

Supporting Information

Superbase-Promoted Selective Carbon-Carbon Bond Cleavage Driven by Aromatization

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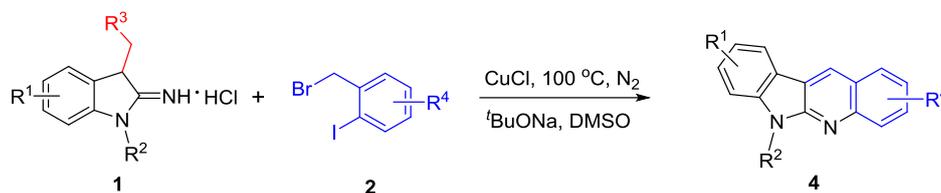
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1. General Procedures

The reactions were monitored by thin layer chromatography (TLC), and the products were isolated by silica gel column chromatography. Melting points were recorded on a Beijing Tech X-4 melting point apparatus. High-resolution mass spectra (HRMS) were recorded on LCMS-IT/TOF (SHIMADZU, Japan) with an electrospray ionization source. ICP-MS was recorded on iCAP-Q (Thermo). Electron-impact mass spectra were recorded on a JEOL JMS-Q1050GC Master Quad GC/MS. ^1H , ^{13}C and ^{19}F NMR spectra were recorded on JEOL ECS-400, JNM-ECA 600 or AV-HD-800X spectrometers. Chemical shifts were reported in ppm down field from internal Me_4Si and external CFCl_3 , respectively. ^1H NMR chemical shifts were referenced to the hydrogen signal of tetramethylsilane (TMS) ($\delta = 0.00$ ppm). In ^{13}C measurements the signal of CDCl_3 ($\delta = 77.06$) was used as a reference. The following abbreviations (or combinations thereof) were used to explain the multiplicities: s = singlet, d = doublet, t = triplet, q = quartet, quint = quintet, sext = sextet, h = heptet, m = multiplet, dd = doublet of doublets, dt = doublet of triplets, td = triplet of doublets. CuCl (CAS: 7758-89-6) and $t\text{BuONa}$ (CAS: 865-48-5) was purchased from Energy Chemical and J & K Scientific Ltd., respectively.

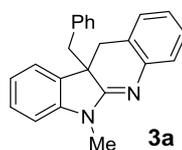
2. Synthesis and Characterization of 3a, 4a-s

2.1. General Procedures for synthesis of 4

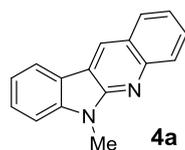


To a dried Schlenk tube were added CuCl (20 μ mol, 10 mol%), **1** (see Ref. 1 for their synthesis) (0.22 mmol, 1.1 equiv), **2** (0.2 mmol, 1.0 equiv) and ^tBuONa (0.8 mmol, 4.0 equiv) under N₂, 2.0 mL of dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO) was then introduced via syringe. After stirring for 10 min at room temperature, the mixture was stirred in a pre-warmed oil bath at 100 °C for 20 h. The solvent was then removed under vacuum, and the residue was purified by column chromatography on silica to give the desired product **4**.

2.2. Characterization of 3a and 4a-s

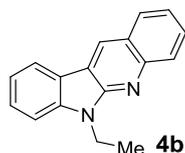


10b-Benzyl-6-methyl-10b,11-dihydro-6H-indolo[2,3-b]quinoline (3a)²: Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.35 – 7.31 (m, 1H), 7.28 (t, J = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 7.24 – 7.16 (m, 2H), 7.14 – 7.04 (m, 4H), 6.94 – 6.87 (m, 2H), 6.65 (dd, J = 7.7, 1.4 Hz, 2H), 6.58 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 3.11 (m, 4H), 2.98 (d, J = 15.7 Hz, 1H), 2.77 (d, J = 12.8 Hz, 1H), 2.69 (d, J = 12.8 Hz, 1H); ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 169.6, 146.4, 145.9, 135.7, 132.3, 130.2, 128.9, 128.4, 128.1, 127.4, 126.6, 124.6, 123.7, 123.7, 123.0, 120.6, 107.3, 46.4, 40.0, 33.4, 27.3.

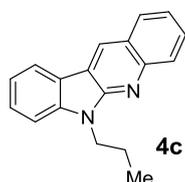


6-Methyl-6H-indolo[2,3-b]quinoline (4a)³: Pale yellow solid; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.63 (s, 1H), 8.11 (m, 2H), 7.96 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.74 – 7.66 (m, 1H), 7.55 (t, J = 8.2 Hz, 1H), 7.43 (t, J = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 7.36 (d, J = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.28 (t, J

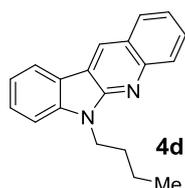
= 7.5 Hz, 1H), 3.93 (s, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 152.9, 146.9, 142.9, 128.9, 128.6, 128.2, 127.6, 127.4, 124.2, 123.0, 121.5, 120.5, 120.0, 118.3, 108.8, 27.8.



