

NOT TO BE OPENED—



Roger Flint Young

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BY ROGER FLINT YOUNG

Illustrated by Ward

One thing about machines, there's an inevitable logic about them, and their organization. If a man could really follow that logic through—some deadly little bits of knowledge might turn up...

When Jim Tredel was a boy he was towheaded and already large framed. People said he would grow up to be big, like his father, and blond, and probably not bad looking. He did grow big, like his father, and not bad looking. Not good looking, just not bad looking. He fooled them on the blond business, he kept on looking like a towhead.

When Jim Tredel was six years old there had been a game, a quite wonderful, only partly understood, game which his father began to play with him. In later years Jim ran across the quotation, "Underlying oneness—" that seemed to help express all his father tried to teach him in that game.

Big Tom Tredel was a machinist. He worked in a machine shop when he was ten years old. He worked there all his life, the last forty-five years as its owner. He was in the same shop when he was past seventy. With no schooling at all he learned to read and write while he worked. He learned all the math and common sense he ever had reason to need, at the shop or away from it.

On his own, he learned a philosophy that was his own. It began to form in the first few weeks he worked, grew with the years.

"There is no such thing as a *part*," he would explain, over and over, to his son, Jim. It was Jim Tredel, not James, just as the father was Tom, not Thomas—a full and legal name.

"There is no such thing as a *piece*. There is no such thing as something that doesn't belong to something else. There is nothing, except as it fits into something else, as it's part of the whole.

"The arm of a chair now, for instance. That arm is meant to fit the back of a chair, and the seat of the chair. It is also meant to fit the forearm of the man who sits in it. A person who's never seen one before, but is trained to know relationships, should be able to reason out what that chair arm is, and what a chair looks like.

"The arm goes with other parts to make a chair. But that chair isn't complete in itself. It's designed to hold a man who sits. It's no good unless it does that.

The four legs of the chair are made to come to the same plane, so it will rest evenly on the floor. And the floor is another component, meeting the walls of the house, which are built to reach the foundations.

"The foundations lead to the street, and that street connects with other streets, so that one house is connected to all the other houses in the world. And if there's an ocean in between, they're still connected."

Tom Tredel had a hundred different ways of saying the same thing, so that the boy must understand. And, with it all, they played the game.

For a while it had been jigsaw puzzles, and the boy had seen the interconnection of the pieces, and how each piece fitted others, and yet others.

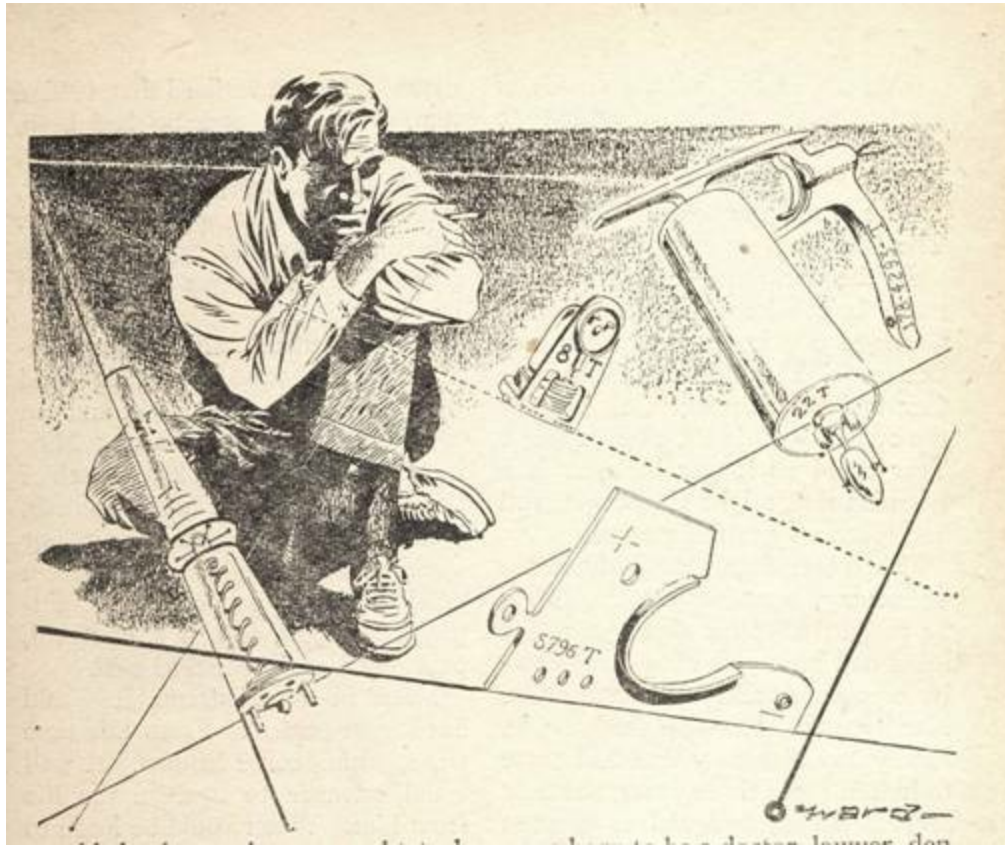
Then he had the same building toys to play with that other children had, but he learned to play with them a little differently. It was not what could be constructed with them that mattered, it was the way the units went together that was important. Then the realization that the whole was not really the whole, because it had become a part of the table, the floor, or whatever it rested upon, and thus was attached to the Earth, the Moon, the Sun, and the Universe.

