

To take the pounding violence of sixteen motors, she thought, the thrust of seven thousand tons of steel and freight, to withstand it, grip it and swing it around a curve, was the impossible feat performed by two strips of metal no wider than her arm. What made it possible? What power had given to an unseen arrangement of molecules the power on which their lives depended and the lives of all the men who waited for the eighty boxcars? She saw a man's face and hands in the glow of a laboratory oven, over the white liquid of a sample of metal.

She felt the sweep of an emotion which she could not contain, as of something bursting upward. She turned to the door of the motor units, she threw it open to a screaming jet of sound and escaped into the pounding of the engine's heart.

For a moment, it was as if she were reduced to a single sense, the sense of hearing, and what remained of her hearing was only a long, rising, falling, rising scream. She stood in a swaying, sealed chamber of metal, looking at the giant generators. She had wanted to see them, because the sense of triumph within her was bound to them, to her love for them, to the reason of the life--work she had chosen. In the abnormal clarity of a violent emotion, she felt as if she were about to grasp something she had never known and had to know. She laughed aloud, but heard no sound of it; nothing could be heard through the continuous explosion. "The John Galt Line!" she shouted, for the amusement of feeling her voice swept away from her lips.

She moved slowly along the length of the motor units, down a narrow passage between the engines and the wall. She felt the immodesty of an intruder, as if she had slipped inside a living creature, under its silver skin, and were watching its life beating in gray metal cylinders, in twisted coils, in sealed tubes, in the convulsive whirl of blades in wire cages. The enormous complexity of the shape above her was drained by invisible channels, and the violence raging within it was led to fragile needles on glass dials, to green and red beads winking on panels, to tall, thin cabinets stenciled "High Voltage."

Why had she always felt that joyous sense of confidence when looking at machines?--she thought. In these giant shapes, two aspects pertaining to the inhuman were radiantly absent: the causeless and the purposeless. Every part of the motors was an embodied answer to "Why?" and "What for?"--like the steps of a life-course chosen by the sort of mind she worshipped. The motors were a moral code cast in steel.

They *are* alive, she thought, because they are the physical shape of the action of a living power--of the mind that had been able to grasp the whole of this complexity, to set its purpose, to give it form. For an instant, it seemed to her that the motors were transparent and she was seeing the net of their nervous system. It was a net of connections, more intricate, more crucial than all of their wires and circuits: the rational connections made by that human mind which had fashioned any one part of them for the first time.

They *are* alive, she thought, but their soul operates them by remote control. Their soul is in every man who has the capacity to equal

this achievement. Should the soul vanish from the earth, the motors would stop, because that is the power which keeps them going—not the oil under the floor under her feet, the oil that would then become primeval ooze again—not the steel cylinders that would become stains of rust on the walls of the caves of shivering savages—the power of a living mind—the power of thought and choice and purpose.

She was making her way back toward the cab, feeling that she wanted to laugh, to kneel or to lift her arms, wishing she were able to release the thing she felt, knowing that it had no form of expression.

She stopped. She saw Rearden standing by the steps of the door to the cab. He was looking at her as if he knew why she had escaped and what she felt. They stood still, their bodies becoming a glance that met across a narrow passage. The beating within her was one with the beating of the motors—and she felt as if both came from him; the pounding rhythm wiped out her will. They went back to the cab, silently, knowing that there had been a moment which was not to be mentioned between them.

The cliffs ahead were a bright, liquid gold. Strips of shadow were lengthening in the valleys below. The sun was descending to the peaks in the west. They were going west and up, toward the sun.

The sky had deepened to the greenish-blue of the rails, when they saw smokestacks in a distant valley. It was one of Colorado's new towns, the towns that had grown like a radiation from the Wyatt oil fields. She saw the angular lines of modern houses, flat roofs, great sheets of windows. It was too far to distinguish people. In the moment when she thought that they would not be watching the train at that distance, a rocket shot out from among the buildings, rose high above the town and broke as a fountain of gold stars against the darkening sky. Men whom she could not see, were seeing the streak of the train on the side of the mountain, and were sending a salute, a lonely plume of fire in the dusk, the symbol of celebration or of a call for help.

Beyond the next turn, in a sudden view of distance, she saw two dots of electric light, white and red, low in the sky. They were not airplanes—she saw the cones of metal girders supporting them—and in the moment when she knew that they were the derricks of Wyatt Oil, she saw that the track was sweeping downward, that the earth flared open, as if the mountains were flung apart—and at the bottom, at the foot of the Wyatt hill, across the dark crack of a canyon, she saw the bridge of Rearden Metal.

They were flying down, she forgot the careful grading, the great curves of the gradual descent, she felt as if the train were plunging downward, head first, she watched the bridge growing to meet them—a small, square tunnel of metal lace work, a few beams criss-crossed through the air, green-blue and glowing, struck by a long ray of sunset light from some crack in the barrier of mountains. There were people by the bridge, the dark splash of a crowd, but they rolled off the edge of her consciousness. She heard the rising, accelerating sound of the wheels—and some theme of music, heard to the rhythm of wheels, kept tugging at her mind, growing louder—