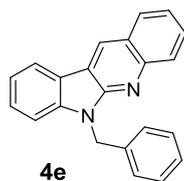
6-Ethyl-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (4b)³: Pale yellow solid; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 8.71 (s, 1H), 8.14 (t, $J = 8.3$ Hz, 2H), 7.99 (dd, $J = 8.1, 1.1$ Hz, 1H), 7.74 – 7.67 (m, 1H), 7.60 – 7.53 (m, 1H), 7.48 – 7.41 (m, 2H), 7.29 (t, $J = 7.3$ Hz, 1H), 4.59 (q, $J = 7.2$ Hz, 2H), 1.51 (t, $J = 7.2$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 152.2, 146.8, 141.9, 128.7, 128.5, 128.0, 127.6, 127.2, 124.1, 122.8, 121.5, 120.6, 119.7, 118.3, 108.9, 36.1, 13.7.



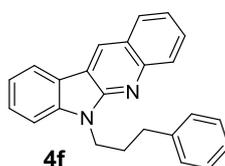
6-Propyl-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (4c): Light yellow oil; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 8.66 (s, 1H), 8.12 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 2H), 7.96 (d, $J = 8.2$ Hz, 1H), 7.73 – 7.66 (m, 1H), 7.54 (t, $J = 7.7$ Hz, 1H), 7.45 – 7.39 (m, 2H), 7.26 (t, $J = 7.5$ Hz, 1H), 4.49 – 4.44 (m, 2H), 2.02 – 1.92 (m, 2H), 1.00 (t, $J = 7.4$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 152.6, 146.9, 142.4, 128.7, 128.5, 127.9, 127.7, 127.2, 124.1, 122.8, 121.5, 120.5, 119.7, 118.1, 109.1, 43.0, 21.9, 11.7. HRMS (ESI⁺): Calcd for $\text{C}_{18}\text{H}_{17}\text{N}_2$, $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ m/z 261.1386. Found 261.1388.



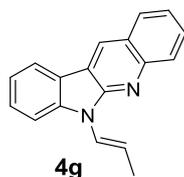
6-Butyl-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (4d)⁴: Pale yellow solid; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 8.66 (s, 1H), 8.12 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 2H), 7.97 (d, $J = 8.1$ Hz, 1H), 7.70 (t, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 1H), 7.54 (t, $J = 7.7$ Hz, 1H), 7.46 – 7.39 (m, 2H), 7.27 (t, $J = 7.5$ Hz, 1H), 4.50 (t, $J = 7.3$ Hz, 2H), 1.92 (quint, $J = 7.1$ Hz, 2H), 1.43 (sext, $J = 7.2$ Hz, 2H), 0.97 (t, $J = 7.4$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 152.7, 147.0, 142.4, 128.8, 128.6, 128.0, 127.8, 127.3, 124.2, 122.9, 121.6, 120.6, 119.8, 118.2, 109.2, 41.3, 30.8, 20.5, 14.0.



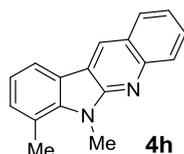
6-Benzyl-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (4e)⁵: Pale yellow solid; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.72 (s, 1H), 8.13 (dd, *J* = 7.9, 5.0 Hz, 2H), 8.00 (d, *J* = 8.2 Hz, 1H), 7.71 (t, *J* = 8.2 Hz, 1H), 7.45 (t, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.31 – 7.20 (m, 7H), 5.74 (s, 2H); ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 152.8, 147.0, 142.2, 137.4, 128.9, 128.8, 128.6, 128.2, 127.9, 127.5, 127.5, 127.3, 124.5, 123.1, 121.6, 120.8, 120.3, 118.3, 109.8, 45.1.



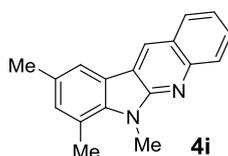
6-(3-Phenylpropyl)-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (4f): Light yellow oil; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.68 (s, 1H), 8.19 – 8.10 (m, 2H), 7.98 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 1H), 7.74 – 7.68 (m, 1H), 7.52 (t, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.44 (t, *J* = 7.7 Hz, 1H), 7.30 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.29 – 7.24 (m, 3H), 7.23 – 7.20 (m, 2H), 7.18 (t, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 1H), 4.54 (t, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 2H), 2.80 – 2.73 (m, 2H), 2.29 (quint, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 2H); ¹³C NMR (151 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 152.6, 146.9, 142.2, 141.5, 128.7, 128.5, 128.5, 128.4, 128.0, 127.7, 127.2, 126.0, 124.2, 122.9, 121.5, 120.6, 119.8, 118.2, 109.0, 41.0, 33.3, 29.9. HRMS (ESI⁺): Calcd for C₂₄H₂₁N₂, [M+H]⁺ *m/z* 337.1699. Found 337.1695.



