

life and spent long hours each day on Capitol Hill. His reputation was that of a respected, hardworking, rather humorless and dour senior member of the House Establishment. An aura of power hung about him. He kept the world at arm's length. The other members of the Committee had avoided scandal too. Congressman Orme had been criticized two years before for taking his wife to Europe as an executive assistant at government expense while her husband visited Army installations which included the continent's most famous resort areas. Congressman Vethik had been arrested for a left turn into the wrong end of a one-way street after drinking more than he could carry at a Christmas party. Par for the course. No one imagined that the Congress was a company of angels.

Baylor lit a cigarette and rubbed his eyes. Why did Bennington have to be so damn secretive? Probably, in some misguided way, he was trying to put Baylor on his mettle. Maybe the staff was involved. Maybe there was a safe deposit box somewhere stuffed with new bills. He yawned and looked at his watch. Six-fifteen. He had to rush.

He drove to Georgetown, showered, changed into a camel's hair topcoat with an outsized collar that he turned up when he kept the top down on the Morgan in the wintertime, and roared off to pick up Sue Soames. Sue might put him inside the Committee.

He took her to one of the proliferating "intimate" restaurants in Georgetown which offered uncertain lighting from flickering candles in pink frosted cylinders of glass, small crowded tables, a confusing decor of "antiqued" wooden walls, new brick work and a melange of early American, French, and Victorian reproductions, and a pseudo-French menu prepared by hearty Negro cooks from Virginia.

Baylor stumbled over a grinning plaster of Paris blackamoor on his way to their table. "Here we are," he said gaily, "the quiet corner I asked Jason to reserve for us. This is really a great restaurant, Sue, in the true tradition of Provence, but the din can get to be a little much, espe-

cially when one wants to talk." He waited while Jason held her chair and then dropped into his own, smiling at her brightly. "What shall we have, dear? How about a really dry ice-cold martini?"

Sue Soames smiled, patting her short brown hair self-consciously. "A martini would be fine."

"Jason, two of the usual . . . *very, very dry.*"

The headwaiter nodded. "Of course, Mr. Baylor." He snapped his fingers at a waiter and turning away relayed the order.

"They seem to know you here, Tony."

"Oh, I give the place my custom," he said airily.

"What have you been doing to yourself, Sue? You look gorgeous."

She dimpled. "You have quite a line, but thanks. I'm just an Ivory girl."

He looked at her admiringly. "Old Fenester doesn't know what he's got. Does he appreciate you?"

"Mr. Fenester? Oh, I practically never see him. He stalks in and out. Besides, he's in his fifties."

"I guess he's quite a boy."

"I guess so," she replied without interest.

The waiter brought their martinis and a small bowl of cheese-spread with crackers.

"Do you still share your apartment with what's-her-name? You know, the one with the hair rollers?"

She laughed. "Muriel? Yes, I do, and you only saw her once in hair rollers. The way you talk, you'd think she lived in them."

"I thought she did. Imagine all that hair, loose and blowing about, looking like an outsized fright wig."

"She doesn't like you either."

"Don't I know it!"

He ordered another round of martinis.

"I shouldn't, Tony. They're doubles."

"Not really, the glass has a double bottom. That's where they make their money."

In time, he ordered their dinner, a rack of lamb with a bottle of Medoc.

"Why don't we have coffee at my place?" he asked after they had eaten.

She smiled at him comfortably. "That sounds super." They left the Morgan in the parking space he had found on the crowded street around the corner from the restaurant and walked the two blocks to the Mews.

A light snow had fallen. His little garden was covered in white under a moon which appeared among racing clouds in a clearing sky. He lit the fire he had laid, but not the lamps.

"Firelight and moonlight," he murmured to her as he helped her off with her coat. "What could be lovelier?" He kissed her left ear lobe lightly. "A pretty girl, of course." She sank down on some pillows he had placed before the fire and kicked off her shoes.

"You have a flair, Tony dear."

