operator to keep on trying and to try every number he could think of, where Mr. Locey might be found. The operator promised and Mitchum hung up, but knew that it was useless to wait or to speak to anyone in Mr. Locey's department.

"What's the matter, Dave?"

Mitchum handed him the order—and saw by the look on the trainmaster's face that the trap was as bad as he had suspected.

He called the Region Headquarters of Taggart Transcontinental at Omaha, Nebraska, and begged to speak to the general manager of the region. There was a brief silence on the wire, then the voice of the Omaha operator told him that the general manager had resigned and vanished three days ago—"over a little trouble with Mr. Locey," the voice added.

He asked to speak to the assistant general manager in charge of his particular district; but the assistant was out of town for the week end and could not be reached.

"Get me somebody else!" Mitchum screamed. "Anybody, of any district! For Christ's sake, get me somebody who'll tell me what to do!"

The man who came on the wire was the assistant general manager of the Iowa-Minnesota District.

"What?" he interrupted at Mitchum's first words. "At Winston, Colorado? Why in hell are you calling *me*? . . . No, don't tell me what happened, I don't want to know it! . . . No, I said! No! You're not going to frame me into having to explain afterwards why I did or didn't do anything about whatever it is. It's not *my* problem! . . . Speak to some region executive, don't pick on me, what do I have to do with Colorado? . . . Oh hell, I don't know, get the chief engineer, speak to him!"

The chief engineer of the Central Region answered impatiently, "Yes? What? What is it?" and Mitchum rushed desperately to explain. When the chief engineer heard that there was no Diesel, he snapped, "Then hold the train, of course!" When he heard about Mr. Chalmers, he said, his voice suddenly subdued, "Hm . . . Kip Chalmers? Of Washington? . . . Well, I don't know. That would be a matter for Mr. Locey to decide." When Mitchum said, "Mr. Locey ordered me to arrange it, but—" the chief engineer snapped in great relief, "Then do exactly as Mr. Locey says!" and hung up.

Dave Mitchum replaced the telephone receiver cautiously. He did not scream any longer. Instead, he tiptoed to a chair, almost as if he were sneaking. He sat looking at Mr. Locey's order for a long time.

Then he snatched a glance about the room. The dispatcher was busy at his telephone. The trainmaster and the road foreman were there, but they pretended that they were not waiting. He wished Bill Brent, the chief dispatcher, would go home; Bill Brent stood in a corner, watching him.

Brent was a short, thin man with broad shoulders; he was forty, but looked younger; he had the pale face of an office worker and the hard, lean features of a cowboy. He was the best dispatcher on the system.

Mitchum rose abruptly and walked upstairs to his office, clutching Locey's order in his hand.

Dave Mitchum was not good at understanding problems of engineering and transportation, but he understood men like Clifton Locey. He understood the kind of game the New York executives were playing and what they were now doing to him. The order did not tell him to give Mr. Chalmers a coal-burning engine—just "an engine." If the time came to answer questions, wouldn't Mr. Locey gasp in shocked indignation that he had expected a division superintendent to know that only a Diesel engine could be meant in that order? The order stated that he was to send the Comet through "*safely*"—wasn't a division superintendent expected to know what was safe?—"and without unnecessary delay." What was an *unnecessary* delay? If the possibility of a major disaster was involved, wouldn't a delay of a week or a month be considered necessary?

The New York executives did not care, thought Mitchum; they did not care whether Mr. Chalmers reached his meeting on time, or whether an unprecedented catastrophe struck their rails; they cared only about making sure that they would not be blamed for either. If he held the train, they would make him the scapegoat to appease the anger of Mr. Chalmers; if he sent the train through and it did not reach the western portal of the tunnel, they would put the blame on his incompetence; they would claim that he had acted against their orders, in either case. What would he be able to prove? To whom? One could prove nothing to a tribunal that had no stated policy, no defined procedure, no rules of evidence, no binding principles—a tribunal, such as the Unification Board, that pronounced men guilty or innocent as it saw fit, with no standard of guilt or innocence.

Dave Mitchum knew nothing about the philosophy of law; but he knew that when a court is not bound by any rules, it is not bound by any facts, and then a hearing is not an issue of justice, but an issue of men, and your fate depends not on what you have or have not done, but on whom you do or do not know. He asked himself what chance he would have at such a hearing against Mr. James Taggart, Mr. Clifton Locey, Mr. Kip Chalmers and their powerful friends.

Dave Mitchum had spent his life slipping around the necessity of ever making a decision; he had done it by waiting to be told and never being certain of anything. All that he now allowed into his brain was a long, indignant whine against injustice. Fate, he thought, had singled him out for an unfair amount of bad luck; he was being framed by his superiors on the only good job, he had ever held. He had never been taught to understand that the manner in which he obtained this job, and the frame-up, were inextricable parts of a single whole.

As he looked at Locey's order, he thought that he could hold the Comet; attach Mr. Chalmers' car to an engine and send it into the tunnel, alone. But he shook his head before the thought was fully formed: he knew that this would force Mr. Chalmers to recognize the nature of the risk: Mr. Chalmers would refuse; he would continue to demand a safe and non-existent engine. And more: this could