Tom Tredel could take a machined part in his big, rough hands, or a piece of sheet metal that had been fashioned with a purpose, study it briefly, turning it to observe unseen attachments, and seem to see the continuations of it that were not there to be seen. From a part he could visualize the assembly of which it must be component, and then describe the connecting assemblies until he had joined it finally and without question to Earth. Only then was he satisfied, and only then did it become an orderly component of an orderly Universe.

Jim learned. At first it was a game, and fun. Later on, it was not a game, and not so much fun. Yet, he continued to learn, because at the same time he discovered it was not, actually, a game, he was old enough to know it was expected of him. Tom Tredel saw that his son did what was expected of him.

Still, it was not the trade of machinist that Tom Tredel wanted Jim to learn. Jim picked it up, the way he was taught—working in the shop to earn allowance money.

His father had other plans for Jim. Something just a little bit better than being a machinist had come along, and Tom was quick to see it. Some people might think a lot of things better than being a machinist—being a doctor, lawyer, dentist. To Tom Tredel those were the occupations that carried men along, so they could do the work men ought to be doing. The important man was one who made things by which the world moved, and advanced. A machinist, now—



What he saw for Jim was electronics. At the time it was radio, but Tom Tredel saw how electronics would mean other things than radio. Noncommunications electronics and radio would some day be the field his descendants should be in. Perhaps the big opportunities wouldn't come in Jim's lifetime, but Jim could raise *his* boy in that field, too. He could pass on just a little more knowledge than a boy would get who was born to be a doctor, lawyer, dentist, or machinist.

Jim would get the education he needed for electronics, and all the help money and planning could provide. He'd also understand the philosophy of Tom Tredel, and he'd know something of the relationships of parts to the whole.

Jim showed the proper interest in electronics. He was led cleverly, yet wisely, along the path that would make him choose it as his life's work.

He had been an apt pupil. He could take a part, in fingers that were longer, hands that were as strong, yet softer, than his father's had been, and visualize its place in the all.

Because of his father's choice of electronics, he had the opportunity to step onto a road—

The three-year chase was over. The trap was sprung.

In the darkness, dark as he had never before known it, Jim Tredel managed a grin, now that his fear was gone. That blinding, instinctive fear had been replaced, slowly, by the certainty of death, close at hand. Fear could no longer be used as a stimulus that might aid escape, and had given way to resignation.

It had been fear, though. Or more—shocking, numbing terror. Then he realized that for three years his mind had been preparing him, slowly, for a climax that must terrify him. Hardly any move he had made, hardly any discovery that had come to him in those three years, but now seemed almost designed to prepare him to be afraid, when at last there should be something to fear.

Why bother, now, to decide his mistake? The immediate error, of course, had

been stepping into the hall. It had looked like all the others he'd traversed so carefully, moving slowly, ever alert for an alarm system. It was ten feet wide, ten feet high, like the others, and appeared to be about a hundred feet long.

