

"I was. About everything but you. Dagny, to find an exception after years of . . . Oh, to hell with them! Do you want me to turn on the radio and hear what they're saying about the two of you tonight?"

"No."

"Good. I don't want to hear them. Let them swallow their own speeches. They're all climbing on the band wagon now. We're the band." He glanced at Rearden. "What are you smiling at?"

"I've always been curious to see what you're like."

"I've never had a chance to be what I'm like—except tonight."

"Do you live here alone, like this, miles away from everything?"

Wyatt pointed at the window. "I'm a couple of steps away from—everything."

"What about people?"

"I have guest rooms for the kind of people who come to see me on business. I want as many miles as possible between myself and all the other kinds." He leaned forward to refill their wine glasses. "Hank, why don't you move to Colorado? To hell with New York and the Eastern Seaboard! This is the capital of the Renaissance. The Second Renaissance—not of oil paintings and cathedrals—but of oil derricks, power plants, and motors made of Rearden Metal. They had the Stone Age and the Iron Age and now they're going to call it the Rearden Metal Age—because there's no limit to what your Metal has made possible."

"I'm going to buy a few square miles of Pennsylvania," said Rearden. "The ones around my mills. It would have been cheaper to build a branch here, as I wanted, but you know why I can't, and to hell with them! I'll beat them anyway. I'm going to expand the mills—and if she can give me three-day freight service to Colorado, I'll give you a race for who's going to be the capital of the Renaissance!"

"Give me a year," said Dagny, "of running trains on the John Galt Line, give me time to pull the Taggart system together—and I'll give you three-day freight service across the continent, on a Rearden Metal track from ocean to ocean!"

"Who was it that said he needed a fulcrum?" said Ellis Wyatt. "Give me an unobstructed right-of-way and I'll show them how to move the earth!"

She wondered what it was that she liked about the sound of Wyatt's laughter. Their voices, even her own, had a tone she had never heard before. When they rose from the table, she was astonished to notice that the candles were the only illumination of the room: she had felt as if she were sitting in a violent light.

Ellis Wyatt picked up his glass, looked at their faces and said, "To the world as it seems to be right now!"

He emptied the glass with a single movement.

She heard the crash of the glass against the wall in the same instant that she saw a circling current—from the curve of his body to the sweep of his arm to the terrible violence of his hand that flung the glass across the room. It was not the conventional gesture meant as

celebration, it was the gesture of a rebellious anger, the vicious gesture which is movement substituted for a scream of pain.

"Ellis," she whispered, "what's the matter?"

He turned to look at her. With the same violent suddenness, his eyes were clear, his face was calm; what frightened her was seeing him smile gently. "I'm sorry," he said. "Never mind. We'll try to think that it will last."

The earth below was streaked with moonlight, when Wyatt led them up an outside stairway to the second floor of the house, to the open gallery at the doors of the guest rooms. He wished them good night and they heard his steps descending the stairs. The moonlight seemed to drain sound as it drained color. The steps rolled into a distant past, and when they died, the silence had the quality of a solitude that had lasted for a long time, as if no person were left anywhere in reach.

She did not turn to the door of her room. He did not move. At the level of their feet, there was nothing but a thin railing and a spread of space. Angular tiers descended below, with shadows repeating the steel tracery of derricks, criss-crossing sharp, black lines on patches of glowing rock. A few lights, white and red, trembled in the clear air, like drops of rain caught on the edges of steel girders. Far in the distance, three small drops were green, strung in a line along the Taggart track. Beyond them, at the end of space, at the foot of a white curve, hung a webbed rectangle which was the bridge.

She felt a rhythm without sound or movement, a sense of beating tension, as if the wheels of the John Galt Line were still speeding on. Slowly, in answer and in resistance to an unspoken summons, she turned and looked at him.

The look she saw on his face made her know for the first time that she had known this would be the end of the journey. That look was not as men are taught to represent it, it was not a matter of loose muscles, hanging lips and mindless hunger. The lines of his face were pulled tight, giving it a peculiar purity, a sharp precision of form, making it clean and young. His mouth was taut, the lips faintly drawn inward, stressing the outline of its shape. Only his eyes were blurred, their lower lids swollen and raised, their glance intent with that which resembled hatred and pain.

The shock became numbness spreading through her body—she felt a tight pressure in her throat and her stomach—she was conscious of nothing but a silent convulsion that made her unable to breathe. But what she felt, without words for it, was: Yes, Hank, yes—now—because it is part of the same battle, in some way that I can't name . . . because it is our being, against theirs . . . our great capacity, for which they torture us, the capacity of happiness . . . Now, like this, without words or questions . . . because we want it . . .

It was like an act of hatred, like the cutting blow of a lash encircling her body: she felt his arms around her, she felt her legs pulled forward against him and her chest bent back under the pressure of his, his mouth on hers.

Her hand moved from his shoulders to his waist to his legs, releasing the unconfessed desire of her every meeting with him. When she