

"Are you going to be insubordinate?"

"No," Sessena drew a deep tremulous breath, "I'm going outside and vomit."

He telephoned Ed Hanson at the FBI from a phone booth in McLean. "Mr. Hanson is out of the city on business, Mr. Sessena," his secretary said. "We don't know where he can be reached."

"There's no way to contact him?"

"I'm afraid not. He left suddenly last evening. Is there any message?"

"Yeah, when he gets back tell him Ernie Sessena said he knows where he can get guts cheap." He slammed up the receiver and drove back to Washington. He had just entered his small efficiency apartment in a building off Thomas Circle when the telephone rang. "Ernie?" He recognized the voice of Molly Flannery.

"Sit tight, sweetie, I'll call you right back. Are you at the sweat shop?"

"Yeah, but—"

"Ten minutes." He hung up, left the apartment, and walked around the corner to a pay telephone. He called the Red Onion. "This is Ernie," he said when she answered.

"What's all the mystery?"

"My telephone may be bugged."

"No kiddin'? Gee, I should have thought of that. How dumb can you get?"

"What's on your mind?"

"You know that guy you talked to in my dressing room the other night?"

"Yes."

"He wants to talk to you again."

"When?"

"Tonight, ten P.M."

"Tell him I'll be there."

"Will do. Take care of yourself, Ernie."

"Sure."

He stopped by a grocery store to select a frozen dinner. After due consideration he chose turkey. He always chose turkey. A newspaper's banner headline screamed

BAYLOR WANTED FOR BENNINGTON MURDER
from the news rack. Sessena grunted, pulled out a paper, and dropped it into the wire buggy he was pushing. Then he picked out two artichokes, a pound of bacon, and a six-pack of beer.

Baylor was standing in the corner of the dressing room when Sessena entered it. Sessena closed and locked the door before moving close to Baylor to speak. He kept his voice low. "O.K. Let's keep this short and sweet. What's on your mind?"

"I want to work with you on the job Frank Bennington and I started."

"Why?"

"The police have a warrant out for my arrest as the murderer of Bennington. If you knew Bennington, you know I didn't kill him. Maybe you're CIA or FBI, and if you can break this case, you'll clear me. You're my only chance, so I'm with you. If I've guessed wrong, I've had it." He smiled sickly.

Sessena carefully lit a cigarette and studied Baylor. He grinned sardonically through the smoke. "Lucky you. I am CIA, after a manner of speaking."

Baylor exhaled and some of the tension in his attitude eased.

Sessena gazed at him impassively.

"Until last night I had the cooperation of the police and the press on this Bennington matter. Now I gather strings have been pulled up the line by VIP's that want you out of the way. I told you to stay out of it. Now they're going for your jugular."

"They can't prove that I killed Bennington."

Sessena snorted. "Proof? Who needs proof? They know damn well that Bennington was killed by a Chinese Red operative by the name of Wong. Your problem is that of staying alive—not proving your innocence. You'll never come to trial, junior. This is a different game."

Baylor nodded. "Wong contacted me last night. He said that he had killed Bennington but that I would hang

for it unless I led him to Bennington's CIA control." Sessena gave a tight-lipped smile. "So you thought of me?"

"You don't think I've thrown in with Wong, do you?" Baylor looked agnash.

"No. There's no future for you in working with Wong. You're smart enough to see that."

"I think I know the CIA angle. Espionage, isn't it?" Sessena nodded. "Yes. Bennington was a CIA agent. We were trying to put this thing together."

"And I was the patsy." Baylor spoke without bitterness.

"Bennington was also a newspaperman, as you know. He would have played square with you on the scoop. It just would have been a bigger story than you expected. We were using you, I admit that, but you would have had your story. I'm sorry about the murder rap. We didn't foresee that."

"I'm willing to cooperate with the CIA. And I'm still after the news story. As a principal, I can write real inside stuff. So maybe it's all for the best."

"The CIA has dropped the case and I've been ordered on leave."

"Why?" Baylor's face whitened.

"Political pressure. The backlash of the Congressional hearings. Christ only knows why the chicken is the national bird inside Washington and the eagle outside."

