

The Silent Eyes of Time

Algis Budrys

Early on a day in the spring of 1971, Clinton Gallard walked steadily along the interminable G concourse at O'Hare International. Most of the boarding areas were still well ahead. He took his time although the Caribbean flight was near departure. In a long and taut life he had detected the rhythm of how things work, and had fallen in with it.

He was a man with a rectangular torso, of equal width at shoulders and hips, thin from the side, with markedly delicate limbs. His legs were very long. He had a narrow, blade-nosed, tanned and age-spotted head. His short, thinning, coarse white hair swirled lightly about his scalp. His pale blue eyes were made secret by the deep folds creased into the leathery flesh around them, and were set far back in their sharply distinct sockets. He moved with economy, not much disturbing the hang of his carefully cut lightweight suit, and he walked with his hands ready.

He was remembering the thick humidity in the cabins of DC-3s floundering through Appalachian thunderstorms; the little fans whirring on their mounts along the edge of the overhead baggage shelf, trying to circulate the dampness and the airsick smell; the condensation running down the windows where the lightning flashed and flashed beyond the rain-drummed wings, altogether different from the blue spitting flame at the exhaust port; the briefcase clutched securely between his ankles, the two of them journeying once again to Washington where they talked New Deal but dealt with you like Calvin Coolidge.

Then he remembered tall white ships easing out of Lower New York Bay with dance bands playing; soft yellow lights along the deck at night, and couples leaning back to smile into each other's faces with their arms around their waists; tall, cold drinks with mint sprigs and a kind of white-frosted ice, and the coast lights changing to Miami. Boys dived for coins at Nassau. In Havana, there was a winding street of little steps; a

little park on an oval terrace where a man could sit at dusk, and then saunter up the hill toward a pale yellow stucco house where music played beyond the wrought-iron railings.

The woman with him, Elizabeth, had a large shoulderbag slung over her California-cut tan poplin jacket. She was made shorter by his height, but she was nearly six feet tall, dressed for their trip in sports slacks. Only by looking around the edges of her large-lensed sunglasses could one see the beginnings of crows' feet, before the chestnut manes of her hair enclosed her high cheekbones and framed her chin and soft mouth. Smaller and younger was what Clinton Gallard conferred upon her, and love.

"We'll be at the gate in plenty of time," Gallard remarked in his relaxed, well-projected voice. She shortened her stride. He looked about him at Avis and motel advertisements in illuminated boxes on the concrete paneling of the concourse walls. He studied one with a critical eye. It was for the new models from AWC, "The Expert Name in Electronics." It was not a slogan of which he approved. Until last year, the advertising campaigns had been tagged "First . . . Best." He thought that was a more easily grasped assertion. And it left more room in the available space, so that the picture of the product—the handsome cabinetwork and buffed metal fascia, and the big tube with the evocative color photograph of white boats on a blue sea—could be brought closer. If you were in a game, it seemed to him, you played for every millimeter of ground.

They were passing boarding areas now. Great and small alike sat facing each other until their flight was called, ignoring each other's eyes while their knees nearly touched. It made Gallard picture muzhiks squatting beside telegraph poles along the right-of-way, waiting to flag the daily train on the Trans-Siberian railroad. It was not a world substantially different from the view before him when he'd sat in the valedictory chair at the Wharton School of Finance back in 1928.

As they neared their gate, he said, "Shit!" Elizabeth raised her head like a doe.

Gallard stopped and they waited for the man hurrying toward them. He was fifty-eight, sixty, faced like a beagle, cyanotic at the lips, wet-combed under his Homburg. "Clint! I'm glad I didn't miss you! I've been waiting for you." He thrust his hand forward, and Gallard took it in a measured grip.

"How are you, Charles," he said pleasantly. "Mr. Treville, this is Miss Farrier. Elizabeth, Mr. Treville is president of AWC Electronics." His successor. A man who had come up through the sales department.

"Very pleased to meet you, Miss Farrier," Treville said, barely diverting his glance from Gallard. "Clint, may we please ask you to postpone your trip?" Gallard raised his eyebrows.

"Clint—" Treville looked about them.

"Please come and let me talk to you."

Gallard studied him briefly. He sucked in one corner of his lower lip. Then he smiled in a kindly manner.

"Elizabeth," he said, "would you please see to canceling our seats and all that? I doubt if you'll be able to retrieve our baggage this late. But I'm sure Mr. Treville took that imposition into account and made his request nonetheless. Please meet us in the VIP lounge." He pressed her shoulder fondly. "Don't worry—you won't be long, and I'll be surrounded by other old gaffers. We know what to do for each other."

He turned away with Treville. "It's strange to see you alone, Charlie," he remarked as they made their way back up the concourse. "No assistants carrying relevant papers, no vice-presidents to part the waves for you."

"Christ almighty, Clint, I had a bitch of a time catching you! By the time I got your housekeeper to admit where you might be, I had to just grab a cab and hustle out here. It's important, Clint. Here you are, all set to just sit around. Got yourself a nice little cooze there to keep off the cool breezes. And here's Charlie Treville saying, 'Pardon the interruption.'"

"And I was telling you the point was made, Charles," Gallard said, his eyes crinkling in a kindly manner. "Just telling you it was made."

He and Treville exchanged no further words between there and the lounge. Gallard was remembering the morning when he was called in to Elmo Daugherty's old walnut-paneled office in the General Office building they used to have on lower Michigan Avenue. "Clint," Elmo Daugherty had said out of his flat, overslung mouth, "I believe it would do the company some good if we made you a vice-president and let you straighten out that mess in Purchasing."

Gallard had said, "The trouble in Purchasing is your cousin Paul."

Daugherty had stood looking out the window with his hands behind his back. "So force my cousin Paul to resign."

They reached a quiet table in a corner of the lounge, and the waitress took their drink orders. Gallard leaned back in his chair, extending his legs. Treville hunched forward.

"It's your boy Hessenbirger down at Churchville Research," he said.

"This time he's opened a can of worms." He eyed Gallard steadily. He ought to have been vindictive, perhaps triumphant. This sort of thing was presumed to be the reason why Gallard had left. Instead, Treville's mouth was slack with fear.

Gallard studied him carefully. He did not like to see fear in men of Treville's type. They always tried to make you pay, later, for having seen it. They operated along simple lines.

Gallard visualized a structure, called AWC, made of intricately curved wires. He saw it floating silvery and highlighted against a featureless soft black background. Because the wires looped and intercurved, they appeared to define and enclose a certain volume of space like a Tchelitchew sculpture. It was possible to misconstrue the space for the sculpture. In actual fact, even the wires were imaginary—a convenient representation of the tracks taken by moving particles whose courses were, quite literally, careers. And if one watched very closely, one could see AWC subtly throbbing to the frictions of their passage. Whereas Treville saw nothing but the shape, and furthermore thought it was all solid inside, like a potato.

Gallard smiled. "What has Hessenbirger done?"

"Worked up a way of reaching the future. I don't know what you'd call it—a—a *thing*; it's electronic, but it moves a man into the future and lets him bring things back—a future mass tranceiver? But it works. He's brought back stuff—coins, newspapers. He handed some of them out for souvenirs. And *then* he reported he'd made this thing."

"The future." Gallard cocked an eyebrow. "Really?"

"Here—" Treville handed him a U.S. quarter dated 1975.

"I'd rather see one of the newspapers," Gallard said, turning the coin in his lean fingers. "That would be harder to fake, I think."

But within him he pictured a landscape of rolling meadows and wooded glades with soft afternoon sky above, and in his mind he peeled away an infinitely thin layer of nearly perfect transparency, to reveal the same landscape, which in turn he lifted away for yet another, and others, as the leaves slowly shifted and the grass deployed in lax formations, and dusk fell upon this land within his mind until, there, past many increments now, he felt the first faint onset of an evening star, only its farthest photons yet impinging on his senses, so thin were the films.

"It's not a fake," Treville said. "It's been corroborated. Mangrum had him make another run. We now have calendars, newsmagazines, and

Polaroids of completed buildings standing on vacant lots." Treville broke off as the waitress set down their drinks, smiled, and left.

"How many people know about it?"

"I don't know. All of Hessenbirger's associates, to begin with; he bragged to them as soon as he'd gotten back. Then a girl file clerk on his way to Mangrum's office—Hessenbirger's got a yen for her, I suppose, and wanted to impress her. Then a draftsman named Pogrobhis; Hessenbirger likes to chase around the strip joints with him on Friday nights, and he happened to bump into him in the stairwell. Then Mangrum, of course—after all, you've got to let your Manager of Engineering know about it sometime, right? Then Mangrum called me, and sent a messenger with a confidential envelope of reports and samples, and I've spoken to Elmo Daugherty."

Daugherty was Chairman of the Board. A wise old fat man. Wary. "What did Elmo say?"

"He said to get hold of you."

"When did you speak to him?"

"This morning. I've been waiting for Mangrum to confirm everything. It's been twenty-four hours."

"Is anything specific in writing?"

"Sure. Engineering memos, research notes, and a slew of paper from Mangrum. Corporations have paper brain cells." Treville picked up his glass and drained off a mouthful. "You know that."

Gallard waved to Elizabeth across the room. "You do need me after all, Charles," he agreed. "I'll go see Elmo. Meanwhile, please arrange for a complete presentation to me at Churchville tomorrow morning. Ask Mangrum to meet me in the bar at the Marriott at seven this evening. Oh, and I'll need two connecting single rooms, and two seats on the Churchville plane. I suppose Mangrum can have his secretary do that for us."

"It's like you'd never left," Treville said quietly.

"Don't worry, Charles—I'll get it done and go away again."

"You had a lot of good ideas, Clint. Sitting where I sit these days, I can really appreciate what it must have taken to build up the company the way you did. There are lots of times when I wish—"

"And this is one of the times," Gallard said with a cordial smile. "But I *will* go away again. Promise."

Treville began to say something else, and then said: "I'll come down on the early morning flight."

"Well, of course you'd want to be at the presentation," Gallard said agreeably. He sipped his sherry. He thought to himself. "What does it say in tomorrow's newspaper, Charles?"

Treville shook his head, blurring his pale features. "You wouldn't believe it. You'll see for yourself. I wouldn't want to discuss things like that. The future is about people we're doing business with *now*, you know? How can I discuss it?"

Gallard looked at Him kindly. "All right, Charles. If you can't say something good, don't say anything at all."

Here she was.

