ture's rice, then claim it from hundreds of millions of such creatures and thus let the rice grains gather into gems.

She had thought that industrial production was a value not to be questioned by anyone; she had thought that these men's urge to expropriate the factories of others was their acknowledgment of the factories' value. She, born of the industrial revolution, had not held as conceivable, had forgotten along with the tales of astrology and alchemy, what these men knew in their secret, furtive souls, knew not by means of thought, but by means of that nameless muck which they called their instincts and emotions: that so long as men struggle to stay alive, they'll never produce so little but that the man with the club won't be able to seize it and leave them still less, provided millions of them are willing to submit—that the harder their work and the less their gain, the more submissive the fiber of their spirit—that men who live by pulling levers at an electric switchboard, are not easily ruled, but men who live by digging the soil with their naked fingers, are—that the feudal baron did not need electronic factories in order to drink his brains away out of jeweled goblets, and neither did the rajahs of the People's State of India.

She saw what they wanted and to what goal their "instincts," which they called unaccountable, were leading them. She saw that Eugene Lawson, the humanitarian, took pleasure at the prospect of human starvation—and Dr. Ferris, the scientist, was dreaming of the day when men would return to the hand-plow.

Incredulity and indifference were her only reaction: incredulity, because she could not conceive of what would bring human beings to such a state—indifference, because she could not regard those who reached it, as human any longer. They went on talking, but she was unable to speak or to listen. She caught herself feeling that her only desire was now to get home and fall asleep

"Miss Taggart," said a politely rational, faintly anxious voice—and jerking her head up, she saw the courteous figure of a waiter, "the assistant manager of the Taggart Terminal is on the telephone, requesting permission to speak to you at once. He says it's an emergency.

It was a relief to leap to her feet and get out of that room, even if in answer to the call of some new disaster. It was a relief to hear the assistant manager's voice, even though it was saying, "The interlocker system is out, Miss Taggart. The signals are dead. There are eight incoming trains held up and six outgoing. We can't move them in or out of the tunnels, we can't find the chief engineer, we can't locate the breach in the circuit, we have no copper wire for repairs, we don't know what to do, we—" "I'll be right down," she said, dropping the receiver.

Hurrying to the elevator, then half-running through the stately lobby of the Wayne-Falkland, she felt herself returning to life at the summons of the possibility of action.

Taxicabs were rare, these days, and none came in answer to the doorman's whistle. She started rapidly down the street, forgetting what she wore, wondering why the touch of the wind seemed too cold and too intimately close.

Her mind on the Terminal ahead, she was startled by the loveliness of a sudden sight: she saw the slender figure of a woman hurrying toward her, the ray of a lamppost sweeping over lustrous hair, naked arms, the swirl of a black cape and the flame of a diamond on her breast, with the long, empty corridor of a city street behind her and skyscrapers drawn by lonely dots of light. The knowledge that she was seeing her own reflection in the side mirror of a florist's window, came an instant too late: she had felt the enchantment of the full context to which that image and city belonged. Then she felt a stab of desolate loneliness, much wider a loneliness than the span of an empty street—and a stab of anger at herself, at the preposterous contrast between her appearance and the context of this night and age.

She saw a taxi turn a corner, she waved to it and leaped in, slamming the door against a feeling which she hoped to leave behind her, on the empty pavement by a florist's window. But she knew—in self-mockery, in bitterness, in longing—that this feeling was the sense of expectation she had felt at her first ball and at those rare times when she had wanted the outward beauty of existence to match its inner splendor. What a time to think of it! she told herself in mockery—not now! she cried to herself in anger—but a desolate voice kept asking her quietly to the rattle of the taxi's wheels: You who believed you must live for your happiness, what do you now have left of it?—what are you gaining from your struggle?—yes! say it honestly: what's in it for you?—or are you becoming one of those abject altruists who has no answer to that question any longer? . . . Not now!—she ordered, as the glowing entrance to the Taggart Terminal flared up in the rectangle of the taxi's windshield.

The men in the Terminal manager's office were like extinguished signals, as if here, too, a circuit were broken and there were no living current to make them move. They looked at her with a kind of inanimate passivity, as if it made no difference whether she let them stay still or threw a switch to set them in motion.

The Terminal manager was absent. The chief engineer could not be found; he had been seen at the Terminal two hours ago, not since. The assistant manager had exhausted his power of initiative by volunteering to call her. The others volunteered nothing. The signal engineer was a college-boyish man in his thirties, who kept saying aggressively, "But this has never happened before, Miss Taggart! The interlocker has never failed. It's not supposed to fail. We know our jobs, we can take care of it as well as anybody can—but not if it breaks down when it's not supposed to!" She could not tell whether the dispatcher, an elderly man with years of railroad work behind him, still retained his intelligence but chose to hide it, or whether months of suppressing it had choked it for good, granting him the safety of stagnation.

"We don't know what to do, Miss Taggart." "We don't know whom to call for what sort of permission." "There are no rules to cover an emergency of this kind." "There aren't even any rules about who's to lay down the rules for it!"

She listened, she reached for the telephone without a word of