frozen—to adjust the matter of the railroad rates? I was thinking of a raise. A small but most essentially needed raise."

"We'll discuss it, you and I," said Mouch amiably. "It might be arranged." He turned to the others; Boyle's face was sagging. "There are many details still to be worked out, but I'm sure that our program won't encounter any major difficulties." He was assuming the tone and manner of a public address; he sounded brisk and almost cheerful. "Rough spots are to be expected. If one thing doesn't work, we'll try another. Trial-and-error is the only pragmatic rule of action. We'll just keep on trying. If any hardships come up, remember that it's only temporary. Only for the duration of the national emergency."

"Say," asked Kinnan, "how is the emergency to end if everything is to stand still?"

"Don't be theoretical," said Mouch impatiently. "We've got to deal with the situation of the moment. Don't bother about minor details, so long as the broad outlines of our policy are clear. We'll have the power We'll be able to solve any problem and answer any question."

Fred Kinnan chuckled. "Who is John Galt?"

"Don't say that!" cried Taggart.

"I have a question to ask about Point Seven," said Kinnan. "It says that all wages, prices, salaries, dividends, profits and so forth will be frozen on the date of the directive. Taxes, too?"

"Oh no!" cried Mouch. "How can we tell what funds we'll need in the future?" Kinnan seemed to be smiling. "Well?" snapped Mouch. "What about it?"

"Nothing," said Kinnan. "I just asked."

Mouch leaned back in his chair. "I must say to all of you that I appreciate your coming here and giving us the benefit of your opinions. It has been very helpful." He leaned forward to look at his desk calendar and sat over it for a moment, toying with his pencil. Then the pencil came down, struck a date and drew a circle around it "Directive 10-289 will go into effect on the morning of May first."

All nodded approval. None looked at his neighbor.

James Taggart rose, walked to the window and pulled the blind down over the white obelisk.

* *

In the first moment of awakening, Dagny was astonished to find herself looking at the spires of unfamiliar buildings against a glowing, pale blue sky. Then she saw the twisted seam of the thin stocking on her own leg, she felt a wrench of discomfort in the muscles of her waistline, and she realized that she was lying on the couch in her office, with the clock on her desk saying 6:15 and the first rays of the sun giving silver edges to the silhouettes of the skyscrapers beyond the window. The last thing she remembered was that she had dropped down on the couch, intending to rest for ten minutes, when the window was black and the clock stood at 3:30.

She twisted herself to her feet, feeling an enormous exhaustion. The lighted lamp on the desk looked futile in the glow of the morning, over the piles of paper which were her cheerless, unfinished task.

She tried not to think of the work for a few minutes longer, while she dragged herself past the desk to her washroom and let handfuls of cold water run over her face.

The exhaustion was gone by the time she stepped back into the office. No matter what night preceded it, she had never known a morning when she did not feel the rise of a quiet excitement that became a tightening energy in her body and a hunger for action in her mind—because this was the beginning of day and it was a day of *her* life. She looked down at the city. The streets were still empty, it made them look wider, and in the luminous cleanliness of the spring air they seemed to be waiting for the promise of all the greatness that would take form in the activity about to pour through them. The calendar in the distance said: May 1.

She sat down at her desk, smiling in defiance at the distastefulness of her job. She hated the reports that she had to finish reading, but it was her job, it was her railroad, it was morning. She lighted a cigarette, thinking that she would finish this task before breakfast; she turned off the lamp and pulled the papers forward.

There were reports from the general managers of the four Regions of the Taggart system, their pages a typewritten cry of despair over the breakdowns of equipment. There was a report about a wreck on the main line near Winston, Colorado. There was the new budget of the Operating Department, the revised budget based on the raise in rates which Jim had obtained last week. She tried to choke the exasperation of hopelessness as she went slowly over the budget's figures; all those calculations had been made on the assumption that the volume of freight would remain unchanged and that the raise would bring them added revenue by the end of the year; she knew that the freight tonnage would go on shrinking, that the raise would make little difference, that by the end of this year their losses would be greater than ever.

When she looked up from the pages, she saw with a small jolt of astonishment that the clock said 9:25. She had been dimly aware of the usual sound of movement and voices in the anteroom of her office, as her staff had arrived to begin their day; she wondered why nobody had entered her office and why her telephone had remained silent; as a daily rule, there should have been a rush of business by this hour. She glanced at her calendar; there was a note that the McNeil Car Foundry of Chicago was to phone her at nine A M in regard to the new freight cars which Taggart Transcontinental had been expecting for six months.

She flicked the switch of the interoffice communicator to call her secretary. The girl's voice answered with a startled little gasp: "Miss Taggart! Are you here, in your office?"

"I slept here last night, again. Didn't intend to, but did. Was there a call for me from the McNeil Car Foundry?"

"No, Miss Taggart."

"Put them through to me immediately, when they call.

"Yes, Miss Taggart."

Switching the communicator off, she wondered whether she imag-