"Sit down, Elizabeth," Gallard said. "We'll be going to a place called Churchville, Indiana, tonight." He signaled to the waitress for her, thinking of Elizabeth systematically emptying the shoulderbag into the drawers of an Indiana motel credenza; the sun lotions and bathing attire in one drawer, the pills and ampules and syringes into another. She would come to him in the night from the next bed if she heard Mm gasping; she would slip the nitroglycerin tablet tenderly under his tongue. "Chivas on the rocks with a splash of soda and a twist of lemon for the lady," he told the waitress softly.

He handed the girl his credit card. "We'll be leaving after that, so we'd like a check, please, as well." He raised his hand and gestured away Charles Treville's hasty move toward his own wallet. "No—that's all right, Charles. I'll be sending in a consultation bill." He winked the wink of one old traveling salesman to another, a thing he had studied many times. The thing was, though, that Treville inalterably saw him as a cutthroat, as if in a Travelodge mirror. So all the amenities between them were pro forma, and it did not actually matter which format one selected. Gallard sipped his sherry with a tender little smile.

II

Elizabeth drove their rental car to Daugherty's home in Lake Forest. Gallard sat with his head resting comfortably on his seat-back, his arms around his knees.

The day had come when Daugherty had asked him to dine alone with the fattening old man in the upstairs room of the new G.O. "Clint, you son of a bitch," Daugherty had said. "I don't see any way to avoid making you chief operating officer. I'm gonna settle down on the board and go buy myself some big stone resting place on the North Shore, there, and let you make me richer."

They pulled up on the bluestone apron at the front of the landside entrance and went up the stone steps together at Gallard's most comfortable pace. Gallard rang, and the butler's eyes widened when he saw who it was, but he murmured, "Very nice to see you here again, Mr. Gallard," as to the manner born.

Elmo Daugherty grunted when they came into the room. "Sit down, Clint. Drink? Miss Farrier? No and no." The three of them sat there in the library, Elizabeth in a corner turning the pages of a book, Gallard and Daugherty in two chairs near each other at the fireplace. "What do you know so far, Clint?" the old man said.

"As much as Charlie knows."

"Well, that's about as much as I know. What do you think?"

"I think Hessenbirger's done it. The same way he's done everything else. He sat there playing with his mind, and took a snatch of something he'd read in somebody's paper, and something he'd rubbed up against at a symposium, and something he'd dreamed when he was a kid, and the next thing he knew, he had a soldering iron in his hand."

"Son of a bitch, Clint, how do people do that?"

"That same way you don't have to read the stock tables. The tables are for technicians. Like high school civics texts. The purpose of college is to refute their lies and substitute a more sophisticated set. Meanwhile, people are out running the world."

"Well, Hessenbirger sure as hell doesn't run the world."

"He's just turned it upside down, Elmo. *That's* the point."

"I know what the fucking point is!" Daugherty glanced quickly toward a tranquil Elizabeth and jerked his head back into place again. "We've got a nice, viable thing going here; big share of the market, control of half the basic patents—"

"Thanks to Hessenbirger."

"Thanks to you for finding Hessenbirger. —Bigger share of the market than we deserve, nice chunk of licensing income, lots of O.E.M. parts sales.

We're not golden, but we're a fuck of a lot better off than anybody else in this country. We could have been up shit creek with the rest of them. You really built something, Clint. But you built it around one man—"

"Around an approach. One man happens to fit it superbly at this point in the company's history. But there can always be others, as long as we keep the approach. You create a climate, and the sun shines."

"Yeah, well, we've got ourselves a tornado now. You'd better get us out of it."

Gallard stared calmly into the fire flickering amid the gas logs. "Why?" He smiled slightly to himself.

"Because you know damned well this isn't some lousy little policy question you and I can knock heads over and it hardly matters who wins. This is the whole world going to hell. Shit—you know what people are like. Get rich quick. Take the money and run. Crooked as a ram's horn. Cinch bettors. We've got our society surrounded and infiltrated with security systems out the ying-yang, and you still get pilferage and embezzlement being national industries. That's what they'd do, man— steal from the future and never think twice about it. Charlie Treville even had a couple of minutes where he wondered if we couldn't market this thing! Jesus!"

"Why me? I'm out of it, Elmo. Shot down."

"My ass. You quit. And I know damned well why you quit, and I don't blame you. My old man went down the hall flat on his back on a stretcher, right past all the secretaries and janitors, on his eighth and last coro-fucking-nary, and by God they had to pry a piece of correspondence out of his hand in the ambulance. I get my checkup every month, and when some of those smart LaSalle Street Money boys want me for something, you can bet your sweet patutie they come out here; it's just as easy to foam at the mouth and die in the back of a limousine as it is in some goddamned North Western Railway commuter car. But don't give me that shot-down crap. I know whose balls I've got in my pocket, and the count sure doesn't include yours. You had me pinned to the mat." Suddenly Daugherty chuckled. "Too bad."

Gallard said pleasantly: "I think it was Bobby Layne of the Detroit Lions who said he never lost—there were just days when he ran out of time."

"Yeah, well, time's got you some extra time, Clint, boy."

"I see. Nobody else can handle Hessenbirger."

"Any two-year-old named Clinton Stages Gallard could have figured that out by now. No—no, he's got us by the short hair, all right, but that's

not all of it." Daugherty brooded. Gallard watched him carefully. The fat man drew dignity about him like a sheik donning a caftan over a bellyband full of skinning knives.

"Maybe—" Daugherty stopped, considered, proceeded. "You know, you've been right many times. You said the Japs would come, and they did. You pumped up Churchville and got Hessenbirger in there. Now we purchase what we want from our Far Eastern colleagues, but some of it's our own property under license. And we're still building and selling over here. You take a look at where some of the other outfits are, and you have to say to yourself that Clint Gallard kept AWC's ass out of the bucket. I have to sit here and think about a track record like that." Daugherty nodded to himself. "I do. All right, but then Charlie Treville and the other boys in Sales began getting their back up. Every time you set a sales target, what I heard was a lot of screaming about how we couldn't meet competition on dealer profit margins and product reliability. They told me the dealers were fomenting about too much warranty work against low per-unit income. And they had a point. We were costing too high at the factories. But maybe that *was* Manufacturing's fault."

He'd spent years attempting to introduce efficiency into the factories. The managers always agreed enthusiastically that it was time to take a new look at how things were done. And then they'd settle for whatever good old Joe, the senior production engineer, told them. If you looked too closely at good old Joe, with his twenty years in toward his pension, maybe somebody'd think good old Manager wasn't untouchable either. But if you all stuck together and waited it out, and formed little alliances with Charlie Treville's people, why, something might happen to get that son of a bitch Gallard off everybody's back. So they met their cost targets by cutting quality. And Marketing made up for it by proving it was time to raise the advertising budget. It was the good old difference between the way business is talked and the way business is done. "American Wireless Corporation is a third-generation company, Elmo," Gallard said. "We're not like the postwar organizations. Now don't tell me you're just realizing how the game is played, Coach."

Daugherty waved his hand. "All right, all right. I know what it's like to get your heel tendons nibbled in the dark. That comes with the territory. Any time you want to bitch about this being a mossback outfit, just remember you didn't do badly in it. And it let you attract people like Hessenbirger, and this hotshot Caldwellader you've got managing the microwave plant, and Austin over in O.E.M. Sales, Rickard in Parts Merchandising, and half a dozen other monkeys you've got climbing up all

the ladders we've got. Don't wave that tarbrush around so fast and loose. I remember when if we'd let you have your way, every color TV in America would have that damn filter wheel rumbling around in front of the screen." He chuckled again. "There's a Moscow for every Napoleon. That's why corporations like committee decisions. But sometimes . . ."

He paused for a long while. "I've wondered if you see this company the same way I do," he mused. "I don't think many people do."

"Really?"

"I've been with it, one way or another, almost from the beginning. That's—what?—forty-six years. I was one of the first employees that wasn't a partner. Came up through the Comptroller's Department, just like you did. Shit, I *was* the Comptroller's Department for a while." The stubby-fingered hand came down hard on the arm of the chair.

"I'm aware of that, Elmo," Gallard said. In the last year of his tenure, the senior accountants had begun producing policy memos against maintaining in-house development, and in favor of subcontracting major assemblies. "I'm always interested in what could make my own people turn against me."

"Yeah, well, maybe I was interested in what you'd come up with instead. I figured a smart operator like you could cook out alternate solutions and still meet the profit targets I promised the stockholders. Too bad you never quite had the time."

"You were getting ready to tell me about something else, Elmo."

"Yeah. Yeah, I was. I was going to say a corporation is one of the world's crudest life-forms. It feeds on its market, and it develops size in response to intake volume, you know? It gets its shape from the constituents in what it eats. So it gets big, and it puts out new pseudopods and retracts old ones, and that looks like evolution. But it doesn't really have any organs. The people in it know they're not an arm or a heart. They're just a piece of pseudopod. And for all they know, they may be getting vestigial. So they're always looking around for hostility. They've always got their heads up in case something says it's time to slough them off." Daugherty stroked his hand ruminatively along his jaw.

"A corporation gets no poontang, you know?" he said. "Doesn't reproduce. We talk about twenty thousand independent businessmen in our dealer network, and we point to a dozen subsidiaries, but it's all pseudopods. Feed momma ipecac and the children vomit. A corporation only gets one life. So it's got to live forever. To do that, it has to keep changing shape. Got to have people who might be cancer, but might be a

new chromosome, too. Might be the only kind of mutation we can get, you know?"

Gallard smiled pleasantly. "Elmo, I told Charlie Treville and I'm sure he promptly told you. I will go to Churchville, I will straighten things out. There's no need to motivate me."

"Yeah, well, I like to be subtle. I'm a ham-fisted Irishman from Tulsa and I like to be subtle."

Daugherty faced forward again. "Time," he said. "Paradoxical, its being time. The kettle everything boils down in."

Riding to Meigs Field for the commuter airline, Gallard watched the limbs of the elms along Sheridan Road form tracteries overhead, their outermost shoots barely misted with the first tentative green buddings of spring. "Elizabeth," he remarked, "did you know that the head of one of America's top twenty companies thinks of his product as excrement?"

III

The Beech 99 put them down on the south side of the city, miles from the Marriott, which was located near the industries on the northeast side. Riding through it in the taxi with Elizabeth, Gallard looked around him at Churchville. It was an old riverfront town that had spread, mainly in the nineteenth century, and presented a variety of architectural styles in wood and brick. It had been founded in 1794, when the United States of America had sent General Anthony Wayne here to stand against the last vestiges of commercial encroachment by the French. Situated to take advantage of barge traffic, crossed, eventually, by railroads connecting with Chicago and St. Louis and the Mississippi, made an Interstate intersection by the Federal Highway Act of the 1950s, it had a population of 150,000 and an industrial capacity outstripping the gross national product of many civilized nations.

