

"How big?"

"Oh, maybe fifty, sixty dollars, twice a week."

"He gets drunk?"

"Oh, a little high, maybe. Mostly he spreads it around. Tips, buying drinks for everybody. He plays the big shot for an hour or so and then fades out. But I ask, 'What's in it for him?'"

Baylor gave her five dollars. "After he's gone, ask Rosie to come over."

"O.K. hon. Thanks. I'll get your Scotch."

The five exotic dancers who provided the Red Onion's "Continuous Entertainment" had gone through their routines all over again before Williams left. A few minutes after his departure, Rosie Dawn dropped into a chair at Baylor's table.

"I hear you been waitin' for me. Am I that good?"

"You're that good. How about a drink?"

"One's on the way. The boss is never asleep on his feet where pushin' the liquor is concerned."

"Your boy friend really goes for this place, doesn't he?"

Rosie smiled crookedly. "Well, that's how we stay in business."

"His name is Williams isn't it?"

Rosie shifted in her chair. "I've got to go to the little girl's room. Come on, and you can wait for me in my dressing room."

"Dressing room?"

"I'm the headliner here now. For laughs we call the six by eight closet I change in a dressing room. The other gals change in the john." Baylor hesitated. "You want to talk about Williams don't you?" Rosie asked with a touch of impatience.

"Yes."

"Then come on."

He followed her through a door at one side of the small stage on which a small-boned Chinese girl was performing under a blue light. She opened a door and

switched on a light. "Make yourself at home. I'll only be a sec."

Baylor sat down on a straight chair and lit a cigarette. The room was musty with the odor of cheap cosmetics. A battered theatrical trunk stood in one corner and a much used dressing table with a dust of powder and a sprinkling of hairpins on its surface filled one wall. There was barely room to move around. The door opened and in the mottled mirror of the dressing table Baylor saw the bulk of a man. He moved quickly into the room and, spinning the chair before the dressing table around, sat down facing Baylor. His swarthy, intense face was less than a foot away from Baylor's.

"My name is Sessena, Baylor. I was a good friend of Frank Bennington's. I know what you two were working on together."

"Oh."

"I'm taking a real chance in seeing you, even under these circumstances, but this thing is moving fast and there's no time to fessce it. Up to now, you've performed an important service. Now it's time for you to drop out. I'm on your side. Let me handle it."

Baylor sat back in his chair, a way little smile on his lips.

"You don't believe me, do you, Baylor?"

"No."

"You're over your head. You don't even know the object of the game. Get out while you can. There's no news story here, just a dirty, dangerous situation that I'm trained to handle and you aren't."

"No."

"I tell you Bennington was a friend of mine. I'll handle it the way he intended."

"No."

"Why not? What's in it for you? Bennington is dead.

There won't be any more money."

"Who in hell are you?"

"It would be simple if I could tell you that, wouldn't it?"

it? But I can't. You'll have to take my word for it that there's nothing more you can do to help. You'll just muck it up."

Baylor hesitated, feeling Sessena's intensity and sincerity. Then he slowly shook his head.

"If you knew the whole story, you'd let me handle it."

"Then tell me the whole story. Maybe I'll give you a by-line."

Sessena spread his hands. "O.K., kid. Have it your way. Keep plunging ahead even though you don't know where you're going or why. It makes my life more complicated and it will probably end yours. But have it your way."

He got up from his chair, opened the door cautiously, and disappeared down the passageway. A breath of cold, fresh air told Baylor he had slipped out an alley entrance.

Baylor waited. The muted bass sounds of the Red Onion's orchestra throbbed through the wall of the room. He knew now that Rosie Dawn wouldn't return, and he soon got up from his chair, found the door into the alley, and walked around to Fourteenth Street. He sat in the Morgan and smoked a cigarette. Damn it. He had given away his interest in Williams to Rosie Dawn and she had probably told that goon with the five o'clock shadow, Sessena. Result: he had been warned off again. This time it was the "let me handle it for you old pal" bit. The guy must have been desperate. He stepped on the starter and the cold engine of the Morgan sputtered into life. After he had warmed the engine enough for it to settle into a steady roar, he drove home to Georgetown.

