The Ultimate City

by James Graham Ballard, 1930-2009

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All winter, while he worked on the sailplane, Halloway had never been certain what drove him to build this dangerous aircraft, with its ungainly wings and humpback fuselage. Even now, as he crouched in the cockpit during the final seconds before his first flight, he was still unsure why he was perched on the steep cliffs above the Sound, waiting to be catapulted into the overlit water. The tapered wings shivered in the cold air, as if the aircraft were trying to rip open the cockpit and eject its foolhardy pilot on to the beach below.

It had taken since dawn for Halloway and his helpers—the crowd of ten-year-olds who formed an enthusiastic claque and coolie-gang—to drag the sailplane from the barn behind his grandfather's house and secure it to the catapult. By the time they reached the cliffs the other contestants in the gliding championship had been aloft for hours. From his cockpit Halloway could see a dozen of the brightly painted craft hanging above his head in the calm sky.

On the ground, by contrast, the turbulent air sweeping up the face of the cliffs seemed to have broken loose from a tornado. Exhausted by the effort of carrying the glider, the boys hung limply from the wings like a line of ballast bags. At any moment a sudden gust would sweep them all into the air together.

In front of Halloway were thirty feet of miniature railway-track and the steel cable linking the sailplane to the sandfilled trolley at the edge of the cliff which would either pull the craft apart or, with luck, catapult it into the air. Halloway signalled the boys aside, and gripped the catapult release lever in both hands. Once again he reminded himself that the Wright Brothers' first sustained flights, little more than a hundred years earlier, had also been launched by catapult.

'Thanks, everybody—now stand back!' he shouted above the wind. One of the smallest boys was still clinging absentmindedly to the port wing-tip. 'Jamie, let go, for God's sake! Take off!'

As the trolley lurched forward, dragging the sailplane after it like a startled bird, Halloway felt the sudden strength of the huge wings and knew already that the aircraft would be the most successful of all those his father had designed before his death. At the edge of the cliffs the trolley hurtled down its track. Halloway released the towing cable, and the glider rose steeply, carried upwards by a cold hand, almost falling on to its back in the rush of wind. The dunes and the beach reeled away to starboard, taking the world from him. The cheers of the spectators were lost in the shrill soughing of the slipstream.

Thirty seconds later, Halloway had climbed a turbulent staircase that carried him in a right-hand spiral to a height of a thousand feet. Abruptly everything around him had become quiet. Little more than a whisper, the wind sucked softly at the fabric of the glider. The heat from the sun stung his blond skin, but Halloway ignored the pain and trimmed the glider into a stable attitude. As always, his father's design had been without error. After the first yawing subsided he began to move the glider across the sky, almost feeling his father's presence in its powerful span. The sailplane soared like a condor in the thermals, dominating the other competitors now far below. Relaxed and happy now, Halloway sat back, ready to preside generously over his domain.

Halloway had begun to build the sailplanes two years earlier. After his parents' death he had moved to his grandfather's house, and for a long while had been reluctant to return to his old home. The charred remains of the sauna where his mother and father had died lay untouched below the derelict sail of the solar energy rig. The hundreds of occluded mirrors, fused by the intense heat of the fire, towered fifty feet above the calcinated roof tiles, an all too melancholy memorial.

One evening, while discussing the annual gliding competition, which the residents of Garden City organized in order to let a little civilized rivalry into their pastoral lives, his grandmother mentioned that Halloway's father had been a keen amateur pilot during the last days of powered aviation. On an impulse Halloway borrowed the keys to the house and wandered through the gutted rooms. Only the studio and workshop, separated from the house by an arm of the canal which irrigated his parents' market garden, had escaped the fire. The shelves were filled with relics of his father's restless mind—antique gear-boxes and carburettors, mementoes of the vanished petroleum age, and the designs for a series of

progressively more ambitious sailplanes. The half-completed skeleton of a small glider still lay on its trestles in the workshop.

Halloway pored over the blueprints for months, intrigued by his father's casual but clear calligraphy. The marginal jottings formed a running diary of the rich inner life of this endlessly inventive man, by a bitter irony killed beside his wife in his own home by the overloaded circuitry of an advanced solar device he had designed himself. Like some pastoral Leonardo, he had sat in his studio in the centre of this placid market garden. As the canals flowed between the greenhouses filled with flowers and vegetables, as the waterwheels turned and the hundreds of solar sails silently drained light from the sun, he had devised ever more complex tidal-energy pumps and solar batteries, refuse recycle units and windmills. His real passion, though, apart from his curious interest in old internal-combustion engines, was for these gliders.

All that first winter Halloway had examined the blueprints, feeling the contours of his father's mind in these graceful airframes and wing designs. Several of the aircraft featured extensive control-surfaces, strengthened fuselage-members far in excess of any wing-loading they might need, almost as if they were designed to carry some secret cargo. But Halloway began with the most basic of the gliders. Fortunately, the art and practice of carpentry had reached an advanced level in Garden City. Where an earlier generation of teenage boy learned to strip a carburettor or re-set a distributor, the young of Garden City were expert by the age of twelve in joining and flitching and dovetailing. Within a month his group of eager assistants had helped him to build his first modest sailplane, ready in time for the summer's gliding championship.

As he urged them on, however, watching them cut and stitch the fabric, plane and polish the struts and stringers, Halloway had known already that the competition was only an excuse. He was driven by some other need, connected not so much with his father as with the metal relics, the superchargers embedded in lucite, the fuel pumps and speedometers that lay around the studio like the ornaments of a shrine dedicated to the vanished spirit of the Otto Cycle.

Long before he became a skilled pilot, Halloway had been able to outfly his rivals, as much by pure aggression as by airmanship. None of the other competitors would rise to his baiting, let alone put up a fight. Although the championships were the climax of the year's flying, the other pilots were happy to award him the prize. When he banked and dived towards the beach, chasing the faster thermals behind the dunes, the two gliders he forced aside made way for him without complaint. Their pilots, a thirty-five-year-old architect whom Halloway was always beating at tennis, and an elderly hydrographer with a red beard, had both visited the workshop to watch the construction of this huge glider, and warned him of the impossibility of launching such a craft.

Both had been suitably impressed by Halloway's catapult. They were clearly glad to see Halloway succeed - too glad, in fact. If they had not been so naturally lacking in deceit they might have questioned his motives for building this elaborate craft—not that he would have been able to answer them—but Halloway's blond hair and guileless blue eyes turned aside any suspicion. Eager for action at all costs, yet shy and very much the dreamer, Halloway had a natural talent for rallying people around him.

At the same time, he liked to provoke the crowd. Looking down at the spectators with their picnic hampers among the dunes, the officials gazing at the sky from their canvas chairs, Halloway imagined himself as a World War II fighter ace, diving out of the sun and raking these amiable neighbours with bursts of machine-gun fire. The whole bucolic landscape of Garden City, this elegant but toy-like world of solar sails and flower-filled gardens, the serene windmills and gently nodding reduction gear of the tidal-power machines—all these cried out for a Pearl Harbor.

Surprised by this strain of aggression in himself, Halloway checked his temper. Most of the three hundred spectators he had known since childhood, intelligent, civilized and kindly people who had done their best to care for him since his parents' death, and enjoyed being shocked by his desperado stunts.

They were all watching him now, hands shielding their eyes from the sun. The coolie-gang of small boys squatted on the catapult rails, obviously waiting for Halloway to astonish them.

A mile away, across the Sound, the steep concrete walls of an artificial island rose from the sea like the hull of a cruise liner. The island was a former naval station, a collection of rusting metal buildings around a lighthouse. Although little more than swimming distance away, Halloway had noticed that few people in Garden City were aware of the island, as if they mentally assigned it to the tower blocks of the old metropolis on the opposite shore of the Sound. The previous summer Halloway had rowed out to the island, winding through the dangerous labyrinth of tidal power pontoons and rocker arms that separated the beach from the sea. In the pump-room below the lighthouse he found the huge diesel engines that once powered the warning beacon, each the size of a steam locomotive.

But even his surprise at the enormous latent power of these metal beasts paled before his first real sight of the city. He stood on the rusting catwalk, hands gripping the rail to stop himself from diving into the cold waters of the Sound and setting off to the far shore. The vast office-blocks, many over a hundred storeys high, formed a silent congregation, more remote and yet closer to him than ever before.

Below him, as the glider climbed the thermals, the first people in the crowd were standing up among their picnic hampers, the officials waving their chequered flags at Halloway. Already they had guessed that he intended to circle the lighthouse. Halloway climbed away from them, making use of the strong updraughts that rose from the heated greenhouses, solar reflectors and rooftops, the warm canals and clay tennis-courts. Already he was looking down, not only at the naval island, but at the distant towers of the city.

When Halloway reached the naval island half an hour later the shoreline of Garden City was far behind him, the lines of solar reflectors forming strips of metallic glitter. He had meant to impress everyone by making a few circuits of the lighthouse before returning, but as he soared above the water he could feel the wind carrying him further across the Sound. At any moment it would be too late to turn back. He waited for the glider to bank to port or starboard, but the sailplane pressed on across the deep water. Already Halloway could see the canyons opening among the officeblocks of the city, an abandoned dream waiting to be re-occupied. Shadow and sunlight alternated between the buildings, as if flashing

some kind of cryptic message to him. But Halloway knew that he had made his decision, and why all winter he had been building this strange aircraft.

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Borne along by the fronts of warm air, Halloway and his glider made their transit of the Sound. The opposing shorelines had begun to converge, and little more than three miles of water separated the beach communities from the deserted quays and motor-routes of the city suburbs. Exhilarated in a way he had never known before, Halloway gripped the control stick with his knees, and stretched out his arms to seize the vivid air. He was not alone in the sky. On all sides flights of wild birds were crossing the Sound - pintails and white-fronted geese, mallard and harlequin duck. A colony of herring gulls moved below him, changing course when they passed Halloway as if guiding him through the crowded air. No longer hunted by the vegetarian inhabitants of Garden City, immense congregations of water birds thrived around the uninhabited shores of the Sound, in the mud-flats, lagoons and sloughs between the market settlements and the old metropolis.

Ahead of him, across the mercury surface of the sea, a collapsed suspension bridge lay like a drowned saurian in the gateway of the Sound. The last of the market gardens gave way to uncultivated scrubland. The canals petered out among the sandhills. Ten miles from the city, by some unwritten rule, as if they were aware that the physical spell of the metropolis might still intimidate them, the last inhabitants to leave their factories, offices and apartment houses had marked out a no-man'sland to separate themselves from their pasts. Halloway remembered his grandfather's lurid account (the old man was only too keen to be tricked into these reminiscences) of how the city, like a thousand others around the globe, had gradually come to a halt and shut itself down for ever. When the world's reserves of fossil fuels had finally been exhausted, when the last coal silos were empty and the last oil-tankers had berthed, the power-stations and railway systems, production lines and steel-works had closed for the last time and the post-technological era had begun.

By then, twenty-five years earlier, there had been few people left anyway. By some unconscious perception of their own extinction, the huge urban populations of the late twentieth century had dwindled during the previous decades. Halloway's parents had been among the last to leave, abandoning their apartment—the only one still occupied—in one of the high-rise blocks that Halloway could see now emerging from the haze beyond the ruined suspension bridge. Perhaps it was this longpostponed departure that had separated his father from the other inhabitants of Garden City. The small but determined parties of colonists—doctors, chemists, agronomists and engineers—had set out into the rural backwaters determined to build the first scientifically advanced agrarian society. Within a generation they, like countless similar communities around other major cities, had successfully built their pastoral paradise, in a shot-gun marriage of Arcadia and advanced technology. Here each home was equipped with recycling and solar-energy devices, set in its own five acres of intensely cultivated market garden, a self-supporting agricultural paradise linked to its neighbours by a network of canals and I conduits, the whole irrigated landscape heated and cooled,

powered and propelled by a technology far more sophisticated in every respect than that of the city they had abandoned, but a technology applied to the waterwheel, the tidal pump and the bicycle.

He had reached the western limits of the Sound. A thousand feet below was the broken back of the bridge. Halloway circled a large ceramics works on the southern shore, letting the hot air reflected from the roof-tiles lift him as high as possible before he made the crossing to the city. The downtown office-blocks and apartment-houses were still nearly ten miles away, but facing him across the bridge was a built-up area of dockyards, suburban department stores, car parks and motor-route intersections. Moored to the quays were line upon line of rusting freighters and oiltankers, their hulls like husks.

For the first time, as he steered the glider across the bridge, Halloway could see the cars, hundreds of the dusty vehicles lining the quaysides, parked in the empty side-streets on flattened tyres. Immense roads ran everywhere, causeways of steel and concrete that moved like some kind of serpentine sculpture through complex interchanges. Traces of these broad decks, never less than six lanes wide, were still to be found in Garden City—on an intact halfmile section behind his grandfather's house the inhabitants staged their annual bicycle rally.

Needless to say, there were no cars in Garden City. If there had been, Halloway often thought with a kind of blank bitterness, his mother and father would still be alive. Despite their severe burns, they might still have been saved by the intensive-care unit at the hospital three miles away. The fastest transport available had been the village fireappliance. This brilliantly designed land-yacht, fitted with the most efficient system of metal sails ever devised, and with an advanced magnetic suspension invented by a local electrical engineer, achieved a top speed of six miles an hour. By the time they reached the hospital, their distraught son tearing at the aluminium sails in a frenzy, the Halloways were already in deep shock and died the next day.

As he crossed the ruined bridge, losing height in the cold air over the water, Halloway counted the cars in the parking lots along the quays. Scores had been abandoned on the bridge approach-roads when their owners set out on foot. The salt air had stripped away their roofs and body panels, exposing the engines and steering gear. Halloway had seen automobile engines before, in the encyclopaedias of industrial archaeology at the village school. Once, as a boy of ten, he had entered his father's workshop and found him running an old gasolene engine. The violent but controlled noise, the juddering motion that shook the work-bench and timber walls, and the heady fumes like a black gas—an intoxicating smell at once dirty and exhilarating—had almost knocked him off his feet. What he remembered above all, before his father switched off the engine and crated it away for the last time, was the overwhelming energy of this machine, the power and excitement beyond anything else in their sophisticated Arcadia. And yet, as his father told him, this was no more than the power unit of a small lawnmower.

Not that there was any taboo against gasolene engines, nor for that matter against oil- or coal-fired steam engines. There was merely a tacit understanding that for two hundred years proto-industrial man had pillaged the earth's natural resources, and these relics were unwelcome reminders of an unhappy history. Beyond this were boredom and indifference—the inhabitants of Garden City were

aware that their technology, their advanced horticulture and their casual winning of energy from the sun, the wind and the tides, had progressed far ahead of anything the age of oil and coal had achieved, with its protein-hungry populations, its limitless pollution of air, soil and sea.

By the time it reached the opposite shore the sailplane was barely three hundred feet above the metal-strewn water. The ragged edge of the eight-lane roadway passed below Halloway, the lines of cars forming bowers of rust from which a few seaflowers flashed their blooms. Huge numbers of pigeons had taken over the silent city, and Halloway could almost believe that he had entered a vast bird-sanctuary. Thousands of starlings clustered among the seats of a deserted sports stadium. Generations of thrush and blackbird had nested on office window-sills and in the seats of open cars. Halloway had to bank sharply to avoid a pair of swans struggling to gain height above a row of dockyard cranes.