He looked over at a riverfront section that had been condemned, was partially wrecked, and was dotted with fresh signs promising office occupancy in the Indiana Life Tower Complex in the spring of next year. Gallard could remember when there had been an old drummers' hotel there, with photographs of twelve-wheeled steam engines in the bar, and cold draft beer in thick, seamed balloon glasses. There was still one block, away from the renewal area, where all the shops were in 1870 decor or its

approximation, and the gaslighted street was red brick. But it was a tourist development, ten years old, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.

"I wonder, Elizabeth—are you aware of the long-term effects of the Louisiana Purchase?" he almost said. Instead, he sat back as the dusk gathered.

They passed a strip shopping development; a grocery store, a fried chicken place, a beauty salon and a TV repair. "Genuine AWC Parts," the decal said. And if the dealer was bright enough to count, he was using them in everything that came into his shop. A Zenith ran just as well on an AWC replacement tube as it did on original equipment, and the dealer's profit was a hell of a lot higher. Gallard's lower teeth touched his upper lip.

Shortly after he had seen the first star, they reached the motel. They checked in with the usual amount of "Yes, Mr. Gallard," and promises of delivery if their baggage caught up, and after they had refreshed themselves as well as possible, they made a dinner reservation for eight o'clock and went down to the bar to wait for Mangrum.

Gallard had always considered this bar a likable fraud. Dressed in beams and siding taken from old farm buildings and refinished in plastic spray to look unfinished, it gave him a feeling of coziness which the dim cocktail candles on each table made even more appropriate. A girl with a guitar was singing quietly beside the stone fireplace, seated on a high stool and wearing a gingham dress, blond hair long and clean in the light from a baby spot as she bent her head gracefully toward the microphone.

They made their way toward a table that would let him see the parking lot entrance, and sat down. He settled himself comfortably and smiled at Elizabeth. "Shall we both have another?" he asked. She smiled back at him, her eyes almost the same color as his, now that her glasses were put away in the bag, and he winked at her.

A waitress came over, dressed in the standard short, low-cut costume, and he smiled up at her pleasant face.

"May I bring you a drink, sir?"

"Yes, thank you. You're new since my last time here, aren't you? This is Elizabeth, and I'm Clint. What's your name?"

"Patty, sir," she smiled back.

"Clint. My father's name was Sir. Well, Patty, please bring Elizabeth a Chivas on the rocks, with a splash and a twist, and I'll have a dry sherry,

straight up. You mustn't bring me any more after that, because I might embarrass Elizabeth, but there'll be another gentleman joining us shortly."

The girl's smile widened by the extent he'd been hoping for. "All right, Clint, we'll do all that. Can I bring you some cheese and crackers to get on with?"

"That would be very nice. Thank you." He watched her walk away toward the service bar, his eyes resting on the play of candlelight upon the sheer dark nylon over her thighs. He let the singer's music wash away all his thinking while he leaned back in the chair. My soldiers lie slain for the emperor's head, he mused. Huzzah for the monarch; a mass for the dead.

Patty brought them their drinks and a snack, bending low over the table to set them down, "What's that perfume?" he asked, and when she told him, with pleasure, he remarked: "It's very nice. Thank you, Patty." He pushed the snack toward Elizabeth's side of the table and sipped his drink slowly, watching people come and go, and Patty and the other waitress circulating among the tables, betiding, stooping, reaching, exchanging pleasantries with the clientele. When the singer finished her set he applauded softly. After a while, he saw Harry Mangrum come in. He smiled toward the man and raised one arm in the air.

When Gallard had been managing the old Akron plant that was now a regional parts depot, his assistant had been a man named Frank Childress who loved to organize touch-football games at the company July picnic. He would raise his hand in the air, and drop it to send his runners forward before he passed off, but he could not bring himself to touch Gallard if Gallard intercepted and ran near him. Not even if he ran at him. Gallard lowered his arm, remembering Childress sitting on the grass with his hand over his bloody mouth, still not claiming a touch.

Mangrum was a spare, short man with protruding jaw muscles and a downswept mouth. He wore bifocals and brushed his hair straight back. His clothes were tight. He came over with short quick steps. His handshake was bony.

Gallard introduced him to Elizabeth and Mangrum acknowledged her stiffly. He sat down with his hands one atop the other on the table.

"I appreciate your taking the time away from your family this evening," Gallard said to him. The man nodded. When Patty came over, he ordered a tomato juice.

"It's an important thing," Mangrum said, clipping out each syllable. "We'll have all the facts for you in the morning."

"I'm sure you will. I just wanted to get the feel of the situation tonight. Tell me—what security measures have you taken?"

Mangrum glanced uncomfortably toward Elizabeth.

"No—no, that's all right. I'm Miss Farrier's only interest in this situation. Please go ahead with the details."

Mangrum clasped his hands more tightly. "All right, if you say so. The first thing I did was identify everybody Hessenbirger had talked to. Then I got them all up to my office right away. I reminded them this thing is just as much AWCs property as anything else from our labs, and I told them the company had a right to expect confidentiality."

Gallard nodded. "Sound practice. Who is 'everybody'?"

"Four research engineers, a draftsman, and a girl file clerk. And I hadn't let Hessenbirger leave my office after he'd told me."

"And that contained the situation?"

Mangrum shook his head. "No. Not all the way. When I asked them, it turned out the girl had shown a 1973 dime to the secretarial pool she worked with. There were eight in the pool, plus the supervisor."

"And how did you solve that?"

"Delayed it, first I called the supervisor and told her to move the whole bunch into the first-floor conference room and wait for me. Then I called one of my assistants and sent him there to keep them company until I was free."

"How much do you suppose your assistant learned from the experience?"

"It can't have been very much. And he's been with me for a long time; he's learned to keep his guesses to himself until called for."

"And what else did you do to handle that offshoot?"

"When I could, I went down there and apologized for keeping them after work. I told them I'd authorize overtime pay. I sent my assistant home, and then I told the girls I'd met somebody at a Rotary luncheon who made a passing remark to me about some defense work that had gone through the labs recently. And I said I'd traced the leak back to this particular secretarial pool."

Gallard smiled. "Go on."

"I made the point that we like to operate on the basis that 'What you see here, what you hear here, let it stay here.' We like to feel all our

employees understand that I said that the trained government security investigators I'm often in contact with always made the point that it wasn't just deliberate malice or espionage they were constantly checking for—it was simple gossip. I said that gossip isn't against the law, but the results can be. And I said I felt it was time to caution this particular group."

"You said all that."

"Yes, sir. I had the conference-room microphones on. You can hear the tape tomorrow, if you'd like to."

"That won't be necessary. Go on."

"I said I wanted each of them to privately examine their consciences and see if they hadn't been looking forward to telling somebody about our demonstration coin. And I said I hoped they understood this example for what it was—a step taken by the company to teach a valuable lesson without singling out any particular individuals at this time. And I said a note was being put in each of their folders in Personnel to show they had attended this conference and had the benefit of this lesson. I pointed out that this was better than giving one single person a bad reference that would terminate them at AWC and make them unemployable anywhere else in Churchville."

Gallard said: "And how did they take to that?"

Mangrum's lips turned upward momentarily. "They got the message."

"Very intelligently done, Harry. And what did you do about the primary contacts?"

"Well, I took care of that as best I could before I fixed the secretaries. First, I got the dime back from the clerk and I got the newspaper entertainment pages from the draftsman."

"Did you tell *them* it was a hoax?"

Mangrum shook his head. "No. Hessenbirger would have contradicted me. And the engineers knew he'd come up with something that wasn't a coin die or a printing press."

"Had they seen him operate it?"

"No. He has his own area in the labs, and they stay out of it. You know what he's like. They look in once in a while, of course."

"Has anyone seen him operate it?"

Mangrum nodded. "Yes. I have. But that was later."

"I didn't mean to make you digress, Harry. Go on."

"After I got the evidence away from them, I told them all to stay ready for detail meetings with the brass. That got the four engineers to thinking the right way."

"Very good, Harry. That leaves the file clerk and the draftsman. What about them?"

"They're in single rooms at a motel. So's Hessenbirger. With another one of my assistants."

"How do they explain that to their families?"

"None of the three of them are married. The girl doesn't live at home."

"Fortunate. Well—I suppose you had your secretary take down a transcript of the meeting in your office?"

Mangrum nodded. "Yes. I enclosed a copy with my sealed report to Mr. Treville."

"How many copies are there?"

"They're all confidential."

"I understand that, Harry. Kept in locked filing cabinets and all that. How many, however?"

"One for Mr. Treville, one for the office confidential files, one copy for the legal department—they'll make a Xerox, of course, so they can divide it between their general files and the patent section—and I have a personal confidential file."

"Five, plus the Xerox."

"Four, plus."

"Your secretary will have kept a carbon, I think, clipped to the pages from her shorthand book. In case anyone ever questions her accuracy."

Mangrum frowned. "I suppose that's right. But she'll have locked that up, too. She's a mature, level-headed woman."

"And where are her files?"

"Well, I don't know—somewhere in the area near her desk."

"No matter," Gallard said easily. "There will also be Xeroxes made of Mr. Treville's copy in Chicago, I imagine."

"I'm not responsible for anything that goes on at the General Office."

"Quite so. Don't worry about it, Harry. Well, now, we have engineering

memos and Hessenbirger's working notes, too, I suppose."

"Being treated on the same basis."

"Right. And your secretary doesn't discuss office matters outside."

"She never has, or she wouldn't be working for me."

"Yes. Now, what about this overnight business? How did you persuade Hessenbirger and the others to go along with that?"

Mangrum's lips thinned momentarily. "He demanded a promise I'd file a report to the G.O. that would bring you down here. I gave it to him, and he persuaded the other two."

"That's a nice compliment to your reputation for honesty."

"I can do without his judgment."

Gallard sighed. "Look, Harry, Hessenbirger is simply incapable of responding maturely to anyone who directly supervises him. There is no way he's ever going to behave reasonably with you, but don't take it personally."

"I've understood all that from the day I was hired."

"Yes. Well—this motel where they're all staying. This would be the second night, now. Where are they? Here?"

Mangrum's head jerked. "I don't have any budget for things like this. They're at that motel near the manufacturing plant. It's clean and serviceable."

"The one near Route 30? Where the truckers get rooms for six dollars a night?"

"It's the same one I was booked into when I came to interview here."

"I didn't know that," Gallard said. He looked at Mangrum's knuckles. "What about Hessenbirger's device?"

