his voice, of his mind, of his drive to a single purpose. The face was like his words—as if the line of a single theme ran from the steady glance of the eyes, through the gaunt muscles of the cheeks, to the faintly scornful, downward curve of the mouth—the line of a ruthless asceticism.

* *

The day began with the news of a disaster: a freight train of the Atlantic Southern had crashed head-on into a passenger train, in New Mexico, on a sharp curve in the mountains, scattering freight cars all over the slopes. The cars carried five thousand tons of copper, bound from a mine in Arizona to the Rearden mills.

Rearden telephoned the general manager of the Atlantic Southern, but the answer he received was: "Oh God, Mr. Rearden, how can we tell? How can anybody tell how long it will take to clear that wreck? One of the worst we've ever had . . . I don't know, Mr. Rearden. There are no other lines anywhere in that section. The track is torn for twelve hundred feet. There's been a rockslide. Our wrecking train can't get through. I don't know how we'll ever get those freight cars back on rails, or when. Can't expect it sooner than two weeks . . . *Three days?* Impossible, Mr. Rearden! . . . But we can't help it! . . . But surely you can tell your customers that it's an act of God! What if you do hold them up? Nobody can blame you in a case of this kind!"

In the next two hours, with the assistance of his secretary, two young engineers from his shipping department, a road map, and the long-distance telephone, Rearden arranged for a fleet of trucks to proceed to the scene of the wreck, and for a chain of hopper cars to meet them at the nearest station of the Atlantic Southern. The hopper cars had been borrowed from Taggart Transcontinental. The trucks had been recruited from all over New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado. Rearden's engineers had hunted by telephone for private truck owners and had offered payments that cut all arguments short.

It was the third of three shipments of copper that Rearden had expected; two orders had not been delivered: one company had gone out of business, the other was still pleading delays that it could not help.

He had attended to the matter without breaking his chain of appointments, without raising his voice, without sign of strain, uncertainty or apprehension; he had acted with the swift precision of a military commander under sudden fire—and Gwen Ives, his secretary, had acted as his calmest lieutenant. She was a girl in her late twenties, whose quietly harmonious, impenetrable face had a quality matching the best-designed office equipment; she was one of his most ruthlessly competent employees; her manner of performing her duties suggested the kind of rational cleanliness that would consider any element of emotion, while at work, as an unpardonable immorality.

When the emergency was over, her sole comment was, "Mr. Rearden, I think we should ask all our suppliers to ship via Taggart Transcontinental." "I'm thinking that, too," he answered; then added,

"Wire Fleming in Colorado. Tell him I'm taking an option on that copper mine property."

He was back at his desk, speaking to his superintendent on one phone and to his purchasing manager on another, checking every date and ton of ore on hand--he could not leave to chance or to another person the possibility of a single hour's delay in the flow of a furnace: it was the last of the rail for the John Galt Line that was being poured—when the buzzer rang and Miss Ives' voice announced that his mother was outside, demanding to see him.

He had asked his family never to come to the mills without an appointment. He had been glad that they hated the place and seldom appeared in his office. What he now felt was a violent impulse to order his mother off the premises. Instead, with a greater effort than the problem of the train wreck had required of him, he said quietly, "All right. Ask her to come in."

His mother came in with an air of belligerent defensiveness. She looked at his office as if she knew what it meant to him and as if she were declaring her resentment against anything being of greater importance to him than her own person. She took a long time settling down in an armchair, arranging and rearranging her bag, her gloves, the folds of her dress, while droning, "It's a fine thing when a mother has to wait in an anteroom and ask permission of a stenographer before she's allowed to see her own son who—"

"Mother, is it anything important? I am very rushed today."

"You're not the only one who's got problems. Of course, it's important. Do you think I'd go to the trouble of driving way out here, if it wasn't important?"

"What is it?"

"It's about Philip."

"Yes?"

"Philip is unhappy."

"Well?"

"He feels it's not right that he should have to depend on your charity and live on handouts and never be able to count on a single dollar of his own."

"Well!" he said with a startled smile. "I've been waiting for him to realize that."

"It isn't right for a sensitive man to be in such a position."

"It certainly isn't."

"I'm glad you agree with me. So what you have to do is give him a job."

"A . . . what?"

"You must give him a job, here, at the mills—but a nice, clean job, of course, with a desk and an office and a decent salary, where he wouldn't have to be among your day laborers and your smelly furnaces."

He knew that he was hearing it; he could not make himself believe it. "Mother, you're not serious."

"I certainly am. I happen to know that that's what he wants; only he's too proud to ask you for it. But if you offer it to him and make it look like it's you who're asking him a favor—why, I know he'd

be happy to take it. That's why I had to come here to talk to you—so he wouldn't guess that I put you up to it."

It was not in the nature of his consciousness to understand the nature of the things he was hearing. A single thought cut through his mind like a spotlight, making him unable to conceive how any eyes could miss it. The thought broke out of him as a cry of bewilderment: "But he knows nothing about the steel business!"

"What has that got to do with it? He needs a job."

"But he couldn't do the work."

"He needs to gain self-confidence and to feel important."

"But he wouldn't be any good whatever."

"He needs to feel that he's wanted."

"Here? What could I want him for?"

"You hire plenty of strangers."

"I hire men who produce. What has he got to offer?"

"He's your brother, isn't he?"

"What has that got to do with it?"

She stared incredulously, in turn, silenced by shock. For a moment, they sat looking at each other, as if across an interplanetary distance.

"He's your brother," she said, her voice like a phonograph record repeating a magic formula she could not permit herself to doubt: "He needs a position in the world. He needs a salary, so that he'd feel that he's got money coming to him as his due, not as alms."

"As his due? But he wouldn't be worth a nickel to me."

"Is that what you think of first? Your profit? I'm asking you to help your brother, and you're figuring how to make a nickel on him, and you won't help him unless there's money in it for *you*—is that it?" She saw the expression of his eyes, and she looked away, but spoke hastily, her voice rising. "Yes, sure, you're helping him—like you'd help any stray beggar. *Material* help—that's all you know or understand. Have you thought about his *spiritual* needs and what his position is doing to his self-respect? He doesn't want to live like a beggar. He wants to be independent of you."

"By means of getting from me a salary he can't earn for work he can't do?"

"You'd never miss it. You've got enough people here who're making money for you."

"Are you asking me to help him stage a fraud of that kind?"

"You don't have to put it that way."

"Is it a fraud—or isn't it?"

"That's why I can't talk to you—because you're not human. You have no pity, no feeling for your brother, no compassion for his feelings."

"Is it a fraud or not?"

"You have no mercy for anybody."

"Do you think that a fraud of this kind would be just?"

"You're the most immoral man living—you think of nothing but justice! You don't feel any love at all!"

He got up, his movement abrupt and stressed, the movement of ending an interview and ordering a visitor out of his office. "Mother, I'm running a steel plant—not a whorehouse."