Baylor smiled weakly. "That just leaves me, doesn't it? A confused fugitive from so-called justice."

"Not exactly." Sessena gestured to himself with the extended thumb of his right hand.

"But you're off the case."

"The CIA dropped it. The FBI chickened out. Sessena's available. I've been ordered on leave, but I have a peculiar idea of what to do for rest and relaxation. I don't like to drop a case when it's getting interesting. I've never dropped a case due to political pressure. All I need to carry on is a partner as stupid as I am. You seem well qualified." He grinned.

Baylor felt a sudden return of confidence and grinned back. "You tell me how we can get these bastards and I'm your man. I'm awfully tired of being pushed around."

"We have only one chance, and that is to obtain iron-clad evidence, admissible in a court of law, and to get it in a hurry. We're playing pigeons as long as we can't prove our suspicions. It won't be a stalemate. If they stop us, it's just a matter of time until they destroy us. They won't be safe until they do. You aren't their immediate problem. As Wong indicated to you, they're digging deeper. They want the CIA connection. They want me. Then they destroy you." Sessena paused. "So, we haven't a hell of a lot of time. We've got to break into the House Armed Services Committee office on the Hill tomorrow night and see what we can find in the records. Then we have to go across town and do the same in the office of attorney Probar."

Baylor nodded. "Probar and his wife tried to buy me off as soon as I got interested in the Committee."

"It follows. Now, there's no problem getting into the Rayburn Building during the day. You're known up there and you're wanted by the police so you'll have to play it coy. I'm not. I can move around. Shortly before five tomorrow afternoon, I'll enter the building with my junior G-man housebreaking kit in a briefcase. I'll lay low wherever I'm able, until nine, maybe in the men's can. I'll then come down to the parking garage under the building and let you in. The garage entrance is on the C Street side. There are just a few guards around the building, mostly uniformed ornaments with flat feet, thick heads, and politicians for brothers-in-law. We can probably avoid them. If not, they'll be easy to take out. We'll break into the Committee office and leave through the parking garage. I'll have a rented car parked over on C Street."

Sessena sized up Baylor. "Wear gloves. Keep that snap brimmed hat. Get a pair of glasses with plain lenses. It will add ten years to your age. Walk a little stooped and shuffle. The police are looking for a flaming youth in a souped-up sports car. Incidentally, ditch that car."

"The police have already taken care of that. They've impounded it."

"I didn't know that. It's just as well. You haven't any use for it."

"How about a false moustache?"

"Forget it. Where are you staying?"

"With my girl friend. No one pairs us together. Our thing is of recent vintage."

"How about her neighbors?"

"They couldn't care less. The building is a hangout for Georgetown kooks."

"We'll try to arrange something better." Sessena punched Baylor playfully on the upper arm. "We're going to have fun, Junior. Now get going and watch yourself. You're wanted. I'm going to hang around here a while."

Sessena stood near a bank of self-service elevators in the Rayburn Building. It was five minutes to nine. He punched the elevator call button. A car arrived. He pushed the button for the garage level. He stepped out into a cavernous, low-ceilinged room and moved quickly down a line of parked automobiles to the C Street entrance. Baylor, standing in the darkness, responded to his quick gesture. They returned together to the floor on which the Committee's office was located.

"The security in this building is practically nonexistent," Sessena said. "The CIA has often complained about it. Now it's paying off. Walk down the hallway like we owned the place—a couple of administrative assistants working late."

At the door of the darkened office, Sessena inserted a jimmy and with a few deft movements opened the door. To a casual observer, he might have been inserting an ill-fitting key. "Duck soup," he said under his breath. "Inside." They stood a moment in the darkened reception room listening. "I'll take the offices to the right, you take those to the left. Go through everything fast. Don't worry about neatness. We don't mind if they know that we've been here."

"What have they stolen from the Pentagon?"

"Bacteriological secrets, germ warfare."

Baylor whistled under his breath. "Real nasty stuff?"

"As nasty as it can get." Sessena nodded soberly. "In a different kind of world, I'd be ashamed that the United States had such secrets to steal."

