"Mark Phillips" is, or are, two writers: Randall Garrett and Laurence M. Janifer. Their joint pen-name, derived from their middle names (Philip and Mark), was coined soon after their original meeting, at a science-fiction convention. Both men were drunk at the time, which explains a good deal, and only one has ever sobered up. A matter for constant contention between the collaborators is which one.

They have been collaborating for some time now, and have devised an interesting method of work: Mr. Garrett handles the verbs, the adverbs and the interjections, Mr. Janifer the nouns, pronouns, and adjectives. Conjunctions are a matter of joint decision, and in the case of a tie, the entire game is replayed at Fenway Park, Boston, early in the following year.

BRAIN TWISTER was fifteen years in the making, of which time three days were spent in the actual writing. When the book was finished, both authors relaxed in the mutual pleasure of nervous breakdowns, from which it is not certain that either has ever recovered.

Mr. Garrett is a large, roundish fellow with a beard. He wears flowered vests and always carries a small talisman which no one has ever seen. Mr. Janifer is a somewhat shorter and thinner type, with a shorter and thinner beard. His vests are in solid colors, he wears horn-rimmed glasses because he has always done so, and he is never found without a souvenir subway token from the City of New York.

The personal lives of the authors differ widely. Mr. Garrett's hobbies, for instance, include such sports as close-order drill and river pollution. Mr. Janifer, a less active type, prefers sedentary games such as humming or blinking.

Mr. Garrett is engaged to an exotically beautiful creature, and the two plan to be married as soon as they run out of excuses. Mr. Janifer, on the other hand, is fascinated by women, and hopes some day to meet one.

Prologue

In nineteen-fourteen, it was enemy aliens.

In nineteen-thirty, it was Wobblies.

In nineteen-fifty-seven, it was fellow-travelers.

And, in nineteen seventy-one, Kenneth J. Malone rolled wearily out of bed wondering what the hell it was going to be now.

One thing, he told himself, was absolutely certain: it was going to be terrible. It always was.

He managed to stand up, although he was swaying slightly when he walked across the room to the mirror for his usual morning look at himself. He didn't much like staring at his own face, first thing in the morning, but then, he told himself, it was part of the toughening- up process every FBI agent had to go through. You had to learn to stand up and take it when things got rough, he reminded himself. He blinked and looked into the mirror.

His image blinked back.

He tried a smile. It looked pretty horrible, he thought—but, then, the mirror had a slight ripple in it, and the ripple distorted everything. Malone's face looked as if it had been gently patted with a waffle-iron.

And, of course, it was still early morning, and that meant he was having a little difficulty in focusing his eyes.

Vaguely, he tried to remember the night before. He was just ending his vacation, and he thought he recalled having a final farewell party for two or three lovely female types he had chanced to meet in what was still the world's finest City of Opportunity, Washington, D.C. (latest female-to-male ratio, five-and-a-half to one). The party had been a classic of its kind, complete with hot and cold running ideas of all sorts, and lots and lots of nice powerful liquor.

Malone decided sadly that the ripple wasn't in the mirror, but in his head. He stared at his unshaven face blearily.

Blink. Ripple.

Quite impossible, he told himself. Nobody could conceivably look as horrible as Kenneth J. Malone thought he did. Things just couldn't be as bad as all that.

Ignoring a still, small voice which asked persistently: "Why not?" he turned away from the mirror and set about finding his clothes. He determined to take his time about getting ready for work: after all, nobody could really complain if he arrived late on his first day after vacation. Everybody knew how tired vacations made a person.

And, besides, there was probably nothing happening anyway. Things had, he recalled with faint pleasure, been pretty quiet lately. Ever since the counterfeiting gang he'd caught had been put away, crime seemed to have dropped to the nice, simple levels of the 1950's and '60's. Maybe, he hoped suddenly, he'd be able to spend some time catching up on his scientific techniques, or his math, or pistol practice… .

The thought of pistol practice made his head begin to throb with the authority of a true hangover. There were fifty or sixty small gnomes inside his skull, he realized, all of them with tiny little hammers. They were mining for lead.

