

"You won't. But—yes, even that. You don't think it's indifference, do you? Was it indifference that broke you and brought you here?"

"I—" And then the violence of the truth made her pull his mouth down to hers, then throw the words at his face: "I didn't care whether either one of us lived afterwards, just to see you this once!"

"I would have been disappointed if you hadn't come."

"Do you know what it was like, waiting, fighting it, delaying it one more day, then one more, then—"

He chuckled. "Do I?" he said softly.

Her hand dropped in a helpless gesture: she thought of his ten years. "When I heard your voice on the radio," she said, "when I heard the greatest statement I ever . . . No, I have no right to tell you what I thought of it."

"Why not?"

"You think that I haven't accepted it."

"You will."

"Were you speaking from here?"

"No, from the valley."

"And then you returned to New York?"

"The next morning."

"And you've been here ever since?"

"Yes."

"Have you heard the kind of appeals they're sending out to you every night?"

"Sure."

She glanced slowly about the room, her eyes moving from the towers of the city in the window to the wooden rafters of his ceiling, to the cracked plaster of his walls, to the iron posts of his bed. "You've been here all that time," she said. "You've lived here for twelve years . . . here . . . like this . . ."

"Like this," he said, throwing open the door at the end of the room.

She gasped: the long, light-flooded, windowless space beyond the threshold, enclosed in a shell of softly lustrous metal, like a small ballroom aboard a submarine, was the most efficiently modern laboratory she had ever seen.

"Come in," he said, grinning. "I don't have to keep secrets from you any longer."

It was like crossing the border into a different universe. She looked at the complex equipment sparkling in a bright, diffused glow, at the mesh of glittering wires, at the blackboard chalked with mathematical formulas, at the long counters of objects shaped by the ruthless discipline of a purpose—then at the sagging boards and crumbling plaster of the garret. Either-or, she thought; this was the choice confronting the world: a human soul in the image of one or of the other.

"You wanted to know where I worked for eleven months out of the year," he said.

"All this," she asked, pointing at the laboratory, "on the salary of"—she pointed at the garret—"of an unskilled laborer?"

"Oh, no! On the royalties Midas Mulligan pays me for his power-

house, for the ray screen, for the radio transmitter and a few other jobs of that kind."

"Then . . . then why did you have to work as a track laborer?"

"Because no money earned in the valley is ever to be spent outside."

"Where did you get this equipment?"

"I designed it. Andrew Stockton's foundry made it." He pointed to an unobtrusive object the size of a radio cabinet in a corner of the room: "There's the motor you wanted," and chuckled at her gasp, at the involuntary jolt that threw her forward. "Don't bother studying it, you won't give it away to them now."

She was staring at the shining metal cylinders and the glistening coils of wire that suggested the rusted shape resting, like a sacred relic, in a glass coffin in a vault of the Taggart Terminal.

"It supplies my own electric power for the laboratory," he said. "No one has had to wonder why a track laborer is using such exorbitant amounts of electricity."

"But if they ever found this place—"

He gave an odd, brief chuckle. "They won't."

"How long have you been—?"

She stopped; this time, she did not gasp: the sight confronting her could not be greeted by anything except a moment of total inner stillness; on the wall, behind a row of machinery, she saw a picture cut out of a newspaper-- a picture of her, in slacks and shirt, standing by the side of the engine at the opening of the John Galt Line, her head lifted, her smile holding the context, the meaning and the sunlight of that day.

A moan was her only answer, as she turned to him, but the look on his face matched hers in the picture.

"I was the symbol of what you wanted to destroy in the world," he said. "But you were my symbol of what I wanted to achieve." He pointed at the picture. "This is how men expect to feel about their life once or twice, as an exception, in the course of their lifetime. But I—*this* is what I chose as the constant and normal."

The look on his face, the serene intensity of his eyes and of his mind made it real to her, now, in this moment, in this moment's full context, in this city.

When he kissed her, she knew that their arms, holding each other, were holding their greatest triumph, that this was the reality untouched by pain or fear, the reality of Halley's Fifth Concerto. This was the reward they had wanted, fought for and won.

The doorbell rang.

Her first reaction was to draw back, his—to hold her closer and longer.

When he raised his head, he was smiling. He said only, "Now is the time not to be afraid."

She followed him back to the garret. She heard the door of the laboratory clicking locked behind them.

He held her coat for her silently, he waited until she had tied its belt and put on her hat—then he walked to the entrance door and opened it.

Three of the four men who entered were muscular figures in military uniforms, each with two guns on his hips, with broad faces devoid of shape and eyes untouched by perception. The fourth, their leader, was a frail civilian with an expensive overcoat, a neat mustache, pale blue eyes and the manner of an intellectual of the public-relations species.

He blinked at Galt, at the room, made a step forward, stopped, made another step and stopped.

"Yes?" said Galt.

"Are . . . are you John Galt?" he asked too loudly.

"That's my name."

"Are you *the* John Galt?"

"Which one?"

"Did you speak on the radio?"

"When?"

"Don't let him fool you." The metallic voice was Dagny's and it was addressed to the leader. "He—is—John—Galt. I shall report the proof to headquarters. You may proceed."

Galt turned to her as to a stranger. "Will you tell me *now* just who you are and what it was that you wanted here?"

Her face was as blank as the faces of the soldiers. "My name is Dagny Taggart. I wanted to convince myself that you are the man whom the country is seeking."

He turned to the leader. "All right," he said "I *am* John Galt—but if you want me to answer you at all, keep your stool pigeon"—he pointed at Dagny—"away from me."

"Mr. Galt!" cried the leader with the sound of an enormous joviality. "It is an honor to meet you, an honor and a privilege! Please, Mr. Galt, don't misunderstand us—we're ready to grant you your wishes—no, of course, you don't have to deal with Miss Taggart, if you prefer not to—Miss Taggart was only trying to do her patriotic duty, but—"

"I said keep her away from me."

"We're not your enemies, Mr. Galt. I assure you we're not your enemies." He turned to Dagny. "Miss Taggart, you have performed an invaluable service to the people. You have earned the highest form of public gratitude. Permit us to take over from here on." The soothing motions of his hands were urging her to stand back, to keep out of Galt's sight.

"Now what do you want?" asked Galt.

"The nation is waiting for you, Mr. Galt. All we want is a chance to dispel misapprehensions. Just a chance to co-operate with you." His gloved hand was waving a signal to his three men; the floor-boards creaked, as the men proceeded silently to the task of opening drawers and closets; they were searching the room. "The spirit of the nation will revive tomorrow morning. Mr. Galt, when they hear that you have been found."

"What do you want?"

"Just to greet you in the name of the people."

"Am I under arrest?"

"Why think in such old-fashioned terms? Our job is only to escort