He wasn't surprised the next morning when Charley Diggs practically walked in on his heels as he entered the office.

"Say, Tony. I just wanted to ask, have the police ever requested you to sign a statement about Bennington?"

"Not yet."

"Doesn't that seem rather strange?"

"I hadn't thought about it. They know where to find me when they want me."

"Funny, they'd just accept your oral statement and let it go at that."

Baylor shrugged. "The police force is going to hell, Charley. If they were doing their job, I'd be under arrest, bound over without bail, and you'd have today's story, which I gather has so far eluded you."

"That's a nasty way to put it, Tony."

"I feel nasty. What else is new, or have I become your sole interest in life?"

"Same old crap. Wire service bread and butter items: tension grows here and there; nature runs wild here and there; prominent politician says he won't when everybody knows damn well he will; Congress, having completed its investigation proving that the Department of State is staffed with halfwits, is starting an investigation this morning to prove that the CIA is staffed with dim-wits."

"Who's after the CIA?"

"The CIA Special Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, old Sam Fenster himself presiding. Jesus, can you imagine trying to testify with those iceberg eyes boring into you? I'd be scared shitless."

Baylor tried to straighten in his chair casually and disguise his sudden, intense interest. All of Charley Diggs' antennae were sensitively alert where Tony Baylor's reactions were concerned. As a friend, Charley no doubt hoped he wasn't in trouble, but if he were in trouble, Charley meant to be first with the story.

"Well, that will go over big in Pocatello."

"Sho' nuff. And it's politically safe. Like the Department of State, the CIA doesn't have a constituency. Did you ever hear of an investigation of the Army? Or the Department of Agriculture, or the Department of Labor, or even the Post Office? But poor old State has always been fair game, and the CIA lately is almost as popular."

To Baylor's relief, Charley Diggs soon ran out of conversation and left with a final doe-eyed look of concern for Baylor. In order to save time, Baylor left the Morgan in the garage and hailed a private taxi. Outside, yellow letters painted on silver-blue proclaimed "The Blue Rocket Cab Company." Inside, a sprung spring in the rear seat poked lasciviously into Baylor's bottom while the entire rear of the car, minus the services of one of the shock absorbers, listed to the right. Par for the course. One advantage was that when they finally made it to the marble fortress of the Rayburn Building, no one would notice him. No one worth noticing would arrive in the sole taxicab of The Blue Rocket Cab Company.

As they proceeded up Pennsylvania Avenue, somewhat on the bias like a giant land crab, the driver puffed genially on his cigar and adjusted the radio to his satisfaction. "You doing O.K., back there?" he called over the spirited sales pitch of the radio announcer.

"Great."

"What's this with them FBI's and CIA's?"

"No idea."

"You know, we go along, no sweat, Vietnam, nude movie starlets, the Senators baseball team, just the good old U.S.A., and all of sudden, bang, police-state intimidation, the FBI trying to take over the country, the CIA payin' us all off. I don't get it. Yesterday nothin'. Today, that's all you hear."

"I haven't been reading the newspapers lately. They give me heartburn."

"Take your choice, man. Newspapers, TV, radio, they're all plugging it."

"I'll look into it right away."

The hearing room was crowded when he arrived at five minutes of ten. In view of the House rules against televising its committee proceedings, he was surprised to see three or four television cameras about the room, their heavy cables running at random up and down the aisles. He walked over to John Rutledge who was overseeing final

preparations with his usual air of patrician detachment.

"Television?"

"Good morning, Baylor. Glad to see that you're coming through the front door this morning."

"Aren't you violating the rules of the House against televised hearings?"

