

conduct out of Cuba, but what if he wasn't ready to leave? When was Jane Forbes's cagey brother going to contact him? What in hell was he waiting for? Jane Forbes, a phony name. Maybe she had a phony brother as well. The Americans hadn't told him everything either. Everybody knew the rules of the game except himself, and he had the ball. He ordered another drink. All he could do was to stall on the prices, play the thing out as long as possible. If he stayed as long as he could and failed, the Americans still ought to give him his fifty thousand bucks. It would be a pretty stinking thing if they didn't. Once he had the money, to hell with this spy bit. It was too tricky, and guys who were supposed to be smart were dumb. What could be dumber than to send a guy into a country like Cuba to talk with some jerk he'd never seen about overthrowing the government? And no password, no identification. Maybe it was a big practical joke. Already he had made one false step. When Perez's man telephoned, he could have tested him with the password.

A chilling thought occurred to him. If he had used a password, it would have been monitored. Perez's man would not have responded, then how would he have explained the strange words he had used? He took a swallow out of his glass. Maybe having no password wasn't so dumb. He began to feel better. Maybe they were pretty smart after all. They had told him to wait. Jane Forbes had told him to wait. That had been his trouble with Perez; he had gone to him. He had taken the initiative. That was a mistake. He had done something he had to explain.

He had one job: waiting. If there was no contact within one month, leave Cuba. That was the game, smart guy; that was the whole game. Just sit on your ass, no matter what. Brother Forbes, or whatever in hell his name was, had the job of convincing Jack Wil-

son at a safe time and place of his identity. There was no risk if he didn't do anything. Just sit tight. Let them come to him. If he played it that way, the Americans would pay off. They might even use him again. Again? What was he thinking about? This was it. The one and only. He ordered another drink, shifted his big shoulders inside his coat, and began to think of Rita Carlos. Waiting, sitting around waiting. That was the hard part for him. He had to have something going.

He finished his drink and changed into his swimming trunks. Diving into the pool, he moved back and forth across its length with long, slow strokes until he was completely relaxed, then he dived deep, curved up to the surface, and pulling himself up on the pool deck, took a sun bath. He fleetingly wondered if Diana Vogel would ever show up again. Not very damn likely. The sun dipped behind an adjoining building and left the pool in shadow.

He returned to his room and after a hot shower, slipped into a pair of sandals, slacks, and a sport shirt and walked down Calle 23 toward the Malecon. The sun, though low in the sky, still warmed the huge rocks and cement blocks that formed the sea wall, outlining them in a pale, washed gold. The sea was darkening as sunset approached and under the influence of a freshening breeze was sending a spume-flecked surf against the sea wall.

He walked down the adjacent sidewalk until he came to three young Negro boys fishing from a rock with just faint vestiges of a whitewashed political message on its wet, gray surface. They had left their clothes tucked under the ornate balustrade that separated the sidewalk from the sea wall and stood wet and glistening in their underwear shorts as they threw their lines into the water.

Wilson leaned against the balustrade on his

forearms and watched them holding the slack of their lines coiled in their hands as they manipulated the remainder with its hook and lead weight toward the quiet pools that flooded and ebbed behind the rocks with each surge of the surf. "Any luck?" he called.

"Some. We got a few."

He lit a cigarette, his mind empty, his body relaxed, welcoming the cool salt air and the occasional light spray of surf. With sunset, the light rapidly began to fade and the orange street lights, encrusted with years of green salt erosion, winked on. Turning away, he began to walk westward, the gray stone cliffs on which rested the Nacional Hotel and its garden rising on his left across the busy boulevard.

A sedan swung in along the curbing and braked to a stop. Two young men scrambled out of the automobile and ran across the sidewalk toward Wilson. No words were spoken. He was struck swiftly and deftly on the side of the head and had only slumped imperceptibly toward the sidewalk before he was supported under both arms and half carried, half dragged to the waiting automobile. They shoved him roughly into the back seat and fell in on top of him. No one noticed the assault and kidnapping. The fishing boys, a hundred yards away, were concentrating on their lines, which were no longer visible in the lamp light and had to be handled entirely by touch.

Wilson regained consciousness in a dusty and disordered garage. Several turns of rough manila rope secured his sagging body to a wooden chair with a splintered back. His head and chest were wet with the water which had been thrown against him in an effort to shock him back into consciousness. A palm slapped him smartly on one cheek and his lips moved loosely in a low moan.

