

sharply in her mind after a startled stop—between spirit and body. First, the vision—then the physical shape to express it. First, the thought—then the purposeful motion down the straight line of a single track to a chosen goal. Could one have any meaning without the other? Wasn't it evil to wish without moving—or to move without aim? Whose malevolence was it that crept through the world, struggling to break the two apart and set them against each other?

She shook her head. She did not want to think or to wonder why the world behind her was as it was. She did not care. She was flying away from it, at the rate of a hundred miles an hour. She leaned to the open window by her side, and felt the wind of the speed blowing her hair off her forehead. She lay back, conscious of nothing but the pleasure it gave her.

Yet her mind kept racing. Broken bits of thought flew past her attention, like the telegraph poles by the track. Physical pleasure?—she thought. This is a train made of steel . . . running on rails of Rearden Metal . . . moved by the energy of burning oil and electric generators . . . it's a physical sensation of physical movement through space . . . but is that the cause and the meaning of what I now feel? . . . Do they call it a low, animal joy—this feeling that I would not care if the rail did break to bits under us now—it won't—but I wouldn't care, because I have experienced this? A low, physical, material, degrading pleasure of the body?

She smiled, her eyes closed, the wind streaming through her hair.

She opened her eyes and saw that Rearden stood looking down at her. It was the same glance with which he had looked at the rail. She felt her power of volition knocked out by some single, dull blow that made her unable to move. She held his eyes, lying back in her chair, the wind pressing the thin cloth of her shirt to her body.

He looked away, and she turned again to the sight of the earth tearing open before them.

She did not want to think, but the sound of thought went on, like the drone of the motors under the sounds of the engine. She looked at the cab around her. The fine steel mesh of the ceiling, she thought, and the row of rivets in the corner, holding sheets of steel sealed together—who made them? The brute force of men's muscles? Who made it possible for four dials and three levers in front of Pat Logan to hold the incredible power of the sixteen motors behind them and deliver it to the effortless control of one man's hand?

These things and the capacity from which they came—was this the pursuit men regarded as evil? Was this what they called an ignoble concern with the physical world? Was this the state of being enslaved by matter? Was this the surrender of man's spirit to his body?

She shook her head, as if she wished she could toss the subject out of the window and let it get shattered somewhere along the track. She looked at the sun on the summer fields. She did not have to think, because these questions were only details of a truth she knew and had always known. Let them go past like the telegraph poles. The thing she knew was like the wires flying above in an unbroken line. The words for it, and for this journey, and for her

feeling, and for the whole of man's earth, were: It's so simple and so right!

She looked out at the country. She had been aware for some time of the human figures that flashed with an odd regularity at the side of the track. But they went by so fast that she could not grasp their meaning until, like the squares of a movie film, brief flashes blended into a whole and she understood it. She had had the track guarded since its completion, but she had not hired the human chain she saw strung out along the right-of-way. A solitary figure stood at every mile post. Some were young schoolboys, others were so old that the silhouettes of their bodies looked bent against the sky. All of them were armed, with anything they had found, from costly rifles to ancient muskets. All of them wore railroad caps. They were the sons of Taggart employees, and old railroad men who had retired after a full lifetime of Taggart service. They had come, unsummoned, to guard this train. As the engine went past him, every man in his turn stood erect, at attention, and raised his gun in a military salute.

When she grasped it, she burst out laughing, suddenly, with the abruptness of a cry. She laughed, shaking, like a child: it sounded like sobs of deliverance. Pat Logan nodded to her with a faint smile; he had noted the guard of honor long ago. She leaned to the open window, and her arm swept in wide curves of triumph, waving to the men by the track.

On the crest of a distant hill, she saw a crowd of people, their arms swinging against the sky. The gray houses of a village were scattered through a valley below, as if dropped there once and forgotten; the roof lines slanted, sagging, and the years had washed away the color of the walls. Perhaps generations had lived there, with nothing to mark the passage of their days but the movement of the sun from east to west. Now, these men had climbed the hill to see a silver-headed comet cut through their plains like the sound of a bugle through a long weight of silence.

As houses began to come more frequently, closer to the track, she saw people at the windows, on the porches, on distant roofs. She saw crowds blocking the roads at grade crossings. The roads went sweeping past like the spokes of a fan, and she could not distinguish human figures, only their arms greeting the train like branches waving in the wind of its speed. They stood under the swinging red lights of warning signals, under the signs saying: "Stop. Look. Listen."

The station past which they flew, as they went through a town at a hundred miles an hour, was a swaying sculpture of people from platform to roof. She caught the flicker of waving arms, of hats tossed in the air, of something flung against the side of the engine, which was a bunch of flowers.

As the miles clicked past them, the towns went by, with the stations at which they did not stop, with the crowds of people who had come only to see, to cheer and to hope. She saw garlands of flowers under the sooted eaves of old station buildings, and bunting of red-white-and-blue on the time-eaten walls. It was like the pictures she had seen--and envied--in schoolbook histories of railroads, from the era when people gathered to greet the first run of a train. It was