that night, she had got three lawyers, a judge and a state legislator out of bed, she had bribed two of them and threatened the others, she had obtained a paper that was an emergency permit of a legality no one would ever be able to untangle, she had had the padlocked doors of the Summit Casting plant unlocked and a random, half-dressed crew working at the smelters before the windows had turned gray with daylight. The crews had remained at work, under a Taggart engineer and a Rearden metallurgist. The rebuilding of the Rio Norte Line was not held up.

She listened to the sound of the drills. The work had been held up once, when the drilling for the bridge abutments was stopped. "I couldn't help it, Miss Taggart," Ben Nealy had said, offended. "You know how fast drill heads wear out. I had them on order, but Incorporated Tool ran into a little trouble, they couldn't help it either, Associated Steel was delayed in delivering the steel to them, so there's nothing we can do but wait. It's no use getting upset, Miss Taggart. I'm doing my best."

"I've hired you to do a job, not to do your best—whatever that is."

"That's a funny thing to say. That's an unpopular attitude, Miss Taggart, mighty unpopular."

"Forget Incorporated Tool. Forget the steel. Order the drill heads made of Rearden Metal."

"Not me. I've had enough trouble with the damn stuff in that rail of yours. I'm not going to mess up my own equipment."

"A drill head of Rearden Metal will outlast three of steel."

"Maybe."

"I said order them made."

"Who's going to pay for it?"

"I am."

"Who's going to find somebody to make them?"

She had telephoned Rearden. He had found an abandoned tool plant, long since out of business. Within an hour, he had purchased it from the relatives of its last owner. Within a day, the plant had been reopened. Within a week, drill heads of Rearden Metal had been delivered to the bridge in Colorado.

She looked at the bridge. It represented a problem badly solved, but she had had to accept it. The bridge, twelve hundred feet of steel across the black gap, was built in the days of Nat Taggart's son. It was long past the stage of safety; it had been patched with stringers of steel, then of iron, then of wood; it was barely worth the patching. She had thought of a new bridge of Rearden Metal. She had asked her chief engineer to submit a design and an estimate of the cost. The design he had submitted was the scheme of a steel bridge badly scaled down to the greater strength of the new metal; the cost made the project impossible to consider.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Taggart," he had said, offended. "I don't know what you mean when you say that I haven't made use of the metal. This design is an adaptation of the best bridges on record. What else did you expect?"

"A new method of construction."

"What do you mean, a new method?"

"I mean that when men got structural steel, they did not use it to build steel copies of wooden bridges." She had added wearily, "Get me an estimate on what we'll need to make our old bridge last for another five years."

"Yes, Miss Taggart," he had said cheerfully. "If we reinforce it with steel—"

"We'll reinforce it with Rearden Metal."

"Yes, Miss Taggart," he had said coldly.

She looked at the snow-covered mountains. Her job had seemed hard at times, in New York. She had stopped for blank moments in the middle of her office, paralyzed by despair at the rigidity of time which she could not stretch any further—on a day when urgent appointments had succeeded one another, when she had discussed worn Diesels, rotting freight cars, failing signal systems, falling revenues, while thinking of the latest emergency on the Rio Norte construction; when she had talked, with the vision of two streaks of green-blue metal cutting across her mind; when she had interrupted the discussions, realizing suddenly why a certain news item had disturbed her, and seized the telephone receiver to call long-distance, to call her contractor, to say, "Where do you get the food from, for your men? . . . I thought so. Well, Barton and Jones of Denver went bankrupt yesterday. Better find another supplier at once, if you don't want to have a famine on your hands." She had been building the line from her desk in New York. It had seemed hard. But now she was looking at the track. It was growing. It would be done on time.

She heard sharp, hurried footsteps and turned. A man was coming up the track. He was tall and young, his head of black hair was hatless in the cold wind, he wore a workman's leather jacket, but he did not look like a workman, there was too imperious an assurance in the way he walked. She could not recognize the face until he came closer. It was Ellis Wyatt. She had not seen him since that one interview in her office.

He approached, stopped, looked at her and smiled.

"Hello, Dagny," he said.

In a single shock of emotion, she knew everything the two words were intended to tell her. It was forgiveness, understanding, acknowledgment. It was a salute.

She laughed, like a child, in happiness that things should be as right as that.

"Hello," she said, extending her hand.

His hand held hers an instant longer than a greeting required. It was their signature under a score settled and understood.

"Tell Nealy to put up new snow fences for a mile and a half on Granada Pass," he said. "The old ones are rotted. They won't stand through another storm. Send him a rotary plow. What he's got is a piece of junk that wouldn't sweep a back yard. The big snows are coming any day now."

She considered him for a moment. "How often have you been doing this?" she asked.

"What?"

"Coming to watch the work."