

her, this case was not much worse than any of the other things that Midas Mulligan had borne for years. He had taken many losses under laws of a similar justice, under rules and edicts that had cost him much larger sums of money; he had borne them and fought and worked the harder; it was not likely that this case had broken him.

"What happened to Judge Narragansett?" she asked involuntarily, and wondered what subconscious connection had made her ask it. She knew little about Judge Narragansett, but she had heard and remembered his name, because it was a name that belonged so exclusively to the North American continent. Now she realized suddenly that she had heard nothing about him for years.

"Oh, he retired," said Lee Hunsacker.

"He did?" The question was almost a gasp.

"Yeah."

"When?"

"Oh, about six months later."

"What did he do after he retired?"

"I don't know. I don't think anybody's heard from him since."

He wondered why she looked frightened. Part of the fear she felt, was that she could not name its reason, either. "Please tell me about the motor factory," she said with effort.

"Well, Eugene Lawson of the Community National Bank in Madison finally gave us a loan to buy the factory—but he was just a messy cheapskate, he didn't have enough money to see us through, he couldn't help us when we went bankrupt. It was not our fault. We had everything against us from the start. How could we run a factory when we had no railroad? Weren't we entitled to a railroad? I tried to get them to reopen their branch line, but those damn people at Taggart Trans—" He stopped. "Say, are you by any chance one of those Taggarts?"

"I am the Operating Vice-President of Taggart Transcontinental."

For a moment, he stared at her in blank stupor; she saw the struggle of fear, obsequiousness and hatred in his filmy eyes. The result was a sudden snarl: "I don't need any of you big shots! Don't think I'm going to be afraid of you. Don't expect me to beg for a job. I'm not asking favors of anybody. I bet you're not used to hear people talk to you this way, are you?"

"Mr. Hunsacker, I will appreciate it very much if you will give me the information I need about the factory."

"You're a little late getting interested. What's the matter? Your conscience bothering you? You people let Jed Starnes grow filthy rich on that factory, but you wouldn't give us a break. It was the same factory. We did everything he did. We started right in manufacturing the particular type of motor that had been his biggest moneymaker for years. And then some newcomer nobody ever heard of opened a two-bit factory down in Colorado, by the name of Nielsen Motors, and put out a new motor of the same class as the Starnes model, at half the price! We couldn't help that, could we? It was all right for Jed Starnes, no destructive competitor happened to come up in his time, but what were we to do? How could we fight this Nielsen, when nobody had given us a motor to compete with his?"

"Did you take over the Starnes research laboratory?"

"Yes, yes, it was there. Everything was there."

"His staff, too?"

"Oh, some of them. A lot of them had gone while the factory was closed."

"His research staff?"

"They were gone."

"Did you hire any research men of your own?"

"Yes, yes, some—but let me tell you, I didn't have much money to spend on such things as laboratories, when I never had enough funds to give me a breathing spell. I couldn't even pay the bills I owed for the absolutely essential modernizing and redecorating which I'd had to do—that factory was disgracefully old-fashioned from the standpoint of human efficiency. The executive offices had bare plaster walls and a dinky little washroom. Any modern psychologist will tell you that nobody could do his best in such depressing surroundings. I had to have a brighter color scheme in my office, and a decent modern bathroom with a stall shower. Furthermore, I spent a lot of money on a new cafeteria and a playroom and rest room for the workers. We had to have morale, didn't we? Any enlightened person knows that man is made by the material factors of his background, and that a man's mind is shaped by his tools of production. But people wouldn't wait for the laws of economic determinism to operate upon us. We never had a motor factory before. We had to let the tools condition our minds, didn't we? But nobody gave us time."

"Can you tell me about the work of your research staff?"

"Oh, I had a group of very promising young men, all of them guaranteed by diplomas from the best universities. But it didn't do me any good. I don't know what they were doing. I think they were just sitting around, eating up their salaries."

"Who was in charge of your laboratory?"

"Hell, how can I remember that now?"

"Do you remember any of the names of your research staff?"

"Do you think I had time to meet every hireling in person?"

"Did any of them ever mention to you any experiments with a . . . with an entirely new kind of motor?"

"What motor? Let me tell you that an executive of my position does not hang around laboratories. I spent most of my time in New York and Chicago, trying to raise money to keep us going."

"Who was the general manager of the factory?"

"A very able fellow by the name of Roy Cunningham. He died last year in an auto accident. Drunk driving, they said."

"Can you give me the names and addresses of any of your associates? Anyone you remember?"

"I don't know what's become of them. I wasn't in a mood to keep track of that."

"Have you preserved any of the factory records?"

"I certainly have."

She sat eagerly. "Would you let me see them?"

"You bet!"

He seemed eager to comply; he rose at once and hurried out of