Shortly after ten o'clock they had finished. "What have you got?" Sessena asked.

"Nothing. Not a damn thing."

"I had to open a little toy safe in the file room. Nothing there either. I really didn't think there would be, but I had to look. They aren't careless. But the exercise is worthwhile. It will worry the hell out of them that we broke in. They'll wonder if they did leave something vital lying about."

They exited through the parking garage without incident and drove across town to Probar's law office building on Connecticut Avenue. Sessena parked around the corner on I Street. "This may take a little direct action," Sessena said. "The building is open all night, but there's a guard who sits at a table in the lobby. He's supposed to sign everyone in and out. We'll walk in and you sign a couple of names, say Jones and Edwards. Maybe we'll get away with it. If not, I'll have moved behind him and I'll slug him if he gives us an argument. Stand between the guard and the street door so a casual passerby doesn't see it from the street."

The guard was a sleepy-eyed, elderly man.

"Good evening, gents," he said, yawning as they walked in. "You of the building?"

"Yes. We're lawyers. Probar, Wilts, and Theme."

"Right. I knew I seen you around. Just sign the book?"

Baylor signed their names.

"Working late, eh?" the guard said. He turned the book around to look at it. "Say, this ain't quite right." Sessena moved slightly behind the guard, his body

tense. "What isn't right?" Baylor asked.

"You forgot to write the time in that column there." The guard pointed with a gnarled finger.

Baylor laughed. "So I did. What time is it, Dad?"

"Ten twenty-five." The guard said, glancing at a large pocketwatch.

"Right." Baylor wrote the figures in the book and turned to Sessena. "Come on, Elmer. We'll never get that brief done."

Sessena turned to him in the elevator. "Elmer?"

"No one would choose Elmer as a phony name. It lent verisimilitude."

"O.K. O.K. You've beaten me down with logic and big words."

Sessena had little trouble with the door to Probar, Wilts, and Theme. "Turn on the lights, Junior. Remember, we're here as legal eager beavers."

"Right, Elmer."

They ignored the offices opening off both sides of a long hallway leading to the left from the reception room and entered a large walnut paneled corner office to the right of the reception room. Sessena stood looking at the score or more of the autographed pictures of the great and near-great inscribed to Philus Probar displayed on the walls and on two library tables. "He's quite an operator, isn't he? Anyone from the sticks would think that he ran the United States government from this office."

"You don't have to be from the sticks to believe that. He's cut you and me down to size."

Sessena walked over to a large picture of Sam Fenester in a silver frame sitting alone on a table. He leaned over and read the inscription. "To my dear friend and mentor, Philus Probar." "Very touching. Well, let's get to work."

In a half hour they were ready to leave. Sessena held up his briefcase. "I've got correspondence here which mentions Williams several times. There's also records of three bank accounts Probar operates as a trustee for Fenester. Again, nothing conclusive, but Probar will climb the walls when he discovers that this stuff is missing."

Baylor did not forget to fill in the time as they checked out.

"Thank you, gents," the guard said genially.

"Thank you, sir," Baylor answered.

They walked around the corner to the car.

"You'd better move in with me, Baylor," Sessena said. "It's safer and we can work better that way. I called the firm today and hinted that I was off to New Orleans to drink absinthe and look up a broad-ass gal I knew in the French Quarter. I moved out of my apartment into a two-week sublet in a live and let live neighborhood on the edge of the Negro district. Molly Flannery, Rosie Dawn to you, found it for me. It will make a good headquarters until we settle this thing."

Baylor patted his pocket. "At your service. I have a tooth brush and a razor. That's all I need for the moment, other than luck."

"We're going to make our own luck," Sessena growled. "All you need is the tooth brush and the razor."

SESSENA gestured toward a table in his newly rented apartment. "I've been through our swag. I'm not surprised that we don't have much. What I hoped to find was a lead as to the location of headquarters for this thing. Even spies need administrative backup. Where do they photograph the data they steal? Where do they analyze it and reduce it to microdots? Where are their codes, the records, the accounts? Even a spymaster like Probar can't operate out of a hat and leave no traces."

