to him? She had found no answer, only a stubborn sense of reluctance, only the feeling that of all the men on earth, Dr. Robert Stadler was the one she must not call.

As she sat at her desk, over the schedules of the John Galt Line, waiting for Dr. Stadler to come, she wondered why no first-rate talent had risen in the field of science for years. She was unable to look for an answer. She was looking at the black line which was the corpse of Train Number 93 on the schedule before her.

A train has the two great attributes of life, she thought, motion and purpose; this had been like a living entity, but now it was only a number of dead freight cars and engines. Don't give yourself time to feel, she thought, dismember the carcass as fast as possible, the engines are needed all over the system. Ken Danagger in Pennsylvania needs trains, more trains if only--

"Dr. Robert Stadler," said the voice of the interoffice communicator on her desk.

He came in, smiling; the smile seemed to underscore his words: "Miss Taggart, would you care to believe how helplessly glad I am to see you again?"

She did not smile, she looked gravely courteous as she answered, "It was very kind of you to come here." She bowed, her slender figure standing tautly straight but for the slow, formal movement of her head.

"What if I confessed that all I needed was some plausible excuse in order to come? Would it astonish you?"

"I would try not to overtax your courtesy." She did not smile. "Please sit down, Dr. Stadler."

He looked brightly around him. "I've never seen the office of a railroad executive. I didn't know it would be so . . . so solemn a place. Is that in the nature of the job?"

"The matter on which I'd like to ask your advice is far removed from the field of your interests, Dr. Stadler. You may think it odd that I should call on you. Please allow me to explain my reason."

"The fact that you wished to call on me is a fully sufficient reason. If I can be of any service to you, any service whatever, I don't know what would please me more at this moment." His smile had an attractive quality, the smile of a man of the world who used it, not to cover his words, but to stress the audacity of expressing a sincere emotion.

"My problem is a matter of technology," she said, in the clear, expressionless tone of a young mechanic discussing a difficult assignment. "I fully realize your contempt for that branch of science. I do not expect you to solve my problem—it is not the kind of work which you do or care about. I should like only to submit the problem to you, and then I'll have just two questions to ask you. I had to call on you, because it is a matter that involves someone's mind, a very great mind, and"—she spoke impersonally, in the manner of rendering exact justice—"and you are the only great mind left in this field."

She could not tell why her words hit him as they did. She saw the stillness of his face, the sudden earnestness of the eyes, a strange

earnestness that seemed eager and almost pleading, then she heard his voice come gravely, as if from under the pressure of some emotion that made it sound simple and humble:

"What is your problem, Miss Taggart?"

She told him about the motor and the place where she had found it; she told him that it had proved impossible to learn the name of the inventor; she did not mention the details of her quest. She handed him photographs of the motor and the remnant of the manuscript.

She watched him as he read. She saw the professional assurance in the swift, scanning motion of his eyes, at first, then the pause, then the growing intentness, then a movement of his lips which, from another man, would have been a whistle or a gasp. She saw him stop for long minutes and look off; as if his mind were racing over countless sudden trails, trying to follow them all—she saw him leaf back through the pages, then stop, then force himself to read on, as if he were torn between his eagerness to continue and his eagerness to seize all the possibilities breaking open before his vision. She saw his silent excitement, she knew that he had forgotten her office, her existence, everything but the sight of an achievement—and in tribute to his being capable of such reaction, she wished it were possible for her to like Dr. Robert Stadler.

They had been silent for over an hour, when he finished and looked up at her. "But this is extraordinary!" he said in the joyous, astonished tone of announcing some news she had not expected.

She wished she could smile in answer and grant him the comradeship of a joy celebrated together, but she merely nodded and said coldly, "Yes."

"But, Miss Taggart, this is tremendous!"

"Yes."

"Did you say it's a matter of technology? It's more, much, much more than that. The pages where he writes about his converter—you can see what premise he's speaking from. He arrived at some new concept of energy. He discarded all our standard assumptions, according to which his motor would have been impossible. He formulated a new premise of his own and he solved the secret of converting static energy into kinetic power. Do you know what *that* means? Do you realize what a feat of pure, abstract science he had to perform before he could make his motor?"

"Who?" she asked quietly.

"I beg your pardon?"

"That was the first of the two questions I wanted to ask you, Dr. Stadler: can you think of any young scientist you might have known ten years ago, who would have been able to do this?"

He paused, astonished; he had not had time to wonder about that question. "No," he said slowly, frowning, "no, I can't think of anyone. . . . And that's odd . . . because an ability of this kind couldn't have passed unnoticed anywhere . . . somebody would have called him to my attention . . . they always sent promising young physicists to me. . . . Did you say you found this in the research laboratory of a plain, commercial motor factory?"

"Yes."

"That's odd. What was he doing in such a place?"

"Designing a motor."

"That's what I mean. A man with the genius of a great scientist, who chose to be a commercial inventor? I find it outrageous. He wanted a motor, and he quietly performed a major revolution in the science of energy, just as a means to an end, and he didn't bother to publish his findings, but went right on making his motor. Why did he want to waste his mind on practical appliances?"

"Perhaps because he liked living on this earth," she said involuntarily.

"I beg your pardon?"

"No, I . . . I'm sorry, Dr. Stadler. I did not intend to discuss any . . . irrelevant subject."

He was looking off, pursuing his own course of thought. "Why didn't he come to me? Why wasn't he in some great scientific establishment where he belonged? If he had the brains to achieve this, surely he had the brains to know the importance of what he had done. Why didn't he publish a paper on his definition of energy? I can see the general direction he'd taken, but God damn him!—the most important pages are missing, the statement isn't here! Surely somebody around him should have known enough to announce his work to the whole world of science. Why didn't they? How could they abandon, just abandon, a thing of this kind?"

"These are the questions to which I found no answers."

"And besides, from the purely, practical aspect, why was that motor left in a junk pile? You'd think any greedy fool of an industrialist would have grabbed it in order to make a fortune. No intelligence was needed to see its commercial value."

She smiled for the first time, a smile ugly with bitterness; she said nothing.

"You found it impossible to trace the inventor?" he asked.

"Completely impossible, so far."

"Do you think that he is still alive?"

"I have reason to think that he is. But I can't be sure."

"Suppose I tried to advertise for him?"

"No. Don't."

"But, if I were to place ads in scientific publications and have Dr. Ferris"—he stopped; he saw her glance at him as swiftly as he glanced at her, she said nothing, but she held his glance; he looked away and finished the sentence coldly and firmly—"and have Dr. Ferris broadcast on the radio that I wish to see him, would he refuse to come?"

"Yes, Dr. Stadler, I think he would refuse."

He was not looking at her. She saw the faint tightening of his facial muscles and, simultaneously, the look of something going slack in the lines of his face; she could not tell what sort of light was dying within him nor what made her think of the death of a light.

He tossed the manuscript down on the desk with a casual, contemptuous movement of his wrist. "Those men who do not mind