want you to know that I am not ashamed of my past career as president of the Community National Bank of Madison."

"I haven't made any reference to shame," said Dagny coldly.

"No moral guilt can be attached to me, inasmuch as I lost everything I possessed in the crash of that bank. It seems to me that I would have the right to feel proud of such a sacrifice."

"I merely wanted to ask you some questions about the Twentieth Century Motor Company which—"

"I shall be glad to answer any questions I have nothing to hide. My conscience is clear. If you thought that the subject was embarrassing to me, you were mistaken."

"I wanted to inquire about the men who owned the factory at the time when you made a loan to—"

"They were perfectly good men. They were a perfectly sound risk—though, of course, I am speaking in human terms, not in the terms of cold cash, which you are accustomed to expect from bankers. I granted them the loan for the purchase of that factory, because they needed the money. If people needed money, that was enough for me. Need was my standard, Miss Taggart. Need not greed. My father and grandfather built up the Community National Bank just to amass a fortune for themselves. I placed their fortune in the service of a higher ideal. I did not sit on piles of money and demand collateral from poor people who needed loans. The heart was my collateral. Of course, I do not expect anyone in this materialistic country to understand me. The rewards I got were not of a kind that people of *your* class, Miss Taggart, would appreciate. The people who used to sit in front of my desk, at the bank, did not sit as you do, Miss Taggart. They were humble, uncertain, worn with care, afraid to speak. My rewards were the tears of gratitude in their eyes, the trembling voices, the blessings, the woman who kissed my hand when I granted her a loan she had begged for in vain everywhere else."

"Will you please tell me the names of the men who owned the motor factory?"

"That factory was essential to the region, absolutely essential. I was perfectly justified in granting that loan. It provided employment for thousands of workers who had no other means of livelihood."

"Did you know any of the people who worked in the factory?"

"Certainly. I knew them all. It was men that interested me, not machines. I was concerned with the human side of industry, not the cash-register side."

She leaned eagerly across the desk. "Did you know any of the engineers who worked there?"

"The engineers? No, no. I was much more democratic than that. It's the real workers that interested me. The common men. They all knew me by sight. I used to come into the shops and they would wave and shout, 'Hello, Gene.' That's what they called me—Gene. But I'm sure this is of no interest to you. It's past history. Now if you really came to Washington in order to talk to me about your railroad"—he straightened up briskly, the bomber-plane pose returning—"I don't know whether I can promise you any special consideration,

inasmuch as I must hold the national welfare above any private privileges or interests which—"

"I didn't come to talk to you about my railroad," she said, looking at him in bewilderment. "I have no desire to talk to you about my railroad."

"No?" He sounded disappointed.

"No. I came for information about the motor factory. Could you possibly recall the names of any of the engineers who worked there?"

"I don't believe I ever inquired about their names. I wasn't concerned with the parasites of office and laboratory. I was concerned with the real workers—the men of callused hands who keep a factory going. They were my friends."

"Can you give me a few of their names? Any names, of anyone who worked there?"

"My dear Miss Taggart, it was so long ago, there were thousands of them, how can I remember?"

"Can't you recall one, any one?"

"I certainly cannot. So many people have always filled my life that I can't be expected to recall individual drops in the ocean."

"Were you familiar with the production of that factory? With the kind of work they were doing—or planning?"

"Certainly. I took a personal interest in all my investments. I went to inspect that factory very often. They were doing exceedingly well. They were accomplishing wonders. The workers' housing conditions were the best in the country. I saw lace curtains at every window and flowers on the window sills. Every home had a plot of ground for a garden. They had built a new schoolhouse for the children."

"Did you know anything about the work of the factory's research laboratory?"

"Yes, yes, they had a wonderful research laboratory, very advanced, very dynamic, with forward vision and great plans."

"Do you . . . remember hearing anything about . . . any plans to produce a new type of motor?"

"Motor? What motor, Miss Taggart? I had no time for details. My objective was social progress, universal prosperity, human brotherhood and love. Love, Miss Taggart. That is the key to everything. If men learned to love one another, it would solve all their problems."

She turned away, not to see the damp movements of his mouth.

A chunk of stone with Egyptian hieroglyphs lay on a pedestal in a corner of the office—the statue of a Hindu goddess with six spider arms stood in a niche—and a huge graph of bewildering mathematical detail, like the sales chart of a mail-order house, hung on the wall.

"Therefore, if you're thinking of your railroad, Miss Taggart—as, of course, you are, in view of certain possible developments—I must point out to you that although the welfare of the country is my first consideration, to which I would not hesitate to sacrifice anyone's profits, still, I have never closed my ears to a plea for mercy and—"

She looked at him and understood what it was that he wanted from her, what sort of motive kept him going.

"I don't wish to discuss my railroad," she said, fighting to keep her voice monotonously flat, while she wanted to scream in revulsion.