

had been chosen specifically to hide his second and far more important piece of sculpture. He moved past the War Rooms at a leisurely pace, checking to make sure he was alone. Once he was sure, he ducked into the custodial closet and pulled the door closed behind him. Reaching high up on the top shelf, he groped in the dark behind the cans and bottles, then gave a little grunt of satisfaction as his fingers closed on the screwdriver he had hidden there three days earlier. Burrowing behind a stack of dirty linen, just in case the museum's caretaker felt impelled to check every room, he settled down to wait, trying to ignore the dull pain now hammering steadily in his stomach. With a conscious effort he pulled his mind away from the next few minutes and what he had to do, for he knew that was betraying him, and would only cause the pain to increase until it wracked his whole body. He began to whistle softly, thinking of summer days spent in the mountains around the valley. Today was August first, he suddenly remembered. A good day for starting something new.

"Central Control?"

Clayne's voice was almost a whisper as it came through the speaker in the Monitoring Room. Travis, the Major, and Nicole all looked up, but it was Travis who answered. "Yes?"

"The caretaker of the museum is just now leaving. He's locked the door."

"Roger," Travis responded, lowering his own voice. He glanced at the monitoring screen. "Eric is still sitting tight in the janitor's closet." He glanced up at the clock. "But he'll have to move pretty soon. The cleaning crew starts arriving by 6:30. That gives him only forty-five minutes."

"There he goes," Nicole called.

"He's moving, Clayne. Just to be sure, from this point on we'll communicate with you via your wrist computer. A window may be open, and he'll be in the front of the building directly over you."

"Ten-four."

Travis turned to Shirley Ferguson. "Okay, Shirley. Don't wait

for our command. Just keep Clayne posted with a running commentary into his wrist computer. And for heaven's sake, don't make it buzz first."

"Yes, sir."

"He's moving toward the War Rooms," Nicole said, watching the blip of light on the enlarged plan of the museum's second floor.

"Okay," the Major commanded. "Activate the camera."

The large screen sprang into life as Nicole flipped a switch. She recognized the World War Two room almost immediately. The back wall, covered with a huge enlargement of Pearl Harbor and the battleship *Arizona* billowing clouds of dark smoke filled the screen. She pushed some buttons and zoomed the lens in on the nearest display case.

"Can he see the camera?" the Major asked.

"No, not unless he looks closely," Travis responded. "It's hidden in a heating vent, but we had to make a small hole for the lens."

"He's been in that room twice since it was installed," Nicole added. "He hasn't ever given any hint that he's seen it."

"Here he comes," Shirley called, watching the board. Then she typed rapidly on her terminal to keep Clayne informed.

"Look," Travis said, pointing. "He's got a screwdriver in his hand."

"Well, you were exactly right, Nicole," the Major said with a trace of sadness. "I was half hoping you weren't."

"So was I," she answered softly.

"Keep me posted on the readings from his implantation," he commanded, then turned to watch.

On the screen they saw Eric pause for a moment at the entrance to the War Room, then move swiftly to the case.

"Pain response at the point-zero-four level," Nicole called.

"Ah," Travis said, "so he's already starting to feel it. And he hasn't even started on the case yet."

"Pain response at point-zero-eight-five," Nicole intoned as Eric knelt down next to the case and took a screwdriver from his pocket. "Going up—point-zero-nine-six."