

of his face was like a speech in the form of a pressure at the base of her throat. It seemed so natural that he should be here, it seemed so unendurably simple—she felt as if the shock were not his presence, but the presence of others on the tracks of her railroad, where he belonged and they did not. She was seeing those moments aboard a train when, at its plunge into the tunnels, she had felt a sudden, solemn tension, as if this place were showing her in naked simplicity the essence of her railroad and of her life, the union of consciousness and matter, the frozen form of a mind's ingenuity giving a physical existence to its purpose; she had felt a sense of sudden hope, as if this place held the meaning of all of her values, and a sense of secret excitement, as if a nameless promise were awaiting her under the ground—it was right that she should now meet him here, *he* had been the meaning and the promise—she was not seeing his clothing any longer, nor to what level her railroad had reduced him—she was seeing only the vanishing torture of the months when he had been outside her reach—she was seeing in his face the confession of what those months had cost him—the only speech she heard was as if she were saying to him: This is the reward for all my days—and as if he were answering: For all of mine.

She knew that she had finished speaking to the strangers when she saw that the tower director had stepped forward and was saying something to them, glancing at a list in his hand. Then, drawn by a sense of irresistible certainty, she found herself descending the stairs, slipping away from the crowd, not toward the platforms and the exit, but into the darkness of the abandoned tunnels. You will follow me, she thought—and felt as if the thought were not in words, but in the tension of her muscles, the tension of her will to accomplish a thing she knew to be outside her power, yet she knew with certainty that it would be accomplished and by her wish . . . no, she thought, not by her wish, but by its total rightness. You will follow me—it was neither plea nor prayer nor demand, but the quiet statement of a fact, it contained the whole of her power of knowledge and the whole of the knowledge she had earned through the years. You will follow me, if we are what we are, you and I, if we live, if the world exists, if you know the meaning of this moment and can't let it slip by, as others let it slip, into the senselessness of the unwilling and unreached. You will follow me—she felt an exultant assurance, which was neither hope nor faith, but an act of worship for the logic of existence.

She was hurrying down the remnants of abandoned rails, down the long, dark corridors twisting through granite. She lost the sound of the director's voice behind her. Then she felt the beat of her arteries and heard, in answering rhythm, the beat of the city above her head, but she felt as if she heard the motion of her blood as a sound filling the silence, and the motion of the city as the beat inside her body—and, far behind her, she heard the sound of steps. She did not glance back. She went faster.

She went past the locked iron door where the remnant of his motor was still hidden, she did not stop, but a faint shudder was her answer to the sudden glimpse of the unity and logic in the events of

the last two years. A string of blue lights went on into the darkness, over patches of glistening granite, over broken sandbags spilling drifts on the rails, over rusty piles of scrap metal. When she heard the steps coming closer, she stopped and turned to look back.

She saw a sweep of blue light flash briefly on the shining strands of Galt's hair, she caught the pale outline of his face and the dark hollows of his eyes. The face disappeared, but the sound of his steps served as the link to the next blue light that swept across the line of his eyes, the eyes that remained held level, directed ahead—and she felt certain that she had stayed in his sight from the moment he had seen her at the tower.

She heard the beat of the city above them—these tunnels, she had once thought, were the roots of the city and of all the motion reaching to the sky—but they, she thought, John Galt and she, were the living power within these roots, they were the start and aim and meaning—he, too, she thought, heard the beat of the city as the beat of his body.

She threw her cape back, she stood defiantly straight, as he had seen her stand on the steps of the tower—as he had seen her for the first time, ten years ago, here, under the ground—she was hearing the words of his confession, not as words, but by means of that beating which made it so difficult to breathe: You looked like a symbol of luxury and you belonged in the place that was its source . . . you seemed to bring the enjoyment of life back to its rightful owners . . . you had a look of energy and of its reward, together . . . and I was the first man who had ever stated in what manner these two were inseparable. . . .

The next span of moments was like flashes of light in stretches of blinded unconsciousness—the moment when she saw his face, as he stopped beside her, when she saw the unastonished calm, the leashed intensity, the laughter of understanding in the dark green eyes—the moment when she knew what he saw in her face, by the tight, drawn harshness of his lips—the moment when she felt his mouth on hers, when she felt the shape of his mouth both as an absolute shape and as a liquid filling her body—then the motion of his lips down the line of her throat, a drinking motion that left a trail of bruises—then the sparkle of her diamond clip against the trembling copper of his hair.

Then she was conscious of nothing but the sensations of her body, because her body acquired the sudden power to let her know her most complex values by direct perception. Just as her eyes had the power to translate wave lengths of energy into sight, just as her ears had the power to translate vibrations into sound, so her body now had the power to translate the energy that had moved all the choices of her life, into immediate sensory perception. It was not the pressure of a hand that made her tremble, but the instantaneous sum of its meaning, the knowledge that it was *his* hand, that it moved as if her flesh were his possession, that its movement was his signature of acceptance under the whole of that achievement which was herself—it was only a sensation of physical pleasure, but it, contained her, worship of him, of everything that was his person and his life—from