"He's coming around."
"You hit him too hard. He may be too far gone to answer our questions."

"I did what I had to do. We couldn't have a scuffle on the sidewalk. We all would have been picked up."

"Slap him again."

Wilson's eyes opened, closed, and then slowly focused on the face of the slight boy of twenty who was standing with spread legs before him. He wet his lips but did not speak.

"Bring me that pail of water. Duck his head in it."

Wilson gagged and spluttered as his face was immersed in the water. He shook his head free. Anger flooded within him and with it a full return to consciousness. "What the hell?" he said thickly. He could see three or four old flat-bed trucks in the shadows beyond the pool of light in which he sat. His captors, four in number and all in their late teens or early twenties, stood around him with hard, intense expressions on their swallow, young faces.

"Wilson," the leader said. "Can you hear me?"

Wilson nodded.

"Who do you work for?"

"None of your damn business."

A palm struck hard across Wilson's face, slicing the edge of his mouth against one of his teeth. A trickle of blood snaked down his chin. "We have learned that you are here to sell the tyrant spare parts for his broken-down American machines."

"That's right. Spare parts."

His interrogator poured some rum into a tin cup. "Drink this. You're still groggy."

Wilson swallowed the rum gratefully and a growing sense of alertness returned as its warm fire coursed

down his throat. He shook his head. "Can't you loosen this rope?"

The leader nodded and the rope was cut away. "You admit that you are trying to sell the Castro government spare parts?"

"I've made them an offer, yes. They haven't accepted it."

"You filthy collaborator! We know who you are, Wilson! You fought with Castro and his Communist friends. Because of vermin like you we lost Cuba."

"A lot of non-Communists fought with Fidel. Many of them are Cuban refugee leaders today. He fooled everybody, me included. He probably would have fooled you if you had been old enough."

"You continue to help him. You are ready to sell him spare parts for his American equipment so that he can keep his economy going. You defy the blockade."

"What are you guys? Counterrevolutionaries?"

"We are fighters for a free Cuba."

"Great. Whatever that means. I think I've heard that line before."

"You talked to Pablo Perez the other night. You betrayed him and now he is dead."

"Don't tell me that Pablo Perez is a freedom fighter?"

"He has helped us."

"He has helped everybody. He was always on every side of every question. As budding political geniuses, you should know that."

"Why did you visit him?"

"He tried to bribe me."

His questioner sneered. "And you could not be bribed?"

"No. Not this season."

"Who do you work for, Wilson?"

"Myself. Freelance."

"Who are your contacts here?"

"You know that. Government officials that can buy my spare parts. It is all straightforward."

"And Major Paco Gomez," the leader added, "you seem to be very good friends."

"We are because we fought together in the hills. You don't forget those things. Maybe it's like the feelings you fellows have for one another. Paco is a pal of mine, a good friend. We drink and whore around together, but he has nothing to do with my spare-parts sale."

His four captors consulted together just beyond earshot. The leader returned. He gazed at Wilson solemnly for a long moment. His voice was toneless with a slight tremor of excitement. "We are going to execute you, Wilson, as an enemy of Free Cuba."

Wilson paled and droplets of perspiration popped out on his forehead. He should have taken these crazy kids more seriously. He ran his tongue over his lips. "Don't do that. I'm not an enemy of Free Cuba."

"You are a collaborator. You admit that you are here to sell spare parts, which are badly needed, to Castro's government."

"You mean that you would shoot me in cold blood for trying to sell a few lousy spare parts?"

"We shoot people for less than that, *amigo*."

Wilson's eyes dropped to the floor. They focused for no reason on a grimy puddle of half-dried engine oil nearby on the cracked cement. "Here? In this crummy garage?"

"This will do well as any place. What do you expect? A formal firing squad in a courtyard of Cabaña Fortress? We lack Castro's facilities."

"How do I know you guys are freedom fighters? You may be agents of Castro's government just testing me. They've done it before."

The leader laughed mirthlessly. "Then you have nothing to worry about."

"Can I have a cigarette?"
"Go ahead."

Wilson fumbled in his shirt pocket and brought forth his cigarettes. They were wet from the water that had been thrown on them. He tossed them on the floor. The leader wordlessly offered him a cigarette from his own pack. Wilson took it, held it to the flame of an offered match, and inhaled its rough, strong flavor. His captors silently watched him smoke it until the stub was too short to hold and he reluctantly dropped it on the floor and twisted it out with the sole of his sandal. The leader smiled coldly at Wilson and nodded toward the flattened cigarette butt. "That is what we are going to do to you, Wilson."

