

resist coming, because it made me think of the days when you would have been glad to see me . . . it was a moment's illusion to re-create for myself. . . ." The words sounded like a memorized lesson.

She knew that she had to speak, while her mind was fighting to grasp the full meaning of her discovery. The words were part of the plan she had intended to use, if she had met him after he had found the roses in his compartment.

He did not answer, he stood watching her, frowning.

"I missed you, Henry. I know what I am confessing: But I don't expect it to mean anything to you any longer." The words did not fit the tight face, the lips that moved with effort, the eyes that kept glancing away from him down the length of the platform. "I wanted . . . I merely wanted to surprise you." A look of shrewdness and purpose was returning to her face.

He took her arm, but she drew back, a little too sharply.

"Aren't you going to say a word to me, Henry?"

"What do you wish me to say?"

"Do you hate it as much as that--having your wife come to meet you at the station?" She glanced down the platform: Dagny Taggart was walking toward them; he did not see her.

"Let's go," he said.

She would not move. "Do you?" she asked.

"What?"

"Do you hate it?"

"No, I don't hate it. I merely don't understand it."

"Tell me about your trip. I'm sure you've had a very enjoyable trip."

"Come on. We can talk at home."

"When do I ever have a chance to talk to you at home?" She was drawling her words impassively, as if she were stretching them to fill time, for some reason which he could not imagine. "I had hoped to catch a few moments of your attention--like this--between trains and business appointments and all those important matters that hold you day and night, all those great achievements of yours, such as . . . Hello, Miss Taggart!" she said sharply, her voice loud and bright.

Rearden whirled around. Dagny was walking past them, but she stopped.

"How do you do," she said to Lillian, bowing, her face expressionless.

"I am so sorry, Miss Taggart," said Lillian, smiling. "you must forgive me if I don't know the appropriate formula of condolences for the occasion." She noted that Dagny and Rearden had not greeted each other. "You're returning from what was, in effect, the funeral of your child by my husband, aren't you?"

Dagny's mouth showed a faint line of astonishment and of contempt. She inclined her head, by way of leave-taking, and walked on.

Lillian glanced sharply at Rearden's face, as if in deliberate emphasis. He looked at her indifferently, puzzled.

She said nothing. She followed him without a word when he turned to go. She remained silent in the taxicab, her face half-turned away from him, while they rode to the Wayne-Falkland Hotel. He felt

certain, as he looked at the tautly twisted set of her mouth, that some uncustomary violence was racing within her. He had never known her to experience a strong emotion of any kind.

She whirled to face him, the moment they were alone in his room.

"So that's who it is?" she asked.

He had not expected it. He looked at her, not quite believing that he had understood it correctly.

"It's Dagny Taggart who's your mistress, isn't she?"

He did not answer.

"I happen to know that you had no compartment on that train. So I know where you've slept for the last four nights. Do you want to admit it or do you want me to send detectives to question her train crews and her house servants? Is it Dagny Taggart?"

"Yes," he answered calmly.

Her mouth twisted into an ugly chuckle; she was staring past him. "I should have known it. I should have guessed. That's why it didn't work!"

He asked, in blank bewilderment, "What didn't work?"

She stepped back, as if to remind herself of his presence. "Had you—when she was in our house, at the party—had you, then . . . ?"

"No. Since."

"The great businesswoman," she said, "above reproach and feminine weaknesses. The great mind detached from any concern with the body . . ." She chuckled "The bracelet . . ." she said, with the still look that made it sound as if the words were dropped accidentally out of the torrent in her mind. "That's what she meant to you. That's the weapon she gave you."

"If you really understand what you're saying—yes."

"Do you think I'll let you get away with it?"

"Get away . . . ?" He was looking at her incredulously, in cold, astonished curiosity.

"That's why, at your trial—" She stopped

"What about my trial?"

She was trembling. "You know, of course, that I won't allow this to continue."

"What does it have to do with my trial?"

"I won't permit you to have her. Not her. Anyone but her."

He let a moment pass, then asked evenly, "Why?"

"I won't permit it! You'll give it up!" He was looking at her without expression, but the steadiness of his eyes hit her as his most dangerous answer. "You'll give it up, you'll leave her, you'll never see her again!"

"Lillian, if you wish to discuss it, there's one thing you'd better understand: nothing on earth will make me give it up."

"But I demand it!"

"I told you that you could demand anything but that."

He saw the look of a peculiar panic growing in her eyes: it was not the look of understanding, but of a ferocious refusal to understand—as if she wanted to turn the violence of her emotion into a fog screen, as if she hoped, not that it would blind her to reality, but that her blindness would make reality cease to exist.

"But I have the right to demand it! I own your life! It's my property. My property—by your own oath. You swore to serve my happiness. Not yours—mine! What have you done for me? You've given me nothing, you've sacrificed nothing, you've never been concerned with anything but yourself—*your* work, *your* mills, *your* talent, *your* mistress! What about me? I hold first claim! I'm presenting it for collection! You're the account I own!"

It was the look on his face that drove her up the rising steps of her voice, scream by scream, into terror. She was seeing, not anger or pain or guilt, but the one inviolate enemy: indifference.

"Have you thought of me?" she screamed, her voice breaking against his face. "Have you thought of what you're doing to me? You have no right to go on, if you know that you're putting me through hell every time you sleep with that woman! I can't stand it, I can't stand one moment of knowing it! Will you sacrifice me to your animal desire? Are you as vicious and selfish as that? Can you buy your pleasure at the price of my suffering? Can you have it, if this is what it does to me?"

Feeling nothing but the emptiness of wonder, he observed the thing which he had glimpsed briefly in the past and was now seeing in the full ugliness of its futility: the spectacle of pleas for pity delivered, in snarling hatred, as threats and as demands.

"Lillian," he said very quietly, "I would have it, even if it took your life."

She heard it. She heard more than he was ready to know and to hear in his own words. The shock, to him, was that she did not scream in answer, but that he saw her, instead, shrinking down into calm. "You have no right . . ." she said dully. It had the embarrassing helplessness of the words of a person who knows her own words to be meaningless.

"Whatever claim you may have on me," he said, "no human being can hold on another a claim demanding that he wipe himself out of existence."

"Does she mean as much as that to you?"

"Much more than that."

The look of thought was returning to her face, but in her face it had the quality of a look of cunning. She remained silent.

"Lillian, I'm glad that you know the truth. Now you can make a choice with full understanding. You may divorce me—or you may ask that we continue as we are. That is the only choice you have. It is all I can offer you. I think you know I want you to divorce me. But I don't ask for sacrifices. I don't know what sort of comfort you can find in our marriage, but if you do, I won't ask you to give it up. I don't know why you should want to hold me now, I don't know what it is that I mean to you. I don't know what you're seeking, what form of happiness is yours or what you will obtain from a situation which I see as intolerable for both of us. By every standard of mine, you should have divorced me long ago. By every standard of mine, to maintain our marriage will be a vicious fraud. But my standards are not yours. I do not understand yours, I never have, but I will accept them. If this is the manner of your love for me, if