that he'd never do it. 'And if it's something that I can't resist,' he said, 'I swear that I'll keep enough of my mind to leave you a letter and give you some hint of what it is, so that you won't have to rack your brain in the kind of dread we're both feeling now.' That's what he swore. Two weeks ago, he went. He left me no letter. . . . Dagny, I can't tell what I'll do when I see it—whatever it was that they saw when they went."

It seemed to her that some destroyer was moving soundlessly through the country and the lights were dying at his touch—someone, she thought bitterly, who had reversed the principle of the Twentieth Century motor and was now turning kinetic energy into static.

That was the enemy—she thought, as she sat at her desk in the gathering twilight—with whom she was running a race. The monthly report from Quentin Daniels lay on her desk. She could not be certain, as yet, that Daniels would solve the secret of the motor; but the destroyer, she thought, was moving swiftly, surely, at an ever accelerating tempo; she wondered whether, by the time she rebuilt the motor, there would be any world left to use it.

She had liked Quentin Daniels from the moment he entered her office on their first interview. He was a lanky man in his early thirties, with a homely, angular face and an attractive smile. A hint of the smile remained in his features at all times, particularly when he listened; it was a look of good-natured amusement, as if he were swiftly and patiently discarding the irrelevant in the words he heard and going straight to the point a moment ahead of the speaker.

"Why did you refuse to work for Dr. Stadler?" she asked.

The hint of his smile grew harder and more stressed; this was as near as he came to showing an emotion; the emotion was anger. But he answered in his even, unhurried drawl, "You know, Dr. Stadler once said that the first word of 'Free, scientific inquiry' was redundant. He seems to have forgotten it. Well, I'll just say that 'Governmental scientific inquiry' is a contradiction in terms."

She asked him what position he held at the Utah Institute of Technology. "Night watchman," he answered. "*What?*" she gasped. "Night watchman," he repeated politely, as if she had not caught the words, as if there were no cause for astonishment.

Under her questioning, he explained that he did not like any of the scientific foundations left in existence, that he would have liked a job in the research laboratory of some big industrial concern—"But which one of them can afford to undertake any long-range work nowadays, and why should they?"—so when the Utah Institute of Technology was closed for lack of funds, he had remained there as night watchman and sole inhabitant of the place: the salary was sufficient to pay for his needs—and the Institute's laboratory was there, intact, for his own private, undisturbed use.

"So you're doing research work of your own?"

"That's right."

"For what purpose?"

"For my own pleasure."

"What do you intend to do, if you discover something of scientific

importance or commercial value? Do you intend to put it to some public use?"

"I don't know. I don't think so."

"Haven't you any desire to be of service to humanity?"

"I don't talk that kind of language, Miss Taggart. I don't think you do, either."

She laughed. "I think we'll get along together, you and I."

"We will."

When she had told him the story of the motor, when he had studied the manuscript, he made no comment, but merely said that he would take the job on any terms she named.

She asked him to choose his own terms. She protested, in astonishment, against the low monthly salary he quoted. "Miss Taggart," he said, "if there's something that I won't take, it's something for nothing. I don't know how long you might have to pay me, or whether you'll get anything at all in return. I'll gamble on my own mind. I won't let anybody else do it. I don't collect for an intention. But I sure do intend to collect for goods delivered. If I succeed, that's when I'll skin you alive, because what I want then is a percentage, and it's going to be high, but it's going to be worth your while."

When he named the percentage he wanted, she laughed. "That *is* skinning me alive and it *will* be worth my while. Okay."

They agreed that it was to be her private project and that he was to be her private employee; neither of them wanted to have to deal with the interference of the Taggart Research Department. He asked to remain in Utah, in his post of watchman, where he had all the laboratory equipment and all the privacy he needed. The project was to remain confidential between them, until and unless he succeeded.

"Miss Taggart," he said in conclusion, "I don't know how many years it will take me to solve this, if ever. But I know that if I spend the rest of my life on it and succeed, I will die satisfied." He added, "There's only one thing that I want more than to solve it: it's to meet the man who has."

Once a month, since his return to Utah, she had sent him a check and he had sent her a report on his work. It was too early to hope, but his reports were the only bright points in the stagnant fog of her days in the office.

She raised her head, as she finished reading his pages. The calendar in the distance said: September 2. The lights of the city had grown beneath it, spreading and glittering. She thought of Rearden. She wished he were in the city; she wished she would see him tonight.

Then, noticing the date, she remembered suddenly that she had to rush home to dress, because she had to attend Jim's wedding tonight. She had not seen Jim, outside the office, for over a year. She had not met his fiancée, but she had read enough about the engagement in the newspapers. She rose from her desk in wearily distasteful resignation: it seemed easier to attend the wedding than to bother explaining her absence afterwards.

She was hurrying across the concourse of the Terminal when she heard a voice calling, "Miss Taggart!" with a strange note of urgency and reluctance, together. It stopped her abruptly; she took a few