

He thought that Gwen Ives and Mr. Ward could look to him for hope, for relief, for renewal of courage. To whom could *he* look for it? He, too, needed it, for once. He wished he had a friend who could be permitted to see him suffer, without pretense or protection, on whom he could lean for a moment, just to say, "I'm very tired," and find a moment's rest. Of all the men he knew, was there one he wished he had beside him now? He heard the answer in his mind, immediate and shocking: Francisco d'Anconia.

His chuckle of anger brought him back. The absurdity of the longing jolted him into calm. That's what you get, he thought, when you indulge yourself in weakness.

He stood at the window, trying not to think. But he kept hearing words in his mind: Rearden Ore . . . Rearden Coal . . . Rearden Steel . . . Rearden Metal . . . What was the use? Why had he done it? Why should he ever want to do anything again? . . .

His first day on the ledges of the ore mines . . . The day when he stood in the wind, looking down at the ruins of a steel plant . . . The day when he stood here, in this office, at this window, and thought that a bridge could be made to carry incredible loads on just a few bars of metal, if one combined a truss with an arch, if one built diagonal bracing with the top members curved to —

He stopped and stood still. He *had not* thought of combining a truss with an arch, that day.

In the next moment, he was at his desk, bending over it, with one knee on the seat of the chair, with no time to think of sitting down, he was drawing lines, curves, triangles, columns of calculations, indiscriminately on the blueprints, on the desk blotter, on somebody's letters.

And an hour later, he was calling for a long distance line, he was waiting for a phone to ring by a bed in a railway car on a siding, he was saying, "Dagny! That bridge of ours— throw in the ashcan all the drawings I sent you, because . . . What? . . . Oh, that? To hell with that! Never mind the looters and their laws! Forget it! Dagny, what do we care! Listen, you know the contraption you called the Rearden Truss, that you admired so much? It's not worth a damn. I've figured out a truss that will beat anything ever built! Your bridge will carry four trains at once, stand three hundred years and cost you less than your cheapest culvert. I'll send you the drawings in two days, but I wanted to tell you about it right now. You see, it's a matter of combining a truss with an arch. If we take diagonal bracing and . . . What? . . . I can't hear you. Have you caught a cold? . . . What are you thanking me for, as yet? Wait till I explain it to you."

Chapter VIII THE JOHN GALT LINE

The worker smiled, looking at Eddie Willers across the table.

"I feel like a fugitive," said Eddie Willers. "I guess you know why I haven't been here for months?" He pointed at the underground cafeteria. "I'm supposed to be a vice-president now. The Vice-President in

Charge of Operation. For God's sake, don't take it seriously. I stood it as long as I could, and then I had to escape, if only for one evening. . . . The first time I came down here for dinner, after my alleged promotion, they all stared at me so much, I didn't dare come back. Well, let them stare. You don't. I'm glad that it doesn't make any difference to you. . . . No, I haven't seen her for two weeks. But I speak to her on the phone every day, sometimes twice a day. . . . Yes, I know how she feels: she loves it. What is it we hear over the telephone—sound vibrations, isn't it? Well, her voice sounds as if it were turning into light vibrations—if you know what I mean. She enjoys running that horrible battle single-handed and winning. . . . Oh yes, she's winning! Do you know why you haven't read anything about the John Galt Line in the newspapers for some time? Because it's going so well . . . Only . . . that Rearden Metal rail will be the greatest track ever built, but what will be the use, if we don't have any engines powerful enough to take advantage of it? Look at the kind of patched coal-burners we've got left—they can barely manage to drag themselves fast enough for old trolley-car rails. . . . Still, there's hope. The United Locomotive Works went bankrupt. That's the best break we've had in the last few weeks, because their plant has been bought by Dwight Sanders. He's a brilliant young engineer who's got the only good aircraft plant in the country. He had to sell the aircraft plant to his brother, in order to take over United Locomotive. That's on account of the Equalization of Opportunity Bill. Sure, it's just a setup between them, but can you blame him? Anyway, we'll see Diesels coming out of the United Locomotive Works now. Dwight Sanders will start things going. . . . Yes, she's counting on him. Why do you ask that? . . . Yes, he's crucially important to us right now. We've just signed a contract with him, for the first ten Diesel engines he'll build. When I phoned her that the contract was signed, she laughed and said, 'You see? Is there ever any reason to be afraid?' . . . She said that, because she knows—I've never told her, but she knows—that I'm afraid. . . . Yes, I am. . . . I don't know . . . I wouldn't be afraid if I knew of what, I could do something about it. But this . . . Tell me, don't you really despise me for being Operating Vice-President? . . . But don't you see—that it's vicious? . . . What honor? I don't know what it is that I really am: a clown, a ghost, an understudy or just a rotten stooge. When I sit in her office, in her chair, at her desk, I feel worse than that: I feel like a murderer. . . . Sure, I know that I'm supposed to be a stooge for *her*—and that would be an honor—but . . . but I feel as if in some horrible way which I can't quite grasp, I'm a stooge for Jim Taggart. Why should it be necessary for her to have a stooge? Why does she have to hide? Why did they throw her out of the building? Do you know that she had to move out into a dinky hole in the back alley, across from our Express and Baggage Entrance? You ought to take a look at it some time, that's the office of John Galt, Inc. Yet everybody knows that it's she who's still running Taggart Transcontinental. Why does she have to hide the magnificent job she's doing? Why are they giving her no credit? Why are they robbing her of her achievement—with me as the receiver of stolen