

of values, he was able to realize which one of them was the more dependent on the other and the more contemptible.

When they parted at the door of the restaurant, she went to Rearden's suite at the Wayne-Falkland Hotel, where she stayed occasionally in his absence. She paced the room for about half an hour, in a leisurely manner of reflection. Then she picked up the telephone, with a smoothly casual gesture, but with the purposeful air of a decision reached. She called Rearden's office at the mills and asked Miss Ives when she expected him to return.

"Mr. Rearden will be in New York tomorrow, arriving on the Comet, Mrs. Rearden," said Miss Ives' clear, courteous voice.

"Tomorrow? That's wonderful. Miss Ives, would you do me a favor? Would you call Gertrude at the house and tell her not to expect me for dinner? I'm staying in New York overnight."

She hung up, glanced at her watch and called the florist of the Wayne-Falkland. "This is Mrs. Henry Rearden," she said. "I should like to have two dozen roses delivered to Mr. Rearden's drawing room aboard the Comet. . . . Yes, today, this afternoon, when the Comet reaches Chicago. . . . No, without any card—just the flowers. . . . Thank you ever so much."

She telephoned James Taggart. "Jim, will you send me a pass to your passenger platforms? I want to meet my husband at the station tomorrow."

She hesitated between Ralph Eubank and Bertram Scudder, chose Ralph Eubank, telephoned him and made a date for this evening's dinner and a musical show. Then she went to take a bath, and lay relaxing in a tub of warm water, reading a magazine devoted to problems of political economy.

It was late afternoon when the florist telephoned her. "Our Chicago office sent word that they were unable to deliver the flowers, Mrs. Rearden," he said, "because Mr. Rearden is not aboard the Comet."

"Are you sure?" she asked.

"Quite sure, Mrs. Rearden. Our man found at the station in Chicago that there was no compartment on the train reserved in Mr. Rearden's name. We checked with the New York office of Taggart Transcontinental, just to make certain, and were told that Mr. Rearden's name is not on the passenger list of the Comet."

"I see. . . . Then cancel the order, please. . . . Thank you."

She sat by the telephone for a moment, frowning, then called Miss Ives. "Please forgive me for being slightly scatterbrained, Miss Ives, but I was rushed and did not write it down, and now I'm not quite certain of what you said. Did you say that Mr. Rearden was coming back tomorrow? On the Comet?"

"Yes, Mrs. Rearden."

"You have not heard of any delay or change in his plans?"

"Why, no. In fact, I spoke to Mr. Rearden about an hour ago. He telephoned from the station in Chicago, and he mentioned that he had to hurry back aboard, as the Comet was about to leave."

"I see. Thank you."

She leaped to her feet as soon as the click of the instrument re-

stored her to privacy. She started pacing the room, her steps now unrhythmically tense. Then she stopped, struck by a sudden thought. There was only one reason why a man would make a train reservation under an assumed name: if he was not traveling alone.

Her facial muscles went flowing slowly into a smile of satisfaction: this was an opportunity she had not expected.

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Standing on the Terminal platform, at a point halfway down the length of the train, Lillian Rearden watched the passengers descending from the Comet. Her mouth held the hint of a smile: there was a spark of animation in her lifeless eyes; she glanced from one face to another, jerking her head with the awkward eagerness of a schoolgirl. She was anticipating the look on Rearden's face when, with his mistress beside him, he would see her standing there.

Her glance darted hopefully to every flashy young female stepping off the train. It was hard to watch: within an instant after the first few figures, the train had seemed to burst at the seams, flooding the platform with a solid current that swept in one direction, as if pulled by a vacuum; she could barely distinguish separate persons. The lights were more glare than illumination, picking this one strip out of a dusty, oily darkness. She needed an effort to stand still against the invisible pressure of motion.

Her first sight of Rearden in the crowd came as a shock: she had not seen him step out of a car, but there he was, walking in her direction from somewhere far down the length of the train. He was alone. He was walking with his usual purposeful speed, his hands in the pockets of his trenchcoat. There was no woman beside him, no companion of any kind, except a porter hurrying along with a bag she recognized as his.

In a fury of incredulous disappointment, she looked frantically for any single feminine figure he could have left behind. She felt certain that she would recognize his choice. She saw none that could be possible. And then she saw that the last car of the train was a private car, and that the figure standing at its door, talking to some station official—a figure wearing, not minks and veils, but a rough sports coat that stressed the incomparable grace of a slender body in the confident posture of this station's owner and center—was Dagny Taggart. Then Lillian Rearden understood.

"Lillian! What's the matter?"

She heard Rearden's voice, she felt his hand grasping her arm; she saw him looking at her as one looks at the object of a sudden emergency. He was looking at a blank face and an unfocused glance of terror.

"What happened? What are you doing here?"

"I . . . Hello, Henry . . . I just came to meet you . . . No special reason . . . I just wanted to meet you." The terror was gone from her face, but she spoke in a strange, flat voice. "I wanted to see you, it was an impulse, a sudden impulse and I couldn't resist it, because—"

"But you look . . . looked ill."

"No . . . No, maybe I felt faint, it's stuffy here. . . . I couldn't