Barely clearing a warehouse roof, the glider rose again in the warm air lifting from the hot concrete of the roads and parking lots. A maze of telegraph wires straggled across the quay-side streets. Halloway flew on above the rusting customs sheds, and crossed the tidal basin of a silted-up dockyard, where a boom of freighters sat in a few feet of water. Beyond a silent railroad station, where ranks of trains stood in waist-high grass, he approached the outskirts of an urban centre, one of a dozen satellite cities on the perimeter of the metropolis. Everywhere there were stores filled with domestic appliances, furniture, clothing and kitchenware, a glut of merchandise that Halloway had never anticipated. In Garden City there were few stores—everything one needed, whether a new solar-powered kitchen stove or a high-speed bicycle, was ordered direct from the craftsman who designed and built it to one's exact needs. In Garden City everything was so well made that it lasted for ever.

Following the main arterial highway which led towards the next satellite city, Halloway crossed an area of tract housing and single-storey factories. In the open fields a local manufacturer had dumped what appeared to be a lifetime's output of washing machines. Line upon line of the white and chromium cabinets stood in the sunlight. Warm air rose from this field of metal, carrying the glider high above the concrete embankments of a cloverleaf.

Directly in front of Halloway there was a flash of light in the glassy face of a fifteen-storey office building. Out of this sunburst huge wings moved in the bright air. A powerful aircraft, with a wing-span as large as his own sailplane's, soared straight towards him. In panic, Halloway plunged the glider into a steep turn, cursing himself for entering the air-space of the city, with its empty towers guarded by aerial demons. As the glider banked across the face of the office building his opponent also turned. His long wings, built to the same plan as Halloway's, were raised in a defensive gesture. A hundred feet apart, they soared together along the curtain-walling, the pilot's white face staring at Halloway in obvious alarm.

Without warning, this timid intruder vanished as suddenly as he had appeared. Turning back, Halloway circled the streets around the office block, searching for any sign of the rival sailplane. Then, as he passed the office block with its mirror-glass curtain-wall, he realized that he had been frightened by nothing more than his own reflection.

Delighted now, Halloway soared to and fro across the face of the building, playing the fool and happy to mimic himself, wingtip little more than ten feet from the curtain-walling. He waved at his reflection, holding the control stick with his knees, proud of his skill and glad to be able to show off to himself. He rose above the building on the strong currents lifting from the metal roofs of the cars, and then plunged towards himself in a 100-m.p.h. dive, swerving away at the last moment, wingtip punching out a section of the mirror.

'Olé…!'

His shout of glee was lost in the splintering glass. On his third dive, as he plummeted downwards, he no longer cared when a gust of wind drove him laterally across the streets in a storm of cigarette packs. Out of control, the sailplane was hurled against the curtain-walling, knocking out a dozen windows. Colliding with his own image, Halloway fell with the broken machine among the cars a hundred feet below.

An hour later, Halloway left the crashed glider lying at the base of this huge rectilinear mirror and set off towards the towers of the city five miles away to the south-west.

Protected by the buckling wings, the cockpit of the glider had fallen among the vehicles parked outside the entrance to the office block. Hanging upside-down in the harness, Halloway punched out the fractured canopy, released his straps and lowered himself on to the roof of a green sedan.

Too shocked to do more than glance numbly at the face of the building which had dashed him from the air, Halloway had climbed across the splintered wings of the glider. Picking a car at random, he lay down in the rear seat. In this warm, stale air, almost unchanged for thirty years, he rested quietly, massaging his bruised chest and shoulders. The domed cabin of the car, with its softly sprung seats and antique contours, its raw metal functionalism, was a fitting womb to guard his passage from the open transits of the sky to the hard and immobile concrete now surrounding him on all sides.

Already, though, when he stepped from the car after an hour's rest, Halloway was coming to terms with the scale and character of the cityscape into which he had fallen. Display signs proliferated everywhere like some voracious metal flora, untrimmed and uncontrolled. The crudeness of the asphalt and concrete streets compared with the tiled and flower-decked pathways of Garden City, the elemental technology of power cables and ventilation shafts, had all the anarchic strength of a proto-industrial society, closer to the massive cantilever bridges and steam engines of the great Victorians than to Halloway's image of the Twentieth Century.

A mile to the north-east a line of rusting cranes marked the shoreline of the Sound. If he walked through the sidestreets he could reach the ruined suspension bridge in less than an hour, cross the channel by swimming from one section to the next, and be home by evening.

Without thinking, Halloway turned his back on the shore, on the cranes and rusting freighters. For all their apparent menace, the cluster of skyscrapers offered more security to him than the pastoral world of Garden City with its kindly farmers and engineers. Somewhere among those tall buildings—on the topmost floor, he was certain—was the apartment in which his mother and father had lived. As for any worries that his grandparents might have for his safety, Halloway

was sure that they, like the crowds on the beach, knew only too well where he had gone.

Halloway climbed over the broken-backed fuselage of the glider. He stared at the wreckage, thinking of the months he had spent building the craft. Lying here at the foot of this mirror it reminded him of the body of his father stretched out below the solar reflector in the burnt-out ruins of his house.

'Come on! Forget it, Halloway!' With a whoop, Halloway leapt over the tailpiane and set off along the street. Shouting to himself, he ran in and out of the cars, pounding on the roofs with his fists. He was going home.

For the next two hours, as the sun drifted across the Sound, Halloway pressed on down the long avenues that carried him, block after block, into the heart of the metropolis. The office-buildings and apartment-houses grew larger, but the centre of the city remained as distant as ever. But Halloway was in no hurry, far more interested in the sights around him. His first feelings of nervousness had gone. Curiosity devouring everything, he ran past the cars that sat on flattened tyres in the roadway, skipping from one side of the avenue to the other when something caught his eye. Many of the stores, bars and offices were unlocked. In a hairdressing salon—an Aladdin's cave of chromium gadgetry, mirrors, thousands of coloured bottles—he sat in the rotating chairs, and tried on a succession of wigs, grimacing at himself in the dusty mirrors. In an empty department-store he lost himself in a maze of furnished rooms, each like a stage-set, decorated in the styles of nearly half a century earlier. The synthetic curtain and carpet fabrics, with their elaborate patterns and lam threads, were totally unlike the simple hand-woven worsteds and woollens of Garden City.

Halloway wandered around these darkened tableaux, these ghosts of bedroom suites and dining-rooms. He lay back grandly on an ornate four-poster, stroking the deep pile of the bedspread. What amused him, above all, was the feel of this vanished world, a surprise more tactile than visual.

In the dim light of a men's-wear department he pulled clothes racks on to the counters, jerked open the cabinet drawers. A cornucopia of suits and shirts, shoes and hats spilled across the floor. Stripping off his woollen trousers and jerkin, like the uniform of an ignorant medieval churl, he selected a new costume—red-white-and-blue sneakers, yellow suede trousers and a fleece-lined jacket with silver-thread embroidery and leather tassels as long as his arm.

In this modest attire he swung happily along the avenue. Thousands of cars lined the streets, their flamboyant bodywork covered with moss. Wild flowers peeped from the radiator grilles. Halloway stopped at every tenth car and tried to start the engine. Sitting behind these dead controls, he remembered the car he had found buried in the dunes at Garden City. The roof and doors had rusted away, but he sat for hours behind the wheel of this drowned hulk. By contrast, the cars here had barely been touched by the weather. Under the moss and dirt the lurid paint was as bright as ever.

Halloway was disappointed that none would start. Rocking a black limousine that took his fancy in an automobile showroom, he could hear the fuel still swishing in its tank.

'Somewhere, Halloway,' he told himself aloud, 'you'll find a car that runs. I've decided you're going to arrive in style..

At dusk, as Halloway passed a park filled with wild trees, shrubs and flowers of every kind, he realized that someone was following him. The soft tap of feet, sometimes barely moving, then running obliquely behind him, sounded faintly through the dark air. Heart racing, Halloway crouched among the cars. Nothing moved across the street. He filled his lungs with air, and broke away with a burst of speed, darting in and out of the cars. He dived through the open door of an evacuation bus parked by a hotel entrance and watched from the rear seats.

Five minutes later he saw the first of his shy pursuers. Edging forward cautiously, its eyes still on the park fifty yards away, a large deer hobbled along the sidewalk, searching the dim light for Halloway. Within moments two more appeared, steering their antlers through the overhead wires that trailed across the road.

As he watched them scenting the darkness, Halloway remembered the placid creatures in the zoo at Garden City, as lacking in aggression as these deer. The Angus and Hereford cows in their enclosure, the shire horses and saddleback pigs, the lambs, chicken and farmyard geese together memorialized all the vanished species of domestic animals. At Garden City everyone was vegetarian, not out of moral or religious conviction, but simply because they knew that the provision of grazing land, and the growing of cereal crops for animal feedstuffs, was a wastefully inefficient means of obtaining protein.

When the deer had gone, returning to their forest between the apartment blocks, Halloway stepped down from the bus. Knowing that he must spend the night somewhere, he walked up the steps into the hotel. On the seventh floor he found a bedroom from which he could see both the Sound and the skyscraper towers of the city centre. On the opposite shore the solar reflectors were still faintly visible, drinking in the last glow of the sunset, beacons of a vanished world. He slept through the night, dreaming of glass aeroplanes, their wings like mirrors, that circled the dark air over his head, waiting to carry him away to some sunlit eyrie among the clouds.

The next morning, after, an early start, Halloway pressed on towards the city centre. He felt refreshed and confident again, fortified by an exotic breakfast of grapefruit juice, beans and peaches taken from the shelves of a nearby supermarket. Vaguely prudish about eating meat, he decided against opening any of the cans of pork and beef, the limitless varieties of salmon, tuna and sardine.

Bright sunlight filled the streets, picking out the vivid colours of the wild flowers growing in profusion from the cracked sidewalks. Despite these embellishments, the city's character had begun to change. Fastening his jacket across his chest, Halloway moved forward more cautiously. Above him, on all sides, were the massive structures and heavy technology of the late Twentieth Century—highway interchanges and bridge approaches, sixty-storey hotels and office-blocks. Between them, almost out of sight on the ground level, was a decaying under-stratum of bars and pintable arcades, nightclubs and clothing stores. The cheap fa□ ades and neon signs had long since collapsed into the roads. A maze of narrow side-streets ran off in all directions, but by following only the main avenues he soon lost his bearings. A wide road raised on concrete stilts carried him high into the air, and changed course in a series of giant loops. Plodding around this

curving viaduct, a cambered deck eight lanes wide, Halloway wasted nearly an hour in returning to his starting point.

It was at this time, shortly after he left the cloverleaf by an emergency staircase, that Halloway came across the first of the strange monuments he was later to find all over the city. As he stepped down from the pedestrian exit, he noticed that a nearby parking lot had been used as a municipal dump. Old tyres, industrial waste and abandoned domestic appliances lay about in a rusty moraine. Rising from its centre was a pyramid of television sets some sixty feet high, constructed with considerable care and an advanced sense of geometry. The thousand or so sets were aligned shoulder to shoulder, their screens facing outwards, the combinations of different models forming decorative patterns on the stepped sides. The whole structure, from base to apex, was invaded by wild elders, moss and firethorn, the clouds of berries forming a huge cascade.

Halloway stared up at the rows of television sets, a pyramid of dead eyes in their worm-riddled cabinets, like the eggs of some voracious reptile waiting to be born from the bland globes embedded in this matrix of rotting organic matter. Pulled apart by the elders, many of the sets revealed their internal wiring. The green and yellow circuitry, the blue capacitors and modulators, mingled with the bright berries of the firethorn, rival orders of a wayward nature merging again after millions of years of separate evolution.

Little more than half a mile away, in a plaza between two office buildings, Halloway found a second pyramid. From a distance it resembled a funeral pyre of metal scrap built from hundreds of typewriters, telex machines and duplicators taken from the offices around the plaza, a monument to the generations of clerks and typists who had worked there. A series of narrow terraces rose one above the other, the tiers of typewriters forming ingenious baroque columns. Brilliant climbing plants, lobster-clawed clematis and honeysuckle with pink and yellow flowers, entwined themselves around the metal colonnades, the vivid blooms illuminating this memorial of rust.

Halloway mounted a staircase of filing cabinets to the upper terrace of the pyramid. On all sides, in the nearby streets and on the raised pedestrian areas above the plaza, an extraordinary vegetation had taken root. Dahlias, marigolds and cosmos flourished among the cracked paving stones and in the ornamental urns outside the entrances to the office blocks. Along a three-hundred-yard section of the avenue all the cars had been cleared aside, and a field of poppies sprang from the broken asphalt. The bright, funeral flowers extended in a blood-red carpet down the line of hotels, as if waiting for a demonic visitor. Here and there an individual car had been picked out by this mysterious and profligate gardener, its windshield and windows knocked in and its cabin packed with blooms. As vivid as an explosion in a paint-shop, blue and carmine flowers and yellow-ribbed leaves crammed the open windows, mingled with tilting sunflowers and the vines that circled the roof and radiator grille.

From a side-street a quarter of a mile away came the sounds of collapsing masonry. Falling glass split the air. Halloway leapt down from the pyramid, holding to a column of typewriters as the road vibrated under his feet. The slow avalanche continued, the rumble of falling brickwork and the brittle ringing of breaking glass. Then Halloway heard the heavy beating of what he guessed was

some kind of huge engine, throbbing with the same rhythm as the motor he had watched his father running in his workshop years before. It moved away, breaking through some glass and masonry obstruction in its path. Already the first dust was billowing from the end of the street, lit by thousands of coloured petals.

Halloway climbed into a nearby car, waiting as this machine moved away. In the deserted city the noise of the assault had carried with it an unmistakable violence, as if some huge and ugly creature was venting its anger at random on the buildings around it.

'Halloway, time to go...' Already he had decided to leave the city and make his way home. Once he had crossed the river he would be safe.

When the streets were quiet again, and the cloud of petalled dust had drifted away down the avenue, Halloway set off, leaving the monument of typewriters and telex machines behind him. He ran silently through the field of poppies, as the last petals fell through the unsettled air around him.

When he reached the side-street he found the roadway littered with human figures. Masonry and broken glass, sections of store window as large as his sailplane's wings, lay among the crushed flowers. Most of the clothing stores that lined both sides of this narrow street had been attacked, their glass fronts and window displays ripped out by some giant implement.

Everywhere the plastic mannequins lay in the sunlight, limbs crushed by the tracks of the machine, polite expressions looking up from the glass and masonry.

Frightened for the first time by the sight of violence, Halloway ran towards the river, and by luck found the open span of a large road-bridge that carried him away from the city. Without pausing to look back, ears listening for any sound of the machine, he sprinted along in his coloured sneakers. Halfway across the bridge he slowed down for the first time to catch his breath. The cloud of petals was still drifting eastwards between the office blocks. Halloway searched the northern suburbs for the mirror-sheathed building into which he had crashed, regretting that he would have to leave the sailplane among these anonymous streets patrolled by this violent machine.

Angry with himself, he pulled off his fleece-lined jacket and hurled it over the balustrade. It fell into the dead water like a sad, brilliant bird. Already he looked forward to his return to Garden City, with its civilized people and sane behaviour. Thinking back, his aggressiveness at the gliding championships embarrassed him.