Jim Tredel had stepped into it, cautiously, going forward slowly. He was three steps on his way when the darkness came, suddenly, without sound.

At first he thought the lights were gone. Then he realized that, behind him, where the opening had been, was now a wall. In front of him, where the passage seemed so clear, there was another wall. That was when he knew the fear, when he realized the trap was sprung, and he was in it.

He lit a match, after a few minutes, when he was sure his hand was steady. Ten feet wide, and ten feet high, this hall had been. Now its length was also ten feet. Each of the six sides was of metal, smooth, polished, with neither break nor opening, with no glint of light from outside, nor breath of air. Lightproof, air-tight, and, if it mattered, probably soundproofed as well.

Even in a melodrama it would have been perfect. From this time on, anything could happen. A wall could advance to squeeze the life from him. Water could be let in to drown him. Heat or cold could be used to—

Whatever the method, one of those, dozen of others, his lack of future could be assured by his captors without ever letting him out of the trap, until they were sure he would be no further trouble to them. They would not even hear his screams. He was quite certain he would scream, protesting the removal of a life he had come to enjoy.

They would take that life, surely. That had been plain from the start. Almost three years before, he had known that, if he ever slipped— And he had slipped, badly.

Perhaps it had been merely walking walking into the hall. Perhaps it was coming here at all. Or coming alone. Or—

It didn't matter. It was much too late to consider what he should have done. Still, he should have let someone know, left some word that would guide others. Instead, his three years of work would be wasted, even as his life would be.

He could feel calm about it, then. He had bet his life, and lost.

Tredel had been out of the army six weeks, married to Edith for five of them, when he went back to the plant. It looked good to see that sign, over the new buildings: Tredel & Morton, Electronics.

And to see Morton again. Bruce Morton, middle-aged, balding, always serious, always nervous, always grateful to Jim Tredel for taking him in as partner when the company started. It was Morton who kept the business going, expanding it tremendously, while Tredel was in the army.

Morton showed him through the new plant, briefly, and then displayed the current line of products.

There was the fourteen tube hifidelity amplifier, the portable PA system, the new motor control, the intercom unit, the phonodoor, the—

That was what caught Tredel's attention. He picked up the small metal stamping, turning it over in his hand, curiously.

Morton bobbed his head at it, hurried to explain. "You know, Jim, during the war we got a lot of new machinery. Used some of it to do subcontract work. When it wasn't tied up with our own production, that is.

"We've been keeping on, to some extent. We don't have enough work of our own to keep the machines busy. This way we can keep the man power employed. There's money in it, too."

Tredel continued to stare at the stamping. His mind was working as it always did, always must, with detail parts, the way his father had taught him. He tried to visualize the assembly, not liking what he saw. Not liking it at all. Not understanding, thoroughly, but knowing he did not like it. There was menace, there, and something—some strangeness.

"What's it for?" He tried to ask it casually.

"Some toy manufacturer ... Triesting Company."

"Guess they converted over to war, too?"

"No ... or, yes, they did. Not armaments, though. They dropped toys to make some sort of special heating equipment for the Navy. Now they're back to toys exclusive."

Tredel hesitated. Then: "This is part of a toy?"

Morton bobbed his head. "Sure. That's all they make—toys. Now, here's our new television tuner—"

Tredel replaced the stamping reluctantly and followed Morton. His mind was still on Triesting. "Toys. Exclusive."

Yet, that stamping was part of no toy. Not the kind of toys children played with, anyhow. The kind grown-ups used when they wanted to kill other grown-ups. Not the kind of weapon he'd ever seen, or heard of. But, somehow, the assembly he visualized wasn't designed by any kind of grown-ups he'd ever heard of, either.

He and Edith would be having children, some day, and—

From the time he picked up that stamping until he found himself in a ten-foot room was just a little over three years.

Edith left him at the end of the first year.

Not just like that. Not just like that at all. She didn't get up one day, surprised him, said she'd had enough and later walked out.

There had been almost a year of things she had to take. Of disappearances on his part, of unexplained trips, of secrecies she couldn't understand. There were long periods, when he was at home, of moodiness and thought, and inattention to her. She really had been forced to imagine almost everything, at one time or another, and he never had an excuse to offer, just asking her to trust him.

