She noticed a large brown envelope lying before her; it bore the letterhead of Rearden Steel.

"That came by special messenger, right after you left," said Eddie. She put her hand on the envelope, but did not open it. She knew what it was: the drawings of the bridge.

After a while, she asked, "Who issued that statement?"

Eddie glanced at her and smiled briefly, bitterly, shaking his head. "No," he said. "I thought of that, too. I called the Institute long-distance and asked them. No, it was issued by the office of Dr. Floyd Ferris, their co-ordinator."

She said nothing.

"But still! Dr. Stadler is the head of that Institute. He *is* the Institute. He must have known about it. He permitted it. If it's done, it's done in his name . . . Dr. Robert Stadler . . . Do you remember . . . when we were in college . . . how we used to talk about the great names in the world . . the men of pure intellect . . . and we always chose his name as one of them, and—" He stopped. "I'm sorry, Dagny. I know it's no use saying anything. Only—"

She sat, her hand pressed to the brown envelope.

"Dagny," he asked, his voice low, "what is happening to people? Why did that statement succeed? It's such an obvious smear-job, so obvious and so rotten. You'd think a decent person would throw it in the gutter. How could"—his voice was breaking in gentle, desperate, rebellious anger—"how could they accept it? Didn't they read it? Didn't they see? Don't they think? Dagny! What is it in people that lets them do this—and how can we live with it?"

"Quiet, Eddie," she said, "quiet. Don't be afraid."

* *

The building of the State Science Institute stood over a river of New Hampshire, on a lonely hillside, halfway between the river and the sky. From a distance, it looked like a solitary monument in a virgin forest. The trees were carefully planted, the roads were laid out as a park, the roof tops of a small town could be seen in a valley some miles away. But nothing had been allowed to come too close and detract from the building's austerity.

The white marble of the walls gave it a classical grandeur; the composition of its rectangular masses gave it the cleanliness and beauty of a modern plant. It was an inspired structure. From across the river, people looked at it with reverence and thought of it as a monument to a living man whose character had the nobility of the building's lines. Over the entrance, a dedication was cut into the marble: "To the fearless mind. To the inviolate truth." In a quiet aisle, in a bare corridor, a small brass plate, such as dozens of other name plates on other doors, said: Dr. Robert Stadler.

At the age of twenty-seven, Dr. Robert Stadler had written a treatise on cosmic rays, which demolished most of the theories held by the scientists who preceded him. Those who followed, found his achievement somewhere at the base of any line of inquiry they undertook. At the age of thirty, he was recognized as the greatest physicist of his time. At thirty-two, he became head of the Department of Physics of the Patrick Henry University, in the days when

the great University still deserved its glory. It was of Dr. Robert Stadler that a writer had said: "Perhaps, among the phenomena of the universe which he is studying, none is so miraculous as the brain of Dr. Robert Stadler himself." It was Dr. Robert Stadler who had once corrected a student: "Free scientific inquiry? The first adjective is redundant."

At the age of forty, Dr. Robert Stadler addressed the nation, endorsing the establishment of a State Science Institute. "Set science free of the rule of the dollar," he pleaded. The issue had hung in the balance; an obscure group of scientists had quietly forced a bill through its long way to the floor of the Legislature; there had been some public hesitation about the bill, some doubt, an uneasiness no one could define. The name of Dr. Robert Stadler acted upon the country like the cosmic rays he studied: it pierced any barrier. The nation built the white marble edifice as a personal present to one of its greatest men.

Dr. Stadler's office at the Institute was a small room that looked like the office of the bookkeeper of an unsuccessful firm. There was a cheap desk of ugly yellow oak, a filing cabinet, two chairs, and a blackboard chalked with mathematical formulas. Sitting on one of the chairs against a blank wall, Dagny thought that the office had an air of ostentation and elegance, together: ostentation, because it seemed intended to suggest that the owner was great enough to permit himself such a setting; elegance, because he truly needed nothing else.

She had met Dr. Stadler on a few occasions, at banquets given by leading businessmen or great engineering societies, in honor of some solemn cause or another. She had attended the occasions as reluctantly as he did, and had found that he liked to talk to her. "Miss Taggart," he had said to her once, "I never expect to encounter intelligence. That I should find it here is such an astonishing relief!" She had come to his office, remembering that sentence. She sat, watching him in the manner of a scientist: assuming nothing, discarding emotion, seeking only to observe and to understand.

"Miss Taggart," he said gaily, "I'm curious about you. I'm curious whenever anything upsets a precedent. As a rule, visitors are a painful duty to me. I'm frankly astonished that I should feel such a simple pleasure in seeing you here. Do you know what it's like to feel suddenly that one can talk without the strain of trying to force some sort of understanding out of a vacuum?"

He sat on the edge of his desk, his manner gaily informal. He was not tall, and his slenderness gave him an air of youthful energy, almost of boyish zest. His thin face was ageless; it was a homely face, but the great forehead and the large gray eyes held such an arresting intelligence that one could notice nothing else. There were wrinkles of humor in the corners of the eyes, and faint lines of bitterness in the corners of the mouth. He did not look like a man in his early fifties; the slightly graying hair was his only sign of age.

"Tell me more about yourself," he said. "I always meant to ask you what you're doing in such an unlikely career as heavy industry and how you can stand those people."