"There's nothing to talk about."

"We've got to. We've got to convince you. Is there anyone you'd *want* to talk to?"

"No."

"I thought maybe . . . it's because she talks—used to talk—like you, at times . . . maybe if I sent Miss Dagny Taggart to tell you—"

"That one? Sure, she used to talk like me. She's my only failure. I thought she was the kind who belonged on my side. But she double-crossed me, to keep her railroad. She'd sell her soul for her railroad. Send her in, if you want me to slap her face."

"No, no, no! You don't have to see her, if that's how you feel. I don't want to waste more time on people who rub you the wrong way. . . . Only . . . only if it's not Miss Taggart, I don't know whom to pick. . . . If . . . if I could find somebody you'd be willing to consider or . . ."

"I've changed my mind," said Galt. "There *is* somebody I'd like to speak to."

"Who?" cried Mr. Thompson eagerly.

"Dr. Robert Stadler."

Mr. Thompson emitted a long whistle and shook his head apprehensively. "That one is no friend of yours," he said in a tone of honest warning.

"He's the one I want to see."

"Okay, if you wish. If you say so. Anything you wish. I'll have him here tomorrow morning."

That evening, dining with Wesley Mouch in his own suite, Mr. Thompson glared angrily at a glass of tomato juice placed before him. "What? No grapefruit juice?" he snapped; his doctor had prescribed grapefruit juice as protection against an epidemic of colds.

"No grapefruit juice," said the waiter, with an odd kind of emphasis.

"Fact is," said Mouch bleakly, "that a gang of raiders attacked a train at the Taggart Bridge on the Mississippi. They blew up the track and damaged the bridge. Nothing serious. It's being repaired—but all traffic is held up and the trains from Arizona can't get through."

"That's ridiculous! Aren't there any other—?" Mr. Thompson stopped; he knew that there were no other railroad bridges across the Mississippi. After a moment, he spoke up in a staccato voice. "Order army detachments to guard the bridge. Day and night. Tell them to pick their best men for it. If anything happened to that bridge—"

He did not finish; he sat hunched, staring down at the costly china plates and the delicate hors d'oeuvres before him. The absence of so prosaic a commodity as grapefruit juice had suddenly made real to him, for the first time, what it was that would happen to the city of New York if anything happened to the Taggart Bridge.

"Dagny," said Eddie Willers, that evening, "the bridge is not the only problem." He snapped on her desk lamp which, in forced concentration of her work, she had neglected to turn on at the approach of dusk. "No transcontinental trains can leave San Francisco. One

of the fighting factions out there—I don't know which one—has seized our terminal and imposed a 'departure tax' on trains. Meaning that they're holding trains for ransom. Our terminal manager has quit. Nobody knows what to do there now."

"I can't leave New York," she answered stonily.

"I know," he said softly. "That's why it's I who'll go there to straighten things out. At least, to find a man to put in charge."

"No! I don't want you to. It's too dangerous. And what for? It doesn't matter now. There's nothing to save."

"It's still Taggart Transcontinental. I'll stand by it. Dagny, wherever you go, you'll always be able to build a railroad. I couldn't. I don't even want to make a new start. Not any more. Not after what I've seen. You should. I can't. Let me do what I can."

"Eddie! Don't you want—" She stopped, knowing that it was useless. "All right, Eddie. If you wish."

"I'm flying to California tonight. I've arranged for space on an army plane. . . . I know that you will quit as soon as . . . as soon as you can leave New York. You might be gone by the time I return. When you're ready, just go. Don't worry about me. Don't wait to tell me. Go as fast as you can. . . . I'll say good-bye to you, now."

She rose to her feet. They stood facing each other; in the dim halflight of the office, the picture of Nathaniel Taggart hung on the wall between them. They were both seeing the years since that distant day when they had first learned to walk down the track of a railroad. He inclined his head and held it lowered for a long moment.

She extended her hand. "Good-bye, Eddie."

He clasped her hand firmly, not looking down at his fingers; he was looking at her face.

He started to go, but stopped, turned to her and asked, his voice low, but steady, neither as plea nor as despair, but as a last gesture of conscientious clarity to close a long ledger, "Dagny . . . did you know . . . how I felt about you?"

"Yes," she said softly, realizing in this moment that she had known it wordlessly for years, "I knew it."

"Good-bye, Dagny."

The faint rumble of an underground train went through the walls of the building and swallowed the sound of the door closing after him.

It was snowing, next morning, and melting drops were like an icy, cutting touch on the temples of Dr. Robert Stadler, as he walked down the long corridor of the Wayne-Falkland Hotel, toward the door of the royal suite. Two husky men walked by his sides; they were from the department of Morale Conditioning, but did not trouble to hide what method of conditioning they would welcome a chance to employ.

"Just remember Mr. Thompson's orders," one of them told him contemptuously. "One wrong squawk out of you—and you'll regret it, brother."

It was not the snow on his temples—thought Dr. Stadler—it was a burning pressure, it had been there since that scene, last night, when he had screamed to Mr. Thompson that he could not see John