She had trusted him. Trusted him more than she should have, much longer than he had a right to expect. Then—Well, she had been right, it was just no life for a married woman. If he ever—Well, she gave him enough hope. If it hadn't become such an obsession with him, he could have stopped his pursuit any time in the next two years, gone to her and asked to start over. He would never have had to explain the past. But he hadn't been able to stop.

From the very first he had somehow sensed that there would be no evidence. That is, nothing concrete he could seize upon to give him an immediate, clear-cut answer. Even then he had known he was working with intangibles. He would have to lean heavily upon half-seen suspicions, upon intuitions that

were only vague feelings. That would be all he would have to go on. Another man would have had less.

Triesting *did* manufacture toys. Nothing but toys. A certain number of people reported for work each day, put in a certain number of hours, and returned the next day for more. As a result, there was a certain flow of finished toys from the factory.

The first real blow came when he found one of their toys used the stamping which he held in question. He almost gave up, then. Did give up, telling himself he was strictly a fool. He went back to his own business, to living his own life. Yet, it kept nagging at his mind. Time after time he tried to put the thoughts away. One should never be a fool more than once over the same subject.

Then he went out and bought one of their Mystery Ray Pistols. He took it apart, studied it, redesigned it to his own satisfaction. He made parts for his redesign, assembled them, and tried the toy.

It worked just a little better than the product Triesting was making. Worked better and would be cheaper to produce. And it didn't make use of the stamping made by Tredel & Morton.

In fact, it was what Triesting Company would have designed and manufactured unless they were determined to make use of that stamping, whether it added expense or not.

Which didn't make sense.

He took it easy. Think it over for a while, be sure. His mind worked on it, always came up with the same answer.

"Bruce!"

Morton looked up.

"That stamping we're making for Triesting—"

Morton nodded.

"Do we ever get rejections?"

Morton looked surprised. "Funny you should bring that up, Jim. Matter of fact, when we ... I, that is ... signed the contract, it called for very rigid

specifications.

"We magnarayed the first batch, as a matter of routine, and found that fifty percent of the parts wouldn't meet spec. Since they were only for toys, I had them delivered anyhow. I wasn't trying to pull anything. But I didn't want to take a loss on the parts. I thought I'd see how their receiving department inspection compared to ' our own inspection."

He paused. Then: "There was no squawk on the first batch. I figured their requirements weren't so stiff as they made out to begin with. Very often they aren't, of course, when there's no stress involved. Since then we've been shipping them full production, and they've been accepting and paying."

"Hm-m-m. Are we still inspecting?"

"Sure. Under the circumstances we haven't made any effort to better the product. The records show that about fifty percent still wouldn't meet their original spec."

That didn't mean much one way or another, Tredel realized. Lots of little companies, since the war, Were still specifying quality that had gone with war contracts. It didn't mean anything in a lot of instances, except that it gave them a convenient way to break a contract if they wanted to.

Still, it stayed in his mind.

Two weeks later he went to San Francisco on business. There wasn't too much hurry, so he went by car, taking Edith with him, so that it was, in part, a pleasure trip. It would do her good, after the neglect he had been showing her.

He managed to squeeze yet another purpose out of it. Across the country, in towns picked at random, at toy stores selected thoroughly by chance, he bought Mystery Ray Pistols.

When they returned he had sixtyeight of the toy pistols. He disassembled them, removed the stampings and took them down to the plant.

The purple dye code on them was first. He checked against the book and found sixty-eight stampings were from sixteen different lots to leave Tredel & Morton.

Then he had them magnarayed. Sixty-eight of them failed to meet specifications.

It meant, with very little shadow of doubt, that the receiving department at Triesting Company was making the inspections. Only rejected parts were going into Mystery Ray Pistols.

The stampings that met spec? Where were they going?

Tredel considered getting into the toy factory to find out. Then thought made it seem that would not be the best way. Working in a factory, in some small section of it, he would have less opportunity to discover many things than would someone on the outside.

Perhaps what happened to the stampings inside the plant wasn't too important. It was where they went from there that mattered. Who did their shipping?

It took a week to check, make sure. All of their out-going freight was handled by Higgenson Rapid Transit, a well known trucking firm.

