

talk?—I mustn't even think about it, I've got to stop it, stop thinking of her and—of her, I mean."

He remained silent and he wondered why the worker's eyes—the eyes that always seemed to see everything within him—made him feel uneasy tonight. He glanced down at the table, and he noticed the butts of many cigarettes among the remnants of food on the worker's plate.

"Are you in trouble, too?" asked Eddie. "Oh, just that you've sat here for a long time tonight, haven't you? . . . For me? Why should you have wanted to wait for me? . . . You know, I never thought you cared whether you saw me or not, me or anybody, you seemed so complete in yourself, and that's why I liked to talk to you, because I felt that you always understood, but nothing could hurt you—you looked as if nothing had ever hurt you—and it made me feel free, as if . . . as if there were no pain in the world. . . . Do you know what's strange about your face? You look as if you've never known pain or fear or guilt. . . . I'm sorry I'm so late tonight. I had to see her off—she has just left, on the Comet. . . . Yes, tonight, just now. . . . Yes, she's gone. . . . Yes, it was a sudden decision—within the past hour. She intended to leave tomorrow night, but something unexpected happened and she had to go at once. . . . Yes, she's going to Colorado—afterwards. . . . To Utah—first. . . . Because she got a letter from Quentin Daniels that he's quitting—and the one thing she won't give up, couldn't stand to give up, is the motor. You remember, the motor I told you about, the remnant that she found. . . . Daniels? He's a physicist who's been working for the past year, at the Utah Institute of Technology, trying to solve the secret of the motor and to rebuild it. . . . Why do you look at me like that? . . . No, I haven't told you about him before, because it was a secret. It was a private, secret project of her own—and of what interest would it have been to you, anyway? . . . I guess I can talk about it now, because he's quit. . . . Yes, he told her his reasons. He said that he won't give anything produced by his mind to a world that regards him as a slave. He said that he won't be made a martyr to people in exchange for giving them an inestimable benefit. . . . What—what are you laughing at? . . . Stop it, will you? Why do you laugh like that? . . . The whole secret? What do you mean, the whole secret? He hasn't found the whole secret of the motor, if that's what you meant, but he seemed to be doing well, he had a good chance. Now it's lost. She's rushing to him, she wants to plead, to hold him, to make him go on—but I think it's useless. Once they stop, they don't come back again. Not one of them has. . . . No, I don't care, not any more, we've taken so many losses that I'm getting used to it. . . . Oh no! It's not Daniels that I can't take, it's—no, drop it. Don't question me about it. The whole world is going to pieces, she's still fighting to save it, and I—I sit here damning her for something I had no right to know. . . . No! She's done nothing to be damned, nothing—and, besides, it doesn't concern the railroad. . . . Don't pay any attention to me, it's not true, it's not her that I'm damning, it's myself. . . . Listen, I've always known that you loved Taggart Transcontinental as I loved it, that it meant something special to

you, something personal, and that was why you liked to hear me talk about it. But this—the thing I learned today—this has nothing to do with the railroad. It would be of no importance to you. Forget it. . . . It's something that I didn't know about her, that's all. . . . I grew up with her. I thought I knew her. I didn't. . . . I don't know what it was that I expected, I suppose I just thought that she had no private life of any kind. To me, she was not a person and not . . . not a woman. She was the railroad. And I didn't think that anyone would ever have the audacity to look at her in any other way. . . . Well, it serves me right. Forget it. . . . Forget it, I said! Why do you question me like this? It's only her private life. What can it matter to you? . . . Drop it, for God's sake! Don't you see that I can't talk about it? . . . Nothing happened, nothing's wrong with me, I just—oh, why am I lying? I can't lie to you, you always seem to see everything, it's worse than trying to lie to myself! . . . I *have* lied to myself. I didn't know what I felt for her. The railroad? I'm a rotten hypocrite. If the railroad was all she meant to me, it wouldn't have hit me like this. I wouldn't have felt that I wanted to kill him! . . . What's the matter with you tonight? Why do you look at me like that? . . . Oh, what's the matter with all of us? Why is there nothing but misery left for anyone? Why do we suffer so much? We weren't meant to. I always thought that we were to be happy, all of us, as our natural fate. What are we doing? What have we lost? A year ago, I wouldn't have damned her for finding something she wanted. But I know that they're doomed, both of them, and so am I, and so is everybody, and she was all I had left. . . . It was so great, to be alive, it was such a wonderful chance, I didn't know that I loved it and that *that* was our love, hers and mine and yours—but the world is perishing and we cannot stop it. Why are we destroying ourselves? Who will tell us the truth? Who will save us? Oh, who is John Galt?! . . . No, it's no use. It doesn't matter now. Why should I feel anything? We won't last much longer. Why should I care what she does? Why should I care that she's sleeping with Hank Rearden? . . . Oh God!—what's the matter with you? Don't go! Where are you going?"

Chapter X THE SIGN OF THE DOLLAR

She sat at the window of the train, her head thrown back, not moving, wishing she would never have to move again.

The telegraph poles went racing past the window, but the train seemed lost in a void, between a brown stretch of prairie and a solid spread of rusty, graying clouds. The twilight was draining the sky without the wound of a sunset; it looked more like the fading of an anemic body in the process of exhausting its last drops of blood and light. The train was going west, as if it, too, were pulled to follow the sinking rays and quietly to vanish from the earth. She sat still, feeling no desire to resist it.

She wished she would not hear the sound of the wheels. They knocked in an even rhythm, every fourth knock accented—and it