"Uh-huh."

"It's the third one from Connecticut in the last two weeks," said Mr. Mowen. "And when you look at what's happening in New Jersey, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and all along the Atlantic coast . . ." The young man was not looking and did not seem to listen. "It's like a leaking faucet," said Mr. Mowen, "and all the water's running out to Colorado. All the money." The young man flung the chain across and followed it deftly, climbing over the big shape covered with canvas. "You'd think people would have some feeling for their native state, some loyalty . . . But they're running away. I don't know what's happening to people."

"It's the Bill," said the young man.

"What Bill?"

"The Equalization of Opportunity Bill."

"How do you mean?"

"I hear Mr. Quinn was making plans a year ago to open a branch in Colorado. The Bill knocked that out cold. So now he's made up his mind to move there, lock, stock and barrel."

"I don't see where that makes it right. The Bill was necessary. It's a rotten shame—old firms that have been here for generations . . . There ought to be a law . . ."

The young man worked swiftly, competently, as if he enjoyed it. Behind him, the conveyor belt kept rising and clattering against the sky. Four distant smokestacks stood like flagpoles, with coils of smoke weaving slowly about them, like long banners at half-mast in the reddish glow of the evening.

Mr. Mowen had lived with every smokestack of that skyline since the days of his father and grandfather. He had seen the conveyor belt from his office window for thirty years. That the Quinn Ball Bearing Company should vanish from across the street had seemed inconceivable; he had known about Quinn's decision and had not believed it; or rather, he had believed it as he believed any words he heard or spoke: as sounds that bore no fixed relation to physical reality. Now he knew that it was real. He stood by the flatcars on the siding as if he still had a chance to stop them.

"It isn't right," he said; he was speaking to the skyline at large, but the young man above was the only part of it that could hear him. "That's not the way it was in my father's time. I'm not a big shot. I don't want to fight anybody. What's the matter with the world?" There was no answer. "Now you, for instance—are they taking you along to Colorado?"

"Me? No. I don't work here. I'm just transient labor. Just picked up this job helping to lug the stuff out."

"Well, where are you going to go when they move away?"

"Haven't any idea."

"What are you going to do, if more of them move out?"

"Wait and see."

Mr. Mowen glanced up dubiously; he could not tell whether the answer was intended to apply to him or to the young man. But the young man's attention was fixed on his task; he was not looking down. He moved on to the shrouded shapes on the next flatcar, and

Mr. Mowen followed, looking up at him, pleading with something up in space: "I've got rights, haven't I? I was born here. I expected the old companies to be here when I grew up. I expected to run the plant like my father did. A man is part of his community, he's got a right to count on it, hasn't he? . . . Something ought to be done about it."

"About what?"

"Oh, I know, you think it's great, don't you?—that Taggart boom and Rearden Metal and the gold rush to Colorado and the drunken spree out there, with Wyatt and his bunch expanding their production like kettles boiling over! Everybody thinks it's great—that's all you hear anywhere you go—people are slap-happy, making plans like six-year-olds on a vacation—you'd think it was a national honeymoon of some kind or a permanent Fourth of July!"

The young man said nothing.

"Well, I don't think so," said Mr. Mowen. He lowered his voice. "The newspapers don't say so, either—mind you that—the newspapers aren't saying anything."

Mr. Mowen heard no answer, only the clanking of the chains.

"Why are they all running to Colorado?" he asked. "What have they got down there that we haven't got?"

The young man grinned. "Maybe it's something you've got that they haven't got."

"What?" The young man did not answer. "I don't see it. It's a backward, primitive, unenlightened place. They don't even have a modern government. It's the worst government in any state. The laziest. It does nothing—outside of keeping law courts and a police department. It doesn't do anything for the people. It doesn't help anybody. I don't see why all our best companies want to run there."

The young man glanced down at him, but did not answer.

Mr. Mowen sighed. "Things aren't right," he said. "The Equalization of Opportunity Bill was a sound idea. There's got to be a chance for everybody. It's a rotten shame if people like Quinn take unfair advantage of it. Why didn't he let somebody else start manufacturing ball bearings in Colorado? . . . I wish the Colorado people would leave us alone. That Stockton Foundry out there had no right going into the switch and signal business. That's been my business for years. I have the right of seniority, it isn't fair, it's dog-eat-dog competition, newcomers shouldn't be allowed to muscle in. Where am I going to sell switches and signals? There were two big railroads out in Colorado. Now the Phoenix-Durango's gone, so there's just Taggart Transcontinental left. It isn't fair—their forcing Dan Conway out. There's got to be room for competition. . . . And I've been waiting six months for an order of steel from Orren Boyle—and now he says he can't promise me anything, because Rearden Metal has shot his market to hell, there's a run on that Metal, Boyle has to retrench. It isn't fair—Rearden being allowed to ruin other people's markets that way. . . . And I want to get some Rearden Metal, too, I need it—but try and get it! He has a waiting line that would stretch across three states—nobody can get a scrap of it, except his old friends, people like Wyatt and Danagger and such. It isn't fair. It's