"The lead," Malone said aloud, "is farther down. Not in the skull."

The gnomes paid him no attention. He shut his eyes and tried to relax. The gnomes went right ahead with their work, and microscopic regiments of Eagle Scouts began marching steadily along his nerves.

There were people, Malone had always understood, who bounced out of their beds and greeted each new day with a smile. It didn't sound possible, but then again there were some pretty strange people. The head of that counterfeiting ring, for instance: where had he got the idea of picking an alias like André Gide?

Clutching at his whirling thoughts, Malone opened his eyes, winced, and began to get dressed. At least, he thought, it was going to be a peaceful day.

It was at this second that his private intercom buzzed.

Malone winced again. "To hell with you," he called at the thing, but the buzz went on, ignoring the code shut-off. That meant, he knew, an emergency call, maybe from his Chief of Section. Maybe even from higher up.

"I'm not even late for work yet," he complained. "I will be, but I'm not yet. What are they screaming about?"

There was, of course, only one way to find out. He shuffled painfully across the room, flipped the switch and said:

"Malone here." Vaguely, he wondered if it were true. He certainly didn't feel as if he were here. Or there. Or anywhere at all, in fact.

A familiar voice came tinnily out of the receiver. "Malone, get down here right away!"

The voice belonged to Andrew J. Burris. Malone sighed deeply and felt grateful, for the fiftieth time, that he had never had a TV pickup installed in the intercom. He didn't want the FBI chief to see him looking as horrible as he did now, all rippled and everything. It wasn't—well, it wasn't professional, that was all.

"I'll get dressed right away," he assured the intercom. "I should be there in—"

"Don't bother to get dressed," Burris snapped. "This is an emergency!"

"But, Chief—"

"And don't call me Chief!"

"Okay," Malone said. "Sure. You want me to come down in my pyjamas. Right?"

"I want you to—" Burris stopped. "All right, Malone. If you want to waste time while our country's life is at stake, you go ahead. Get dressed. After all, Malone, when I say something is an emergency—"

"I won't get dressed, then," Malone said. "Whatever you say."

"Just do something!" Burris told him desperately. "Your country needs you. Pyjamas and all. Malone, it's a crisis!"

Conversations with Burris, Malone told himself, were bound to be a little confusing. "I'll be right down," he said.

"Fine," Burris said, and hesitated. Then he added: "Malone, do you wear the tops or the bottoms?"

"The what?"

"Of your pyjamas," Burris explained hurriedly. "The top part or the bottom part?"

"Oh," Malone said. "As a matter of fact, I wear both."

"Good," Burris said with satisfaction. "I wouldn't want an agent of mine arrested for indecent exposure." He rang off.

Malone blinked at the intercom for a minute, shut it off and then, ignoring the trip-hammers in his skull and the Eagle Scouts on his nerves, began to get dressed. Somehow, in spite of Burris' feelings of crisis, he couldn't see himself trying to flag a taxi on the streets of Washington in his pyjamas. Anyhow, not while he was awake. I dreamed I was an FBI agent, he thought sadly, in my drafty BVDs.

Besides, it was probably nothing important. These things, he told himself severely, have a way of evaporating as soon as a clear, cold intelligence got hold of them.

Then he began wondering where in hell he was going to find a clear, cold intelligence. Or even, for that matter, what one was.

Chapter 1

"They could be anywhere," Burris said, with an expression which bordered on exasperated horror. "They could be all around us. Heaven only knows."

He pushed his chair back from his desk and stood up, a chunky little man with bright blue eyes and large hands. He paced to the window and looked out at Washington, and then he came back to the desk. A persistent office rumor held that he had become head of the FBI purely because he happened to have an initial *J* in his name, but in his case the J stood for Jeremiah. And, at the moment, his tone expressed all the hopelessness of that Old Testament prophet's lamentations.

"We're helpless," he said, looking at the young man with the crisp brown hair who was sitting across the desk. "That's what it is, we're helpless."

Kenneth Malone tried to look dependable. "Just tell me what to do," he said.

