

if she could think of some action to take against the things she had found on her return to New York, the things Eddie begged her to fight.

She had tried to think, but she could see no way of fighting, no rules of battle, no weapons. Helplessness was a strange experience, new to her; she had never found it hard to face things and make decisions; but she was not dealing with things—this was a fog without shapes or definitions, in which something kept forming and shifting before it could be seen, like semi-clots in a not-quite-liquid—it was as if her eyes were reduced to side-vision and she were sensing blurs of disaster coiling toward her, but she could not move her glance, she had no glance to move and focus.

The Union of Locomotive Engineers was demanding that the maximum speed of all trains on the John Galt Line be reduced to sixty miles an hour. The Union of Railway Conductors and Brakemen was demanding that the length of all freight trains on the John Galt Line be reduced to sixty cars.

The states of Wyoming, New Mexico, Utah and Arizona were demanding that the number of trains run in Colorado not exceed the number of trains run in each of these neighboring states.

A group headed by Orren Boyle was demanding the passage of a Preservation of Livelihood Law, which would limit the production of Rearden Metal to an amount equal to the output of any other steel mill of equal plant capacity.

A group headed by Mr. Mowen was demanding the passage of a Fair Share Law to give every customer who wanted it an equal supply of Rearden Metal.

A group headed by Bertram Scudder was demanding the passage of a Public Stability Law, forbidding Eastern business firms to move out of their states.

Wesley Mouch, Top Co-ordinator of the Bureau of Economic Planning and National Resources, was issuing a great many statements, the content and purpose of which could not be defined, except that the words "emergency powers" and "unbalanced economy" kept appearing in the text every few lines.

"Dagny, by what right?" Eddie Willers had asked her, his voice quiet, but the words sounding like a cry "By what right are they all doing it? By what right?"

She had confronted James Taggart in his office and said, "Jim, this is your battle. I've fought mine. You're supposed to be an expert at dealing with the looters. Stop them."

Taggart had said, not looking at her, "You can't expect to run the national economy to suit your own convenience."

"I don't want to run the national economy! I want your national economy runners to leave me alone! I have a railroad to run—and I know what's going to happen to your national economy if my railroad collapses!"

"I see no necessity for panic."

"Jim, do I have to explain to you that the income from our Rio Norte Line is all we've got, to save us from collapsing? That we need every penny of it, every fare, every carload of freight as fast as we

can get it?" He had not answered. "When we have to use every bit of power in every one of our broken-down Diesels, when we don't have enough of them to give Colorado the service it needs—what's going to happen if we reduce the speed and the length of trains?"

"Well, there's something to be said for the unions' viewpoint, too. With so many railroads closing and so many railroad men out of work, they feel that those extra speeds you've established on the Rio Norte Line are unfair—they feel that there should be more trains, instead, so that the work would be divided around—they feel that it's not fair for us to get all the benefit of that new rail, they want a share of it, too."

"Who wants a share of it? In payment for what?" He had not answered. "Who'll bear the cost of two trains doing the work of one?" He had not answered. "Where are you going to get the cars and the engines?" He had not answered. "What are those men going to do after they've put Taggart Transcontinental out of existence?"

"I fully intend to protect the interests of Taggart Transcontinental."

"How?" He had not answered. "How—if you kill Colorado?"

"It seems to me that before we worry about giving some people a chance to expand, we ought to give some consideration to the people who need a chance of bare survival."

"If you kill Colorado, what is there going to be left for your damn looters to survive on?"

"You have always been opposed to every progressive social measure. I seem to remember that you predicted disaster when we passed the Anti-dog-eat-dog Rule—but the disaster has not come."

"Because I saved you, you rotten fools! I won't be able to save you this time!" He had shrugged, not looking at her. "And if I don't, who will?" He had not answered.

It did not seem real to her, here, under the ground. Thinking of it here, she knew she could have no part in Jim's battle. There was no action she could take against the men of undefined thought, of unnamed motives, of unstated purposes, of unspecified morality. There was nothing she could say to them—nothing would be heard or answered. What were the weapons, she thought, in a realm where reason was not a weapon any longer? It was a realm she could not enter. She had to leave it to Jim and count on his self-interest. Dimly, she felt the chill of a thought telling her that self-interest was not Jim's motive.

She looked at the object before her, a glass case containing the remnant of the motor. The man who made the motor—she thought suddenly, the thought coming like a cry of despair. She felt a moment's helpless longing to find him, to lean against him and let him tell her what to do. A mind like his would know the way to win this battle.

She looked around her. In the clean, rational world of the underground tunnels, nothing was of so urgent an importance as the task of finding the man who made the motor. She thought: Could she delay it in order to argue with Orren Boyle?—to reason with Mr. Mowen?—to plead with Bertram Scudder? She saw the motor, completed, built into an engine that pulled a train of two hundred cars down a track of Rearden Metal at two hundred miles an hour. When the vision was within her reach, within the possible, was she to give it up and