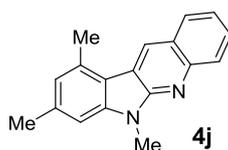
6-(Prop-1-en-1-yl)-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (4g): Light yellow oil; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.69 (s, 1H), 8.14 (dd, *J* = 16.2, 8.1 Hz, 2H), 7.99 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.74 – 7.66 (m, 2H), 7.56 (t, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 7.47 (t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 7.35 – 7.30 (m, 2H), 6.70 – 6.61 (m, 1H), 2.06 (dd, *J* = 6.7, 1.5 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 152.1, 146.9, 141.2, 129.0, 128.5, 128.3, 128.2, 127.3, 124.6, 123.6, 122.9, 121.5, 121.2, 121.0, 118.4, 116.8, 110.5, 16.4. HRMS (ESI⁺): Calcd for C₁₈H₁₅N₂, [M+H]⁺ *m/z* 259.1230. Found 259.1232.



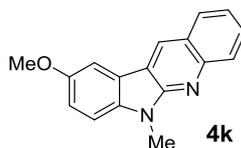
6,7-Dimethyl-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (4h): Light yellow oil; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ^1H NMR (800 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 8.63 (s, 1H), 8.12 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 1H), 7.97 (t, $J = 6.7$ Hz, 2H), 7.73 – 7.66 (m, 1H), 7.43 (t, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 1H), 7.27 (d, $J = 7.3$ Hz, 1H), 7.16 (t, $J = 7.4$ Hz, 1H), 4.27 (s, 3H), 2.86 (s, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (201 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 153.3, 146.9, 141.3, 131.3, 128.7, 128.5, 127.5, 126.9, 124.2, 122.8, 121.0, 120.8, 120.0, 119.3, 118.2, 30.92, 19.9. HRMS (ESI $^+$): Calcd for $\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{15}\text{N}_2$, $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ m/z 247.1230. Found 247.1230.



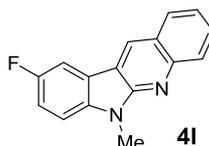
6,7,9-Trimethyl-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (4i): Light yellow oil; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ^1H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 8.50 (s, 1H), 8.09 (d, $J = 8.5$ Hz, 1H), 7.91 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 1H), 7.70 (s, 1H), 7.67 (t, $J = 7.1$ Hz, 1H), 7.39 (t, $J = 7.3$ Hz, 1H), 7.04 (s, 1H), 4.17 (s, 3H), 2.75 (s, 3H), 2.45 (s, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (151 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 153.4, 146.7, 139.3, 132.4, 129.3, 128.6, 128.4, 127.4, 126.7, 124.1, 122.6, 121.0, 120.3, 119.3, 118.2, 30.8, 21.0, 19.6. HRMS (ESI $^+$): Calcd for $\text{C}_{18}\text{H}_{17}\text{N}_2$, $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ m/z 261.1386. Found 261.1388.



6,8,10-Trimethyl-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (4j): Pale yellow solid, mp = 137-139 $^\circ\text{C}$; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ^1H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 8.45 (s, 1H), 8.07 (d, $J = 8.5$ Hz, 1H), 7.88 (d, $J = 8.1$ Hz, 1H), 7.66 (t, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H), 7.39 (t, $J = 7.3$ Hz, 1H), 6.90 (s, 1H), 6.81 (s, 1H), 3.81 (s, 3H), 2.73 (s, 3H), 2.48 (s, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (151 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 152.7, 145.8, 143.1, 138.2, 134.2, 128.5, 128.4, 128.3, 127.2, 124.2, 122.9, 122.6, 118.8, 116.3, 106.6, 27.6, 22.2, 20.3. HRMS (ESI $^+$): Calcd for $\text{C}_{18}\text{H}_{17}\text{N}_2$, $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ m/z 261.1386. Found 261.1386.



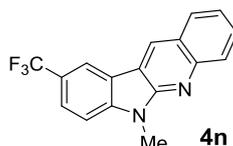
9-Methoxy-6-methyl-6H-indolo[2,3-b]quinoline (4k)³: Pale yellow solid; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 5:1; ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.55 (s, 1H), 8.10 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 1H), 7.92 (d, *J* = 8.2 Hz, 1H), 7.72 – 7.66 (m, 1H), 7.57 (d, *J* = 2.3 Hz, 1H), 7.41 (t, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.22 (d, *J* = 8.7 Hz, 1H), 7.17 – 7.12 (m, 1H), 3.90 (s, 3H), 3.87 (s, 3H); ¹³C NMR (151 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 154.1, 152.9, 146.8, 137.4, 128.8, 128.5, 127.4, 127.3, 123.7, 122.6, 120.7, 118.1, 116.0, 109.2, 105.3, 56.1, 27.7.



9-Fluoro-6-methyl-6H-indolo[2,3-b]quinoline (4l): Light yellow oil; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ¹H NMR (800 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.63 (s, 1H), 8.11 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 1H), 7.97 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.79 (dt, *J* = 8.3, 1.5 Hz, 1H), 7.74 – 7.68 (m, 1H), 7.48 – 7.43 (m, 1H), 7.33 – 7.26 (m, 2H), 3.95 (s, 3H); ¹³C NMR (201 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 157.70 (d, *J* = 237.2 Hz), 153.1, 147.1, 139.1, 129.1, 128.7, 128.0, 127.5, 123.9, 123.0, 120.9 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz), 117.7 (d, *J* = 3.7 Hz), 115.4 (d, *J* = 24.9 Hz), 109.2 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz), 107.8 (d, *J* = 24.2 Hz), 27.9; ¹⁹F NMR (565 MHz, CDCl₃) δ -124.39. HRMS (ESI⁺): Calcd for C₁₆H₁₂FN₂, [M+H]⁺ *m/z* 251.0979. Found 251.0978.