"This is a meeting of the Joint Watchdog Committee on the CIA. Mr. Fenester decided that in view of the breadth of his inquiry, it was not desirable to hold hearings with a House subcommittee. Since he is Chairman as well of the Joint Senate and House Committee, he has decided to hold the hearings before the Senior Committee."

"And get on nationwide television."

"You're a Washington news reporter, you tell me."

"Certainly you wouldn't fault him for that?"

"I wouldn't fault him for anything. Mr. Rutledge

—not on the Hill, anyway."

Rutledge looked at him with a slight touch of increased interest. "You seem just a little more perceptive

than when we last met, Mr. Baylor."

"I've lived a little."

"Just so. It's good to live, isn't it?" A faint, wintry ghost of a smile touched Rutledge's face as he turned away.

One by one the Senators and Representatives comprising the Joint Committee entered the hearing room by a door leading directly to the dais on which the Committee members sat in a semicircle behind a huge judicial bench, looking out in a false implication of judgment on the witnesses, newspapermen, and audience below them. The purpose of Congressional hearings, Baylor thought wryly, is to obtain information which will enable the Congress to perform its legislative functions effectively, but the design of its hearing rooms suggests a court of inquiry. In the hands of an astute and ruthless chairman, bathed in klieg lights and before the television cameras, it can become a Star Chamber, prosecuting, condemning, and in the sense of adverse publicity, punishing the witnesses before it and the institutions or causes they represent. He had no doubt

in his mind that Congressman Sam Fenester intended to publicly punish the FBI and the CIA in just this way. God! If he just knew why!

There was a little stir of excitement in the room and the large, majestic figure of Congressman Sam Fenester strode purposefully across the dais. He stood a moment behind the chairman's seat in the middle of the dais, nodding solemnly to the other members as several photographers trained their flash cameras on him. Then he sat down and looked calmly out over the hearing room for a moment, his powerful face immobile, his eyes serene. He was the master of his element, and he was in his element. Congressman Vethnik leaned over and whispered a few words into his right ear. Fenester nodded. Congressman Orme leaned over his shoulder and talked earnestly for a moment before he patted Fenester's massive shoulder and resumed his seat.

As Fenester's huge right hand reached for the gavel, the already well-lit dais was suddenly bathed in an intense blue-white light as the television cameras ground into action.

The gavel descended in one majestic arc, and Congressman Fenester spoke in a deep, assured voice. "This hearing has been called to look into allegations that our domestic and international security agencies, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency, respectively, are exceeding their directives set by this Congress under appropriate legislation, and are engaged in activity which endangers the civil rights and the constitutional immunities of the people. As this is a most serious matter and a subject of the highest public interest in a democracy, these hearings are public hearings and, I am informed, will be brought in whole or in part to the people by radio and television. I wish to make it clear that we are not here to pass judgment on the professional competence or patriotic zeal of these agencies, but are merely exercising the prerogative of alert supervision of security agencies and their police functions that is essential to a democracy. If, in the Chairman's judgment, this inquiry

moves into areas where the national security is jeopardized by public hearings, these hearings will be adjourned and the Committee will reconvene in Executive Session with the press and the public excluded.

"The first witness will be the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency."

Baylor walked over to the press table. The statement of the Director had been mimeographed. He took a copy from a pile on the corner of the press table and sat down. It would take the Director fifteen minutes to read his statement. It was the questions and answers, the interplay between Fenester and the Director, that Baylor was eagerly anticipating.

Fenester was brutal with the Director. In a way, it was a masterpiece of parry and thrust. Always verbally polite, almost to the point of punctiliousness, Fenester belied his words by his inflections, his timing, and his expressions. The message came across clearly: this formidable and powerful man was angered and alarmed, and he would not hesitate to use his vast influence and authority to cripple or to destroy the CIA if he had to do so. The television cameras, which could convey only the appearances of what they recorded, framed this anger and alarm in terms of an old-fashioned American's concern for private liberty, and the threat to destroy the CIA as a simple assertion of the primacy of the people and their representatives over any policy or security agency.

