that he had broken his own unstated commandment: Don't make it harder for her. He should not have told her about Dan Conway, he thought; he should not have said anything to remind them both of the despair they would feel, if they felt. He wondered what was the matter with him: he thought it inexcusable that he should find his discipline slipping just because this was a room, not an office.

She went on speaking—and he listened, looking down at his pad, making a brief notation once in a while. He did not permit himself to look at her again

She threw the door of her closet open, jerked a suit off a hanger and folded it rapidly, while her voice went on with unhurried precision. He did not look up, he was aware of her only by means of sound: the sound of the swift movements and of the measured voice. He knew what was wrong with him, he thought; he did not want her to leave, he did not want to lose her again, after so brief a moment of reunion. But to indulge any personal loneliness, at a time when he knew how desperately the railroad needed her in Colorado, was an act of disloyalty he had never committed before—and he felt a vague, desolate sense of guilt.

"Send out orders that the Comet is to stop at every division point," she said, "and that all division superintendents are to prepare for me a report on—"

He glanced up—then his glance stopped and he did not hear the rest of the words. He saw a man's dressing gown hanging on the back of the open closet door, a dark blue gown with the white initials HR on its breast pocket.

He remembered where he had seen that gown before, he remembered the man facing him across a breakfast table in the Wayne-Falkland Hotel, he remembered that man coming, unannounced, to her office late on a Thanksgiving night—and the realization that he should have known it, came to him as two subterranean jolts of a single earthquake: it came with a feeling that screamed "No!" so savagely that the scream, not the sight, brought down every girder within him. It was not the shock of the discovery, but the more terrible shock of what it made him discover about himself.

He hung on to a single thought: that he must not let her see what he had noticed or what it had done to him. He felt a sensation of embarrassment magnified to the point of physical torture; it was the dread of violating her privacy twice: by learning her secret and by revealing his own. He bent lower over the note pad and concentrated on an immediate purpose: to stop his pencil from shaking.

". . . fifty miles of mountain trackage to build, and we can count on nothing but whatever material we own."

"I beg your pardon," he said, his voice barely audible, "I didn't hear what you said."

"I said I want a report from all superintendents on every foot of rail and every piece of equipment available on their divisions."

"Okay."

"I will confer with each of them in turn. Have them meet me in my car aboard the Comet."

"Okay."

"Send word out—unofficially—that the engineers are to make up time for the stops by going seventy, eighty, a hundred miles an hour, anything they wish as and when they need to, and that I will . . . Eddie?"

"Yes. Okay."

"Eddie, what's the matter?"

He had to look up, to face her and, desperately, to lie for the first time in his life. "I'm . . . I'm afraid of the trouble we'll get into with the law," he said.

"Forget it. Don't you see that there isn't any law left? Anything goes now, for whoever can get away with it—and, for the moment, it's we who're setting the terms."

When she was ready, he carried her suitcase to a taxicab, then down the platform of the Taggart Terminal to her office car, the last at the end of the Comet. He stood on the platform, saw the train jerk forward and watched the red markers on the back of her car slipping slowly away from him into the long darkness of the exit tunnel. When they were gone, he felt what one feels at the loss of a dream one had not known till after it was lost.

There were few people on the platform around him and they seemed to move with self-conscious strain, as if a sense of disaster clung to the rails and to the girders above their heads. He thought indifferently that after a century of safety, men were once more regarding the departure of a train as an event involving a gamble with death.

He remembered that he had had no dinner, and he felt no desire to eat, but the underground cafeteria of the Taggart Terminal was more truly his home than the empty cube of space he now thought of as his apartment—so he walked to the cafeteria, because he had no other place to go.

The cafeteria was almost deserted—but the first thing he saw, as he entered, was a thin column of smoke rising from the cigarette of the worker, who sat alone at a table in a dark corner.

Not noticing what he put on his tray, Eddie carried it to the worker's table, said, "Hello," sat down and said nothing else. He looked at the silverware spread before him, wondered about its purpose, remembered the use of a fork and attempted to perform the motions of eating, but found that it was beyond his power. After a while, he looked up and saw that the worker's eyes were studying him attentively.

"No," said Eddie, "no, there's nothing the matter with me. . . . Oh yes, a lot has happened, but what difference does it make now? . . . Yes, she's back. . . . What else do you want me to say about it? . . . How did you know she's back? Oh well, I suppose the whole company knew it within the first ten minutes. . . . No, I don't know whether I'm glad that she's back. . . . Sure, she'll save the railroad—for another year or month. . . . What do you want me to say? . . . No, she didn't. She didn't tell me what she's counting on. She didn't tell me what she thought or felt. . . . Well, how do you suppose she'd feel? It's hell for her—all right, for me, too! Only my kind of hell is my own fault. . . . No. Nothing, I can't talk about it—