9-Chloro-6-methyl-6H-indolo[2,3-b]quinoline (4m): Pale yellow solid, mp = 129-131 °C; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.60 (s, 1H), 8.11 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 8.04 (d, *J* = 1.9 Hz, 1H), 7.96 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.72 (t, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.50 (dd, *J* = 8.4, 2.0 Hz, 1H), 7.45 (t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 7.28 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 1H), 3.92 (s, 3H); ¹³C NMR (151 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 152.6, 146.9, 140.9, 129.1, 128.5, 127.8, 127.7, 127.4, 125.2, 123.9, 123.0, 121.3, 121.1, 117.0, 109.4, 27.6. HRMS (ESI⁺): Calcd for C₁₆H₁₂ClN₂, [M+H]⁺ *m/z* 267.0684. Found 267.0680.

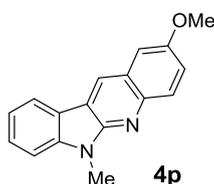


6-Methyl-9-(trifluoromethyl)-6H-indolo[2,3-b]quinoline (4n): Pale yellow solid, mp = 99-101 °C; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.67 (s, 1H), 8.34

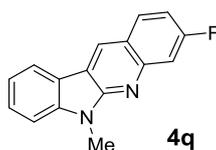
(s, 1H), 8.13 (d, $J = 8.5$ Hz, 1H), 7.98 (d, $J = 8.1$ Hz, 1H), 7.79 (d, $J = 8.5$ Hz, 1H), 7.77 – 7.72 (m, 1H), 7.48 (t, $J = 7.4$ Hz, 1H), 7.41 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 1H), 3.96 (s, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (151 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 152.9, 147.1, 144.5, 129.5, 128.7, 128.2, 127.7, 124.9 (q, $J = 3.8$ Hz), 124.3, 123.5, 120.2, 118.7 (d, $J = 3.8$ Hz), 117.3, 108.7, 27.9; ^{19}F NMR (565 MHz, CDCl_3) δ -61.22. HRMS (ESI⁺): Calcd for $\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{12}\text{F}_3\text{N}_2$, $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ m/z 301.0947. Found 301.0947.



6-Butyl-9-methyl-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (4o): Pale yellow solid, mp = 95-97 °C; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ^1H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 8.60 (s, 1H), 8.11 (d, $J = 8.5$ Hz, 1H), 7.94 (d, $J = 7.7$ Hz, 1H), 7.90 (s, 1H), 7.71 – 7.65 (m, 1H), 7.40 (t, $J = 7.4$ Hz, 1H), 7.34 (d, $J = 8.1$ Hz, 1H), 7.27 (d, $J = 8.2$ Hz, 1H), 4.46 (t, $J = 7.3$ Hz, 2H), 2.52 (s, 3H), 1.89 (quint, $J = 7.5$ Hz, 2H), 1.40 (sext, $J = 7.4$ Hz, 2H), 0.95 (t, $J = 7.4$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (151 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 152.7, 146.8, 140.4, 129.0, 129.0, 128.6, 128.5, 127.6, 126.9, 124.0, 122.6, 121.7, 120.5, 118.1, 108.8, 41.2, 30.7, 21.3, 20.4, 13.9. HRMS (ESI⁺): Calcd for $\text{C}_{20}\text{H}_{20}\text{N}_2$, $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ m/z 289.1699. Found 289.1699.

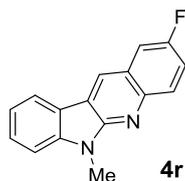


2-Methoxy-6-methyl-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (4p): Light yellow oil; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ^1H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 8.58 (s, 1H), 8.16 – 8.09 (m, 1H), 8.03 (d, $J = 9.2$ Hz, 1H), 7.56 (t, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H), 7.41 – 7.37 (m, 2H), 7.29 – 7.25 (m, 2H), 3.95 (s, 6H); ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 155.3, 151.8, 142.9, 142.8, 128.9, 128.1, 126.2, 124.7, 121.5 (2C), 120.3, 119.7, 118.3, 108.7, 106.3, 55.6, 27.8. HRMS (ESI⁺): Calcd for $\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{15}\text{N}_2\text{O}$, $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ m/z 263.1179. Found 263.1178.

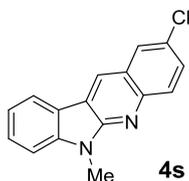


3-Fluoro-6-methyl-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (4q): Pale yellow solid, mp = 98-100 °C; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ^1H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 8.55 (s, 1H), 8.06 (d, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H),

7.89 (dd, $J = 8.9, 6.4$ Hz, 1H), 7.72 (dd, $J = 10.9, 2.4$ Hz, 1H), 7.56 (t, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 1H), 7.35 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.29 (t, $J = 7.5$ Hz, 1H), 7.21 (td, $J = 8.6, 2.6$ Hz, 1H), 3.90 (s, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (151 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 163.0 (d, $J = 248.0$ Hz), 153.2, 147.7 (d, $J = 13.1$ Hz), 142.5, 130.3, 130.2, 128.0, 127.2, 121.3, 120.3, 120.1, 117.5 (d, $J = 2.7$ Hz), 113.1 (d, $J = 25.3$ Hz), 111.2 (d, $J = 20.9$ Hz), 108.8, 27.7; ^{19}F NMR (565 MHz, CDCl_3) δ -111.73. HRMS (ESI⁺): Calcd for $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{12}\text{FN}_2$, $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ m/z 251.0979. Found 251.0979.