"You're a good agent, Kenneth," Burris said. "You're one of the best. That's why you've been picked for this job. And I want to say that I picked you personally. Believe me, there's never been anything like it before."

"I'll do my best," Malone said at random. He was twenty-six, and he had been an FBI agent for three years. In that time, he had, among other things, managed to break up a gang of smugglers, track down a counterfeiting ring, and capture three kidnappers. For reasons which he could neither understand nor explain, no one seemed willing to attribute his record to luck.

"I know you will," Burris said. "And if anybody can crack this case, Malone, you're the man. It's just that—everything sounds so *impossible*. Even after all the conferences we've had."

"Conferences?" Malone said vaguely. He wished the Chief would get to the point. Any point. He smiled gently across the desk and tried to look competent and dependable and reassuring. Burris' expression didn't change.

"You'll get the conference tapes later," Burris said. "You can study them before you leave. I suggest you study them very carefully, Malone. Don't be like me. Don't get confused." He buried his face in his hands. Malone waited patiently. After a few seconds, Burris looked up. "Did you read books when you were a child?" he asked.

Malone said: "What?"

"Books," Burris said. "When you were a child. Read them."

"Sure I did," Malone said. *"Bomba the Jungle Boy*, and *Doctor Doolittle*, and *Lucky Starr*, and *Little Women*—"

"Little Women?"

"When Beth died," Malone said, "I wanted to cry. But I didn't. My father said big boys don't cry."

"And your father was right," Burris said. "Why, when I was a—never mind. Forget about Beth and your father. Think about Lucky Starr for a minute. Remember him?"

"Sure," Malone said. "I liked those books. You know it's funny, but the books you read when you're a kid, they kind of stay with you. Know what I mean? I can still remember that one about Venus, for instance. Gee, that was—"

"Never mind about Venus, too," Burris said sharply. "Keep your mind on the problem."

"Yes, sir," Malone said. He paused. "What problem, sir?" he added.

"The problem we're discussing," Burris said. He gave Malone a bright, blank stare. "My God," he said. "Just listen to me."

"Yes, sir."

"All right, then." Burris took a deep breath. He seemed nervous. Once again he stood up and went to the window. This time, he spoke without turning. "Remember how everybody used to laugh about spaceships, and orbital satellites, and life on other planets? That was just in those Lucky Starr books. That was all just for kids, wasn't it?"

"Well, I don't know," Malone said slowly.

"Sure it was all for kids," Burris said. "It was laughable. Nobody took it seriously."

"Well, *somebody* must—"

"You just keep quiet and listen," Burris said.

"Yes, sir," Malone said.

Burris nodded. His hands were clasped behind his back. "We're not laughing any more, are we, Malone?" he said without moving.

There was silence.

"Well, are we?"

"Did you want me to answer, sir?"

"Of course I did!" Burris snapped.

"You told me to keep quiet and—"

"Never mind what I told you," Burris said. "Just do what I told you."

"Yes, sir," Malone said. "No, sir," he added after a second.

"No, sir, what?" Burris asked softly.

"No, sir, we're not laughing any more," Malone said.

"Ah," Burris said. "And why aren't we laughing any more?"

There was a little pause. Malone said, tentatively: "Because there's nothing to laugh about, sir?"

Burris whirled. "On the head!" he said happily. "You've hit the nail on the head, Kenneth. I knew I could depend on you." His voice grew serious again, and thoughtful. "We're not laughing any more because there's nothing to laugh about. We have orbital satellites, and we've landed on the Moon with an atomic rocket. The planets are the next step, and after that the stars. Man's heritage, Kenneth. The stars. And the stars, Kenneth, belong to Man—not to the Russians!"

"Yes, sir," Malone said soberly.

"So," Burris said, "we should learn not to laugh any more. But have we?"

"I don't know, sir."

"We haven't," Burris said with decision. "Can you read my mind?"

"No, sir," Malone said. "Can I read your mind?"

Malone hesitated. At last he said: "Not that I know of, sir."

"Well, I can't," Burris snapped. "And can any of us read each other's mind?"

Malone shook his head. "No, sir," he said.