Baylor walked back from the Hill to the National Press Building oblivious to the light rain falling. He felt a peculiar sense of discomfort, almost of humiliation. Why? He entered his dingy office and hung his damp coat on the coat tree. Standing before his desk, he lit a cigarette and stood gazing somberly out of the rain-streaked window. What if he had been had? This guy Sessena with the five o'clock shadow had known or had guessed at the money Bennington had given to him. What if Bennington had been an FBI or a CIA agent? It explained a lot of things including the sick sensation crawling out of the pit of his

stomach. He ground out the cigarette viciously in an ash tray and ran a hand through his hair with a distraught motion. "You stupid bastard," he said to the reflection in his mirror. "You stupid, gullible bastard."

FIFTEEN

HE smoked six more cigarettes before he decided that it wasn't all that bad. He had two thousand dollars of Bennington's, tainted or otherwise, and a lead on one hell of a story. Why not stay with it? If someone were willing to kill Bennington to keep it quiet, it was big enough to make his reputation as an honest-to-God newspaperman.

He looked around in distaste at his little office. He'd break out of here. He'd show them who was small-time. Bennington's bosses may not have wanted a newspaperman, but that was what they sure as hell had got.

His only hope was to hang onto Williams and try to break him down or follow him to a better lead. He sighed and picked up the telephone.

"Guess who?"

"Tony!"

"I feel like some more dancing. How about you?"

"Rightee-o."

"Seven-thirty?"

"I can't wait."

He delayed until they stopped at an all-night hamburger drive-in after their dancing. "Janice, how well do you know this guy Williams?"

She squeezed catsup from a plastic container on the hamburgers that rested on a metal tray by her window. "We say hello at the water cooler. That's about all. He's shy with girls."

"How about introducing me to him casually?"

"I thought you met him at Colonel Chambers' office?"

"I did, but I'd like to meet him again where I can talk to him socially."

She handed Baylor a hamburger heaped high with lettuce, tomatoes, and onions.

"How am I going to eat this?"

"Stop talking and pretend no one is watching. Hold it in both hands or it'll squish out the sides."

"Where's the coke?"

"Over here on the tray. When you're thirsty give a holler and I'll hold it to your lips."

Baylor munched on the sandwich. "Do you ever have office parties?"

"Tomorrow night, as a matter of fact."

"Does Williams come?"

"Once in a while."

"Invite me tomorrow night and introduce me if he shows up."

"Rightee-o." She turned and grinned at him, then her expression seemed to fade away. She slumped forward, her drink pouring sideways out of a clenched paper cup onto the floor. He threw his sandwich out of his window with a reflex motion and reached for her. He was dimly conscious that a jagged halo of glass had exploded in his windshield.

"Janice! What's wrong?"

The girl slid forward until her inert body was against the dashboard. Baylor lifted her head and felt a warm sticky substance running down from her hair onto her neck. Blood. He turned, still holding her, and shouted

out of the window. "Help, somebody. This girl has been shot."

The nearest car was four parking spaces away. A boy of high-school age looked out. "Whatcha say, Mister?"

"This girl has been shot! Please call a doctor."

The boy's eyes grew big. "No kiddin'?"

"No kiddin'. For Christ's sake, hurry."

Voices came from inside the parked car. "The guy says someone in his car is shot." An older man with a concerned face, whitish blue under the fluorescent lighting, hastily got out on the far side of the car and looked across its roof at the Morgan.

"You say someone is shot?"

"Yes. Shot. Please get a doctor. Please."

"O.K., fellow, hold on. I'll call from inside." He broke into a dead run for the door of the drive-in restaurant.