'...too eager for action at any cost,' he reproved himself as he strode along. 'In future check that, Halloway...'

He left the bridge and set off eastwards past the dockyards and warehouses. He had entered an area of single-storey factories and cheap housing, chemical tank-farms and electrical sub-stations. All around him, as well, were the monuments. He was crossing a plain of these memorials, pyramids of domestic appliances and car tyres, machine tools and office furniture that had been erected on any available patch of waste ground. Ignoring them, and their ambiguous flowers, Halloway pressed on. Already he could see the collapsed suspension bridge that marked the gateway to the Sound.

Shortly before noon, when the river crossing was three miles behind him, Halloway came across the airport. As he approached the perimeter fence he could see the control tower, and the tails of parked airliners as high as three-storey

buildings. The entire surface of the airport, the concrete runways and grass verges, was covered with thousands of automobiles. Variants of no more than two or three models, they stretched away in a huge metallized dream.

Curious to see the airliners, Halloway followed the perimeter fence towards the entrance. He guessed that the cars had been new models fresh from the production line, stored here by the manufacturers when the oil tap had been turned off. With luck, one of the cars might start for him.

Now that he had left the city, Halloway began to relax again. The airport was a zone that he found curiously reassuring, and in some obscure way made up for the loss of his sailplane. He visualized his father landing and taking off in one of the single-engine aircraft parked nose-to-tail on the other side of the perimeter fence.

At the airport entrance, in the centre of a traffic island, Halloway found the largest of the pyramids he had seen so far. Well over one hundred feet high, the memorial had been constructed entirely from automobile radiator grilles, a tour-de-force of ironic humour. Row upon row, the grilles rose to the apex, cunningly welded together to form staircases and internal galleries. For once, the tropical flora had barely gained a purchase on the base of the pyramid, and the still-gleaming chrome formed a brilliant lacework.

Impressed by the structure, Halloway made his way around it into the airport. Service roads led in all directions to the terminal buildings and air-freight offices. Fuel tankers and breakdown vehicles blocked the narrow lanes. Losing himself in this maze, Halloway decided to climb to the roof of a ten-storey car park whose canted floors spiralled up into the air behind the terminal buildings.

As he passed the elevators on his way to the staircase, Halloway without thinking touched the call button. To his surprise, the doors promptly responded, opening without any hesitation on well-oiled castors. The interior of the elevator was clean and well-maintained, the control panel freshly polished.

Listening to the faint drumming of an electric generator somewhere above the shaft, Halloway gathered his courage together. There was something seductive about this immaculate compartment, and already he was becoming impatient with himself for turning tail and leaving the city at the first alarm. Sooner or later he intended to come to terms with whatever creature prowled its deserted canyons, and this car park would make a good observation post.

Stepping into the elevator, he inspected the control panel and pushed a button at random.

Within less than a minute he had ridden to the seventh floor and stepped out into what he soon discovered was a museum of automobiles. At first glance the cars were indistinguishable from the thousands of vehicles he had passed that day. But as he walked through the dim light, seeing his reflection in the burnished cellulose and waxed leather, he realized that he had stumbled on to a unique private museum. The sixty or so cars on this canted deck were all exhibition pieces, sitting squarely on inflated tyres, antique coachwork lovingly restored.

'Pierce Arrow... Bugatti... Hispano-Suiza... Chevrolet Impala..

Aloud, he read out the names from the manufacturers' medallions. Many of the cars dated back well over a century to the dawn of the automobile age, huge perambulators of brass and steel with high seats and coaching lamps larger than

their diminutive engines. Others, slab-decked saloons and limousines, were as new as the models that covered the runways of the airport.

Cord. Stutz. ChryslerImperial. Halloway climbed the deck to the eighth floor. More cars, all lovingly waxed and polished, faced each other through the gloom.

The one exception was parked in the centre of the ramp, a grimy six-wheeled breakdown truck with a heavy crane mounted on its rear platform. The engine cowling was still warm. Halloway opened the driver's door; on the seat were a toolkit and a set of maps of the city marked off into various zones. Ignition keys hung from the dashboard, and from the whole compartment came the raw but potent odour of carbonized oil, gasolene and engine coolant.

Sitting behind the steering wheel, Halloway felt the controls, trying to remember something of the casual expertise with which he so easily impressed the gang of ten-year-olds who watched him demonstrate how to drive.

Suddenly the engine was alive, thundering out between the concrete decks as if trying to shake itself apart. The heavy vehicle was vibrating fiercely, and the unlatched door bumped against Halloway's elbow. A blaze of lights lit up the dashboard. Gripping the wheel cautiously, Halloway released the handbrake and let the truck roll forward down the concrete incline, pressing the accelerator as the vehicle moved along at a steady two miles an hour.

Within thirty minutes he was driving around the airport at speed, roaring along the perimeter roads and down the one exposed section of runway. Flocks of startled ducks and geese rose from the reservoirs to the east of the airport, fleeing from the noise of the careening vehicle. When he first emerged from the car park the truck had come to a halt, and it had taken Halloway some time to discover that the gear lever was in neutral. He soon learned to engage it, and set off at breakneck pace, slamming in and out of the parked cars. The heavy truck and its wildly swinging crane, steel hook lashing about, sent up a spray of rust from the cars kicked out of their way. The forward power of the vehicle, after the agile but passive motion of the sailplane, astonished Halloway. The slightest pressure of his foot on the accelerator sent the truck hurtling ahead. It was the raw energy of the machine that most impressed him, this gut-driven dynamo totally at one with the city across the river.

Carried away by his new-found determination, and confident that he could take on any opponent now, Halloway headed out of the airport. As he left the main gates he was already moving at sixty m. p. h. Too late, he released the accelerator as the road veered off to circle the traffic island with its pyramid of radiator grilles. Trying to slow down, he plunged across the grass verge, the concrete kerb almost rolling the truck on to its side. It hurtled forward, the crane's hook and heavy chains thrashing the cabin behind Halloway's head. He clung to the wheel, face hidden behind his arms, and felt himself flung across the cabin as the truck struck the lowest tier of the pyramid. It tore out a dozen radiator grilles, which hung like trophies from the dented fenders as it swerved away, ran head-on into the steel pylon of a route indicator and came to a halt on its side, cabin buried in the soft earth.

He was waking from a dream of powered flight.

He soared across a dark, windless sky. Through the rigging and fuselage struts behind his head came the steady beat of an engine. Beside him in the cockpit a

man was crouching over the controls, as if hiding himself from Halloway. When he tried to see the face of this mysterious pilot the aircraft banked steeply, throwing Halloway against the canopy. Searching for a way to escape from the aircraft, he realized that it was built of glass, and that he could see the stars through the wings and fuselage. Unable to restrain himself, he seized the man's shoulder and tried to wrest the control column from him. As they struggled together the aircraft plunged across the sky, its engine screaming.

He woke to find himself in a dimly lit cabin, lying on a bed attached to the panelled wall. Leaning over Halloway, pulling with concern at his shoulder, was a young man about five years older than himself, a tall, slimly built Negro with an expression of wary concern on his shy but intelligent face.

Rest—you've landed safely.

A line of scarlet letters, in a stylized computer typeface, glowed in Halloway's eyes, hovering in the air two feet from him.

Can you hear me? You're not flying now.

Halloway nodded weakly, gazing at the message that seemed to emerge from the man's hand. Although there were windows in the cabin the air outside was almost opaque, as if they were contained by yet another building. Twenty feet away a second ceiling tilted across the sky.

'There was an engine on the glider,' Halloway explained. He sat up, pointing to the roof of the cabin. Somewhere above him there was the steady drumming of an internal-combustion engine. 'I can hear it now…'

Lights flickered in the Negro's palm. Again the strange alphabet sorted itself into a message. His pensive eyes presided over these reassembling letters as if over the anagrams of stigmata.—There is a power generator on the roof As if to reassure Halloway, he pressed a wall switch.

When the electric light—an antique tungsten-filament glow—came on in the cabin Halloway examined his surroundings. He was lying on a bunk in a large landcruiser, one of a group drawn up together on what he guessed was the top floor of the car park. In front of him, beyond a small kitchen, was the driver's compartment, the steering wheel and instrument panel below a high windshield.

Sitting beside him, clearly relieved to see Halloway regain consciousness, was the tenant of the cruiser. The left side of his face was covered by a fretwork of notches, minute cuts clearly inflicted during his childhood. At first Halloway assumed that they were some kind of tribal insignia, but later he learned that they were the scars left by a serious automobile accident.

With his intelligent face and curiously unfocused eyes, which seemed to be fixed on some point within his mind, he reminded Halloway of a circus clown without his make-up. He sat here in his land-cruiser with the same vaguely melancholy posture of the clowns whom Halloway and his friends visited in their trailers whenever they toured Garden City. As he gazed down at Halloway with his alert but neutral expression he looked as if he had been alone too long, and was unsure how to respond to the physical presence of another human being.

He touched Halloway's shoulder, obviously convincing himself that his visitor posed no threat.

Now—are you all right?

'I'm a lot better. I guess it was your truck I crashed.'

His rescuer waved this aside. He seemed about to speak, but checked himself. In one hand, almost hidden between his slim fingers, was a pocket calculator. With surprising swiftness, he tapped out a message, which flashed up on the alphanumeric display.

Forget it. There's not exactly a shortage here.

As he gazed through the window of the cruiser Halloway had the distinct impression that this solitary young mute was a prisoner here, high above this museum of cars in the centre of the abandoned airport. His fingers fluttered across the keys of the calculator. As each sentence came up it was glanced at and quickly erased, fingers flicking away in this reverse Braille. Obviously he was used to holding long conversations with himself.

'I'm sorry about the truck,' Halloway said. Remembering the frightening violence he had witnessed that morning, he asked cautiously: 'Do you live here? What's your name?'

Olds.

'Olds? What, as in—?' Halloway laughed, despite himself, but the young Negro nodded, clearly taking no offence. Joining in the joke, he touched the scars on his scalp. Fingers flicked across the keyboard.

Yes. As in Oldsmobile. Ten years ago I renamed myself He stared at the illuminated message, his mind drifting away. An expression of regret hovered around his faint smile.

'Why not?' Halloway said encouragingly. 'I like it, it's a good name.' He looked at his watch. It was after two o'clock. He felt drawn to this solitary young Negro, but it was time to be moving on.

'Olds, I ought to be going.'

All right. But first have some food.

They left the cabin and stepped down on to the tenth floor of the car park. Four of the land-cruisers were drawn up to form a private enclosure. From the balustrade Halloway looked down at the thousands of vehicles that covered the airport.

The breakdown truck lay on its side by the pyramid of radiator grilles. He took for granted that Olds had constructed these monuments. On trestle tables beside the land-cruisers lay an extensive selection of electrical parts—dynamos and transformers, fuse-boxes and switching units. Power cables trailed across the floor, running from the generator on the roof to a barbecue in the centre of what he assumed was Olds' dining area. Rotating on the spit was the body of a small deer. The fused flesh gleamed like polished oak. Olds beckoned Halloway to a chair, and began to cut steaks from the carcass.

An hour later Halloway had finished the most intoxicating meal of his life, and made his decision to postpone any return to Garden City for as long as possible. After the pallid vegetarian cuisine of his childhood, the flavour of venison and animal fat acted on him like adrenalin. Surrounded by the bones and meat scraps, he felt like the early pioneers who had colonized this land and built its cities.

Olds had watched him eat with obvious pleasure. At intervals, as he urged him to take second and third helpings, his right hand flicked out some brief message to himself on the calculator, as if he were transcribing a commentary on a second life going on inside his head.

During their meal he told Halloway about himself, and how as a boy of five years old during the final evacuation of the city he had been knocked down by a housewife driving her Oldsmobile to the neighbourhood scrap-yard. Thus he had become the world's last traffic casualty. Fifteen years later, after a long and incomplete recovery from his brain injuries, he left the technical training centre at the commune hospital fifty miles to the north of the city and made his home among the thousands of cars parked on the runways of this abandoned airport. Here, moved by some profound compulsion, he spent his time putting together this museum of cars, perhaps in an attempt to find the missing sections of his mind. His ambition, he explained to Halloway, was to have a running model of every make of car ever manufactured.

Only then will I come to terms with my accident.

He flashed a self-deprecating smile and added: After that I can learn to fly.

Halloway nodded sympathetically, unsure whether Olds was pulling his leg. This clever, shy but self-confident man seemed to be all there as far as Halloway could tell. When they had finished the meal Halloway asked Olds to take him on a tour of the museum.

'You repaired all these yourself? It's hard to believe - in the first place, what about the fuel?'

Olds gestured casually at the sea of vehicles that stretched to the horizon on all sides of the car park.

There are five million cars in this city alone. Almost every tank still has a little gas in it.

Halloway walked down the line of cars, gazing at his reflections in the lovingly refurbished radiator, grilles, hubcaps and chromium trim. Olds led the way, pointing out a rare Mercedes 600, a Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud, a Facel Vega. He was clearly proud to show off his collection, but at the same time Halloway noticed that he seemed slightly bored by these vehicles. His eyes were forever straying to the moss-covered airliners parked by the terminal buildings.

'And you're sure they all run?' Halloway asked. He pointed to a resplendent limousine. 'What about this one Daimler Majestic?'

With remarkable speed, Olds leapt behind the wheel of the car. Within seconds its engine roared out, headlamps pulsed, momentarily blinding Halloway. The horn sounded imperiously.

'Olds, it's unbelievable!' Halloway congratulated him. 'Let's see you try another—this Pontiac Firebird.'

For the next thirty minutes the two men moved through the museum, Halloway shouting and pointing to one car after another, Olds leaping like an excited faun, an automotive Ariel, from one driver's seat to the next, switching on the ignitions and bringing the engines to life. Each car he left with its motor racing and headlamps full on. First a dozen cars came alive, then more than thirty, and finally the entire eighth and ninth decks of the car park. The roar of the engines, the exhaust swirling in the headlamp beams, the vibrating floors and balustrades, the smell of burning fuel and the noise booming out over the deserted airport, made Halloway feel that the entire city had begun to spring to life, re-starting itself under the hands of this young recluse.

Finally, out or curiosity rather than cruelty, Halloway shouted out the last name. 'One more, Olds! What about -, In the absence of the car, he pointed at random. '- Oldsmobile!'

Immediately Halloway regretted the prank. Too late, he saw the rictus on Olds' face. Sitting behind the wheel of a white Galaxie, he began to pound the controls, angry with the car when it failed to start on its own. When Halloway reached him he had slumped back and was already moving into a deep fugue, mouth agape, the blood in his face making a livid lace-work of the scars. On the seat beside him, like some hyper-excited small animal, his right hand flicked out a desperate message on the calculator.

'Olds… it doesn't matter!'

Halloway pulled open the door and tried to calm him. Bizarre messages glimmered among the headlamps as he sank into unconsciousness, the engines of a hundred cars throbbing around him in the exhaustfilled air.

Teach me to fly!

Within an hour Olds had recovered. Sitting back on a car seat beside the barbecue, he touched his face and scalp, feeling the tracery of scars as if making sure that the jigsaw was once again in place. After dragging him to the elevator and taking him back to his lair, Halloway had moved among the cars, switching off the engines one by one. When the building was silent again he leaned against the balustrade, looking out at the distant towers of the city. Despite the moss-covered airliners by the terminal buildings, Halloway noticed that he was no longer thinking of his quest for his parents' apartment. Already the elements of a far grander scheme were forming in his mind.