Burris nodded. "That's the problem," he said. "That's the case I'm sending you out to crack."

This time, the silence was a long one.

At last, Malone said: "What problem, sir?"

"Mind reading," Burris said. "There's a spy at work in the Nevada plant, Kenneth. And the spy is a telepath."

The video tapes were very clear and very complete. There were a great many of them, and it was long after nine o'clock when Kenneth Malone decided to take a break and get some fresh air. Washington was a good city for walking, even at night, and Malone liked to walk. Sometimes he pretended, even to himself, that he got his best ideas while walking, but

he knew perfectly well that wasn't true. His best ideas just seemed to come to him, out of nowhere, precisely as the situation demanded them.

He was just lucky, that was all. He had a talent for being lucky. But nobody would ever believe that. A record like his was spectacular, even in the annals of the FBI, and Burris himself believed that the record showed some kind of superior ability.

Malone knew that wasn't true, but what could he do about it? After all, he didn't want to resign, did he? It was kind of romantic and exciting to be an FBI agent, even after three years. A man got a chance to travel around a lot and see things, and it was interesting. The pay was pretty good, too.

The only trouble was that, if he didn't quit, he was going to have to find a telepath.

The notion of telepathic spies just didn't sound right to Malone. It bothered him in a remote sort of way. Not that the idea of telepathy itself was alien to him—after all, he was even more aware than the average citizen that research had been going on in that field for something over a quarter of a century, and that the research was even speeding up.

But the cold fact that a telepathy-detecting device had been invented somehow shocked his sense of propriety, and his notions of privacy. It wasn't decent, that was all.

There ought to be something sacred, he told himself angrily.

He stopped walking and looked up. He was on Pennsylvania Avenue, heading toward the White House.

That was no good. He went to the corner and turned off, down the block. He had, he told himself, nothing at all to see the President about.

Not yet, anyhow.

The streets were dark and very peaceful. *I get my best ideas while walking*, Malone said without convincing himself. He thought back to the video tapes.

The report on the original use of the machine itself had been on one of the first tapes, and Malone could still see and hear it. That was one thing he did have, he reflected; his memory was pretty good.

Burris had been the first speaker on the tapes, and he'd given the serial and reference number in a cold, matter-of-fact voice. His face had been perfectly blank, and he looked just like the head of the FBI people were accustomed to seeing on their TV and newsreel screens. Malone wondered what had happened to him between the time the tapes had been made and the time he'd sent for Malone.

Maybe the whole notion of telepathy was beginning to get him, Malone thought.

Burris recited the standard tape-opening in a rapid mumble, like a priest involved in the formula of the Mass: "Any person or agent unauthorized for this tape please refrain from viewing further, under penalties as prescribed by law." Then he looked off, out past the screen to the left, and said: "Dr. Thomas O'Connor, of Westinghouse Laboratories. Will you come here, Dr. O'Connor?"

Dr. O'Connor came into the lighted square of screen slowly, looking all around him. "This is very fascinating," he said, blinking in the lamplight. "I hadn't realized that you people took so many precautions—"

He was, Malone thought, somewhere between fifty and sixty, tall and thin with skin so transparent that he nearly looked like a living X- ray. He had pale blue eyes and pale white hair, and, Malone thought, if there ever were a contest for the best-looking ghost, Dr. Thomas O'Connor would win it hands (or phalanges) down.

"This is all necessary for the national security," Burris said, a little sternly.

"Oh," Dr. O'Connor said quickly. "I realize that, of course. Naturally. I can certainly see that."

"Let's go ahead, shall we?" Burris said.

O'Connor nodded. "Certainly. Certainly."

Burris said: "Well, then," and paused. After a second he started again: "Now, Dr. O'Connor, would you please give us a sort of verbal rundown on this for our records?"

"Of course," Dr. O'Connor said. He smiled into the video cameras and cleared his throat. "I take it you don't want an explanation of how this machine works. I mean: you don't want a technical exposition, do you?"

"No," Burris said, and added: "Not by any means. Just tell us what it does."

