

Then she noticed that she was clinging to the radio, as if the faint electric beat within it still held a tie to the only living force on earth, which it had transmitted for a few brief moments and which now filled the room where all else was dead.

As distant remnants of the explosion's wreckage, she noticed a sound that came from Jim, part-moan, part-scream, part-growl--then the sight of Jim's shoulders shaking over a telephone and his distorted voice screaming, "But, Rodrigo, you said it was safe! Rodrigo--oh God!--do you know how much I'd sunk into it?"--then the shriek of another phone on his desk, and his voice snarling into another receiver, his hand still clutching the first, "Shut your trap, Orren! What are *you* to do? What do I care, God damn you!"

There were people rushing into the office, the telephones were screaming and, alternating between pleas and curses, Jim kept yelling into one receiver, "Get me Santiago! . . . Get Washington to get me Santiago!"

Distantly, as on the margin of her mind, she could see what sort of game the men behind the shrieking phones had played and lost. They seemed far away, like tiny commas squirming on the white field under the lens of a microscope. She wondered how they could ever expect to be taken seriously when a Francisco d'Anconia was possible on earth.

She saw the glare of the explosion in every face she met through the rest of the day--and in every face she passed in the darkness of the streets, that evening. If Francisco had wanted a worthy funeral pyre for d'Anconia Copper, she thought, he had succeeded. There it was, in the streets of New York City, the only city on earth still able to understand it--in the faces of people, in their whispers, the whispers crackling tensely like small tongues of fire, the faces lighted by a look that was both solemn and frantic, the shadings of expressions appearing to sway and weave, as if cast by a distant flame, some frightened, some angry, most of them uneasy, uncertain, expectant, but all of them acknowledging a fact much beyond an industrial catastrophe, all of them knowing what it meant, though none would name its meaning, all of them carrying a touch of laughter, a laughter of amusement and defiance, the bitter laughter of perishing victims who feel that they are avenged.

She saw it in the face of Hank Rearden, when she met him for dinner that evening. As his tall, confident figure walked toward her--the only figure that seemed at home in the costly setting of a distinguished restaurant--she saw the look of eagerness fighting the sternness of his features, the look of a young boy still open to the enchantment of the unexpected. He did not speak of this day's event, but she knew that it was the only image in his mind.

They had been meeting whenever he came to the city, spending a brief, rare evening together--with their past still alive in their silent acknowledgment--with no future in their work and in their common struggle, but with the knowledge that they were allies gaining support from the fact of each other's existence.

He did not want to mention today's event, he did not want to speak of Francisco, but she noticed, as they sat at the table, that the

strain of a resisted smile kept pulling at the hollows of his cheeks. She knew whom he meant, when he said suddenly, his voice soft and low with the weight of admiration, "He did keep his oath, didn't he?"

"His *oath*?" she asked, startled, thinking of the inscription on the temple of Atlantis.

"He said to me, 'I swear—by the woman I love—that I am your friend.' He was."

"He is."

He shook his head. "I have no right to think of him. I have no right to accept what he's done as an act in my defense. And yet . . ." He stopped.

"But it was, Hank. In defense of all of us—and of you, most of all."

He looked away, out at the city. They sat at the side of the room, with a sheet of glass as an invisible protection against the sweep of space and streets sixty floors below. The city seemed abnormally distant: it lay flattened down to the pool of its lowest stories. A few blocks away, its tower merging into darkness, the calendar hung at the level of their faces, not as a small, disturbing rectangle, but as an enormous screen, eerily close and large, flooded by the dead, white glow of light projected through an empty film, empty but for the letters: September 2.

"Rearden Steel is now working at capacity," he was saying indifferently. "They've lifted the production quotas off my mills—for the next five minutes, I guess. I don't know how many of their own regulations they've suspended, I don't think they know it, either, they don't bother keeping track of legality any longer, I'm sure I'm a lawbreaker on five or six counts, which nobody could prove or disprove—all I know is that the gangster of the moment told me to go full steam ahead." He shrugged. "When another gangster kicks him out tomorrow, I'll probably be shut down, as penalty for illegal operation. But according to the plan of the present split-second, they've begged me to keep pouring my Metal, in any amount and by any means I choose."

She noticed the occasional, surreptitious glances that people were throwing in their direction. She had noticed it before, ever since her broadcast, ever since the two of them had begun to appear in public together. Instead of the disgrace he had dreaded, there was an air of awed uncertainty in people's manner—uncertainty of their own moral precepts, awe in the presence of two persons who dared to be certain of being right. People were looking at them with anxious curiosity, with envy, with respect, with the fear of offending an unknown, proudly rigorous standard, some almost with an air of apology that seemed to say: "Please forgive us for being married." There were some who had a look of angry malice, and a few who had a look of admiration.

"Dagny," he asked suddenly, "do you suppose he's in New York?"

"No. I've called the Wayne-Falkland. They told me that the lease on his suite had expired a month ago and he did not renew it."

"They're looking for him all over the world," he said, smiling.