He brought over an espresso coffee maker and a bottle of Courvoisier V.S.O.P. and placed them on a low hammered brass circular table which a Georgetown decorator had said came from Morocco.

He handed her a demitasse of coffee when it was ready and a small glass snifter of brandy.

"Cigarette?"

"Not now, darling."

He did not touch her, but drank his coffee and looked into the fire.

"What made you call me today?" she asked.

"I was looking through some things and found a picture of you."

She glanced at him in surprise. "You don't have my picture?"

"Yes, I do. I snapped it when we were together with that group at Rehoboth Beach last summer."

Her face softened. "How sweet. I didn't know you did that, Tony. Why didn't you ask for a picture? I would have been glad to give you an official version."

He sipped his brandy. "Stolen sweets, I guess. And I would have been embarrassed to ask for your picture. I didn't know you well enough."

"How sweet! May I see it?"

"I destroyed it. It didn't do you justice."

"I'll send you a picture."

"Wonderful, darling."

He reached over and tousled her hair. "That's better."

"You really think so?" she murmured.

"Yes," he breathed and met her parted lips with his.

The fire had burned down. The room had grown chilly. She had gone into the bathroom to dress.

He lit a cigarette and gazed out of his window at the snow.

"What time is it?" she called.

"Three-thirty."

"My God. I'll lose my reputation."

"With whom? Muriel?"

She emerged, her cheeks flushed and her eyes shining. "Well, I have to have been somewhere."

He kissed her on the tip of the nose. "True. Tell her I brought you here and tried to seduce you and that you fought me off. That's what she wants to believe, anyway."

She laughed. "I don't look as if I put up much of a fight."

He put an arm around her and hugged her to him.

"How about a nightcap? Plain old percolator coffee this time?"

"I'd love it."

She sat in his big chair with her feet curled under her and smiled at him over the brim of a big cup. "What are you going to do today?"

"Oh, probe the news sources. I'm on a big story as a matter of fact."

"How thrilling! I don't suppose I can ask what?"

He weighed her carefully with his eyes. "I can only say it may involve the Armed Services Committee."

Her eyes widened. "My Committee?"

"Why not?"

"Well, no reason, I guess. I mean, I always think of

news happening to someone else, somewhere else." He acted as if he had suddenly been struck by an inspiration. "Say, darling! What a coincidence, and what fun! We could work together on this!"

She looked at him without answering.

"I mean, you just happen to work for the Committee. Why didn't I think of this before? You could be one of my news sources. Talk about combining business and pleasure!"

"What do you mean, your news source?" she asked, her face looking a little pinched.

"Well, you know. If you find something out—I mean, if you notice anything—what I mean is . . ." he began to flounder as he saw the apprehension growing in her face, "if you have any news about the Committee, you could feed it to me."

Her face crumpled and she began to cry quietly.

"Sue!" he said, kneeling by her chair and taking her hand. "Honey! You don't think for one moment that I . . ." he gestured helplessly, "did all of this just for a little information? What kind of a heel do you think I am, for God's sake?"

She dabbed at her eyes and looked at him angrily. "I may not be very smart, Tony Baylor, not very smart at all, I guess, but I know when I've been had. I want to go home."

"O.K., O.K. Forget it," he said, "I'm deeply hurt. Just remember you brought the subject up, I didn't. I thought we could do something together—oh, hell. I know you'll never believe me now. You've got me pegged as an operator, for God's sake. Talk about an insult!"

"I just want to go home."

He walked her through the soft snow to the street where they had left the Morgan and drove her to her apartment building. She sat, wounded and remote, leaning away from him against the door. As he swung into the curb outside her apartment building, he said, "One thing, Sue. Don't underestimate yourself. You're a gorgeous gal. That's why we had the evening together. You don't have to trade

information for dates. You do yourself an injustice to think so, regardless of what you think of me."

She opened the door and ran across the snowy sidewalk and into the apartment-building foyer.