Dr. O'Connor suddenly reminded Malone of a professor he'd had in college for one of the law courses. He had, Malone thought, the same smiling gravity of demeanor, the same condescending attitude of absolute authority. It was clear that Dr. O'Connor lived in a world of his own, a world that was not even touched by the common run of men.

"Well," he began, "to put it very simply, the device indicates whether or not a man's mental—ah—processes are being influenced by outside—by outside influences." He gave the cameras another little smile. "If you will allow me, I will demonstrate on the machine itself."

He took two steps that carried him out of camera range, and returned wheeling a large heavy-looking box. Dangling from the metal covering were a number of wires and attachments. A long cord led from the box to the floor and snaked out of sight to the left.

"Now," Dr. O'Connor said. He selected a single lead, apparently, Malone thought, at random. "This electrode—"

"Just a moment, Doctor," Burris said. He was eyeing the machine with a combination of suspicion and awe. "A while back you mentioned something about 'outside influences.' Just what, specifically, does that mean?"

With some regret, Dr. O'Connor dropped the lead. "Telepathy," he said. "By outside influences, I meant influences on the mind, such as telepathy or mind-reading of some nature."

"I see," Burris said. "You can detect a telepath with this machine."

"I'm afraid—"

"Well, some kind of a mind-reader anyhow," Burris said. "We won't quarrel about terms."

"Certainly not," Dr. O'Connor said. The smile he turned on Burris was as cold and empty as the inside of Orbital Station One. "What I meant was—if you will permit me to continue—that we cannot detect any sort of telepathy or mind-reader with this device. To be frank, I very much wish that we could; it would make everything a great deal simpler. However, the laws of psionics don't seem to operate that way."

"Well, then," Burris said, "what does the thing do?" His face wore a mask of confusion. Momentarily, Malone felt sorry for his chief. He could remember how he'd felt, himself, when that law professor had come up with a particularly baffling question in class.

"This machine," Dr. O'Connor said with authority, "detects the slight variations in mental activity that occur when a person's mind is *being* read."

"You mean, if my mind were being read right now—"

"Not right now," Dr. O'Connor said. "You see, the bulk of this machine is in Nevada; the structure is both too heavy and too delicate for transport. And there are other qualifications—"

"I meant theoretically," Burris said.

"Theoretically—" Dr. O'Connor began, and smiled again—"Theoretically, if your mind were being read, this machine would detect it, supposing that the machine were in operating condition and all of the other qualifications had been met. You see, Mr. Burris, no matter

how poor a telepath a man may be, he has some slight ability—even if only very slight—to detect the fact that his mind is being read."

"You mean, if somebody was reading my mind, I'd know it?" Burris said. His face showed, Malone realized, that he plainly disbelieved this statement.

"You would know it," Dr. O'Connor said, "but you would never know you knew it. To elucidate: in a normal person—like you, for instance, or even like myself—the state of having one's mind read merely results in a vague, almost sub-conscious feeling of irritation, something that could easily be attributed to minor worries, or fluctuations in one's hormonal balance. The hormonal balance, Mr. Burris, is—"

"Thank you," Burris said with a trace of irritation. "I know what hormones are."

"Ah. Good," Dr. O'Connor said equably. "In any case, to continue: this machine interprets those specific feelings as indications that the mind is being—ah—'eavesdropped' upon."

You could almost see the quotation marks around what Dr. O'Connor considered slang dropping into place, Malone thought.

"I see," Burris said with a disappointed air. "But what do you mean, it won't detect a telepath? Have you ever actually worked with a telepath?"

"Certainly we have," Dr. O'Connor said. "If we hadn't, how would we be able to tell that the machine was, in fact, indicating the presence of telepathy? The theoretical state of the art is not, at present, sufficiently developed to enable us to—"

"I see," Burris said hurriedly. "Only wait a minute."

"Yes?"

"You mean you've actually got a real mind-reader? You've found one? One that works?"

Dr. O'Connor shook his head sadly. "I'm afraid I should have said, Mr. Burris, that we did once have one," he admitted. "He was, unfortunately, an imbecile, with a mental age between five and six, as nearly as we were ever able to judge."

