against the golden sunburst of rays filling the great windows. "This looks like . . . You know, I never hoped to see any of you again, I wondered at times how much I'd give for just one more glimpse or one more word—and now—now this is like that dream you imagine in childhood, when you think that some day, in heaven, you will see those great departed whom you had not seen on earth, and you choose, from all the past centuries, the great men you would like to meet."

"Well, that's one clue to the nature of our secret," said Akston. "Ask yourself whether the dream of heaven and greatness should be left waiting for us in our graves—or whether it should be ours here and now and on this earth."

"I know," she whispered.

"And if you met those great men in heaven," asked Ken Danagger, "what would you want to say to them?"

"Just . . . just 'hello,' I guess."

"That's not all," said Danagger. "There's something you'd want to hear from them. I didn't know it, either, until I saw him for the first time"—he pointed to Galt—"and he said it to me, and then I knew what it was that I had missed all my life. Miss Taggart, you'd want them to look at you and to say, 'Well done.'" She dropped her head and nodded silently, head down, not to let them see the sudden spurt of tears to her eyes. "All right, then. Well done, Dagny!—well done—too well—and now it's time for you to rest from that burden which none of us should ever have had to carry."

"Shut up," said Midas Mulligan, looking at her bowed head with anxious concern.

But she raised her head, smiling. "Thank you," she said to Danagger.

"If you talk about resting, then let her rest," said Mulligan. "She's had too much for one day."

"No." She smiled. "Go ahead, say it—whatever it is."

"Later," said Mulligan.

It was Mulligan and Akston who served dinner, with Quentin Daniels to help them. They served it on small silver trays, to be placed on the arms of the chairs—and they all sat about the room, with the fire of the sky fading in the windows and sparkles of electric light glittering in the wine glasses. There was an air of luxury about the room, but it was the luxury of expert simplicity; she noted the costly furniture, carefully chosen for comfort, bought somewhere at a time when luxury had still been an art. There were no superfluous objects, but she noticed a small canvas by a great master of the Renaissance worth a fortune, she noticed an Oriental rug of a texture and color that belonged under glass in a museum. This was Mulligan's concept of wealth, she thought—the wealth of selection, not of accumulation.

Quentin Daniels sat on the floor, with his tray on his lap; he seemed completely at home, and he glanced up at her once in a while, grinning like an impudent kid brother who had beaten her to a secret she had not discovered. He had preceded her into the valley by some ten minutes, she thought, but he was one of them, while she was still a stranger.

Galt sat aside, beyond the circle of lamplight, on the arm of Dr. Akston's chair. He had not said a word, he had stepped back and turned her over to the others, and he sat watching it as a spectacle in which he had no further part to play. But her eyes kept coming back to him, drawn by the certainty that the spectacle was of his choice and staging, that he had set it in motion long ago, and that all the others knew it as she knew it.

She noticed another person who was intensely aware of Galt's presence: Hugh Akston glanced up at him once in a while, involuntarily, almost surreptitiously, as if struggling not to confess the loneliness of a long separation. Akston did not speak to him, as if taking his presence for granted. But once, when Galt bent forward and a strand of hair fell down across his face, Akston reached over and brushed it back, his hand lingering for an imperceptible instant on his pupil's forehead: it was the only break of emotion he permitted himself, the only greeting; it was the gesture of a father.

She found herself talking to the men around her, relaxing in lighthearted comfort. No, she thought, what she felt was not strain, it was a dim astonishment at the strain which she should, but did not, feel; the abnormality of it was that it seemed so normal and simple.

She was barely aware of her questions, as she spoke to one man after another, but their answers were printing a record in her mind, moving sentence by sentence to a goal.

"The Fifth Concerto?" said Richard Halley, in answer to her question. "I wrote it ten years ago. We call it the Concerto of Deliverance. Thank you for recognizing it from a few notes whistled in the night. . . . Yes, I know about that. . . . Yes, since you knew my work, you would know, when you heard it, that this Concerto said everything I had been struggling to say and reach. It's dedicated to him." He pointed to Galt. "Why, no, Miss Taggart, I haven't given up music. What makes you think so? I've written more in the last ten years than in any other period of my life. I will play it for you, any of it, when you come to my house. . . . No, Miss Taggart, it will not be published outside. Not a note of it will be heard beyond these mountains."

"No, Miss Taggart, I have not given up medicine," said Dr. Hendricks, in answer to her question. "I have spent the last six years on research. I have discovered a method to protect the blood vessels of the brain from that fatal rupture which is known as a brain stroke. It will remove from human existence the terrible threat of sudden paralysis. . . . No, not a word of my method will be heard outside."

"The law, Miss Taggart?" said Judge Narragansett. "What law? I did not give it up—it has ceased to exist. But I am still working in the profession I had chosen, which was that of serving the cause of justice. . . . No, justice has not ceased to exist. How could it? It is possible for men to abandon their sight of it, and then it is justice that destroys them. But it is not possible for justice to go out of existence, because one is an attribute of the other, because justice is the act of acknowledging that which exists. . . . Yes, I am continuing in my profession. I am writing a treatise on the philosophy of law. I shall demonstrate that humanity's darkest evil, the most destructive