

him. Observe the ugly mess which most men make of their sex lives—and observe the mess of contradictions which they hold as their moral philosophy. One proceeds from the other. Love is our response to our highest values—and can be nothing else. Let a man corrupt his values and his view of existence, let him profess that love is not self-enjoyment but self-denial, that virtue consists, not of pride, but of pity or pain or weakness or sacrifice, that the noblest love is born, not of admiration, but of charity, not in response to *values*, but in response to *flaws*—and he will have cut himself in two. His body will not obey him, it will not respond, it will make him impotent toward the woman he professes to love and draw him to the lowest type of whore he can find. His body will always follow the ultimate logic of his deepest convictions; if he believes that flaws are values, he has damned existence as evil and only the evil will attract him. He has damned himself and he will feel that depravity is all he is worthy of enjoying. He has equated virtue with pain and he will feel that vice is the only realm of pleasure. Then he will scream that his body has vicious desires of its own which his mind cannot conquer, that sex is sin, that true love is a pure emotion of the spirit. And then he will wonder why love brings him nothing but boredom, and sex—nothing but shame.”

Rearden said slowly, looking off, not realizing that he was thinking aloud, “At least . . . I’ve never accepted that other tenet . . . I’ve never felt guilty about making money.”

Francisco missed the significance of the first two words; he smiled and said eagerly, “You do see that it’s the same issue? No, you’d never accept any part of their vicious creed. You wouldn’t be able to force it upon yourself. If you tried to damn sex as evil, you’d still find yourself, against your will, acting on the proper moral premise. You’d be attracted to the highest woman you met. You’d always want a heroine. You’d be incapable of self-contempt. You’d be unable to believe that existence is evil and that you’re a helpless creature caught in an impossible universe. You’re the man who’s spent his life shaping matter to the purpose of his mind. You’re the man who would know that just as an idea unexpressed in physical action is contemptible hypocrisy, so is platonic love—and just as physical action unguided by an idea is a fool’s self-fraud, so is sex when cut off from one’s code of values. It’s the same issue, and you would know it. Your inviolate sense of self-esteem would know it. You would be incapable of desire for a woman you despised. Only the man who extols the purity of a love devoid of desire, is capable of the depravity of a desire devoid of love. But observe that most people are creatures cut in half who keep swinging desperately to one side or to the other. One kind of half is the man who despises money, factories, skyscrapers and his own body. He holds undefined emotions about non-conceivable subjects as the meaning of life and as his claim to virtue. And he cries with despair, because he can feel nothing for the woman he respects, but finds himself in bondage to an irresistible passion for a slut from the gutter. He is the man whom people call an idealist. The other kind of half is the man whom people call practical, the man who despises principles, abstractions.

art, philosophy and his own mind. He regards the acquisition of material objects as the only goal of existence—and he laughs at the need to consider their purpose or their source. He expects them to give him pleasure—and he wonders why the more he gets, the less he feels. *He* is the man who spends his time chasing women. Observe the triple fraud which he perpetrates upon himself. He will not acknowledge his need of self-esteem, since he scoffs at such a concept as moral values; yet he feels the profound self-contempt which comes from believing that he is a piece of meat. He will not acknowledge, but he knows that sex is the physical expression of a tribute to personal values. So he tries, by going through the motions of the effect, to acquire that which should have been the cause. He tries to gain a sense of his own value from the women who surrender to him—and he forgets that the women he picks have neither character nor judgment nor standard of value. He tells himself that all he's after is physical pleasure—but observe that he tires of his women in a week or a night, that he despises professional whores and that he loves to imagine he is seducing virtuous girls who make a great exception for his sake. It is the feeling of achievement that he seeks and never finds. What glory can there be in the conquest of a mindless body? Now *that* is your woman-chaser. Does the description fit me?"

"God, no!"

"Then you can judge, without asking my word for it, how much chasing of women I've done in my life."

"But what on earth have you been doing on the front pages of newspapers for the last—-isn't it twelve—-years?"

"I've spent a lot of money on the most ostentatiously vulgar parties I could think of, and a miserable amount of time on being seen with the appropriate sort of women. As for the rest—" He stopped, then said, "I have some friends who know this, but you are the first person to whom I am confiding it against my own rules: I have never slept with any of those women. I have never touched one of them."

"What is more incredible than that, is that I believe you."

The lamp on the floor beside him threw broken bits of light across Francisco's face, as he leaned forward, the face had a look of guiltless amusement. "If you care to glance over those front pages, you'll see that I've never said anything. It was the women who were eager to rush into print with stories insinuating that being seen with me at a restaurant was the sign of a great romance. What do you suppose those women are after but the same thing as the chaser—the desire to gain their own value from the number and fame of the men they conquer? Only it's one step phonier, because the value they seek is not even in the actual fact, but in the impression on and the envy of other women. Well, I gave those bitches what they wanted—but what they literally wanted, without the pretense that they expected, the pretense that hides from them the nature of their wish. Do you think they wanted to sleep with me or with any man? They wouldn't be capable of so real and honest a desire. They wanted food for their vanity—and I gave it to them. I gave them the chance to boast to their friends and to see themselves in the scandal sheets in the