being practical enough to sell their brains for money, ought to acquire a little knowledge of the conditions of practical reality."

He looked at her with a touch of defiance, as if waiting for an angry answer. But her answer was worse than anger: her face remained expressionless, as if the truth or falsehood of his convictions were of no concern to her any longer. She said politely, "The second question I wanted to ask you was whether you would be kind enough to tell me the name of any physicist you know who, in your judgment, would possess the ability to attempt the reconstruction of this motor."

He looked at her and chuckled; it was a sound of pain. "Have you been tortured by it, too, Miss Taggart? By the impossibility of finding any sort of intelligence anywhere?"

"I have interviewed some physicists who were highly recommended to me and I have found them to be hopeless."

He leaned forward eagerly. "Miss Taggart," he asked, "did you call on me because you trusted the integrity of my scientific judgment?" The question was a naked plea.

"Yes," she answered evenly, "I trusted the integrity of your scientific judgment."

He leaned back; he looked as if some hidden smile were smoothing the tension away from his face. "I wish I could help you," he said, as to a comrade. "I most selfishly wish I could help you, because, you see, this has been my hardest problem—trying to find men of talent for my own staff. Talent, hell! I'd be satisfied with just a semblance of promise—but the men they send me couldn't be honestly said to possess the potentiality of developing into decent garage mechanics. I don't know whether I am getting older and more demanding, or whether the human race is degenerating, but the world didn't seem to be so barren of intelligence in my youth. Today, if you saw the kind of men I've had to interview, you'd—"

He stopped abruptly, as if at a sudden recollection. He remained silent; he seemed to be considering something he knew, but did not wish to tell her; she became certain of it, when he concluded brusquely, in that tone of resentment which conceals an evasion, "No, I don't know anyone I'd care to recommend to you."

"This was all I wanted to ask you, Dr. Stadler," she said. "Thank you for giving me your time."

He sat silently still for a moment, as if he could not bring himself to leave.

"Miss Taggart," he asked, "could you show me the actual motor itself?"

She looked at him, astonished. "Why, yes . . . if you wish. But it's in an underground vault, down in our Terminal tunnels."

"I don't mind, if you wouldn't mind taking me down there. I have no special motive. It's only my personal curiosity. I would like to see it—that's all."

When they stood in the granite vault, over a glass case containing a shape of broken metal, he took off his hat with a slow, absent movement—and she could not tell whether it was the routine gesture

of remembering that he was in a room with a lady, or the gesture of baring one's head over a coffin.

They stood in silence, in the glare of a single light refracted from the glass surface to their faces. Train wheels were clicking in the distance, and it seemed at times as if a sudden, sharper jolt of vibration were about to awaken an answer from the corpse in the glass case.

"It's so wonderful," said Dr. Stadler, his voice low. "It's so wonderful to see a great, new, crucial idea which is not mine!"

She looked at him, wishing she could believe that she understood him correctly. He spoke, in passionate sincerity, discarding convention, discarding concern for whether it was proper to let her hear the confession of his pain, seeing nothing but the face of a woman who was able to understand:

"Miss Taggart, do you know the hallmark of the second-rater? It's resentment of another man's achievement. Those touchy mediocrities who sit trembling lest someone's work prove greater than their own--they have no inkling of the loneliness that comes when you reach the top. The loneliness for an equal--for a mind to respect and an achievement to admire. They bare their teeth at you from out of their rat holes, thinking that you take pleasure in letting your brilliance dim them—while you'd give a year of your life to see a flicker of talent anywhere among them. They envy achievement, and their dream of greatness is a world where all men have become their acknowledged inferiors. They don't know that that dream is the infallible proof of mediocrity, because that sort of world is what the man of achievement would not be able to bear. They have no way of knowing what he feels when surrounded by inferiors--hatred? no, not hatred, but boredom--the terrible, hopeless, draining, paralyzing boredom. Of what account are praise and adulation from men whom you don't respect? Have you ever felt the longing for someone you could admire? For something, not to look down at, but up to?"

"I've felt it all my life," she said. It was an answer she could not refuse him.

"I know," he said--and there was beauty in the impersonal gentleness of his voice.·"I knew it the first time I spoke to you. That was why I came today--" He stopped for the briefest instant, but she did not answer the appeal and he finished with the same quiet gentleness, "Well, that was why I wanted to see the motor."

"I understand," she said softly; the tone of her voice was the only form of acknowledgment she could grant him.

"Miss Taggart," he said, his eyes lowered, looking at the glass case, "I know a man who might be able to undertake the reconstruction of that motor. He would not work for me --so he is probably the kind of man you want."

But by the time he raised his head—and before he saw the look of admiration in her eyes, the open look he had begged for, the look of forgiveness—he destroyed his single moment's atonement by adding in a voice of drawing-room sarcasm, "Apparently, the young man had no desire to work for the good of society or the welfare of science. He told me that he would not take a government job. I