold back his laugh and he stretched out his hand. "Thanks, Mossback."

"Hell, Jim, I owe you the thanks. That was the best training problem my men ever had, taught 'em more in one night that they can ever learn until the real stuff starts whistling around."

Bennington glanced over Mosby's shoulder at the place he was heading for: the hot seat, Chief Scott's desk chair, bright under the TV spotlights, the center of every camera focus.

"You've got work to do, I know, so where's that Thornberry?" Mosby growled. "He should be with you."

"Upstairs, asleep. He said that he was only the assistant warden, then asked Chief Scott for an empty cell and left me."

"Why?"

"It's very simple: he's still not convinced that I had to shoot Clarens."

Mosby grunted deep disgust, looked over his shoulder toward the hot seat,

looked again at Bennington. "You should have shaved.

"No, wait a minute, I guess not. Just go the way you are and give 'em hell."

Bennington rubbed his chin and the bristle of his late-night, early-morning beard crackled crisply.

The problem he had anticipated was now here, as he had known it would be. And the answer was nowhere, which equally had been a matter of foreknowledge.



"What will I say, General Mosby?" Bennington murmured. "Cue me in. You were always the best public relations officer either of us ever had."

"Jim, from anyone else—" Mosby started, stopped, grinned. "The trouble is, you're right.

"But this time we don't need any style, this time all we need is the truth.

"Tell them why the prison wasn't running right, how the riot happened and why you are where you are tonight, and what the prisons need to make them run better..."

Mosby stopped again, and this time was very slow in re-starting.

"When you get there, I don't know, Jim. What *are* you going to tell them?"

I wish I could be sure, Mossback.

I know I can make that hot seat hotter by stating no one else knows either, because we've never decided what a prison is for ... society's protection, a place to put people like Clarens, where they won't affect the lives of normal folk? A deterrent, a threat, a place to point to as a warning not to break the law? Or, as Thornberry would have it, the first step to returning people to normal lives as functioning members of society again?

Dare I say that the only thing certain about prisons is that so far they haven't worked ... that stone walls, iron bars, conditioning and drugs that take the reason prisoner, none of these have kept men in ... that they would always try to escape as long as there was hope, hope of something better on the outside.

As Mosby stepped aside, Bennington considered the reverse of that last thought.

Was there an answer here, to ask his fellow-countrymen to face the immediately, perhaps the forever, impossible, that the only way to keep a man from hoping and trying to get out, was to build a society where they never got in?

Then Bennington remembered Clarens.

No, let's face facts, that till man is superman, there will always be people like Clarens, people who will never be redeemed. People, who no matter how carefully caged or watched, will ever be a potential threat, if only to their keepers. By what weird accident they came to life, well, list that among other facts as yet unknown, and consider only the end result, that there were people whose only pleasure lay in perpetual destruction.

Automatically, such people themselves must be destroyed.

He was only vaguely aware of the flash-bulbs popping as he walked to the chair behind Chief Scott's desk.

That could be an answer, a new addition to the Decalogue, a new Commandment specific to the judge giving sentence to a man like Clarens, an injunction not to jail but to destroy. Simply phrased for the judge, thou shalt not commit!

He seated himself and blinked a couple of times, adjusting to the glare.

But, beginning with Thornberry, there would be many people who wouldn't agree, who would never accept such an amendment to the Sacred Ten, people who never seemed to see that phrase in their newspapers every time a child was assaulted, "Police are questioning all known sex offenders."

Bennington looked thoughtfully around at the men ready to question him.

He, too, was ready, ready to tell them....

... Some people are a damn sight better off dead.

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