"An imbecile?" Burris said. "But how were you able to—"

"He could repeat a person's thoughts word for word," Dr. O'Connor said. "Of course, he was utterly incapable of understanding the meaning behind them. That didn't matter; he simply repeated whatever you were thinking. Rather disconcerting."

"I'm sure," Burris said. "But he was really an imbecile? There wasn't any chance of—"

"Of curing him?" Dr. O'Connor said. "None, I'm afraid. We did at one time feel that there had been a mental breakdown early in the boy's life, and, indeed, it's perfectly possible that he was normal for the first year or so. The records we did manage to get on that period, however, were very much confused, and there was never any way of telling anything at all, for certain. It's easy to see what caused the confusion, of course: telepathy in an imbecile is rather an oddity— and any normal adult would probably be rather hesitant about admitting that he was capable of it. That's why we have not found another subject; we must merely sit back and wait for lightning to strike."

Burris sighed. "I see your problem," he said. "But what happened to this imbecile boy of yours?"

"Very sad," Dr. O'Connor said. "Six months ago, at the age of fifteen, the boy simply died. He simply—gave up, and died."

"Gave up?"

"That was as good an explanation as our medical department was able to provide, Mr. Burris. There was some malfunction—but—we like to say that he simply gave up. Living became too difficult for him."

"All right," Burris said after a pause. "This telepath of yours is dead, and there aren't any more where he came from. Or if there are, you don't know how to look for them. All right. But to get back to this machine of yours: it couldn't detect the boy's ability?"

Dr. O'Connor shook his head. "No, I'm afraid not. We've worked hard on that problem at Westinghouse, Mr. Burris, but we haven't yet been able to find a method of actually detecting telepaths."

"But you can detect—"

"That's right," Dr. O'Connor said. "We can detect the fact that a man's mind is being read." He stopped, and his face became suddenly morose. When he spoke again, he sounded guilty, as if he were making an admission that pained him. "Of course, Mr. Burris, there's nothing we can do about a man's mind being read. Nothing whatever." He essayed a grin that didn't look very healthy. "But at least," he said, "you know you're being spied on."

Burris grimaced. There was a little silence while Dr. O'Connor stroked the metal box meditatively, as if it were the head of his beloved.

At last, Burris said: "Dr. O'Connor, how sure can you be of all this?"

The look he received made all the previous conversation seem as warm and friendly as a Christmas party by comparison. It was a look that froze the air of the room into a solid chunk, Malone thought, a chunk you could have chipped pieces from, for souvenirs, later, when

Dr. O'Connor had gone and you could get into the room without any danger of being quick-frozen by the man's unfriendly eye.

"Mr. Burris," Dr. O'Connor said in a voice that matched the temperature of his gaze, "please. Remember our slogan."

Malone sighed. He fished in his pocket for a pack of cigarettes, found one, and extracted a single cigarette. He stuck it in his mouth and started fishing in various pockets for his lighter.

He sighed again. Perfectly honestly, he preferred cigars, a habit he'd acquired from the days when he'd filched them from his father's cigar-case. But his mental picture of a fearless and alert young FBI agent didn't include a cigar. Somehow, remembering his father as neither fearless nor, exactly, alert—anyway, not the way the movies and the TV screens liked to picture the words—he had the impression that cigars looked out of place on FBI agents.

And it was, in any case, a small sacrifice to make. He found his lighter and shielded it from the brisk wind. He looked out over water at the Jefferson Memorial, and was surprised that he'd managed to walk as far as he had. Then he stopped thinking about walking, and took a puff of his cigarette, and forced himself to think about the job in hand.

Naturally, the Westinghouse gadget had been declared Ultra Top Secret as soon as it had been worked out. Virtually everything was, these days. And the whole group involved in the machine and its workings had been transferred without delay to the United States Laboratories out in Yucca Flats, Nevada.

Out there in the desert, there just wasn't much to do, Malone supposed, except to play with the machine. And, of course, look at the scenery. But when you've seen one desert, Malone thought confusedly, you've seen them all.