2-Fluoro-6-methyl-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (4r): Pale yellow solid, mp = 112-114 °C; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 8.48 (s, 1H), 8.12 – 7.99 (m, 2H), 7.59 – 7.49 (m, 2H), 7.49 – 7.41 (m, 1H), 7.33 (d, $J = 8.1$ Hz, 1H), 7.27 (t, $J = 7.4$ Hz, 1H), 3.88 (s, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 158.3 (d, $J = 242.7$ Hz), 152.5, 143.7, 143.0, 129.5 (d, $J = 8.9$ Hz), 128.5, 126.4 (d, $J = 5.3$ Hz), 124.2 (d, $J = 9.6$ Hz), 121.7, 120.1, 119.9, 118.8, 118.8 (d, $J = 25.5$ Hz), 111.3 (d, $J = 21.5$ Hz), 108.8, 27.7. HRMS (ESI⁺): Calcd for $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{12}\text{N}_2\text{F}$, $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ m/z 251.0979. Found 251.0979.

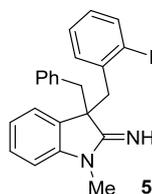


2-Chloro-6-methyl-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (4s): Pale yellow solid, mp = 144-146 °C; Eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc 10:1; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 8.57 (s, 1H), 8.13 (d, $J = 7.7$ Hz, 1H), 8.04 (d, $J = 9.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.94 (d, $J = 2.4$ Hz, 1H), 7.65 – 7.57 (m, 2H), 7.41 (d, $J = 8.1$ Hz, 1H), 7.34 – 7.29 (m, 1H), 3.96 (s, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 153.0, 145.2, 143.1, 129.6, 129.1, 128.7, 128.2, 127.1, 126.4, 124.7, 121.8, 120.3, 120.2, 119.0, 109.0, 27.9. HRMS (ESI⁺): Calcd for $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{12}\text{ClN}_2$, $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ m/z 267.0684. Found 267.0684.

2.3. Synthesis and Characterization of 5

To a mixture of **1a** (0.3 mmol, 1.0 equiv), **2a** (0.3 mmol, 1.0 equiv) and K_2CO_3 (0.75 mmol, 2.5 equiv) was added 3 mL of DMSO, and the mixture was heated with stirring for 12 h at RT. After

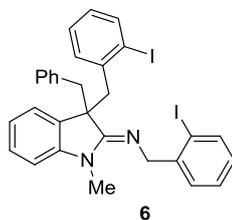
removal of all volatiles *in vacuo*, the residue was purified by column chromatography on silica eluted with EtOAc to give the desired product **5** as a light yellow oil.



3-Benzyl-3-(2-iodobenzyl)-1-methylindolin-2-imine (5): ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.70 (dd, $J = 7.9, 1.2$ Hz, 1H), 7.11 – 6.99 (m, 6H), 6.96 – 6.91 (m, 1H), 6.87 – 6.78 (m, 3H), 6.75 (td, $J = 7.7, 1.7$ Hz, 1H), 6.36 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 1H), 3.52 – 3.45 (m, 1H), 3.43 – 3.35 (m, 1H), 3.23 – 3.17 (m, 1H), 3.17 – 3.10 (m, 1H), 2.90 (s, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 172.7, 145.5, 139.6, 139.5, 135.4, 130.3, 130.2, 129.8, 128.3, 128.1, 127.8, 127.5, 126.5, 124.4, 120.0, 106.4, 103.6, 55.3, 47.7, 45.9, 26.8. HRMS (ESI $^+$): Calcd for $\text{C}_{23}\text{H}_{22}\text{IN}_2$, $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ m/z 453.0828. Found 453.0826.

2.4. Synthesis and Characterization of **6**

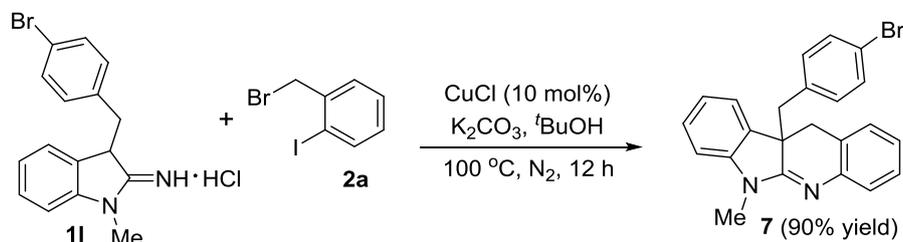
To a mixture of **1a** (0.3 mmol, 1.0 equiv), **2a** (0.66 mmol, 2.2 equiv) and K_2CO_3 (1.05 mmol, 3.5 equiv) was added 3 mL of DMSO, and the mixture was heated with stirring for 12 h at RT. After removal of all volatiles *in vacuo*, the residue was purified by column chromatography on silica eluted with petroleum ether/EtOAc (15:1 in volume) to give the desired product **6** as a light yellow oil.