"I locked up his area."

"Is it turned off?"

"Hessenbirger says it is. And I pulled the plug out of the power supply."

"What does his device look like?"

Mangrum grimaced. "It's about what you'd expect— a lot of breadboarding, and equipment racks patched in, and a station for the operator. That's just a three-sided box made out of pegboard. So he can hang things on it. And a lab stool to sit on. You'll see it tomorrow."

"And it uses some sort of standard power supply?"

"Two twenty volts AC, right out of the wall. I don't know how many amps it draws. I had him make the one run in it before we shut everything down. Just to make sure it wasn't some kind of charade. He was gone for about twenty minutes."

"Does the whole machine go? If it's attached to the wall?"

"No. Just he goes. And the stool. Whatever's inside the box, I suppose."

"Does that tell you anything? What I mean to say is, I'm no engineer, of course. I wonder whether you have any thoughts on what principles he's using or how his hardware works. Have you discussed it with him?"

Mangrum sat back. "No, sir, I haven't. I haven't read his notes, either, and I won't until I'm authorized to do that. I've instructed him to have a complete explanation in the morning."

"Are you impressed by what he's done?"

"I'd be a fool not to be." There was a pause. "I'll be in the history books as the bureaucrat who didn't hand him the keys to the city."

Gallard smiled sympathetically. "Take an old man's word—for every historian, there are two to refute him. Personally, I feel AWC was well justified in its selection of managers for Churchville."

Mangrum nodded stiffly. "Thank you."

"What further plans do you have for handling these people?"

"Sir, all of that is up to you. I've done every reasonable thing I could. I've got this event confined to a practicable set of dimensions, and I've notified the G.O. I didn't need Hessenbirger to tell me to do that. Now you're here. I'll devote every possible effort of Churchville Division toward carrying out your decisions and instructions. I think I've done everything anyone in my position could do, and I'm going to go on doing that. As well as carrying out all the other assignments on our schedule."

Gallard smiled at him. "Well said. All right, Harry. I'm looking forward to a comprehensive presentation in the morning. You'll be picking us up at seven-thirty? How about a real drink before you go? Well, all right— thank you again for coming. It's been very valuable."

They said goodnight and Mangrum left. Gallard shook his head. "Would you believe," he remarked to Elizabeth, "that people plan and labor to achieve that man's position?" He sipped his sherry.

"Frozen sleep," Elizabeth said.

Gallard continued to study the glass in his hand. "Yes. You've been thinking it through. Practical applications. It would be nice to be brought forward in time and find surgeons who do heart transplants that work. Quite a bit of that sort of thing comes to mind, yes, it does. But there have been no miracles in my past, and there's no reason to expect otherwise of the future." He grinned. "I wonder if Mangrum gave her another dime." He looked around him at the room.

Outposts, he thought. He remembered that in Akron the only time he ever saw the good dining rooms was when the General Office people came to town. You'd sit there taking mental notes in your expense account, looking forward to a stiff policy memo about overentertaining, wondering what the visiting brass would find wrong at the plant in the morning.

Gallard glanced at his wrist. "Let us be served," he said, and they went in to dinner. He toyed with his broiled fish. He lost interest in the lemon-dressing salad after the first few forkfuls. He remembered how he had eaten steaks here—good, hot New York cuts sizzling on platters you wouldn't dare touch—and had sat smoking a cigar and drinking Grand Marnier on the rocks, trading jokes with his staff and the Churchville management who were there to entertain them. He eyed a man at the next table piling sour cream and bacon bits bits on his baked potato. "Your filet looks very good, Elizabeth," he said politely. "They know how to treat beef here."

IV

He sat on the edge of the bed and called Lake Forest. When the houseman had gotten the phone to Daugherty, Gallard said: "I think we'll be able to manage."

"What's the situation?"

"Well, Mangrum has been clever with the people under his thumb and successful with the rest. I give him a passing grade. I believe money and footwork will do the remainder."

"Go ahead and spend the money. Tell Treville I said so." Daugherty grunted. "And supply the footwork."

"I've been taking all that as given, Elmo. I'm calling to impress upon you that they know what we're doing. There's too much paper in existence,

and too many people who'll be moved around. 1975 is sitting up there waiting for us."

There was a pause on the line. "I suppose I was hoping against it. But I know."

"So the best I can do is ensure they are we."

"Well, I hope you can attain your best."

Gallard pictured the fat man sitting on his bed with his stomach on his thighs, his shoulders round, his head collared in the folds of his neck. A pile of Daugherty, pressed upon. Early to bed—it was nine o'clock in the Central time zone; for that matter, nine o'clock pulses beat in the wrist under Gallard's 10 p.m. watch, but tomorrow morning the leverage would be the other way. "Elmo, do you see a single major commercial use for this thing?"

"I had a bunch, at first. The more I think about it, the more I cross off. You?"

"I don't know. Perhaps Hessenbirger will spark something."

"Be the least he could do."

Gallard smiled one-sidedly into the phone. "We mustn't knock him, Elmo. You and I are of interest. He ranks with Prometheus."

"Yeah, well, no wonder they staked him out for the vultures."

The conversation dragged to a close. Gallard put the phone down and smiled at Elizabeth, who had finished unpacking her bag and was sitting on the other single bed looking at him closely. "I'm all right," he said. "For a lonely old man who has to get up too early in the morning."

"I don't like you getting this tired," she said.

"Well, that comes with the territory. You can give me one of those vitamin shots in the morning. That's a nice high."

"I'm not crazy about handing those out instead of sleep."

"Sleep is the enemy, Elizabeth. Sleep is the thief in the night," he said, unbuttoning his shirt, fumbling at his cufflinks with his numb fingertips. "Good night."

"Good night, Mr. Gallard."

He turned off the light and they finished undressing in the dark, getting into their beds. He lay on his back staring up through closed lids, thinking to himself as if speaking to his wife. There had been several times when he had almost left her, because of situations not quite like this, before she

died. Wherever you are, he said to himself, you've got to be laughing like hell. If you can see me. If you care. If you cared.

He lay awake for a while longer, and then finally drifted off. Then in the morning, at six, their baggage came, with United stickers over the original Eastern tags, and there was an entire set piece with Elizabeth stepping into the next room through the connecting door, and two sets of tips for the bellboy, and clutchings of blankets around shoulders, and all that fumbling and thumping, so that he was cranky and off-stride for half an hour afterward, even though the bellboy obviously thought himself no fool and added another negligible jot to Gallard's reputation which, God knew, Gallard would have liked to spare him.

V

The Churchville Engineering and Research Division of AWC Electronics, Incorporated, was housed in a 1960-modern building of glassed curtain-walls set in a parklike five acres off U.S. 30 Bypass. The fountain at the front was lighted pink by night. In the early glare of morning, it plumed southwestward in the wind. As Mangrum silently held the car door for Gallard and Elizabeth, an airport taxi pulled up with Treville in it. They shook hands and exchanged good mornings all around. Mangrum led them inside.

"You boys have a good talk last night?" Treville asked when they had reached Mangrum's office and settled themselves.

"Very satisfactory," Gallard said, waving off a tray with cups and a Thermos jug of coffee proffered by Mangrum's secretary. She looked and dressed like the hostess at a hotel dining room. He presumed this augured for reliability. She put sugar and powdered creamer in Mangrum's cup for him, and he drank from it without wasting a premonitory sip. One might assume, Gallard decided, that there was mutual confidence between them. She looked aggressively at Elizabeth's knees. Elizabeth smiled and turned in her chair to create a somewhat more modest line of sight to her skirt hem from Mangrum. Gallard cleared his throat softly. "How do you want to do this?" Mangrum asked, looking exactly between Gallard and Treville. "I have everybody waiting for whenever you're ready."

"All in one room?"

Mangrum shook his head. "No. I have the engineers separate. And

Hessenbirger's by himself in the conference room, getting his presentation ready. One of my assistants is helping him with his charts and drawings." "Fine," Gallard said. "Leave things that way for the moment. We have some underbrush to clear out first. I'd like to see the personnel files on the other two." Mangrum handed them over from his desk, where they'd been lying ready. Gallard took them with a nod of appreciation. "By the way, do all those people have coffee?" he remarked, and the secretary left the room on Mangrum's glance. Gallard worked quickly through the two folders.

The draftsman was Knud Pogrobius, graduate of a technical academy in Sweden. He'd originally entered the U.S.A. as a member of an amateur bicycle-racing team sponsored by Huskvarna. He was in his thirties and had been with AWC three years; no previous U.S. employment. Not a citizen, so not cleared for defense contract work. He'd had the usual merit raises, no promotions, and an unvaried series of *satisfactory's* on his annual review report forms. "Laconic," Gallard remarked.

Mangrum said: "Excuse me?"

"Your drafting department supervisor seems to use few words. Do you know anything about Pogrobius?"

Mangrum shook his head.

Treville said: "You know we have a lot of draftsmen."

"I can understand that. What do you know about this man Hazen?" He looked at Mangrum.

"The drafting supervisor? Topnotch. Gets out a lot of work, gets it out clean, never makes special demands on the division."

"Strengths and weaknesses?"

"Well, those are his strengths," Mangrum said. "I guess if he's got a weakness, it's that he's a little too fussy on government projects. Nothing wasteful—he just takes longer. Sometimes he calls things back and has them redone."

"Never happens on house projects?"

Mangrum pondered. "No. Not for some time."

"How many years?"

Mangrum pursed his lips thoughtfully. "Oh, about three."

"Explanation?"

Mangrum shrugged. "I'd say it might be because he knows he does a good job. He's just a little more self-critical on contract work." He had

brought the words out slowly, and he was frowning over a new thought.

Gallard smiled at him. "Pogrobius works only on house projects. He joined us three years ago."

"I noted that from his file."

"He's making his supervisor look good."

Mangrum nodded. "I've been thinking that."

Treville said: "It's to a supervisor's credit if he can find and keep good people."

"Yes. Who hired Hazen?" he asked offhandedly.

"I did," Mangrum said.

"Well, that's to your credit," Gallard replied mildly. "All right, now, let's see about this girl." He tapped his fingertips busily against the back of the other manila folder. "Grace Chute. Grace Chute; Class of '69, Churchville South High School, diploma in Business Arts; white female American; age 19; marital status single; value to AWC, marginal. Job performance passable, absenteeism just within acceptable limits, wages commensurate with value. The purpose of this horse is to occupy the space that would otherwise be filled by another horse." He looked up at Mangrum. "What's your impression of her?"

Mangrum shrugged.

"Well, suppose your son announced their engagement?" Gallard studied the manager's face. "I see. Do you have a son?"

