

age and neglect: it looked as if she was pregnant. This seemed impossible, but glancing closer Dagny saw that her dust-colored hair was not gray and that there were few wrinkles on her face; it was only the vacant eyes, the stooped shoulders, the shuffling movements that gave her the stamp of senility.

Dagny leaned out and asked, "How old are you?"

The woman looked at her, not in resentment, but merely as one looks at a pointless question. "Thirty-seven," she answered.

They had driven five former blocks away, when Dagny spoke.

"Hank," she said in terror, "that woman is only two years older than I!"

"Yes."

"God, how did they ever come to such a state?"

He shrugged. "Who is John Galt?"

The last thing they saw, as they left the town, was a billboard. A design was still visible on its peeling strips, imprinted in the dead gray that had once been color. It advertised a washing machine.

In a distant field, beyond the town, they saw the figure of a man moving slowly, contorted by the ugliness of a physical effort beyond the proper use of a human body: he was pushing a plow by hand.

They reached the factory of the Twentieth Century Motor Company two miles and two hours later. They knew, as they climbed the hill, that their quest was useless. A rusted padlock hung on the door of the main entrance, but the huge windows were shattered and the place was open to anyone, to the woodchucks, the rabbits and the dried leaves that lay in drifts inside.

The factory had been gutted long ago. The great pieces of machinery had been moved out by some civilized means—the neat holes of their bases still remained in the concrete of the floor. The rest had gone to random looters. There was nothing left, except refuse which the neediest tramp had found worthless, piles of twisted, rusted scraps, of boards, plaster and glass splinters—and the steel stairways, built to last and lasting, rising in trim spirals to the roof.

They stopped in the great hall where a ray of light fell diagonally from a gap in the ceiling, and the echoes of their steps rang around them, dying far away in rows of empty rooms. A bird darted from among the steel rafters and went in a hissing streak of wings out into the sky.

"We'd better look through it, just in case," said Dagny. "You take the shops and I'll take the annexes. Let's do it as fast as possible."

"I don't like to let you wander around alone. I don't know how safe they are, any of those floors or stairways."

"Oh, nonsense! I can find my way around a factory—or in a wrecking crew. Let's get it over with. I want to get out of here."

When she walked through the silent yards—where steel bridges still hung overhead, tracing lines of geometrical perfection across the sky—her only wish was not to see any of it, but she forced herself to look. It was like having to perform an autopsy on the body of one's love. She moved her glance as an automatic searchlight, her teeth clamped tight together. She walked rapidly—there was no necessity to pause anywhere.

It was in a room of what had been the laboratory that she stopped. It was a coil of wire that made her stop. The coil protruded from a pile of junk. She had never seen that particular arrangement of wires, yet it seemed familiar, as if it touched the hint of some memory, faint and very distant. She reached for the coil, but could not move it: it seemed to be part of some object buried in the pile.

The room looked as if it had been an experimental laboratory—if she was right in judging the purpose of the torn remnants she saw on the walls: a great many electrical outlets, bits of heavy cable, lead conduits, glass tubing, built-in cabinets without shelves or doors. There was a great deal of glass, rubber, plastic and metal in the junk pile, and dark gray splinters of slate that had been a blackboard. Scraps of paper rustled dryly all over the floor. There were also remnants of things which had not been brought here by the owner of that room: popcorn wrappers, a whiskey bottle, a confession magazine.

She attempted to extricate the coil from the scrap pile. It would not move; it was part of some large object. She knelt and began to dig through the junk.

She had cut her hands, she was covered with dust by the time she stood up to look at the object she had cleared. It was the broken remnant of the model of a motor. Most of its parts were missing, but enough was left to convey some idea of its former shape and purpose.

She had never seen a motor of this kind or anything resembling it. She could not understand the peculiar design of its parts or the functions they were intended to perform.

She examined the tarnished tubes and odd-shaped connections. She tried to guess their purpose, her mind going over every type of motor she knew and every possible kind of work its parts could perform. None fitted the model. It looked like an electric motor, but she could not tell what fuel it was intended to burn. It was not designed for steam, or oil, or anything she could name.

Her sudden gasp was not a sound, but a jolt that threw her at the junk pile. She was on her hands and knees, crawling over the wreckage, seizing every piece of paper in sight, flinging it away, searching further. Her hands were shaking.

She found part of what she hoped had remained in existence. It was a thin sheaf of typewritten pages clamped together—the remnant of a manuscript. Its beginning and end were gone; the bits of paper left under the clamp showed the thick number of pages it had once contained. The paper was yellowed and dry. The manuscript had been a description of the motor.

From the empty enclosure of the plant's powerhouse, Rearden heard her voice screaming, "Hank!" It sounded like a scream of terror.

He ran in the direction of the voice. He found her standing in the middle of a room, her hands bleeding, her stockings torn, her suit smeared with dust, a bunch of papers clutched in her hand.

"Hank, what does this look like?" she asked, pointing at an odd piece of wreckage at her feet; her voice had the intense, obsessed