Baylor sat in the Morgan holding Janice's inert form. He pulled a handkerchief from his jacket pocket and tried to stop the blood that was trickling down the side of her face. The wound appeared to be somewhere above her right ear, but since that side of her head was away from him, he could not be certain. She was still alive, though her breathing was shallow.

The white-faced man appeared at his window. "I've called an emergency ambulance and the police. They should be right along. Is there anything I can do?"

"No, thanks. I'm just trying to stop the flow of blood until the doctor arrives."

"Yes, the blood. I guess that's all you can do." The man stood staring at him anxiously. A small crowd had gathered some little distance away in the parking area. Snatches of their excited conversation drifted over to Baylor.

"What happened?"

"Some gal is shot."

"Did he do it?"

"I don't know."

"Is she dead?"

"I think so."

"Somebody ought to call the police."

"I think the gray-haired guy standing by the car did."

"Is he a cop?"

"Probably. Off duty, maybe."

The sound of a siren screaming in the distance became louder. A white ambulance with flashing red lights careened into the parking area. The driver asked something of the crowd and pulled over beside the Morgan. The right door of the Morgan opened and an attendant in a white smock looked in. "O.K. feller, let me have her." He drew Janice toward him, picked her up in powerful arms, and laid her on a stretcher the driver of the ambulance had placed on the pavement beside the Morgan. Baylor got stiffly out of the other side of the car and walked around to Janice. She looked dead in the fluorescent light, but she was still breathing in little gasps through thin, purple lips. The attendant gave her an injection and taped a heavy bandage to the head wound. He nodded to the driver and they lifted the stretcher into the ambulance.

A police squad car moved in behind the ambulance.

A uniformed policeman slid out from behind the wheel.

"Gunshot, officer. A medical emergency. She's still alive." The ambulance attendant said.

The officer looked at Baylor, his eyes drooping to notice the blood on his clothing and then coming back to his face. "You with her, mister?"

"Yes."

The officer deftly ran his hands down Baylor's body to be certain he wasn't armed, then he nodded to the ambulance driver. "O.K., take her away." He nodded curtly to Baylor. "Stand easy over there by the squad car, mister." He turned and looked inside the Morgan, probing its interior with a flashlight. Its beam lingered for some time on the hole in the shattered windshield. He straightened up and turned to Baylor. His manner was more relaxed. "Let's see your driver's license." He looked at the card Baylor handed him and then fixed it at the top of a

clipboard. "O.K., get in the squad car and let me have the story."

The officer slipped in beside Baylor and picked up the radio phone. He reported the incident and asked for another squad car and a tow truck. Then he turned to Baylor. "We'll have to impound your vehicle as material evidence. After we've looked it over, say in a day or two, you can pick it up. You'll have to ride down to headquarters in the squad car I've called for. They'll decide whether to book you or not. You are not required to answer my questions without a lawyer present. If you want a lawyer and can't afford it, we'll see that you are furnished one. Anything you say may be used in evidence against you." The officer ended his monotonous litany. "O.K.? Now, you want to answer a few basic questions like who you are and who the girl is and what you think might have happened, to save you time at headquarters?"

"Sure."

"O.K., by the numbers."

An hour later he was sitting on a bench at police headquarters at 300 Indiana Avenue. Sergeant O'Brien of the Homicide Bureau was standing before him, legs apart, looking down at him quizzically as he rocked back and forth on his heels. "You have any idea who fired that shot?"

"No."

"It was a go-calibre rifle slug. We found it in the shrubbery of the drive-in. Who was it for, you or the girl?" Baylor shrugged. "How can I know? Some crack-pot probably fired at random."

"Just fired at a parked car for the hell of it?"

"Something like that."

"Maybe it was the same guy that happened to deliver a dead body to your office."

"Maybe."

The sergeant blew his nose vigorously and showed the handkerchief back into his pocket. "Well, Baylor. I'm not worried if you aren't."

"You mean I'm free to go?"

