

LIVE FOR THE SAKE OF ANOTHER MAN, NOR ASK ANOTHER MAN
TO LIVE FOR MINE

She turned to Galt. He stood beside her; he had followed her, she had known that this salute was his. She was looking at the inventor of the motor, but what she saw was the easy, casual figure of a workman in his natural setting and function—she noted the uncommon lightness of his posture, a weightless way of standing that showed an expert control of the use of his body—a tall body in simple garments: a thin shirt, light slacks, a belt about a slender waistline—and loose hair made to glitter like metal by the current of a sluggish wind. She looked at him as she had looked at his structure.

Then she knew that the first two sentences they had said to each other still hung between them, filling the silence—that everything said since, had been said over the sound of those words, that he had known it, had held it, had not let her forget it. She was suddenly aware that they were alone; it was an awareness that stressed the fact, permitting no further implication, yet holding the full meaning of the unnamed in that special stress. They were alone in a silent forest, at the foot of a structure that looked like an ancient temple—and she knew what rite was the proper form of worship to be offered on an altar of that kind. She felt a sudden pressure at the base of her throat, her head leaned back a little, no more than to feel the faint shift of a current against her hair, but it was as if she were lying back in space, against the wind, conscious of nothing but his legs and the shape of his mouth. He stood watching her, his face still but for the faint movement of his eyelids drawing narrow as if against too strong a light. It was like the beat of three instants—this was the first—and in the next, she felt a stab of ferocious triumph at the knowledge that his effort and his struggle were harder to endure than hers—and then he moved his eyes and raised his head to look at the inscription on the temple.

She let him look at it for a moment, almost as an act of condescending mercy to an adversary struggling to refuel his strength, then she asked, with a note of imperious pride in her voice, pointing at the inscription. "What's that?"

"It's the oath that was taken by every person in this valley, but you."

She said, looking at the words, "This has always been my own rule of living."

"I know it."

"But I don't think that yours is the way to practice it."

"Then you'll have to learn which one of us is wrong."

She walked up to the steel door of the structure, with a sudden confidence faintly stressed in the movements of her body, a mere hint of stress, no more than her awareness of the power she held by means of his pain—and she tried, asking no permission, to turn the knob of the door. But the door was locked, and she felt no tremor under the pressure of her hand, as if the lock were poured and sealed to the stone with the solid steel of the sheet.

"Don't try to open that door, Miss Taggart."

He approached her, his steps a shade too slow, as if stressing his

glitter faintly in the corners of his eyes, a humor that was shrewder, more demanding, yet warmer than a smile.

He opened the door of his house, moving his arm a shade more slowly than normal, giving an imperceptibly solemn emphasis to his gesture. Walking into the living room, she faced seven men who rose to their feet at her entrance.

"Gentlemen—'Taggart Transcontinental," said Midas Mulligan.

He said it smiling, but only half-jesting; some quality in his voice made the name of the railroad sound as if it would have sounded in the days of Nat Taggart, as a sonorous title of honor.

She inclined her head, slowly, in acknowledgment to the men before her, knowing that these were the men whose standards of value and honor were the same as her own, the men who recognized the glory of that title as she recognized it, knowing with a sudden stab of wistfulness how much she had longed for that recognition through all her years.

Her eyes moved slowly, in greeting, from face to face. Ellis Wyatt—Ken Danagger—Hugh Akston—Dr. Hendricks—Quentin Daniels—Mulligan's voice pronounced the names of the two others: "Richard Halley—Judge Narragansett."

The faint smile on Richard Halley's face seemed to tell her that they had known each other for years—as, in her lonely evenings by the side of her phonograph, they had. The austerity of Judge Narragansett's white-haired figure reminded her that she had once heard him described as a marble statue—a blindfolded marble statue, it was the kind of figure that had vanished from the courtrooms of the country when the gold coins had vanished from the country's hands.

"You have belonged here for a long time, Miss Taggart," said Midas Mulligan. "This was not the way we expected you to come, but—welcome home."

No! She wanted to answer, but heard herself answering softly, "Thank you."

"Daggy, how many years is it going to take you to learn to be yourself?" It was Ellis Wyatt, grasping her elbow, leading her to a chair, grinning at her look of helplessness, at the struggle between a smile and a tightening resistance in her face. "Don't pretend that you don't understand us. You do."

"We never make assertions, Miss Taggart," said Hugh Akston. "That is the moral crime peculiar to our enemies. We do not tell—we *show*. We do not claim—we *prove*. It is not your obedience that we seek to win, but your rational conviction. You have seen all the elements of our secret. The conclusion is now yours to draw—we can help you to name it, but not to accept it—the sight, the knowledge and the acceptance, must be yours."

"I feel as if I know it," she answered simply, "and more: I feel as if I've always known it, but never found it, and now I'm afraid, not afraid to hear it, just afraid that it's coming so close."

Akston smiled. "What does this look like to you, Miss Taggart?" He pointed around the room.

"This?" She laughed, suddenly, looking at the faces of the men