They sat together in the dusk, listening to the steady beat of the generator on the roof, their faces lit by the glow of the barbecue.

With the same innocent guile that he used on his grandfather, Halloway said: 'Olds, you're a genius with cars. But can you start up anything else?'

Olds nodded soberly at Halloway, not taken in by him for a moment. He inspected his slim hands, as if resigned to the talents multiplying from his fingertips.

Anything. I can make anything work.

'I believe you, Olds. We'll find my sailplane and you can put an engine and propeller on it. Then I'll teach you how to fly.'

Early the next morning Olds and Halloway set off together from the airport. Olds selected, apparently at random, another breakdown vehicle from his stable of trucks and pick-ups on the first floor of the car park. Into the rear section, where a generator was bolted to the deck, he slung a leather tool-case and reels of power cable. He had recovered from his seizure of the previous afternoon. Something about the prospect of flying had given him back his self-confidence. As they left the airport, circling the pyramid of radiator grilles, he flicked a series of questions at Halloway.

What engine size? How many horse-power?

'I can't remember,' Halloway admitted. Already he was having to pretend that he had flown a powered craft. 'Big enough to drive a propeller. The size of this truck's?'

Far too heavy. I'll find an aero-engine.

They crossed the river and headed northwards through the city. At intervals Olds would check his fuel gauge, stop the truck in the centre of the street and leap out with a siphon hose. He moved around, shaking the parked cars and listening to the swish of fuel.

Once, while Olds was sucking away at his hose, Halloway strolled across the sidewalk to a small bar. A juke-box stood in the doorway, thick dust covering the extravagant plastic front. Halloway pressed the buttons at random, and then wandered off along the street.

When he returned five minutes later Olds had disappeared. The truck stood in the roadway, the engine of the power generator ticking over smoothly. The tool-bag had gone, and cables ran from the generator across the sidewalk.

'Olds! Let's go!'

Then he heard music coming from the bar. There was a jangle of coarse sound, a rapid beat of drums and guitars, and a rock-and-roll singer's voice bellowed across the empty street.

When he reached the bar he found Olds crouched behind the juke-box, tool-kit open on the floor. Like a leather carpetbag fitted with hundreds of pockets, it seemed to contain every tool ever devised. Olds' arms were deep inside the entrails of the machine, hooking up a series of extension leads to a transformer.

When Halloway put his hands to his ears Olds switched off. He winked at Halloway.

That's only a beginning.

He was as good as his word. As they pressed on down the endless avenues lined with office-blocks, hotels and department-stores, Olds would stop the truck, seize his tool-kit and unwind his cables across the street. In rapid succession he started up three pintables in an amusement arcade, a line of washing machines in a launderette, a telex and two ticker-tapes in the ground-floor office of a commercial business, and a complete appliance range in a home equipment store. As if in rehearsal for some lunatic household, mixers whirred, fan-heaters pumped, vacuum cleaners roared, a dozen other gadgets clattered and whistled.

Watching all this, Halloway was impressed by the casual way Olds turned on these devices. They moved northwards, animating these minuscule portions of the city, leaving behind them these happy nodes of activity.

Confused by the noise and excitement, Halloway sat limply in the truck when they reached the mirror-sheathed office block into which he had crashed. The sailplane lay among the cars, its broken wings stirring in the light air. As Olds moved around it, inspecting the inverted cockpit with his gentle but shrewd eyes, Halloway half-expected him to reassemble the glider with a few waves of his screwdriver.

Olds pointed to the humpbacked cockpit, where the strengthened fuselage frame behind the pilot's seat formed a platform whose purpose Halloway had never understood.

This is a real aircraft. Designed to take an engine. But you built it to look like a glider?

'I know,' Halloway lied. 'I couldn't find the right power-plant.'

Olds' quick hands were exploring the interior of the fuselage.

Runs for control lines. A fuel-tank compartment. It's well thought out. And room for both of us.

'What?' Genuinely surprised, Halloway peered into the cockpit.

Behind the pilot's bulkhead there's space for a passenger.

As Olds pointed with the calculator, Halloway stared at what his father clearly designed to be a rear seat. Had his mother and father planned to leave him behind when they flew off? Or perhaps his father had intended to take his son with him, the two of them soaring back to the city together. Puzzled by these discoveries, he noticed Olds watching him in a shrewd but still kindly way. Did Olds really believe that Halloway had designed this powered glider himself? Was he using Halloway in exactly the same way that Halloway was trying to exploit him?

For the time being it hardly mattered. Halloway took the wheel for the return journey to the airport, after they dismantled the glider and lashed the sections to the truck. The power and noise of the engine erased all doubts. Barely controlling his excitement, he tried to hold down their speed as they raced through the streets.

'Olds! Watch this!'

They crossed a section of the roadway planted with poppies, the vivid but sinister flowers extending in front of them for three hundred yards. The bumper of the truck scythed through the flowers, and a dense cloud of petals billowed into the air, staining the sky like a miniature sunset. Halloway turned and made a second run through the poppies, almost standing at the wheel as they hurtled through the whirling petals.

As they approached the centre of the city Halloway drove around the side-streets, hunting out any other of these floral tracts planted here in the broken asphalt by some aberrant gardener. Soon millions of leaves were drifting through the coloured air. There were white streets where they found daisies, yellow avenues filled with a mist of crushed buttercups, blue boulevards which wept a rain of forget-me-nots.

Then, as they emerged from a storm of daffodil petals, Halloway nearly collided into a large industrial tractor moving along the roadway in front of him. Pulling to a halt behind its high rear assembly, he flung Olds on to the dashboard. Halloway switched off the engine, and watched this massive tracked vehicle lumbering slowly through the haze of petals. A hydraulic ram was mounted in front of the motor, fitted with an immense claw that now held a single automobile, carried in the air fifteen feet from the ground.

In the control cabin a dark-haired man in a black plastic jacket emblazoned with silver studs was operating the steering levers. His face was barely visible through the whirling petals, and he seemed unaware of the truck stalled behind him. However, when Halloway restarted his engine, intending to overtake the tractor, the driver swung his claw to the right, blocking Halloway with the swinging automobile. Looking up at the man's handsome face, with its hard mouth like a piece of gristle, Halloway was certain that it was this driver, and this terrifying machine, which had destroyed the garment store mannequins the previous day.

Halloway began to reverse the truck down the street, but Olds held his arm warningly.

Follow him. Stillman needs to be given his own way.

As Halloway moved forward, following the tractor, Olds sat back. He had switched off the calculator, and seemed to have forgotten their exhilarating race through the flowers, his mind moving elsewhere, bored by the prospect of whatever was to come.

They emerged into ai open square, set in the heart of one of the oldest sections of the city, an area of theatres, bars and cheap hotels. Rising from the centre of the square was the largest of the eccentric memorials to Twentieth-Century technology that Halloway had seen so far. At first glance it resembled a gothic cathedral, built entirely from rusting iron, glass and chromium. As they crossed the square, following the tractor, Halloway realized that this structure was built entirely from the bodies of automobiles. Stacked one upon the other, they formed a palisade of towers that rose two hundred feet into the air.

A group of heavy cranes and a buttress of scaffolding marked out the working face, overlooked by an observation platform reached by a simple elevator. Standing at the rail, and waiting for the tractor to carry its latest contribution to the memorial, was a small, pugnacious man of advanced age. Although well into his eighties, he was dressed like a physical education instructor in immaculate white sweater and well-creased trousers. Inspecting Halloway's glider with a critical eye, he picked up an electric megaphone and began to call out instructions in a high voice to the driver of the tractor.

Olds was gazing up at the monument of cars, shaking his head as if ruefully aware that he and this odd old man were in the same business. He switched on the calculator.

I'll wait for you here. You're about to meet Mr Buckmaster. Viceroy, czar, and warden of this island.

Halloway waited as the driver climbed down from his cab. Deliberately taking his time, he sauntered over to Halloway, pointing to his red, white and blue sneakers, yellow trousers and shirt covered with petals.

'The Rainbow Kid—you come down from the sky and have yourself a time…'

Although twice Halloway's age, with slicked-back hair and a pale skin that would always appear dirty, he had a lazy, youthful aura, as if a large section of his life had passed in his absence and he himself had never aged beyond his twenties. For all his sarcastic manner, he seemed watchful and ready to ingratiate himself at a moment's notice. With his self-directed aggression and stylized swagger he was a type Halloway had never known at Garden City, but which all his reading confirmed was a classic specimen of metropolitan man.

'Take the elevator,' he told Halloway. 'Mr Buckmaster has been waiting to meet you. He'll want to induct you into his workforce.'

'This monument—and the others? He built them all?'

'I built them. Buckmaster merely dreamed up the whole mad idea. Homage to the Chrysler Corporation, Datsun and General Motors. When we've finished, the spirit of Karl Benz will be laid to rest under a million driver's licences and parking tickets.'

He slammed the elevator grille in Halloway's face and punched the ascend button.

The old man in his whites was waiting for Halloway when he reached the observation platform. On a card-table lay a set of blueprints, and Halloway could see that if ever completed the structure would rise some four hundred feet into the air.

The old man beckoned Halloway to the rail. Everything about him, his quick eyes and mouth, his restless hands, was in a hurry. He talked to Halloway as if he had known him for years and was resuming a conversation interrupted only a few seconds earlier.

'It looks a mess, eh? Just a pile of automobiles, a million junkyards are full of them. What do I think I'm doing? Wait and see.' He pointed to Halloway's glider on the back of the truck, where Olds was already tearing away the torn fabric. 'Is that a glider or a power-plane? During the war I built thirty thousand fighters for the government, we were turning them out so fast the Air Force kept the war going just to get rid of them. And that was on top of a hundred airships, cargo-submarines and enough spare parts to give every man on this planet his own robot-assembly kit. Then I re-tooled and flooded the world with wristwatch TVs, compressed paper houses, a million gimmicks. Techniques of mass production raised to the nth power. Do you remember my protein synthesizer?' He glanced at Halloway, who nodded promptly. 'No, you're too young. No bigger than a suitcase, you put it under your bed at night and it ran off your sweat and body temperature. Somehow it didn't catch on, but I would have fed a starving world, lifted the population of this planet to fifty billion in comfort. I was ready to build them super-cities, the first conurbation conglomerates, the mega-metropolis larger than any individual nation-state. I designed the first collapsible city, interchangeable parts moving around on gigantic rails. Makes sense—if a theatre isn't being used by day, wheel it off and roll on an officeblock. Instead of which' here he raised his ancient hands eloquently to the empty streets—'they all just gave up and faded away. Goodbye, C20 Man, hello Arcadia, that timid world of waterwheels and solar batteries. Not that there's an unlimited future for tidal power. Every time one of those pontoons nods its head the planet slows down a little. The days are getting longer..

He turned away from the rail, and put a hard arm around Halloway's shoulder. 'Now, you've come to work for me? It's too late, I closed down my last design office ten years ago.' He steered Halloway to the elevator, nodding sagely to himself as they rode down together. 'A pity, you could have done great things with those hands. Anyway, you can work for Stillman, there's more than he can do.'

'Well...' Halloway glanced at the black-jacketed driver, standing beside the tractor with one hand on the automobile suspended in the air over his head. 'I was thinking of setting up on my own.'

'Good for you—but it's all over. There's nothing to do now but close it down. Give it a humane burial, put up a monument here and there to Twentieth-Century technology, to all those things we took for granted tyres, engines, TVs, kitchen appliances, automobiles...'

His voice wavered for the first time and then stopped, as he gazed up wistfully at his cathedral of cars. Waiting for this strange old man to start again, Halloway remembered that he had seen his combative jaw and dreamer's eyes in the architecture textbooks in his grandfather's library. Buckmaster had been the last

of the great entrepreneur-industrialists, part architect and engineer, part visionary, driven on by old-fashioned crankiness, ceaseless originality and a welldeveloped talent for seizing the headlines. Grandiose projects started all over the world and then abandoned to rivals and pupils, a succession of wives, the third of whom died in a mysterious scandal, lawsuits against any number of governments, plans for the first trans-Atlantic bridge—these were elements in a stormy career spanning nearly seventy years. Although Buckmaster was clearly living a century too late there was something about his unflagging energy and resolve that fired a response in Halloway's mind. He couldn't help contrasting Buckmaster's limitless appetite for steel, power, concrete and raw materials with the self-denying, defeatist lives of the engineers and architects at Garden City. There was even a fringe group of scientific fanatics—the so-called 'heliophiles'—whose ambition was to return energy to the sun by firing off all the old missiles with nuclear warheads, repaying the sun for its billion-year bounty.

He followed Buckmaster into the interior of the memorial, uneasily aware that this cathedral of rust might collapse at any time. At the far end of the nave the semi-circle of internal walls had been transformed into a lavish botanical garden. Terrace upon terrace of climbing plants hung from the chassis of the cars, brilliant flowers bloomed in the windows and wheel-wells. The golden bells of forsythia trailed from the windows of grand limousines a hundred feet in the air, the white mist of mile-a-minute vines hovered like steam above the radiator grilles and exhaust pipes.

Apparently unaware that this cascade of blossoms was already transforming his monument into a far more bizarre structure than he had visualized, Buckmaster began to point out various details of the construction. But Halloway was more interested in the hanging garden. A young woman was working at the flowers, taking nasturtium and petunia seedlings from a series of trays and planting them in the doors and windows. As she moved about, climbing up and down a high ladder, Halloway had difficulty in guessing her age. At Garden City the emancipated women wore simple home-woven smocks and jerkins indistinguishable from the men's. With undressed hair and devoid of make-up, their sexual roles were always explicit, desire worn casually on their sleeves.

By contrast, this young woman—his daughter Miranda, Buckmaster informed him—was dressed like the heroine of a lavishly costumed period musical. Everything about her, from her extravagant copper-tinted hair in a Pre-Raphaelite cut to her long white neck and embroidered art-nouveau gown, was calculated for concealment and effect, artifice and allure. Later, Halloway discovered that she changed her appearance every day, moving through the deserted boutiques and fashion-houses of the city, modelling herself on the vanished styles of the Twentieth Century. On one day she would appear in a cream cloche hat and Gatsby gown, on another in a lurex blouse, bobby sox and teenager's flared tartan skirt.

Buckmaster introduced Halloway to her. 'Miranda, a new recruit—Mr Halloway, an aviator from Garden City. Any more like him and I may have to think again about opening my design office.'

As the old man wandered around, nodding at the profusion of flowers, Halloway searched for something to say. In his yellow trousers and multi-coloured sneakers

he was as much in costume as Buckmaster's daughter, but he felt gauche and clumsy beside her. Although she was his own age, there was something naive, and at the same time knowing and sophisticated, about Miranda. He guessed that he was the first young man of eighteen she had met, but that she had done a great deal of thinking about the subject and for all her shyness was well prepared to deal with him on her own terms.

'We watched you driving around,' she told him matter-of-factly and without any rancour. 'Killing all those flowers in a way it must have been fun.'

