The movement of his arm, as he raised his glass, went from the portrait—to her—to himself—to the buildings of the city beyond the window.

* *

For a month in advance, the people who filled the courtroom had been told by the press that they would see the man who was a greedy enemy of society; but they had come to see the man who had invented Rearden Metal.

He stood up, when the judges called upon him to do so. He wore a gray suit, he had pale blue eyes and blond hair; it was not the colors that made his figure seem icily implacable, it was the fact that the suit had an expensive simplicity seldom flaunted these days, that it belonged in the sternly luxurious office of a rich corporation, that his bearing came from a civilized era and clashed with the place around him.

The crowd knew from the newspapers that he represented the evil of ruthless wealth; and—as they praised the virtue of chastity, then ran to see any movie that displayed a half-naked female on its posters—so they came to see him; evil, at least, did not have the stale hopelessness of a bromide which none believed and none dared to challenge. They looked at him without admiration—admiration was a feeling they had lost the capacity to experience, long ago; they looked with curiosity and with a dim sense of defiance against those who had told them that it was their duty to hate him.

A few years ago, they would have jeered at his air of self-confident wealth. But today, there was a slate-gray sky in the windows of the courtroom, which promised the first snowstorm of a long, hard winter; the last of the country's oil was vanishing, and the coal mines were not able to keep up with the hysterical scramble for winter supplies. The crowd in the courtroom remembered that this was the case which had cost them the services of Ken Danagger. There were rumors that the output of the Danagger Coal Company had fallen perceptibly within one month; the newspapers said that it was merely a matter of readjustment while Danagger's cousin was reorganizing the company he had taken over. Last week, the front pages had carried the story of a catastrophe on the site of a housing project under construction: defective steel girders had collapsed, killing four workmen; the newspapers had not mentioned, but the crowd knew, that the girders had come from Orren Boyle's Associated Steel.

They sat in the courtroom in heavy silence and they looked at the tall, gray figure, not with hope—they were losing the capacity to hope—but with an impassive neutrality spiked by a faint question mark; the question mark was placed over all the pious slogans they had heard for years.

The newspapers had snarled that the cause of the country's troubles, as this case demonstrated, was the selfish greed of rich industrialists; that it was men like Hank Rearden who were to blame for the shrinking diet, the falling temperature and the cracking roofs in the homes of the nation; that if it had not been for men who broke regulations and hampered the government's plans, prosperity would have been achieved long ago; and that a man like Hank Rearden

was prompted by nothing but the profit motive. This last was stated without explanation or elaboration, as if the words "profit motive" were the self-evident brand of ultimate evil.

The crowd remembered that these same newspapers, less than two years ago, had screamed that the production of Rearden Metal should be forbidden, because its producer was endangering people's lives for the sake of his greed; they remembered that the man in gray had ridden in the cab of the first engine to run over a track of his own Metal; and that he was now on trial for the greedy crime of withholding from the public a load of the Metal which it had been his greedy crime to offer in the public market.

According to the procedure established by directives, cases of this kind were not tried by a jury, but by a panel of three judges appointed by the Bureau of Economic Planning and National Resources; the procedure, the directives had stated, was to be informal and democratic. The judge's bench had been removed from the old Philadelphia courtroom for this occasion, and replaced by a table on a wooden platform; it gave the room an atmosphere suggesting the kind of meeting where a presiding body puts something over on a mentally retarded membership.

One of the judges, acting as prosecutor, had read the charges. "You may now offer whatever plea you wish to make in your own defense," he announced.

Facing the platform, his voice inflectionless and peculiarly clear, Hank Rearden answered:

"I have no defense."

"Do you—" The judge stumbled; he had not expected it to be that easy. "Do you throw yourself upon the mercy of this court?"

"I do not recognize this court's right to try me."

"What?"

"I do not recognize this court's right to try me."

"But, Mr. Rearden, this is the legally appointed court to try this particular category of crime."

"I do not recognize my action as a crime."

"But you have admitted that you have broken our regulations controlling the sale of your Metal."

"I do not recognize your right to control the sale of my Metal."

"Is it necessary for me to point out that your recognition was not required?"

"No. I am fully aware of it and I am acting accordingly."

He noted the stillness of the room. By the rules of the complicated pretense which all those people played for one another's benefit, they should have considered his stand as incomprehensible folly; there should have been rustles of astonishment and derision; there were none, they sat still; they understood.

"Do you mean that you are refusing to obey the law?" asked the judge.

"No. I am complying with the law—to the letter. Your law holds that my life, my work and my property may be disposed of without my consent. Very well, you may now dispose of me without my participation in the matter. I will not play the part of defending