thought of the payment these papers gave him for his ore mines. Two-thirds of the sum was money which Larkin had obtained as a loan from the government: the new law made provisions for such loans "in order to give a fair opportunity to the new owners who have never had a chance." Two-thirds of the rest was a loan he himself had granted to Larkin, a mortgage he had accepted on his own mines. . . . And the government money, he thought suddenly, the money now given to him as payment for his property, where had that come from? Whose work had provided it?

"You don't have to worry, Hank," said Larkin, with that incomprehensible, insistent note of pleading in his voice. "It's just a paper formality."

Rearden wondered dimly what it was that Larkin wanted from him. He felt that the man was waiting for something beyond the physical fact of the sale, some words which he, Rearden, was supposed to pronounce, some action pertaining to mercy which he was expected to grant. Larkin's eyes, in this moment of his best fortune, had the sickening look of a beggar.

"Why should you be angry, Hank? It's only a new form of legal red tape. Just a new historical condition. Nobody can help it, if it's a historical condition. Nobody can be blamed for it. But there's always a way to get along. Look at all the others. They don't mind. They're—"

"They're setting up stooges whom they control, to run the properties extorted from them. I—"

"Now why do you want to use such words?"

"I might as well tell you—and I think you know it—that I am not good at games of that kind. I have neither the time nor the stomach to devise some form of blackmail in order to tie you up and own my mines through you. Ownership is a thing I don't share. And I don't wish to hold it by the grace of your cowardice—by means of a constant struggle to outwit you and keep some threat over your head. I don't do business that way and I don't deal with cowards. The mines are yours. If you wish to give me first call on all the ore produced, you will do so. If you wish to doublecross me, it's in your power."

Larkin looked hurt. "That's very unfair of you," he said; there was a dry little note of righteous reproach in his voice. "I have never given you cause to distrust me." He picked up the papers with a hasty movement.

Rearden saw the papers disappear into Larkin's inside coat pocket. He saw the flare of the open coat, the wrinkles of a vest pulled tight over flabby bulges, and a stain of perspiration in the armpit of the shirt.

Unsummoned, the picture of a face seen twenty-seven years ago rose suddenly in his mind. It was the face of a preacher on a street corner he had passed, in a town he could not remember any longer. Only the dark walls of the slums remained in his memory, the rain of an autumn evening, and the righteous malice of the man's mouth, a small mouth stretched to yell into the darkness: ". . . the noblest

ideal—that man live for the sake of his brothers, that the strong work for the weak, that he who has ability serve him who hasn't . . ."

Then he saw the boy who had been Hank Rearden at eighteen. He saw the tension of the face, the speed of the walk, the drunken exhilaration of the body, drunk on the energy of sleepless nights, the proud lift of the head, the clear, steady, ruthless eyes, the eyes of a man who drove himself without pity toward that which he wanted. And he saw what Paul Larkin must have been at that time – a youth with an aged baby's face, smiling ingratiatingly, joylessly, begging to be spared, pleading with the universe to give him a chance. If someone had shown that youth to the Hank Rearden of that time and told him that this was to be the goal of his steps, the collector of the energy of his aching tendons, what would he have—

It was not a thought, it was like the punch of a fist inside his skull. Then when he could think again, Rearden knew what the boy he had been would have felt: a desire to step on the obscene thing which was Larkin and grind every wet bit of it out of existence.

He had never experienced an emotion of this kind. It took him a few moments to realize that this was what men called hatred.

He noticed that rising to leave and muttering some sort of good-byes, Larkin had a wounded, reproachful, mouth-pinched look, as if he, Larkin, were the injured party.

When he sold his coal mines to Ken Danagger, who owned the largest coal company in Pennsylvania, Rearden wondered why he felt as if it were almost painless. He felt no hatred. Ken Danagger was a man in his fifties, with a hard, closed face; he had started in life as a miner.

When Rearden handed to him the deed to his new property, Danagger said impassively, "I don't believe I've mentioned that any coal you buy from me, you'll get it at cost."

Rearden glanced at him, astonished. "It's against the law," he said.

"Who's going to find out what sort of cash I hand to you in your own living room?"

"You're talking about a rebate."

"I am."

"That's against two dozen laws. They'll sock you worse than me, if they catch you at it."

"Sure. That's your protection—so you won't be left at the mercy of my good will."

Rearden smiled; it was a happy smile, but he closed his eyes as under a blow. Then he shook his head. "Thanks," he said. "But I'm not one of them. I don't expect anybody to work for me at cost."

"I'm not one of them, either," said Danagger angrily. "Look here, Rearden, don't you suppose I know what I'm getting, unearned? The money doesn't pay you for it. Not nowadays."

"You didn't volunteer to bid to buy my property. I asked you to buy it. I wish there had been somebody like you in the ore business, to take over my mines. There wasn't. If you want to do me a favor, don't offer me rebates. Give me a chance to pay you higher prices, higher than anyone else will offer, sock me anything you wish, just