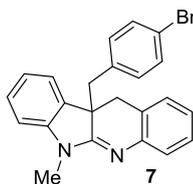
3-Benzyl-N,3-bis(2-iodobenzyl)-1-methylindolin-2-imine (6): ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.81 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 1H), 7.66 (d, $J = 7.9$ Hz, 1H), 7.50 (d, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H), 7.28 (t, $J = 7.5$ Hz, 1H), 7.12 – 6.91 (m, 8H), 6.80 – 6.69 (m, 4H), 6.38 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 1H), 5.08 (d, $J = 17.4$ Hz, 1H), 4.91 (d, $J = 17.4$ Hz, 1H), 3.81 (d, $J = 15.8$ Hz, 1H), 3.75 – 3.66 (m, 2H), 3.28 (d, $J = 13.4$ Hz, 1H), 2.98 (s, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 162.8, 145.8, 143.5, 139.8, 139.7, 138.7, 135.8, 130.9, 129.9, 129.1, 128.7, 128.3, 128.3, 128.2, 128.0, 127.6, 126.6, 123.3, 119.5, 106.1, 103.3, 99.1,

56.4, 55.2, 46.7, 44.4, 27.4. HRMS (ESI⁺): Calcd for C₃₀H₂₇I₂N₂, [M+H]⁺ m/z 669.0264. Found 669.0263.

2.5. Synthesis and Characterization of **7**¹

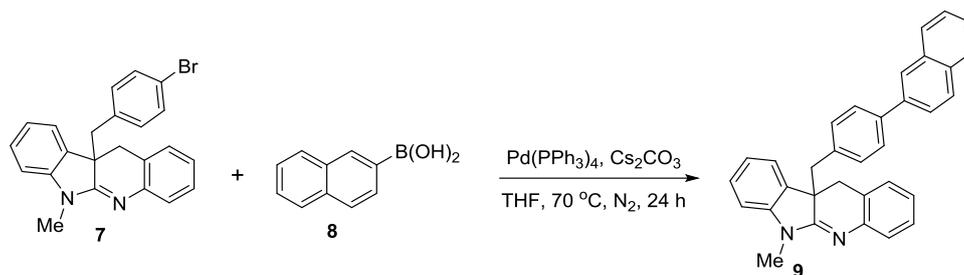


An oven-dried Schlenk tube equipped with a Teflon screw seal was charged with a magnetic stirbar, CuCl (30 μmol, 10 mol%), **1** (0.33 mmol, 1.1 equiv), **2a** (0.3 mmol, 1.0 equiv) and K₂CO₃ (1.2 mmol, 4.0 equiv). The tube was evacuated and backfilled with argon; this procedure was carried out three times. The solids were dissolved in ^tBuOH (3.0 mL), the reaction tube was sealed, and the reaction mixture was stirred in a pre-heated oil-bath at 100 °C for 12 h. The solvent was then removed under vacuum, and the residue was purified by column chromatography on silica eluted with petroleum ether/EtOAc (10:1 in volume) to give the desired product **7** as a light yellow oil.

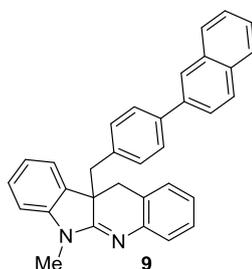


10b-(4-Bromobenzyl)-6-methyl-10b,11-dihydro-6H-indolo[2,3-*b*]quinoline (7**):** ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.32 (d, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.28 (t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 7.22 – 7.16 (m, 4H), 7.05 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 1H), 6.96 (d, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 1H), 6.92 (t, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 1H), 6.59 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 6.49 (d, *J* = 8.2 Hz, 2H), 3.11 (s, 3H), 3.07 (d, *J* = 15.7 Hz, 1H), 2.99 (d, *J* = 15.7 Hz, 1H), 2.75 (d, *J* = 13.0 Hz, 1H), 2.60 (d, *J* = 13.0 Hz, 1H); ¹³C NMR (151 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 169.0, 146.2, 145.7, 134.7, 131.9, 131.6, 130.4, 128.7, 128.5, 128.1, 124.5, 123.7, 123.3, 122.7, 120.7, 120.6, 107.3, 46.1, 39.4, 33.5, 27.2. HRMS (ESI⁺): Calcd for C₂₃H₂₀BrN₂, [M+H]⁺ m/z 403.0810. Found 403.0811.