It took a month to trace down, to come to the conclusion that if anything were to be learned it would be something not obvious. All the shipments from Triesting went to the dock at Higgenson to be routed according to destination. So far as it was possible to check, without arousing suspicion, all shipments were aboveboard. They went to toy stores, to jobbers and distributors throughout the country, to factories in England, to representatives around the world.

I've spent, in cash outlay, about a thousand dollars, Tredel thought, summing it up, and I've yet to eliminate a negative. It's not that I've got to find something positive, but—

He saw it, then, as having the makings of a really long-range project. To come, eventually, close to the positive, he must eliminate the things that couldn't be.

So far, he had eliminated nothing. It wasn't a question of starting over. It was more that he went back to the beginning and chose a parallel line to check.

Tredel & Morton made a stamping that was in question. Who made the other parts of the assembly that he had visualized?

He built up the assembly, carefully, on paper, deciding how it must look in order to use the stamping. He did it again and again, checking his reasoning carefully, as though Big Tom Tredel were looking over his shoulder.

No. That was the way it had to be. *Had* to be.

He chose, finally, a part that would be the most unusual in shape. That would be the one to work on.

Then he thought about that part. Just thought about it for days. He guessed, discarded, guessed again. And discarded.

There would be few legitimate uses for such a part. An airplane perhaps. But the normal use of the part didn't have to be legitimate. As the stamping had turned up in a child's toy, the connecting part could turn up anywhere. An airplane? Throughout the country the number of plane parts used by manufacturers in current production, the number carried as spares for older models, would run into the millions. Impossible to trace down such usage—in a pin-ball machine perhaps; or a lock on a trunk; or even in another toy.

There was always the chance that such a part did not even exist. He could be wrong, wildly wrong. Even if he were right, in theory, the part might not be quite as he imagined it. While he might see it as it had to be, someone else might not have designed quite so logically. The Mystery Ray Pistol, for instance.

No, that didn't follow. The Mystery Ray Pistol was definitely a distortion. Someone had gone out of his way to design and make use of a part that had no business in the assembly.

Then he found the part, in his own plant, where it should never have been.

And, it was just as he had visualized it, just as he had sketched it. Just as he knew it must be. It was in production, on subcontract, under his very nose.

It was strictly an accident, his finding it, Morton had picked up a rivet-making machine, at a bargain price, and they were making their own rivets. They still used rivets and bolts where other companies used spot welding. It gave the repair man a better chance to make repairs the way they should be made.

Tredel had gone out to the little shed where the machine was installed. The operator was in the corner, reading, when he entered. The man looked up, grinned a little sheepishly, then waved his hand at the machinery. He didn't try to talk. The rivet maker was going, with its loud, rapid *phut-ti-phut-phut-ti-phut* as it took the long wire from the drum, punched it into rivets, then ejected them into a stock cart. Tredel understood the gesture of the operator: "Takes care of itself, Boss. I just put on the wire and take away the rivets."

Well, that was all right. The place was clean and neat, rivets were being made, so there was nothing to complain about. Besides, the operator was reading a correspondence course in electronics. That was all right.

Tredel found the part in the trash barrel, bent a little out of shape. He picked it out quickly. There was no possibility of error. This was what he was looking for. Excited, eager, realizing his heart was pumping to the *phut-ti-phut* of the rivet maker, he signaled the operator to follow him out of the shed. In the quiet of the open air he held out the part.

"Yes sir?"

"I was wondering—do we make this?"

The operator glanced briefly at the part, then back at Tredel.

"Not any more. Used to. We had a punch press in here before the rivet maker. That part's a dilly. Took five operations just in the punch press."

"Not any more, though?"

"No sir. Maybe. I'm not sure. They took the punch press over to Building 7. I think all the parts like that were finished three months ago. Had that one on my desk as a paper weight. Tossed it out this morning."

They were still making the parts in Building 7, on a lot basis. They made one thousand of them on the first working day of each month.

"We've got it down good, Mr. Tredel," the aproned punch press operator told him, "but still they keep coming up the first of every month. I'd like to go ahead and make them all up sometime. Then they could deliver to the contractor when he calls for them. Save a lot of set-up time." The operator hesitated, feeling as though he had talked of things that were not his to talk about. "Course, I know how it is: Contract cancellation comes along, and

we'd be stuck with a bunch of them. Still, I get sick of them. First job every month.

