

years ago. We were defeated by the greed, the selfishness and the base, animal nature of men. It was the eternal conflict between spirit and matter, between soul and body. They would not renounce their bodies, which was all we asked of them. I do not remember any of those men. I do not care to remember. . . . The engineers? I believe it was they who started the hemophilia. . . . Yes, that is what I said: the hemophilia—the slow leak—the loss of blood that cannot be stopped. They ran first. They deserted us, one after another . . . Our plan? We put into practice that noble historical precept: From each according to his ability, to each according to his need. Everybody in the factory, from charwomen to president, received the same salary—the barest minimum necessary. Twice a year, we all gathered in a mass meeting, where every person presented his claim for what he believed to be his needs. We voted on every claim, and the will of the majority established every person's need and every person's ability. The income of the factory was distributed accordingly. Rewards were based on need, and the penalties on ability. Those whose needs were voted to be the greatest, received the most. Those who had not produced as much as the vote said they could, were fined and had to pay the fines by working overtime without pay. That was our plan. It was based on the principle of selflessness. It required men to be motivated, not by personal gain, but by love for their brothers."

Dagny heard a cold, implacable voice saying somewhere within her: Remember it—remember it well—it is not often that one can see pure evil—look at it—remember—and some day you'll find the words to name its essence. . . . She heard it through the screaming of other voices that cried in helpless violence: It's nothing—I've heard it before—I'm hearing it everywhere—it's nothing but the same old tripe—why can't I stand it?—I can't stand it—I can't stand it!

"What's the matter with you, my girl? Why did you jump up like that? Why are you shaking? . . . What? Do speak louder, I can't hear you. . . . How did the plan work out? I do not care to discuss it. Things became very ugly indeed and went fouler every year. It has cost me my faith in human nature. In four years, a plan conceived, not by the cold calculations of the mind, but by the pure love of the heart, was brought to an end in the sordid mess of policemen, lawyers and bankruptcy proceedings. But I have seen my error and I am free of it. I am through with the world of machines, manufacturers and money, the world enslaved by matter. I am learning the emancipation of the spirit, as revealed in the great secrets of India, the release from bondage to flesh, the victory over physical nature, the triumph of the spirit over matter."

Through the blinding white glare of anger, Dagny was seeing a long strip of concrete that had been a road, with weeds rising from its cracks, and the figure of a man contorted by a hand plow.

"But, my girl, I said that I do not remember. . . . But I do not know their names, I do not know any names, I do not know what sort of adventurers my father may have had in that laboratory! . . . Don't you hear me? . . . I am not accustomed to being questioned in such manner and . . . Don't keep repeating it. Don't you know any words but 'engineer'? . . . Don't you hear me at all? . . . What's the

matter with you? I—I don't like your face, you're . . . Leave me alone. I don't know who you are, I've never hurt you, I'm an old woman, don't look at me like that, I . . . Stand back! Don't come near me or I'll call for help! I'll . . . Oh, yes, yes, I know that one! The chief engineer. Yes. He was the head of the laboratory. Yes. William Hastings. That was his name—William Hastings. I remember. He went off to Brandon, Wyoming. He quit the day after we introduced the plan. He was the second man to quit us. . . . No. No, I don't remember who was the first. He wasn't anybody important."

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The woman who opened the door had graying hair and a poised, distinguished look of grooming; it took Dagny a few seconds to realize that her garment was only a simple cotton housedress.

"May I see Mr. William Hastings?" asked Dagny.

The woman looked at her for the briefest instant of a pause; it was an odd glance, inquiring and grave. "May I ask your name?"

"I am Dagny Taggart, of Taggart Transcontinental."

"Oh. Please come in, Miss Taggart, I am Mrs. William Hastings." The measured tone of gravity went through every syllable of her voice, like a warning. Her manner was courteous, but she did not smile.

It was a modest home in the suburbs of an industrial town. Bare tree branches cut across the bright, cold blue of the sky, on the top of the rise that led to the house. The walls of the living room were silver-gray; sunlight hit the crystal stand of a lamp with a white shade; beyond an open door, a breakfast nook was papered in red-dotted white.

"Were you acquainted with my husband in business, Miss Taggart?"

"No. I have never met Mr. Hastings. But I should like to speak to him on a matter of business of crucial importance."

"My husband died five years ago, Miss Taggart."

Dagny closed her eyes; the dull, sinking shock contained the conclusions she did not have to make in words: This, then, had been the man she was seeking, and Rearden had been right; this was why the motor had been left unclaimed on a junk pile.

"I'm sorry," she said, both to Mrs. Hastings and to herself.

The suggestion of a smile on Mrs. Hastings' face held sadness, but the face had no imprint of tragedy, only a grave look of firmness, acceptance and quiet serenity.

"Mrs. Hastings, would you permit me to ask you a few questions?"

"Certainly. Please sit down."

"Did you have some knowledge of your husband's scientific work?"

"Very little. None, really. He never discussed it at home."

"He was, at one time, chief engineer of the Twentieth Century Motor Company?"

"Yes. He had been employed by them for eighteen years."

"I wanted to ask Mr. Hastings about his work there and the reason why he gave it up. If you can tell me, I would like to know what happened in that factory."

The smile of sadness and humor appeared fully on Mrs. Hastings' face. "That is what I would like to know myself," she said. "But I'm afraid I shall never learn it now. I know why he left the factory. It