"I could have staked my life that he loved the railroad!"

"He does."

"But he destroyed it."

"Yes."

She tightened the collar of her coat and walked on, against a gust of wind.

"I used to talk to him," he said, after a while. "His face . . Dagny, it didn't look like any of the others, it . . . it showed that he understood so much. . . . I was glad, whenever I saw him there, in the cafeteria . . . I just talked . . . I don't think I knew that he was asking questions . . . but he was . . . so many questions about the railroad and . . . and about you."

"Did he ever ask you what I look like, when I'm asleep?"

"Yes . . . Yes, he did . . . I'd found you once, asleep in the office, and when I mentioned it, he—" He stopped, as a sudden connection crashed into place in his mind.

She turned to him, in the ray of a street lamp, raising and holding her face in full light for a silent, deliberate moment, as if in answer and confirmation of his thought.

He closed his eyes "Oh God, Dagny!" he whispered.

They walked on in silence.

"He's gone by now, isn't he?" he asked. "From the Taggart Terminal, I mean."

"Eddie," she said, her voice suddenly grim, "if you value his life, don't ever ask that question. You don't want them to find him, do you? Don't give them any leads. Don't ever breathe a word to anyone about having known him. Don't try to find out whether he's still working in the Terminal."

"You don't mean that he's still there?"

"I don't know. I know only that he might be."

"*Now?*"

"Yes."

"Still?"

"Yes. Keep quiet about it, if you don't want to destroy him."

"I think he's gone He won't be back. I haven't seen him since . . since . . ."

"Since when?" she asked sharply.

"The end of May. The night when you left for Utah, remember?" He paused, as the memory of that night's encounter and the full understanding of its meaning struck him together. He said with effort, "I saw him that night. Not since . . . I've waited for him, in the cafeteria . . . He never came back."

"I don't think he'll let you see him now, he'll keep out of your way. But don't look for him. Don't inquire."

"It's funny. I don't even know what name he used. It was Johnny something or—"

"It was John Galt," she said, with a faint, mirthless chuckle. "Don't look at the Terminal payroll. The name is still there."

"Just like that? All these years?"

"For twelve years. Just like that."

"And it's still there now?"

"Yes."

After a moment, he said, "It proves nothing, I know. The personnel office hasn't taken a single name off the payroll list since Directive 10–289. If a man quits, they give his name and job to a starving friend of their own, rather than report it to the Unification Board."

"Don't question the personnel office or anyone. Don't call attention to his name. If you or I make any inquiries about him, somebody might begin to wonder. Don't look for him. Don't make any move in his direction. And if you ever catch sight of him by chance, act as if you didn't know him."

He nodded. After a while, he said, his voice tense and low, "I wouldn't turn him over to them, not even to save the railroad."

"Eddie—"

"Yes?"

"If you ever catch sight of him, tell me."

He nodded.

Two blocks later, he asked quietly, "You're going to quit, one of these days, and vanish, aren't you?"

"Why do you say that?" It was almost a cry.

"Aren't you?"

She did not answer at once, when she did, the sound of despair was present in her voice only in the form of too tight a monotone: "Eddie, if I quit, what would happen to the Taggart trains?"

"There would be no Taggart trains within a week. Maybe less."

"There will be no looters' government within ten days. Then men like Cuffy Meigs will devour the last of our rails and engines. Should I lose the battle by failing to wait one more moment? How can I let it go—Taggart Transcontinental, Eddie—go forever, when one last effort can still keep it in existence? If I've stood things this long, I can stand them a little longer. Just a little longer. I'm not helping the looters. Nothing can help them now."

"What are they going to do?"

"I don't know. What can they do? They're finished."

"I suppose so."

"Didn't you see them? They're miserable, panic-stricken rats, running for their lives."

"Does it mean anything to them?"

"What?"

"Their lives."

"They're still struggling, aren't they? But they're through and they know it."

"Have they ever acted on what they know?"

"They'll have to. They'll give up. It won't be long. And we'll be here to save whatever's left."

"Mr. Thompson wishes it to be known," said official broadcasts on the morning of November 23, "that there is no cause for alarm. He urges the public not to draw any hasty conclusions. We must preserve our discipline, our morale, our unity and our sense of broad-minded tolerance. The unconventional speech, which some of you might have heard on the radio last night, was a thought-provoking

contribution to our pool of ideas on world problems. We must consider it soberly, avoiding the extremes of total condemnation or of reckless agreement. We must regard it as one viewpoint out of many in our democratic forum of public opinion, which, as last night has proved, is open to all. The truth, says Mr. Thompson, has many facets. We must remain impartial."

"They're silent," wrote Chick Morrison, as a summary of its content, across the report from one of the field agents he had sent out on a mission entitled Public Pulse Taking. "They're silent," he wrote across the next report, then across another and another. "Silence," he wrote, with a frown of uneasiness, summing up his report to Mr. Thompson. "People seem to be silent."

The flames that went up to the sky of a winter night and devoured a home in Wyoming were not seen by the people of Kansas, who watched a trembling red glow on the prairie horizon, made by the flames that went up to devour a farm, and the glow was not reflected by the windows of a street in Pennsylvania, where the twisting red tongues were reflections of the flames that went up to devour a factory. Nobody mentioned, next morning, that those flames had not been set off by chance and that the owners of the three places had vanished. Neighbors observed it without comment—and without astonishment. A few homes were found abandoned in random corners across the nation, some left locked, shuttered and empty, others open and gutted of all movable goods—but people watched it in silence and, through the snowdrifts of untended streets in the haze of pre-morning darkness, went on trudging to their jobs, a little slower than usual.

Then, on November 27, a speaker at a political meeting in Cleveland was beaten up and had to escape by scurrying down dark alleys. His silent audience had come to sudden life when he had shouted that the cause of all their troubles was their selfish concern with their own troubles.

On the morning of November 29, the workers of a shoe factory in Massachusetts were astonished, on entering their workshop, to find that the foreman was late. But they went to their usual posts and went on with their habitual routine, pulling levers, pressing buttons, feeding leather into automatic cutters, piling boxes on a moving belt, wondering, as the hours went by, why they did not catch sight of the foreman, or the superintendent, or the general manager, or the company president. It was noon before they discovered that the front offices of the plant were empty.

"You goddamn cannibals!" screamed a woman in the midst of a crowded movie theater, breaking into sudden, hysterical sobs—and the audience showed no sign of astonishment, as if she were screaming for them all.

"There is no cause for alarm," said official broadcasts on December 5. "Mr. Thompson wishes it to be known that he is willing to negotiate with John Galt for the purpose of devising ways and means to achieve a speedy solution of our problems. Mr. Thompson urges the people to be patient. We must not worry, we must not doubt, we must not lose heart."