He lit a cigarette and inhaled its smoke thoughtfully. "Probar lives on a large, rather remote estate. That's a real possibility. It would fit. They could tuck away a real operation central in all of that concrete and garden."

Baylor sat down on a swaybacked daybed that creaked under his weight. "How do we get inside Probar's house? I was there at a very civilized tête à tête over luncheon not too many days ago, and I got the impression that it could be buttoned up very tight indeed. High walls,

iron gates, roving dogs, that sort of thing: a twentieth-century Wuthering Heights."

Sessena nodded. "Add electrified fences, alarms, and guards, and you probably have the picture just right." He poured each of them a cup of coffee from an electric coffee pot on a round table covered with a red and white checked oil cloth and dropped into a scratched oak mission-style chair. His eyes roamed idly over the room's soiled beige wallpaper and fixed on a spider web in an upper corner of the room. A fly was still struggling in it weakly, seeking to free itself from an earlier misstep. A crummy room, he thought, and it smells as crummy as it looks. He sipped the strong, almost bitter, black coffee and looked at the newspaper he had bought earlier.

"Am I still on the front page?" Baylor asked. "I was hoping you'd be back among the news of tariff negotiations and minor political scandals. It would make it a hell of a lot easier. Unfortunately, you are still front-page news though you now rank after an Arizona air crash." Sessena folded back the newspaper to an inside page.

Baylor yawned and stretched. "I'm thinking about some sleep. Maybe we'll get a bright idea in the morning."

"I've got the bright idea right now," Sessena said, sitting up more erectly and gesturing at the newspaper with his coffee cup. "Old lady Probar has her house on the annual charity tour of Washington's Great Houses' tomorrow." He beamed at Baylor. "How would you like to take that in?"

"I wouldn't get inside the door before they nabbed me. The Probars know me. They probably know you too. Besides, you look too much like a cop."

"Is that supposed to be a compliment?" Sessena asked evenly.

"I'm just being realistic. We'd never make it as a team."

Sessena nodded. "I have to agree with you. What about this girl friend of yours? Can we use her? Can we trust her?"

"Jiggs?"

"The one you're shackled up with."

"That's Jiggs. She's a brick."

"I was thinking that if you went as a pair you might not be noticed. Tone her down to the mouse-like wife bit. You can wear your elementary disguise of tonight. Pretend you're a round-shouldered architect."

"A round-shouldered architect?"

"You get the idea."

Baylor smiled. "Elmer, you floor me. You divide architects into erect and round-shouldered?"

"I have other categories. What I mean is, be different, quiet, don't meet the eyes of others. If you suggest that you aren't important, no one will notice you. In other words, be round-shouldered. It helps to keep you in the role."

"Oh."

"This Jiggs. Does she love you?"

Baylor flushed. "That's a dirty word in Georgetown."

"O.K. She loves you to the extent that you're embarrassed because you're such a heel. Is she loyal?"

"Yes, and honorable and obedient, too."

"Can you telephone her?"

"Yes."

"O.K. Telephone her from a pay telephone. Give her the number and tell her to go out and call that number from another pay telephone. If we're lucky, they haven't got her telephone line bugged, but if they have, this will throw them off. Have you two ever hit any of the after-hour night spots in this part of town?"

"We dropped into a place near here a couple of weeks ago. It's called Jackson's Hole, and it sure was. Interracial, homosexual, hip, turned on, you name it."

"Tell her we'll meet her there. Don't mention the name. Just identify it as the dump you went slumming in. Is it near here?"

"Four blocks away."

"Can she take care of herself? We're bringing her out late into a tough part of town."

"As well as anyone."

"Tell her to carry a big handbag. Fill it with what she needs to stay feminine for a few days. She's moving in with us. Don't mention me. We'll surprise her."

"Will do. She'll be glad to be a part of this."

Sessena glanced at his wristwatch. "There's no accounting for tastes, but we need her. It's three A.M. When do they close?"

"That's square talk, baby," Baylor grinned. "These cats never sleep. The police never touch the place. By definition, that would be police brutality."

"We'll meet her there at four. Call from the phone booth down on the corner. I'll tag along and cover you."

