

"Ever since—"

"Ever since I quit the Twentieth Century."

"The night when you saw me for the first time . . . you were working here, then?"

"Yes. And the morning when you offered to work for me as my cook, I was only your track laborer on leave of absence. Do you see why I laughed as I did?"

She was looking up at his face; hers was a smile of pain, his—of pure gaiety. "John . . ."

"Say it. But say it all."

"You were here . . . all those years . . ."

"Yes."

". . . all those years . . . while the railroad was perishing . . . while I was searching for men of intelligence . . . while I was struggling to hold on to any scrap of it I could find . . ."

". . . while you were combing the country for the inventor of my motor, while you were feeding James Taggart and Wesley Mouch, while you were naming your best achievement after the enemy whom you wanted to destroy."

She closed her eyes

"I was here all those years," he said, "within your reach, inside your own realm, watching your struggle, your loneliness, your longing, watching you in a battle you thought you were fighting for me, a battle in which you were supporting my enemies and taking an endless defeat—I was here, hidden by nothing but an error of your sight, as Atlantis is hidden from men by nothing but an optical illusion—I was here, waiting for the day when you would see, when you would know that by the code of the world you were supporting, it's to the darkest bottom of the underground that all the things you valued would have to be consigned and that it's there that you would have to look. I was here. I was waiting for you. I love you, Dagny. I love you more than my life. I who have taught men how life is to be loved. I've taught them also never to expect the unpaid for—and what I did tonight, I did it with full knowledge that I would pay for it and that my life might have to be the price."

"No!"

He smiled, nodding. "Oh yes. You know that you've broken me for once, that I broke the decision I had set for myself—but I did it consciously, knowing what it meant, I did it, not in blind surrender to the moment, but with full sight of the consequences and full willingness to bear them. I could not let this kind of moment pass us by, it was ours, my love, we had earned it. But you're not ready to quit and join me—you don't have to tell me, I know—and since I chose to take what I wanted before it was fully mine, I'll have to pay for it, I have no way of knowing how or when. I know only that if I give in to an enemy, I'll take the consequences." He smiled in answer to the look on her face. "No, Dagny, you're not my enemy in mind—and *that* is what brought me to this—but you *are* in fact, in the course you're pursuing, though you don't see it yet, but I do. My actual enemies are of no danger to me. *You are.* You're the only

one who can lead them to find me. They would never have the capacity to know what I am, but with your help—they will."

"No!"

"No, not by your intention. And you're free to change your course, but so long as you follow it, you're not free to escape its logic. Don't frown, the choice was mine and it's a danger I chose to accept. I am a trader, Dagny, in all things. I wanted you, I had no power to change your decision, I had only the power to consider the price and decide whether I could afford it. I could. My life is mine to spend or to invest—and you, you're"—as if his gesture were continuing his sentence, he raised her across his arm and kissed her mouth, while her body hung limply in surrender, her hair streaming down, her head falling back, held only by the pressure of his lips—"you're the one reward I had to have and chose to buy. I wanted you, and if my life is the price, I'll give it. My life—but not my mind."

There was a sudden glint of hardness in his eyes, as he sat up and smiled and asked, "Would you want me to join you and go to work? Would you like me to repair that interlocking signal system of yours within an hour?"

"No!" The cry was immediate—in answer to the flash of a sudden image, the image of the men in the private dining room of the Wayne-Falkland.

He laughed. "Why not?"

"I don't want to see *you* working as their serf!"

"And yourself?"

"I think that they're crumbling and that I'll win. I can stand it just a little longer."

"True, it's just a little longer—not till you win, but till you learn "

"I can't let it go!" It was a cry of despair.

"Not yet," he said quietly.

He got up, and she rose obediently, unable to speak.

"I will remain here, on my job," he said. "But don't try to see me. You'll have to endure what I've endured and wanted to spare you—you'll have to go on, knowing where I am, wanting me as I'll want you, but never permitting yourself to approach me. Don't seek me here. Don't come to my home. Don't ever let them see us together. And when you reach the end, when you're ready to quit, don't tell them, just chalk a dollar sign on the pedestal of Nat Taggart's statue—where it belongs—then go home and wait. I'll come for you in twenty-four hours."

She inclined her head in silent promise.

But when he turned to go, a sudden shudder ran through her body, like a first jolt of awakening or a last convulsion of life, and it ended in an involuntary cry: "Where are you going?"

"To be a lamppost and stand holding a lantern till dawn—which is the only work your world relegates me to and the only work it's going to get."

She seized his arm, to hold him, to follow, to follow him blindly, abandoning everything but the sight of his face. "John!"

He gripped her wrist, twisted her hand and threw it off. "No," he said.

Then he took her hand and raised it to his lips and the pressure of his mouth was more passionate a statement than any he had chosen to confess. Then he walked away, down the vanishing line of rail, and it seemed to her that both the rail and the figure were abandoning her at the same time.

When she staggered out into the concourse of the Terminal, the first blast of rolling wheels went shuddering through the walls of the building, like the sudden beat of a heart that had stopped. The temple of Nathaniel Taggart was silent and empty, its changeless light beating down on a deserted stretch of marble. Some shabby figures shuffled across it, as if lost in its shining expanse. On the steps of the pedestal, under the statue of the austere, exultant figure, a ragged bum sat slumped in passive resignation, like a wing-plucked bird with no place to go, resting on any chance cornice.

She fell down on the steps of the pedestal, like another derelict, her dust-smeared cape wrapped tightly about her, she sat still, her head on her arm, past crying or feeling or moving.

It seemed to her only that she kept seeing a figure with a raised arm holding a light, and it looked at times like the Statue of Liberty and then it looked like a man with sun-streaked hair, holding a lantern against a midnight sky, a red lantern that stopped the movement of the world.

"Don't take it to heart, lady, whatever it is," said the bum, in a tone of exhausted compassion. "Nothing's to be done about it, anyway. . . . What's the use, lady? Who is John Galt?"

Chapter VI THE CONCERTO OF DELIVERANCE

On October 20, the steel workers' union of Rearden Steel demanded a raise in wages.

Hank Rearden learned it from the newspapers: no demand had been presented to him and it had not been considered necessary to inform him. The demand was made to the Unification Board; it was not explained why no other steel company was presented with a similar claim. He was unable to tell whether the demanders did or did not represent his workers, the Board's rules on union elections having made it a matter impossible to define. He learned only that the group consisted of those newcomers whom the Board had slipped into his mills in the past few months.

On October 23, the Unification Board rejected the union's petition, refusing to grant the raise. If any hearings had been held on the matter, Rearden had not known about it. He had not been consulted, informed or notified. He had waited, volunteering no questions.

On October 25, the newspapers of the country, controlled by the same men who controlled the Board, began a campaign of commiseration with the workers of Rearden Steel. They printed stories about the refusal of the wage raise, omitting any mention of who had refused it or who held the exclusive legal power to refuse, as if counting on the public to forget legal technicalities under a barrage of stories implying that an employer was the natural cause of all miser-