"Me? Oh, but I am quite resigned to taking second place in the shadow of my husband. I am humbly aware that the wife of a great man has to be contented with reflected glory—don't you think so, Miss Taggart?"

"No," said Dagny, "I don't."

"Is this a compliment or a reproach, Miss Taggart? But do forgive me if I confess I'm helpless. Whom may I present to you? I'm afraid I have nothing but writers and artists to offer, and they wouldn't interest you, I'm sure."

"I'd like to find Hank and say hello to him."

"But of course. James, do you remember you said you wanted to meet Balph Eubank?—oh yes, he's here—I'll tell him that I heard you rave about his last novel at Mrs. Whitcomb's dinner!"

Walking across the room, Dagny wondered why she had said that she wanted to find Hank Rearden, what had prevented her from admitting that she had seen him the moment she entered.

Rearden stood at the other end of the long room, looking at her. He watched her as she approached, but he did not step forward to meet her.

"Hello, Hank."

"Good evening."

He bowed, courteously, impersonally, the movement of his body matching the distinguished formality of his clothes. He did not smile.

"Thank you for inviting me tonight," she said gaily.

"I cannot claim that I knew you were coming."

"Oh? Then I'm glad that Mrs. Rearden thought of me. I wanted to make an exception."

"An exception?"

"I don't go to parties very often."

"I am pleased that you chose this occasion as the exception." He did not add "Miss Taggart," but it sounded as if he had.

The formality of his manner was so unexpected that she was unable to adjust to it. "I wanted to celebrate," she said.

"To celebrate my wedding anniversary?"

"Oh, is it your wedding anniversary? I didn't know. My congratulations, Hank."

"What did you wish to celebrate?"

"I thought I'd permit myself a rest. A celebration of my own—in your honor and mine."

"For what reason?"

She was thinking of the new track on the rocky grades of the Colorado mountains, growing slowly toward the distant goal of the Wyatt oil fields. She was seeing the greenish-blue glow of the rails on the frozen ground, among the dried weeds, the naked boulders, the rotting shanties of half-starved settlements.

"In honor of the first sixty miles of Rearden Metal track," she answered.

"I appreciate it." The tone of his voice was the one that would have been proper if he had said, "I've never heard of it."

She found nothing else to say. She felt as if she were speaking to a stranger.

"Why, Miss Taggart!" a cheerful voice broke their silence. "Now *this* is what I mean when I say that Hank Rearden can achieve any miracle!"

A businessman whom they knew had approached, smiling at her in delighted astonishment. The three of them had often held emergency conferences about freight rates and steel deliveries. Now he looked at her, his face an open comment on the change in her appearance, the change, she thought, which Rearden had not noticed.

She laughed, answering the man's greeting, giving herself no time to recognize the unexpected stab of disappointment, the unadmitted thought that she wished she had seen this look on Rearden's face, instead. She exchanged a few sentences with the man. When she glanced around, Rearden was gone.

"So that is your famous sister?" said Balph Eubank to James Taggart, looking at Dagny across the room.

"I was not aware that my sister was famous," said Taggart, a faint bite in his voice.

"But, my good man, she's an unusual phenomenon in the field of economics, so you must expect people to talk about her. Your sister is a symptom of the illness of our century. A decadent product of the machine age. Machines have destroyed man's humanity, taken him away from the soil, robbed him of his natural arts, killed his soul and turned him into an insensitive robot. There's an example of it—a woman who runs a railroad, instead of practicing the beautiful craft of the handloom and bearing children."

Rearden moved among the guests, trying not to be trapped into conversation. He looked at the room; he saw no one he wished to approach.

"Say, Hank Rearden, you're not such a bad fellow at all when seen close up in the lion's own den. You ought to give us a press conference once in a while, you'd win us over."

Rearden turned and looked at the speaker incredulously. It was a young newspaperman of the seedier sort, who worked on a radical tabloid. The offensive familiarity of his manner seemed to imply that he chose to be rude to Rearden because he knew that Rearden should never have permitted himself to associate with a man of his kind.

Rearden would not have allowed him inside the mills; but the man was Lillian's guest; he controlled himself; he asked dryly, "What do you want?"

"You're not so bad. You've got talent. Technological talent. But, of course, I don't agree with you about Rearden Metal."

"I haven't asked you to agree."

"Well, Bertram Scudder said that your policy—" the man started belligerently, pointing toward the bar, but stopped, as if he had slid farther than he intended.

Rearden looked at the untidy figure slouched against the bar. Lillian had introduced them, but he had paid no attention to the name. He turned sharply and walked off, in a manner that forbade the young bum to tag him.

Lillian glanced up at his face, when Rearden approached her in