

The Senator was seated at his desk. Behind him were two empty glasses; one had probably contained milk; the other probably bourbon. He did not stand.

“Sorry to keep you waiting. I was just finishing my lunch. What can I do for you, my boy?”

Fitz knew exactly what Williams could do for him. The question was what, if anything, Fitz could do for Williams that might win his allegiance.

“Good to see you again, Senator. It’s been too long.” Indeed, they had last talked to each other a few months ago at a signing ceremony at the White House for the Restore the American Dream Act, one of the few to which President Obama invited any Republicans. They had spoken for about 30 seconds, just long enough to say hello and exchange compliments on each other’s good work on the bill. They did not run in the same social circles, though they occasionally attended fundraisers for the same candidates. But elected officials, at least of the same party, almost always talk as if they know each other well, just as they do with constituents.

“As you probably know from reading *Politico*, I’m thinking seriously about throwing my hat into the ring for President. It’s a long slog, of course, but it would be an honor if I could count on your support at the appropriate time. I admire your judgment, and your endorsement would mean a great deal to me personally. It would be especially helpful in the primaries.”

Williams smiled vaguely. “I did read somewhere that you might be thinking about running. You’ve got a lot of competition, you know. It’s only 2014, and already a couple of other guys – and gals – have talked to me. So let me tell you what I told them. Times have changed from the old days when even the senior senator from Alabama could dictate to his party’s Convention delegates on the Presidential nomination. I will need to know what my constituents think of you. That will be the deciding factor.

“And plastering the State with billboards that say *Fitzpatrick for President* won’t be enough. I expect our nominee will win the 2016 election, so our choice this time is not an academic exercise. We need someone who will lead in the right direction. We will want to know your views on the issues and appropriations, and your ideas about appointees, before we decide.”

Fitz winced. Does he really not know my name? Is that just his way of saying “you’re nobody” to me or to Alabamans? Or is he just getting senile? Do I dare correct him? Of course there will be billboards all over the State – everyone knows the senator’s playboy son owns the Alabama Outdoor Advertising Company. But clearly that isn’t going to be enough to win his endorsement, which they both knew would be valuable.

[Excerpt from pp. 3-5]