Tony Baylor gritted his teeth and shoved the Morgan through its change of gears. "You blew that one, wise guy," he muttered. "You rushed it. Now you've lost her." He pulled the Morgan in by the garbage cans and sat for a moment watching the shadows of the fast moving clouds against the snow. "Damnation!" He swung out of the car and entered his apartment.

BAYLOR arrived at his office the next morning at nine and found his mail in a small pile on the floor under the letter drop. He opened a plain envelope with a New York postmark. It contained a check drawn in his favor on a New York bank in the amount of one thousand dollars. The signature was so scrawled that he couldn't determine if it were Bennington's. The guy was as good as his word, and prompt too. They'd make a good team. Bennington and Baylor. Baylor and Bennington. He wondered if Bennington would mind using the names in alphabetical sequence? It sounded better that way, but he wouldn't make an issue of it.

The telephone rang shrilly.

"Baylor speaking."

"One moment, Mr. Baylor. Mr. Rutledge will speak with you."

An incisive, authoritative voice came on the line. "Mr. Baylor, this is John Rutledge speaking. I am Chief Counsel of the House Armed Services Committee."

Baylor clapped his free hand to his brow in mock

despair. "How do you do, Mr. Rutledge. What can I do for you?"

"Would you mind paying me a visit at your convenience? I would like to speak with you."

"When?"

"No hurry. When you can, but not later than tomorrow."

"I'll be on the Hill about eleven this morning. I could drop in on you then."

"Excellent. I'll look for you. Room 2120 in the Rayburn Building."

Baylor got out of his taxicab at the Independence Avenue entrance of the Rayburn Building. He walked up a broad, shallow flight of steps between two sitting statues of heroic symbolism and through the doors, half hidden under a massive decorative balcony framed by towering Grecian pillars. After the ornate exterior, a kind of architectural fantasy on a theme by Pericles with variations by Mussolini, the spacious good taste of the interior was a relief. He took a fast-moving automatic elevator up one floor and walked down a broad corridor bathed in light from recessed ceiling fixtures to Room 2120. A blonde secretary sat at a desk before a frosted glass partition framed in walnut which shielded an inner office. The reflection of a florescent light shone in one lens of her horn-rimmed glasses as she smiled at him.

"I'm Mr. Baylor, to see Mr. Rutledge."

A tall, slim, patrician looking man with silver hair appeared at the door of the inner office. "I overheard you, Baylor. Tim Rutledge. Come in." He gestured Baylor toward a chair covered in black leather. "Thank you for coming." He sat down in an adjoining chair and fixed Baylor with a penetrating gaze from unwavering light grey eyes. He had not offered to shake hands and he did not smile. "I think we can be brief. I understand from Sue Soames that you are interested in our Committee."

Baylor forced himself to meet the grey eyes. "I write a news sheet. I am interested in all of the Committees on the Hill."

"Not particularly the Armed Services Committee?"
"Not particularly."

Rutledge's eyes continued to bore into him.

"If you wish information about this Committee or its activities, Mr. Baylor, you can always talk with me. I am certain that I have a reputation for frankness and cooperation among your colleagues." He paused, then added coldly, "You don't have to corrupt our secretarial staff to obtain information that is freely available by more orthodox means."

Baylor felt himself flushing and controlled an urge to justify himself to Rutledge. What the hell? He remained silent.

Rutledge put the fingers of his two hands together. "There is something that, as a newsman, distresses you about this Committee?"

"Not a thing."

"Or its staff?"

"Some of the members talk too much."

Rutledge gave a faint, wintery smile. "Don't we all." He arose. "Don't let me keep you, Mr. Baylor. I think we understand one another. When you want a news source on this Committee, please see me. I am always available."

Baylor stood up. "That's very neat, Mr. Rutledge. I wish for your sake that things worked that way, but I'm a newspaperman, not a paid publicist. I'll find my own news sources, including sources of news about this Committee."

The skin around Rutledge's eyes tightened. "I am a good friend and bad enemy, Mr. Baylor," he said softly. "That may be trite, but, believe me, it's true."

"I'll find my own way out." Baylor's voice held an angry edge.