"I have a daughter. In college." His eyes flickered sideward to a corner of his desk, where a small leather-backed photo easel stood alone. Apparently he did not keep a picture of his wife in his office.

"I'm sure she makes you proud," Gallard said sincerely. He thought of his own one child disappeared into the maw of Haight-Ashbury and was glad again that his wife was dead. "Well, all right. I think we have a working fix on this situation." He closed both folders and laid them on Mangrum's desk.

Mangrum said: "Hessenbirger couldn't have done more damage if he'd picked them out deliberately."

"Quite so." Gallard smiled down at the floor. He scratched absently behind his right ear, then stretched out in his chair and folded his hands in his lap. "I had a friend in college who had no head for betting. It infuriated good players to be in poker games with him. It frustrated them to see him winning less money than they might have."

Treville said: "This draftsman has no handles on him. He could leave us any time and get a job with somebody else."

"Yes," Gallard agreed. "He has a skilled specialty, no particular career, no family, no responsibilities."

"And this underage girl is dynamite."

"Doesn't even know what's happening," Mangrum said. "There's no telling what she'll do."

"Ah, well," Gallard said, "she and Pogrobius have had quite some time to sit and think. They'll each have pared down to a few options. They'll be nowhere near as pliable as they might have been."

Mangrum said: "I don't see what else I could have done with them. If I'd turned them loose—"

Gallard doubted if Hessenbirger would have let that happen. But that was beside the present point. "You did exactly the right thing, Harry," he said. "Your instincts were perfect."

"I don't know about that," Treville demurred. "They're going to be pretty hard to get along with."

Gallard smiled at him kindly. Mangrum had been starting a newly relieved expression, and Treville had doused it. A salesman like Charlie ought to have weighed how many points it would cost him to assert an opinion just now. But then, Treville was under a strain. And, of course, he was a president now, and presidents run things. They don't sit back quietly in the manner of board chairmen. And it is difficult, Gallard admitted to himself, to know how to help things develop at their own pace, when there is great urgency upon one. "We do appear to be dealing from weakness," he said agreeably.

Mangrum, he noticed, was watching him closely. He appeared to be learning something. Gallard smiled again. "Now, then," he said. "We have a great many rows to hoe this morning. Let's have the girl in here." He nodded to Mangrum, who immediately picked up his desk phone and spoke into it. Gallard turned his countenance on Treville. "Charles, I assume you feel we have to make the best of a bad situation with this person. It may be very difficult for all of us."

"I don't see any other way. We've got to get things back under control."

"It's aggravating that someone with her brains in her pants might have a multibillion-dollar entity at her mercy," Gallard mused. "Can you imagine what would happen if she went to the government with this story?"

"Yeah, I've thought about it," Treville said, tight-lipped. He wiped his hand across the flesh above his mouth.

To look at him through Gallard's eyes was to share visions of plainly dressed dispassionate guerrillas riddling the entire structure; of unimpressed strangers saying Yea and Nay and What's This in Charles Treville's province. Glancing at Mangrum, Gallard could see the same thing. Well, for that matter the fear and indignation were there within him, too, or he could not have detected it in these others.

"The girl's on her way up," Mangrum said.

"Let's hope she doesn't give us too rough a time," Gallard said.

Mangrum began: "Maybe Miss Farrier should—"

Gallard shook his head. "I never know when I'm going to need Miss Farrier." He glanced at Treville. "Just concentrate on what Grace Chute could do to us, Charles," he said.

Treville put his hands on his thighs and stared at Gallard. "I don't need reminding," he said. His fingernails dragged slowly across the fabric of his trousers. Gallard saw his Adam's apple move suddenly.

"Sorry," Gallard said mildly, smiling.

VI

Mangrum's secretary brought her to the door and hesitated. "Please join us, Mrs. Buchanan," Gallard said as he rose from his chair. "Well need you to take notes of our agreement with Miss Chute." He crossed the room and held out his hand to the girl, who stood small in the doorway, looking up at him out of darting seal-colored eyes while she held her body still.

"I'm Clinton Gallard, Miss Chute," he said. "The General Office has sent me down here to do the best I can." He tentatively squeezed her cautiously offered hand. "This is Mr. Treville, the president of the company, and you know Mr. Mangrum, who heads this division. And this is Miss Farrier, who flew down here from Chicago as Mr. Treville and I did. Please make yourself comfortable." He glanced at Mangrum's secretary. "Can Mrs. Buchanan bring you another cup of coffee? Have you had breakfast? I think we can get you something from the canteen."

"That's okay," the girl said. "I'm all right." Her voice was repressed—a

thin, undirected presentation of a Midwest twang full of plangent nasals that came and went in Gallard's ears as she turned her head from side to side, counting all the faces.

She was a pale, thin-boned person without much in the chest; she wore a short-skirted dress that did not mold itself too candidly to her figure, and the deep, not-too-tight neckline showed the edges of a pale pastel bra. Her dull brown hair was streaked with touches of something that made her a parti-colored blonde. The bright color of her lips was uneven, and particles of it could be seen clinging to her small, crowded front teeth. Her eyes were heavily made up, and the whiteness of her throat and bare arms betrayed the intensity of the makeup on her small, sharp-featured face. Gallard presumed someone had gone to her place and brought back a change of clothing, and her cosmetics. He noticed that the polish on her nails was thick and fresh.

Nineteen, he thought. I know where they come from, but where do they go?

Well, for this one the process would be a little different. But not essentially so.

She sat down in the chair to which Gallard had escorted her. It was the one he'd been using, selected to make it easy to watch everyone in the room. He sat down awkwardly in the visitor's chair beside Mangrum's desk, holding his body very upright and keeping his feet pulled back. He let her watch Treville fidgeting and hear Mangrum's fingertips drumming softly on his desk, and then he said: "Well, Miss Chute, I'm sure you can understand why the company wishes that the last two days had happened a little differently."

Her eyes again reviewed all their expressions. "Sure," she said, her voice beginning to gain a little strength. "It's not the kind of thing you'd want getting out." Gallard said nothing, and she went on. "I mean, something like this. Where you can see tomorrow's paper, and all. If everybody knows about it, then it doesn't do you any good." Her hands closed tightly over the flap of her vinyl purse.

"What do you suppose would happen?" Gallard asked. "If it got out."

"Well, the government wouldn't let you buy any stock, I guess." She grinned. "Bookies wouldn't even talk to you." She glanced around.

Gallard chuckled. "I don't suppose they would." Treville was looking at her sourly. Mangrum, Gallard noted, was keeping a totally neutral expression, but watching him as much as her. "No, Mrs. Buchanan," Gallard said quickly to the secretary, "don't take this part down." The

secretary was seated on a little stepstool beside a wall of print racks. She hadn't yet touched her pencil to her book, and sent Gallard a sharp look which he overrode with: "There's no need to write down these negotiations."

"And people would follow your investments," the girl said definitely.

Treville demanded: "What do you mean by that?"

Her first smile appeared. She sat up straighter, and she looked directly into Treville's eyes. It was not something he had expected, and he blinked.

"Every time you wanted to buy a piece of property," she said, "you'd have to hide who you were, or everybody would make you pay a lot. I think that's what I'd do. And even if you didn't have to pay too much, your competition would build up right with you the minute they knew what you were doing. It would all cost you a lot more than it should. You'd be harassed all the time. It's like if somebody down where I live, in that part of town, you know, bought a Corvette. You'd be all the time listening for the burglar alarm, and you wouldn't get your pleasure from it." She looked around again, but not in search of smiles. She was sitting back a little and keeping her neck straight

"Well, now, Miss Chute," Gallard said kindly, "suppose we simply mass-produced this device and sold it to anyone. Then everyone would be even. Don't you think this company could do rather well from that position?"

She stared at him in dismay. "Oh, you wouldn't do that! You wouldn't be even—" She frowned, groping for aptness. "I mean, I thought about that part of it...."

She brightened. "Sure, you'd be even. But the whole world would be odd. I mean—I can't even *imagine* what it would be like, but money wouldn't be worth *anything*, and . . . and, gee, suppose you were a basketball team and you saw in the paper that you lost, well, you wouldn't even play, would you? What would that do? What would happen when it was time to print tomorrow's paper?" Her eyes grew very wide. "I just thought of that part," she said softly.

"Money wouldn't be worth anything," Gattard said.

"So you're not going to sell it to anybody, are you?" she asked. "No, you're not. I've been doing a lot of thinking, but so have you and there's more of you." She looked around the room. "You've got a big headache if people just know you have it."

"Even if we kept our Corvette locked in the garage and neyer drove it

anywhere," Gallard agreed. He leaned forward. "Just as soon as word got around the neighborhood."

"What are we gonna do?" the girl asked. Gallard smiled warmly.

"I mean it," the girl said. "What are we gonna do about me? Look at him—" She jerked her head, pointed chin at Treville. "If looks could kill, like they say. And Mr. Mangrum wishes I would just dry up and go away. And Mrs. Buchanan—" An expression from her small girlhood crossed her face. "—Just can't stand it because I might get Mr. Mangrum in trouble." She took a deep breath and her eyes narrowed. She gripped her purse and plunged ahead. "I was down on Lake Wauwasee one time last summer, you know? They have this Toad Tavern there that everybody takes his boat to and buys beer. And this boy I was with was taking me over there, and in the channel there's this other boat coming the other way right next to us. And you know who I saw sitting and drinking with each other on that other boat?" She stared from Mangrum to his secretary. "And I never said a word to anybody. Because it's live and let live in this world. I mean, life's too short." She looked at Treville. "So give me a little credit, somebody."

Gallard began to laugh. He shook his head, his face coloring, and had difficulty keeping himself from being overwhelmed. He raised a hand. "Grace—really, I'm not laughing *at* you, Grace—nevertheless, I'm going to make you an offer."

She was blushing and keeping her eyes away from Mangrum and his secretary. "Okay," she said softly.

"Mrs. Buchanan, please take this down. Miss Chute, you're in a unique position regarding certain technical developments at this division of AWC Electronics, Incorporated. Call it the company. Although you don't have the technical training to understand the principles and applications involved, you've demonstrated an ability to speculate on the social consequences of a device or devices stemming from these developments and all related research. Although you recognize that those devices are proprietary to the company, you have retained your right to free speculation on their theoretical effects in the marketplace. Would you allow me to describe it that way?"

"I think it makes sense."

"Thank you. Now—did you have time to do any of this kind of talking with anyone before you were asked to come up to Mr. Mangrum's office the other day?"

