

# CHAPTER IV -Tom Swift and His Electric Locomotive

As the evening progressed, Tom Swift and Mr. Damon visited Ned Newton, fully expecting him to be awake despite the late hour. Upon their arrival, they quickly delved into the events of the night, revealing they were targeted by a highwayman close to Ned's residence, a predicament they humorously blamed on Tom's presence.

Mr. Damon, brimming with excitement, prompted Tom to disclose the night's significant discussion. Tom, emphasizing the need for discretion, revealed that he and his father were contemplating a lucrative venture for the Swift Construction Company, sparked by a proposition from the president of the Hendrickton & Pas Alos Railroad.

The proposition - building an electric locomotive capable of two miles a minute - was met with enthusiasm from Ned and astonishment from Mr. Damon. Despite the daunting challenge, Tom was invigorated by the project's potential impact on the future of electrically-powered transport, particularly in reducing the operational costs of railways which were currently burdened by the high expenses of coal and oil.

Historically, Tom noted, the ambition for electrification in rail transport had always aimed at surpassing the limitations of steam locomotives while achieving significant cost-efficiency. However, existing electric models, such as the Jandel locomotive, lacked the necessary speed and power, particularly on challenging terrains like those faced by the H. & P. A. railroad.

Convinced of their capability to innovate, Tom, supported by Ned's financial acumen and Mr. Damon's boundless enthusiasm, looked forward to tackling the project. Yet, amid the excitement, the recent theft of Tom's wallet and subsequent hold-up cast a shadow of concern, hinting at a possible sabotage connected to their new venture.

As speculation about the identity and motive of the assailants ensued, Ned suggested that the thief might have local connections, implying a deeper intrigue against the Swift Construction Company's ambitions. Despite the looming threat, the focus remained on the electric locomotive's potential to revolutionize rail transport, with each party ready to contribute to this groundbreaking endeavor.