2.6. Synthesis and Characterization of **9**

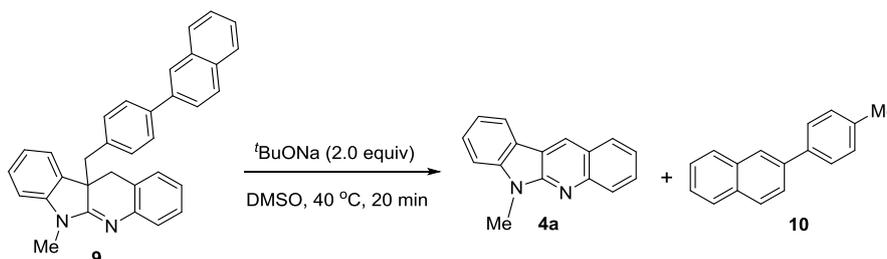


To a mixture of **7** (0.3 mmol, 1.0 equiv), **8** (0.6 mmol, 2.0 equiv), Pd(PPh₃)₄ (0.03 mmol, 0.1 eq) and Cs₂CO₃ (0.9 mmol, 3.0 equiv) was added 3 mL of THF under N₂, and the mixture was heated with stirring at 70 °C for 24 h. After removal of all volatiles *in vacuo*, the residue was purified by column chromatography on silica eluted with petroleum ether/EtOAc (15:1 in volume) to give the desired product **9** as a pale yellow solid, mp = 179-181 °C.

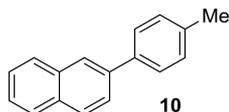


6-Methyl-10b-(4-(naphthalen-2-yl)benzyl)-10b,11-dihydro-6H-indolo[2,3-b]quinoline (9): ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.97 (s, 1H), 7.85 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 7.82 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 7.68 (dd, *J* = 8.5, 1.5 Hz, 1H), 7.49 – 7.42 (m, 4H), 7.37 (d, *J* = 7.7 Hz, 1H), 7.31 (t, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.26 – 7.19 (m, 2H), 7.09 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 1H), 6.98 (d, *J* = 6.6 Hz, 1H), 6.94 (t, *J* = 7.4 Hz, 1H), 6.77 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 6.61 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 3.19 – 3.14 (m, 4H), 3.01 (d, *J* = 15.6 Hz, 1H), 2.81 (d, *J* = 13.0 Hz, 1H), 2.77 (d, *J* = 13.0 Hz, 1H); ¹³C NMR (151 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 169.6, 146.3, 145.7, 139.1, 138.1, 134.9, 133.6, 132.5, 132.3, 130.7, 128.8, 128.4, 128.4, 128.1, 127.6, 126.3, 126.3, 125.9, 125.4, 125.3, 124.5, 123.7, 123.7, 122.9, 120.7, 107.4, 46.3, 39.6, 33.3, 27.3. HRMS (ESI⁺): Calcd for C₃₃H₂₇N₂, [M+H]⁺ *m/z* 451.2174. Found 451.2173.

2.7. Synthesis and Characterization of 10



To a mixture of **9** (0.2 mmol, 1.0 equiv) and ^tBuONa (0.2 mmol, 2.0 equiv) was added 3 mL of THF under air or N₂, and the mixture was heated with stirring at 40 °C for 20 min. After removal of all volatiles *in vacuo*, the residue was purified by column chromatography on silica eluted with petroleum ether/EtOAc (100:1 in volume) to give the desired product **10** as a white solid, mp = 81-83 °C.



2-(p-tolyl)naphthalene (10)⁶: ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.01 (s, 1H), 7.88 (t, *J* = 8.2 Hz, 2H), 7.84 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 1H), 7.73 (dd, *J* = 8.5, 1.6 Hz, 1H), 7.62 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 2H), 7.51 – 7.42 (m, 2H), 7.28 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 2H), 2.41 (s, 3H); ¹³C NMR (151 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 138.5, 138.2, 137.2, 133.7, 132.5, 129.6, 128.4, 128.2, 127.7, 127.3, 126.3, 125.8, 125.6, 125.5, 21.2. EI-MS: Calcd for C₁₇H₁₄, M⁺ m/z 218. Found 218.