There was the sound of low voices at the entrance to the garage. A small door set in the larger overhead door opened, its rusty hinges grating noisily. A heavyset figure of middle height in dirty dungarees entered sidewise through the narrow opening and moved toward Wilson, followed by an anxious young guard with a Tommy gun. He looked up at the figure as it entered the circle of light surrounding him. It was Maria of the bar on Virtudes Street.

She walked over and stood in front of him, looking down. "Where did you find this, Jorge?"

"We picked him up as he walked along the Malecon."

"He was probably looking for a young girl to pick up," she sneered. "What are you going to do with him?"

"Kill him."

She glanced at the Tommy gun. "With that? That is too easy. He should die slowly." She walked

around Wilson like a cat stalking its prey. "What have you learned from him?"

"He is a collaborator. He is trying to sell spare parts to Fidel."

"We knew that before. What have you learned from him that you did not know?"

"Nothing. He has nothing to tell us."

"Are you sure? He is unmarked. We should make him talk, tell us everything. There are means to persuade low worms such as this one. If we are persuasive, he will come crawling on his hands and knees, begging to tell us all that he knows, or dreams, or feels." She rubbed the back of one hand across her mouth as she stared malevolently at Wilson. "We can take him to the farm. It will be quiet there. We can take our time."

Jorge hesitated, then nodded reluctantly. "We shall do as you say, but we are not torturers."

"We are fighters for liberty. To win, we need men and guns and information. This is but one filthy collaborator. He stinks as he crawls over the Cuban earth seeking his blood money. He has information we need. What spare parts are the Communists seeking? Where is their need? Where is their weakness? This we must know to direct our sabotage and this, this moral carrion, this offal, can tell us."

"For God's sake, Maria," Wilson finally croaked, "why do you hate me so? What have I done to you?"

Jorge turned to Wilson. "You know this woman? You have met before?"

Maria laughed harshly. "Of course we have met before. This Wilson was a captain with Fidel in the hills. He was a courier between Fidel and the revolutionary groups in Havana. My father's bar was one of the message relay points. He betrayed my father and

my brother. He lied about them to Fidel, and when the revolution was won, they were executed."

"That's not true!" Wilson shouted. "You know it is a lie. They died long after I left Cuba. You told me this yourself!"

"I say that it is true." Maria spoke with a heavy emphasis on each word as if she were passing judgment.

Jorge glanced from one to the other with a faint gleam of amusement in his eyes. "Let us go to the farm. If we are to squeeze this lemon, let us do it now."

An empty flour sack was pushed over Wilson's head, his wrists were bound behind him, and he was led out of the garage. He was lifted into the trunk of a car and the trunk lid slammed down upon him. The car jerked forward, bouncing him painfully on the hard floor. A sharp object, probably the car's jack, pressed into the small of his back. He felt a moment of panic. What if he suffocated? His legs were painfully bent back and were already aching from a lack of circulation. He rubbed his head against the trunk lid, chafing and scratching himself as he did so. He perspired profusely with the effort, but gradually he worked off the untied flour sack. As it fell from his head he lay back exhausted. For a time the bindings on his wrists had cut into his skin, causing a painful throbbing, but now his arms and legs were numb. The bouncing continued and he became drenched in perspiration. The air of the trunk became heavy and lifeless. A half-hour had passed when he lost consciousness.

He became aware of an intense light in his eyes. It was sunlight. He was lying on his back in some scrub grass, looking up through a scraggly palm tree. He was unbound. His arms and legs throbbed painfully. Maria was looking down at him. "He is conscious. Take him into the house."

Two of his young captors jerked him to his feet and led him, stumbling, toward a one-story unpainted farmhouse, surrounded on all four sides by a wide veranda. Several chickens, pecking futilely at the sparse, dusty soil around the house, fled squawking noisily as they approached. The group walked up the wooden steps and across the veranda, their footsteps echoing on the planking, to pass through a doorless entrance into the interior of the house. Maria followed them.

"Take him into the room at the end of the hall," she said curtly.

