other. His face relaxed a little at the sight of the change in Francisco's.

Francisco smiled, asking him, "Why do you stare at me?"

"Do you know what you looked like when you came in?"

"Oh, did I? That's because I hadn't slept for three nights. John, will you invite me to dinner? I want to know how this scab of yours got here, but I think that I might collapse sound asleep in the middle of a sentence—even though right now I feel as if I'll never need any sleep at all—so I think I'd better go home and stay there till evening."

Galt was watching him with a faint smile. "But aren't you going to leave the valley in an hour?"

"What? No . . ." he said mildly, in momentary astonishment. "No!" he laughed exultantly. "I don't have to! That's right, I haven't told you what it was, have I? I was searching for Dagny. For . . . for the wreck of her plane. She'd been reported lost in a crash in the Rockies."

"I see," said Galt quietly.

"I could have thought of anything, except that she would choose to crash in Galt's Gulch," Francisco said happily; he had the tone of that joyous relief which almost relishes the horror of the past, defying it by means of the present. "I kept flying over the district between Afton, Utah, and Winston, Colorado, over every peak and crevice of it, over every remnant of a car in any gully below, and whenever I saw one, I—" He stopped; it looked like a shudder. "Then at night, we went out on foot—the searching parties of railroad men from Winston—we went climbing at random, with no clues, no plan, on and on, until it was daylight again, and—" He shrugged, trying to dismiss it and to smile. "I wouldn't wish it on my worst—"

He stopped short; his smile vanished and a dim reflection of the look he had worn for three days came back to his face, as if at the sudden presence of an image he had forgotten.

After a long moment, he turned to Galt. "John," his voice sounded peculiarly solemn, "could we notify those outside that Dagny is alive . . . in case there's somebody who . . . who'd feel as I did?"

Galt was looking straight at him. "Do you wish to give any outsider any relief from the consequences of remaining outside?"

Francisco dropped his eyes, but answered firmly, "No."

"Pity, Francisco?"

"Yes. Forget it. You're right."

Galt turned away with a movement that seemed oddly out of character: it had the unrhythmical abruptness of the involuntary.

He did not turn back; Francisco watched him in astonishment, then asked softly, "What's the matter?"

Galt turned and looked at him for a moment, not answering. She could not identify the emotion that softened the lines of Galt's face; it had the quality of a smile, of gentleness, of pain, and of something greater that seemed to make these concepts superfluous.

"Whatever any of us has paid for this battle," said Galt, "you're the one who's taken the hardest beating, aren't you?"

"Who? I?" Francisco grinned with shocked, incredulous amuse-

ment. "Certainly not! What's the matter with you?" He chuckled and added, "Pity, John?"

"No," said Galt firmly.

She saw Francisco watching him with a faint, puzzled frown—because Galt had said it, looking, not at him, but at her.

* *

The emotional sum that struck her as an immediate impression of Francisco's house, when she entered it for the first time, was not the sum she had once drawn from the sight of its silent, locked exterior. She felt, not a sense of tragic loneliness, but of invigorating brightness. The rooms were bare and crudely simple, the house seemed built with the skill, the decisiveness and the impatience typical of Francisco; it looked like a frontiersman's shanty thrown together to serve as a mere springboard for a long flight into the future—a future where so great a field of activity lay waiting that no time could be wasted on the comfort of its start. The place had the brightness, not of a home, but of a fresh wooden scaffolding erected to shelter the birth of a skyscraper.

Francisco, in shirt sleeves, stood in the middle of his twelve-foot-square living room, with the look of a host in a palace. Of all the places where she had ever seen him, this was the background that seemed most properly his. Just as the simplicity of his clothes, added to his bearing, gave him the air of a superlative aristocrat, so the crudeness of the room gave it the appearance of the most patrician retreat; a single royal touch was added to the crudeness: two ancient silver goblets stood in a small niche cut in a wall of bare logs; their ornate design had required the luxury of some craftsman's long and costly labor, more labor than had gone to build the shanty, a design dimmed by the polish of more centuries than had gone to grow the log wall's pines. In the midst of that room, Francisco's easy, natural manner had a touch of quiet pride, as if his smile were silently saying to her: This is what I am and what I have been all these years.

She looked up at the silver goblets.

"Yes," he said, in answer to her silent guess, "they belonged to Sebastián d'Anconia and his wife. That's the only thing I brought here from my palace in Buenos Aires. That, and the crest over the door. It's all I wanted to save. Everything else will go, in a very few months now." He chuckled. "They'll seize it, all of it, the last dregs of d'Anconia Copper, but they'll be surprised. They won't find much for their trouble. And as to that palace, they won't be able to afford even its heating bill."

"And then?" she asked. "Where will you go from there?"

"I? I will go to work for d'Anconia Copper."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you remember that old slogan: 'The king is dead, long live the king'? When the carcass of my ancestors' property is out of the way, then my mine will become the young new body of d'Anconia Copper, the kind of property my ancestors had wanted, had worked for, had deserved, but had never owned."

"*Your* mine? What mine? Where?"