

CHAPTER XVII -Tom Swift and His Electric Locomotive

Tom Swift and his friend Ned were initially content with their journey, having received reassuring updates about the safety of Tom's electric locomotive, the Hercules 0001. Even with a minor concern about Koku, their exotic companion, who the railway crew found puzzling, the duo remained undisturbed. However, their peaceful travel was abruptly interrupted near Hendrickton when their train was halted due to a freight train wreck ahead. This freight train, Number Forty-eight, had derailed and caused significant disruption, but their immediate concern was for the Hercules 0001, which was part of the derailed convoy.

Rushing to the scene at dawn, Tom and Ned discovered the wreck's extent and quickly sought out the Hercules 0001. To their relief, the electric locomotive was undamaged, upright on the tracks, near the front of the train. A railroad worker warned them of a "savage" onboard, referring humorously to Koku, who was safeguarding the locomotive. The young inventor reassured the giant Koku, who was impatiently waiting inside the cab, indicating their venture was still on track despite the incident.

In the aftermath, while assessing the situation, Tom and Ned's attention was drawn to a distinguished-looking man inquiring anxiously about a missing individual, O'Malley. This conversation piqued their interest, recalling O'Malley's link to corporate espionage connected with Tom's inventions. The chapter closes on their realization of O'Malley's disappearance from the scene, adding a layer of intrigue and concern regarding potential industrial sabotage beneath the surface of an accidental train wreck. This incident not only highlighted the vulnerabilities in transporting valuable inventions but also foreshadowed the complexities of corporate competition and espionage that Tom and Ned would have to navigate.