The invitation which arrived the next morning before he left Georgetown for the office was for a dinner that evening. It was delivered by a uniformed chauffeur who smilingly confirmed his name before handing him the white square envelope.

Baylor stood by the window overlooking his tiny

garden and opened it. His forefinger casually stroked the engraved script as he read.

Mr. and Mrs. Philus Probar
request the pleasure of the company of

Mr. Baylor
at dinner
The Apex Club
January 15th at eight o'clock

R.S.V.P.

Black Tie

He was rereading it when the telephone rang.
"Mr. Baylor?" a cool feminine voice inquired.

"Speaking."

"This is Mrs. Probar's social secretary. I think you have an invitation for dinner tonight in your hand?"

"You are psychic."

A light laugh came over the wire. "Gaylord was to call me when he had delivered it. I am sorry it's on such short notice, Mr. Baylor. Mrs. Probar asked me to apologize. Mr. Probar receives your little newspaper at his law office, and he's been asking Mrs. Probar to include you at one of their dinners for some time. Frankly, for tonight we have had last minute regrets from one of our most winning bachelors. Mrs. Probar would be so pleased if you could fill in. And then, too, Mr. Probar could meet you, at last."

Baylor laughed, showing his pleasure. "I wondered if the invitation hadn't been sent to me by mistake. I didn't recall knowing the Probars. Just a moment, please. I think I may be free for tonight." He laid the telephone down and picking up a nearby paperback western ruffled its pages near the receiver. Then he picked the telephone up again. "Good luck. The best of luck. I am free. I shall be delighted to come."

"Thank you, Mr. Baylor. Mr. and Mrs. Probar will be most pleased."

Baylor sat down in his big chair and put up his feet on the nearby Moroccan leather hassock. A little smile played around his lips as he tapped his front teeth with the

envelope. This was the big time. The inner circle. He reached for the telephone.

"Jiggs? This is Tony, Darling. I'm onto a scoop. We'll have to postpone tonight. How about tomorrow? Can't make it? Why not? Well, of course it's my business, darling. No, I'm not jealous. I'm just interested. O.K. I'm more than interested." He glanced impatiently at his wrist watch. "Look, darling, I've got to run. Do we have a date or don't we? Now how in hell can I take you for granted? You're still playing the field. No, no. I didn't mean it that way. Look, yes or no? Yes? Good girl. I love you. Come around here about sevenish. Sweet girl. Goodbye." He put down the telephone with a little grimace.

The taxi brought him to the Apex Club at 8:15. He wanted to be casually, but not impolitely, late, and fifteen minutes past the hour seemed about right.

He mounted the two flights of stairs leading up to the Georgian mansion, pushed a discretely placed bell button, and waited. A butler opened the door with a tentatively welcoming smile and eyebrows raised in an unspoken question.

"I'm Mr. Baylor."

"Of course, Mr. Baylor. Mr. and Mrs. Probar are expecting you." As a maid took his coat and hat, the butler handed him a small white envelope with the name of the lady he was to escort in to dinner. Baylor glanced at the seating chart and walked toward the doorway leading to the salon. "Mr. Baylor," the butler said in a low, clear voice.

A tall, angular woman with striking features under blonde hair arranged in a careful coiffure smiled brilliantly and extended her hand. "Mr. Baylor. How very nice of you to come. Philus will be so pleased." She lowered her voice in a mock confidence. "That cad has stood me up. Fifteen minutes past the hour and no host! What excuse can he give us? Another call to the White House? He used that last night. Well, let me introduce you." She turned easily to her right to the group closest to her in the well-filled room

and, having performed the introduction, turned to greet the newest arrivals.

