"I heard it," he answered quietly. "I don't know what you're trying to accomplish."

"What a question!" said his mother. "Isn't that just like a man? She's trying to save you from going to jail—that's what she's trying to accomplish."

That could be true, he thought; perhaps, by the reasoning of some crude, childish cowardice, the motive of their malice was a desire to protect him, to break him down into the safety of a compromise. It's possible, he thought—but knew that he did not believe it.

"You've always been unpopular," said Lillian, "and it's more than a matter of any one particular issue. It's that unyielding, intractable attitude of yours. The men who're going to try you, know what you're thinking. That's why they'll crack down on you, while they'd let another man off."

"Why, no, I don't think they know what I'm thinking. That's what I have to let them know tomorrow."

"Unless you show them that you're willing to give in and cooperate, you won't have a chance. You've been too hard to deal with."

"No. I've been too easy."

"But if they put you in jail," said his mother, "what's going to happen to your family? Have you thought of that?"

"No. I haven't."

"Have you thought of the disgrace you'll bring upon us?"

"Mother, do you understand the issue in this case?"

"No, I don't and I don't want to understand. It's all dirty business and dirty politics. All business is just dirty politics and all politics is just dirty business. I never did want to understand any of it. I don't care who's right or wrong, but what I think a man ought to think of first is his family. Don't you know what this will do to us?"

"No, Mother, I don't know or care."

His mother looked at him, aghast.

"Well, I think you have a very provincial attitude, all of you," said Philip suddenly. "Nobody here seems to be concerned with the wider, social aspects of the case. I don't agree with you, Lillian. I don't see why you say that they're pulling some sort of rotten trick on Henry and that he's in the right. I think he's guilty as hell. Mother, I can explain the issue to you very simply. There's nothing unusual about it, the courts are full of cases of this kind. Businessmen are taking advantage of the national emergency in order to make money. They break the regulations which protect the common welfare of all—for the sake of their own personal gain. They're profiteers of the black market who grow rich by defrauding the poor of their rightful share, at a time of desperate shortage. They pursue a ruthless, grasping, grabbing, antisocial policy, based on nothing but plain, selfish greed. It's no use pretending about it, we all know it—and I think it's contemptible."

He spoke in a careless, offhand manner, as if explaining the obvious to a group of adolescents; his tone conveyed the assurance of a man who knows that the moral ground of his stand is not open to question.

Rearden sat looking at him, as if studying an object seen for the

first time. Somewhere deep in Rearden's mind, as a steady, gentle inexorable beat, was a man's voice, saying: By what right?—by what code?—by what standard?

"Philip," he said, not raising his voice, "say any of that again and you will find yourself out in the street, right now, with the suit you've got on your back, with whatever change you've got in your pocket and with nothing else."

He heard no answer, no sound, no movement. He noted that the stillness of the three before him had no element of astonishment. The look of shock on their faces was not the shock of people at the sudden explosion of a bomb, but the shock of people who had known that they were playing with a lighted fuse. There were no outcries, no protests, no questions; they knew that he meant it and they knew everything it meant. A dim sickening feeling told him that they had known it long before he did.

"You . . . you wouldn't throw your own brother out on the street, would you?" his mother said at last; it was not a demand, but a plea.

"I would."

"But he's your brother . . . Doesn't that mean anything to you?"

"No."

"Maybe he goes a bit too far at times, but it's just loose talk, it's just that modern jabber, he doesn't know what he's saying."

"Then let him learn."

"Don't be hard on him . . he's younger than you and . . . and weaker. He . . . Henry, don't look at me that way! I've never seen you look like that. . You shouldn't frighten him. You know that he needs you."

"Does he know it?"

"You can't be hard on a man who needs you, it will prey on your conscience for the rest of your life."

"It won't."

"You've got to be kind, Henry."

"I'm not."

"You've got to have some pity."

"I haven't."

"A good man knows how to forgive."

"I don't."

"You wouldn't want me to think that you're selfish."

"I am."

Philip's eyes were darting from one to the other. He looked like a man who had felt certain that he stood on solid granite and had suddenly discovered that it was thin ice, now cracking open all around him.

"But I . . ." he tried, and stopped; his voice sounded like steps testing the ice. "But don't I have any freedom of speech?"

"In your own house. Not in mine."

"Don't I have any right to my own ideas?"

"At your own expense. Not at mine."

"Don't you tolerate any differences of opinion?"

"Not when I'm paying the bills."

"Isn't there anything involved but money?"

"Yes. The fact that it's *my* money."

"Don't you want to consider any hi . . ."—he was going to say "higher," but changed his mind—"any other aspects?"

"No."

"But I'm not your slave."

"Am I yours?"

"I don't know what you—" He stopped; he knew what was meant.

"No," said Rearden, "you're not my slave. You're free to walk out of here any time you choose."

"I . . . I'm not speaking of that."

"I am."

"I don't understand it . . ."

"Don't you?"

"You've always known my . . . my political views. You've never objected before."

"That's true," said Rearden gravely. "Perhaps I owe you an explanation, if I have misled you. I've tried never to remind you that you're living on my charity. I thought that it was your place to remember it. I thought that any human being who accepts the help of another, knows that good will is the giver's only motive and that good will is the payment he owes in return. But I see that I was wrong. You were getting your food unearned and you concluded that affection did not have to be earned, either. You concluded that I was the safest person in the world for you to spit on, precisely because I held you by the throat. You concluded that I wouldn't want to remind you of it and that I would be tied by the fear of hurting your feelings. All right, let's get it straight: you're an object of charity who's exhausted his credit long ago. Whatever affection I might have felt for you once, is gone. I haven't the slightest interest in you, your fate or your future. I haven't any reason whatever for wishing to feed you. If you leave my house, it won't make any difference to me whether you starve or not. Now *that* is your position here and I will expect you to remember it, if you wish to stay. If not, then get out."

But for the movement of drawing his head a little into his shoulders, Philip showed no reaction. "Don't imagine that I enjoy living here," he said; his voice was lifeless and shrill. "If you think I'm happy, you're mistaken. I'd give anything to get away." The words pertained to defiance, but the voice had a curiously cautious quality. "If that is how you feel about it, it would be best for me to leave." The words were a statement, but the voice put a question mark at the end of it and waited; there was no answer. "You needn't worry about my future. I don't have to ask favors of anybody. I can take care of myself all right." The words were addressed to Rearden, but the eyes were looking at his mother; she did not speak; she was afraid to move. "I've always wanted to be on my own. I've always wanted to live in New York, near all my friends." The voice slowed down and added in an impersonal, reflective manner, as if the words were not addressed to anyone, "Of course, I'd have the problem of maintaining a certain social position . . . it's not my fault if I'll be embarrassed by a family name associated with a millionaire . . . I