

scious. Then he dropped his head again and lay still, as if he had forgotten them.

His naked body looked strangely out of place in this cellar. They knew it, though none of them would identify that knowledge. The long lines of his body, running from his ankles to the flat hips, to the angle of the waist, to the straight shoulders, looked like a statue of ancient Greece, sharing that statue's meaning, but stylized to a longer, lighter, more active form and a gaunter strength, suggesting more restless an energy—the body, not of a chariot driver, but of a builder of airplanes. And as the meaning of a statue of ancient Greece—the statue of man as a god—clashed with the spirit of this century's halls, so his body clashed with a cellar devoted to prehistorical activities. The clash was the greater, because he seemed to belong with electric wires, with stainless steel, with precision instruments, with the levers of a control board. Perhaps—this was the thought most fiercely resisted and most deeply buried at the bottom of his watchers' sensations, the thought they knew only as a diffused hatred and an unfocused terror—perhaps it was the absence of such statues from the modern world that had transformed a generator into an octopus and brought a body such as his into its tentacles.

"I understand you're some sort of electrical expert," said Ferris, and chuckled. "So are we--don't you think so?"

Two sounds answered him in the silence: the drone of the generator and the beating of Galt's heart.

"The mixed series!" ordered Ferris, waving one finger at the mechanic.

The shocks now came at irregular, unpredictable intervals, one after another or minutes apart. Only the shuddering convulsions of Galt's legs, arms, torso or entire body showed whether the current was racing between two particular electrodes or through all of them at once. The needles on the dials kept coming close to the red marks, then receding: the machine was calculated to inflict the maximum intensity of pain without damaging the body of the victim.

It was the watchers who found it unbearable to wait through the minutes of the pauses filled with the sound of the heartbeat: the heart was now racing in an irregular rhythm. The pauses were calculated to let that beat slow down, but allow no relief to the victim, who had to wait for a shock at any moment.

Galt lay relaxed, as if not attempting to fight the pain, but surrendering to it, not attempting to negate it, but to bear it. When his lips parted for breath and a sudden jolt slammed them tight again, he did not resist the shaking rigidity of his body, but he let it vanish the instant the current left him. Only the skin of his face was pulled tight, and the sealed line of his lips twisted sideways once in a while. When a shock raced through his chest, the gold-copper strands of his hair flew with the jerking of his head, as if waving in a gust of wind, beating against his face, across his eyes. The watchers wondered why his hair seemed to be growing darker, until they realized that it was drenched in sweat.

The terror of hearing one's own heart struggling as if about to burst at any moment, had been intended to be felt by the victim. It

was the torturers who were trembling with terror, as they listened to the jagged, broken rhythm and missed a breath with every missing beat. It sounded now as if the heart were leaping, beating frantically against its cage of ribs, in agony and in a desperate anger. The heart was protesting; the man would not. He lay still, his eyes closed, his hands relaxed, hearing his heart as it fought for his life.

Wesley Mouch was first to break. "Oh God, Floyd!" he screamed. "Don't kill him! Don't dare kill him! If he dies, we die!"

"He won't," snarled Ferris. "He'll wish he did, but he won't! The machine won't let him! It's mathematically computed! It's safe!"

"Oh, isn't it enough? He'll obey us now! I'm sure he'll obey!"

"No! It's not enough! I don't want him to obey! I want him to *believe*! To *accept*! To *want* to accept! We've got to have him work for us *voluntarily*!"

"Go ahead!" cried Taggart. "What are you waiting for? Can't you make the current stronger? He hasn't even screamed yet!"

"What's the matter with you?" gasped Mouch, catching a glimpse of Taggart's face while a current was twisting Galt's body: Taggart was staring at it intently, yet his eyes seemed glazed and dead, but around that inanimate stare the muscles of his face were pulled into an obscene caricature of enjoyment.

"Had enough?" Ferris kept yelling to Galt. "Are you ready to want what we want?"

They heard no answer. Galt raised his head once in a while and looked at them. There were dark rings under his eyes, but the eyes were clear and conscious.

In mounting panic, the watchers lost their sense of context and language—and their three voices blended into a progression of indiscriminate shrieks: "We want you to take over! . . . We want you to rule! . . . We order you to give orders! . . . We demand that you dictate! . . . We order you to save us! . . . We order you to think! . . ."

They heard no answer but the beating of the heart on which their own lives depended.

The current was shooting through Galt's chest and the beating was coming in irregular spurts, as if it were racing and stumbling—when suddenly his body fell still, relaxing: the beating had stopped.

The silence was like a stunning blow, and before they had time to scream, their horror was topped by another: by the fact that Galt opened his eyes and raised his head.

Then they realized that the drone of the motor had ceased, too, and that the red light had gone out on the control panel: the current had stopped; the generator was dead.

The mechanic was jabbing his finger at the button to no avail. He yanked the lever of the switch again and again. He kicked the side of the machine. The red light would not go on; the sound did not return.

"Well?" snapped Ferris. "Well? What's the matter?"

"The generator's on the blink," said the mechanic helplessly.

"What's the matter with it?"

"I don't know."

"Well, find out and fix it!"

The man was not a trained electrician; he had been chosen, not