'Well…' Lamely, Halloway tried to apologize. He helped her down the ladder, relieved when she was on his own level. There was something unsettling about the way she had looked down at him, surrounded by the vine-infested cars. 'I didn't realize that they were yours. I'll help you to plant them again—they'll soon grow.'

'I know.' She strolled around him, picking the petals from his shirt, as if removing spots of blood. 'Sometimes I feel like the daughter of some great magician - wherever I touch, a flower springs up.'

Halloway brushed away the last of the petals. His difficulty in talking to her stemmed partly from her ambiguity, the naively teasing sexual come-on, but more from his own inexperience. In Garden City the relations between young people were governed by the most enlightened rules, derived from the teachings of Malinowski, Margaret Mead and the anthropologists who had followed them. From the age of sixteen, in the approved Polynesian style, young people of both sexes lived together openly in the 'long house' dormitories set aside for them until they later chose their marriage partner. Halloway had opted out of this, for reasons he had never understood, so committing himself to the company of his grandparents on one side and the younger teenagers on the other. He had never regretted the decision - there was something far too amiable, far too bovine and uncritical, about the hand-holding tenants of the long house.

Now, as he watched Miranda admiring his coloured sneakers, swirling her embroidered dress around him, he was certain that he was right. That ambiguity she showed, that moody combination of challenge and allure, was exactly what the city was about.

'I saw your glider yesterday,' Miranda told him. 'Crossing the Sound. It was like part of a dream, miles away across the water. Now suddenly you're here, in your miracle shoes.'

'I dream about powered flight,' Halloway told her with some pride. 'Olds and I are rebuilding the glider. When it's ready we'll put an engine on it.'

Miranda nodded, gazing up at her hanging garden, as if waiting patiently for the jungle to return. In some way she seemed almost at odds with her father, trying to undo his work and transform it for her own purposes.

'Halloway…' She touched his arm. 'My father's very old. I want him to finish this before it's too late. Stillman's losing interest. Will you work for us for a while?'

The next day Halloway joined Stillman's one-man construction gang. He had said goodbye to Olds, who returned with the sailplane to the airport, and spent the night in one of the small hotels around the square.

Riding on the cowling of the tractor's engine, Halloway squatted in front of the driving cab as Stillman roved the city, searching for the exact models of the cars that Buckmaster had ordered. Each one they carried back to the monument, and

Halloway climbed the wall of vehicles and guided Stillman as he steered the largest of the cranes and inserted the car into its place. From the observation platform the old industrialist supervised the work from behind his blueprints. Meanwhile his daughter, dressed for the day in a 1940s business suit, with boxy shoulders and a skirt of brown pin-stripe, her hair in a frizz, moved silently among the flowers in the centre of the memorial, tending the vines and blossoms in this dark, humid arbour.

His involvement with this strange trio surprised Halloway, but he soon realized that each of them played a role in certain unfolding obsessions of his own. Of the three, Stillman with his black jacket and hoodlum style most disturbed and most stimulated him, brooding over a dark dream of the city so like Halloway's own.

As they drove back through the streets on that first day Halloway had an unsettling glimpse of Stillman's unpredictable violence. The massive tractor was clanking down a wide avenue, a yellow taxi-cab held in its claw, when they passed a department store. Halloway was sitting in front of the cab, and was nearly flung to the road as Stillman slammed back the left-hand drive lever and turned the tractor towards the sidewalk. Cars were parked nose to tail along the kerb, but Stillman drove straight into them, knocking them out of his way with powerful left and right swings of the taxi. Gripped by the claw, the battered vehicle showered glass and rust on to the road. Working the levers and throttle with hard and almost spasm-like thrusts of his arms and shoulders, Stillman drove the tractor towards the store. His jaws champed rapidly on a piece of gum, but his face was deliberately expressionless, part of a continuous stylization of gesture and movement that Halloway had never seen before and that excited and disturbed him at the same time.

A group of mannequins sat in the store window around a table, part of a mock dinner-party that had started twentyfive years earlier and never proceeded beyond the waxy hors d'oeuvres. The polite poses and prim over-elegant manners clearly pulled a hair-trigger in Stiliman's mind. As the plate glass collapsed into the sidewalk he slung aside the taxi, sending it rolling across the street, and then began to sweep the mannequins out of the window, scattering them on to the sidewalk.

As he watched the destruction of these smartly attired female figures, Halloway was thinking of Miranda and her obsessive changes of costume. Was this her way of containing Stillman, or of provoking him? Stillman stared at her with a kind of humourless irony, as if forming in his mind a series of obscene jokes about her. Only his deference to the old industrialist seemed to prevent him from assaulting Miranda.

Seizing the yellow taxi again, Stillman set off down the street, the shattered mannequins lying in their tailored rags like the well-to-do victims of a terrorist attack in a fashionable shopping centre. Halloway was shaking with excitement, barely able to keep his seat on the engine cowling. For all his fear of Stiliman, he knew that he was half-hoping that he would be violent again. He imagined the city filled with people, their lives invigorated by just this kind of callous and stylized aggression. When they passed another clothing store with a group of mannequins in the window he tapped the windshield and pointed them out to Stillman.

Later, when Buckmaster and his daughter retired to their third-floor suite in a hotel facing the monument of cars, Stillman and Halloway wandered through the dusk towards a nearby park. Stillman broke into a gunshop, and from the racks behind the counter took down a sporting rifle and shotgun. Pockets filled with cartridges, they strolled into the park, and in the evening light shot quail and a small deer. The roar of gunfire, the coarse smell of the cordite and the hard recoil against his arms and shoulders, the terrified movement of thousands of birds and animals as they fled through the forest, together filled Halloway's head with fantasies of violence.

Stillman occupied a penthouse apartment on the twentieth floor of a block facing the park.

'It's a long climb,' he warned Halloway. 'But I like to sit up there in the morning and watch dinner grazing down below.'

On the open terrace they lit a fire with pieces of furniture taken from the other apartments. Around them the walls of the city rose into the night. As he roasted the quail and turned the deer on its spit Halloway could see the flames reflected in thousands of darkened windows, as if the night were on fire. They sat together in armchairs by the embers flaring in the wind, and Stiliman talked about the city, of the period he could just remember when it had been filled with more than a million people, the streets packed with traffic and the skies with helicopters, a realm of ceaseless noise and activity, competition and crime. It was here, in fact, as a young student at the school of architecture, that Stillman had first met Buckmaster. Within six months he had killed the industrialist's third wife in a lovers' quarrel. The last murderer to be tried and convicted before the emigration from the cities began in earnest, he was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment. Eighteen years later, rotting away in an empty penitentiary, the sole prisoner looked after by one aged warder, he had been freed by Buckmaster, who took him on his own parole in a strange gesture. Now he worked for the old man, operating the heavy lifting equipment and helping him to build his monuments to a vanished age of technology. All the while he could barely contain his anger at finding the city he had longed for through so many years an empty and abandoned shell.

Halloway listened to him without speaking. When Stillman finished and lay back in his armchair, staring at the embers of the fire and the bones scattered at his feet, Halloway walked to the balustrade and looked at the dark buildings around them.

'Stillman—it isn't too late. It's all waiting for us here. We can start it up again. Olds can bring it back to life for us.'

During the next month, as he continued to work for the old industrialist on his memorials, Halloway began his selfappointed task of reanimating this huge metropolis. The cathedral of cars now reached to a height of three hundred feet, an eccentric but impressive structure of steel, glass and chrome. As it neared completion Buckmaster began to slow down, as if aware that this last monument would mark the end of his life and career.

Free during the afternoons, Halloway returned to Stillman's apartment house. Invariably he found the slim patient figure of Olds standing beside his breakdown truck. The mute's hopes of learning to fly, his dream of escape from the thousands of cars that surrounded him at the airport and the memories of his accident, had

become the central obsession of his life. On the one afternoon when Halloway could spare the time to visit the airport he found his sailplane on the roof of the car park, tethered to the sloping concrete deck like a prisoner of the sky. Olds had rebuilt the wings and fuselage, and was already preparing a fifty horse-power engine and propeller to be mounted above the cockpit.

Nodding his approval, Halloway noticed that the museum of cars was already showing signs of neglect. Dust filmed the once immaculate coachwork, leaves and tags of paper lay against the unwiped windshields. As Olds gazed at the sailplane the calculator in his hand flickered continuously.

Halloway, we'll leave soon. When I've assembled the engine.

'Of course,' Halloway reassured him. 'We're going together, I know.'

Flying lessons?

There was panic in the quivering letters.

I can't fly yet!

'Olds, naturally. You won't find it difficult—look at the way you handle machinery, you're a genius.'

But Olds was only interested in the aircraft. In the aviation section of one of the city's science museums he found a leather flying suit and helmet dating back to World War I. He took to wearing the costume, his slight figure and scarred head encased in this antique aviator's gear.

For the time being, Halloway decided to humour him. Olds was essential to his plan to restart the city, and without his electrical and mechanical skills the metropolis would remain as dead as a tomb. In return for the promise of flying lessons, Olds drove in from the airport each afternoon, equipped with his generators, cables and tool-kit.

Sceptical of Halloway's ambitious scheme, Stillman wandered through the densely forested park with his rifle, killing the birds. Meanwhile Olds fitted the apartment house with its own electricity supply. A gasolenedriven generator in the entrance hail was soon pounding away, its power supply plugged into the mains. Even this small step immediately brought the building alive. Halloway moved from one apartment to the next, flicking lights on and off, working the appliances in the kitchens. Mixers chattered, toasters and refrigerators hummed, warning lights glowed in control panels. Most of the equipment, barely used during the long period of power cuts twenty-five years earlier, was still in functioning order. Television sets came on, radios emitted a ghostly tonelessness interrupted now and then by static from the remotecontrolled switching units of the tidal pumps twenty miles away along the Sound.

However, in the tape-recorders, stereo-systems and telephone answering machines Halloway at last found the noise he needed to break the silence of the city. At first, playing through these tapes of conversations recorded by husbands and wives in the last years of the Twentieth Century, Halloway was disturbed by the anxious queries and despairing messages that described the slow collapse of an entire world. The sense of gloom and psychic entropy that came through these reminders to queue for gasolene and cooking oil were the absolute opposite of the vigour and dynamism he had expected.

But the music was different. Almost every apartment seemed to be a broadcasting station of its own. Bursting with crude confidence, the music

transformed these ghost-filled rooms into a battery of nightclubs. He moved from floor to floor, blowing the dust from records and cassettes, switching on each of the apartments in turn. Rock-and-roll, big band, jazz and pop boomed through the open windows at the silent park. Even Stiliman was impressed, looking up in surprise from the waist-high grass, shotgun raised hesitantly to the air as if thinking twice about trying to make an equal noise.

'Olds, it works!' Halloway found him resting by the generator in the lobby. 'If we can switch on this building we can switch on the whole city! Take off that flying cap and we'll start now.'

Reluctantly, Olds peeled off his helmet. He smiled ungrudgingly at Halloway, clearly admiring the energy and enthusiasm of this excited young man, but at the, same time he seemed to be estimating his degree of involvement with Halloway. Although surrounded by his tools and cables, ammeters and transformers, his mind was clearly miles away, in the cockpit of the glider on the roof of the car park. He looked bored by what he was doing, hardly the mechanic to the world whom Halloway needed.

Halloway noticed that Olds had found a second calculator. The two instruments lay side by side on the floor, the fragments of an extended private dialogue flicking to and fro under the Negro's fingers. For the first time Halloway felt impatient.

'Olds—do you want flying lessons or not? If you can't help me I'll find someone else.' Enjoying his aggressive manner, he added, 'Old Buckmaster will know someone.'

I'll help you, Halloway.

For one flying lesson.

So Olds joined Halloway in his grand design. While Halloway drove over to the airport to collect the generators stored in the basement of the car park, Olds worked away at the apartment block, repairing the elevator and airconditioning units. With almost magical ease he moved around the building, opening fuse-boxes, trailing cable from a second generator to the motors in the elevator head. When Halloway returned he found Olds serenely raising the elevator like a moody but elegant trapeze artist.

'Olds—it's unbelievable…' Halloway congratulated him, careful to add, 'Wait until you repair the jet planes at the airport.'

Olds shook his head, watching Halloway reflectively, not taken in by him for a moment.

A little too much—even for me.

'Nothing is—now, we'll help Mr Buckmaster.'

Leaving a dozen stereograms to blare their music into the empty streets, Halloway and Olds set off for the mausoleum. Buckrnaster was resting in his bedroom. Flattered by Halloway's concern, he watched with approval from his balcony as Olds manhandled a generator into the lobby and ran the cables up to his suite.

From the breakdown truck Halloway unloaded a battery of six arc-lights he had removed from the fa□ ade of the airport terminal building.

'We'll set them up around the square, sir,' Halloway explained. 'At night you'll be able to see the whole monument floodlit.'

Buckmaster strolled across the square, his sharp eyes following Halloway with some curiosity as he darted enthusiastically around the cathedral of cars, setting the arc-lights in position. Deep in the nave of the monument Miranda was at work on the terraces of her hanging garden. Dressed today in blue jeans and a hippy jacket, a child's beads around her wrists, she was placing petunias and nasturtiums among the radiator grilles thirty feet above the ground. During the previous days Halloway had been too busy to make contact with her. Besides, her fey manner unsettled him. There seemed to be something decadent about this obsessive planting of vines and flowers, an unconscious but all the more sinister attempt to bring back a lurid and over-bright nature red in tooth and claw. Halloway had begun to hate the carpets of blossoms, these creepers and climbing plants that threatened to strangle the city before he could release it. Already he was thinking of the defoliants he had noticed in a chemical supplies store.

'I'm grateful to you, Halloway,' Buckmaster told him as they walked back to the hotel. 'There's a sense of style about you that I like, all too rare these days, you belong to a vanished breed—Brunel, Eiffel, Lloyd Wright, Kaiser, Buckmaster. For once, though, don't pitch your dreams too high. What happens when the gas runs out? You're going to have a second energy crisis all your own.'

Halloway shook his head confidently. 'Sir, there are millions of cars here. The tankers at the airport—some of them are half-full of aviation fuel, enough to keep us going for a year. After that'—Halloway gestured at the air—'we'll find something else.'

His hand on Halloway's shoulder, Buckmaster listened to the sound of the generator coming to life in the lobby. He watched the arc-lights pulse briefly and then blaze out, almost over-heating the sunshine. For all the old industrialist's caution, Halloway could sense Buckmaster's excitement. Halloway was glad of this. For some reason he wanted to impress him. He was aware that the image of his father, which had propelled him towards the city, had recently begun to fade in his mind, confined to the sailplane tethered like an imprisoned bird on the roof of the car park.

Halloway pointed at the deserted streets around the square. 'There's so much that should have happened here that never did,' he explained to Buckmaster. 'I want to bring everything alive again, and give back to the city all that lost time.'

During the next weeks Halloway embarked on his grandiose scheme to re-animate the city. From the start he knew that the task of literally bringing back to life the whole of this huge metropolis was beyond the skills of even a hundred men like Olds. However, in a symbolic sense the task could be achieved on a more modest scale.

