ders. It gave her pleasure to devise complex systems of levers and pulleys out of old scraps of iron and rope, then to move weights of rock that were much beyond her physical power. She planted a few seeds of nasturtiums and morning glories, to see one spreading slowly over the ground and the other climbing up the tree trunks, to see them grow, to see progression and movement.

The work gave her the calm needed; she had not noticed how she began it or why; she had started without conscious intention, but she saw it growing under her hands, pulling her forward, giving her a healing sense of peace. Then she understood that what she needed was the motion to a purpose, no matter how small or in what form, the sense of an activity going step by step to some chosen end across a span of time. The work of cooking a meal was like a closed circle, completed and gone, leading nowhere. But the work of building a path was a living sum, so that no day was left to die behind her, but each day contained all those that preceded it, each day acquired its immortality on every succeeding tomorrow. A circle, she thought, is the movement proper to physical nature, they say that there's nothing but circular motion in the inanimate universe around us, but the straight line is the badge of man, the straight line of a geometrical abstraction that makes roads, rails and bridges, the straight line that cuts the curving aimlessness of nature by a purposeful motion from a start to an end. The cooking of meals, she thought, is like the feeding of coal to an engine for the sake of a great run, but what would be the imbecile torture of coaling an engine that had no run to make? It is not proper for man's life to be a circle, she thought, or a string of circles dropping off like zeros behind him—man's life must be a straight line of motion from goal to farther goal, each leading to the next and to a single growing sum, like a journey down the track of a railroad, from station to station to—oh, stop it!

Stop it—she told herself in quiet severity, when the scream of the wounded stranger was choked off—don't think of that, don't look too far, you like building this path, build it, don't look beyond the foot of the hill.

She had driven a few times to the store in Woodstock, twenty miles away, to buy supplies and food. Woodstock was a small huddle of dying structures, built generations ago for some reason and hope long since forgotten. There was no railroad to feed it, no electric power, nothing but a county highway growing emptier year by year.

The only store was a wooden hovel, with spider-eaten corners and a rotted patch in the middle of the floor, eaten by the rains that came through the leaking roof. The storekeeper was a fat, pallid woman who moved with effort, but seemed indifferent to her own discomfort. The stock of food consisted of dusty cans with faded labels, some grain, and a few vegetables rotting in ancient bins outside the door. "Why don't you move those vegetables out of the sun?" Dagny asked once. The woman looked at her blankly, as if unable to understand the possibility of such a question. "They've always been there," she answered indifferently.

Driving back to the cabin, Dagny looked up at a mountain stream that fell with ferocious force down a sheer granite wall, its spray

hanging like a mist of rainbows in the sun. She thought that one could build a hydroelectric plant, just large enough to supply the power for her cabin and for the town of Woodstock—Woodstock could be made to be productive—those wild apple trees she saw in such unusual numbers among the dense growth on the hillsides, were the remnants of orchards—suppose one were to reclaim them, then build a small spur to the nearest railroad—oh, stop it!

"No kerosene today," the storekeeper told her on her next trip to Woodstock. "It rained Thursday night, and when it rains, the trucks can't get through Fairfield gorge, the road's flooded, and the kerosene truck won't be back this way till next month." "If you know that the road gets flooded every time it rains, why don't you people repair it?" The woman answered, "The road's always been that way."

Driving back, Dagny stopped on the crest of a hill and looked down at the miles of countryside below. She looked at Fairfield gorge where the county road, twisting through marshy soil below the level of a river, got trapped in a crack between two hills. It would be simple to by-pass those hills, she thought, to build a road on the other side of the river—the people of Woodstock had nothing to do, she could teach them—cut a road straight to the southwest, save miles, connect with the state highway at the freight depot of—oh, stop it!

She put her kerosene lamp aside and sat in her cabin after dark by the light of a candle, listening to the music of a small portable radio. She hunted for symphony concerts and twisted the dial rapidly past whenever she caught the raucous syllables of a news broadcast; she did not want any news from the city.

Don't think of Taggart Transcontinental—she had told herself on her first night in the cabin—don't think of it until you're able to hear the words as if they were "Atlantic Southern" or "Associated Steel." But the weeks passed and no scar would grow over the wound.

It seemed to her as if she were fighting the unpredictable cruelty of her own mind. She would lie in bed, drifting off to sleep—then find herself suddenly thinking that the conveyor belt was worn at the coaling station at Willow Bend, Indiana, she had seen it from the window of her car on her last trip, she must tell them to replace it or they—and then she would be sitting up in bed, crying, Stop it!—and stopping it, but remaining awake for the rest of that night

She would sit at the door of the cabin at sunset and watch the motion of the leaves growing still in the twilight—then she would see the sparks of the fireflies rising from the grass, flashing on and off in every darkening corner, flashing slowly, as if holding one moment's warning—they were like the lights of signals winking at night over the track of a— Stop it!

It was the times when she could not stop it that she dreaded, the times when, unable to stand up—as in physical pain, with no limit to divide it from the pain of her mind—she would fall down on the floor of the cabin or on the earth of the woods and sit still, with her face pressed to a chair or a rock, and fight not to let herself scream