"Hank, I'll never think that it's hopeless, not ever again," said Dagny that evening, after the trial. "I'll never be tempted to quit. You've proved that the right always works and always wins—" She stopped, then added "—provided one knows what is the right."

Lillian said to him at dinner next day, "So you've won, have you?" Her voice was noncommittal; she said nothing else; she was watching him, as if studying a riddle.

The Wet Nurse asked him at the mills, "Mr. Rearden, what's a moral premise?" "What you're going to have a lot of trouble with." The boy frowned, then shrugged and said, laughing, "God, that was a wonderful show! What a beating you gave them, Mr. Rearden! I sat by the radio and howled." "How do you know it was a beating?" "Well, it was, wasn't it?" "Are you sure of it?" "Sure I'm sure." "The thing that makes you sure is a moral premise."

The newspapers were silent. After the exaggerated attention they had given to the case, they acted as if the trial were not worthy of notice. They printed brief accounts on unlikely pages, worded in such generalities that no reader could discover any hint of a controversial issue.

The businessmen he met seemed to wish to evade the subject of his trial. Some made no comment at all, but turned away, their faces showing a peculiar resentment under the effort to appear noncommittal as if they feared that the mere act of looking at him would be interpreted as taking a stand. Others ventured to comment: "In my opinion, Rearden, it was extremely unwise of you. . . . It seems to me that this is hardly the time to make enemies . . . We can't afford to arouse resentment."

"Whose resentment?" he asked.

"I don't think the government will like it."

"You saw the consequences of *that*."

"Well, I don't know . . . The public won't take it, there's bound to be a lot of indignation."

"You saw how the public took it."

"Well, I don't know . . We've been trying hard not to give any grounds for all those accusations about selfish greed—and you've given ammunition to the enemy."

"Would you rather agree with the enemy that you have no right to your profits and your property?"

"Oh, no, no, certainly not—but why go to extremes? There's always a middle ground."

"A middle ground between you and your murderers?"

"Now why use such words?"

"What I said at the trial, was it true or not?"

"It's going to be misquoted and misunderstood."

"Was it true or not?"

"The public is too dumb to grapple with such issues."

"Was it true or not?"

"It's no time to boast about being rich—when the populace is starving. It's just goading them on to seize everything."

"But telling them that you have no right to your wealth, while *they* have—is what's going to restrain them?"

"Well, I don't know . . ."

"I don't like the things you said at your trial," said another man. "In my opinion, I don't agree with you at all. Personally, I'm proud to believe that I *am* working for the public good, not just for my own profit. I like to think that I have some goal higher than just earning my three meals a day and my Hammond limousine."

"And I don't like that idea about no directives and no controls," said another. "I grant you they're running hog-wild and overdoing it. But—no controls at all? I don't go along with that. I think *some* controls are necessary. The ones which are for the public good."

"I am sorry, gentlemen," said Rearden, "that I will be obliged to save your goddamn necks along with mine."

A group of businessmen headed by Mr. Mowen did not issue any statements about the trial. But a week later they announced, with an inordinate amount of publicity, that they were endowing the construction of a playground for the children of the unemployed.

Bertram Scudder did not mention the trial in his column. But ten days later, he wrote, among items of miscellaneous gossip: "Some idea of the public value of Mr. Hank Rearden may be gathered from the fact that of all social groups, he seems to be most unpopular with his own fellow businessmen. His old-fashioned brand of ruthlessness seems to be too much even for those predatory barons of profit."

On an evening in December—when the street beyond his window was like a congested throat coughing with the horns of pre-Christmas traffic—Rearden sat in his room at the Wayne-Falkland Hotel, fighting an enemy more dangerous than weariness or fear: revulsion against the thought of having to deal with human beings.

He sat, unwilling to venture into the streets of the city, unwilling to move, as if he were chained to his chair and to this room. He had tried for hours to ignore an emotion that felt like the pull of homesickness: his awareness that the only man whom he longed to see, was here, in this hotel, just a few floors above him.

He had caught himself, in the past few weeks, wasting time in the lobby whenever he entered the hotel or left it, loitering unnecessarily at the mail counter or the newsstand, watching the hurried currents of people, hoping to see Francisco d'Anconia among them. He had caught himself eating solitary dinners in the restaurant of the Wayne-Falkland, with his eyes on the curtains of the entrance doorway. Now he caught himself sitting in his room, thinking that the distance was only a few floors.

He rose to his feet, with a chuckle of amused indignation; he was acting, he thought, like a woman who waits for a telephone call and fights against the temptation to end the torture by making the first move. There was no reason, he thought, why he could not go to Francisco d'Anconia, if that was what he wanted. Yet when he told himself that he would, he felt some dangerous element of surrender in the intensity of his own relief.

He made a step toward the phone, to call Francisco's suite, but

stopped. It was not what he wanted; what he wanted was simply to walk in, unannounced, as Francisco had walked into his office; it was this that seemed to state some unstated right between them.

On his way to the elevator, he thought: He won't be in or, if he is, you'll probably find him entertaining some floozie, which will serve you right. But the thought seemed unreal, he could not make it apply to the man he had seen at the mouth of the furnace—he stood confidently in the elevator, looking up—he walked confidently down the hall, feeling his bitterness relax into gaiety—he knocked at the door.

Francisco's voice snapped, "Come in!" It had a brusque, absent-minded sound.

Rearden opened the door and stopped on the threshold. One of the hotel's costliest satin-shaded lamps stood in the middle of the floor, throwing a circle of light on wide sheets of drafting paper. Francisco d'Anconia, in shirt sleeves, a strand of hair hanging down over his face, lay stretched on the floor, on his stomach, propped up by his elbows, biting the end of a pencil in concentration upon some point of the intricate tracing before him. He did not look up, he seemed to have forgotten the knock. Rearden tried to distinguish the drawing: it looked like the section of a smelter. He stood watching in startled wonder; had he had the power to bring into reality his own image of Francisco d'Anconia, this was the picture he would have seen: the figure of a purposeful young worker intent upon a difficult task.

In a moment, Francisco raised his head. In the next instant, he flung his body upward to a kneeling posture, looking at Rearden with a smile of incredulous pleasure. In the next, he seized the drawings and threw them aside too hastily, face down.

"What did I interrupt?" asked Rearden.

"Nothing much. Come in." He was grinning happily. Rearden felt suddenly certain that Francisco had waited, too, had waited for this as for a victory which he had not quite hoped to achieve.

"What were you doing?" asked Rearden.

"Just amusing myself."

"Let me see it."

"No." He rose and kicked the drawings aside.

Rearden noted that if he had resented as impertinence Francisco's manner of proprietorship in his office, he himself was now guilty of the same attitude—because he offered no explanation for his visit, but crossed the room and sat down in an armchair, casually, as if he were at home.

"Why didn't you come to continue what you had started?" he asked.

"You have been continuing it brilliantly without my help."

"Do you mean, my trial?"

"I mean, your trial."

"How do you know? You weren't there."

Francisco smiled, because the tone of the voice confessed an added sentence: I was looking for you. "Don't you suppose I heard every word of it on the radio?"