for the sort of conversations which were not supposed to be meant, so he did not answer. He stood looking at her, wondering about the things he had never been able to understand.

Lillian Rearden was generally regarded as a beautiful woman. She had a tall, graceful body, the kind that looked well in high-waisted gowns of the Empire style, which she made it a practice to wear. Her exquisite profile belonged to a cameo of the same period: its pure, proud lines and the lustrous, light brown waves of her hair, worn with classical simplicity, suggested an austere, imperial beauty. But when she turned full face, people experienced a small shock of disappointment. Her face was not beautiful. The eyes were the flaw: they were vaguely pale, neither quite gray nor brown, lifelessly empty of expression. Rearden had always wondered, since she seemed amused so often, why there was no gaiety in her face.

"We have met before, dear," she said, in answer to his silent scrutiny, "though you don't seem to be sure of it."

"Have you had any dinner, Henry?" his mother asked; there was a reproachful impatience in her voice, as if his hunger were a personal insult to her.

"Yes . . . No . . . I wasn't hungry."

"I'd better ring to have them—"

"No, Mother, not now, it doesn't matter."

"That's the trouble I've always had with you." She was not looking at him, but reciting words into space. "It's no use trying to do things for you, you don't appreciate it. I could never make you eat properly."

"Henry, you work too hard," said Philip. "It's not good for you."

Rearden laughed. "I like it."

"That's what you tell yourself. It's a form of neurosis, you know. When a man drowns himself in work, it's because he's trying to escape from something. You ought to have a hobby."

"Oh, Phil, for Christ's sake!" he said, and regretted the irritation in his voice.

Philip had always been in precarious health, though doctors had found no specific defect in his loose, gangling body. He was thirty-eight, but his chronic weariness made people think at times that he was older than his brother.

"You ought to learn to have some fun," said Philip. "Otherwise, you'll become dull and narrow. Single-tracked, you know. You ought to get out of your little private shell and take a look at the world. You don't want to miss life, the way you're doing."

Fighting anger, Rearden told himself that this was Philip's form of solicitude. He told himself that it would be unjust to feel resentment: they were all trying to show their concern for him—and he wished these were not the things they had chosen for concern.

"I had a pretty good time today, Phil," he answered, smiling—and wondered why Philip did not ask him what it was.

He wished one of them would ask him. He was finding it hard to concentrate. The sight of the running metal was still burned into his mind, filling his consciousness, leaving no room for anything else.

"You might have apologized, only I ought to know better than to

expect it." It was his mother's voice; he turned. she was looking at him with that injured look which proclaims the long-bearing patience of the defenseless

"Mrs Beacham was here for dinner,' she said reproachfully

"What?"

"Mrs Beacham My friend Mrs Beacham

'Yes?

"I told you about her I told you many times but you never remember anything I say Mrs Beacham was so anxious to meet you, but she had to leave after dinner, she couldn't wait Mrs Beacham is a very busy person She wanted so much to tell you about the wonderful work we're doing in our parish school, and about the classes in metal craftsmanship, and about the beautiful wrought-iron doorknobs that the little slum children are making all by themselves'

It took the whole of his sense of consideration to force himself to answer evenly, "I'm sorry if I disappointed you, Mother"

'You're not sorry You could've been here if you'd made the effort But when did you ever make an effort for anybody but yourself? You're not interested in any of us or in anything we do You think if you pay the bills, that's enough, don't you? Money! That's all you know And all you give us is money Have you ever given us any time?"

If this meant that she missed him, he thought, then it meant affection and if it meant affection, then he was unjust to experience a heavy, murky feeling which kept him silent lest his voice betray that the feeling was disgust

'You don't care her voice went half spitting half begging on Lillian needed you today for a very important problem but I told her it was no use waiting to discuss it with you

Oh, Mother, it's not important! said Lillian Not to Henry'

He turned to her He stood in the middle of the room, with his trenchcoat still on, as if he were trapped in an unreality that would not become real to him

"It's not important at all,' said Lillian gaily, he could not tell whether her voice was apologetic or boastful "It's not business It's purely non-commercial"

"What is it?"

"Just a party I'm planning to give'

"A party?'

"Oh, don't look frightened, it's not for tomorrow night I know that you're so very busy, but it's for three months from now and I want it to be a very big, very special affair, so would you promise me to be here that night and not in Minnesota or Colorado or California?"

She was looking at him in an odd manner, speaking too lightly and too purposefully at once, her smile overstressing an air of innocence and suggesting something like a hidden trump card

"Three months from now?" he said "But you know that I can't tell what urgent business might come up to call me out of town."

"Oh, I know! But couldn't I make a formal appointment with