Tredel nodded as though he'd been listening, headed back to his office, part in his pocket.

Even in his own organization it took him three days to discover what the part was, and who ordered it. He realized then, concretely, the difficulty he would have working in some other company trying to discover something.

Of course, he could have asked. Morton would have known right away. Tredel felt the time was still there to be cautious.

The way he had to find out made it slow. Show an interest in what the company was making for other people. Then get into the order and blueprint files without seeming overanxious.

He went three-quarters of the way through the files before he found what he wanted. At that, he almost missed it.

The order was in an envelope, with a glassine front, and the blueprint was tucked inside the envelope. From the description on the order he didn't recognize the part: End-Record Rack Size AB.

No, that couldn't be it. He went four envelopes further, then went back to the blueprint for the record rack end and pulled it out. That was it.

It was a detail print, but in the upper left-hand corner there was a small drawing of the assembly, showing the way the end fitted. Not the best design for the end, by a long shot, and it called for the use of a connecting detail that could have been eliminated, but logical enough.

Structurally the end was rather meaningless, but the peculiar curve of it extended through the record rack, so that in the assembly it became integral. The end seemed designed to carry out the curve of the rack. Someone would have to be twisting his thoughts the way Tredel was shaping his to imagine that the record rack might have been designed to agree with the end.

Tredel checked the spec. Nothing bad here. It called for tolerances that were a cinch to meet, though they were exacting. Once the tools were made accurately, they couldn't miss. Hardness specified was natural for the grade of

aluminum used. Holes were to be located and drilled on assembly. No finish.

Then he was guessing again. Production of Triesting stampings were five hundred a month. Approximately half were used in Mystery Ray Pistols, leaving two hundred and fifty unaccounted for. Therefore, two hundred and fifty of the record rack ends should be unaccounted for, leaving seven hundred and fifty to go into record racks.

Providing there were such record racks, and he rather imagined—

There were, all right. Tosdal Specialties made record racks and book ends and ash trays and other low-cost home furnishing extras. They had a small shop, employed seven people including the owner, and had two salesmen on the road working on commission. It took two weeks of maneuvering to determine that each month they, manufactured seven hundred and fifty record racks. Their deliveries were all made through Higgenson Rapid Transit.

He had a few things to stop and think about. Assuming: Someone was acquiring parts for an assembly, and didn't want it known, then there were certain things they should do.

Some of those things were being taken care of very well. That was the use of the components for normal purposes. Strained usages, perhaps, but under most circumstances good enough so as to arouse no suspicions. The use of one trucking company was not, possibly, a mistake, since it was a popular trucking line and most of its business was probably legitimate. It did not seem a mistake to have more than one component of such an assembly manufactured by one company. Of course, it should be good enough. Had been good enough until Tredel chanced on it. Still—

He investigated a little further, carefully, and now through Morton. All it seemed to be was routine curiosity about their customers.

"We inherited Tosdal Specialties," Morton explained. "They were having their work done by Marcus Sheet Metal. We took Marcus over, lock stock and barrel. They got into a few things out of their line, and got in too deep. It was a good chance to pick up equipment and business, so I bought them out.

"We took over most of their accounts, too. Tosdal didn't care, so long as he got the same work at the same price. Most of Marcus' other customers felt the

same way."

That was better. It was an accident, then, that more than one component was in the same plant. An accident that couldn't be very well foreseen. Faced with the necessity of getting a new subcontractor, or—

That implied direct knowledge. On whose part? Did Tosdal know? Did Triesting? If each handled only one component, there were seven components to the assembly—That meant perhaps a maximum of seven different companies similar to Tosdal and Triesting doing the cover-up—for one assembly.



One town. Temple City. Two Companies. Triesting. Tosdal. Temple. Triesting. Tosdal. T T T. That couldn't mean anything, of course.

Could it?

Suppose he took the telephone book and found five more companies beginning with the letter *T*?

He went through the classified book three times before he had what he wanted. It took a month, working at home and at the office. His list had to be made carefully. Better to include too many than exclude one. If he had been doing such a list earlier, he would have left out a specialties company. What he wanted was anyone registered as a possibility to do assembly work. Leave out fabrications for the moment. Risky, but leave them out for the moment, and assume the pattern would carry through.

