night, twelve years ago. The six thousand of us were crowded on bleachers built way up to the rafters of the plant's largest hangar. We had just voted for the new plan and we were in an edgy sort of mood, making too much noise, cheering the people's victory, threatening some kind of unknown enemies and spoiling for a fight, like bullies with an uneasy conscience. There were white arclights beating down on us and we felt kind of touchy and raw, and we were an ugly, dangerous mob in that moment. Gerald Starnes, who was chairman, kept hammering his gavel for order, and we quieted down some, but not much, and you could see the whole place moving restlessly from side to side, like water in a pan that's being rocked. 'This is a crucial moment in the history of mankind!' Gerald Starnes yelled through the noise. 'Remember that none of us may now leave this place, for each of us belongs to all the others by the moral law which we all accept!' 'I don't,' said one man and stood up. He was one of the young engineers. Nobody knew much about him. He'd always kept mostly by himself. When he stood up, we suddenly turned dead-still. It was the way he held his head. He was tall and slim—and I remember thinking that any two of us could have broken his neck without trouble—but what we all felt was fear. He stood like a man who knew that he was right. 'I will put an end to this, once and for all,' he said. His voice was clear and without any feeling. That was all he said and started to walk out. He walked down the length of the place, in the white light, not hurrying and not noticing any of us. Nobody moved to stop him. Gerald Starnes cried suddenly after him, 'How?' He turned and answered, 'I will stop the motor of the world.' Then he walked out. We never saw him again. We never heard what became of him. But years later, when we saw the lights going out, one after another, in the great factories that had stood solid like mountains for generations, when we saw the gates closing and the conveyor belts turning still, when we saw the roads growing empty and the stream of cars draining off, when it began to look as if some silent power were stopping the generators of the world and the world was crumbling quietly, like a body when its spirit is gone—then we began to wonder and to ask questions about him. We began to ask it of one another, those of us who had heard him say it. We began to think that he had kept his word, that he, who had seen and known the truth we refused to know, was the retribution we had called upon our heads, the avenger, the man of that justice which we had defied. We began to think that he had damned us and there was no escape from his verdict and we would never be able to get away from him—and this was the more terrible because he was not pursuing us, it was we who were suddenly looking for him and he had merely gone without a trace. We found no answer about him anywhere. We wondered by what sort of impossible power he could have done what he had promised to do. There was no answer to that. We began to think of him whenever we saw another collapse in the world, which nobody could explain, whenever we took another blow, whenever we lost another hope, whenever we felt caught in this dead, gray fog that's descending all over the earth. Perhaps people heard us crying that question and they did not

know what we meant, but they knew too well the feeling that made us cry it. They, too, felt that something had gone from the world. Perhaps this was why they began to say it, whenever they felt that there was no hope. I'd like to think that I am wrong, that those words mean nothing, that there's no conscious intention and no avenger behind the ending of the human race. But when I hear them repeating that question, I feel afraid. I think of the man who said that he would stop the motor of the world. You see, his name was John Galt."

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She awakened, because the sound of the wheels had changed. It was an irregular beat, with sudden screeches and short, sharp cracks, a sound like the broken laughter of hysteria, with the fitful jerking of the car to match it. She knew, before she glanced at her watch, that this was the track of the Kansas Western and that the train had started on its long detour south from Kirby, Nebraska.

The train was half-empty; few people had ventured across the continent on the first Comet since the tunnel disaster. She had given a bedroom to the tramp, and then had remained alone with his story. She had wanted to think of it, of all the questions she intended to ask him tomorrow—but she had found her mind frozen and still, like a spectator staring at the story, unable to function, only to stare. She had felt as if she knew the meaning of that spectacle, knew it with no further questions and had to escape it. To move—had been the words beating in her mind with peculiar urgency—to move—as if movement had become an end in itself, crucial, absolute and doomed.

Through a thin layer of sleep, the sound of the wheels had kept running a race with the growth of her tension. She had kept awakening, as in a causeless start of panic, finding herself upright in the darkness, thinking blankly: What was it:—then telling herself in reassurance: We're moving . . . we're still moving. . . .

The track of the Kansas Western was worse than she had expected—she thought, listening to the wheels. The train was now carrying her hundreds of miles away from Utah. She had felt a desperate desire to get off the train on the main line, abandon all the problems of Taggart Transcontinental, find an airplane and fly straight to Quentin Daniels. It had taken a cheerless effort of will to remain in her car.

She lay in the darkness, listening to the wheels, thinking that only Daniels and his motor still remained like a point of fire ahead, pulling her forward. Of what use would the motor now be to her? She had no answer. Why did she feel so certain of the desperate need to hurry? She had no answer. To reach him in time, was the only ultimatum left in her mind. She held onto it, asking no questions. Wordlessly, she knew the real answer: the motor was needed, not to move trains, but to keep her moving.

She could not hear the beat of the fourth knocks any longer in the jumbled screeching of metal, she could not hear the steps of the enemy she was racing, only the hopeless stampede of panic. . . . I'll get there in time, she thought, I'll get there first, I'll save the motor.