

tore her mouth away from him, she was laughing soundlessly, in triumph, as if saying: Hank Rearden—the austere, unapproachable Hank Rearden of the monklike office, the business conferences, the harsh bargains—do you remember them now?—I’m thinking of it, for the pleasure of knowing that I’ve brought you to this. He was not smiling, his face was tight, it was the face of an enemy, he jerked her head and caught her mouth again, as if he were inflicting a wound.

She felt him trembling and she thought that this was the kind of cry she had wanted to tear from him—this surrender through the shreds of his tortured resistance. Yet she knew, at the same time, that the triumph was his, that her laughter was her tribute to him, that her defiance was submission, that the purpose of all of her violent strength was only to make his victory the greater—he was holding her body against his, as if stressing his wish to let her know that she was now only a tool for the satisfaction—of his desire—and his victory, she knew, was her wish to let him reduce her to that. Whatever I am, she thought, whatever pride of person I may hold, the pride of my courage, of my work, of my mind and my freedom—that is what I offer you for the pleasure of your body, *that* is what I want you to use in your service—and that you want it to serve you is the greatest reward I can have.

There were lights burning in the two rooms behind them. He took her wrist and threw her inside his room, making the gesture tell her that he needed no sign of consent or resistance. He locked the door, watching her face. Standing straight, holding his glance, she extended her arm to the lamp on the table and turned out the light. He approached. He turned the light on again, with a single, contemptuous jerk of his wrist. She saw him smile for the first time, a slow, mocking, sensual smile that stressed the purpose of his action.

He was holding her half-stretched across the bed, he was tearing her clothes off, while her face was pressed against him, her mouth moving down the line of his neck, down his shoulder. She knew that every gesture of her desire for him struck him like a blow, that there was some shudder of incredulous anger within him—yet that no gesture would satisfy his greed for every evidence of her desire.

He stood looking down at her naked body, he leaned over, she heard his voice—it was more a statement of contemptuous triumph than a question: “You want it?” Her answer was more a gasp than a word, her eyes closed, her mouth open: “Yes.”

She knew that what she felt with the skin of her arms was the cloth of his shirt, she knew that the lips she felt on her mouth were his, but in the rest of her there was no distinction between his being and her own, as there was no division between body and spirit. Through all the steps of the years behind them, the steps down a course chosen in the courage of a single loyalty: their love of existence—chosen in the knowledge that nothing will be given, that one must make one’s own desire and every shape of its fulfillment—through the steps of shaping metal, rails and motors—they had moved by the power of the thought that one remakes the earth for one’s enjoyment, that man’s spirit gives meaning to insentient matter

by molding it to serve one's chosen goal. The course led them to the moment when, in answer to the highest of one's values, in an admiration not to be expressed by any other form of tribute, one's spirit makes one's body become the tribute, recasting it—as proof, as sanction, as reward—into a single sensation of such intensity of joy that no other sanction of one's existence is necessary. He heard the moan of her breath, she felt the shudder of his body, in the same instant.

## Chapter IX THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE

She looked at the glowing bands on the skin of her arm, spaced like bracelets from her wrist to her shoulder. They were strips of sunlight from the Venetian blinds on the window of an unfamiliar room. She saw a bruise above her elbow, with dark beads that had been blood. Her arm lay on the blanket that covered her body. She was aware of her legs and hips, but the rest of her body was only a sense of lightness, as if it were stretched restfully across the air in a place that looked like a cage made of sunrays.

Turning to look at him, she thought: From his aloofness, from his manner of glass-enclosed formality, from his pride in never being made to feel anything—to this, to Hank Rearden in bed beside her, after hours of a violence which they could not name now, not in words or in daylight—but which was in their eyes, as they looked at each other, which they wanted to name, to stress, to throw at each other's face.

He saw the face of a young girl, her lips suggesting a smile, as if her natural state of relaxation were a state of radiance, a lock of hair falling across her cheek to the curve of a naked shoulder, her eyes looking at him as if she were ready to accept anything he might wish to say, as she had been ready to accept anything he had wished to do.

He reached over and moved the lock of hair from her cheek, cautiously, as if it were fragile. He held it back with his fingertips and looked at her face. Then his fingers closed suddenly in her hair and he raised the lock to his lips. The way he pressed his mouth to it was tenderness, but the way his fingers held it was despair.

He dropped back on the pillow and lay still, his eyes closed. His face seemed young, at peace. Seeing it for a moment without the reins of tension, she realized suddenly the extent of the unhappiness he had borne; but it's past now, she thought, it's over.

He got up, not looking at her. His face was blank and closed again. He picked up his clothes from the floor and proceeded to dress, standing in the middle of the room, half-turned away from her. He acted, not as if she wasn't present, but as if it did not matter that she was. His movements, as he buttoned his shirt, as he buckled the belt of his slacks, had the rapid precision of performing a duty.

She lay back on the pillow, watching him, enjoying the sight of his figure in motion. She liked the gray slacks and shirt—the expert mechanic of the John Galt Line, she thought, in the stripes of sun-