

myself, where no defense is possible, and I will not simulate the illusion of dealing with a tribunal of justice."

"But, Mr. Rearden, the law provides specifically that you are to be given an opportunity to present your side of the case and to defend yourself."

"A prisoner brought to trial can defend himself only if there is an objective principle of justice recognized by his judges, a principle upholding his rights, which they may not violate and which he can invoke. The law, by which you are trying me, holds that there are no principles, that I have no rights and that you may do with me whatever you please. Very well. Do it."

"Mr. Rearden, the law which you are denouncing is based on the highest principle—the principle of the public good."

"Who is the public? What does it hold as its good? There was a time when men believed that 'the good' was a concept to be defined by a code of moral values and that no man had the right to seek his good through the violation of the rights of another. If it is now believed that my fellow men may sacrifice me in any manner they please for the sake of whatever they deem to be their own good, if they believe that they may seize my property simply because they need it—well, so does any burglar. There is only this difference, the burglar does not ask me to sanction his act."

A group of seats at the side of the courtroom was reserved for the prominent visitors who had come from New York to witness the trial. Dagny sat motionless and her face showed nothing but a solemn attention, the attention of listening with the knowledge that the flow of his words would determine the course of her life. Eddie Willers sat beside her. James Taggart had not come. Paul Larkin sat hunched forward, his face thrust out, pointed like an animal's muzzle, sharpened by a look of fear, now turning into malicious hatred. Mr. Mowen, who sat beside him, was a man of greater innocence and smaller understanding; his fear was of a simpler nature; he listened in bewildered indignation and he whispered to Larkin, "Good God, now he's done it! Now he'll convince the whole country that all businessmen are enemies of the public good!"

"Are we to understand," asked the judge, "that you hold your own interests above the interests of the public?"

"I hold that such a question can never arise except in a society of cannibals."

"What . . . what do you mean?"

"I hold that there is no clash of interests among men who do not demand the unearned and do not practice human sacrifices."

"Are we to understand that if the public deems it necessary to curtail your profits, you do not recognize its right to do so?"

"Why, yes, I do. The public may curtail my profits any time it wishes—by refusing to buy my product."

"We are speaking of . . . other methods."

"Any other method of curtailing profits is the method of looters—and I recognize it as such."

"Mr. Rearden, this is hardly the way to defend yourself."

"I said that I would not defend myself."

"But this is unheard of! Do you realize the gravity of the charge against you?"

"I do not care to consider it."

"Do you realize the possible consequences of your stand?"

"Fully."

"It is the opinion of this court that the facts presented by the prosecution seem to warrant no leniency. The penalty which this court has the power to impose on you is extremely severe."

"Go ahead."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Impose it."

The three judges looked at one another. Then their spokesman turned back to Rearden. "This is unprecedented," he said.

"It is completely irregular," said the second judge. "The law requires you to submit a plea in your own defense. Your only alternative is to state for the record that you throw yourself upon the mercy of the court."

"I do not."

"But you have to."

"Do you mean that what you expect from me is some sort of voluntary action?"

"Yes."

"I volunteer nothing."

"But the law demands that the defendant's side be represented on the record."

"Do you mean that you need my help to make this procedure legal?"

"Well, no . . . yes . . . that is, to complete the form."

"I will not help you."

The third and youngest judge, who had acted as prosecutor, snapped impatiently, "This is ridiculous and unfair! Do you want to let it look as if a man of your prominence had been railroaded without a--" He cut himself off short. Somebody at the back of the courtroom emitted a long whistle.

"I want," said Rearden gravely, "to let the nature of this procedure appear exactly for what it is. If you need my help to disguise it—I will not help you."

"But we are giving you a chance to defend yourself—and it is you who are rejecting it."

"I will not help you to pretend that I have a chance. I will not help you to preserve an appearance of righteousness where rights are not recognized. I will not help you to preserve an appearance of rationality by entering a debate in which a gun is the final argument. I will not help you to pretend that you are administering justice."

"But the law compels you to volunteer a defense!"

There was laughter at the back of the courtroom.

"That is the flaw in your theory, gentlemen," said Rearden gravely, "and I will not help you out of it. If you choose to deal with men by means of compulsion, do so. But you will discover that you need the voluntary co-operation of your victims, in many more ways than you can see at present. And your victims should discover that it is their