Jackson's Hole was jammed when they entered, yet the atmosphere was strangely subdued, almost passive. The five or six tables at the edges of the single room were full and the bar along one wall crowded. On a small platform in the center, a tall, bearded Negro plucked tonelessly at a guitar while a pale, anemic white girl with long oily dark hair sang short disconnected phrases in a monotone, more or less in company to passages on the guitar. Most of the crowd was Negro, though all races were represented. Sessena nodded to a powerful Negro about six feet three dressed in a plum colored coat. He wore a van Dyke beard.

"You Jackson?"

"The same."

Sessena shipped him a ten dollar bill and winked. "I need a table. A girl is going to join us in a few minutes. Any chance?"

Jackson pocketed the ten dollars. "I'll set up another table. Supply and demand. We just compress those standing a little more." He brought his two huge hands together and grinned. "One thing we got is togetherness."

They got a small table that tipped uncertainly and three sprung wire chairs. Sessena hooked one leg over the third chair to keep it from walking away with some member of the sweaty crowd that jostled about them.

He sipped beer out of the bottle ignoring the cloudy glass he had been furnished. "Nice crowd. Joyous life. What would you say they were high on?"

Baylor shrugged, "Pot, LSD, alcohol, banana peel, dope, aspirin, maybe just the rich, ripe air."

Shortly after four A.M. Jiggs arrived. She was dressed in black dancing tights under a polo coat and looked frightened. She tightly gripped a large black handbag.

"I'm sorry to bring you into a neighborhood like this at this time of night," Baylor said, holding a chair for her with difficulty in the milling crowd.

"It isn't that. I think I've been followed." She said under her breath. Her green eyes frankly appraised Sessena. "Who are you?"

"Ernie. I'm on your side."

"Welcome to Washington's most exclusive clique. There aren't many of us left." She squeezed Sessena's hairy hand and smiled at him.

"Who do you think followed you?" Baylor lit a cigarette for her across the table.

"That man by the door."

Baylor and Sessena followed her eyes to a dapper Negro of about thirty who stood leaning against the wall by the door. His eyes were half closed. He seemed to be watching the girl in the center of the room snigging her toneless phrases.

"Where did he start following you?"

"I first noticed him at a stop light at Fifteenth and K."

"Maybe he was trying for a pickup."

"Maybe. If so, he'll go away."

They ordered her a beer.

"We'll leave in a minute," Sessena said. "If he follows us, I'll drop back and take care of him. I'll meet you at the apartment."

Jiggs stared at him wide-eyed. "Will you be all right? He looks dangerous to me."

Sessena grinned. "No strain, little lady. No strain at all."

The man at the door pushed himself away from the wall he had been leaning against and walked in an indolent and loose-jointed manner through the crowd toward them.

He took a chair from a nearby table and sat down next to Jiggs. He grinned broadly at Baylor, showing even white teeth, but said nothing.

Sessena's eyes studied him for a moment and then dropped to his own hands which were folded before him.

The silence continued for some moments.

"What's on your mind?" Sessena asked at last, his eyes still on his hands.

The Negro's grin widened, but he didn't respond.

"We are getting up in thirty seconds and leaving," Sessena said. "If you try to cause trouble, I'll break you into little pieces."

The Negro's eyes flicked, but the grin remained fixed on his face. He cleared his throat and spoke in strident tones over the sounds of the room. "Hey, look at these honkies! If you don't want to sit with a Negro, Mr. Charlie, why do you come to our part of town?"

The guitar player and the singer stopped as a hush fell over the room. The Negro pushed back his chair which toppled over with a crash. He appeared to be shaking with anger, and he pointed a finger at Sessena. "There sits Whitey," he taunted. "He's had his foot on our neck for so long, he can't believe we're trying to get up. Well, here's one black man that thinks he's just as good as Whitey!" He leaned over and spat in Sessena's face.

Sessena turned to Baylor, the spittle running down one cheek, and spoke in an icy, authoritative voice. "Get the girl out of here. I'll follow. This is probably one of the opposition's goons trying to create a incident so he'll have an excuse to carve us up."

