aloud, while they were suddenly as close to her and as real as the body of a lover: the two lines of rail going off to a single point in the distance—the front of an engine cutting space apart by means of the letters TT—the sound of the wheels clicking in accented rhythm under the floor of her car—the statue of Nat Taggart in the concourse of the Terminal. Fighting not to know them, not to feel them, her body rigid but for the grinding motion of her face against her arm, she would draw whatever power over her consciousness still remained to her into the soundless, toneless repetition of the words: Get it over with.

There were long stretches of calm, when she was able to face her problem with the dispassionate clarity of weighing a problem in engineering. But she could find no answer. She knew that her desperate longing for the railroad would vanish, were she to convince herself that it was impossible or improper. But the longing came from the certainty that the truth and the right were hers—that the enemy was the irrational and the unreal—that she could not set herself another goal or summon the love to achieve it, while her rightful achievement had been lost, not to some superior power, but to a loathsome evil that conquered by means of impotence.

She could renounce the railroad, she thought; she could find contentment here, in this forest; but she would build the path, then reach the road below, then rebuild the road—and then she would reach the storekeeper of Woodstock and that would be the end, and the empty white face staring at the universe in stagnant apathy would be the limit placed on her effort. Why?—she heard herself screaming aloud. There was no answer.

Then stay here until you answer it, she thought. You have no place to go, you can't move, you can't start grading a right-of-way until . . until you know enough to choose a terminal.

There were long, silent evenings when the emotion that made her sit still and look at the unattainable distance beyond the fading light to the south, was loneliness for Hank Rearden. She wanted the sight of his unyielding face, the confident face looking at her with the hint of a smile. But she knew that she could not see him until her battle was won. His smile had to be deserved, it was intended for an adversary who traded her strength against his, not for a pain-beaten wretch who would seek relief in that smile and thus destroy its meaning. He could help her to live; he could not help her to decide for what purpose she wished to go on living.

She had felt a faint touch of anxiety since the morning when she marked "May 15" on her calendar. She had forced herself to listen to news broadcasts, once in a while; she had heard no mention of his name. Her fear for him was her last link to the city; it kept drawing her eyes to the horizon at the south and down to the road at the foot of the hill. She found herself waiting for him to come. She found herself listening for the sound of a motor. But the only sound to give her a futile start of hope at times, was the sudden crackle of some large bird's wings hurtling through the branches into the sky.

There was another link to the past, that still remained as an un-

solved question: Quentin Daniels and the motor that he was trying to rebuild. By June 1, she would owe him his monthly check. Should she tell him that she had quit, that she would never need that motor and neither would the world? Should she tell him to stop and to let the remnant of the motor vanish in rust on some such junk pile as the one where she had found it? She could not force herself to do it. It seemed harder than leaving the railroad. That motor, she thought, was not a link to the past: it was her last link to the future. To kill it seemed like an act, not of murder, but of suicide: her order to stop it would be her signature under the certainty that there was no terminal for her to seek ahead.

But it is not true—she thought, as she stood at the door of her cabin, on this morning of May 28—it is not true that there is no place in the future for a superlative achievement of man's mind; it can never be true. No matter what her problem, this would always remain to her—this immovable conviction that evil was unnatural and temporary. She felt it more clearly than ever this morning: the certainty that the ugliness of the men in the city and the ugliness of her suffering were transient accidents—while the smiling sense of hope within her at the sight of a sun-flooded forest, the sense of an unlimited promise, was the permanent and the real.

She stood at the door, smoking a cigarette. In the room behind her, the sounds of a symphony of her grandfather's time were coming from the radio. She barely listened, she was conscious only of the flow of chords that seemed to play an underscoring harmony for the flow of the smoke curving slowly from her cigarette, for the curving motion of her arm moving the cigarette to her lips once in a while. She closed her eyes and stood still, feeling the rays of the sun on her body. This was the achievement, she thought—to enjoy this moment, to let no memory of pain blunt her capacity to feel as she felt right now; so long as she could preserve this feeling, she would have the fuel to go on.

She was barely aware of a faint noise that came through the music, like the scratching of an old record. The first thing to reach her consciousness was the sudden jerk of her own hand flinging the cigarette aside. It came in the same instant as the realization that the noise was growing louder and that it was the sound of a motor. Then she knew that she had not admitted to herself how much she had wanted to hear that sound, how desperately she had waited for Hank Rearden. She heard her own chuckle—it was humbly, cautiously low, as if not to disturb the drone of revolving metal which was now the unmistakable sound of a car rising up the mountain road.

She could not see the road—the small stretch under the arch of branches at the foot of the hill was her only view of it—but she watched the car's ascent by the growing, imperious strain of the motor against the grades and the screech of the tires on curves.

The car stopped under the arch of branches. She did not recognize it—it was not the black Hammond, but a long, gray convertible. She saw the driver step out: it was a man whose presence here could not be possible. It was Francisco d'Anconia.

The shock she felt was not disappointment, it was more like the