

Then the sobbing stopped and the boy raised his head. His face seemed thinner and paler, but the eyes were lustrous, and he looked up at Rearden, straining for the strength to speak.

"Mr. Rearden . . . I . . . I liked you very much."

"I know it."

The boy's features had no power to form a smile, but it was a smile that spoke in his glance, as he looked at Rearden's face—as he looked at that which he had not known he had been seeking through the brief span of his life, seeking as the image of that which he had not known to be his values.

Then his head fell back, and there was no convulsion in his face, only his mouth relaxing to a shape of serenity—but there was a brief stab of convulsion in his body, like a last cry of protest—and Rearden went on slowly, not altering his pace, even though he knew that no caution was necessary any longer because what he was carrying in his arms was *now* that which had been the boy's teachers' idea of a man—a collection of chemicals.

He walked, as if this were his form of last tribute and funeral procession for the young life that had ended in his arms. He felt an anger too intense to identify except as a pressure within him: it was a desire to kill.

The desire was not directed at the unknown thug who had sent a bullet through the boy's body, or at the looting bureaucrats who had hired the thug to do it, but at the boy's teachers who had delivered him, disarmed, to the thug's gun—at the soft, safe assassins of college classrooms who, incompetent to answer the queries of a quest for reason, took pleasure in crippling the young minds entrusted to their care.

Somewhere, he thought, there was this boy's mother, who had trembled with protective concern over his groping steps, while teaching him to walk, who had measured his baby formulas with a jeweler's caution, who had obeyed with a zealot's fervor the latest words of science on his diet and hygiene, protecting his unhardened body from germs—then had sent him to be turned into a tortured neurotic by the men who taught him that he had no mind and must never attempt to think. Had she fed him tainted refuse, he thought, had she mixed poison into his food, it would have been more kind and less fatal.

He thought of all the living species that train their young in the art of survival, the cats who teach their kittens to hunt, the birds who spend such strident effort on teaching their fledglings to fly—yet man, whose tool of survival is the mind, does not merely fail to teach a child to think, but devotes the child's education to the purpose of destroying his brain, of convincing him that thought is futile and evil, before he has started to think.

From the first catch-phrases flung at a child to the last, it is like a series of shocks to freeze his motor, to undercut the power of his consciousness. "Don't ask so many questions, children should be seen and not heard!"—"Who are you to think? It's so, because I say so!"—"Don't argue, obey!"—"Don't try to understand, believe!"—"Don't rebel, adjust!"—"Don't stand out, belong!"—"Don't strug-

gle, compromise?"—"Your heart is more important than your mind!"—"Who are you to know? Your parents know best!"—"Who are you to know? Society knows best!" "Who are you to know? The bureaucrats know best!"—"Who are you to object? All values are relative!"—"Who are you to want to escape a thug's bullet? That's only a personal prejudice!"

Men would shudder, he thought, if they saw a mother bird plucking the feathers from the wings of her young, then pushing him out of the nest to struggle for survival—yet *that* was what they did to their children.

Armed with nothing but meaningless phrases, this boy had been thrown to fight for existence, he had hobbled and groped through a brief, doomed effort, he had screamed his indignant, bewildered protest—and had perished in his first attempt to soar on his mangled wings.

But a different breed of teachers had once existed, he thought, and had reared the men who created this country; he thought that mothers should set out on their knees to look for men like Hugh Akston, to find them and beg them to return.

He went through the gate of the mills, barely noticing the guards who let him enter, who stared at his face and his burden; he did not pause to listen to their words, as they pointed to the fighting in the distance; he went on walking slowly toward the wedge of light which was the open door of the hospital building.

He stepped into a lighted room full of men, bloody bandages and the odor of antiseptics; he deposited his burden on a bench, with no word of explanation to anyone, and walked out, not glancing behind him.

He walked in the direction of the front gate, toward the glare of fire and the bursts of guns. He saw, once in a while, a few figures running through the cracks between structures or darting behind black corners, pursued by groups of guards and workers; he was astonished to notice that his workers were well armed. They seemed to have subdued the hoodlums inside the mills, and only the siege at the front gate remained to be beaten. He saw a lout scurrying across a patch of lamplight, swinging a length of pipe at a wall of glass panes, battering them down with an animal relish, dancing like a gorilla to the sound of crashing glass, until three husky human figures descended upon him, carrying him writhing to the ground.

The siege of the gate appeared to be ebbing, as if the spine of the mob had been broken. He heard the distant screeches of their cries—but the shots from the road were growing rarer, the fire set to the gatekeeper's office was put out, there were armed men on the ledges and at windows, posted in well-planned defense.

On the roof of a structure above the gate, he saw, as he came closer, the slim silhouette of a man who held a gun in each hand and, from behind the protection of a chimney, kept firing at intervals down into the mob, firing swiftly and, it seemed, in two directions at once, like a sentinel protecting the approaches to the gate. The confident skill of his movements, his manner of firing, with no time wasted to take aim, but with the kind of casual abruptness that never