Baylor melted without effort into the crowded room. He discovered that though the group was somewhat older and considerably more distinguished than his friends in Georgetown, the same lighthearted patter, or a variation of it, served equally well. Glancing around out of the corner of his eye as he chatted with some nonentities, he could identify many celebrities. He was impressed and elated to discover that he was a part of a guest list that included a Supreme Court justice, two senators, a state governor, and one of the nation's richest businessmen. He took a drink from a passing tray and smiled politely at the grey haired woman in front of him who was chattering on about her servant problem. Over her shoulder he could see Representative Sam Fenester standing erect before the fireplace mantel, listening gravely and impassively to the conversation of the state governor. Fenester was a towering man, several inches over six feet, who weighed at least two hundred and twenty-five pounds. He exuded an atmosphere of massive physical strength and political power. Now his eyes were half closed as he listened to his companion talk. As Baylor watched him, the eyes suddenly opened and fixed him with a direct, all-encompassing scrutiny. They were bright blue eyes that conveyed a formidable intellectual capacity. As quickly as they had opened they were hooded again. Even across a crowded room Baylor felt that he had been noticed, appraised, and dismissed.

A hand grasped his forearm. "Baylor, I'm Probar. Damned nice of you to come on such short notice. Must have seemed like a God damned royal summons." The man standing beside him was deeply tanned and smiling broadly under a ruff of silver grey hair.

"I was free, Mr. Probar, and glad to come. Particularly since I was told you liked my stuff."

"I do. I do. Damned perceptive. Style, content, coverage. What more could one want? You met everyone here?"

"Not at the other end of the room."

"It's a God damned crush, isn't it? I tell Darwin, for God's sake, either cut the guest list or let's hire a hall. Who would you like to meet over there?"

"I'd like to meet Representative Sam Fenester."

Probar chuckled and punched his shoulder. "Of course you would! You know this town. He's the most powerful man here. Shakes the Pentagon on Monday, sears hell out of the CIA on Tuesday, and tells off the White House on Wednesday."

"Then he rests on Thursday?"

Probar looked at him and threw back his head in a hearty laugh, "You're savvy, boy. Thursday's the day of the party caucus. Friday, Saturday, and Sunday he goes home to his Congressional district and builds those political fences, because all of that power, all of that influence that sears the bejesus out of the bureaucracy, whether they're a three star general with an army or a file clerk with a mimeograph machine, can disappear any November of an even-numbered year when he fails to get a majority." He punched Baylor with a forefinger. "That's sovereignty, boy, that's the raw, ultimate, honest-to-God truth of politics."

Baylor grinned. "Yes, sir."

Probar peered at him. "I don't fool you, do I boy? Good. Keep your eyes open and your tail tucked in and you may survive in this town. We ought to talk some more. Why not have lunch with me tomorrow at the City Club?"

"I'd be delighted."

"Good. One o'clock. Borne, the guard of the sacred portals, will tell you where to find me. Now, come along. I'll introduce you to Fenester and some of his Congressional colleagues on the Committee that's his power base. Know the power bases in this town, boy, and you know who runs Washington."

They moved into the group that now surrounded the Congressman at the fireplace.

"Sam," Probar said in a booming voice. "I want you to meet one of the bright young fellows in this town, Tony Baylor."

The hooded eyes opened and a powerful, ham-like

hand reached out to grasp Baylor's. Blue eyes bored once again into his. Baylor felt transfixed, then the eyes drooped and the hand released his. "Mr. Baylor," the deep voice said, as if not only acknowledging an introduction but filing the name and impressions about it securely away forever. It was all very impressive and flattering. Baylor was hardly aware of the other introductions or of the interested faces that appraised him from the circle around Fenester. Congressman Blackwold, Congressman Orme, Congressman Vetrnik, Governor Severbold, the names were a meaningless litany. It was the cold blue eyes that he remembered.

Metropolitan
Club Hunt
to be in London

SEVEN

AT one o'clock the next day, Baylor survived Borne's cold scrutiny and passed into the austere lobby of the City Club as instructed. Philus Probar was standing with his back to a roaring fire reading the financial page of a newspaper. He glanced up over his glasses as Baylor approached. "Right on time, Tony." They shook hands. "Stand here with me a moment. That warmth feels good on my backside. I ought to be down in Barbados this month, away from this winter weather, but there's too damn much work to be done. Is it still snowing outside?"