So, the scientists ran experiments on the machine, and they made a discovery of a kind they hadn't been looking for.

Somebody, they discovered, was picking the brains of the scientists there.

Not the brains of the people working with the telepathy machine.

And not the brains of the people working on the several other Earth-limited projects at Yucca Flats.

They'd been reading the minds of some of the scientists working on the new and highly classified non-rocket space drive.

In other words, the Yucca Flats plant was infested with a telepathic spy. And how do you go about finding a telepath? Malone sighed. Spies

that got information in any of the usual ways were tough enough to locate. A telepathic spy was a lot tougher proposition.

Well, one thing about Andrew J. Burris. He had an answer for everything. Malone thought of what his chief had said: "It takes a thief to catch a thief. And if the Westinghouse machine won't locate a telepathic spy, I know what will."

"What?" Malone had asked.

"It's simple," Burris had said. "Another telepath. There has to be one around somewhere. Westinghouse did have one, after all, and the Russians *still* have one. Malone, that's your job: go out and find me a telepath."

Burris had an answer for everything, all right, Malone thought. But he couldn't see where the answer did him very much good. After all, if it takes a telepath to catch a telepath, how do you catch the telepath you're going to use to catch the first telepath?

Malone ran that through his mind again, and then gave it up. It sounded as if it should have made sense, somehow, but it just didn't, and that was all there was to that.

He dropped his cigarette to the ground and mashed it out with the toe of his shoe. Then he looked up.

Out there, over the water, was the Jefferson Memorial. It stood, white in the floodlights, beautiful and untouchable in the darkness. Malone stared at it. What would Thomas Jefferson have done in a crisis like this?

Jefferson, he told himself without much conviction, would have been just as confused as he was.

But he'd have had to find a telepath, Malone thought. Malone determined that he would do likewise, If Thomas Jefferson could do it, the least he, Malone, could do was to give it a good try.

There was only one little problem:

Where, Malone thought, *do I start looking?*

Chapter 2

Early the next morning, Malone awoke on a plane, heading across the continent toward Nevada. He had gone home to sleep, and he'd had to wake up to get on the plane, and now here he was, waking up again. It seemed, somehow, like a vicious circle.

The engines hummed gently as they pushed the big ship through the middle stratosphere's thinly distributed molecules. Malone looked out at the purple-dark sky and set himself to think out his problem again.

He was still mulling things over when the ship lowered its landing gear and rolled to a stop on the big field near Yucca Flats. Malone sighed and climbed slowly out of his seat. There was a car waiting for him at the airfield, though, and that seemed to presage a smooth time; Malone remembered calling Dr. O'Connor the night before, and congratulated himself on his foresight.

Unfortunately, when he reached the main gate of the high double fence that surrounded the more than ninety square miles of United States Laboratories, he found out that entrance into that sanctum sanctorum of Security wasn't as easy as he'd imagined—not even for an FBI man. His credentials were checked with the kind of minute care Malone had always thought people reserved for disputed art masterpieces, and it was with a great show of reluctance that the Special Security guards passed him inside as far as the office of the Chief Security Officer.

There, the Chief Security Officer himself, a man who could have doubled for Torquemada, eyed Malone with ill-concealed suspicion while he called Burris at FBI headquarters back in Washington.

Burris identified Malone on the video screen and the Chief Security Officer, looking faintly disappointed, stamped the agent's pass and thanked the FBI chief. Malone had the run of the place.

Then he had to find a courier jeep. The Westinghouse division, it seemed, was a good two miles away.

As Malone knew perfectly well, the main portion of the entire Yucca Flats area was devoted solely to research on the new space drive which was expected to make the rocket as obsolete as the blunderbuss—at least

as far as space travel was concerned. Not, Malone thought uneasily, that the blunderbuss had ever been used for space travel, but—

He got off the subject hurriedly. The jeep whizzed by buildings, most of them devoted to aspects of the non-rocket drive. The other projects based at Yucca Flats had to share what space was left—and that included, of course, the Westinghouse research project.