"Well, gee, no—I mean, Dr. Hessenbirger gave me this dime. He was laughing and joking, the way he does." She smiled. "He's nice. I mean, he

likes to come up behind you and blow in your ear, but it's just how he says 'Glad to see you,' you know? Anyway, he gave it to me and said to show it around to the other girls and see what they made of it. Just for something to break up the day. I didn't know there was any big deal about it until Mrs. Buchanan came downstairs and hustled me out of there just like that. And then of course when we were all sitting here and Mr. Mangrum began talking serious, I started keeping my ears open." She looked at Mrs. Buchanan. "Cause it's not right, hustling people."

"No." Gallard smiled. "I'm sure we all wish we hadn't been quite so excited. Since then, you haven't discussed this with anyone except Dr. Hessenbirger and Mr. Pogrobius?"

"Well, with Knud, mostly. I haven't seen much of Dr. Hessenbirger."

"Some of us," Mrs. Buchanan said distinctly, "have seen too much of him."

Gallard sighed. "And some of us are too old to have seen everything. Let us resume. Miss Chute, it appears that in keeping with your position as an AWC employee in good standing, you have not offered your speculations to anyone outside the company, or anyone within the company who did not already know about these developments. Make that 'these subject developments,' Mrs. Buchanan. Therefore, you are in effect offering us your services as a marketing applications consultant. And as a duly authorized management representative of the company, I'm prepared to offer you certain terms of employment in that capacity; clear so far, Grace?"

The girl cocked her head to one side. Gallard wondered if she had once sat that same way in her parents' parlor, listening to remonstrances with her hands stiff and her eyes searching, but her feet planted flat on the floor, and had gotten up at the end and moved out nevertheless. "I think I see what we're getting to," she said. "Go ahead."

"We're offering you a base annual salary of twelve thousand dollars," Gallard said, and paused to give her an eyeblink's time before he went on. "And a fringe benefit program of investments, plus the usual executive insurance benefits. The investment program is an incentive, to be funded on a one-for-one basis with your salary. The salary, of course, will rise on the normal executive review schedule.

"What it boils down to, Grace, is that if AWC's profits continue to rise, we can presume you've made a contribution to that. So for every dollar you draw in gross pay, a matching dollar will be invested for you, fifty cents in AWC stock and fifty cents in the same securities that appear in

AWC's own corporate holdings portfolio. In effect, our chairman and board of directors would be your investment counselors. And our Comptroller's Division will help you with your tax returns, if you'd like. It will all grow into quite a good thing, the longer it runs."

The girl considered it with private little flickers of expression. "I don't know," she said thoughtfully. "We'd never get away with it around here."

Gallard grinned at her. "Grace, if I were thirty, I'd court you. We're going to send you to San Francisco, if that's all right."

"San Francisco?"

"The microwave plant; that's kind of half manufacturing and half engineering. There's a young fellow named Bob Cadwallader running things out there. You'd be reporting directly to him. I believe he has a thirty-six-foot sailboat and drinks Olympia. Some people say it's better than Coors." He turned his expression directly into Treville's face, ignoring the suddenly dilated pupils he found there. "I wonder if that's what Elmo Daugherty meant when he admitted being over a barrel. Charles, all these arrangements are agreeable to you, aren't they? Good. Mr. Mangrum, do you concur in Miss Chute's transfer? Fine—now, Grace, what do you say?"

She grinned at him. "Mr. Gallard, how did you ever get euchred out of being president? You got me." She was breathless but she was holding on. "How's—how's fifteen thousand, and everything else matches?"

Gallard turned to Mangrum. "You see, Harry? That's what they learn in the corridors, between classes. That's to teach us to respect her. Fifteen thousand it is, Grace, and we'll pay your moving expenses."

"Okay." She was suddenly on the verge of giggling. She stood up imitating a businesslike demeanor. "Is Dr. Hessenbirger going to be in trouble? Or Knud?"

"No," Gallard said.

"We all been waiting for Dr. Hessenbirger to get let go. With all the cutting down that's been happening with the junior technicians and all."

"He won't be let go, Grace. Nor Mr. Pogrobius. Their careers are safe." He ignored Mangrum and Treville.

"Well, that's good, that's okay, then," she said. But he had seen her relinquishing that surface concern from the moment he had begun reassuring her. She was nineteen, and she had sailboats in her eyes . . . in time they, too, would be superseded.

"Mrs. Buchanan," he said, turning, "if you please, type that up right

away, with places for Mr. Treville's signature and mine as well as Miss Chute's. Copies for everybody, copy to Cadwallader, copy to Mr. Daugherty. All confidential. You and Mr. Mangrum can sign as witnesses."

Holding herself very stiffly, the secretary left the room. Then they sat working out the last details— where she would stay meanwhile, when she would leave; she would take care of what she'd say to her parents—it was not a matter of moment—and so, bit by bit, it was all taken care of. Mrs. Buchanan returned with the typed agreement; he proofread it, and they all signed. Mrs. Buchanan left for her desk beside the door. Grace put her copy carefully in her purse. "Well, goodbye," she said, and they all shook hands. She went out the door and walked away down the corridor, another historical personage.

Treville, Mangrum, and Gallard sat looking at each other. Gallard was damned if he was going to speak first; there was too much hanging in the air. Mangrum was looking down at his desktop with a crooked, thin smile. Finally, he looked up and said: "Cheap at twice the price."

Gallard shook his head. It was all right for now, and after he'd called Cadwallader and explained the situation to him, she'd be under the eye of a man with his brains about him. But she would inch it up. She was moving forward hesitantly now, but nevertheless her pace was sixty seconds per minute, and she would not be the same any longer than that permitted. The processes would take hold; the appetites would grow as the boredom set in. And the intake would determine the shape of the organism. He would not like to see her again.

Treville could understand that as well as anyone could. But that was not what made him so snappish when he said: "Mr. Gallard never works cheap."

VII

"Well, however that may be," Gallard said with a pleasant smile, "let's now go discover how Pogrobius has decided to play his stake. We'll go to him. Different strokes for different folks. Lead the way, please, Harry."

In the corridor, he took occasion to draw Mangrum aside briefly. "No sweat, Harry," he said softly. "But don't bring her with you when you move up to the General Office. Country gentlewomen discover charge accounts in the big city." He pressed lightly on Mangrum's shoulder, urging him

back into the lead, and the little group made its way into the room where the draftsman was waiting.

Pogrobius had a broad, open face and massive, nearly hairless forearms protruding from his rolled-up white sleeves. He was sitting still behind a steel table, his necktie open and his suitcoat hanging over the back of the chair. He had a scratch pad on which he'd been doodling—old-fashioned flying machines, Gallard noticed, full of wings and wires. His eyes were tigerish green above his flat cheeks, their color undimmed by his short, straw-colored lashes.

Mangrum nodded to the junior-manager type in the room. "All right, Jim," he said, "you can go get on that Matsushita proposal now," and the assistant left. Pogrobius stood up. He was the chunky, dense-bodied type, Gallard saw; there was a touch of Finn in his ancestry, and Finns are warlocks.

"Good morning," Gallard said. "I'm Clinton Gallard; you know who I am."

Pogrobius thrust out his hand. "Yes. Good morning to you." He had an abrupt way with the language. They shook hands, and Pogrobius waited again.

Gallard said: "I know what I'd want if I were you."

Pogrobius showed white, square teeth. "You have made Grace temporarily rich, correct? Would you like to try making me rich?"

Gallard shook his head.

"Will you assure me of no harm to Eduard Hessenbirger?"

"Certainly. But that's not a term."

"No, that confirms a foregone conclusion." Pogrobius repeated the quick huntsman's smile, this time adding a nod. "You know, he is a remarkable man."

Gallard said: "Yes, he is. Tell me—do we have to all sit down in this windowless compartment and negotiate, or can we reach a quick agreement and let you get back on the job?"

"Well, go ahead with your agreement."

"All right." Gallard held up his left hand and began ticking off its fingers. "First, we get a senator to sponsor a private bill making you a citizen right away. Second, an employment contract. Third, the contract is for Assistant Supervisor of Drafting, if that's what you want; something else you're qualified for if it's not."

"No, drafting is all right. I'm not educated in engineering."

"Very well. Fourth, when the bill comes through, a promotion to Supervisor. Fifth, that's contingent."

Pogrobius raised his eyebrows. His face took on a look of innocence. "Contingent on what?"

"On whether you prove to be a good assistant supervisor in Mr. Mangrum's judgment, and then as soon as he finds another honorable slot for Hazen."

"Ah. That's wise," Pogrobius said. "And you give me all this because I am the best draftsman in the division, because when you look at me it's obvious I would be a good boss."

"We're giving it to you now for obvious reasons," Gallard said. "I would also like to add my apologies as company representative; you should have had a chance at it sooner."

Pogrobius ran his tongue between his lip and his lower teeth. "It's good to be a friend of Eduard's."

"It's not bad to be a graduate of the Goteborg Technical Gymnasium," Gallard said in halting Swedish. "Or to know what it is to be a team racer." In English, he said with a wink: "Don't sell America short." He shook Pogrobius's hand again. "We have an agreement, then."

"Yes," Pogrobius said.

"Excellent. I'm pleased with myself. Harry—you'll get the contract ready today, right? Put a rider on it about the citizenship thing. It'll fit, because we're picking up the tab as a contract benefit. Another thing—Mr. Pogrobius is fully entitled to suitable greater responsibilities as they come up over the years; I'm sure he'll be expecting normal consideration on his merits. Put a note in his personnel file. If he gets shafted, I'll come back and haunt this place." He did not smile. Neither did he frown.

Mangrum nodded. "Yes, sir."

"Mr. Pogrobius, it was pleasant meeting you."

Pogrobius nodded. "The same for me. Eduard speaks well of you."

"Well, we understand each other."

"He said there would be very little bullshit after you arrived."

"That remains to be seen," Gallard said. "Good morning."

"You will straighten things out for him, next?"

Gallard turned back from the doorway. "I'm here to straighten out things for the company."

Pogrobius blanked. Then he said: "Ah, well, it may be the same thing."

They filed out. Mangrum had offered his hand to Pogrobius and the draftsman had taken it after a steady-eyed pause. In the hallway, Gallard said: "Thank you, Harry. Some people don't know when to stop managing. But you gave those two enough time to decide what their positions were going to be, and then it was easy to tip them our way. I hate moving targets."

Mangrum shrugged. "Didn't do it deliberately."

"Perhaps not. But it appears you have a useful style. Style counts. Details follow." Gallard smiled; then so did Mangrum.