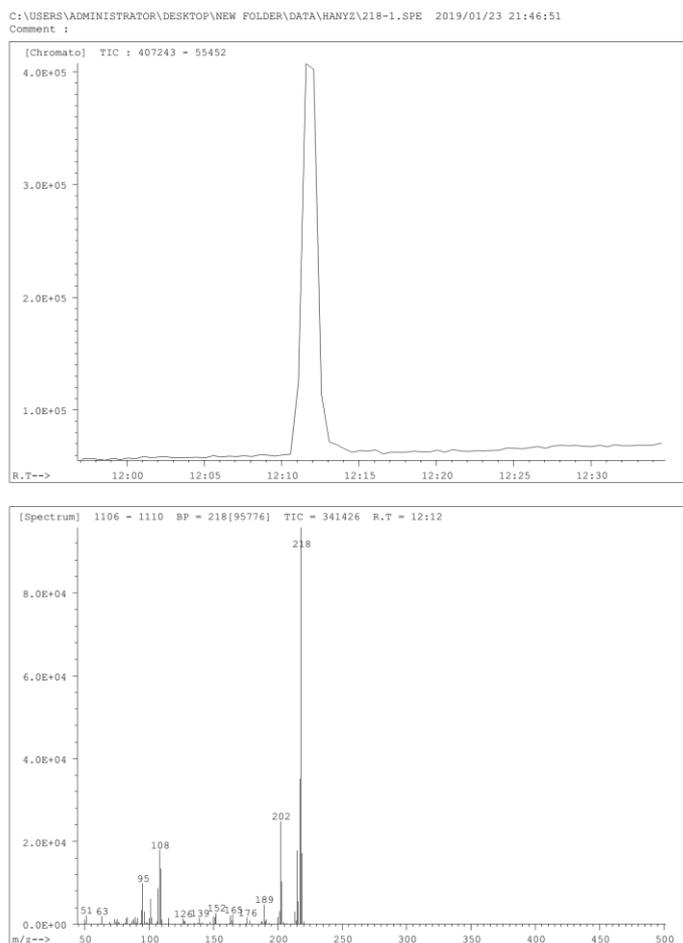


Figure S1. EI-MS data for compound **10** using GC-MS.

3. ICP-MS Data

The commercial available ^tBuONa from J & K Scientific Ltd. was examined by ICP-MS experiments. Possible critical transition metals, including Fe, Co, Ni, Cu, Pd, Ru, Ir were tested. The results were as **Table S1**.

Table S1. ICP-MS Analysis of Various Metals in ^tBuONa.

Element	Fe	Ni	Co	Pd	Ir	Cu	Ru
Amount	75.911	2.303	<0.1	6.446	<0.01	40.051	0.147

Unit: ng/g (ppb)

We found that the ^tBuONa from J & K Scientific Ltd., contained all these metals in the ppb level.

4. X-Ray Crystallographic Data for **4e**

Single crystal X-ray data were collected on a Bruker APEXII X-ray diffractometer equipped with a CMOS PHOTON 100 detector with a Cu K α X-ray source ($K\alpha = 1.54178 \text{ \AA}$). Data were indexed, integrated and scaled using DENZO and SCALEPACK from the HKL program suite. Structure of **4e**, was solved through direct method (SHELXS-97) and refined by full-matrix least-squares (SHELXL-2014) on F^2 . Anisotropic thermal parameters were used for the non-hydrogen atoms and isotropic parameters for the hydrogen atoms. The data obtained were deposited at the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre.

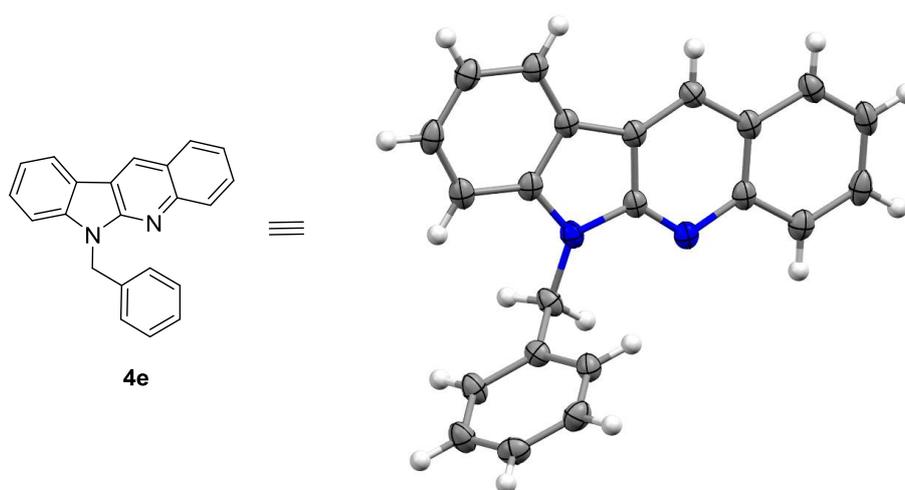


Figure S2. Crystal structure of **4e** showing 50% probability displacement ellipsoids.

Table S2. Crystal Data and Structure Refinement for 4e.

Identification code	CCDC 1889682
Empirical formula	C ₂₂ H ₁₆ N ₂
Formula weight	308.37
Temperature/K	108.9(7)
Crystal system	monoclinic
Space group	P2 ₁ /n
a/Å	4.84497(9)
b/Å	20.0214(4)
c/Å	15.7697(3)
α /°	90
β /°	96.9103(18)
γ /°	90
Volume/Å ³	1518.60(5)
Z	4
ρ_{calc} /cm ³	1.349
μ /mm ⁻¹	0.615
F(000)	648
Crystal size/mm ³	0.4 × 0.12 × 0.1
Radiation	CuK α (λ = 1.54184)
2 Θ range for data collection/°	7.134 to 142.328
Index ranges	-5 ≤ h ≤ 4, -23 ≤ k ≤ 23, -18 ≤ l ≤ 19
Reflections collected	9190
Independent reflections	2899 [R _{int} = 0.0328, R _{sigma} = 0.0309]
Data/restraints/parameters	2899/0/217
Goodness-of-fit on F ²	1.017
Final R indexes [I ≥ 2 σ (I)]	R ₁ = 0.0406, wR ₂ = 0.1010
Final R indexes [all data]	R ₁ = 0.0501, wR ₂ = 0.1083
Largest diff. peak/hole / e Å ⁻³	0.378/-0.226

5. References

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6. NMR Spectra of 3a, 4a-s, 5-7, 9 and 10

