after one performance, to the sound of booing and catcalls. That night, Richard Halley had walked the streets of the city till dawn, trying to find an answer to a question, which he did not find.

On the night when the opera was presented again, nineteen years later, the last sounds of the music crashed into the sounds of the greatest ovation the opera house had ever heard. The ancient walls could not contain it, the sounds of cheering burst through to the lobbies, to the stairs, to the streets, to the boy who had walked those streets nineteen years ago.

Dagny was in the audience on the night of the ovation. She was one of the few who had known the music of Richard Halley much earlier; but she had never seen him. She saw him being pushed out on the stage, saw him facing the enormous spread of waving arms and cheering heads. He stood without moving, a tall, emaciated man with graying hair. He did not bow, did not smile; he just stood there, looking at the crowd. His face had the quiet, earnest look of a man staring at a question.

"The music of Richard Halley," wrote a critic next morning, "belongs to mankind. It is the product and the expression of the greatness of the people." "There is an inspiring lesson," said a minister, "in the life of Richard Halley. He has had a terrible struggle, but what does that matter? It is proper, it is noble that he should have endured suffering, injustice, abuse at the hands of his brothers—in order to enrich their lives and teach them to appreciate the beauty of great music."

On the day after the opening, Richard Halley retired.

He gave no explanation. He merely told his publishers that his career was over. He sold them the rights to his works for a modest sum, even though he knew that his royalties would now bring him a fortune. He went away, leaving no address. It was eight years ago: no one had seen him since.

Dagny listened to the Fourth Concerto, her head thrown back, her eyes closed. She lay half-stretched across the corner of a couch, her body relaxed and still; but tension stressed the shape of her mouth on her motionless face, a sensual shape drawn in lines of longing.

After a while, she opened her eyes. She noticed the newspaper she had thrown down on the couch. She reached for it absently, to turn the vapid headlines out of sight. The paper fell open. She saw the photograph of a face she knew, and the heading of a story. She slammed the pages shut and flung them aside.

It was the face of Francisco d'Anconia. The heading said that he had arrived in New York. What of it?—she thought. She would not have to see him. She had not seen him for years.

She sat looking at the newspaper on the floor. Don't read it, she thought; don't look at it. But the face, she thought, had not changed. How could a face remain the same when everything else was gone? She wished they had not caught a picture of him when he smiled. That kind of smile did not belong in the pages of a newspaper. It was the smile of a man who is able to see, to know and to create the glory of existence. It was the mocking, challenging smile of a

brilliant intelligence. Don't read it, she thought; not now—not to that music—oh, not to that music!

She reached for the paper and opened it.

The story said that Señor Francisco d'Anconia had granted an interview to the press in his suite at the Wayne-Falkland Hotel. He said that he had come to New York for two important reasons: a hatcheck girl at the Cub Club, and the liverwurst at Moe's Delicatessen on Third Avenue. He had nothing to say about the coming divorce trial of Mr and Mrs. Gilbert Vail. Mrs. Vail, a lady of noble breeding and unusual loveliness, had taken a shot at her distinguished young husband, some months ago, publicly declaring that she wished to get rid of him for the sake of her lover, Francisco d'Anconia. She had given to the press a detailed account of her secret romance, including a description of the night of last New Year's Eve which she had spent at d'Anconia's villa in the Andes. Her husband had survived the shot and had sued for divorce. She had countered with a suit for half of her husband's millions, and with a recital of his private life which, she said, made hers look innocent. All of that had been splashed over the newspapers for weeks. But Señor d'Anconia had nothing to say about it, when the reporters questioned him. Would he deny Mrs. Vail's story, they asked. "I never deny anything," he answered. The reporters had been astonished by his sudden arrival in town; they had thought that he would not wish to be there just when the worst of the scandal was about to explode on the front pages. But they had been wrong. Francisco d'Anconia added one more comment to the reasons for his arrival. "I wanted to witness the farce," he said.

Dagny let the paper slip to the floor. She sat, bent over, her head on her arms. She did not move, but the strands of hair, hanging down to her knees, trembled in sudden jolts once in a while.

The great chords of Halley's music went on, filling the room, piercing the glass of the windows, streaming out over the city. She was hearing the music. It was *her* quest, her cry.

* *

James Taggart glanced about the living room of his apartment, wondering what time it was; he did not feel like moving to find his watch. He sat in an armchair, dressed in wrinkled pajamas, barefooted; it was too much trouble to look for his slippers. The light of the gray sky in the windows hurt his eyes, still sticky with sleep. He felt, inside his skull, the nasty heaviness which is about to become a headache. He wondered angrily why he had stumbled out into the living room. Oh yes, he remembered, to look for the time.

He slumped sidewise over the arm of the chair and caught sight of a clock on a distant building; it was twenty minutes past noon.

Through the open door of the bedroom, he heard Betty Pope washing her teeth in the bathroom beyond. Her girdle lay on the floor, by the side of a chair with the rest of her clothes; the girdle was a faded pink, with broken strands of rubber.

"Hurry up, will you?" he called irritably. "I've got to dress."

She did not answer. She had left the door of the bathroom open; he could hear the sound of gargling.

Why do I do those things? he thought, remembering last night But it was too much trouble to look for an answer

Betty Pope came into the living room, dragging the folds of a satin harlequin negligee—checkered in orange and purple She looked awful in a negligee, thought Taggart, she was ever so much better in a riding habit, in the photographs on the society pages of the newspapers She was a lanky girl, all bones and loose joints that did not move smoothly She had a homely face, a bad complexion and a look of impertinent condescension derived from the fact that she belonged to one of the very best families

"Aw hell!" she said at nothing in particular, stretching herself to limber up 'Jim, where are your nail clippers? I've got to trim my toenails

"I don t know I have a headache Do it at home

"You look unappetizing in the morning she said indifferently "You look like a snail'

"Why don't you shut up?

She wandered aimlessly about the room "I don t want to go home," she said with no particular feeling "I hate morning Here's another day and nothing to do I've got a tea session on for this afternoon, at Liz Blane's Oh well, it might be fun, because Liz is a bitch She picked up a glass and swallowed the stale remnant of a drink 'Why don t you have them repair your air conditioner? This place smells

' Are you through in the bathroom? he asked I have to dress I have an important engagement today '

' Go right in I don't mind I ll share the bathroom with you I hate to be rushed '

While he shaved, he saw her dressing in front of the open bath room door She took a long time twisting herself into her girdle hooking garters to her stockings, pulling on an ungainly expensive tweed suit The harlequin negligee, picked from an advertisement in the smartest fashion magazine was like a uniform which she knew to be expected on certain occasions which she had worn dutifully for a specified purpose and then discarded

The nature of their relationship had the same quality There was no passion in it, no desire, no actual pleasure not even a sense of shame To them the act of sex was neither joy nor sin It meant nothing They had heard that men and women were supposed to sleep together, so they did

"Jim, why don't you take me to the Armenian restaurant tonight?" she asked "I love shish-kebab"

"I can't," he answered angrily through the soap lather on his face "I've got a busy day ahead"

"Why don't you cancel it?"

"What?'

"Whatever it is"

"It is very important, my dear It is a meeting of our Board of Directors"

"Oh, don't be stuffy about your damn railroad It's boring I hate businessmen They're dull"