They proceeded along the hallway for a while. Treville was thin-lipped. Suddenly he put on a mock-jovial air and punched Mangrum lightly on the shoulder. "Never figured you'd let somebody else shuffle one of your departments, Harry," he chuckled.

Mangrum showed puzzlement. "Mr. Gallard has the right answers," he said. "And Pogrobius deserved it. I don't mind at all."

Treville turned on Gallard. He spread his arms broadly. "What am I going to do with this man, Clint? You've conned him and he doesn't even know it." He turned back to Mangrum. His grin was white at the corners, and his eyes were slitted. "If you'd had more chances to watch him operate when *he* was president, you'd be a harder sell."

Mangrum said slowly: "I suppose that could be." He shifted his glance toward Gallard. "What's our next move, Mr. Gallard?"

Gallard's eyes crinkled. "Well, you'd probably want to get with your engineers now. They'll want to know there's going to be an important research role for them in the coming years. And then you'll want to prime up a little for Hessenbirger's presentation. I'm going to need a little time alone with him first. So why don't you and the engineers meet us in the conference room in twenty minutes."

Mangrum nodded. "Yes, sir. Excuse me, Mr. Treville, Miss Farrier." He turned and walked away.

"Charles," Gallard remarked, "people need to feel they've cooperated in events."

Treville said huskily: "What do you mean by that?"

"You're hurting yourself."

"How?"

"You see me moving Cadwallader into position. You see me shifting Mangrum toward thinking more about managing and less about who had what prerogatives, and you're fighting it. After you retire, you'll be bitter because you fought and lost. Ease off, Charles. I told you I wasn't coming back. I'll be gone soon, and you can be president again. You'll have a few years, and you can enjoy them." Gallard's eyes were steady. He held up his hand. "Please just listen for a moment.

"Charles, in a year or two, Mangrum has to move into the General Office. He'll be thinking he's being held back. And he'll be realizing he doesn't have anything to hold him here, with his daughter graduated out of his house forever. There's only one reason why men his age fall in love with their secretaries. It's the shortest step toward one last time of being able to drink and laugh aboard a pleasure craft on a soft summer night. But that palls; it's a lot of trouble to arrange, and it takes up space in the managerial capacities of the brain. He'll have come to feel that way. But you don't have to care about any of that; you'll just want him where you can keep a closer eye on him. And then Cadwallader moves here, because he's in the know and because he's the best engineering manager we have. Grace will be an enormously demanding and self-indulgent problem by then. But good management will have mitigated things as much as possible, I'm sure. Everything will be proceeding handily. And you can be the good shepherd."

Treville bit his lip. He stepped forward. But then he spared one look sideward.

Gallard smiled. "Don't consider Miss Farrier a witness. She is solely my problem."

Treville said: "I can take apart anything you can build."

Gallard shook his head. "Oh, no. Then you'd need me back to put it together again. And I won't be here. I'll be where no cool breezes can reach me."

Treville opened his mouth. Then one could see him remembering with what feelings he had called Elmo Daugherty yesterday, and, looking at him with interest, Gallard could see the doom mirrored in his eyes.

"All right," Treville said. "Now you've told me."

"I wouldn't con you, Charles," Gallard said. "I wouldn't make it that easy for you, you son of a bitch."

And now you see it plainly, Gallard thought to himself, still smiling. You

see it as a perfectly understandable case of revenge, and when they hand you the gold watch in a few years, that's the package you can carry it away in. "Come along, Elizabeth," he said. "Mr. Treville probably wants to try making a phone call before he joins us downstairs."

They walked away. After they had turned a corner, Gallard stopped beside a water fountain and rested one shoulder lightly against the wall. "My vision is going gray at the edges," he said, "and I'm getting a slight irregularity."

She put her middle finger against the inside of his wrist and reached into her bag with the other hand. He smiled down at her with a softening of his lips, and reached out to touch her hair lightly.

"Push your sleeve up," she said.

When they were done together, they took the elevator one flight down and walked to the conference room. Another of Mangrum's assistants was waiting outside the doors. Mangram had called ahead and told him Gallard was coming, so the man was not surprised. He eyed calmly along Elizabeth's body until he noticed that she was rubbing the sides of her fingertips against the wet skin of her cheekbones; then he was embarrassed.

"Would you please go and unlock Dr. Hessenbirger's laboratory," Gallard said to him. "I'll be looking in on it before the presentation." The assistant hurried away. Gallard pushed on the conference-room doors.

VIII

The conference-room bulletin boards were spotted with exhibits and pieces of yellow-legal-pad paper with red felt-tip writing. Eduard Hessenbirger, wearing a long white cotton coat open over his tweed suit, sprawled in a chair he had pulled back from one end of the long table so he could throw a leg over one of its arms. He waved negligently. "Hello, Clint." He studied Elizabeth, frowned momentarily, seemed to search his mind, shrugged, and resumed smiling.

He was a long-jawed red-haired man in his forties, with knobby fingers and prominent teeth. The top of his scalp was bare; the hair at the sides was beginning to mix with white and was worn carelessly, so that pink wisps hung over the tips of his ears. There was hardly a line on his face,

unless one stood very close to him. A pair of glasses with yellowing clear plastic frames rested on the bridge of his bony nose, their temples askew.

"Hello, Eduard," Gallard said absently, walking along the walls and studying the exhibits. "This is Miss Farrier. Elizabeth, Dr. Hessenbirger." He paused in front of a pinned-up first page of the Red Flash edition of the *Chicago Daily News* for April 8, 1975. He studied it for a long time and turned away. "God is dead," he said, "and Mickey Spillane has the position." He made his way back to where Elizabeth sat with Hessenbirger frowning at her.

"You can't see it when you're walking around in it," Hessenbirger said.

"No, I don't suppose you can," Gallard remarked as he took the chair next to Elizabeth. He glanced around the room. "Why all this stuff on the bulletin boards?"

"Ah, well, you said a presentation. So we give them the whole thing, right? The lab smock, the show-and-tell—after all, it's like a New Product Committee meeting, isn't it?" Hessenbirger's eyes sparkled. He looked at Gallard conspiratorially. "The 1971 model Telechron from AWC. So, we can't call it that, but I'm sure Marketing will come up with something snappy. Meanwhile, the bean-counters from Accounting will want to know how much, so that's all over there by the fire extinguisher; all costs to date, with overhead figured in as a separate item—and Manufacturing will want to know what sort of tooling might be involved, so that's right there above the wastebasket, because it's all nonsense, of course. By the light switches is where Legal will find references to prior art, which is a note from me saying I don't think Herbert George Wells is in a position to sue. Sales will want to know about cabinetwork, and that's the Polaroid you see over behind the slide projector stand. And then of course there is a list of all the strong sales features—I'm particularly proud of the fact that it can easily be all-transistorized and microlithic; solid-state, we can tell the poor boobs in their little tract houses. For O.E.M., I suggest the medical supply market—no psychiatrist's office should be complete without a machine that lets you see yourself as others see you; we sell the hardware, the O.E.M. customer builds the cabinet complete with couch and security blanket, choice of pink or blue, and padded restraining straps, of course—and I also think this can be sold in kit form for the do-it-yourself people. Some of the components are presently worth hundreds of hours of handwork each, and in order to understand the directions you must discard the notion that electrons are particles in motion, when they are in fact static filaments through which time is combed, but with modern space-age technology, what sort of obstacle is that?" Hessenbirger waved

his arm again, and giggled.

"What good is it?"

"Good? My friend, it takes you four years forward into the future, almost to the day. No further. Is this somehow related to the need for leap years? Good? Of what use, sir, is a newborn baby? Of course, every material application involves violations of postdated copyrights and patents, to say nothing of outright theft. But if we let it get out, perhaps all such conventions will be meaningless. We can throw out everything after Genesis and write a new set of instructions. Services—yes, perhaps it will be possible to set up service organizations which will turn a nice buck, but first I suggest we determine whether the future is as linear as the past, or whether it is multiplex, contrary to what the past appears to be. I have not run tests on what happens when you do something to contradict tomorrow's newspaper, nor am I anxious to persuade my grandson to shoot me. Good? I will underscore the obvious—the good of this device to AWC is that it has saved my job, probably gotten Knud into a better position vis-a-vis that bumbler Hazen, and made such a mess that they had to bring you back to keep this corporation the way it should be." Hessenbirger stood up and bowed. "I take full credit."

"Has it occurred to you that I might not have wanted to come back?"

Hessenbirger looked at him owl-eyed. "Well, my friend, you know you don't turn these things on and off like a water spigot. First you have it occur to you that a thing can be done, and then, late at night when you've become very bored with cutting and pasting the apparatus, you divert yourself by thinking what can be done with it. And then things proceed—one does not deny an idea. Otherwise, the brain gets constipated, right? And of course one thinks of the incredible stupidity of men like Treville and his cronies, and one does not hold back one's hand."

"No, I don't suppose one does," Gallard admitted. He smiled, and shook his head.

Hessenbirger had once again found a vacant space within him from which to pause and study Elizabeth. "I know you," he said slowly.

"No—wait—pictures. Yes. Newspaper halftones. Farrier. Let me see—you were wearing a light coat coming down some courthouse steps, so it was either spring or autumn. ..."

Elizabeth raised her eyes.

Hessenbirger snapped his fingers. "Dr. Elizabeth Farrier. The clinic. Of course. Late last year." He smiled suddenly and began moving toward her, putting out his hand. "I am delighted to meet you. Truly. It is a pleasure to

meet someone who fights the system. Goddamned barbarians. Some of us must teach them it's not all their way. They would rather fill their slums with potential voters than do something for people. The incredible stupidity of taking away a physician's license and throwing her in jail—"

"Putting me on probation," Elizabeth said.

"Whatever. When all you were trying to do was help those girls."

"I was an abortionist," Elizabeth said as she shook his hand. "That was what I was, and that's probably what I will be again someday. Pleased to meet you, Dr. Hessenbirger." She sat back down again without having smiled. Hessenbirger looked at her awkwardly.

"We don't have a great deal of time," Gallard said. "And I want to see your machine before the engineers arrive. Can we visit your laboratory for a moment, Ed?"

"Oh, sure. Come on. Let's go."

The three of them went down along the corridors leading toward the back of the building. Gallard said: "How does it work, Ed?"

"Oh, that. Well, it's rather interesting. First of all, it moves only into the future; I have no method for reaching the past, although I've thought about it some and made a few attempts. I suspect the past is linear. Putting it another way, I can't comb back against the nap. That may not be quite the same thing.