Baylor and Jiggs got to their feet but the Negro blocked their way. "Run back to your big houses and your rich neighborhoods. You're laid out and you've been slum-

ning, and now it's time to go home." He shouldered Baylor, ramming an elbow into his stomach. "Don't you touch me, Mr. Charliel I won't take it. I strike back!" Two tough Negroes detached themselves from the bar and moved toward them menacingly as the first Negro spun around to swing a right fist into Baylor's groin.

An iron bar descended with a crunch on the Negro's wrist as he swung. He cried out with pain. His hand jerked helplessly below the shattered bone. Jackson stood towering over him. "I don't know who you are, Mister, but you're no ace. You're not from this neighborhood and you're no part of the Movement. You're just trouble. You're bad for business. This bar is for everyone. So get out!"

The Negro held his broken wrist with his good hand. "Uncle Tom!" He spat in a voice heavy with pain. "He's for Whitey! Get him!" The last was shouted not to the silent, awe-struck crowd, paralyzed by the sudden violence, but to the two men moving in from the bar. Jackson turned around and threatened them with his iron bar. "Stay where you are. Cover them," he said to the barnman who had laid a sawed off shot gun across the bar. Over his shoulder he spoke quietly to Sessena. "Get out of here. There's a door at the end of the bar. It leads into the alley. Run like hell. I think these are Black Panther cats."

Sessena, Baylor, and Jiggs ran toward the alley door as the two men edged away from Jackson and then bolted for the street door. The alley was dark and littered with boxes, broken glass, and paper. They stood outside the door, orienting themselves. There was a rustling in some paper and two rats scurried away into the darkness. "Down the alley," Sessena said urgently. "Those two goons will round the corner from the street any second. I'll see you at home. Beat it."

Jiggs and Baylor ran headlong down the alley, while Sessena took a knife from inside his coat and moved deeper into the shadows as he peered toward the street. The goons would be silhouetted against the light, he thought with satisfaction. Easy targets.

He joined Baylor and Jiggs an hour later. The sleeve of his coat was torn and he was limping. "Are you hurt badly, Ernie?" Jiggs asked solicitously, taking his arm as he hobbled into the room.

"A little routine knife work on the other side, strike two of theirs. No casualties on our side," Sessena said, easing himself into a chair. "But I stumbled on something in that God damned alley and twisted my ankle."

Jiggs filled an enameled metal basin with steaming hot water and gently immersed Sessena's ankle. "That will make you more comfortable," she said in motherly tones. "You'll have to keep your weight off it."

Sessena put a piece of gum into his mouth. "Finished for direct action and graduated to the mastermind category by a piece of slippery gook in one of Washington's lousy alleys." He turned to Baylor. "Did you fill her in?"

"I told her the whole story. I thought she deserved to know why she's risking her life."

Sessena glanced at the small, red-headed girl and spoke dryly. "I think she knew the answer to that before she heard the story. Right, sis?"

Jiggs blushed. "The CIA knows all. If you can't go back, Ernie, you can always write advice to the lovelorn."

"Who's lovelorn?"

"Not me," Jiggs said happily. "I'm having a ball."

Sessena poured more hot water into the basin and

winned as he shifted position. "It's nearly six A.M. After six hours of luxurious sleep, you two are going on the Washington House Tour. If we're lucky, you can get into the Probar house with the group. If we're even luckier, you can leave the group unnoticed and hide until the house has settled down for the night. Then your job is to go over the place, room by room, looking for evidence of the operations of this spy ring. Whatever is there to find must be found tonight. We won't have a second chance."

"What are we looking for?" Jiggs asked.

"Files, lists, photographs, receipts, transmitters, photographic equipment, anything that can tie the Probar into the espionage at the Pentagon. Bring me that bag," he gestured toward a corner. "I want to give both of you a short course in housebreaking, burglary, and mayhem, along with the tools that make it easier." He looked at them seriously. "I'm sorry that I won't be there to back you up as I planned, but this may be the situation that calls for the inspired amateur."

"Gifted amateur, Elmer," Baylor grinned.

"Is his name Elmer?"

"No, Jiggsy. I call him that because Ernie is such a long name."

"You both are nuts."

