

tangle of ferns and pine branches, was more characteristic, more familiar than the words: WYATT OIL.

It was oil that ran in a glittering curve from the mouth of a pipe into a tank at the foot of the wall, as the only confession of the tremendous secret struggle inside the stone, as the unobtrusive purpose of all the intricate machinery—but the machinery did not resemble the installations of an oil derrick, and she knew that she was looking at the unborn secret of the Buena Esperanza Pass, she knew that this was oil drawn out of shale by some method men had considered impossible.

Ellis Wyatt stood on a ridge, watching the glass dial of a gauge imbedded in the rock. He saw the car stopping below, and called, "Hi, Dagny! Be with you in a minute!"

There were two other men working with him: a big, muscular roughneck, at a pump halfway up the wall, and a young boy, by the tank on the ground. The young boy had blond hair and a face with an unusual purity of form. She felt certain that she knew this face, but she could not recall where she had seen it. The boy caught her puzzled glance, grinned and, as if to help her, whistled softly, almost inaudibly the first notes of Halley's Fifth Concerto. It was the young brakeman of the Comet.

She laughed. "It was the Fifth Concerto by Richard Halley, wasn't it?"

"Sure," he answered. "But do you think I'd tell that to a scab?"

"A what?"

"What am I paying you for?" asked Ellis Wyatt, approaching; the boy chuckled, darting back to seize the lever he had abandoned for a moment. "It's Miss Taggart who couldn't fire you, if you loafed on the job. I can."

"That's one of the reasons why I quit the railroad. Miss Taggart," said the boy.

"Did you know that I stole him from you?" said Wyatt. "He used to be your best brakeman and now he's my best grease-monkey, but neither one of us is going to hold him permanently."

"Who is?"

"Richard Halley. Music. He's Halley's best pupil."

She smiled. "I know, this is a place where one employs nothing but aristocrats for the lousiest kinds of jobs."

"They're all aristocrats, that's true," said Wyatt, "because they know that there's no such thing as a lousy job—only lousy men who don't care to do it."

The roughneck was watching them from above, listening with curiosity. She glanced up at him, he looked like a truck driver, so she asked, "What were *you* outside? A professor of comparative philology, I suppose?"

"No, ma'am," he answered. "I was a truck driver." He added, "But that's not what I wanted to remain."

Ellis Wyatt was looking at the place around them with a kind of youthful pride eager for acknowledgment: it was the pride of a host at a formal reception in a drawing room, and the eagerness of an

artist at the opening of his show in a gallery. She smiled and asked, pointing at the machinery, "Shale oil?"

"Uh-huh."

"That's the process which you were working to develop while you were on earth?" She said it involuntarily and she gasped a little at her own words.

He laughed. "While I was in hell--yes. I'm on earth now."

"How much do you produce?"

"Two hundred barrels a day."

A note of sadness came back into her voice. "It's the process by which you once intended to fill five tank-trains a day."

"Dagny," he said earnestly, pointing at his tank, "one gallon of it is worth more than a trainful back there in hell--because this is *mine*, all of it, every single drop of it, to be spent on nothing but myself." He raised his smudged hand, displaying the greasy stains as a treasure, and a black drop on the tip of his finger flashed like a gem in the sun. "Mine," he said. "Have you let them beat you into forgetting what that word means, what it feels like? You should give yourself a chance to relearn it."

"You're hidden in a hole in the wilderness," she said bleakly, "and you're producing two hundred barrels of oil, when you could have flooded the world with it."

"What for? To feed the looters?"

"No! To earn the fortune you deserve."

"But I'm richer now than I was in the world. What's wealth but the means of expanding one's life? There's two ways one can do it: either by producing more or by producing it faster. And that's what I'm doing: I'm manufacturing time."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm producing everything I need, I'm working to improve my methods, and every hour I save is an hour added to my life. It used to take me five hours to fill that tank. It now takes three. The two I saved are *mine*--as pricelessly *mine* as if I moved my grave two further hours away from every five I've got. It's two hours released from one task, to be invested in another--two more hours in which to work, to grow, to move forward. That's the savings account I'm hoarding. Is there any sort of safety vault that could protect this account in the outside world?"

"But what space do you have for moving forward? Where's your market?"

He chuckled. "Market? I now work for use, not for profit--*my* use, not the looters' profit. Only those who add to my life, not those who devour it, are my market. Only those who produce, not those who consume, can ever be anybody's market. I deal with the life-givers, not with the cannibals. If my oil takes less effort to produce, I ask less of the men to whom I trade it for the things I need. I add an extra span of time to their lives with every gallon of my oil that they burn. And since they're men like me, they keep inventing faster ways to make the things they make--so every one of them grants me an added minute, hour or day with the bread I buy from them, with the clothes, the lumber, the metal"--he glanced at Galt--"an

added year with every month of electricity I purchase. That's our market and that's how it works for us—but that was not the way it worked in the outer world. Down what drain were they poured out there, our days, our lives and our energy? Into what bottomless, futureless sewer of the unpaid-for? Here, we trade achievements, not failures—values, not needs. We're free of one another, yet we all grow together. Wealth. Dagny? What greater wealth is there than to own your life and to spend it on growing? Every living thing must grow. It can't stand still. It must grow or perish. Look—" He pointed at a plant fighting upward from under the weight of a rock—a long, gnarled stem, contorted by an unnatural struggle, with drooping, yellow remnants of unformed leaves and a single green shoot thrust upward to the sun with the desperation of a last, spent, inadequate effort. "That's what they're doing to us back there in hell. Do you see me submitting to it?"

"No," she whispered.

"Do you see *him* submitting?" He pointed at Galt.

"God, no!"

"Then don't be astonished by anything you see in this valley."

She remained silent when they drove on. Galt said nothing.

On a distant mountainside, in the dense green of a forest, she saw a pine tree slanting down suddenly, tracing a curve, like the hand of a clock, then crashing abruptly out of sight. She knew that it was a man-made motion.

"Who's the lumberjack around here?" she asked.

"Ted Nielsen."

The road was relaxing into wider curves and gentler grades, among the softer shapes of hillsides. She saw a rust-brown slope patched by two squares of unmatched green: the dark, dusty green of potato plants, and the pale, greenish-silver of cabbages. A man in a red shirt was riding a small tractor, cutting weeds.

"Who's the cabbage tycoon?" she asked.

"Roger Marsh."

She closed her eyes. She thought of the weeds that were climbing up the steps of a closed factory, over its lustrous tile front, a few hundred miles away, beyond the mountains.

The road was descending to the bottom of the valley. She saw the roofs of the town straight below, and the small, shining spot of the dollar sign in the distance at the other end. Galt stopped the car in front of the first structure on a ledge above the roofs, a brick building with a faint tinge of red trembling over its smokestack. It almost shocked her to see so logical a sign as "Stockton Foundry" above its door.

When she walked, leaning on her cane, out of the sunlight into the dank gloom of the building, the shock she felt was part sense of anachronism, part homesickness. This was the industrial East, which in the last few hours, had seemed to be centuries behind her. This was the old, the familiar, the loved sight of reddish billows rising to steel rafters, of sparks shooting in sunbursts from invisible sources, of sudden flames streaking through a black fog, of sand molds glowing with white metal. The fog hid the walls of the structure, dissolving