

to be made of nothing but pain. He's not. You're not. That terrible hopelessness that's all around us, I lose it only in his presence. And here. Nowhere else."

She came back to him and slipped down to sit at his feet, pressing her face to his knees. "Hank, we still have so much ahead of us . . . and so much right now. . . ."

He looked at the shape of pale blue silk huddled against the black of his clothes—he bent down to her—he said, his voice low, "Daggy . . . the things I said to you that morning in Ellis Wyatt's house . . . I think I was lying to myself."

"I know it."

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Through a gray drizzle of rain, the calendar above the roofs said: September 3, and a clock on another tower said: 10:40, as Rearden rode back to the Wayne-Falkland Hotel. The cab's radio was spitting out shrilly the sounds of a panic-tinged voice announcing the crash of d'Anconia Copper.

Rearden leaned wearily against the seat: the disaster seemed to be no more than a stale news story read long ago. He felt nothing, except an uncomfortable sense of impropriety at finding himself out in the morning streets, dressed in evening clothes. He felt no desire to return from the world he had left to the world he saw drizzling past the windows of the taxi.

He turned the key in the door of his hotel suite, hoping to get back to a desk as fast as possible and have to see nothing around him.

They hit his consciousness together: the breakfast table—the door to his bedroom, open upon the sight of a bed that had been slept in—and Lillian's voice saying, "Good morning, Henry."

She sat in an armchair, wearing the suit she had worn yesterday, without the jacket or hat; her white blouse looked smugly crisp. There were remnants of a breakfast on the table. She was smoking a cigarette, with the air and pose of a long, patient vigil.

As he stood still, she took the time to cross her legs and settle down more comfortably, then asked, "Aren't you going to say anything, Henry?"

He stood like a man in military uniform at some official proceedings where emotions could not be permitted to exist. "It is for you to speak."

"Aren't you going to try to justify yourself?"

"No."

"Aren't you going to start begging my forgiveness?"

"There is no reason why you should forgive me. There is nothing for me to add. You know the truth. Now it is up to you."

She chuckled, stretching, rubbing her shoulder blades against the chair's back. "Didn't you expect to be caught, sooner or later?" she asked. "If a man like you stays pure as a monk for over a year, didn't you think that I might begin to suspect the reason? It's funny, though, that that famous brain of yours didn't prevent you from getting caught as simply as this." She waved at the room, at the breakfast table. "I felt certain that you weren't going to return here, last night. And it wasn't difficult or expensive at all to find out from

a hotel employee, this morning, that you haven't spent a night in these rooms in the past year."

He said nothing.

"The man of stainless steel!" She laughed. "The man of achievement and honor who's so much better than the rest of us! Does she dance in the chorus or is she a manicurist in an exclusive barber shop patronized by millionaires?"

He remained silent.

"Who is she, Henry?"

"I won't answer that."

"I want to know."

"You're not going to."

"Don't you think it's ridiculous, your playing the part of a gentleman who's protecting the lady's name—or of any sort of gentleman, from now on? Who is she?"

"I said I won't answer."

She shrugged. "I suppose it makes no difference. There's only one standard type for the one standard purpose. I've always known that under that ascetic look of yours you were a plain, crude sensualist who sought nothing from a woman except an animal satisfaction which I pride myself on not having given you. I knew that your vaunted sense of honor would collapse some day and you would be drawn to the lowest, cheapest type of female, just like any other cheating husband." She chuckled. "That great admirer of yours, Miss Dagny Taggart, was furious at me for the mere hint of a suggestion that her hero wasn't as pure as his stainless, non-corrosive rail. And she was naive enough to imagine that I could suspect her of being the type men find attractive for a relationship in which—what they seek is most notoriously *not* brains. I knew your real nature and inclinations. Didn't I?" He said nothing. "Do you know what I think of you now?"

"You have the right to condemn me in any way you wish."

She laughed. "The great man who was so contemptuous—in business—of weaklings who trimmed corners or fell by the wayside, because they couldn't match his strength of character and steadfastness of purpose! How do you feel about it now?"

"My feelings need not concern you. You have the right to decide what you wish me to do. I will agree to any demand you make, except one: don't ask me to give it up."

"Oh, I wouldn't ask you to give it up! I wouldn't expect you to change your nature. This is your true level—under all that self-made grandeur of a knight of industry who rose by sheer genius from the ore mine gutters to finger bowls and white tie! It fits you well, that white tie, to come home at eleven o'clock in the morning! You never rose out of the ore mines, that's where you belong—all of you self-made princes of the cash register—in the corner saloon on Saturday night, with the traveling salesmen and the dance-hall girls!"

"Do you wish to divorce me?"

"Oh, wouldn't you like that! Wouldn't that be a smart trade to pull! Don't you suppose I know that you've wanted to divorce me since the first month of our marriage?"