Adjoining the northern side of the square was a cluster of side-streets that formed a self-sufficient neighbourhood cut off from the fifty-storey buildings surrounding it. By chance, this enclave, little more than a block in extent, contained the whole city in miniature. There were modest hotels and theatres, bars and restaurants, even a police station and one television studio. Wandering around these narrow streets in the afternoons, Halloway noticed that the stores and offices, banks and supermarkets had been built to a smaller scale than in the rest of the city, and at a time before the zoning ordinances which would have excluded the light factories erected in back-yards, the auto-repair shops in

converted garages. On the first floors above the bars and shops were dozens of one-man businesses, minor printing works and travel agencies, tailors and TV repairers.

Sitting on a stool in an empty bar, Halloway calculated that the working population of this city-in-miniature would have been little more than 2000 in its heyday. Even now, a hundred people like himself would be able to get most of its activities going again.

Through the weeks that followed, Halloway and Olds, with grudging help from Stillman, began the task of bringing this neighbourhood back to life. Olds drove in from the airport with a yellow-hulled fuel tanker, filled with enough aviation spirit to power a hundred generators for a month. Tirelessly, he moved in and out of the inspection tunnels below the sidewalks, opening up the electricity sub-stations and feeding down fresh cable. Meanwhile Halloway cut away the tangle of overhead wires that crossed the streets in steel webs, and then he and Olds began the laborious task of re-wiring the roadways. First the street lights came on, filling these deserted thoroughfares with an eerie brilliance, then the traffic signals and pedestrian control signs. Stillman cleared away the hundreds of derelict cars that lined the streets, leaving some twenty vehicles that Olds decided he could renovate.

Supervising all this activity, Halloway drove around in a black-andwhite police car whose engine the young Negro had brought to life. Halloway had made the local police station his operational headquarters. The lavish wall-maps and communications equipment, the electric alarm signals that ran to so many of the stores and businesses, even the clandestine listening devices which the police had bugged in to many of the bars and iiotels, made the station a natural headquarters.

Often working a dozen hours a day, Halloway pressed on, too tired in the evenings to do more than fall asleep in his apartment two floors below Stillman's. Despite all their efforts, however, the chaos seemed to grow rather than diminish. Piles of garbage covered the sidewalks, dozens of generators and fuel drums blocked the doorways of the bars and supermarkets, everywhere there were sections of dismantled switchboards and circuitry.

But one afternoon, after returning from the airport with a small lathe for Olds, he knew that he had succeeded.

A hundred yards from the station he was approaching a minor street intersection when the traffic lights turned from green to red. Laughing aloud at himself for obeying this solitary signal in an empty city of ten thousand intersections, in which he was its only traffic policeman, Halloway nonetheless pulled to a halt and waited until the lights changed to green. An important principle was at stake. Later, as he sat in the cabin of Stillman's tractor, bulldozing the piles of garbage and collapsed electric signs out of the streets, Halloway reflected that he was not working for himself alone. In the three supermarkets within the reclamation zone he drained the freezer compartments, swept the aisles and re-stacked the pyramids of canned goods, like a dedicated resort hotelier preparing for an invasion army of tourists. Three taxi-cabs, each in running order, stood outside the neighbourhood's leading hotel. One by one the

streets were cleared of debris and abandoned cars, the sidewalks were free from garbage, the plate-glass shopfronts gleamed anew.

Amused but impressed by the transformation, Stillman at last decided to take part. At first, Halloway was reluctant to recruit this deviant figure. Every day Halloway heard him moving around the city, the violent explosions of breaking steel and glass as he dragged down another department-store portico and ran his tracks over the mannequins. In the evenings, as they sat together on the flood-lit terrace of the penthouse, Stillman would gaze resentfully across the roasting deer, as if annoyed that the dark dream of the city which had sustained him for so long should be brought to life in so naive a fashion by this idealistic youth. Then, one evening when Halloway was rhapsodizing about the harshness and vitality of his neat and immaculate streets, Stillman brusquely shut him up and announced that he would join the reclamation project. Clearly he had decided to inject some real life into this toy-town neighbourhood. He curtly turned down Halloway's suggestion that he take over the renovation of a store selling kitchen equipment.

'That's not my style, Halloway. I leave the domestic sciences to you. My expertise lies in other areas..

In no time Stillman had staked out two amusement arcades, several bars and a small nightclub in the basement of an office block. Once Olds had supplied electric current Stillman set to work with a will, moving at a far swifter pace than his usual surly languor had ever previously allowed. The amusement arcades were soon a blaze of garish lights. Pinball machines chattered and clanged, score numerals stuttered. In the communications room of the police station Halloway sat by the monitor screen of the traffic-control television system, watching the multicoloured lights ripple across the sidewalks.

Stiliman had stripped down the punctured neon signs above the bars and arcades. From a warehouse discovered somewhere he brought in a truckload of intact signs, massive pieces of electrographic architecture that dominated the whole of Halloway's neighbourhood. Giant letters dripped across the night sky, cascades of pink light fell mushily across the façade of his nightclub, the winged emblems of long-vanished airlines pulsed through the overloaded air, the roof-sills of bars and amusement arcades were trimmed with tubes of racing fluorescence.

Watching uneasily on his TV monitor, Halloway wondered how to put a stop to this lurid invasion. At dusk, as the surrounding city grew dark, he left the police station and cruised the streets in his squad-car, listening to the generators beating in the basements and alleyways, the tireless hearts pumping out this haemorrhage of light. He knew now why Stillman had been so dismissive of his laborious restocking of offices and supermarkets. It was only now, in this raucous light and noise, that the city was being its true self, only in this flood of cheap neon that it was really alive.

Halloway parked outside a bank he had begun to reclaim. Olds' tool-bags and equipment trolleys were by the doorway. He had been working on the electrically operated vault doors before leaving for the airport, and the piles of old banknotes lay exposed in their metal trays. Halloway looked down at the bales of notes, worthless now but a fortune thirty years earlier. In Garden City money was never used, and had given way to a sophisticated system of barter and tithes-giving that eliminated the abuses of credit, instalment-buying and taxation.

Touching the banknotes, with their subtle progression from one denomination to the next, a means of quantifying the value of everything, its promise and obligation, Halloway watched the garish lights of the neon signs in the street flicker across his hands. He was glad that Stillman had transformed this staid and well-swept thoroughfare. They needed workers for the stores and offices and production lines, and they needed visitors for the hotels and bars. They would need money, as well, to oil the engine of competition.

Halloway locked away the trays of banknotes and slipped the keys into his pocket. There were thousands of other banks in the city, but in the printing shop next to the police station Olds would over-print the notes with Halloway's frank. The thought pleased him - to have reached the point of issuing his own currency meant that success was really at hand.

He ended his evening rounds at the square. Lit by the arc-lights, Buckmaster's memorial of cars rose over three hundred feet into the air, a cathedral of rust. The vines and flowers that climbed its sides looked dead in the fierce light. Halloway was glad to see that their once vivid colours were blanched out by the powerful glare. A dozen reflections in the dark buildings around the square transformed it into a mortuary plain of illuminated tombs.

Buckmaster stood on the steps of his hotel, looking with obvious pleasure at this huge spectacle. Miranda, however, watching from a window above, stared at Halloway with equally clear hostility. That afternoon Halloway had stripped the last of the poppies and forget-me-nots from the avenues around the reclamation zone. As he crossed the square at the controls of the tractor, the bale of flowers in the metal scoop like a multicoloured haystack, Miranda followed him through the streets, catching in her white hands the loose petals that drifted in the air.

Now, on her balcony, she was dressed in a bizarre Barbarella costume of silver metal and glass, like a science-fiction witch about to take her revenge on Halloway.

Unaware of his daughter's anger, Buckmaster took Halloway's arm and pointed to a building across the square, the offices of a former newspaper. A frieze of electric letters that had once carried a continuous news strip had been repaired by Olds, a city-sized replica of the display panels of his pocket calculators. Letters began to race from right to left.

'Halloway, they ought to hand you the mayoral chain, my boy, and put your name up there, high, wide and handsome!'

But already the first message was flashing past.

OLDS! OLDS! OLDS! OLDS! OLDS!

Delighted by this, Halloway joined Buckmaster and rode the elevator with the old industrialist to the observation platform beside his cathedral. As they stepped out, however, a new message was racing across the display sign.

DANGER! FIVE MILES NORTH-EAST. INVASION PARTY COMING.

Two days later, when the rescue expedition arrived, Halloway was ready to deal with them in his own way. During that first night after Olds had given the alarm he spent the long hours until dawn in the top-floor offices of the newspaper building. Soon after sunrise he watched the landing party disembark from their sailing vessel, a threemaster whose white aluminium sails and white steel hull stood out against the dark water like chiselled bone. Using binoculars, Halloway

immediately identified the ship, a barquentine built by the Garden City administrative council.

Halloway had taken for granted that a rescue party would one day come to search for him. Presumably they had been scouring the shore along the northern coast of the Sound, and had now decided to explore the city itself, no doubt guided there by the sudden efflorescence of light each evening, this neon pleasure-drome that had come to life among the silent tower-blocks.

An hour after dawn Halloway drove north through the city in his squad-car. He left the vehicle half a mile from the landing point and walked ahead through the deserted streets. The white masts and square metal fore-sail of the barquentine rose above the buildings near the quay where she had docked. There was no rigging—remote-controlled by an in-board computer that assessed tides, course and wind-velocity, the ship was the ultimate in the technology of sail.

Halloway climbed on to the roof of an appliance store and watched the expedition party come ashore. There were ten people in the group, all members of the Garden City gliding club - Halloway recognized the architect and his twelveyear-old son, and the elderly hydrographer with the red beard. As they unloaded their bicycles and wicker hampers they reminded Halloway of a Victorian picnic party exploring a nature reserve. Had he really spent his life with these quiet, civilized and anaemic people? Amused by them, but already bored by the whole absurd business, he watched them adjust their bicycle clips and tyre pressures. Their polite and gentle manners, the timid way in which they gazed down the empty streets, had given him all the ideas he needed on how to deal with them.

As Halloway had guessed, it took the rescue party a full two days to reach the centre of the city. During the mornings they pedalled forward at a sedate pace, cautiously making their way through the abandoned cars and festoons of rusting telephone wire. There were endless pauses to consult their maps and take refreshment. They had even brought a portable recycling unit with them, and carefully reprocessed their kitchen and other wastes. By early afternoon they were already pitching their elaborate tents and laying out their complex camping equipment.

Luckily, it was almost dusk when they finally reached the central square. On the television monitor in the police station Halloway watched them dismount from their bicycles and stare with amazement at Buckmaster's towering monument. Lit by a single floodlight inside the nave the memorial rose above the darkened square, the hundreds of windows and radiator grilles shining like the facets of an immense glowing jewel.

The party edged forward tentatively, gripping their bicycle handlebars for moral support. All around them the streets were dark and silent. Then, as they all bent down to take off their trouser clips, Halloway leaned across his control console and began to throw the switches.

Later, when he looked back on this episode, Halloway relished his routing of the rescue party and only wished that he had recorded it on the traffic control videotape system. For thirty minutes total pandemonium had broken loose in the square and nearby streets. As a hundred generators roared into life, pouring electric current into the grid, arc-lights blazed around the square, freezing his

would-be rescuers in their tracks. The fa□ ades of the buildings around the square erupted into a cataract of neon. Traffic lights beckoned and signalled. From the loudspeakers which Olds had strung across the streets came a babel of sound - police sirens howling, jet aircraft taking off, trains slamming through junctions, car horns blaring, all the noises of the city in its heyday which Halloway had found in a speciality record shop.

As this visual and acoustic nightmare broke loose around the members of the rescue party, Halloway left the communications room and ran down to the street. As he climbed into his police car Stillman swerved past in his white gangster's limousine. Racing after him, Halloway switched on his siren. He reached the square and hurtled around it, cornering on two wheels in the way approved by the stunt-drivers in the fifty-year-old crime films which Stiliman had screened for him in his nightclub that afternoon.

For the next fifteen minutes, as the noise of police sirens and aircraft, machine-gun fire and express trains sounded through the streets, Halloway and Stillman put on their mock car chase, pursuing each other around the square, plunging out of narrow alleys and swerving across the sidewalks, driving the terrified members of the rescue party in front of them. Stillman, inevitably, soon went too far, knocking the bicycles out of their hands and crushing two of the complex machines against a fire hydrant. In fact, Halloway was certain that if they had not turned tail and run at least one member of the party would have been killed.

Abandoning their equipment and sharing the remaining bicycles, it took them less than six hours to reach the ship and set sail. Long after they had gone, when Halloway had switched off the recorded sounds and dimmed the neon lights, Stillman continued to drive around the square in his white limousine, jumping the lights at the traffic intersections, tirelessly wheeling the big car in and out of the alleys and side-streets, as if deranged by this dreamcome-true of the violent city.

From the communications room at the police station Halloway watched Stillman's car swerving around the square. Somehow he would have to find a means of containing Stillman before he destroyed everything they had done. Tired out by all the noise and action, Halloway reached forward to switch off the monitor, when he realized that he was no longer the only spectator of Stillman's disturbed driving.

Standing in the portico of a deserted bank, their slim figures almost hidden by the high columns, were two boys in their late teens. Despite the shiny plastic suitcases and their flamboyant shoes and jackets—presumably taken from the stores on the outskirts of the city—Halloway was certain that they had come from one of the pastoral settlements. On their Garden City faces was a childlike expectation, an innocent but clear determination to seize the life of the metropolis.

Switching on the loudspeaker system so that he could talk to them, Halloway picked up the microphone. The first of his people had arrived to take their places in his city.

It had been another successful day. On the television monitor in the police commissioner's office Halloway watched the activity in the avenue below. It was five o'clock in the afternoon, and the rush-hour traffic was beginning to build up. The sidewalks were thronged by more than a dozen pedestrians, leaving their offices and workshops on their way to the neighbourhood bars and supermarkets.

A hundred yards from the station, six cars were blocking an intersection where the lights had failed. Their horns sounded impatiently above the street noise.

Halloway spoke to the desk sergeant in the orderly room. 'Get a man over to the Seventh Avenue intersection. There's a faulty green light holding up the traffic.'

'He's already left, Mr Halloway.'

'Good—if we don't watch it now there'll be chaos in an hour or two.'

These minor breakdowns were a pleasant challenge to Halloway. Even now, as one of Stillman's young men ignored the stuttering red light and the outstretched arm of the police constable, Halloway was in no way annoyed. In a sense, these displays of aggression pleased him, confirming everything he had hoped about the reclamation scheme. The pedestrians in the street below strode along purposefully, pushing past each other with scant courtesy. There was no trace here of good humour and pastoral docility.

In an alleyway facing the station a diesel generator was pumping out dense clouds of sooty smoke. A three-man repair gang recently trained by Olds had emptied the sump oil across the sidewalk, in clear contravention of the local ordinances. But, again, Halloway made no attempt to reprimand them. If anything, he had done what he could to frustrate any efforts to bring in stricter clear-air regulations. Pollution was part of the city, a measure of its health. All the so-called ills that had beset this huge metropolis in its prime had visited themselves with flattering haste on Halloway's small enclave. Pollution, traffic congestion, inadequate municipal services, inflation and deficit public financing had all promptly reappeared.

Halloway had even been pleased when the first crime was committed. During the previous night several clothing stores had been broken into, and pilfering from the supermarkets went on continuously. Halloway had spoken to Stillman about the light-fingered behaviour of his entourage. Lounging back with his young cronies in his 1920s gangster limousine, Stillman had merely flicked the sharp lapels of his dove-grey suit and pointed out that petty crime helped to keep the economy running.