"Yes. Very heavily now." Probar folded up the paper. "Ever been here before?"

"No." "This is the neutral ground where we meet our guests. We'll take that little toy elevator over there to the dining room on the fourth floor for lunch." Baylor nodded and smiled. Probar teetered back and forth on his heels for a moment, seemingly lost in thought. "Well, let's go." He

laid the newspaper on a large circular table in the center of the room and, in passing, squeezed the shoulder of a man reading there who looked up and smiled. "Hello, Phi. Looks like the golf at Burning Tree is snowed out for this weekend."

"Afraid so, Win." They crowded into the elevator with three other men who greeted Probar with jocular familiarity. "This is Tony Baylor, fellows," Probar said. "Tony, this is about as close as you can get to a group of diplomats." He gestured with his head, "Ambassador Jordan, Ambassador Wilts, Assistant Secretary Key."

"I'm glad to know you, gentlemen," Baylor said. The elevator creaked to a stop on the fourth floor. "Well, we made it, Phi," Wilts said. "We're in company watched over by the angels."

"Fallen or otherwise?" Probar rejoined. Baylor dutifully joined in the appreciative burst of laughter.

They sat at a table by the window overlooking Seventeenth Street. Probar wrote out their order on a luncheon ticket and leaned back in his chair as the waiter brought them two dry sherries.

"Tio Pepe," Probar said after a sip. "The best sherry in Spain—and that means anywhere. Ever been there?"

"No, I haven't," Baylor admitted. "Lovely country. You should take your next vacation there."

"I may do that." "You look like a Yale man."

"I'm afraid not." "Princeton?"

"No. Valparaiso University." "You went to school in Chile?"

"No. Valparaiso, Indiana." Probar turned his glass of sherry in the light. "I've heard of it. Lutheran isn't it?"

"Yes, but I'm Episcopalian." "Hometown boy?"

"No, I came from Peru, Indiana."

"You must have a lot of Spanish out there, Peru, Valparaiso."

"Not really. We also have a Plymouth, a La Porte, and a Warsaw. We're pretty international."

Probar laughed. "Not like the provincial East, eh?"

"Not at all."

"Still, you look Ivy League."

"Protective coloration."

Probar finished his sherry as the waiter put two portions of deviled crab before them. "Don't go on the defensive, boy. I'm from Davenport, Iowa, myself by way of Center College, Kentucky."

Baylor smiled. "And you look like you could buy and sell the Ivy League."

"I married into it. Thanks to me, my wife is one of the more generous alumnae of Vassar." Probar began to eat. "This crab is damned good. So you see, boy, we are really a couple of Middlewestern hayseeds making it in the big town." He grinned across the table at Baylor. "Fortunately, there's a lot more hayseed in this town than there is Ivy." Changing the subject he asked, "What did you think of Sam Fenester?"

"He lives up in person to all I've heard about him."

"He's one of the most powerful men in the Congress and he knows it. Don't ever cross him. He eats people like you for breakfast."

"And I thought he was a vegetarian."

"You aren't very impressed, are you, boy? Is that because you're that tough or because you don't know any better?"

Baylor shrugged. "I suppose it's because I have nothing to lose. I could leave town tomorrow with everything I own in the back of my Morgan."

"You're lean and hungry."

"Something like that."

"And ambitious?"

"Sure."

Probar slowly lit a cigar, rolling it carefully in the flame of his match as he studied Baylor. "You remind me of

myself twenty years ago, Tony. I was a young lawyer, you're a young newspaperman. I suppose either calling is useful for someone that plans to make Washington pay the piper."

"I don't intend to make Washington pay the piper."

"You know damn well you do. Nothing else will satisfy you. We're too much alike for me not to understand you, boy. I read you like a book."

"It's not an unflattering comparison, Mr. Probar, but I'm not certain that you're right."

Probar laughed shortly. "Can the politeness. You know you're thinking 'what does this wily old son-of-a-bitch want?'"

"O.K. What do you want?"

