

pride a woman is supposed to experience at being granted the title of wife.

In the many months of his absence, she never wondered whether he was true to her or not; she knew he was. She knew, even though she was too young to know the reason, that indiscriminate desire and unselective indulgence were possible only to those who regarded sex and themselves as evil.

She knew little about Francisco's life. It was his last year in college; he seldom spoke of it, and she never questioned him. She suspected that he was working too hard, because she saw, at times, the unnaturally bright look of his face, the look of exhilaration that comes from driving one's energy beyond its limit. She laughed at him once, boasting that she was an old employee of Taggart Transcontinental, while he had not started to work for a living. He said: "My father refuses to let me work for d'Anconia Copper until I graduate." "When did you learn to be obedient?" "I must respect his wishes. He is the owner of d'Anconia Copper . . . He is not, however, the owner of all the copper companies in the world." There was a hint of secret amusement in his smile.

She did not learn the story until the next fall, when he had graduated and returned to New York after a visit to his father in Buenos Aires. Then he told her that he had taken two courses of education during the last four years: one at the Patrick Henry University, the other in a copper foundry on the outskirts of Cleveland. "I like to learn things for myself," he said. He had started working at the foundry as furnace boy, when he was sixteen—and now, at twenty, he owned it. He acquired the first title of property, with the aid of some inaccuracy about his age, on the day when he received his university diploma, and he sent them both to his father.

He showed her a photograph of the foundry. It was a small, grimy place, disreputable with age, battered by years of a losing struggle: above its entrance gate, like a new flag on the mast of a derelict, hung the sign: d'Anconia Copper.

The public relations man of his father's office in New York had moaned, outraged. "But, Don Francisco, you can't do that! What will the public think? *That* name--on a dump of this kind?" "It's my name," Francisco had answered.

When he entered his father's office in Buenos Aires, a large room, severe and modern as a laboratory, with photographs of the properties of d'Anconia Copper as sole ornament on its walls—photographs of the greatest mines, ore docks and foundries in the world—he saw, in the place of honor, facing his father's desk, a photograph of the Cleveland foundry with the new sign above its gate.

His father's eyes moved from the photograph to Francisco's face as he stood in front of the desk.

"Isn't it a little too soon?" his father asked.

"I couldn't have stood four years of nothing but lectures."

"Where did you get the money for your first payment on that property?"

"By playing the New York stock market."

"What? Who taught you to do that?"

"It is not difficult to judge which industrial ventures will succeed and which won't."

"Where did you get the money to play with?"

"From the allowance you sent me, and from my wages."

"When did you have time to watch the stock market?"

"While I was writing a thesis on the influence--upon subsequent metaphysical systems--of Aristotle's theory of the Immovable Mover."

Francisco's stay in New York was brief, that fall. His father was sending him to Montana as assistant superintendent of a d'Anconia mine. "Oh well," he said to Dagny, smiling, "my father does not think it advisable to let me rise too fast. I would not ask him to take me on faith. If he wants a factual demonstration, I shall comply." In the spring, Francisco came back--as head of the New York office of d'Anconia Copper.

She did not see him often in the next two years. She never knew where he was, in what city or on what continent, the day after she had seen him. He always came to her unexpectedly--and she liked it, because it made him a continuous presence in her life, like the ray of a hidden light that could hit her at any moment.

Whenever she saw him in his office, she thought of his hands as she had seen them on the wheel of a motorboat: he drove his business with the same smooth, dangerous, confidently mastered speed. But one small incident remained in her mind as a shock: it did not fit him. She saw him standing at the window of his office, one evening, looking at the brown winter twilight of the city. He did not move for a long time. His face was hard and tight; it had the look of an emotion she had never believed possible to him: of bitter, helpless anger. He said, "There's something wrong in the world. There's always been. Something no one has ever named or explained." He would not tell her what it was.

When she saw him again, no trace of that incident remained in his manner. It was spring and they stood together on the roof terrace of a restaurant, the light silk of her evening gown blowing in the wind against his tall figure in formal black clothes. They looked at the city. In the dining room behind them, the sounds of the music were a concert étude by Richard Halley, Halley's name was not known to many, but they had discovered it and they loved his music. Francisco said, "We don't have to look for skyscrapers in the distance, do we? We've reached them." She smiled and said, "I think we're going past them. . . . I'm almost afraid. . . . we're on a speeding elevator of some kind." "Sure. Afraid of what? Let it speed. Why should there be a limit?"

He was twenty-three when his father died and he went to Buenos Aires to take over the d'Anconia estate, now his. She did not see him again for three years.

He wrote to her, at first, at random intervals. He wrote about d'Anconia Copper, about the world market, about issues affecting the interests of Taggart Transcontinental. His letters were brief, written by hand, usually at night.

She was not unhappy in his absence. She, too, was taking her first