The attendants of a hospital in Illinois showed no astonishment when a man was brought in, beaten up by his elder brother, who had supported him all his life: the younger man had screamed at the elder, accusing him of selfishness and greed—just as the attendants of a hospital in New York City showed no astonishment at the case of a woman who came in with a fractured jaw: she had been slapped in the face by a total stranger, who had heard her ordering her five-year-old son to give his best toy to the children of neighbors.

Chick Morrison attempted a whistle-stop tour to buttress the country's morale by speeches on self-sacrifice for the general welfare. He was stoned at the first of his stops and had to return to Washington.

Nobody had ever granted them the title of "the better men" or, granting it, had paused to grasp that title's meaning, but everybody knew, each in his own community, neighborhood, office or shop and in his own unidentified terms, who would be the men that would now fail to appear at their posts on some coming morning and would silently vanish in search of unknown frontiers—the men whose faces were tighter than the faces around them, whose eyes were more direct, whose energy was more conscientiously enduring—the men who were now slipping away, one by one, from every corner of the country—of the country which was now like the descendant of what had once been regal glory, prostrated by the scourge of hemophilia, losing the best of its blood from a wound not to be healed

"But we're willing to negotiate!" yelled Mr Thompson to his assistants, ordering the special announcement to be repeated by all radio stations three times a day "We're willing to negotiate! He'll hear it! He'll answer!"

Special listeners were ordered to keep watch, day and night, at radio receivers tuned to every known frequency of sound, waiting for an answer from an unknown transmitter. There was no answer.

Empty, hopeless, unfocused faces were becoming more apparent in the streets of the cities, but no one could read their meaning. As some men were escaping with their bodies into the underground of uninhabited regions, so others could only save their souls and were escaping into the underground of their minds—and no power on earth could tell whether their blankly indifferent eyes were shutters protecting hidden treasures at the bottom of shafts no longer to be mined, or were merely gaping holes of the parasite's emptiness never to be filled.

"I don't know what to do," said the assistant superintendent of an oil refinery, refusing to accept the job of the superintendent who had vanished—and the agents of the Unification Board were unable to tell whether he lied or not. It was only an edge of precision in the tone of his voice, an absence of apology or shame, that made them wonder whether he was a rebel or a fool. It was dangerous to force the job on either.

"Give us men!" The plea began to hammer progressively louder upon the desk of the Unification Board, from all parts of a country ravaged by unemployment, and neither the pleaders nor the Board dared to add the dangerous words which the cry was implying: "Give us men of ability!" There were waiting lines years' long for the jobs

of janitors, greasers, porters and bus boys; there was no one to apply for the jobs of executives, managers, superintendents, engineers.

The explosions of oil refineries, the crashes of defective airplanes, the break-outs of blast furnaces, the wrecks of colliding trains, and the rumors of drunken orgies in the offices of newly created executives, made the members of the Board fear the kind of men who did apply for the positions of responsibility.

"Don't despair! Don't give up!" said official broadcasts on December 15, and on every day thereafter. "We will reach an agreement with John Galt. We will get him to lead us. He will solve all our problems. He will make things work. Don't give up! We will get John Galt!"

Rewards and honors were offered to applicants for managerial jobs—then to foremen—then to skilled mechanics—then to any man who would make an effort to deserve a promotion in rank: wage raises, bonuses, tax exemptions and a medal devised by Wesley Mouch, to be known as "The Order of Public Benefactors." It brought no results. Ragged people listened to the offers of material comforts and turned away with lethargic indifference, as if they had lost the concept of "Value." *These,* thought the public-pulse-takers with terror, were men who did not care to live—or men who did not care to live on present terms.

"Don't despair! Don't give up! John Galt will solve our problems!" said the radio voices of official broadcasts, traveling through the silence of falling snow into the silence of unheated homes.

"Don't tell them that we haven't got him!" cried Mr. Thompson to his assistants. "But for God's sake tell them to find him!" Squads of Chick Morrison's boys were assigned to the task of manufacturing rumors: half of them went spreading the story that John Galt was in Washington and in conference with government officials—while the other half went spreading the story that the government would give five hundred thousand dollars as reward for information that would help to find John Galt.

"No, not a clue," said Wesley Mouch to Mr. Thompson, summing up the reports of the special agents who had been sent to check on every man by the name of John Galt throughout the country. "They're a shabby lot. There's a John Galt who's a professor of ornithology, eighty years old—there's a retired greengrocer with a wife and nine children—there's an unskilled railroad laborer who's held the same job for twelve years—and other such trash."

"Don't despair! We will get John Galt!" said official broadcasts in the daytime—but at night, every hour on the hour, by a secret, official order, an appeal was sent from short-wave transmitters into the empty reaches of space: "Calling John Galt! . . . Calling John Galt! . . . Are you listening, John Galt? . . . We wish to negotiate. We wish to confer with you. Give us word on where you can be reached. . . . Do you hear us, John Galt?" There was no answer.

The wads of worthless paper money were growing heavier in the pockets of the nation, but there was less and less for that money to buy. In September, a bushel of wheat had cost eleven dollars; it had cost thirty dollars in November; it had cost one hundred in Decem-