

was because of an outrageous scheme which the heirs of Jed Starnes established there. He would not work on such terms or for such people. But there was something else. I've always felt that something happened at Twentieth Century Motors, which he would not tell me."

"I'm extremely anxious to know any clue you may care to give me."

"I have no clue to it. I've tried to guess and given up. I cannot understand or explain it. But I know that something happened. When my husband left Twentieth Century, we came here and he took a job as head of the engineering department of Acme Motors. It was a growing, successful concern at the time. It gave my husband the kind of work he liked. He was not a person prone to inner conflicts, he had always been sure of his actions and at peace with himself. But for a whole year after we left Wisconsin, he acted as if he were tortured by something, as if he were struggling with a personal problem he could not solve. At the end of that year, he came to me one morning and told me that he had resigned from Acme Motors, that he was retiring and would not work anywhere else. He loved his work; it was his whole life. Yet he looked calm, self-confident and happy, for the first time since we'd come here. He asked me not to question him about the reason of his decision. I didn't question him and I didn't object. We had this house, we had our savings, we had enough to live on modestly for the rest of our days. I never learned his reason. We went on living here, quietly and very happily. He seemed to feel a profound contentment. He had an odd serenity of spirit that I had never seen in him before. There was nothing strange in his behavior or activity--except that at times, very rarely, he went out without telling me where he went or whom he saw. In the last two years of his life, he went away for one month, each summer; he did not tell me where. Otherwise, he lived as he always had. He studied a great deal and he spent his time on engineering research of his own, working in the basement of our house. I don't know what he did with his notes and experimental models. I found no trace of them in the basement, after his death. He died five years ago, of a heart ailment from which he had suffered for some time."

Dagny asked hopelessly, "Did you know the nature of his experiments?"

"No. I know very little about engineering."

"Did you know any of his professional friends or co-workers, who might have been acquainted with his research?"

"No. When he was at Twentieth Century Motors, he worked such long hours that we had very little time for ourselves and we spent it together. We had no social life at all. He never brought his associates to the house."

"When he was at Twentieth Century, did he ever mention to you a motor he had designed, an entirely new type of motor that could have changed the course of all industry?"

"A motor? Yes. Yes, he spoke of it several times. He said it was an invention of incalculable importance. But it was not he who had designed it. It was the invention of a young assistant of his."

She saw the expression on Dagny's face, and added slowly, quizzically, without reproach, merely in sad amusement, "I see."

"Oh, I'm sorry!" said Dagny, realizing that her emotion had shot to her face and become a smile as obvious as a cry of relief.

"It's quite all right. I understand. It's the inventor of that motor that you're interested in. I don't know whether he is still alive, but at least I have no reason to think that he isn't."

"I'd give half my life to know that he is—and to find him. It's as important as that, Mrs. Hastings. Who is he?"

"I don't know. I don't know his name or anything about him. I never knew any of the men on my husband's staff. He told me only that he had a young engineer who, some day, would up-turn the world. My husband did not care for anything in people except ability. I think this was the only man he ever loved. He didn't say so, but I could tell it, just by the way he spoke of this young assistant. I remember—the day he told me that the motor was completed—how his voice sounded when he said, 'And he's only twenty-six!' This was about a month before the death of Jed Starnes. He never mentioned the motor or the young engineer, after that."

"You don't know what became of the young engineer?"

"No."

"You can't suggest any way to find him?"

"No."

"You have no clue, no lead to help me learn his name?"

"None. Tell me, was that motor extremely valuable?"

"More valuable than any estimate I could give you."

"It's strange, because, you see, I thought of it once, some years after we'd left Wisconsin, and I asked my husband what had become of that invention he'd said was so great, what would be done with it. He looked at me very oddly and answered, 'Nothing.'"

"Why?"

"He wouldn't tell me."

"Can you remember anyone at all who worked at Twentieth Century? Anyone who knew that young engineer? Any friend of his?"

"No, I . . . Wait! Wait, I think I can give you a lead. I can tell you where to find one friend of his. I don't even know that friend's name, either, but I know his address. It's an odd story. I'd better explain how it happened. One evening—about two years after we'd come here—my husband was going out and I needed our car that night, so he asked me to pick him up after dinner at the restaurant of the railroad station. He did not tell me with whom he was having dinner. When I drove up to the station, I saw him standing outside the restaurant with two men. One of them was young and tall. The other was elderly; he looked very distinguished. I would still recognize those men anywhere; they had the kind of faces one doesn't forget. My husband saw me and left them. They walked away toward the station platform; there was a train coming. My husband pointed after the young man and said, 'Did you see him? That's the boy I told you about.' 'The one who's the great maker of motors?' 'The one who was.'"

"And he told you nothing else?"

"Nothing else. This was nine years ago. Last spring, I went to visit my brother who lives in Cheyenne. One afternoon, he took the family