it received was respectful, because it came from people who were disinterested.

No space was given by the newspapers to the progress of the construction of the John Galt Line. No reporter was sent to look at the scene. The general policy of the press had been stated by a famous editor five years ago. "There are no objective facts," he had said. "Every report on facts is only somebody's opinion. It is, therefore, useless to write about facts."

A few businessmen thought that one should think about the possibility that there might be commercial value in Rearden Metal. They undertook a survey of the question. They did not hire metallurgists to examine samples, nor engineers to visit the site of construction. They took a public poll. Ten thousand people, guaranteed to represent every existing kind of brain, were asked the question. "Would you ride on the John Galt Line?" The answer, overwhelmingly, was: "No, sir-ree!"

No voices were heard in public in defense of Rearden Metal. And nobody attached significance to the fact that the stock of Taggart Transcontinental was rising on the market; very slowly, almost furtively. There were men who watched and played safe. Mr. Mowen bought Taggart stock in the name of his sister. Ben Nealy bought it in the name of a cousin. Paul Larkin bought it under an alias. "I don't believe in raising controversial issues," said one of these men.

"Oh, yes, of course, the construction is moving on schedule," said James Taggart, shrugging, to his Board of Directors. "Oh yes, you may feel full confidence. My dear sister does not happen to be a human being, but just an internal combustion engine, so one must not wonder at her success."

When James Taggart heard a rumor that some bridge girders had split and crashed, killing three workmen, he leaped to his feet and ran to his secretary's office, ordering him to call Colorado. He waited, pressed against the secretary's desk, as if seeking protection; his eyes had the unfocused look of panic. Yet his mouth moved suddenly into almost a smile and he said, "I'd give anything to see Henry Rearden's face right now." When he heard that the rumor was false, he said, "Thank God!" But his voice had a note of disappointment.

"Oh well!" said Philip Rearden to his friends, hearing the same rumor. "Maybe he can fail, too, once in a while. Maybe my great brother isn't as great as he thinks."

"Darling," said Lillian Rearden to her husband, "I fought for you yesterday, at a tea where the women were saying that Dagny Taggart is your mistress. . . . Oh, for heaven's sake, don't look at me like that! I know it's preposterous and I gave them hell for it. It's just that those silly bitches can't imagine any other reason why a woman would take such a stand against everybody for the sake of your Metal. Of course, I know better than that. I know that the Taggart woman is perfectly sexless and doesn't give a damn about you—and, darling, I know that if you ever had the courage for anything of the sort, which you haven't, you wouldn't go for an adding machine in

tailored suits, you'd go for some blond, feminine chorus girl who—oh, but Henry, I'm only joking!—don't look at me like that!"

"Dagny," James Taggart said miserably, "what's going to happen to us? Taggart Transcontinental has become so unpopular!"

Dagny laughed, in enjoyment of the moment, any moment, as if the undercurrent of enjoyment was constant within her and little was needed to tap it. She laughed easily, her mouth relaxed and open. Her teeth were very white against her sun-scorched face. Her eyes had the look, acquired in open country, of being set for great distances. On her last few visits to New York, he had noticed that she looked at him as if she did not see him.

"What are we going to do? The public is so overwhelmingly against us!"

"Jim, do you remember the story they tell about Nat Taggart? He said that he envied only one of his competitors, the one who said 'The public be damned!' He wished he had said it."

In the summer days and in the heavy stillness of the evenings of the city, there were moments when a lonely man or woman—on a park bench, on a street corner, at an open window—would see in a newspaper a brief mention of the progress of the John Galt Line, and would look at the city with a sudden stab of love. They were the very young, who felt that it was the kind of event they longed to see happening in the world—or the very old, who had seen a world in which such events did happen. They did not care about railroads, they knew nothing about business, they knew only that someone was fighting against great odds and winning. They did not admire the fighters' purpose, they believed the voices of public opinion—and yet, when they read that the Line was growing, they felt a moment's sparkle and wondered why it made their own problems seem easier.

Silently unknown to everyone except to the freight yard of Taggart Transcontinental in Cheyenne and the office of the John Galt Line in the dark alley freight was rolling in and orders for cars were piling up—for the first train to run on the John Galt Line. Dagny Taggart had announced that the first train would be not a passenger express loaded with celebrities and politicians, as was the custom, but a freight special.

The freight came from farms, from lumber yards, from mines all over the country, from distant places whose last means of survival were the new factories of Colorado. No one wrote about these shippers, because they were men who were not disinterested.

The Phoenix-Durango Railroad was to close on July 25. The first train of the John Galt Line was to run on July 22.

"Well, it's like this, Miss Taggart," said the delegate of the Union of Locomotive Engineers. "I don't think we're going to allow you to run that train."

Dagny sat at her battered desk, against the blotched wall of her office. She said, without moving, "Get out of here."

It was a sentence the man had never heard in the polished offices of railroad executives. He looked bewildered. "I came to tell you—"

"If you have anything to say to me, start over again."