Probar leaned slightly over the table and dropped his voice. "I'm a political animal, Tony, surrounded by lawyers inhibited by delusions of professional purity. Any one of my partners would sell out their own mothers if they saw even a temporary advantage in it, but first they'd have to devise a highly moral, ethical reason for doing so. Now, there's nothing more gratifying in this world to the avaricious and the pure of heart than those wonderful occasions when personal gain and high moral purpose can coincide. Unfortunately, those occasions are not common enough, and I often find my lawyers floundering around like falcons with one wing. I need someone who's not a lawyer to follow the political scents where they lead and damn the ethics, damn the lip service to the higher things, damn the so-called unwritten rules. If there's a kill to be made—make it."

"It sounds like you need a ferret, not a falcon."

Probar gestured impatiently with his cigar. "We've carried that imagery far enough. What I need on my payroll is not another lawyer, I need a newspaperman."

"Like me?"

"My intuition and my judgment tell me that you're the man."

"What do you want me to do?"

"For starters, I want a thorough investigation of the

National Committee staff of the other major political party. It will be a full time job, apart from the time it takes to get out your little news sheet. I want to emphasize that. It would be a full time job. You would have to give up everything else."

"How much?"

"Five thousand to start. We'll talk about money again in about a month."

"That's pretty rich."

"You prove to me that it's worth it, and it's only a beginning. Besides, I'm not just talking about money. This is politics, grabbing the opposition where the hair is short. Who knows where it can lead?"

"It's tempting."

"It's meant to be."

Baylor quietly finished his coffee. Probar sat smoking, looking out of the window, waiting. Baylor cleared his throat. "I can't do it."

"Why?"

"I'm a newspaperman."

"You haven't answered my question."

"If that's not an answer, Mr. Probar, then I haven't got an answer."

Probar looked at him, a sardonic smile playing about his mouth. "Didn't I offer enough? Don't tell me I've been outbid?"

"No. I'm not Dr. Faust."

Probar pushed out his cigar and arose from the table, his face flushing and clouding over. "I thought you were smarter than that, boy. I really did. You just bought yourself a permanent berth among this town's also-rans."

Several inches of slushy snow had fallen when Baylor emerged from the City Club. He walked around the corner and, retrieving the Morgan from a parking garage, drove to the National Press Building. He bought a package of cigarettes from the news stand in the lobby and absently took the elevator to his office floor. The strange feeling of inadequacy he had in the presence of Probar was leaving

him, together with the temptation, when he was with the lawyer, to apologize for his own temerity in disagreeing with the man. The money, the power, the social position had nearly mesmerized him, but now as he entered his dingy office, he began to feel like his own man again. A feeling of elation surged through him. He was onto something. Probar had tried to buy him off.

He dropped into his swivel chair and lit a cigarette. But what in the hell was it? What was the Committee doing? Whatever it was, Probar must know about it. He got up and walked down the hall to one of the several glass doors of a wire service which occupied a large part of his floor. "Charley Diggs in?" he asked a frowsy woman who was reading copy over the smoke of a cigarette protruding from one corner of her mouth. She tossed her head in the direction of an inner office and went on reading. Baylor pushed through a maze of battered green filing cabinets and scattered books and papers until he found a small, bald-headed man bent over an ancient typewriter. His two forefingers flew over the keys, interrupted only by the carriage bell. Then an inky thumb shot the carriage back to the right.

"Hi, Charley."

"Greetings, Tony." The typewriter lapsed into silence. "Have a seat—somewhere." Charley looked around vaguely. "What's new?"

"I need some advice."

"That's new."

"If you were trying to get some dirt on some Congressmen, how would you go about it?"

Charley took a cigarette from the pack offered him and let Baylor light it. "You've got a nice little income from your news sheet. Why start living dangerously?"

"No kidding. What would you do?"

"I'd go home, take a nice cold shower, and forget it. But if you haven't enough brains to do that, I'd talk with the political opposition, the staff of the opposition party on their Committees, the bureaucrats they've roasted and disappointed in Committee hearings, their former employees