no, there could be no answer. She would not seek it. It did not matter now.

The remnant of violence, the emotion rising as a thin trembling within her, was not for the man she was going to see; it was a cry of protest against a sacrilege—against the destruction of what had been greatness.

In a break between buildings, she saw the towers of the Wayne-Falkland. She felt a slight jolt, in her lungs and legs, that stopped her for an instant. Then she walked on evenly.

By the time she walked through the marble lobby, to the elevator, then down the wide, velvet-carpeted, soundless corridors of the Wayne-Falkland, she felt nothing but a cold anger that grew colder with every step.

She was certain of the anger when she knocked at his door. She heard his voice, answering, "Come in." She jerked the door open and entered.

Francisco Domingo Carlos Andres Sebastián d'Anconia sat on the floor, playing marbles.

Nobody ever wondered whether Francisco d'Anconia was good-looking or not; it seemed irrelevant, when he entered a room, it was impossible to look at anyone else. His tall, slender figure had an air of distinction, too authentic to be modern, and he moved as if he had a cape floating behind him in the wind. People explained him by saying that he had the vitality of a healthy animal, but they knew dimly that that was not correct. He had the vitality of a healthy human being, a thing so rare that no one could identify it. He had the power of certainty.

Nobody described his appearance as Latin, yet the word applied to him, not in its present, but in its original sense, not pertaining to Spain, but to ancient Rome. His body seemed designed as an exercise in consistency of style, a style made of gauntness, of tight flesh, of long legs and swift movements. His features had the fine precision of sculpture. His hair was black and straight, swept back. The suntan of his skin intensified the startling color of his eyes: they were a pure, clear blue. His face was open, its rapid changes of expression reflecting whatever he felt, as if he had nothing to hide. The blue eyes were still and changeless, never giving a hint of what he thought.

He sat on the floor of his drawing room, dressed in sleeping pajamas of thin black silk. The marbles spread on the carpet around him were made of the semi-precious stones of his native country: carnelian and rock crystal. He did not rise when Dagny entered. He sat looking up at her, and a crystal marble fell like a teardrop out of his hand. He smiled, the unchanged, insolent, brilliant smile of his childhood.

"Hi, Slug!"

She heard herself answering, irresistibly, helplessly, happily:

"Hi, Frisco!"

She was looking at his face; it was the face she had known. It bore no mark of the kind of life he had led, nor of what she had seen on their last night together. There was no sign of tragedy, no bitterness, no tension—only the radiant mockery, matured and stressed, the

look of dangerously unpredictable amusement, and the great, guiltless serenity of spirit. But this, she thought, was impossible; this was more shocking than all the rest.

His eyes were studying her: the battered coat thrown open, half-slipping off her shoulders, and the slender body in a gray suit that looked like an office uniform.

"If you came here dressed like this in order not to let me notice how lovely you are," he said, "you miscalculated. You're lovely: I wish I could tell you what a relief it is to see a face that's intelligent though a woman's. But you don't want to hear it. That's not what you came here for."

The words were improper in so many ways, yet were said so lightly that they brought her back to reality, to anger and to the purpose of her visit. She remained standing, looking down at him, her face blank, refusing him any recognition of the personal, even of its power to offend her. She said, "I came here to ask you a question."

"Go ahead."

"When you told those reporters that you came to New York to witness the farce, which farce did you mean?"

He laughed aloud, like a man who seldom finds a chance to enjoy the unexpected.

"That's what I like about you, Dagny. There are seven million people in the city of New York, at present. Out of seven million people, you are the only one to whom it could have occurred that I wasn't talking about the Vail divorce scandal."

"What were you talking about?"

"What alternative occurred to you?"

"The San Sebastian disaster."

"That's much more amusing than the Vail divorce scandal, isn't it."

She said in the solemn, merciless tone of a prosecutor, "You did it consciously, cold-bloodedly and with full intention."

"Don't you think it would be better if you took your coat off and sat down?"

She knew she had made a mistake by betraying too much intensity. She turned coldly, removed her coat and threw it aside. He did not rise to help her. She sat down in an armchair. He remained on the floor, at some distance, but it seemed as if he were sitting at her feet.

"What was it I did with full intention?" he asked.

"The entire San Sebastian swindle."

"What was my *full* intention?"

"That is what I want to know."

He chuckled, as if she had asked him to explain in conversation a complex science requiring a lifetime of study.

"You knew that the San Sebastián mines were worthless," she said. "You knew it before you began the whole wretched business."

"Then why did I begin it?"

"Don't start telling me that you gained nothing. I know it. I know you lost fifteen million dollars of your own money. Yet it was done on purpose."

"Can you think of a motive that would prompt me to do it?"

"No. It's inconceivable."

"Is it? You assume that I have a great mind, a great knowledge and a great productive ability, so that anything I undertake must necessarily be successful. And then you claim that I had no desire to put out my best effort for the People's State of Mexico. Inconceivable, isn't it?"

"You knew, before you bought that property, that Mexico was in the hands of a looters' government. You didn't have to start a mining project for them."

"No, I didn't have to."

"You didn't give a damn about that Mexican government, one way or another, because—"

"You're wrong about that."

"—because you knew they'd seize those mines sooner or later. What you were after is your American stockholders."

"That's true." He was looking straight at her, he was not smiling, his face was earnest. He added, "That's part of the truth."

"What's the rest?"

"It was not all I was after."

"What else?"

"That's for you to figure out."

"I came here because I wanted you to know that I am beginning to understand your purpose."

He smiled. "If you did, you wouldn't have come here."

"That's true. I *don't* understand and probably never shall. I am merely beginning to see part of it."

"Which part?"

"You had exhausted every other form of depravity and sought a new thrill by swindling people like Jim and his friends, in order to watch them squirm. I don't know what sort of corruption could make anyone enjoy that, but that's what you came to New York to see, at the right time."

"They certainly provided a spectacle of squirming on the grand scale. Your brother James in particular."

"They're rotten fools, but in this case their only crime was that they trusted you. They trusted your name and your honor."

Again, she saw the look of earnestness and again knew with certainty that it was genuine, when he said, "Yes. They did. I know it."

"And do you find it amusing?"

"No. I don't find it amusing at all."

He had continued playing with his marbles, absently, indifferently, taking a shot once in a while. She noticed suddenly the faultless accuracy of his aim, the skill of his hands. He merely flicked his wrist and sent a drop of stone shooting across the carpet to click sharply against another drop. She thought of his childhood and of the predictions that anything he did would be done superlatively.

"No," he said, "I don't find it amusing. Your brother James and his friends knew nothing about the copper-mining industry. They knew nothing about making money. They did not think it necessary to learn. They considered knowledge superfluous and judgment inessential. They observed that there I was in the world and that I made