

horror machine among all the devices of men, is non-objective law. . . . No, Miss Taggart, my treatise will not be published outside."

"My business, Miss Taggart?" said Midas Mulligan. "My business is blood transfusion—and I'm still doing it. My job is to feed a life-fuel into the plants that are capable of growing. But ask Dr. Hendricks whether any amount of blood will save a body that refuses to function, a rotten hulk that expects to exist without effort. My blood bank is gold. Gold is a fuel that will perform wonders, but no fuel can work where there is no motor. . . . No, I haven't given up. I merely got fed up with the job of running a slaughter house, where one drains blood out of healthy living beings and pumps it into gutless half-corpse."

"Given up?" said Hugh Akston. "Check your premises, Miss Taggart. None of us has given up. It is the world that has. . . . What is wrong with a philosopher running a roadside diner? Or a cigarette factory, as I am doing now? All work is an act of philosophy. And when men will learn to consider productive work—and that which is its source—as the standard of their moral values, they will reach that state of perfection which is the birthright they lost. . . . The source of work? Man's mind, Miss Taggart, man's reasoning mind. I am writing a book on this subject, defining a moral philosophy that I learned from my own pupil. . . . Yes, it could save the world. . . . No, it will not be published outside."

"Why?" she cried. "Why? What are you doing, all of you?"

"We are on strike," said John Galt.

They all turned to him, as if they had been waiting for his voice and for that word. She heard the empty beat of time within her, which was the sudden silence of the room, as she looked at him across a span of lamplight. He sat slouched casually on the arm of a chair, leaning forward, his forearm across his knees, his hand hanging down idly—and it was the faint smile on his face that gave to his words the deadly sound of the irrevocable:

"Why should this seem so startling? There is only one kind of men who have never been on strike in human history. Every other kind and class have stopped, when they so wished, and have presented demands to the world, claiming to be indispensable—except the men who have carried the world on their shoulders, have kept it alive, have endured torture as sole payment, but have never walked out on the human race. Well, their turn has come. Let the world discover who they are, what they do and what happens when they refuse to function. This is the strike of the men of the mind, Miss Taggart. This is the mind on strike."

She did not move, except for the fingers of one hand that moved slowly up her cheek to her temple.

"Through all the ages," he said, "the mind has been regarded as evil, and every form of insult: from heretic to materialist to exploiter—every form of iniquity: from exile to disfranchisement to expropriation—every form of torture: from sneers to rack to firing squad—have been brought down upon those who assumed the responsibility of looking at the world through the eyes of a living consciousness and performing the crucial act of a rational connection.

Yet only to the extent to which—in chains, in dungeons, in hidden corners, in the cells of philosophers, in the shops of traders—some men continued to think, only to that extent was humanity able to survive. Through all the centuries of the worship of the mindless, whatever stagnation humanity chose to endure, whatever brutality to practice—it was only by the grace of the men who perceived that wheat must have water in order to grow, that stones laid in a curve will form an arch, that two and two makes four, that love is not served by torture and life is not fed by destruction—only by the grace of those men did the rest of them learn to experience moments when they caught the spark of being human, and only the sum of such moments permitted them to continue to exist. It was the man of the mind who taught them to bake their bread, to heal their wounds, to forge their weapons and to build the jails into which they threw him. He was the man of extravagant energy—and reckless generosity—who knew that stagnation is not man's fate, that impotence is not his nature, that the ingenuity of his mind is his noblest and most joyous power—and in service to that love of existence he was alone to feel, he went on working, working at any price, working for his despoilers, for his jailers, for his torturers, paying with his life for the privilege of saving theirs. This was his glory and his guilt—that he let them teach him to feel guilty of his glory, to accept the part of a sacrificial animal and, in punishment for the sin of intelligence, to perish on the altars of the brutes. The tragic joke of human history is that on any of the altars men erected, it was always man whom they immolated and the animal whom they enshrined. It was always the animal's attributes, not man's, that humanity worshipped: the idol of instinct and the idol of force—the mystics and the kings—the mystics, who longed for an irresponsible consciousness and ruled by means of the claim that their dark emotions were superior to reason, that knowledge came in blind, causeless fits, blindly to be followed, not doubted—and the kings, who ruled by means of claws and muscles, with conquest as their method and looting as their aim, with a club or a gun as sole sanction of their power. The defenders of man's soul were concerned with his feelings, and the defenders of man's body were concerned with his stomach—but both were united against his mind. Yet no one, not the lowest of humans, is ever able fully to renounce his brain. No one has ever believed in the irrational; what they do believe in is the unjust. Whenever a man denounces the mind, it is because his goal is of a nature the mind would not permit him to confess. When he preaches contradictions, he does so in the knowledge that someone will accept the burden of the impossible, someone will make it work for him at the price of his own suffering or life; destruction is the price of any contradiction. It is the victims who made injustice possible. It is the men of reason who made it possible for the rule of the brute to work. The despoiling of reason has been the motive of every anti-reason creed on earth. The despoiling of ability has been the purpose of every creed that preached self-sacrifice. The despoilers have always known it. We haven't. The time has come for us to see. What we are now asked to worship, what had once been dressed as God or king, is