earth that can force me to tell it. If you understand this, you'll understand everything that's baffling you."

"That night . . . twelve years ago . . . a spring night when you walked out of a meeting of six thousand murderers—that story is true, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"You told them that you would stop the motor of the world."

"I have."

"What have you done?"

"I've done *nothing*, Miss Taggart. And that's the whole of my secret."

She looked at him silently for a long moment. He stood waiting, as if he could read her thoughts. "The destroyer—" she said with a tone of wonder and helplessness.

"—the most evil creature that's ever existed," he said in the tone of a quotation, and she recognized her own words, "the man who's draining the brains of the world."

"How thoroughly have you been watching me," she asked, "and for how long?"

It was only an instant's pause, his eyes did not move, but it seemed to her that his glance was stressed, as if in special awareness of seeing her, and she caught the sound of some particular intensity in his voice as he answered quietly, "For years."

She closed her eyes, relaxing and giving up. She felt an odd, lighthearted indifference, as if she suddenly wanted nothing but the comfort of surrendering to helplessness.

The doctor who arrived was a gray-haired man with a mild, thoughtful face and a firmly, unobtrusively confident manner.

"Miss Taggart, may I present Dr. Hendricks?" said Galt.

"Not Dr. Thomas Hendricks?" she gasped, with the involuntary rudeness of a child; the name belonged to a great surgeon, who had retired and vanished six years ago.

"Yes, of course," said Galt.

Dr. Hendricks smiled at her, in answer. "Midas told me that Miss Taggart has to be treated for shock," he said, "not for the one sustained, but for the ones to come."

"I'll leave you to do it," said Galt, "while I go to the market to get supplies for breakfast."

She watched the rapid efficiency of Dr. Hendricks' work, as he examined her injuries. He had brought an object she had never seen before: a portable X-ray machine. She learned that she had torn the cartilage of two ribs, that she had sprained an ankle, ripped patches of skin off one knee and one elbow, and acquired a few bruises spread in purple blotches over her body. By the time Dr. Hendricks' swift, competent hands had wound the bandages and the tight lacings of tape, she felt as if her body were an engine checked by an expert mechanic, and no further care was necessary.

"I would advise you to remain in bed, Miss Taggart."

"Oh no! If I'm careful and move slowly, I'll be all right."

"You ought to rest."

"Do you think I can?"

He smiled. "I guess not."

She was dressed by the time Galt came back. Dr. Hendricks gave him an account of her condition, adding, "I'll be back to check up, tomorrow."

"Thanks," said Galt. "Send the bill to me."

"Certainly not!" she said indignantly. "I will pay it myself."

The two men glanced at each other, in amusement, as at the boast of a beggar.

"We'll discuss that later," said Galt.

Dr. Hendricks left, and she tried to stand up, limping, catching at the furniture for support. Galt lifted her in his arms, carried her to the kitchen alcove and placed her on a chair by the table set for two.

She noticed that she was hungry, at the sight of the coffee pot boiling on the stove, the two glasses of orange juice, the heavy white pottery dishes sparkling in the sun on the polished table top.

"When did you sleep or eat last?" he asked.

"I don't know . . . I had dinner on the train, with—" She shook her head in helplessly bitter amusement: with the tramp, she thought, with a desperate voice pleading for escape from an avenger who would not pursue or be found—the avenger who sat facing her across the table, drinking a glass of orange juice. "I don't know . . . it seems centuries and continents away."

"How did you happen to be following me?"

"I landed at the Afton airport just as you were taking off. The man there told me that Quentin Daniels had gone with you."

"I remember your plane circling to land. But that was the one and only time when I didn't think of you. I thought you were coming by train."

She asked, looking straight at him, "How do you want me to understand that?"

"What?"

"The one and only time when you didn't think of me."

He held her glance; she saw the faint movement she had noted as typical of him: the movement of his proudly intractable mouth curving into the hint of a smile. "In any way you wish," he answered.

She let a moment pass to underscore her choice by the severity of her face, then asked coldly, in the tone of an enemy's accusation, "You knew that I was coming for Quentin Daniels?"

"Yes."

"You got him first and fast, in order not to let me reach him? In order to beat me—knowing fully what sort of beating that would mean for me?"

"Sure."

It was she who looked away and remained silent. He rose to cook the rest of their breakfast. She watched him as he stood at the stove, toasting bread, frying eggs and bacon. There was an easy, relaxed skill about the way he worked, but it was a skill that belonged to another profession; his hands moved with the rapid precision of an engineer pulling the levers of a control board. She remembered suddenly where she had seen as expert and preposterous a performance.

"Is that what you learned from Dr. Akston?" she asked, pointing at the stove.

"That, among other things."

"Did he teach you to spend your time—*your* time!" she could not keep the shudder of indignation out of her voice—"on this sort of work?"

"I've spent time on work of much lesser importance."

When he put her plate before her, she asked, "Where did you get that food? Do they have a grocery store here?"

"The best one in the world. It's run by Lawrence Hammond."

"*What?*"

"Lawrence Hammond, of Hammond Cars. The bacon is from the farm of Dwight Sanders—of Sanders Aircraft. The eggs and the butter from Judge Narragansett—of the Superior Court of the State of Illinois."

She looked at her plate, bitterly, almost as if she were afraid to touch it. "It's the most expensive breakfast I'll ever eat, considering the value of the cook's time and of all those others."

"Yes—from one aspect. But from another, it's the cheapest breakfast you'll ever eat—because no part of it has gone to feed the looters who'll make you pay for it through year after year and leave you to starve in the end."

After a long silence, she asked simply, almost wistfully, "What is it that you're all doing here?"

"Living."

She had never heard that word sound so real.

"What is your job?" she asked. "Midas Mulligan said that you work here."

"I'm the handy man, I guess."

"The what?"

"I'm on call whenever anything goes wrong with any of the installations—with the power system, for instance."

She looked at him—and suddenly she tore forward, staring at the electric stove, but fell back on her chair, stopped by pain.

He chuckled. "Yes, that's true—but take it easy or Dr. Hendricks will order you back to bed."

"The power system . . ." she said, choking, "the power system here . . . it's run by means of your motor?"

"Yes."

"It's built? It's working? It's functioning?"

"It has cooked your breakfast."

"I want to see it!"

"Don't bother crippling yourself to look at that stove. It's just a plain electric stove like any other, only about a hundred times cheaper to run. And that's all you'll have a chance to see, Miss Taggart."

"You promised to show me this valley."

"I'll show it to you. But not the power generator."

"Will you take me to see the place now, as soon as we finish?"

"If you wish—and if you're able to move."

"I am."