The room was empty except for four heavy iron rings set in steel plates fastened to the plank floor at each corner. Wilson was placed spread-eagle on his back on the floor and each of his arms and legs were fastened with a rough manila line to an iron ring. The fastenings were tightened just enough to place each of his limbs under a slight tension. Maria nodded with satisfaction. "Now let's go have breakfast."

He lay quietly on the floor looking up at the fly-specked wooden ceiling. The interior walls of the house, like the exterior, were of wood, but at some time they had been painted. Now the putty-colored paint was peeling. Several large black flies flew through the open windows and bumped stupidly against the ceiling and the upper walls, buzzing loudly. The clucking of the chickens and the sounds of the farm's livestock came to him faintly. He could hear the murmur of human voices somewhere in the rear of the house. After an interval, an airplane flew over the area. It was single-motored and quite high.

He strained at his bonds and chafed his back against the floor, seeking a sense of relief. Goddamn all women, he thought. They aren't worth it. Maria really hated his guts. Why? Because he'd laid her once? Not

likely. She was sore at him because he had passed her up when he saw her again on Virtudes Street. She figured that he thought she was ugly. Well, Christ, she was ugly, fat as hell and twice as mean. And how was he to know that she was in the Cuban underground? Still, if she hadn't come along, his guts would have been spilled all over the floor of that garage by the kid with the Tommy gun.

There was a sound of footfalls coming up the outside steps and Jorge entered the room. He looked down at Wilson with a faintly embarrassed air. Wilson managed a half smile. "Not exactly the way to build the new Cuba, is it? It's more like Fidel's Cuba or Batista's Cuba, or Machado's Cuba, or you name it."

"Shut up."

"You can see that this dame has a personal grudge against me."

"I said, Shut up!"

"O.K., take me apart a piece at a time, just to satisfy a woman."

"Did you inform on her father and brother?"

"Hell, no. My only mistake was going to bed with her when she was eight years younger and fifty pounds lighter."

"I know the story of her father and her brother. You could not have had anything to do with it."

"That's what I say, but I'm sure glad you know it."

"But you are under our sentence of execution. How does it matter how you die? And she may be right. You may be able to tell us things that will help in planning sabotage."

"I don't know anything now, but I will when I get the spare parts order."

María and the other young revolutionaries entered. "What was he saying?" María asked suspiciously.

"He was saying that he is worth more alive than dead."

María sneered. "Not to us."

"You can torture me for her," Wilson said, "but if you really want to know where Fidel is weak, let me get the spare-parts order. Then we shall know what he needs. I'll try to find out where he needs it. I can give you shipping dates, quantities, all the dope. Now, I don't know a thing. You can tear me apart to see if I am telling the truth, but I swear to God that I am."

Jorge looked at María. "What he says is true, María. He can get us valuable information."

She stepped forward and spat on Wilson. "He should die."

"Why? What good would that do us?"

"You were about to kill him. If I had entered that garage two minutes later he would be a corpse now."

"That is true, but you reminded us that we might be able to get valuable information from him."

"He will betray us, just as he betrayed my father and my brother."

"He did not betray your father and brother, María," Jorge said evenly. "I know the facts."

She bit her lips. She muttered after an interval, "I don't trust him."

Wilson looked up at her. "Look, María, I'm a heel. I admit it. You are one hell of a fine woman and I wasn't smart enough to see it. You'd like to see me in hell and maybe I deserve it, but what about your revolution? I can get you hard information."

Jorge nodded. "He's right, María."

"I don't trust him," she repeated sullenly. "Look," Wilson said, "All I want is a spare-parts sale at a profit. I don't give a damn about Fidel or the Communists. What did he ever do for me? If I have the

sale and the profits, you can blow the spare parts and the installations they are for sky high. What's that to me? I'll cooperate with you so that I can get out of here alive."

"He does not know the rest of you," María said morosely. "He cannot betray you, but he can betray me."

Wilson wet his lips. "I won't betray anybody, certainly not you, sweetie. I remember you from the old days. I'll give you a signed, incriminating letter. Then if I don't play ball with you, inform on me to Fidel's butchers."

María stood silently looking down on Wilson, then she sighed imperceptibly. "Bring a pen and a sheet of paper. Cut him loose."

Wilson awkwardly got to his feet and began to massage the circulation back into his hands. "Come out into the kitchen," she said curly. "You can write your letter there."