"Fair comment."

They joined the first group on the house tour which left from a Georgetown church by bus at two P.M. The group ran to dowagers in flowered hats and elderly men in carefully unpressed, immaculate tweed jackets. Jiggs, in her black tights and a sweater under her polo coat, wore no make-up and concealed her red hair under a closely drawn black wool scarf. Baylor wore his glasses with the plain lenses and a dusty, rather shapeless felt hat. In one pocket of his coat he was aware of the unfamiliar bulk of Sessena's pistol. In the other was a compact burglar's kit and a camera with a sensitive lens. They remained quietly at the rear of the touring group, speaking to each other infrequently. They were unnoticed by the remainder of the

group who had found numerous acquaintances to whom they could prattle happily about antiques as well as transplanted European architecture and gardens.

The bus crawled slowly around Georgetown, Kalorama, and Spring Valley before it moved toward Foxhall Road. They drove through the great iron gates of the Probar estate at four-twenty and stopped in front of the house.

The tour, confined behind red velvet ropes, was limited to the downstairs rooms. This was the last house on the tour, and tea was to be served in the breakfast room by hostesses of the ladies auxiliary of the sponsoring charity. After tea, they were to leave the house by a side door and walk around the corner to the waiting bus for the return to Georgetown.

They trailed into the building behind the group and followed them along well-cordoned walkways through the large, opulent rooms. In each room an alert, hard-faced man stood watching no one and everyone, hands clasped loosely behind his back. Plain clothes professionals, Baylor thought, hired to protect the house during the tour. Or were they permanent members of Probar's goon squad? After last night there were a few vacancies. Baylor grinned with satisfaction.

Inexorably they moved through the rooms toward tea and an ignominious exit. There was no opportunity to leave the group. Even lingering in one of the rooms was unwise. It would be noticed. They filed into the breakfast room. Jiggs turned concerned eyes to his. "What are we going to do, Tony?" she asked in a low voice.

Baylor smiled at her brilliantly as if he were making light conversation and spoke softly. "When I was here for lunch, I remember the butler bringing up a bottle of wine through that door opening off the hallway leading to the kitchen wing. The door may open onto a stairway to the cellars. I'm going to create a little confusion. Thanks to the serving of refreshments, we aren't cordoned off here. Let's get our tea and drift over by the hallway. The instant the crowd is distracted, we'll run down the hallway and

through the door. I hope to God it's unlocked. If it's locked or we're noticed, pretend we just reacted nervously to excitement, thought it was a bomb or something."

Jiggs nodded and laughed lightly as if he had said something amusing. They received their tea from a smiling hostess by the tea urn who smiled and bestowed upon them a little Junior League pleasantry. They drifted back toward the hallway. Baylor took his cup from the saucer, placed it in the palm of his right hand, and gave it an underhand toss over the heads of the chattering group toward the hostess by the tea urn. It arced high in the air and then fell, creating a loud, unexpected explosion of hot tea and china in the middle of the tea table. "Now!" Baylor said. They turned on their heels and ran down the hallway. On reaching the door, Baylor wrenched at its knob. The door opened. He closed it quietly and quickly behind them. They plunged down the stairs into the darkness. At the foot of the steps, they paused to listen. Over their rapid breathings they could sense excitement and hear rapid footfalls above them. But the door to the cellar remained shut, and the cellar lights did not flare into sudden brightness.

"That was a long shot," Baylor whispered after a moment. "We may get away with it."

They waited. Five minutes passed. They could hear the group leaving. There was a jumbled shuffling of feet, then silence.

"Do you think they saw us?" Jiggs asked, her lips touching his ear. "Will they come after us now?"

"I don't know. Let's find a place to hide." He turned on a flashlight. Its beams penetrated only a short way into the cavernous spaces under the house. "Follow me," he said, moving slowly away from the stairs. They walked cautiously down a center passageway about fourteen feet wide. The cellar was broken up into compartments by thick walls of brick which supported the main beams and joists. Some of these compartments had been finished off with heavy oak doors for storage purposes. Others remained open to the center passageway. As they passed, Baylor tried each door. Each opened onto unexceptional accumulations