

discrimination. I'm just as good as the next fellow. I'm entitled to my share of that Metal."

The young man looked up. "I was in Pennsylvania last week," he said. "I saw the Rearden mills. *There's* a place that's-busy! They're building four new open-hearth furnaces, and they've got six more coming. . . . New furnaces," he said, looking off to the south. "Nobody's built a new furnace on the Atlantic Coast for the last five years. . . ." He stood against the sky, on the top of a shrouded motor, looking off at the dusk with a faint smile of eagerness and longing, as one looks at the distant vision of one's love. "They're busy. . . ." he said.

Then his smile vanished abruptly; the way he jerked the chain was the first break in the smooth competence of his movements: it looked like a jolt of anger.

Mr. Mowen looked at the skyline, at the belts, the wheels, the smoke—the smoke that settled heavily, peacefully across the evening air, stretching in a long haze all the way to the city of New York somewhere beyond the sunset—and he felt reassured by the thought of New York in its ring of sacred fires, the ring of smokestacks, gas tanks, cranes and high tension lines. He felt a current of power flowing through every grimy structure of his familiar street; he liked the figure of the young man above him, there was something reassuring in the way he worked, something that blended with the skyline. . . . Yet Mr. Mowen wondered why he felt that a crack was growing somewhere, eating through the solid, the eternal walls.

"Something ought to be done," said Mr. Mowen. "A friend of mine went out of business—last week—the oil business—had a couple of wells down in Oklahoma—couldn't compete with Ellis Wyatt. It isn't fair. They ought to leave the little people a chance. They ought to place a limit on Wyatt's output. He shouldn't be allowed to produce so much that he'll swamp everybody else off the market. . . . I got stuck in New York yesterday, had to leave my car there and come home on a damn commuters' local, couldn't get any gas for the car, they said there's a shortage of oil in the city. . . . Things aren't right. Something ought to be done about it. . . ."

Looking at the skyline, Mr. Mowen wondered what was the nameless threat to it and who was its destroyer.

"What do you want to do about it?" asked the young man.

"Who, me?" said Mr. Mowen. "I wouldn't know. I'm not a big shot. I can't solve national problems. I just want to make a living. All I know is, somebody ought to do something about it. . . . Things aren't right. . . . I listen—what's your name?"

"Owen Kellogg."

"Listen, Kellogg, what do you think is going to happen to the world?"

"You wouldn't care to know."

A whistle blew on a distant tower, the night-shift whistle, and Mr. Mowen realized that it was getting late. He sighed, buttoning his coat, turning to go.

"Well, things are being done," he said. "Steps are being taken. Constructive steps. The Legislature has passed a Bill giving wider

powers to the Bureau of Economic Planning and National Resources. They've appointed a very able man as Top Co-ordinator. Can't say I've heard of him before, but the newspapers said he's a man to be watched. His name is Wesley Mouch "

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Dagny stood at the window of her living room, looking at the city. It was late and the lights were like the last sparks left glittering on the black remnants of a bonfire.

She felt at peace, and she wished she could hold her mind still to let her own emotions catch up with her, to look at every moment of the month that had rushed past her. She had had no time to feel that she was back in her own office at Taggart Transcontinental; there had been so much to do that she forgot it was a return from exile. She had not noticed what Jim had said on her return or whether he had said anything. There had been only one person whose reaction she had wanted to know; she had telephoned the Wayne-Falkland Hotel; but Señor Francisco d'Anconia, she was told, had gone back to Buenos Aires.

She remembered the moment when she signed her name at the bottom of a long legal page: it was the moment that ended the John Galt Line. Now it was the Rio Norte Line of Taggart Transcontinental again—except that the men of the train crews refused to give up its name. She, too, found it hard to give up; she forced herself not to call it "the John Galt," and wondered why that required an effort, and why she felt a faint wrench of sadness.

One evening, on a sudden impulse, she had turned the corner of the Taggart Building, for a last look at the office of John Galt, Inc., in the alley; she did not know what she wanted—just to see it, she thought. A plank barrier had been raised along the sidewalk: the old building was being demolished; it had given up, at last. She had climbed over the planks and, by the light of the street lamp that had once thrown a stranger's shadow across the pavement, she had looked in through the window of her former office. Nothing was left of the ground floor; the partitions had been torn down, there were broken pipes hanging from the ceiling and a pile of rubble on the floor. There was nothing to see.

She had asked Rearden whether he had come there one night last spring and stood outside her window, fighting his desire to enter. But she had known, even before he answered, that he had not. She did not tell him why she asked it. She did not know why that memory still disturbed her at times.

Beyond the window of her living room, the lighted rectangle of the calendar hung like a small shipping tag in the black sky. It read: September 2. She smiled defiantly, remembering the race she had run against its changing pages: there were no deadlines now, she thought, no barriers, no threats, no limits.

She heard a key turning in the door of her apartment; this was the sound she had waited for, had wanted to hear tonight.

Rearden came in, as he had come many times, using the key she had given him, as sole announcement. He threw his hat and coat

down on a chair with a gesture that had become familiar; he wore the formal black of dinner clothes.

"Hello," she said.

"I'm still waiting for the evening when I won't find you in," he answered.

"Then you'll have to phone the offices of Taggart Transcontinental."

"Any evening? Nowhere else?"

"Jealous, Hank?"

"No. Curious what it would feel like, to be."

He stood looking at her across the room, refusing to let himself approach her, deliberately prolonging the pleasure of knowing that he could do it whenever he wished. She wore the tight gray skirt of an office suit and a blouse of transparent white cloth tailored like a man's shirt; the blouse flared out above her waistline, stressing the trim flatness of her hips; against the glow of a lamp behind her, he could see the slender silhouette of her body within the flaring circle of the blouse.

"How was the banquet?" she asked.

"Fine. I escaped as soon as I could. Why didn't you come? You were invited."

"I didn't want to see you in public."

He glanced at her, as if stressing that he noted the full meaning of her answer; then the lines of his face moved to the hint of an amused smile. "You missed a lot. The National Council of Metal Industries won't put itself again through the ordeal of having me for guest of honor. Not if they can help it."

"What happened?"

"Nothing. Just a lot of speeches."

"Was it an ordeal for you?"

"No . . . Yes, in a way . . . I had really wanted to enjoy it."

"Shall I get you a drink?"

"Yes, will you?"

She turned to go. He stopped her, grasping her shoulders from behind; he bent her head back and kissed her mouth. When he raised his head, she pulled it down again with a demanding gesture of ownership, as if stressing her right to do it. Then she stepped away from him.

"Never mind the drink," he said. "I didn't really want it—except for seeing you wait on me."

"Well, then, let me wait on you."

"No."

He smiled, stretching himself out on the couch, his hands crossed under his head. He felt at home; it was the first home he had ever found.

"You know, the worst part of the banquet was that the only wish of every person present was to get it over with," he said. "What I can't understand is why they wanted to do it at all. They didn't have to. Certainly not for my sake."

She picked up a cigarette box, extended it to him, then held the flame of a lighter to the tip of his cigarette, in the deliberate manner