The telephone rang while he was running the vacuum cleaner. He had worked his way through the apartment and was doing the living room, using the nozzle attachment to get at the cat hairs between the cushions. He stopped and listened and then switched off the vacuum. He went to answer the telephone.

“Hello,” he said. “Myers here.”

“Myers,” she said. “How are you? What are you doing?”

“Nothing,” he said. “Hello, Paula.”

“There’s an office party this afternoon,” she said. “You’re invited. Dick invited you.”

“I don’t think I can come,” Myers said.

“Dick just this minute said get that old man of yours on the phone. Get him down here for a drink. Get him out of his ivory tower and back into the real world for a while. Dick’s funny when he’s drinking. Myers?”

“I heard you,” Myers said.

Myers used to work for Dick. Dick always talked of going to Paris to write a novel, and when Myers had quit to write a novel, Dick had said he would watch for Myers’ name on the best-seller list.

“I can’t come now,” Myers said.

As he drove, he looked at the people who hurried along the sidewalks with shopping bags. He glanced at the gray sky, filled with flakes, and at the tall buildings with snow in the