"Then, there is some sort of drag. I think there may be conservation of entropy. But it takes twenty minutes objective time to get back from the four-year limit, and from beyond four years, nothing gets back at all. I made some animal experiments and so forth. I suspect we will need some sort of amplifier to travel farther; I think what happens is that we are on a sort of teeter-totter, in which the forward trip, down the entropy gradient, puts sufficient energy into the system to allow a slower rebound to the starting point, but then returns diminish exponentially. I think things fall short— perhaps they return to the coordinates of this point in space, but at the wrong time. Of course, this thing might thus become an interstellar-traveling vehicle, but we are quite some time away from making an application of that, I think."

Gallard shook his head. "What can I say? You're a very important man."

"No more or less than I was a few years ago." Hessenbirger grinned. "Of course, I have never sold myself short."

"What's it like? How did you get the newspapers and things?"

Walking along beside Gallard, Hessenbirger shrugged. "Nothing to it. I arrive, so to speak, in the laboratory. The machine is there; I leave the lab, go to the reception area, use the pay phone to call a cab, and I go downtown to the big newsstand. I pay for everything with the perfectly legal money in my pocket, and they give me change. I take the cab back, I go to my laboratory, and I throw the switch the other way. It's exactly like any other trip, except that I have consumed twenty minutes of 1971 time, without respect to time spent in 1975. If I see somebody in the halls, I smile and nod and keep going. I am the eccentric Dr. Hessenbirger and no one speaks to me until spoken to."

"You're not waiting for yourself?"

"No, and I don't think I ever will be. In my life, I've from time to time caught unwarned glimpses of myself in what I didn't know was a mirror. And every so often my acquaintances point out people they swear look and act just like me. I'm sure it happens to everyone; the world's gene pool is large, but finite. I have never enjoyed it; have you?"

"I've been startled."

"Yes, that's one way to put it. At any rate, I intend to keep careful schedules. Of course, some time, as a very careful experiment ... perhaps I'll become curious whether two heads are better than one. But I think I'll wait until I have something very serious to discuss. Otherwise, it's just onanism, you know? Well, here we are. Wait—I'll get the light switches . . . Dr. Farrier, after you. ..."

Hessenbirger's area was a large room beyond the office and work rooms used by the engineers. It was in the usual state of clutter, with all sorts of equipment Gallard did not understand, though he had the vocabulary to give perhaps accurate names to most of it. Gallard stood in the doorway, looking at the pegboard booth, into which wires led in neatly taped bundles. Hessenbirger waved toward it.

"There it is," he said. "Ta-ra! Step this way, lady and gentleman. . . ." He walked over to the wall and pushed the three-pronged plug back into the outlet. He dusted his hands as he straightened. "Well, that's it. Greater than fire or the wheel, but perhaps not as elegant to the eye."

Gallard said: "I don't understand how the power goes into the future with you."

"Oh, it does and it doesn't. First of all, it gives me the initial surge that lets me go over the edge of the entropy gradient, so to speak. All the time I'm traveling, the system is loading with energy because I'm traveling from a universe with a higher energy level. When I arrive in 1975, the

heat-death is four years closer, after all. All the machine here has to do is maintain tuning; it draws only as much power as it needs to keep itself operating—it doesn't really do any of the work. Meanwhile, I arrive in 1975 with the contents of the booth, which include the controls. The controls are synchronized to the system; when I want to return, I have access to the accumulated energy, which of course is back here in time. It can't be in 1975, because that would change the 1975 entropy level, and it would be absurd. It doesn't matter whether the machine is powered in 1975, and as a matter of fact, it isn't. I assume there's another machine somewhere that is reaching 1979, or perhaps even farther. Even if I powered up this machine in 1975, I couldn't use it to reach another four years, because the only controls belong to 1971. There can't be anything already inside the booth when I arrive, or there would be things attempting to occupy each other's space, you see? Even so, there is some body heat, and a rather dramatic puff of wind, but nothing insupportable. These are all aspects that can be explored; there is ramification enough for a dozen careers."

"I certainly suppose so," Gallard agreed. He glanced at his watch. "I've put some things in motion," he said. "I hope Bob Cadwallader will be the manager here by 1974 at the latest. Perhaps sooner."

Hessenbirger grinned his appreciation. "Good! Very good!" He smiled and shook his head. "So I did do a good job for us, then. I thought to myself that a sly old fox like you could make something useful of all this."

Gallard smiled back. "I do the best I can, for a man who can't foretell the future."

"Would you like to go? It's ridiculously simple."

"No—no, not now. We have a meeting in five minutes. Treville is trying to get Elmo Daugherty to rescind my arrangements; I have some very difficult moments ahead of me, and I want to meet them on time."

He leaned his shoulder against the doorframe and rubbed his hand over his eyes. "Elizabeth," he said, "do you have anything in that magic bag for me?"

"You're ill!" Hessenbirger said. "I didn't know that!"

Gallard shook his head. "I'm not ill. I'm dying. Too many things have shut off in my arteries. Even with Dr. Farrier, it's just a matter of time. But I'll be all right in a moment. I function." He looked up and smiled at Hessenbirger. "I do it all in increments, you see, and somehow they add up to a day or two at a time."

Elizabeth was taking his pulse and looking searchingly into his face.

"One thing," Gallard said over her shoulder.

"What?"

"Is the machine ready? If you could go out to the 1975 reception room, and see who's listed as manager in the interoffice phone book ..."

"Yes, I can do that," Hessenbirger said.

"I'd appreciate it. I'll go to the conference room and fight a delaying action until you get there."

Hessenbirger's excitement shone through his concern. "Of course! Drama! The messenger from Marathon! It doesn't matter what you say or do, gentlemen, the accomplished fact is as follows. Zum! We got 'em right here!" He held up his hand, palm up, fingers curled. He turned toward the machine. He laughed suddenly and stripped off the ludicrous coat, tossing it aside. He busied himself in the booth.

"Mr. Gallard," Elizabeth said softly, "you're not having an episode of any sort. There's a slight acceleration of the pulse, but—"

"Hush, darling," Gallard said.

IX

Gallard and Elizabeth made their way back up the hallways, ignoring the confusion in the darkened offices. The power failure was confined to this wing of the building, and in due course they reached the lights of the conference room. Looking in through the doorway, Gallard could see the four engineers and Mangrum studying the walls. Treville was waiting in the hall.

"Where's Hessenbirger?" he asked.

"He'll be along. What did Elmo tell you, Charles?"

"He said he'd review the situation. He wants you to call him as soon as this presentation's over." Treville smiled tautly. "One thing you've done for us, Clint. By cooling out Pogrobius and that Chute girl, you've given us time to think over if we meant what you said to them. And they'll be fat, dumb, and happy meanwhile, because they got it straight from the great Gallard's mouth."

"Ah. All right—let's go in."

"How soon is Hessenbirger going to get here? Look at this crap he's got put up! What does he think this corporation is—a joke?"

"No. Neither does he consider himself fit to be taken lightly. He's no different from you or me, Charles." He smiled in a kindly manner, and pressed lightly against Treville's arm to move him into the room.

"That could be," Treville said, "but you've got him boxed in for us, and that's what counts. He made a big splash, but you scooped all the water back in the bucket for us. There's only him to deal with now; nobody's going to talk, nobody's going to rock any boats. If we tell him we're going to want things a certain way—"

"No fear, Charles," Gallard said. "The next four years will see most of your policies in full force. And after that, what do you care? You and your poor circulatory condition can retire to Arizona, and what strangers do to your company won't seem important at all." He brushed by Treville and stepped into the room. "Gentlemen," he said. "You are going to be very important to this company over the coming years. You can ignore that twaddle on the bulletin boards. Concentrate on the existing research notes and the engineering memos; and of course you can study Dr. Hessenbirger's equipment all you wish, as long as you don't disturb the arrangement of the operator's booth itself. On April 8, 1975, and then on the tenth, you will keep clear of the labs. On the tenth, at about this time, I suggest a responsible company representative be in the reception room. Perhaps he'd better be there a little ahead of time, just to be sure."

Gallard sat down. Everyone was watching him. "Tell Dr. Hessenbirger not to attempt to return to 1971. I pulled the plug. That backlashed a lot of energy into the system; he had shunts built into it, but it still blew all the fuses in the east wing. His power source is gone." Gallard looked around him at the other men, his smile ending directed at Treville. "I don't suppose it really matters if he's met in 1975 or not; he's there now, and he can't travel into the past. But it would be polite, not to say potentially useful, to be courteous to him. He'll be angry enough as it is." He closed his eyes and rubbed the bridge of his nose. "It's all done, Charles," he said. "And can't be undone. And the company has four years to think about it."

X

Elmo Daugherty's voice on the phone had to compete with the sound of

departure announcements and the shuffle of feet in the narrow concourse. Gallard leaned as far as he could into the open, three-sided booth with its symmetrically drilled metal facings. "Well, Elmo, it's just a matter of having the better brains in the company begin working out subsidiaries and spin-off companies that will go into the new markets. You've got four years to set up the new format, and in 1975 he drops right into it and it's Gung Ho for glory. You have time to set up the right kind of connections with the government, so there won't be any problems about licensing or federal regulation or anything like that; you'll have what you want, and you can give away the rest and take credit for philanthropy."

"I saw all that the minute I heard about what you did."

"Yes, well, we're all businessmen, Elmo. We can see our hands in front of our faces. All you have to do is keep Hessenbirger happy—which he will be, of course, particularly if no one crosses what he thinks is right— and let him work on it. By 1980 or so, everything we touch now will be golden. And if you hurry and make it public as much before that as you can, Grace Chute won't quite be the major stockholder yet."

"I wasn't planning to be here in 1980."

"Neither am I, Elmo. Hold on tight. Leave memos where they can be found. Address them to trustworthy heads."

A crackle interrupted the canned music from the speakers, and the Caribbean flight was called.

"Where are you, Clint?" Elmo asked quickly. "I thought you'd be coming up to see me."

"Whatever for, Elmo? You owe me one day's consultation fee. Just deposit two hundred dollars in my bank account." He hung up the phone, turned, and smiled at Elizabeth. He offered her his arm. They began to walk up the concourse. Gallard's footsteps were sure and regular. He looked up at nothing in particular, winked, and made a jerking motion of his free hand. He began to laugh. Elizabeth cast him an anxious glance. Gallard stopped capering and smiled at her, fondly. He was already, however, beginning to think of DC-3s, and then of tall white cruise ships, and of a narrow winding street of steps that led to the house where they played music on Victrolas with hand-joined, beautifully varnished boxes, nickeled cranks, and fluted horns like Morning Glories confused by the light from the great chandeliers and thus mistakenly uttering praise of a new day.