rocked under her feet, in a single blast of emotion within her. She knew that she would have killed any other person who struck her; she felt the violent fury which would have given her the strength for it—and as violent a pleasure that Francisco had done it. She felt pleasure from the dull, hot pain in her cheek and from the taste of blood in the corner of her mouth. She felt pleasure in what she suddenly grasped about him, about herself and about his motive.

She braced her feet to stop the dizziness, she held her head straight and stood facing him in the consciousness of a new power, feeling herself his equal for the first time, looking at him with a mocking smile of triumph.

"Did I hurt you as much as that?" she asked.

He looked astonished; the question and the smile were not those of a child. He answered, "Yes—if it pleases you."

"It does."

"Don't ever do that again. Don't crack jokes of that kind."

"Don't be a fool. Whatever made you think that I cared about being popular?"

"When you grow up, you'll understand what sort of unspeakable thing you said."

"I understand it now."

He turned abruptly, took out his handkerchief and dipped it in the water of the river. "Come here," he ordered.

She laughed, stepping back. "Oh, no. I want to keep it as it is. I hope it swells terribly. I like it."

He looked at her for a long moment. He said slowly, very earnestly, "Dagny, you're wonderful."

"I thought that you always thought so," she answered, her voice insolently casual.

When she came home, she told her mother that she had cut her lip by falling against a rock. It was the only lie she ever told. She did not do it to protect Francisco, she did it because she felt, for some reason which she could not define, that the incident was a secret too precious to share.

Next summer, when Francisco came, she was sixteen. She started running down the hill to meet him, but stopped abruptly. He saw it, stopped, and they stood for a moment, looking at each other across the distance of a long, green slope. It was he who walked up toward her, walked very slowly, while she stood waiting.

When he approached, she smiled innocently, as if unconscious of any contest intended or won.

"You might like to know," she said, "that I have a job on the railroad. Night operator at Rockdale."

He laughed. "All right, Taggart Transcontinental, now it's a race. Let's see who'll do greater honor, you—to Nat Taggart, or I—to Sebastián d'Anconia."

That winter, she stripped her life down to the bright simplicity of a geometrical drawing: a few straight lines—to and from the engineering college in the city each day, to and from her job at Rockdale Station each night—and the closed circle of her room, a room littered

with diagrams of motors, blueprints of steel structures, and railroad timetables.

Mrs. Taggart watched her daughter in unhappy bewilderment. She could have forgiven all the omissions, but one: Dagny showed no sign of interest in men, no romantic inclination whatever. Mrs. Taggart did not approve of extremes; she had been prepared to contend with an extreme of the opposite kind, if necessary; she found herself thinking that this was worse. She felt embarrassed when she had to admit that her daughter, at seventeen, did not have a single admirer.

"Dagny and Francisco d'Anconia?" she said, smiling ruefully, in answer to the curiosity of her friends. "Oh no, it's not a romance. It's an international industrial cartel of some kind. That's all they seem to care about."

Mrs. Taggart heard James say one evening, in the presence of guests, a peculiar tone of satisfaction in his voice, "Dagny, even though you were named after her, you really look more like Nat Taggart than like that first Dagny Taggart, the famous beauty who was his wife." Mrs. Taggart did not know which offended her most: that James said it or that Dagny accepted it happily as a compliment.

She would never have a chance, thought Mrs. Taggart, to form some conception of her own daughter. Dagny was only a figure hurrying in and out of the apartment, a slim figure in a leather jacket, with a raised collar, a short skirt and long show-girl legs. She walked, cutting across a room, with a masculine, straight-line abruptness, but she had a peculiar grace of motion that was swift, tense and oddly, challengingly feminine.

At times, catching a glimpse of Dagny's face, Mrs. Taggart caught an expression which she could not quite define: it was much more than gaiety, it was the look of such an untouched purity of enjoyment that she found it abnormal, too: no young girl could be so insensitive to have discovered no sadness in life. Her daughter, she concluded, was incapable of emotion.

"Dagny," she asked once, "don't you ever want to have a good time?" Dagny looked at her incredulously and answered, "What do you think I'm having?"

The decision to give her daughter a formal debut cost Mrs. Taggart a great deal of anxious thought. She did not know whether she was introducing to New York society Miss Dagny Taggart of the Social Register or the night operator of Rockdale Station; she was inclined to believe it was more truly this last; and she felt certain that Dagny would reject the idea of such an occasion. She was astonished when Dagny accepted it with inexplicable eagerness, for once like a child.

She was astonished again, when she saw Dagny dressed for the party. It was the first feminine dress she had ever worn—a gown of white chiffon with a huge skirt that floated like a cloud. Mrs. Taggart had expected her to look like a preposterous contrast. Dagny looked like a beauty. She seemed both older and more radiantly innocent than usual; standing in front of the mirror, she held her head as Nat Taggart's wife would have held it.

"Dagny," Mrs. Taggart said gently, reproachfully, "do you see how beautiful you can be when you want to?"