'Relax, Halloway, it's all part of the problem of urban renewal. Do I complain that some of your boys are on the take? You've got to increase turnover. You're working these poor devils so hard they haven't time to spend their pay. If they've got anything left by the end of the week, that is. This is a real high-rent area you've set up for them. Any time now you'll have a housing crisis on your hands, social problems, urban unrest. Remember, Halloway, you don't want to start a flight from the cities.'

Halloway had taken this friendly ribbing in his stride, though the rapid increase in the size of Stillman's gang had begun to make him uneasy. Clearly Stiliman relished lording it over this entourage of wide-eyed teenagers and farm-bred youths, fitting them up with their gangster suits and weapons like a corrupt stage-director playing ironic games with a chorus of young actors. At times Halloway felt that he too was part of this sardonic man's devious entertainment.

However, apart from the stealing, Stillman's continued ravaging of department store windows in the surrounding districts of the city had turned Halloway's neighbourhood into an island of light and activity in an ever-larger sea of

devastation. Halloway's plans for expansion had been effectively shelved by this deliberate vandalism, the wholesale destruction of complete city blocks.

In addition, Stillman's entourage had come into collision with Olds, and Halloway now depended more than ever on the mute. Two of Stiliman's men had tried to break into Olds' automobile plant, complaining that the models they had ordered from him had not been delivered. For several days Olds had retreated to his rooftop eyrie above the garage at the airport. Without him everything soon began to run down. Halloway drove out to pacify him, and found Olds sitting below the wing of the glider tethered to the roof, calculators flicking in his hands as he brooded to himself. His eyes were gazing at the flights of birds taking off from the reservoirs around the airport, thousands of wild geese moving westwards across the city. Uneasily, Halloway noticed that the cars in his museum were still dusty and untended. One of them, the black Duesenberg, had been savagely attacked, its windows knocked in and upholstery slashed, controls pounded out of recognition by a heavy mallet.

But for a brilliant stroke of Halloway's, Olds would long since have left. Two months beforehand, he had shown his first irritation with the throngs of youths and teenage girls who were entering the reclamation area. Many of them were idealists like Halloway, repressed by the passivity of the garden communities and eager to help re-start the city. However, an equal number were drifters and misfits, who resented taking orders from Olds and began to mimic him, flashing obscenities on the read-out panels of the pocket calculators they had taken from a business-machines store.

Searching for some way of retaining his hold over Olds, Halloway came up with the suggestion that the mute could own and manage his own automobile plant. The idea had immediately appealed to Olds. In an underground garage near the police-station he and his workforce soon constructed a crude but functioning production line, on which the dozens of cars being re-equipped and re-engined moved along a section of railway line. They entered as little more than wrecks picked up off the street by their prospective owners, and emerged at the far end of the line as fully functioning vehicles. Delighted by this, Olds had agreed to stay on in the city.

In fact, Halloway's idea worked better than he hoped. The motor-car was the chief commodity of the city, and demand for it was insatiable. Almost every one of the new inhabitants now owned three or four cars, and their chief recreation was driving around the streets of the reclamation area dressed in the latest finery. Parking problems had become acute, and a special task force under Olds was renovating the kerbside meters, an unpopular measure grudgingly accepted only because of the special status of the automobile and the important position it occupied, economically and otherwise, in people's lives.

Despite these problems, Halloway was satisfied with his achievement. In the four months since the first of the new arrivals had turned up, a genuine microcosm of the former metropolis had come into existence. The population of the city was now two hundred, girls and youths in their late teens and early twenties, emigrants from Garden City and Parkville, Laurel Heights and Heliopolis, drawn from these dozy pastoral settlements to the harsh neon glare that each evening lit up the night sky like a beacon.

By now any new immigrants—some of them, worryingly, little more than children—were rapidly inducted into urban life. On arrival they were interviewed by Halloway, issued with a list of possible jobs, either on Olds' production line, in the clothing stores and supermarkets, or in any one of a dozen reclamation gangs. The last group, who foraged through the city at large for cars, fuel, food supplies, tools and electrical equipment, in effect represented the productive capacity of the new settlement, but in time Halloway hoped that they would embark on the original manufacture of an ever-wider range of consumer goods. Cash credits (banknote6 franked with Halloway's name) were advanced to the new recruits against their first week's pay, with which they could buy the garish clothing, records and cigarettes they seemed to need above all else. Most of the two hundred inhabitants were now heavily in debt, but rather than evict them from their apartments and close the discotheques, bars and amusement arcades where they spent their evenings, Halloway had astutely lengthened the working day from eight to ten hours, enticing them with generous though uneconomic overtime payments. Already, he happily realized, he was literally printing money. Within only a few months inflation would be rampant, but like the crime and pollution this was a real sign of his success, a confirmation of all he had dreamed about.

There was a flicker of interference on the monitor screen, indicating a fault in the camera mounted outside the station. Muttering with mock-annoyance, 'Nothing works any more,' Halloway switched to the camera in the square. The open plaza with its memorial of cars was deserted at this hour. The monument had never been completed. Stiliman had long since lost interest in the hard work of construction, and no one else had volunteered, particularly as no payment was involved. Besides, these memorials of cars and radiator grilles, tyres and kitchen appliances created an atmosphere of defeat and fatality, presiding like funeral pyres over the outskirts of the city as the new arrivals pressed on to their promised land.

A few attempts had been made to dismantle the pyramids, but each time Buckmaster and his daughter had managed to make good the damage. Dressed in her ever-changing costumes, in this cavalcade of Twentieth-Century fashion, Miranda moved tirelessly through the city, seeding the glass-filled streets with poppies and daisies, trailing vines over the fallen telephone wires. Halloway had given two assistants the task of following her around the city and destroying whatever new plants they could find. Too many of the flowers she was now setting out in window boxes and ornamental urns had a distinctly sinister aspect. Halloway had caught her the previous week, eerily at work in the reclamation area itself, bedding out bizarre lilies with nacreous petals and mantis-like flowers in the entrance to the policestation, glamorous but vicious plants that looked as if they might lunge at the throats of anyone passing by. Halloway had pushed past her, overturned her flower trolley and torn out the lilies with his bare hands. Then, with unexpected forbearance, he had ordered his sergeant to drive her back to her hotel. His feelings for Miranda remained as confused as they had been at their first meeting. On the one hand he wanted to impress her, to make her recognize the importance of everything he had done, on the other he was vaguely afraid of this young and naive Diana of the botanical gardens, about to embark on some macabre hunt through the intense, over-heated foliage.

The day after this incident Buckmaster paid Halloway a visit, the first he had made to the reclamation zone. Still keen to earn the old industrialist's approval, Halloway took him on a tour of the neighbourhood, proudly pointing out the mechanics working on the motor-cars on Olds' production line, the gleaming vehicles being collected by their new owners, the system of credit and finance which he had evolved, the busy bars and supermarkets, the new arrivals moving into their refurbished apartments, and even the first two-hour-a-day transmissions from the local television station—the programmes, with complete historical accuracy, consisted entirely of old movies and commercials. The latter, despite a hiatus of thirty years, were still up-to-date advertisements of the products they bought and sold in the stores and supermarkets.

'Everything is here that you can think of, sir,' Halloway told the old man. 'And it's a living urban structure, not a film set. We've got traffic problems, inflation, even the beginnings of serious crime and pollution…'

The industrialist smiled at Halloway in a not unkindly way. 'That's a proud boast, Halloway. I'd begun to notice those last two myself. Now, you've taken me on your tour—let me take you on one of mine.'

Reluctant to leave his command post in the commissioner's office, Halloway nonetheless decided to humour Buckmaster. Besides, he knew that in many ways Buckmaster had taken over the role of his own father. Often, as he relaxed in the evenings at his apartment overlooking the park, Halloway seriously wondered if his father would have understood all that he had achieved, so far beyond the antique engine parts and aircraft designs. Unhappily, Buckmaster—who certainly did understand—remained ambiguous in his response.

Together they set off in Halloway's car, driving for over an hour towards the industrial areas to the north-west of the city. Here, among the power stations and railyards, foundries and coal depots, Buckmaster tried to point out to Halloway how the Twentieth Century had met its self-made death. They stood on the shores of artificial lagoons filled with chemical wastes, drove along canals silvered by metallic scum, across landscapes covered by thousands of tons of untreated garbage, fields piled high with cans, broken glass and derelict machinery.

But as he listened to the old man warning him that sooner or later he would add to these terminal moraines, Halloway had been exhilarated by the scenes around him. Far from disfiguring the landscape, these discarded products of Twentieth-Century industry had a fierce and wayward beauty. Halloway was fascinated by the glimmering sheen of the metal-scummed canals, by the strange submarine melancholy of drowned cars looming up at him from abandoned lakes, by the brilliant colours of the garbage hills, by the glitter of a million cans embedded in a matrix of detergent packs and tinfoil, a kaleidoscope of everything they could wear, eat and drink. He was fascinated by the cobalt clouds that drifted below the surface of the water, free at last of all plants and fish, the soft chemical billows interacting as they seeped from the sodden soil. He explored the whorls of steel shavings, foliage culled from a metallic christmas tree, the bales of rusting wire whose dense copper hues formed a burnished forest in the sunlight. He gazed raptly at the chalky whiteness of old china-clay tips, vivid as powdered ice, abandoned railyards with their moss-covered locomotives, the undimmed beauty of industrial wastes produced by skills and imaginations far richer than nature's,

more splendid than any Arcadian meadow. Unlike nature, here there was no death.

Lulled by this vision of technology's Elysian Fields, Halloway sat halfasleep behind the commissioner's desk, dwarfed by the leather-backed chair. When he woke he found that the TV monitor was again showing a jumble of interference patterns. Part of the excitement of city life was the constant breakdown of these poorly designed appliances, and the difficulty of getting hold of a repairman. In Garden City, every piece of equipment, every washing machine and solar-powered kitchen stove, functioned for ever with dismaying perfection. In the rare event of even the smallest malfunction the designer would appear on one's doorstep as fast as his bicycle could carry him. By contrast, the metropolis operated an exciting knifeedge away from total collapse.

Leaving the station, Halloway saluted the two eighteen-year-old policemen sitting in their patrol car. There were ten officers under his command, an over-large proportion of the total number of inhabitants, but all Halloway's scrutiny of the commissioner's records confirmed that a large police force, like pollution and a high crime-rate, was an essential feature of city life.

Besides, they might well be useful sooner than he expected. As he stepped into his car to drive the fifty yards to Olds' garage—Halloway never walked, however short the distance, and often U-turned his car to get from one side of the road to the other—a gang of teenage boys tumbled with a chorus of obscenities from a nearby amusement arcade. They clustered around a large motorcycle with extended forks and a lavishly chromed engine. All wore black leather jackets strung with sinister ornaments - iron crosses, ceremonial daggers and death's heads. The driver kick-started the machine with a violent roar, then lurched in a circle across the sidewalk, knocking down part of a tobacco kiosk before veering into Halloway's path. Without apology, he drummed his fist on the roof above Halloway's head and roared off down the street, weaving in and out of the shouting pedestrians.

As Halloway expected, most of the workers on Olds' production line had packed up early. The thirty vehicles mounted on their movable trolleys had come to a halt, and the few mechanics left were plugging the batteries into the overnight chargers.

Olds was seated in his glass-walled office, moodily playing with his collection of pocket calculators, slim fingers flicking out fragments of some strange dialogue. As life for him had become increasingly complex, with all the problems of running this automobile plant, he had added more and more calculators. He placed the instruments in a series of lines across his desk, and seemed to be working towards a decision about everything, laying out the elements of this reductive conversation like cards in a game of solitaire.

He gazed up at Halloway, as if recognizing him with difficulty. He looked tired and listless, numbed by his work on all the projects which Halloway pushed forward ruthlessly.

'Olds, it's only six. Why are we scrapping the evening shift?'

There are not enough men for the line.

'They should all be here.' When Olds sat back, shuffling the calculators with one hand, Halloway snapped, 'Olds they need the work! They've got to pay back their wage credits!'

The mute shrugged, watching Halloway with his passive but intelligent eyes. From a drawer he pulled out his old flying-helmet. He seemed about to question Halloway about something, but changed his mind.

Halloway, they lack your appreciation of the value of hard work.

'Olds, can't you understand?' With an effort, Halloway controlled his exasperation. He paced around the office, deciding on a new tack. 'Listen, Olds, there's something I wanted to bring up with you. As you know, you don't actually pay any rent for this garage—in fact, this whole operation makes no direct contribution at all to the municipal budget. Originally I exempted you because of the help you've given in starting everything up, but I think now we'll have to look into the question of some kind of reasonable rent—and of taxation, too, for that matter.' As Olds' fingers began to race irritatingly across the calculators, flicking out a series of messages he was unable to read, Halloway pressed on.

'There's another thing. So much of life here depends on time—hours of work, rates of pay and so on, they're all hitched to the clock. It occurred to me that if we lengthened the hour, without anyone knowing, of course, we would get more work out of people for the same rates of pay. Suppose I ordered in all the clocks and wristwatches, for a free check-up, say, could you readjust them so that they ran a little slower?' Halloway paused, waiting to see if Olds fully appreciated the simplicity of this ingenious scheme. He added, 'Naturally, it would be to everyone's benefit. In fact, by varying the length of the hour, by slowing or speeding up all the clocks, we would have a powerful economic regulator, we'd be able to cut back or encourage inflation, vary pay-rates and productivity. I'm looking ahead, I know, but I already visualize a central radio transmitter beaming out a variable time signal to everyone's clock and wristwatch, so that no one need bother about making the adjustments himself...'

Halloway waited for a reply, but the calculators were silent for once, their display panels unlit. Olds was looking up at him with an expression Halloway had never seen before. All the mute's intelligence and judgment were in his eyes, staring at this blond-haired young man as if seeing him clearly for the first time.

Annoyed by his almost disdainful attitude, Halloway was tempted to strike the mute. But at that moment, carried clearly above the drumming of the generators, they heard the squeal of tyres in the road above, and the sounds of breaking glass and a child's scream.

When they reached the street a crowd had already gathered, standing around a white limousine that had swerved across the sidewalk and plunged through the windows of a supermarket. Cans and detergent packs, which Halloway had helped to stack into their display pyramids, were scattered among the broken glass. Stillman's chauffeur, a blackjacketed youth of sixteen, stepped from the car, spitting away his gum in a nervous gesture. Everyone was looking down at two eleven-year-old boys, barely conscious, stretched out in the roadway, and at the dead body of a young girl lying under the limousine between its rear wheels.

As the siren of a police car wailed towards them Olds pushed through the crowd. He knelt down and held the girl's bloodied wrist. When he carried her away in his arms, pushing brusquely past Halloway, he held the calculator in one hand. Halloway caught a glimpse of its display panel, screaming out a single silent obscenity.

