

to be compared with engine-driving, not by long odds, but still it was railroading. His face brightened. He would interview Farley, the train-master.

Farley was in his office. Speckles had not very far to go, only a few steps down the platform. All the offices—and Big Cloud was division headquarters—were under the same roof.

At Speckles' request, Farley swung around in his swivel-chair with a quizzical expression on his face. Then he grinned.

"Want to go on with the train-crews, eh? What do you think, kid, that I'm running a kindergarten outfit, even if some of 'em do act like it? How old are you?"

"Sixteen," said Speckles, with a sinking heart.

"Sixteen, eh? Well, come back in a couple of years, and——"

But, for the second time that day, Speckles fled. He was in no mood to stand much chaffing, and Farley, as he well knew, had a leaning that way. Speckles halted outside the door, undecided what move to make next, when the clicking of the instruments in the dispatcher's room overhead came to his ears like an inspiration.

Why hadn't he thought of that before? Spence, who had been on the night trick most of the years that Speckles was caller, was now chief dispatcher. If he had any friend anywhere, it was Spence, the man at whose elbow he had sat through those long, dark hours of the night that beget confidences, and