

Another asked, "Aren't you going to tell us your motive for building that Line?"

"I have told you: the profit which I expect to make."

"Oh, Miss Taggart, don't say that!" cried a young boy. He was new, he was still honest about his job, and he felt that he liked Dagny Taggart, without knowing why. "That's the wrong thing to say. That's what they're all saying about you."

"Are they?"

"I'm sure you didn't mean it the way it sounds and . . . and I'm sure you'll want to clarify it."

"Why, yes, if you wish me to. The average profit of railroads has been two per cent of the capital invested. An industry that does so much and keeps so little, should consider itself immoral. As I have explained, the cost of the John Galt Line in relation to the traffic which it will carry makes me expect a profit of not less than fifteen per cent on our investment. Of course, any industrial profit above four per cent is considered usury nowadays. I shall, nevertheless, do my best to make the John Galt Line earn a profit of twenty per cent for me, if possible. That was my motive for building the Line. Have I made myself clear now?"

The boy was looking at her helplessly. "You don't mean, to earn a profit for *you*, Miss Taggart? You mean, for the small stockholders, of course?" he prompted hopefully.

"Why, no. I happen to be one of the largest stockholders of Taggart Transcontinental, so my share of the profits will be one of the largest. Now, Mr Rearden is in a much more fortunate position, because he has no stockholders to share with—or would you rather make your own statement, Mr Rearden?"

"Yes, gladly," said Rearden. "Inasmuch as the formula of Rearden Metal is my own personal secret, and in view of the fact that the Metal costs much less to produce than you boys can imagine, I expect to skin the public to the tune of a profit of twenty-five per cent in the next few years."

"What do you mean, skin the public, Mr. Rearden?" asked the boy. "If it's true, as I've read in your ads, that your Metal will last three times longer than any other and at half the price, wouldn't the public be getting a bargain?"

"Oh, have you noticed that?" said Rearden.

"Do the two of you realize you're talking for publication?" asked the man with the sneer.

"But, Mr. Hopkins," said Dagny, in polite astonishment, "is there any reason why we would talk to you, if it weren't for publication?"

"Do you want us to quote all the things you said?"

"I hope I may trust you to be sure and quote them. Would you oblige me by taking this down verbatim?" She paused to see their pencils ready, then dictated: "Miss Taggart says—quote—I expect to make a pile of money on the John Galt Line. I will have earned it. Close quote. Thank you so much."

"Any questions, gentlemen?" asked Rearden.

There were no questions.

"Now I must tell you about the opening of the John Galt Line,"

said Dagny. "The first train will depart from the station of Taggart Transcontinental in Cheyenne, Wyoming, at four P.M. on July twenty-second. It will be a freight special, consisting of eighty cars. It will be driven by an eight-thousand-horsepower, four-unit Diesel locomotive—which I'm leasing from Taggart Transcontinental for the occasion. It will run non-stop to Wyatt Junction, Colorado, traveling at an average speed of one hundred miles per hour. I beg your pardon?" she asked, hearing the long, low sound of a whistle.

"What did you say, Miss Taggart?"

"I said, one hundred miles per hour—grades, curves and all."

"But shouldn't you cut the speed below normal rather than . . . Miss Taggart, don't you have any consideration whatever for public opinion?"

"But I do. If it weren't for public opinion, an average speed of sixty-five miles per hour would have been quite sufficient."

"Who's going to run that train?"

"I had quite a bit of trouble about that. All the Taggart engineers volunteered to do it. So did the firemen, the brakemen and the conductors. We had to draw lots for every job on the train's crew. The engineer will be Pat Logan, of the Taggart Comet, the fireman—Ray McKim. I shall ride in the cab of the engine with them."

"Not really!"

"Please do attend the opening. It's on July twenty-second. The press is most eagerly invited. Contrary to my usual policy, I have become a publicity hound. Really, I should like to have spotlights, radio microphones and television cameras. I suggest that you plant a few cameras around the bridge. The collapse of the bridge would give you some interesting shots."

"Miss Taggart," asked Rearden, "why didn't you mention that I'm going to ride in that engine, too?"

She looked at him across the room, and for a moment they were alone, holding each other's glance.

"Yes, of course, Mr. Rearden," she answered.

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She did not see him again until they looked at each other across the platform of the Taggart station in Cheyenne, on July 22.

She did not look for anyone when she stepped out on the platform: she felt as if her senses had merged, so that she could not distinguish the sky, the sun or the sounds of an enormous crowd, but perceived only a sensation of shock and light.

Yet he was the first person she saw, and she could not tell for how long a time he was also the only one. He stood by the engine of the John Galt train, talking to somebody outside the field of her consciousness. He was dressed in gray slacks and shirt, he looked like an expert mechanic, but he was stared at by the faces around him, because he was Hank Rearden of Rearden Steel. High above him, she saw the letters TT on the silver front of the engine. The lines of the engine slanted back, aimed at space.

There was distance and a crowd between them, but his eyes moved to her the moment she came out. They looked at each other and she knew that he felt as she did. This was not to be a solemn venture