if bent; but she noticed the collar of his shirt: it was bone-white from repeated laundering and it still preserved a semblance of shape. He had pulled himself up to his feet, he was looking indifferently at the black hole open upon miles of uninhabited wilderness where no one would see the body or hear the voice of a mangled man, but the only gesture of concern he made was to tighten his grip on a small, dirty bundle, as if to make sure he would not lose it in leaping off the train.

It was the laundered collar and this gesture for the last of his possessions—the gesture of a sense of property—that made her feel an emotion like a sudden, burning twist within her. "Wait," she said.

The two men turned to her.

"Let him be my guest," she said to the conductor, and held her door open for the tramp, ordering, "Come in."

The tramp followed her, obeying as blankly as he had been about to obey the conductor.

He stood in the middle of her car, holding his bundle, looking around him with the same observant, unreacting glance.

"Sit down," she said

He obeyed—and looked at her, as if waiting for further orders. There was a kind of dignity in his manner, the honesty of the open admission that he had no claim to make, no plea to offer, no questions to ask, that he now had to accept whatever was done to him and was ready to accept it.

He seemed to be in his early fifties; the structure of his bones and the looseness of his suit suggested that he had once been muscular The lifeless indifference of his eyes did not fully hide that they had been intelligent; the wrinkles cutting his face with the record of some incredible bitterness, had not fully erased the fact that the face had once possessed the kindliness peculiar to honesty.

"When did you eat last?" she asked.

"Yesterday," he said, and added, "I think."

She rang for the porter and ordered dinner for two, to be brought to her car from the diner.

The tramp had watched her silently, but when the porter departed, he offered the only payment it was in his power to offer: "I don't want to get you in trouble, ma'am," he said.

She smiled. "What trouble?"

"You're traveling with one of those railroad tycoons, aren't you?"

"No, alone."

"Then you're the wife of one of them?"

"No."

"Oh." She saw his effort at a look of something like respect, as if to make up for having forced an improper confession, and she laughed.

"No, not that, either. I guess I'm one of the tycoons myself. My name is Dagny Taggart and I work for this railroad."

"Oh . . . I think I've heard of you, ma'am—in the old days." It was hard to tell what "the old days" meant to him, whether it was a month or a year or whatever period of time had passed since he had given up. He was looking at her with a sort of interest in the

past tense, as if he were thinking that there had been a time when he would have considered her a personage worth seeing. "You were the lady who ran a railroad," he said.

"Yes," she said. "I was."

He showed no sign of astonishment at the fact that she had chosen to help him. He looked as if so much brutality had confronted him that he had given up the attempt to understand, to trust or to expect anything.

"When did you get aboard the train?" she asked.

"Back at the division point, ma'am. Your door wasn't locked." He added, "I figured maybe nobody would notice me till morning on account of it being a private car."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know." Then, almost as if he sensed that this could sound too much like an appeal for pity, he added, "I guess I just wanted to keep moving till I saw some place that looked like there might be a chance to find work there." This was his attempt to assume the responsibility of a purpose, rather than to throw the burden of his aimlessness upon her mercy—an attempt of the same order as his shirt collar.

"What kind of work are you looking for?"

"People don't look for *kinds* of work any more, ma'am," he answered impassively. "They just look for work."

"What sort of place did you hope to find?"

"Oh . . . well . . . where there's factories, I guess."

"Aren't you going in the wrong direction for that? The factories are in the East."

"No." He said it with the firmness of knowledge. "There are too many people in the East. The factories are too well watched. I figured there might be a better chance some place where there's fewer people and less law."

"Oh, running away? A fugitive from the law, are you?"

"Not as you'd mean it in the old days, ma'am. But as things are now, I guess I am. I want to work."

"What do you mean?"

"There aren't any jobs back East. And a man couldn't give you a job, if he had one to give—he'd go to jail for it. He's watched. You can't get work except through the Unification Board. The Unification Board has a gang of its own friends waiting in line for the jobs, more friends than a millionaire's got relatives. Well, me—I haven't got either."

"Where did you work last?"

"I've been bumming around the country for six months—no, longer, I guess—I guess it's closer to about a year—I can't tell any more—mostly day work it was. Mostly on farms. But it's getting to be no use now. I know how the farmers look at you—they don't like to see a man starving, but they're only one jump ahead of starvation themselves. they haven't any work to give you, they haven't any food, and whatever they save, if the tax collectors don't get it, then the raiders do—you know, the gangs that rove all through the country—deserters, they call them."

"Do you think that it's any better in the West?"

"No. I don't."

"Then why are you going there?"

"Because I haven't tried it before. That's all there is left to try. It's somewhere to go. Just to keep moving . . . You know," he added suddenly, "I don't think it will be any use. But there's nothing to do in the East except sit under some hedge and wait to die. I don't think I'd mind it much now, the dying. I know it would be a lot easier. Only I think that it's a sin to sit down and let your life go, without making a try for it."

She thought suddenly of those modern college-infected parasites who assumed a sickening air of moral self-righteousness whenever they uttered the standard bromides about their concern for the welfare of others. The tramp's last sentence was one of the most profoundly moral statements she had ever heard; but the man did not know it; he had said it in his impassive, extinguished voice, simply, dryly, as a matter of fact.

"What part of the country do you come from?" she asked.

"Wisconsin," he answered.

The waiter came in, bringing their dinner. He set a table and courteously moved two chairs, showing no astonishment at the nature of the occasion.

She looked at the table; she thought that the magnificence of a world where men could afford the time and the effortless concern for such things as starched napkins and tinkling ice cubes, offered to travelers along with their meals for the price of a few dollars, was a remnant of the age when the sustenance of one's life had not been made a crime and a meal had not been a matter of running a race with death—a remnant which was soon to vanish, like the white filling station on the edge of the weeds of the jungle

She noticed that the tramp, who had lost the strength to stand up, had not lost the respect for the meaning of the things spread before him. He did not pounce upon the food; he fought to keep his movements slow, to unfold his napkin, to pick up his fork in tempo with hers, his hand shaking—as if he still knew that this, no matter what indignity was ever forced upon them, was the manner proper to men.

"What was your line of work—in the old days?" she asked, when the waiter left. "Factories, wasn't it?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"What trade?"

"Skilled lathe-operator."

"Where did you work at it last?"

"In Colorado, ma'am. For the Hammond Car Company."

"Oh . . !"

"Ma'am?"

"No, nothing. Worked there long?"

"No, ma'am. Just two weeks."

"How come?"

"Well, I'd waited a year for it, hanging around Colorado just to get that job. They had a waiting list too, the Hammond Car Company, only they didn't go by friendships and they didn't go by senior-