It turned out to be a single, rather small white building with a fence around it. The fence bothered Malone a little, but there was no need to worry; this time he was introduced at once into Dr. O'Connor's office. It was paneled in wallpaper manufactured to look like pine, and the telepathy expert sat behind a large black desk bigger than any Malone had ever seen in the FBI offices. There wasn't a scrap of paper on the desk; its surface was smooth and shiny, and behind it the nearly transparent Dr. Thomas O'Connor was close to invisible.

He looked, in person, just about the same as he'd looked on the FBI tapes. Malone closed the door of the office behind him, looked for a chair and didn't find one. In Dr. O'Connor's office, it was perfectly obvious, Dr. O'Connor sat down. You stood, and were uncomfortable.

Malone took off his hat. He reached across the desk to shake hands with the telepathy expert, and Dr. O'Connor gave him a limp fragile paw. "Thanks for giving me a little time," Malone said. "I really appreciate it." He smiled across the desk. His feet were already beginning to hurt.

"Not at all," Dr. O'Connor said, returning the smile with one of his own special quick-frozen brand. "I realize how important FBI work is to all of us, Mr. Malone. What can I do to help you?"

Malone shifted his feet. "I'm afraid I wasn't very specific on the phone last night," he said. "It wasn't anything I wanted to discuss over a line that might have been tapped. You see, I'm on the telepathy case."

Dr. O'Connor's eyes widened the merest trifle. "I see," he said. "Well, I'll certainly do everything I can to help you."

"Fine," Malone said. "Let's get right down to business, then. The first thing I want to ask you about is this detector of yours. I understand it's too big to carry around—but how about making a smaller model?"

"Smaller?" Dr. O'Connor permitted himself a ghostly chuckle. "I'm afraid that isn't possible, Mr. Malone. I would be happy to let you have a small model of the machine if we had one available—more than happy. I would like to see such a machine myself, as a matter of fact. Unfortunately, Mr. Malone—"

"There just isn't one, right?" Malone said.

"Correct," Dr. O'Connor said. "And there are a few other factors. In the first place, the person being analyzed has to be in a specially shielded room, such as is used in encephalographic analysis. Otherwise, the mental activity of the other persons around him would interfere with the analysis." He frowned a little. "I could wish that we knew a bit more about psionic machines. The trouble with the present device, frankly, is that it is partly psionic and partly electronic, and we can't be entirely sure where one part leaves off and the other begins. Very trying. Very trying indeed."

"I'll bet it is," Malone said sympathetically, wishing he understood what Dr. O'Connor was talking about.

The telepathy expert sighed. "However," he said, "we keep working at it." Then he looked at Malone expectantly.

Malone shrugged. "Well, if I can't carry the thing around, I guess that's that," he said. "But here's the next question: do you happen to know the maximum range of a telepath? I mean: how far away can he get from another person and still read his mind?"

Dr. O'Connor frowned again. "We don't have definite information on that, I'm afraid," he said. "Poor little Charlie was rather difficult to work with. He was mentally incapable of cooperating in any way, you see."

"Little Charlie?"

"Charles O'Neill was the name of the telepath we worked with," Dr. O'Connor explained.

"I remember," Malone said. The name had been on one of the tapes, but he just hadn't associated "Charles O'Neill" with "Little Charlie." He felt as if he'd been caught with his homework undone. "How did you manage to find him, anyway?" he said. Maybe, if he knew how Westinghouse had found their imbecile-telepath, he'd have some kind of clue that would enable him to find one, too. Anyhow, it was worth a try.

"It wasn't difficult in Charlie's case," Dr. O'Connor said. He smiled. "The child babbled all the time, you see."

"You mean he talked about being a telepath?"

Dr. O'Connor shook his head impatiently. "No," he said. "Not at all. I mean that he babbled. Literally. Here: I've got a sample recording in my files." He got up from his chair and went to the tall gray filing cabinet that hid in a far corner of the pine-paneled room. From a drawer he extracted a spool of common audio tape, and returned to his desk.

"I'm sorry we didn't get full video on this," he said, "but we didn't feel it was necessary." He opened a panel in the upper surface of the desk, and slipped the spool in. "If you like, there are other tapes—"