He was left with the names of seventy-three companies beginning with the letter *T*.

Now what? It seemed obvious. There were several ways. Direct observation. Employment of an agency. Cautious telephone calls. A phony questionnaire.

No, he wasn't ready to go to an agency. Too much danger of a leak. Too much chance of a leak on telephone calls, or questionnaire. Only surely secret way was the long way—observation.

He marked a city map carefully, to show the location of all the companies on his list, then he started driving.

He had to assume exclusive use, such as employed by Tosdal and Triesting. It wasn't certain, but possible.

By the end of the week, by driving and looking, he cut the list down to twenty-seven. In two days more there were only eleven left on the list. He knocked seven more off in the two days of closer observation.

Which left four companies starting with *T* who used Higgenon Rapid Transit. Others he had seen using Higgenon, but all the others had at least one other truck from a rival company taking out deliveries. These four were

the exclusives.

Thornton Manufacturing. Temple City Products. Top-Notch Corporation. Thompson Electric. Four where there should have been five.

It wasn't hard to get hold of catalogues and bulletins from the firms. He hesitated to approach them directly, and finally did his shopping through retail outlets. In a week he had four more parts to his assembly. And each one was as he had known it must be.

There was still one part missing. He could make it himself, he knew, but Tredel preferred to find out where it came from, to have a part that was actually made to go on the assembly.

Back to the classified index, back to his driving. And three weeks later he still had only the six parts.

In the fourth week he found the seventh part. Under his own nose again. In his own factory. In an intercommunication unit he had designed himself.

Only it wasn't quite the way he had designed it, before the war. There were several changes. Basically it was the same unit, but the changes had been made to conform and allow the use of a new part.

Morton! Tredel had to think, then. Really think. That wasn't possible. Or was it? How much did he know about the man, really? Outside of the fact that they'd been friends for a long time, now, and Morton had proven himself trustworthy enough—or had he? How much did you ever know, really, about a friend, or anyone besides yourself? Even yourself?

He couldn't go to Morton. No, he couldn't go to Morton whether the man was innocent or guilty.

Still, he found out what he wanted to know.

They'd had a large order for intercom units during the war. The customer had the required priority to make materials and assembly time available. He'd insisted on a couple of changes, which had been made. It called for several new parts, which, since they didn't have the facilities, they'd subcontracted to Young Brothers. They'd switched the whole design, then, thinking it simpler to make all the intercoms the same, and there was little cost difference.

The customer was still on the books, still taking intercoms and spares. Tredel

wasn't surprised to find that the spares on his suspect part amounted to two-hundred-and-fifty a month.

It seemed ridiculous at first. A customer ordered fifty intercoms a month, and two-hundred-and-fifty spares on a part that was under no strain, had practically no chance of breaking, no need to be replaced. How could he expect to go unsuspected?

Yet, why not? Who was there to question it? Certainly Morton never had. Almost every company gets enough screwy orders so that sooner or later they stop worrying about what the customer is going to do. As long as they order and pay, that's enough.

Still, this was one he could trace down. Wilson Watkins Company, Los Angeles. The *T* didn't follow there. It was only then that he realized—Tredel & Morton. Their intercoms had been picked because their company name started with *T*.

It was something more of a shock, to remember, seconds later, that all their outgoing freight was handled by Higgenson. Morton said they offered special rates, so—

In Los Angeles, Tredel found the Wilson Watkins Company listed, in the classified book, as manufacturers of intercommunication and sound equipment. Manufacturers.

He tried a few radio stores first, found his intercoms on sale. There had been a slight change in them. Now the Tredel & Morton nameplate was gone, replaced by a new one: Wilson Watkins.

He went to them directly, then, and talked to Watkins. Watkins was big, bluff, red-faced and bald. He used tissues to wipe continuously at a steady stream of sweat-moisture from his face. He coughed, agonizingly, when Tredel lighted a cigarette, and looked grateful when it was immediately put out.

"Sure, we take your intercoms, change the nameplate, and sell them out here. We've never had quite the market to go into the manufacturing ourselves. We want to carry them, so we use yours. We don't like to turn down orders for them, you see, because it might mean business for items we do manufacture."