Wilson sat down at the kitchen table and cleared a space among the litter of the breakfast. A cloud of flies rose up and settled down again. "You will write as follows," María said. "I freely confess that I am an enemy of Cuba, paid as a CIA agent to work against the interests of the people of Cuba, and that I am guilty of sabotage, attempted bribery, and murder."

Wilson carefully wrote as he was instructed.

"Now sign it, but do not put a date on it." She smiled at him grimly after she had taken it from him and read it. "Now, *amigo mío*, you do just as I say to do or we shall let Fidel eat you alive and save us the trouble."

Wilson ducked his head. "I want to cooperate. You won't have any trouble with me."

Jorge gripped him firmly by the arm. "Your contact with us will be María. Take your instructions from

her. If you keep your word, you can return to Canada with your profits. That is nothing to us. It is only Fidel's blood money. If you betray us, you will die. Even if you leave Cuba, we shall follow you and you will die. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Good. Now we shall feed you and you will be under guard in this house until tonight. After dark we shall cover your eyes and drive you back to Havana. We shall leave you on the Malecon."

María rubbed her palms down her hips. "Tomorrow night you will come to my bar at eleven P.M. to report to me. You will do exactly as I say."
Wilson forced a grin. "That's the deal."

SHORTLY after midnight Wilson was let out of his captors' sedan near the white bulk of the closed United States Embassy. He stood for a moment on the sidewalk and then decided to walk the mile or so along the Malecon to his hotel. He walked with his hands in his trouser pockets, his head down, trying to think.

Jesus, if only he had a cigarette. But there were no tobacco stores near the Malecon. He walked along. This spare-parts deal might have been a brilliant idea to explain his presence in Cuba to the government, but it had put him on the public enemy list with the underground. Why hadn't someone thought of that? He hoped he could keep it all straight. It was getting damn complicated. The thing to remember, to hold to, was that he was here to be contacted by "Forbes." Just hold on and keep fending the bastards off. Cooperate with everybody.

He reached Calle 23 and stepped into a café. He

bought some cigarettes and had a black coffee. At least the young punks were honest. They had given him his wallet back. When he reached the Vedado he went straight to his room and to bed. It was one-thirty A.M.

At two A.M. the ceiling light in his room flared on. Two hard-faced army lieutenants gazed down at him. "Get up, Señor Wilson. We want to talk with you."

Wilson rubbed a hand over his unshaven face and sat up on the edge of the bed. He did not say anything. One officer stepped out into the hallway and partly closed the door behind him. He leaned against the door jamb where he could watch the hallway and at the same time listen to the conversation in Wilson's room. The other officer drew up a straight chair beside Wilson and sat down.

"You have been missing for over twenty-four hours."

Wilson reached for a cigarette on his night table and lit it. "Not missing. Just absent."

"Don't try to be smart, Wilson. We saw you get kidnapped. We weren't close enough to stop it and unfortunately we lost the car in traffic."

"Not so good for your side, Lieutenant."

"Who was it?"

"Some kind of underground outfit. A bunch of trigger-happy kids."

The lieutenant gave a quick, tight smile. "Aren't we all? What did they want of you?"

"I am public enemy number one for trying to sell spare parts to the Cuban government. They wanted to rough me up."

"Is that all?"

"Listen, Lieutenant, I want to cooperate, but the game is getting a little confusing. How about showing me your identification card?"

The officer wordlessly reached into an inside

pocket and handed Wilson a card with a seal upon it encased in heavy plastic. Wilson looked at it and nodded. "G-2."

"I work for Captain Muñoz."

"O.K. I'm at your service."

"Give me the details . . . all of them."

"They decided to kill me. Then they changed their minds and recruited me. I am supposed to give them all of the information I can on the spare-parts sale so that they can organize their sabotage accordingly."

"Where did they take you?"

"First to an old, abandoned garage, I think somewhere here in Havana. Then they took me to a farm about a three hours' drive over some rough roads. I was unconscious part of the time."

"How many were there?"

"Four men in their late teens or early twenties. One woman, fat, greasy, about thirty."

"Did you recognize any of them or hear names mentioned?"

"The leader was called Jorge. I didn't hear names for the other men. The woman was María, who runs a bar on Virtudes street."

"Who is your contact?"

"The woman. I'm supposed to visit her tonight at eleven p.m. at her bar."

