so I'll be first to get the coal. I'll manage my end of it. Only let me have the coal."

"You'll have it."

Rearden wondered, for a while, why he heard no word from Wesley Mouch. His calls to Washington remained unanswered. Then he received a letter consisting of a single sentence which informed him that Mr. Mouch was resigning from his employ. Two weeks later, he read in the newspapers that Wesley Mouch had been appointed Assistant Coordinator of the Bureau of Economic Planning and National Resources.

Don't dwell on any of it—thought Rearden, through the silence of many evenings, fighting the sudden access of that new emotion which he did not want to feel—there is an unspeakable evil in the world, you know it, and it's no use dwelling on the details of it. You must work a little harder. Just a little harder. Don't let it win.

The beams and girders of the Rearden Metal bridge were coming daily out of the rolling mills, and were being shipped to the site of the John Galt Line, where the first shapes of green-blue metal, swung into space to span the canyon, glittered in the first rays of the spring sun. He had no time for pain, no energy for anger. Within a few weeks, it was over; the blinding stabs of hatred ceased and did not return.

He was back in confident self-control on the evening when he telephoned Eddie Willers. "Eddie, I'm in New York, at the Wayne-Falkland. Come to have breakfast with me tomorrow morning. There's something I'd like to discuss with you."

Eddie Willers went to the appointment with a heavy feeling of guilt. He had not recovered from the shock of the Equalization of Opportunity Bill; it had left a dull ache within him, like the black-and-blue mark of a blow. He disliked the sight of the city: it now looked as if it hid the threat of some malicious unknown. He dreaded facing one of the Bill's victims: he felt almost as if he, Eddie Willers, shared the responsibility for it in some terrible way which he could not define.

When he saw Rearden, the feeling vanished. There was no hint suggesting a victim in Rearden's bearing. Beyond the windows of the hotel room, the spring sunlight of early morning sparkled on the windows of the city, the sky was a very pale blue that seemed young, the offices were still closed, and the city did not look as if it held malice, but as if it were joyously, hopefully ready to swing into action— in the same manner as Rearden. He looked refreshed by an untroubled sleep, he wore a dressing gown, he seemed impatient of the necessity to dress, unwilling to delay the exciting game of his business duties.

"Good morning, Eddie. Sorry if I got you out so early. It's the only time I had. Have to go back to Philadelphia right after breakfast. We can talk while we're eating."

The dressing gown he wore was of dark blue flannel, with the white initials "H R" on the breast pocket. He looked young, relaxed, at home in this room and in the world.

Eddie watched a waiter wheel the breakfast table into the room

with a swift efficiency that made him feel braced. He found himself enjoying the stiff freshness of the white tablecloth and the sunlight sparkling on the silver, on the two bowls of crushed ice holding glasses of orange juice; he had not known that such things could give him an invigorating pleasure.

"I didn't want to phone Dagny long distance about this particular matter," said Rearden. "She has enough to do. We can settle it in a few minutes, you and I."

"If I have the authority to do it."

Rearden smiled. "You have." He leaned forward across the table. "Eddie, what's the financial state of Taggart Transcontinental at the moment? Desperate?"

"Worse than that, Mr. Rearden."

"Are you able to meet pay rolls?"

"Not quite. We've kept it out of the newspapers, but I think everybody knows it. We're in arrears all over the system and Jim is running out of excuses."

"Do you know that your first payment for the Rearden Metal rail is due next week?"

"Yes, I know it."

"Well, let's agree on a moratorium. I'm going to give you an extension—you won't have to pay me anything until six months after the opening of the John Galt Line."

Eddie Willers put down his cup of coffee with a sharp thud. He could not say a word.

Rearden chuckled. "What's the matter? You do have the authority to accept, don't you?"

"Mr. Rearden . . . I don't know . . . what to say to you."

"Why, just 'okay' is all that's necessary."

"Okay, Mr. Rearden." Eddie's voice was barely audible.

"I'll draw up the papers and send them to you. You can tell Jim about it and have him sign them."

"Yes, Mr. Rearden."

"I don't like to deal with Jim. He'd waste two hours trying to make himself believe that he's made me believe that he's doing me a favor by accepting."

Eddie sat without moving, looking down at his plate.

"What's the matter?"

"Mr. Rearden, I'd like . . . to say thank you . . . but there isn't any form of it big enough to—"

"Look, Eddie. You've got the makings of a good businessman, so you'd better get a few things straight. There aren't any thank-you's in situations of this kind. I'm not doing it for Taggart Transcontinental. It's a simple, practical, selfish matter on my part. Why should I collect my money from you now, when it might prove to be the death blow to your company? If your company were no good, I'd collect, and fast. I don't engage in charity and I don't gamble on incompetents. But you're still the best railroad in the country. When the John Galt Line is completed, you'll be the soundest one financially. So I have good reason to wait. Besides, you're in trouble on account of my rail. I intend to see you win."