"Why not? What have you done wrong, except maybe to duck?"

"How is the girl?"

"She's going to live. The bullet just creased the side of her head."

"Thank God for that."

Sergeant O'Brien looked at Baylor impassively.

"There was good luck tonight all the way around, but your appeal to the ladies may be reduced when they discover that you're accident prone."

"I'll have to keep it a secret."

"And keep ducking."

"Let me know when you begin to get worried."

"Protective custody?"

"Something like that."

It was two-thirty when Baylor got home to Georgetown. He fell asleep across the bed in his clothes with the light on.

He awakened with the sun streaming in his windows and a figure standing over his bed, silhouetted in the bright daylight. He rubbed his eyes and rose up on one elbow. It was Jiggs.

"You look like hell."

"I feel like hell."

"I'll fix breakfast and you go bathe and shave."

"O.K."

She waited until he had eaten and was drinking his second cup of coffee. "What's going on?"

"I was sitting in a drive-in last night with a secretary from the Pentagon when someone shot her with a rifle."

Jiggs hand flew up to her mouth. "Shot her. You mean they killed her?"

"No, she's alive. The bullet just creased her skull. I suppose it's all over the morning papers, and tied in with Bennington's death because of me."

Jiggs stared at him. "No, Tony, it isn't. There isn't a word about it in the newspapers."

"Nothing on the radio or TV?"

She shook her head.

He sat silently and sipped his coffee.

"You're fishing in mighty deep waters, chum."

He nodded slowly.

"The Bennington murder has disappeared from the newspapers too."

"Yes, Charley Diggs told me that it was fading out on him."

"Someone wants this all very quiet."

"Yes."

"Someone big."

"Yes."

"Someone wants you dead."

"Yes"

"Someone big enough to control newspaper stories?"

"Maybe."

"That's very, very big."

"How about another cup of coffee?"

She poured it for him. "What are you going to do now, Tony?"

"I don't know. Stick like glue to Williams, I guess. If I can just stay in the game, I feel this thing may move toward a climax."

"What kind of a climax?"

"I don't know. That's the hell of it."

"I'm scared, Tony."

"Come sit over here with me. We don't have to go anywhere."

She snuggled beside him on the sofa. "This is better," she said happily, then she suddenly turned her face into his chest and began to cry. "I don't want you dead, Tony."

He hugged her to him. "Forget it, Jiggsy."

But she cried for some time.

Jiggs stayed with him all day. By midafternoon, a heavy cloud cover had obscured the sun and a rising wind blew flurries of snow against the garden window.

When darkness fell early, they drew the draperies and lit a fire in the fireplace.

"How about an omelet?" she asked.

"Swell. Let's do it now. I have to go out about seven."

She looked at him apprehensively. "Where?"

"I want to call on Janice at the hospital. Visiting hours are from seven to nine."

"Janice?"

"The Pentagon secretary they shot in my car."

"Oh. You never mentioned her name."

He chuckled her under the chin. "She's just a little creep I was trying to use to get a line on Williams. You don't have to use that tone of voice."

She smiled and then her face grew serious. "Poor kid. She didn't deserve it, did she?"

"No."

The snow flurries had become a light rain as his taxi drew up to the impersonal entrance of the red brick hospital. He found out Janice's room number at the reception desk, took a self-service elevator to the fourth floor, and walked down a green corridor to her ward. She was lying across the room from him in a bed near a window. He walked over to her past the other beds and a few other visitors and laid a bouquet of flowers on a small table by the bed. "Hello, Janice, honey. How are you?"

Her eyes fluttered open and then widened. She moistened her lips with her tongue. "Go away, you bug me," she said in a weak voice.

"I'm terribly sorry you were hurt."

"Go away." Her eyes filled with tears. "You're just trouble."

He hesitated.

"If you don't go, I'll ring for a nurse."

"All right, I'll go."

"Take your flowers with you. I don't want them."

