baffled. "About that temporary bit of confusion in California. We'll straighten it out in no time, it was an act of illegal insurrection, their state government had no right to impose local taxes detrimental to national taxes, we'll negotiate an equitable arrangement immediately—but in the meantime, if you have been disturbed by any unpatriotic rumors about the California oil companies, I just wanted to tell you that Rearden Steel has been placed in the top category of essential need, with first claim upon any oil available anywhere in the nation, very top category, Mr. Rearden—so I just wanted you to know that you won't have to worry about the problem of fuel this winter!"

Rearden hung up the telephone receiver, with a frown of worry, not about the problem of fuel and the end of the California oil fields—disasters of this kind had become habitual—but about the fact that the Washington planners found it necessary to placate him. This was new; he wondered what it meant. Through the years of his struggle, he had learned that an apparently causeless antagonism was not hard to deal with, but an apparently causeless solicitude was an ugly danger. The same wonder struck him again, when, walking down an alley between the mill structures, he caught sight of a slouching figure whose posture combined an air of insolence with an air of expecting to be swatted: it was his brother Philip.

Ever since he had moved to Philadelphia, Rearden had not visited his former home and had not heard a word from his family, whose bills he went on paying. Then, inexplicably, twice in the last few weeks, he had caught Philip wandering through the mills for no apparent reason. He had been unable to tell whether Philip was sneaking to avoid him or waiting to catch his attention; it had looked like both. He had been unable to discover any clue to Philip's purpose, only some incomprehensible solicitude, of a kind Philip had never displayed before.

The first time, in answer to his startled "What are you doing here?"—Philip had said vaguely, "Well, I know that you don't like me to come to your office." "What do you want?" "Oh, nothing . . but . . . well, Mother is worried about you." "Mother can call me any time she wishes." Philip had not answered, but had proceeded to question him, in an unconvincingly casual manner, about his work, his health, his business; the questions had kept hitting oddly beside the point, not questions about business, but more about his, Rearden's, feelings toward business. Rearden had cut him short and waved him away, but had been left with the small, nagging sense of an incident that remained inexplicable.

The second time, Philip had said, as sole explanation, "We just want to know how you feel." "Who's we?" "Why . . Mother and I. These are difficult times and . . . well, Mother wants to know how you feel about it all." "Tell her that I don't." The words had seemed to hit Philip in some peculiar manner, almost as if this were the one answer he dreaded. "Get out of here," Rearden had ordered wearily, "and the next time you want to see me, make an appointment and come to my office. But don't come unless you have something to

say. This is not a place where one discusses feelings, mine or anybody else's."

Philip had not called for an appointment—but now there he was again, slouching among the giant shapes of the furnaces, with an air of guilt and snobbishness together, as if he were both snooping and slumming.

"But I do have something to say! I do!" he cried hastily, in answer to the angry frown on Rearden's face.

"Why didn't you come to my office?"

"You don't want me in your office."

"I don't want you here, either."

"But I'm only . . .I'm only trying to be considerate and not to take your time when you're so busy and . . you are very busy, aren't you?"

"And?"

"And . . well, I just wanted to catch you in a spare moment . . . to talk to you."

"About what?"

"I . . . Well, I need a job."

He said it belligerently and drew back a little. Rearden stood looking at him blankly.

"Henry, I want a job. I mean, here, at the mills. I want you to give me something to do. I need a job. I need to earn my living, I'm tired of alms." He was gropping for something to say, his voice both offended and pleading, as if the necessity to justify the plea were an unfair imposition upon him. "I want a livelihood of my own. I'm not asking you for charity, I'm asking you to give me a chance!"

"This is a factory, Philip, not a gambling joint."

"Uh?"

"We don't take chances or give them."

"I'm asking you to give me a *job*!"

"Why should I?"

"Because I need it!"

Rearden pointed to the red spurts of flame shooting from the black shape of a furnace, shooting safely into space four hundred feet of steel-clay-and-steam-embodied thought above them. "I needed that furnace, Philip. It wasn't my need that gave it to me."

Philip's face assumed a look of not having heard. "You're not officially supposed to hire anybody, but that's just a technicality, if you'll put me on, my friends will okay it without any trouble and—" Something about Rearden's eyes made him stop abruptly, then ask in an angrily impatient voice, "Well, what's the matter? What have I said that's wrong?"

"What you haven't said."

"I beg your pardon?"

"What you're squirming to leave unmentioned."

"What?"

"That you'd be of no use to me whatever."

"Is that what you—" Philip started with automatic righteousness, but stopped and did not finish.

"Yes," said Rearden, smiling, "*that's* what I think of first."

Philip's eyes oozed away; when he spoke, his voice sounded as if it were darting about at random, picking stray sentences: "Everybody is entitled to a livelihood . . . How am I going to get it, if nobody gives me my chance?"

"How did I get mine?"

"I wasn't born owning a steel plant."

"Was I?"

"I can do anything you can—if you'll teach me."

"Who taught me?"

"Why do you keep saying that? I'm not talking about you!"

"I am."

In a moment, Philip muttered, "What do *you* have to worry about? It's not *your* livelihood that's in question!"

Rearden pointed to the figures of men in the steaming rays of the furnace. "Can you do what they're doing?"

"I don't see what you're—"

"What will happen if I put you there and you ruin a heat of steel for me?"

"What's more important, that your damn steel gets poured or that I eat?"

"How do you propose to eat if the steel doesn't get poured?"

Philip's face assumed a look of reproach. "I'm not in a position to argue with you right now, since you hold the upper hand."

"Then don't argue."

"Uh?"

"Keep your mouth shut and get out of here."

"But I meant—" He stopped.

Rearden chuckled. "You meant that it's I who should keep my mouth shut, because I hold the upper hand, and should give in to you, because you hold no hand at all?"

"That's a peculiarly crude way of stating a moral principle."

"But that's what your moral principle amounts to, doesn't it?"

"You can't discuss morality in materialistic terms."

"We're discussing a job in a steel plant—and, boy! is that a materialistic place!"

Philip's body drew a shade tighter together and his eyes became a shade more glazed, as if in fear of the place around him, in resentment of its sight, in an effort not to concede its reality. He said, in the soft, stubborn whine of a voodoo incantation, "It's a moral imperative, universally conceded in our day and age, that every man is entitled to a job." His voice rose: "I'm entitled to it!"

"You are? Go on, then, collect your claim."

"Uh?"

"Collect your job. Pick it off the bush where you think it grows."

"I mean—"

"You mean that it doesn't? You mean that you need it, but can't create it? You mean that you're entitled to a job which *I* must create for you?"

"Yes!"

"And if I don't?"

The silence went stretching through second after second. "I don't