nearest division point to call. We're somewhere within thirty miles of it."

"Are there any Taggart trains following us?"

"The next one is Number 253, the transcontinental freight, but it won't get here till about seven A.M., if it's running on time, which I doubt."

"Only *one* freight in seven hours?" He said it involuntarily, with a note of outraged loyalty to the great railroad he had once been proud to serve.

Her mouth moved in the brief snap of a smile. "Our transcontinental traffic is not what it was in your day."

He nodded slowly. "I don't suppose there are any Kansas Western trains coming tonight, either?"

"I can't remember offhand, but I think not."

He glanced at the poles by the side of the track. "I hope that the Kansas Western people have kept their phones in order."

"You mean that the chances are they haven't, if we judge by the state of their track. But we'll have to try it."

"Yes."

She turned to go, but stopped. She knew it was useless to comment, but the words came involuntarily. "You know," she said, "it's those lanterns our men put behind the train to protect us that's the hardest thing to take. They . . . they felt more concern for human lives than their country had shown for theirs."

His swift glance at her was like a shot of deliberate emphasis, then he answered gravely, "Yes, Miss Taggart."

Climbing down the ladder on the side of the engine, they saw a cluster of passengers gathered by the track and more figures emerging from the train to join them. By some special instinct of their own, the men who had sat waiting knew that someone had taken charge, someone had assumed the responsibility and it was now safe to show signs of life.

They all looked at her with an air of inquiring expectation, as she approached. The unnatural pallor of the moonlight seemed to dissolve the differences of their faces and to stress the quality they all had in common: a look of cautious appraisal, part fear, part plea, part impertinence held in abeyance.

"Is there anyone here who wishes to be spokesman for the passengers?" she asked.

They looked at one another. There was no answer.

"Very well," she said. "You don't have to speak. I'm Dagny Taggart, the Operating Vice-President of this railroad, and"—there was a rustle of response from the group, half-movement, half-whisper, resembling relief—"and I'll do the speaking. We are on a train that has been abandoned by its crew. There was no physical accident. The engine is intact. But there is no one to run it. This is what the newspapers call a frozen train. You all know what it means—and you know the reasons. Perhaps you knew the reasons long before they were discovered by the men who deserted you tonight. The law forbade them to desert. But this will not help you now."

A woman shrieked suddenly, with the demanding pétulance of hysteria. "What are we going to do?"

Dagny paused to look at her. The woman was pushing forward, to squeeze herself into the group, to place some human bodies between herself and the sight of the great vacuum—the plain stretching off and dissolving into moonlight, the dead phosphorescence of impotent, borrowed energy. The woman had a coat thrown over a nightgown; the coat was slipping open and her stomach protruded under the gown's thin cloth, with that loose obscenity of manner which assumes all human self-revelation to be ugliness and makes no effort to conceal it. For a moment, Dagny regretted the necessity to continue.

"I shall go down the track to a telephone," she continued, her voice clear and as cold as the moonlight. "There are emergency telephones at intervals of five miles along the right-of-way. I shall call for another crew to be sent here. This will take some time. You will please stay aboard and maintain such order as you are capable of maintaining."

"What about the gangs of raiders?" asked another woman's nervous voice.

"That's true," said Dagny. "I'd better have someone to accompany me. Who wishes to go?"

She had misunderstood the woman's motive. There was no answer. There were no glances directed at her or at one another. There were no eyes—only moist ovals glistening in the moonlight. There they were, she thought, the men of the new age, the demanders and recipients of self-sacrifice. She was struck by a quality of anger in their silence—an anger saying that she was supposed to spare them moments such as this—and, with a feeling of cruelty new to her, she remained silent by conscious intention.

She noticed that Owen Kellogg, too, was waiting; but he was not watching the passengers, he was watching her face. When he became certain that there would be no answer from the crowd, he said quietly, "I'll go with you, of course, Miss Taggart."

"Thank you."

"What about us?" snapped the nervous woman.

Dagny turned to her, answering in the formal, inflectionless monotone of a business executive, "There have been no cases of raider gang attacks upon frozen trains—unfortunately."

"Just where are we?" asked a bulky man with too expensive an overcoat and too flabby a face; his voice had a tone intended for servants by a man unfit to employ them. "In what part of what state?"

"I don't know," she answered.

"How long will we be kept here?" asked another, in the tone of a creditor who is imposed upon by a debtor.

"I don't know."

"When will we get to San Francisco?" asked a third, in the manner of a sheriff addressing a suspect.

"I don't know."

The demanding resentment was breaking loose, in small, crackling

puffs, like chestnuts popping open in the dark oven of the minds who now felt certain that they were taken care of and safe.

"This is perfectly outrageous!" yelled a woman, springing forward, throwing her words at Dagny's face. "You have no right to let this happen! I don't intend to be kept waiting in the middle of nowhere! I expect transportation!"

"Keep your mouth shut," said Dagny, "or I'll lock the train doors and leave you where you are."

"You can't do that! You're a common carrier! You have no right to discriminate against me! I'll report it to the Unification Board!"

"—if I give you a train to get you within sight or hearing of your Board," said Dagny, turning away.

She saw Kellogg looking at her, his glance like a line drawn under her words, underscoring them for her own attention.

"Get a flashlight somewhere," she said, "while I go to get my handbag, then we'll start."

When they started out on their way to the track phone, walking past the silent line of cars, they saw another figure descending from the train and hurrying to meet them. She recognized the tramp.

"Trouble, ma'am?" he asked, stopping.

"The crew has deserted."

"Oh. What's to be done?"

"I'm going to a phone to call the division point."

"You can't go alone, ma'am. Not these days. I'd better go with you."

She smiled. "Thanks. But I'll be all right. Mr. Kellogg here is going with me. Say—what's your name?"

"Jeff Allen, ma'am."

"Listen, Allen, have you ever worked for a railroad?"

"No, ma'am."

"Well, you're working for one now. You're deputy-conductor and proxy-vice-president in charge of operation. Your job is to take charge of this train in my absence, to preserve order and to keep the cattle from stampeding. Tell them that I appointed you. You don't need any proof. They'll obey anybody who expects obedience."

"Yes, ma'am," he answered firmly, with a look of understanding.

She remembered that money inside a man's pocket had the power to turn into confidence inside his mind; she took a hundred-dollar bill from her bag and slipped it into his hand. "As advance on wages," she said.

"Yes, ma'am."

She had started off, when he called after her, "Miss Taggart!"

She turned. "Yes?"

"Thank you," he said.

She smiled, half-raising her hand in a parting salute, and walked on.

"Who is that?" asked Kellogg.

"A tramp who was caught stealing a ride."

"He'll do the job, I think."

"He will."

They walked silently past the engine and on in the direction of its