He reached over and picked up the flowers. "I am really sorry."

"Go away."

He threw the flowers into a waste basket on his way out.

As he walked through the lobby, he heard a voice over the public address system. "Mr. Anthony Baylor, please contact the information desk."

He walked over to the information desk. "I'm Anthony Baylor."

The middle-aged woman behind the counter glanced at a scrawled note. "You got a telephone call. You can take it on one of the house phones over there. Just give the operator your name."

It was Jiggs. "Tony," she said breathlessly. "I'm calling from a pay-phone down at the drugstore. The police just drove up to your place, sirens, red lights, and all. Thank God, I had just left and was on the next corner when they barrelled down the street."

"What did they do?"

"They pounded on the door and raised general hell. The whole neighborhood turned out. Then they left, but a ferocious-looking man in a white helmet is waiting at the door. I suppose they'll be back with a search warrant tomorrow and make themselves comfortable inside."

"I see."

"The rumor is that you are wanted for murder."

"Oh."

"You can't go home, Tony. You'd better come to my place."

"I shouldn't involve you."

"I am involved, darling. I've been involved for a long time. Besides it's a cold night and you have no other place to go."

"O.K. I'll be there in a half hour."

"How's Janice?"

"She threw me out."

"That's nice." She blew him a kiss into the telephone and hung up.

gusts of cold wind drove the rain under the roof of the hospital motor entrance. Baylor stood shivering in a pool of light thrown by the circular electric fixtures embedded in the roof's rough-textured concrete until a taxi cab swung up a curving incline to the entrance, its windshield wipers arching back and forth briskly, to discharge a passenger. He entered the stale warmth of the taxi gratefully and asked the driver to take him to the corner of Wisconsin and M in Georgetown. Lighting a cigarette, he leaned back against the worn brown vinyl and watched the street lights flash by outside the rain-spattered windows.

He had a cold, numbing ache in his stomach and he could not think clearly. He was wanted by the police for murder! What in hell did you do when you were wanted by the police for murder? Where did you go? Who did you talk to? How did you convince the police that it was all a horrible mistake and that you were innocent? He had walked out of his apartment an hour ago and now he couldn't go back. He had the slightly damp clothes he was

wearing and about twenty-five dollars in his wallet. He couldn't go to his office. He couldn't show his face anywhere he was known. He was a man suddenly hunted. He was alone.

Not entirely alone. Jiggs had offered to take him in. But was that safe? Was it fair to Jiggs? Jiggs said he had no choice. If he could just get hold of himself and think this out.

"You want this side of Wisconsin or the other side?" The taxi driver asked.

"Other side, please." He paid the fare and slowly walked up Wisconsin Avenue to a hamburger stand. He straddled a stool and ordered a cup of coffee. At police headquarters, Sergeant O'Brien had acted more concerned for his safety than interested in him as a suspect in Bennington's murder. What had changed his mind? Was somebody trying to frame him? Murder Bennington and convict Baylor of the crime? That would take care of both of them. He drained his cup and put it down shakily on the saucer with a little clatter.

"Some more coffee, chum?" The counterwoman looked at him expectantly, a Silex of coffee poised in one hand.

"Yes, please. Hit it again."

"Right."

He took out his wallet. He didn't have twenty-five dollars. He had eighteen. Hidden in the coffee tin in the kitchen of his apartment was the two thousand dollars he had received from Bennington. He needed that two thousand dollars. He also needed an extra shirt and his toothbrush. Jiggs had said that the police apparently hadn't had a search warrant. They had posted a man outside and left. He could go through the garden of the house next door, over his wall, and enter his apartment through the garden doors. The policeman on the alley side wouldn't know the difference if he were quiet.

With a plan for action he felt calmer, almost cheerful. He left a quarter on the counter and stepped out on Wisconsin Avenue. The rain had stopped. He walked up the wet sidewalks, reflecting the multicolors of the shop