

She looked at him, unable to understand. But he was looking past her, straight ahead, at the crane in the distance. She wished he had not said it. The accusation did not trouble her, she never thought of herself in such terms and she was completely incapable of experiencing a feeling of fundamental guilt. But she felt a vague apprehension which she could not define, the suggestion that there was something of grave consequence in whatever had made him say it, something dangerous to him. He had not said it casually. But there had been no feeling in his voice, neither plea nor shame. He had said it indifferently, as a statement of fact.

Then, as she watched him, the apprehension vanished. He was looking at his mills beyond the window; there was no guilt in his face, no doubt, nothing but the calm of an inviolate self-confidence.

"Dagny," he said, "whatever we are, it's we who move the world and it's we who'll pull it through."

Chapter V THE CLIMAX OF THE D'ANCONIAS

The newspaper was the first thing she noticed. It was clutched tightly in Eddie's hand, as he entered her office. She glanced up at his face: it was tense and bewildered.

"Dagny, are you very busy?"

"Why?"

"I know that you don't like to talk about him. But there's some thing here I think you ought to see."

She extended her hand silently for the newspaper.

The story on the front page announced that upon taking over the San Sebastián Mines, the government of the People's State of Mexico had discovered that they were worthless—blatantly, totally, hopelessly worthless. There was nothing to justify the five years of work and the millions spent, nothing but empty excavations, laboriously cut. The few traces of copper were not worth the effort of extracting them. No great deposits of metal existed or could be expected to exist there, and there were no indications that could have permitted anyone to be deluded. The government of the People's State of Mexico was holding emergency sessions about their discovery, in an uproar of indignation, they felt that they had been cheated.

Watching her, Eddie knew that Dagny sat looking at the newspaper long after she had finished reading. He knew that he had been right to feel a hint of fear, even though he could not tell what frightened him about that story.

He waited. She raised her head. She did not look at him. Her eyes were fixed, intent in concentration, as if trying to discern something at a great distance.

He said, his voice low, "Francisco is not a fool. Whatever else he may be, no matter what depravity he's sunk to—and I've given up trying to figure out why—he is not a fool. He couldn't have made a mistake of this kind. It is not possible. I don't understand it."

"I'm beginning to."

She sat up, jolted upright by a sudden movement that ran through her body like a shudder. She said:

"Phone him at the Wayne-Falkland and tell the bastard that I want to see him."

"Dagny," he said sadly, reproachfully, "it's Frisco d'Anconia."
"It was."

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She walked through the early twilight of the city streets to the Wayne-Falkland Hotel. "He says, any time you wish," Eddie had told her. The first lights appeared in a few windows high under the clouds. The skyscrapers looked like abandoned lighthouses sending feeble, dying signals out into an empty sea where no ships moved any longer. A few snowflakes came down, past the dark windows of empty stores, to melt in the mud of the sidewalks. A string of red lanterns cut the street, going off into the murky distance.

She wondered why she felt that she wanted to run, that she should be running; no, not down this street: down a green hillside in the blazing sun to the road on the edge of the Hudson, at the foot of the Taggart estate. That was the way she always ran when Eddie yelled, "It's Frisco d'Anconia!" and they both flew down the hill to the car approaching on the road below.

He was the only guest whose arrival was an event in their childhood, their biggest event. The running to meet him had become part of a contest among the three of them. There was a birch tree on the hillside, halfway between the road and the house; Dagny and Eddie tried to get past the tree, before Francisco could race up the hill to meet them. On all the many days of his arrivals, in all the many summers, they never reached the birch tree; Francisco reached it first and stopped them when he was way past it. Francisco always won, as he always won everything.

His parents were old friends of the Taggart family. He was an only son and he was being brought up all over the world; his father, it was said, wanted him to consider the world as his future domain. Dagny and Eddie could never be certain of where he would spend his winter: but once a year, every summer, a stern South American tutor brought him for a month to the Taggart estate.

Francisco found it natural that the Taggart children should be chosen as his companions: they were the crown heirs of Taggart Transcontinental, as he was of d'Anconia Copper. "We are the only aristocracy left in the world—the aristocracy of money," he said to Dagny once, when he was fourteen. "It's the only real aristocracy, if people understood what it means, which they don't."

He had a caste system of his own: to him, the Taggart children were not Jim and Dagny, but Dagny and Eddie. He seldom volunteered to notice Jim's existence. Eddie asked him once, "Francisco, you're some kind of very high nobility, aren't you?" He answered, "Not yet. The reason my family has lasted for such a long time is that none of us has ever been permitted to think he is born a d'Anconia. We are expected to become one." He pronounced his name as if he wished his listeners to be struck in the face and knighted by the sound of it.

Sebastián d'Anconia, his ancestor, had left Spain many centuries ago, at a time when Spain was the most powerful country on earth and his was one of Spain's proudest figures. He left because the lord of the Inquisition did not approve of his manner of thinking and suggested, at a court banquet, that he change it. Sebastian d'Anconia threw the contents of his wine glass at the face of the lord of the Inquisition, and escaped before he could be seized. He left behind him his fortune, his estate, his marble palace and the girl he loved—and he sailed to a new world.

His first estate in Argentina was a wooden shack in the foothills of the Andes. The sun blazed like a beacon on the silver coat of arms of the d'Anconias, nailed over the door of the shack while Sebastian d'Anconia dug for the copper of his first mine. He spent years, pickaxe in hand, breaking rock from sunrise till darkness, with the help of a few stray derelicts, deserters from the armies of his countrymen, escaped convicts, starving Indians.

Fifteen years after he left Spain, Sebastián d'Anconia sent for the girl he loved; she had waited for him. When she arrived she found the silver coat of arms above the entrance of a marble palace, the gardens of a great estate, and mountains slashed by pits of red ore in the distance. He carried her in his arms across the threshold of his home. He looked younger than when she had seen him last.

"My ancestors and yours," Francisco told Dagny, "would have liked each other."

Through the years of her childhood Dagny lived in the future in the world she expected to find, where she would not have to feel contempt or boredom. But for one month each year she was free. For one month, she could live in the present. When she raced down the hill to meet Francisco d'Anconia, it was a release from prison.

"Hi, Slug!"

"Hi, Frisco!"

They had both resented their nicknames at first. She had asked him angrily, "What do you think you mean?" He had answered, "In case you don't know it, 'Slug' means a great fire in a locomotive firebox." "Where did you pick that up?" "From the gentlemen along the Taggart iron." He spoke five languages, and he spoke English without a trace of accent, a precise, cultured English deliberately mixed with slang. She had retaliated by calling him Frisco. He had laughed, amused and annoyed. "If you barbarians had to degrade the name of a great city of yours, you could at least refrain from doing it to me." But they had grown to like the nicknames.

It had started in the days of their second summer together, when he was twelve years old and she was ten. That summer, Frisco began vanishing every morning for some purpose nobody could discover. He went off on his bicycle before dawn and returned in time to appear at the white and crystal table set for lunch on the terrace, his manner courteously punctual and a little too innocent. He laughed, refusing to answer, when Dagny and Eddie questioned him. They tried to follow him once, through the cold, pre-morning darkness, but they gave it up, no one could track him when he did not want to be tracked.