by Taggart executives, but he did not like it. The cafeteria seemed part of the railroad, and he felt more at home.

The cafeteria lay underground. It was a large room with walls of white tile that glittered in the reflections of electric lights and looked like silver brocade. It had a high ceiling, sparkling counters of glass and chromium, a sense of space and light.

There was a railroad worker whom Eddie Willers met at times in the cafeteria. Eddie liked his face. They had been drawn into a chance conversation once, and then it became their habit to dine together whenever they happened to meet.

Eddie had forgotten whether he had ever asked the worker's name or the nature of his job; he supposed that the job wasn't much, because the man's clothes were rough and grease-stained. The man was not a person to him, but only a silent presence with an enormous intensity of interest in the one thing which was the meaning of his own life: in Taggart Transcontinental.

Tonight, coming down late, Eddie saw the worker at a table in a corner of the half-deserted room. Eddie smiled happily, waving to him, and carried his tray of food to the worker's table.

In the privacy of their corner, Eddie felt at ease, relaxing after the long strain of the day. He could talk as he did not talk anywhere else, admitting things he would not confess to anyone, thinking aloud, looking into the attentive eyes of the worker across the table.

"The Rio Norte Line is our last hope," said Eddie Willers. "But it will save us. We'll have at least one branch in good condition, where it's needed most, and that will help to save the rest. . . . It's funny—isn't it? -to speak about a last hope for Taggart Transcontinental. Do you take it seriously if somebody tells you that a meteor is going to destroy the earth? . . I don't, either. . . . 'From Ocean to Ocean, forever'—that's what we heard all through our childhood, she and I. No, they didn't say 'forever,' but that's what it meant. . . . You know, I'm not any kind of a great man. I couldn't have built that railroad. If it goes, I won't be able to bring it back. I'll have to go with it. . . . Don't pay any attention to me. I don't know why I should want to say things like that. Guess I'm just a little tired tonight. . . Yes, I worked late. She didn't ask me to stay, but there was a light under her door, long after all the others had gone . . .Yes, she's gone home now. . . . Trouble? Oh, there's always trouble in the office. But she's not worried. She knows she can pull us through. . . . Of course, it's bad. We're having many more accidents than you hear about. We lost two Diesels again, last week. One—just from old age, the other—in a head-on collision. . . . Yes, we have Diesels on order, at the United Locomotive Works, but we've waited for them for two years. I don't know whether we'll ever get them or not. . . . God, do we need them! Motive power—you can't imagine how important that is. That's the heart of everything. . . . What are you smiling at? . . . Well, as I was saying, it's bad. But at least the Rio Norte Line is set. The first shipment of rail will get to the site in a few weeks. In a year, we'll run the first train on the new track. Nothing's going to stop us, this time. . . . Sure, I know who's going to lay the rail. McNamara, of Cleveland. He's the con-

tractor who finished the San Sebastián Line for us There, at least, is one man who knows his job So we're safe We can count on him There aren't many good contractors left We're rushed as hell, but I like it I've been coming to the office an hour earlier than usual, but she beats me to it She's always there first What? I don't know what she does at night Nothing much I guess No, she never goes out with anyone She sits at home, mostly, and listens to music She plays records What do you care, which records? Richard Halley She loves the music of Richard Halley Outside the railroad that's the only thing she loves."

Chapter IV THE IMMOVABLE MOVERS

Motive power—thought Dagny, looking up at the Taggart Building in the twilight – was its first need motive power, to keep that building standing, movement to keep it immovable It did not rest on piles driven into granite, it rested on the engines that rolled across a continent

She felt a dim touch of anxiety She was back from a trip to the plant of the United Locomotive Works in New Jersey where she had gone to see the president of the company in person She had learned nothing neither the reason for the delays nor any indication of the date when the Diesel engines would be produced The president of the company had talked to her for two hours But none of his answers had connected to any of her questions His manner had conveyed a peculiar note of condescending reproach whenever she attempted to make the conversation specific, as if she were giving proof of ill breeding by breaking some unwritten code known to everyone else

On her way through the plant, she had seen an enormous piece of machinery left abandoned in a corner of the yard It had been a precision machine tool once, long ago of a kind that could not be bought anywhere now It had not been worn out it had been rotted by neglect, eaten by rust and the black drippings of a dirty oil She had turned her face away from it A sight of that nature always blinded her for an instant by the burst of too violent an anger She did not know why, she could not define her own feeling she knew only that there was, in her feeling, a scream of protest against injustice, and that it was a response to something much beyond an old piece of machinery

The rest of her staff had gone when she entered the anteroom of her office, but Eddie Willers was still there, waiting for her She knew at once that something had happened, by the way he looked and the way he followed her silently into her office

"What's the matter, Eddie?"

"McNamara quit."

She looked at him blankly "What do you mean, quit?"

"Left Retired Went out of business."

"McNamara, our contractor?"

"Yes."

"But that's impossible!"

"I know it."

"What happened? Why?"

"Nobody knows."

Taking her time deliberately, she unbuttoned her coat, sat down at her desk, started to pull off her gloves. Then she said, "Begin at the beginning, Eddie. Sit down."

He spoke quietly, but he remained standing. "I talked to his chief engineer, long distance. The chief engineer called from Cleveland, to tell us. That's all he said. He knew nothing else."

"What did he say?"

"That McNamara has closed his business and gone."

"Where?"

"He doesn't know. Nobody knows."

She noticed that she was holding with one hand two empty fingers of the glove of the other, the glove half-removed and forgotten. She pulled it off and dropped it on the desk.

Eddie said, "He's walked out on a pile of contracts that are worth a fortune. He had a waiting list of clients for the next three years. . . ." She said nothing. He added, his voice low, "I wouldn't be frightened if I could understand it. . . . But a thing that can't have any possible reason . . ." She remained silent. "He was the best contractor in the country."

They looked at each other. What she wanted to say was, "Oh God, Eddie!" Instead, her voice even, she said, "Don't worry. We'll find another contractor for the Rio Norte Line."

It was late when she left her office. Outside, on the sidewalk at the door of the building, she paused, looking at the streets. She felt suddenly empty of energy, of purpose, of desire, as if a motor had crackled and stopped.

A faint glow streamed from behind the buildings into the sky, the reflection of thousands of unknown lights, the electric breath of the city. She wanted to rest. To rest, she thought, and to find enjoyment somewhere.

Her work was all she had or wanted. But there were times, like tonight, when she felt that sudden, peculiar emptiness, which was not emptiness, but silence, not despair, but immobility, as if nothing within her were destroyed, but everything stood still. Then she felt the wish to find a moment's joy outside, the wish to be held as a passive spectator by some work or sight of greatness. Not to make it, she thought, but to accept; not to begin, but to respond; not to create, but to admire. I need it to let me go on, she thought, because joy is one's fuel.

She had always been—she closed her eyes with a faint smile of amusement and pain—the motive power of her own happiness. For once, she wanted to feel herself carried by the power of someone else's achievement. As men on a dark prairie liked to see the lighted windows of a train going past, her achievement, the sight of power and purpose that gave them reassurance in the midst of empty miles and night—so she wanted to feel it for a moment, a brief greeting,