He glanced at her, his eyes narrowed; he did not laugh as she had, but the glance was an equivalent.

She remembered suddenly their last meeting, at the party. The memory seemed incredible. Their ease with each other—the strange, light-headed feeling, which included the knowledge that it was the only sense of ease either of them found anywhere—made the thought of hostility impossible. Yet she knew that the party had taken place; he acted as if it had not.

They walked to the edge of the canyon. Together, they looked at the dark drop, at the rise of rock beyond it, at the sun high on the derricks of Wyatt Oil. She stood, her feet apart on the frozen stones, braced firmly against the wind. She could feel, without touching it, the line of his chest behind her shoulder. The wind beat her coat against his legs.

"Hank, do you think we can build it in time? There are only six months left."

"Sure. It will take less time and labor than any other type of bridge. Let me have my engineers work out the basic scheme and submit it to you. No obligation on your part. Just take a look at it and see for yourself whether you'll be able to afford it. You will. Then you can let your college boys work out the details."

"What about the Metal?"

"I'll get the Metal rolled if I have to throw every other order out of the mills."

"You'll get it rolled on so short a notice?"

"Have I ever held you up on an order?"

"No. But the way things are going nowadays, you might not be able to help it."

"Who do you think you're talking to—Orren Boyle?"

She laughed. "All right. Let me have the drawings as soon as possible. I'll take a look and let you know within forty-eight hours. As to my college boys, they—" She stopped, frowning. "Hank, why is it so hard to find good men for any job nowadays?"

"I don't know . . ."

He looked at the lines of the mountains cut across the sky. A thin jet of smoke was rising from a distant valley.

"Have you seen the new towns of Colorado and the factories?" he asked.

"Yes."

"It's great, isn't it?—to see the kind of men they've gathered here from every corner of the country. All of them young, all of them starting on a shoestring and moving mountains."

"What mountain have *you* decided to move?"

"Why?"

"What are you doing in Colorado?"

He smiled. "Looking at a mining property."

"What sort?"

"Copper."

"Good God, don't you have enough to do?"

"I know it's a complicated job. But the supply of copper is becoming completely unreliable. There doesn't seem to be a single first-

rate company left in the business in this country—and I don't want to deal with d'Anconia Copper. I don't trust that playboy."

"I don't blame you," she said, looking away.

"So if there's no competent person left to do it, I'll have to mine my own copper, as I mine my own iron ore. I can't take any chances on being held up by all those failures and shortages. I need a great deal of copper for Rearden Metal."

"Have you bought the mine?"

"Not yet. There are a few problems to solve. Getting the men, the equipment, the transportation."

"Oh . . . !" She chuckled. "Going to speak to me about building a branch line?"

"Might. There's no limit to what's possible in this state. Do you know that they have every kind of natural resource here, waiting, untouched? And the way their factories are growing! I feel ten years younger when I come here."

"I don't." She was looking east, past the mountains. "I think of the contrast, all over the rest of the Taggart system. There's less to carry, less tonnage produced each year. It's as if . . . Hank, what's wrong with the country?"

"I don't know."

"I keep thinking of what they told us in school about the sun losing energy, growing colder each year. I remember wondering, then, what it would be like in the last days of the world. I think it would be . . . like this. Growing colder and things stopping."

"I never believed that story. I thought by the time the sun was exhausted, men would find a substitute."

"You did? Funny. I thought that, too."

He pointed at the column of smoke. "There's your new sunrise. It's going to feed the rest."

"If it's not stopped."

"Do you think it can be stopped?"

She looked at the rail under her feet. "No," she said.

He smiled. He looked down at the rail, then let his eyes move along the track, up the sides of the mountains, to the distant crane. She saw two things, as if, for a moment, the two stood alone in her field of vision: the lines of his profile and the green-blue cord coiling through space.

"We've done it, haven't we?" he said.

In payment for every effort, for every sleepless night, for every silent thrust against despair, this moment was all she wanted. "Yes. We have."

She looked away, noticed an old crane on a siding, and thought that its cables were worn and would need replacing. This was the great clarity of being beyond emotion, after the reward of having felt everything one could feel. Their achievement, she thought, and one moment of acknowledging it, of possessing it together—what greater intimacy could one share? Now she was free for the simplest, most commonplace concerns of the moment, because nothing could be meaningless within her sight.

She wondered what made her certain that he felt as she did. He

turned abruptly and started toward his car. She followed. They did not look at each other.

"I'm due to leave for the East in an hour," he said.

She pointed at the car. "Where did you get that?"

"Here. It's a Hammond. Hammond of Colorado—they're the only people who're still making a good car. I just bought it, on this trip."

"Wonderful job."

"Yes, isn't it?"

"Going to drive it back to New York?"

"No. I'm having it shipped. I flew my plane down here."

"Oh, you did? I drove down from Cheyenne—I had to see the line—but I'm anxious to get home as fast as possible. Would you take me along? Can I fly back with you?"

He did not answer at once. She noticed the empty moment of a pause. "I'm sorry," he said; she wondered whether she imagined the note of abruptness in his voice. "I'm not flying back to New York. I'm going to Minnesota."

"Oh well, then I'll try to get on an air liner, if I can find one today."

She watched his car vanish down the winding road. She drove to the airport an hour later. The place was a small field at the bottom of a break in the desolate chain of mountains. There were patches of snow on the hard, pitted earth. The pole of a beacon stood at one side, trailing wires to the ground; the other poles had been knocked down by a storm.

A lonely attendant came to meet her. "No, Miss Taggart," he said regretfully, "no planes till day after tomorrow. There's only one transcontinental liner every two days, you know, and the one that was due today has been grounded, down in Arizona. Engine trouble, as usual." He added, "It's a pity you didn't get here a bit sooner. Mr. Rearden took off for New York, in his private plane, just a little while ago."

"He wasn't flying to New York, was he?"

"Why, yes. He said so."

"Are you sure?"

"He said he had an appointment there tonight."

She looked at the sky to the east, blankly, without moving. She had no clue to any reason, nothing to give her a foothold, nothing with which to weigh this or fight it or understand.

* *

"Damn these streets!" said James Taggart. "We're going to be late."

Dagny glanced ahead, past the back of the chauffeur. Through the circle made by a windshield wiper on the sleet-streaked glass, she saw black, worn, glistening car tops strung in a motionless line. Far ahead, the smear of a red lantern, low over the ground, marked a street excavation.

"There's something wrong on every other street," said Taggart irritably. "Why doesn't somebody fix them?"

She leaned back against the seat, tightening the collar of her wrap. She felt exhausted at the end of a day she had started at her desk,