

What Dr. Ferris was seeing in Rearden's face was the look of luminous serenity that comes from the sudden answer to an old, dark problem, a look of relaxation and eagerness together; there was a youthful clarity in Rearden's eyes and the faintest touch of contempt in the line of his mouth. Whatever this meant—and Dr. Ferris could not decipher it—he was certain of one thing: the face held no sign of guilt.

"There's a flaw in your system, Dr. Ferris," Rearden said quietly, almost lightly, "a practical flaw which you will discover when you put me on trial for selling four thousand tons of Rearden Metal to Ken Danagger."

It took twenty seconds—Rearden could feel them moving past slowly—at the end of which Dr. Ferris became convinced that he had heard Rearden's final decision.

"Do you think we're bluffing?" snapped Dr. Ferris; his voice suddenly had the quality of the animals he had spent so much time studying: it sounded as if he were baring his teeth.

"I don't know," said Rearden. "I don't care, one way or the other."

"Are you going to be as impractical as that?"

"The evaluation of an action as 'practical,' Dr. Ferris, depends on what it is that one wishes to practice."

"Haven't you always placed your self-interest above all else?"

"That is what I am doing right now."

"If you think we'll let you get away with a—"

"You will now please get out of here."

"Whom do you think you're fooling?" Dr. Ferris' voice had risen close to the edge of a scream. "The day of the barons of industry is done! You've got the goods, but we've got the goods on you, and you're going to play it our way or you'll—"

Rearden had pressed a button; Miss Ives entered the office.

"Dr. Ferris has become confused and has lost his way, Miss Ives," said Rearden; "Will you escort him out, please?" He turned to Ferris. "Miss Ives is a woman, she weighs about a hundred pounds, and she has no practical qualifications at all, only a superlative intellectual efficiency. She would never do for a bouncer in a saloon, only in an impractical place, such as a factory."

Miss Ives looked as if she were performing a duty of no greater emotional significance than taking dictation about a list of shipping invoices. Standing straight in a disciplined manner of icy formality, she held the door open, let Dr. Ferris cross the room, then walked out first; Dr. Ferris followed.

She came back a few minutes later, laughing in uncontrollable exultation.

"Mr. Rearden," she asked, laughing at her fear for him, at their danger, at everything but the triumph of the moment, "what is it you're doing?"

He sat in a pose he had never permitted himself before, a pose he had resented as the most vulgar symbol of the businessman—he sat leaning back in his chair, with his feet on his desk—and it seemed

to her that the posture had an air of peculiar nobility, that it was not the pose of a stuffy executive, but of a young crusader.

"I think I'm discovering a new continent, Gwen," he answered cheerfully. "A continent that should have been discovered along with America, but wasn't."

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"I have to speak of it to *you*," said Eddie Willers, looking at the worker across the table. "I don't know why it helps me, but it does just to know that you're hearing me."

It was late and the lights of the underground cafeteria were low, but Eddie Willers could see the worker's eyes looking at him intently.

"I feel as if . . . as if there's no people and no human language left," said Eddie Willers. "I feel that if I were to scream in the middle of the streets, there would be no one to hear it. . . . No, that's not quite what I feel, it's this: I feel that someone is screaming in the middle of the streets, but people are passing by and no sound can reach them—and it's not Hank Rearden or Ken Danagger or I who's screaming, and yet it seems as if it's all three of us. . . . Don't you see that somebody should have risen to defend them, but nobody has or will? Rearden and Danagger were indicted this morning—for an illegal sale of Rearden Metal. They'll go on trial next month. I was there, in the courtroom in Philadelphia, when they read the indictment. Rearden was very calm—I kept feeling that he was smiling, but he wasn't. Danagger was worse than calm. He didn't say a word, he just stood there, as if the room were empty. . . . The newspapers are saying that both of them should be thrown in jail. . . . No . . . no, I'm not shaking, I'm all right, I'll be all right in a moment. . . . That's why I haven't said a word to her, I was afraid I'd explode and I didn't want to make it harder for her, I know how she feels. . . . Oh yes, *she* spoke to me about it, and she didn't shake, but it was worse—you know, the kind of rigidity when a person acts as if she didn't feel anything at all, and . . . Listen, did I ever tell you that I like you? I like you very much—for the way you look right now. You hear us. You understand. . . . What did she say? It was strange: it's not Hank Rearden that she's afraid for, it's Ken Danagger. She said that Rearden will have the strength to take it, but Danagger won't. Not that he'll lack the strength, but he'll refuse to take it. She . . . she feels certain that Ken Danagger will be the next one to go. To go like Ellis Wyatt and all those others. To give up and vanish. . . . Why? Well, she thinks that there's something like a shift of stress involved—economic and personal stress. As soon as all the weight of the moment shifts to the shoulders of some one man—he's the one who vanishes, like a pillar slashed off. A year ago, nothing worse could have happened to the country than to lose Ellis Wyatt. He's the one we lost. Since then, she says, it's been as if the center of gravity were swinging wildly—like in a sinking cargo ship out of control—shifting from industry to industry, from man to man. When we lose one, another becomes that much more desperately needed—and he's the one we lose next. Well, what could be a greater disaster now than to have the country's coal supply left in