

Galt stopped the car in front of the house. For a moment, they held each other's eyes: her glance was a question, his a command, her face had a defiant frankness, his an unrevealing severity; she understood his purpose, but not his motive. She obeyed. Leaning on her cane, she stepped out of the car, then stood erect, facing the house.

She looked at the silver crest that had come from a marble palace in Spain to a shack in the Andes to a log cabin in Colorado—the crest of the men who would not submit. The door of the cabin was locked, the sun did not reach into the glazed darkness beyond the windows, and pine branches hung outstretched above the roof like arms spread in protection, in compassion, in solemn blessing. With no sound but the snap of a twig or the ring of a drop falling somewhere in the forest through long stretches of moments, the silence seemed to hold all the pain that had been hidden here, but never given voice. She stood, listening with a gentle, resigned, unlamenting respect: Let's see who'll do greater honor, you—to Nat Taggart, or I—to Sebastián d'Anconia. . . . Dagny! Help me to remain. To refuse. Even though he's right! . . .

She turned to look at Galt, knowing that *he* was the man against whom she had had no help to offer. He sat at the wheel of the car, he had not followed her or moved to assist her, as if he had wanted her to acknowledge the past and had respected the privacy of her lonely salute. She noticed that he still sat as she had left him, his forearm leaning against the wheel at the same angle, the fingers of his hand hanging down in the same sculptured position. His eyes were watching her, but that was all she could read in his face: that he had watched her intently, without moving.

When she was seated beside him once more, he said, "That was the first man I took away from you."

She asked, her face stern, open and quietly defiant, "How much do you know about that?"

"Nothing that he told me in words. Everything that the tone of his voice told me whenever he spoke of you."

She inclined her head. She had caught the sound of suffering in the faintest exaggeration of evenness in his voice.

He pressed the starter, the motor's explosion blasted the story contained in the silence, and they drove on.

The path widened a little, streaming toward a pool of sunlight ahead. She saw a brief glitter of wires among the branches, as they drove out into a clearing. An unobtrusive little structure stood against a hillside, on a rising slant of rocky ground. It was a simple cube of granite, the size of a toolshed, it had no windows, no apertures of any kind, only a door of polished steel and a complex set of wire antenna branching out from the roof. Galt was driving past, leaving it unnoticed, when she asked with a sudden start, "What's that?"

She saw the faint break of his smile. "The powerhouse."

"Oh, stop, please!"

He obeyed, backing the car to the foot of the hillside. It was her first few steps up the rocky incline that stopped her, as if there were no need to move forward, no further place to rise—and she stood

as in the moment when she had opened her eyes on the earth of the valley, a moment uniting her beginning to her goal.

She stood looking up at the structure, her consciousness surrendered to a single sight and a single, wordless emotion—but she had always known that an emotion was a sum totaled by an adding machine of the mind, and what she now felt was the instantaneous total of the thoughts she did not have to name, the final sum of a long progression, like a voice telling her by means of a feeling: If she had held onto Quentin Daniels, with no hope of a chance to use the motor, for the sole sake of knowing that achievement had not died on earth—if, like a weighted diver sinking in an ocean of mediocrity, under the pressure of men with gelatin eyes, rubber voices, spiral-shaped convictions, non-committal souls and non-committing hands, she had held, as her life line and oxygen tube, the thought of a superlative achievement of the human mind—if, at the sight of the motor's remnant, in a sudden gasp of suffocation, as a last protest from his corruption-eaten lungs, Dr. Stadler had cried for something, not to look down at, but up to, and *this* had been the cry, the longing and the fuel of her life—if she had moved, drawn by the hunger of her youth for a sight of clean, hard, radiant competence—then here it was before her, reached and done, the power of an incomparable mind given shape in a net of wires sparkling peacefully under a summer sky, drawing an incalculable power out of space into the secret interior of a small stone hovel.

She thought of this structure, half the size of a boxcar, replacing the power plants of the country, the enormous conglomerations of steel, fuel and effort—she thought of the current flowing from this structure, lifting ounces, pounds, tons of strain from the shoulders of those who would make it or use it, adding hours, days and years of liberated time to their lives, be it an extra moment to lift one's head from one's task and glance at the sunlight, or an extra pack of cigarettes bought with the money saved from one's electric bill, or an hour cut from the work-day of every factory using power, or a month's journey through the whole, open width of the world, on a ticket paid for by one day of one's labor, on a train pulled by the power of this motor—with all the energy of that weight, that strain, that time replaced and paid for by the energy of a single mind who had known how to make connections of wire follow the connections of his thought. But she knew that there was no meaning in motors or factories or trains, that their only meaning was in man's enjoyment of his life, which they served—and that her swelling admiration at the sight of an achievement was for the man from whom it came, for the power and the radiant vision within him which had seen the earth as a place of enjoyment and had known that the work of achieving one's happiness was the purpose, the sanction and the meaning of life.

The door of the structure was a straight, smooth sheet of stainless steel, softly lustrous and bluish in the sun. Above it, cut in the granite, as the only feature of the building's rectangular austerity, there stood an inscription:

I SWEAR BY MY LIFE AND MY LOVE OF IT THAT I WILL NEVER