

explanation, she ordered the operator to get her the operating vice-president of the Atlantic Southern in Chicago, to get him at his home and out of bed, if necessary.

"George? Dagny Taggart," she said, when the voice of her competitor came on the wire. "Will you lend me the signal engineer of your Chicago terminal, Charles Murray, for twenty-four hours? . . . Yes . . . Right . . . Put him aboard a plane and get him here as fast as you can. Tell him we'll pay three thousand dollars. . . . Yes, for the one day. . . . Yes, as bad as that . . . Yes, I'll pay him in cash, out of my own pocket; if necessary. I'll pay whatever it takes to bribe his way aboard a plane, but get him on the first plane out of Chicago . . . No, George, not one—not a single mind left on Taggart Transcontinental . . . Yes, I'll get all the papers, exemptions, exceptions and emergency permissions. . . . Thanks, George. So long."

She hung up and spoke rapidly to the men before her, not to hear the stillness of the room and of the Terminal, where no sound of wheels was beating any longer, not to hear the bitter words which the stillness seemed to repeat: Not a single mind left on Taggart Transcontinental.

"Get a wrecking train and crew ready at once," she said. "Send them out on the Hudson Line, with orders to tear down every foot of copper wire, any copper wire, lights, signals, telephone, everything that's company property. Have it here by morning." "But, Miss Taggart! Our service on the Hudson Line is only temporarily suspended and the Unification Board has refused us permission to dismantle the line!" "I'll be responsible." "But how are we going to get the wrecking train out of here, when there aren't any signals?" "There will be signals in half an hour." "How?" "Come on," she said, rising to her feet.

They followed her as she hurried down the passenger platforms, past the huddling, shifting groups of travelers by the motionless trains. She hurried down a narrow catwalk, through a maze of rail, past blinded signals and frozen switches, with nothing but the beat of her satin sandals to fill the great vaults of the underground tunnels of Taggart Transcontinental, with the hollow creaking of planks under the slower steps of men trailing her like a reluctant echo—she hurried to the lighted glass cube of Tower A, that hung in the darkness like a crown without a body, the crown of a deposed ruler above a realm of empty tracks.

The tower director was too expert a man at too exacting a job to be able wholly to conceal the dangerous burden of intelligence. He understood what she wanted him to do from her first few words and answered only with an abrupt "Yes, ma'am," but he was bent over his charts by the time the others came following her up the iron stairway, he was grimly at work on the most humiliating job of calculation he had ever had to perform in his long career. She knew how fully he understood it, from a single glance he threw at her, a glance of indignation and endurance that matched some emotion he had caught in her face. "We'll do it first and feel about it afterwards," she said, even though he had made no comment. "Yes, ma'am," he answered woodenly.

His room, on the top of an underground tower, was like a glass verandah overlooking what had once been the swiftest, richest and most orderly stream in the world. He had been trained to chart the course of over ninety trains an hour and to watch them roll safely through a maze of tracks and switches in and out of the Terminal, under his glass walls and his fingertips. Now, for the first time, he was looking out at the empty darkness of a dried channel.

Through the open door of the relay room, she saw the tower men standing grimly idle—the men whose jobs had never permitted a moment's relaxation—standing by the long rows that looked like vertical copper pleats, like shelves of books and as much of a monument to human intelligence. The pull of one of the small levers, which protruded like bookmarks from the shelves, threw thousands of electric circuits into motion, made thousands of contacts and broke as many others, set dozens of switches to clear a chosen course and dozens of signals to light it, with no error left possible, no chance, no contradiction—an enormous complexity of thought condensed into one movement of a human hand to set and insure the course of a train, that hundreds of trains might safely rush by, that thousands of tons of metal and lives might pass in speeding streaks, a breath away from one another, protected by nothing but a thought, the thought of the man who devised the levers. But they—she looked at the face of her signal engineer—they believed that that muscular contraction of a hand was the only thing required to move the traffic—and now the tower men stood idle—and on the great panels in front of the tower director, the red and green lights, which had flashed announcing the progress of trains at a distance of miles, were now so many glass beads—like the glass beads for which another breed of savages had once sold the island of Manhattan.

"Call all of your unskilled laborers," she said to the assistant manager, "the section hands, trackwalkers, engine wipers, whoever's in the Terminal right now, and have them come here at once."

"Here?"

"Here," she said, pointing at the tracks outside the tower "Call all your switchmen, too. Phone your storehouse and have them bring here every lantern they can lay their hands on, any sort of lantern, conductors' lanterns, storm lanterns, anything."

"Lanterns, Miss Taggart?"

"Get going."

"Yes, ma'am."

"What is it we're doing, Miss Taggart?" asked the dispatcher.

"We're going to move trains and we're going to move them manually."

"Manually?" said the signal engineer.

"Yes, brother! Now why should you be shocked?" She could not resist it. "Man is only muscles, isn't he? We're going back—back to where there were no interlocking systems, no semaphores, no electricity—back to the time when train signals were not steel and wire, but men holding lanterns. Physical men, serving as lampposts. You've advocated it long enough—you got what you wanted. Oh, you thought that your tools would determine your ideas? But it