

# Who Is Don Galt?

*by Gary Hardaway*

*It's the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine*  
*-REM*

Don Galt's butterflies swallowed Peter Robinson's holdings on a cool and cloudy December afternoon. The holdings were still there as bits of factories here and bars of bullion there but what was gone into the limitless belly of the digital swarm were all the symbols of Peter's wealth. The numbers and denominations, the terms and conditions, the legal descriptions, the manifests and codes disappeared in minutes. All balances were erased. In every practical sense, his Forbes Number 12 ranking among the world's wealthiest and the billions that earned it were both gone.

The butterflies didn't single Peter out. Ruth Mendohlson's meager retirement fund also vanished. The stock certificates that Walter Smythe received for his fourteenth birthday no longer manifested in his infant brokerage account. The butterflies ate everything contained in the elaborate networks of representation that fueled and delineated the developed world.

The momentum of habit kept the lights on and the gasoline flowing for a couple of weeks. Once the technicians realized no direct deposits existed anymore and the checks issued hastily in lieu were only worth the heat their burning might generate, the dark emerged, block by gridded block. Except for the exchange of eggs for handmade loaves of bread, of whiskey for a case of Bush's beans, commerce ceased. Governments, national and local, crept away to start vegetable gardens and apple orchards in the once-upon-a time-hinterlands. People died, millions died, fighting for pallets of canned peas and potted meats in abandoned warehouses; of dysentery and cholera spawned by the collapse of water and sewage systems in Rio

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and St Petersburg. Sunlight dried the remains of corpses left uneaten by dog packs and starving militiamen.

Don Galt roasted his grubs and yams in Melanesia. The village children laughed in play across the beaten path. He knew where one could find every paper deed and certificate of ownership he amassed after his exploratory digital raid on Bain Capital netted him what he called his Cayman Collection. He smiled a small ironic smile imagining what his house in Richardson, Texas, with that stuffed steel vault, might look like today, the summer solstice, 2013. He had always loved apocalypse.