The next week marked an uneasy interregnum. On the pretext of keeping an eye on every-thing, Halloway retreated to the commissioner's office, watching the streets for hours on the TV monitor. The death of the girl, the first traffic fatality of the new city, was an event even Halloway was unable to rationalize. He stayed away from the funeral, which was attended by everyone except himself. Olds drove the huge hearse, which he found in a breaker's yard and spent all night refurbishing. Surrounded by an arbour of flowers, the dead child in her lavish hand-carved casket moved away at the head of the procession, followed through the empty streets by all the people of the neighbourhood, everyone at the wheel of his car. Stiliman and his entourage wore their darkest gangster suits. Miranda and old Buckmaster, both in black capes, appeared in an ancient open tourer filled with strange wreaths she had prepared from the flowers that Halloway's men had destroyed.

However, much to Halloway's relief everything soon returned to normal, though by some unhappy paradox this first death set off an even greater latent violence. During the following days more and more workers defected from their jobs to join Stillman's entourage, which by now had swollen to a substantial private army. Many of them wore black para-military uniforms. All day the sound of gunfire echoed through the streets as they destroyed hundreds of the deer in the park, driving away the pheasants, quail and wild duck on which Halloway depended to stock the fresh meat counters of the supermarkets. Armed with rifles, they marched up and down the square in parade order, presenting arms beside the files of slaughtered deer. Stillman, now affecting a military tunic and peaked cap, had swapped his limousine for an open-topped half-track, in which he stood to attention, taking the salute.

Halloway tried to laugh off these absurd games as another mental aberration of this convicted murderer, but Stiliman's men had begun to disrupt the life of the zone. They strolled in gangs around the supermarkets, helping themselves to whatever they wanted and brushing aside any requests for payment. Taking their cue from this, many of the apartment-house tenants defaulted on their rents. Instead of shopping at the supermarkets, and helping to bolster the faltering economy of the zone, they were breaking into the stores outside the area. Each day there was a further slide towards anarchy, the failure of another generator, an increase in traffic delays and parking offences, and above all a growing conviction that the city was unmanageable.

Faced with this collapse of his dream, worked for with such effort, Halloway decided to reassert his authority. He needed some means of inspiring these new urban dwellers. Bored by their long hours of repetitive work, most of them did no more in their leisure time than hang around the bars and amusement arcades, driving aimlessly around the streets in their various cars. The influx of new arrivals had begun to fall off, and already the first of the original settlers were packing their bags and drifting off to the suburbs.

After a night of continuous uproar, filled with the sound of sirens and gunfire, Halloway decided to enlist Buckmaster's help. The old industrialist was the only person he could fall back on. Olds no longer spoke to him the whole make-believe of teaching the mute to fly had long since lost its credibility. But Buckmaster had

been one of the pioneers who created the Twentieth Century, and might well be able to charge everyone with enthusiasm again.

Outside Buckmaster's hotel Halloway hesitated before stepping from his car. His ruthless use of defoliants on Miranda's plant kingdom made him uneasy about seeing her, but he would have to brush this aside.

As he climbed the steps to the hotel entrance he noticed that the revolving door had been converted into a miniature greenhouse. Each of the segments was filled with an unfamiliar plant, with purple flowers and purple-black berries. With a reflex of irritation, Halloway was about to rip them out with his hands, but a brief movement on a balcony above him caught his eye.

Three floors above, Miranda was standing on her balcony and looking down at Halloway, a posy of mantis lilies in her hand. She was wearing a long white dress and white lace veil that Halloway had never seen before, but which he recognized immediately. Gazing up at her, and knowing that she had never been more beautiful, Halloway was suddenly convinced that she was wearing the wedding gown for him. She was waiting for Halloway to come and collect her from the hotel, and then they would cross the square to the cathedral of cars where her father would marry them.

As if to confirm this, Miranda leaned slightly over her balcony, smiling at Halloway and beckoning to him with a white-gloved hand.

When he reached the revolving door the purple flowers and dark berries clustered thickly around him. He was about to push past them when he remembered the posy, of lilies in her hand, and the too-eager way in which she had watched him arrive. Then he realized that the plants he was about to brush out of his way, festering here in this glass execution chamber between himself and his bride, were deadly nightshade.

In the early afternoon Miranda and her father left the city for good.

That night, as he lay asleep in his apartment, Halloway dreamed that he was standing at an open window overlooking the park. Below him the waist-high grass shivered and seethed. Some deep motion had unsettled the ground, a profound shudder that crossed the entire park. The bushes and brambles, the trees and shrubs, even the lowliest weeds and wild flowers, were beginning to rustle and quiver, straining from the ground. Everywhere branches were waving in an invisible wind, leaves beating at the passing air. Then, by the lake at the centre of the park, a miniature oak broke free, boughs moving like the wings of an ungainly bird. Shaking the earth from its roots, it soared towards Halloway, a hundred feet from the ground. Other trees were following, branches grasping at the air, a million leaves whirling together. As Halloway watched, gripping the window-sill to stop himself from joining them, the whole park suddenly rose upwards, every tree and flower, every blade of grass joining to form an immense sunlit armada that circled above Halloway's head and soared along the rays of the sun. As they moved away across the sky Halloway could see that all over the city the flowers and vines which Miranda had planted were also leaving. A flight of poppies soared past, a crimson carpet followed by an aerial causeway of daisies, petals beating as if they were the cilia of some huge lace-like creature. Halloway looked up from the city, with its now barren stone and dying air. The sky was filled with a legion of flying

creatures, a green haze of petals and blossoms free at last to make their way to the welcoming sun.

When he woke the next morning, Halloway went out on to his balcony, uncertain whether the dense vegetation rooted securely to the ground was an illusion of his mind. Later, when he paused briefly at the police station, the vision of these flying oaks and marigolds, elms and daisies still hung in the air, brighter than the neon fa ades of the bars and amusement arcades.

Instead of switching off the lights and going to work, people were hanging around the doorways of the bars, watching Halloway across the pintables in the arcades. None of the police force had turned up for duty, and for a moment Halloway felt that the day itself had failed to appear.

Determined now on a confrontation with Stillman, he went back to his car. He was convinced that the former convict was responsible for the collapse of everything he had worked for. Stillman had been drawn here by the limitless opportunities he had seen for cruelty and disruption. He needed a dying city, not a living one, a warm cadaver that he could infest like a maggot.

After locking the police station, Halloway drove along the park to Stillman's headquarters, a cylindrical art museum with a single spiral ramp that circled upwards to Stillman's audience chamber. Armed guards lounged in their black uniforms around the line of armoured limousines parked outside. They signalled Halloway forward, clearly expecting him. As Halloway walked towards the elevator Stillman was standing in a theatrical pose on the topmost stage.

Their meeting never took place. Halfway up, the elevator stopped with an abrupt shudder, its lights failing. Everywhere voices began to shout, a shot was fired, feet raced past down the ramp. By the time Halloway broke free from the elevator he was the last to leave the darkened building. Stillman and his gang had set off, taking Halloway's car with them.

When he reached the police-station half an hour later an electrical storm was sweeping the streets of the reclamation zone. Cars were stalled bumper to bumper at the intersections. The drivers stood by their vehicles, flinching from the neon signs that were exploding in cascades of molten glass above the bars and restaurants. Everywhere the overloaded circuitry was burning out. Coloured light-bulbs burst and ripped across the ceilings of the amusement arcades. Pintables exploded in a chatter of free games, in the supermarkets the first fires were lifting from the freezer cabinets, flames roasting the carcasses of the deer and wild-fowl. The noise of a hundred generators filled the air, turned up by someone to their greatest output.

It took Halloway several hours to restore order. Long before he had turned down the last of the overheated generators, replaced the fuses and put out the most serious of the fires, Halloway knew who had been responsible. Dozens of the pocket calculators lay around the generators in the alleyways and basements, display panels glowing dimly. Olds must have ransacked the business-machine stores, gathering together as many calculators as he could find to cope with his mental crisis. They were scattered in his trail, spinning off from his hyper-active mind.

Wings?

Mixture rich, carburettor heat cold.

Sparrow, wren, robin, hummingbird…

Halloway stared down angrily at these fragmentary messages, bulletins to himself that expressed Olds' doubts and anxieties. When Halloway found him he would scream him into submission with one potent word, throw him into a final fit from which he would never recover.

Kiwi, penguin?

Pitch full fine, fuel cocks open.

Starling, swallow, swift…

Halloway stamped on the calculators, pulverizing this ascending order of birds. Exhausted by the effort of shutting down the generators, he sat on the floor in the supermarket basement, surrounded by soup cans and the glowing dials.

Climbing.

Flaps down, throttle slightly cracked.

Elizabeth, dead child. No pain.

Blue eyes. Insane.

Partridge, quail, geese, oriole… eagle, osprey, falcon.

Guessing that he might find the mute in his automobile plant, Halloway ran down the ramp into the basement. But Olds had gone. In a last galvanic spasm, the thirty cars on the production line had been hurled against the concrete wall, and lay heaped across each other in a tangle of chrome and broken glass. On the desk in his office the calculators were laid out neatly to form a last message.

O1 Old Olds Oldsm Oldsmo Oldsmob Oldsmobi Oldsmobil OLDSMOBILE!!!

And then, in the drawer where he had kept his antique flying-helmet: I can—!

Fulmar, albatross, flamingo, frigate-bird, condor…

IGNITION!

* * * * *

Abandoning his car, Halloway walked through the empty streets, littered with smouldering neon tubes as if a burntout rainbow had collapsed across the sidewalks. Already he could see that everyone had gathered in the square, their backs turned to Buckmaster's memorial. They were looking up at the display sign on the newspaper building, the brief message which Olds had left for them repeating itself in a cry of fear, pride and determination.

I CAN FLY! I CAN FLY! I CAN FLY! I CAN FLY!

By the time Halloway reached the airport the siege was well under way. Stiliman and his men surrounded the car park, crouching behind their limousines and firing at random at the upper floors. There were no signs of Olds, but from the apex of the pyramid of radiator grilles Halloway could see that the powered glider on the roof had been readied for flight. Olds had fitted an undercarriage and tail-wheel to the craft. No longer tethered, it had been moved to the upper end of the canted roof, the two hundred yards of concrete sloping away below the polished propeller.

Under cover of a fusillade of shots, Stillman and three of his men rushed the building and entered the ground floor of the car park. Ten storeys above them, Olds appeared on the roof, dressed in his antique flying-suit, leather jacket and gaiters. He moved around the aircraft, making some last adjustments to the engine, oblivious of the shooting below.

Twenty minutes later, smoke began to rise from the eighth floor of the car park, dark billows that lifted towards the roof. Seeing the smoke, Olds stopped and watched it swirl around him. Then, above the sound of gunshots and exploding fuel tanks, Halloway heard the clatter of the aero-engine. The propeller span briskly, pumping the heavy smoke out of its way.

Knowing that Olds would be killed if he tried to take off, Halloway ran towards the car park. Shouting at Stillman's men, he pushed past them to the emergency stairs.

When he reached the eighth floor one of the young guards held him back. At the far end of the sloping concrete floor Olds had built a solid barricade with his four land-cruisers. Unable to climb past it, and with the remainder of the stairway blocked by a pile of generators and electrical equipment, Stiliman and his men were setting fire to the cars, shooting into the engine compartments and fuel tanks of these once-cherished sedans and limousines.

'Stillman!' Halloway shouted. 'Let him go! If he tries to fly he'll kill himself!'

But Stiliman waved him away. Two of the cars were burning briskly, and he and his men pushed the flaming vehicles up the slope and rammed them into the land-cruisers. Within moments the metal cabins were splitting in the fierce heat. Watching this conflagration begin, Stillman beckoned his men down the slope.

Then, moving down the gutter below the internal balustrade, came a thin stream of fluid, working its way around the old tyres and the piles of leaves and birds' nests. Thinking that this was Olds' pathetic attempt to douse the fire Stiliman had started, Halloway grappled with the guard, trying to wrest the shotgun from him. As they struggled together by the staircase he saw that the stream had expanded into a broad sheet, as wide as the sloping floor, moving swiftly like a tidal race. It swilled below the land-cruisers and around the wheels of the burning cars, touched here and there by the nimbus of a flame. The fluid overran Stillman's feet as he and his men turned and ran for their lives, splashing through the fast-moving sluice. In the last seconds, as the whole floor lit up in a sudden bloom of flame, illuminating the running figures trapped in the centre of this sloping furnace, Halloway hurled himself down the staircase. The sounds of explosions followed him to the ground floor.

So Olds had opened the stopcocks on the fuel tanks of the cars on the ninth and tenth floors. When Halloway reached the road the upper three storeys of the garage were aflame. Powerful explosions were ripping apart the limousines, sports-cars and open tourers that Olds had collected so carefully. Window glass and pieces of sharp chrome flicked through the air, landing on the sidewalk around him as he crouched behind an airline van. Fifty feet high, the flames of the burning gasolene rose into a sluggish tower of smoke two hundred yards in diameter.

Most of Stillman's men had driven off, these youths in their black uniforms and large cars frightened by the violence of the explosions. Three others had remained behind, waiting with their rifles raised, but Halloway was certain that both Olds and Stillman had already died.

High above him, a propeller whirled through the smoke. The sailplane moved across the roof, lining itself up for take-off. Olds' slim figure was crouched in the cockpit, face hidden by the antique helmet. The engine deepened its roar, and the

aircraft with its long drooping wings sped forward down the sloping roof. As it left the building and sailed into the open air it seemed to fall towards the ground, but its wings suddenly climbed on to the light wind crossing the airport. It soared along, engine blaring, a few feet above the cars parked nose-to-tail down the runway, and shook off the oily smoke that still wreathed its wings and fuselage. It flew on steadily, gaining altitude as it cleared the perimeter fence. Moving northwards towards the Sound, it made a careful left-hand turn, three hundred feet above the ground. It set off across the river, wings rocking as Olds tested the controls. Halfway across the river it picked up a flight of wild duck which were circling the city, and then joined a stream of petals half a mile long that was being carried away by the wind. Together, the three flights—the wild duck and the stream of petals, and Olds in his sailplane—flew on to the north-west, parting company when they crossed the ruined suspension bridge. Halloway waited as the sailplane, little more than a point of light reflected from its propeller, climbed higher into the secure sky, and finally vanished on its way westwards across the continent.

* * * * *

When he had driven back to the city Halloway left his car in the square. Standing beside Buckmaster's memorial, he watched the supermarkets and stores, the bars and amusement arcades close themselves down. Almost everyone had left now, as the young people made their way back to their garden settlements.

Halloway waited until they had all gone. The last of the generators had run out of fuel, dimming the lights in the police-station. He walked through the streets, picking his way over the broken glass and burnt-out cables, past dozens of abandoned cars. Discarded banknotes, printed with his own name, drifted along the roadway.

In the space of only a few months he had managed to achieve what had taken this metropolis as a whole more than a hundred and fifty years to do. However, it had all been worthwhile. He knew now that he would never return to Garden City, with its pastoral calm. In the morning, after he had rested, he would set off on foot, searching for Olds and the sailplane, following the memorials westwards across the continent, until he found the old man again and could help him raise his pyramids of washing machines, radiator-grilles and typewriters. Somehow he would come to terms with Miranda, and help her to re-forest the cities. Maybe, then, she would wear her wedding dress again for him.

Confident of all this, Halloway set off across the square. Already he was planning the first of a series of huge metal pyramids in his mind, as high perhaps as these skyscrapers, built of airliners, freight trains, walking draglines and missile launchers, larger than anything of which Buckmaster and the Twentieth Century had ever dreamed. And perhaps, too, Olds would teach him how to fly.