The lieutenant fixed him with a cold, hard gaze for a moment. "Very well. That's all for now. I'll tell Captain Muñoz that you have been cooperative. He will be gratified. I shall be back at three p.m. I want to talk with you further and give you some instructions. Also some life insurance. We don't want these neo-revolutionists to kill you. That would be a pity."

"I wouldn't like it worth a damn."

"And yet they will try it, sooner or later. They

should have killed you when they had you. They shouldn't have trusted you."

"Yeah. I can see that."

"You are still alive. I congratulate you. Either you were very persuasive or they are still very inexperienced. You have told me everything?"

"The works."

"You have not made something up, added something to mislead me?"

"I am too damn tired to even think straight. I couldn't make up anything if I tried."

"We'll do our talking here in the future. This room is now secure. We are clearing the rest of the floor. In this room you are perfectly safe. Everywhere else, watch yourself. You are creating a lot of attention in certain circles in Havana, señor. You are vulnerable. Remain here until I return at three p.m."

"No strain. I can sleep the clock around."

The lieutenant nodded, arose, and left the room. Wilson walked over to the door and tried it. It was locked from the outside. He shrugged and returned to his bed. In sixty seconds he was sound asleep. He awoke about two p.m. and had showered and shaved by the time the bolt on the door rattled and the lieutenant entered.

Wilson glowered at him. "You didn't have to lock me in."

"It was for your own protection until we had made certain arrangements." There was the rattle of dishes and a tough-looking man in a waiter's uniform entered and left a tray. "Go ahead and eat while we talk, Señor Wilson," the lieutenant said, sitting down on a chair. "You are probably hungry."

Wilson nodded and began to eat.

"We want you to continue your negotiations for

the sale of the spare parts. It is not for us to say whether the government will actually purchase them, but the negotiations must continue so that we can trap these revolutionaries."

Wilson nodded, swallowing a mouthful of egg. "We want you to keep your rendezvous tonight at Maria's bar. Apart from this, we suggest that you stay very close to the hotel. I want you in this room at five p.m. every day without fail in case we wish to talk with you."

"Right."

The lieutenant reached into the pocket of his jacket. He held out a small disk about an inch and a half across and a quarter of an inch thick. On it was etched a silhouette of a diver and the inscription "1st Class/Diving Champion—Toronto 1955." The lieutenant dropped the disk into Wilson's palm. This is a swimming medal that you won and always carry with you. It contains a tiny, high-frequency transmitter activated by a firm pressure in the center. If you get into serious trouble, press the medal firmly between thumb and forefinger—so—and it will transmit a high-frequency impulse which we can receive and trace. We will cover you wherever you go, but this is your means of crying for help. Carry it in your trouser pocket with your coins. One can usually thrust his hands into his trouser pockets without creating suspicion, and you can easily activate it there."

Wilson looked at the medal. "Imagine that. As a matter of fact, I am a pretty good diver."

"All the better. Let events take their course, señor. Watch yourself. Be in your room each afternoon at five. I have no further instructions for you."

"O.K."

The lieutenant let himself out of the room without a backward glance. Wilson listened to his footsteps

die away in the hall outside. He tried the door. It opened. He looked down the hallway. There was no sign of life. He shut the door and sat down on the bed. He rumbled his hair in both hands, then he arose and retrieved a bottle of rum from his dresser drawer. He filled his empty coffee cup half full and swallowed it down. "Christ, what a mess!" he muttered.

Shortly before eleven p.m. he entered the bar on Virtudes Street. There were five or six customers from the neighborhood in the small, stale-smelling room. Maria was at the far end of the bar, leaning on her forearms, watching a young prostitute at one of her tables try to convince a tired-looking fat man, well past middle age, to accompany her to a nearby hotel. Wilson moved up to the bar.

"Do you think he'll buy it?" he asked Maria.

"He fears that he is no longer a man. He fears to try."

"Then why he is hanging around here?"

"He wants to try. He feels the excitement, but he is afraid." She looked at him for the first time. "Some day you will be like that. Afraid to prove yourself. You will not wish to admit that you are an old man, any more than he does."

"Can that, sweetie. Where's a good place to talk?"

She gestured toward a door set in the rear wall of the bar. "Go in there. I'll follow in a few minutes. Manuel can take care of the business." Her eyes flicked toward a shallow man standing behind the bar near the street entrance. He had the curious, self-effacing manner of the chronically ill. Wilson hadn't noticed him as he entered.

"O.K. I'll wait for you." He took a bottle of beer