approval nor of resentment. It seemed to her that she caught an imperceptible shading in his gravely attentive expression: he looked as if this were a matter about which he did not choose to feel.

Her faint apprehension grew into a question mark, and the question mark turned into a drill, cutting deeper and deeper into her mind through the evenings that followed—when Galt left the house and she remained alone. He went out every other night, after dinner, not telling her where he went, returning at midnight or later. She tried not to allow herself fully to discover with what tension and restlessness she waited for his return. She did not ask him where he spent his evenings. The reluctance that stopped her was her too urgent desire to know; she kept silent in some dimly intentional form of defiance, half in defiance of him, half of her own anxiety.

She would not acknowledge the things she feared or give them the solid shape of words, she knew them only by the ugly, nagging pull of an unadmitted emotion. Part of it was a savage resentment, of a kind she had never experienced before, which was her answer to the dread that there might be a woman in his life; yet the resentment was softened by some quality of health in the thing she feared, as if the threat could be fought and even, if need be, accepted. But there was another, uglier dread: the sordid shape of self-sacrifice, the suspicion, not to be uttered about him, that he wished to remove himself from her path and let its emptiness force her back to the man who was his best-loved friend.

Days passed before she spoke of it. Then, at dinner, on an evening when he was to leave, she became suddenly aware of the peculiar pleasure she experienced while watching him eat the food she had prepared—and suddenly, involuntarily, as if that pleasure gave her a right she dared not identify, as if enjoyment, not pain, broke her resistance, she heard herself asking him, "What is it you're doing every other evening?"

He answered simply, as if he had taken for granted that she knew it, "Lecturing."

"What?"

"Giving a course of lectures on physics, as I do every year during this month. It's my . . . What are you laughing at?" he asked, seeing the look of relief, of silent laughter that did not seem to be directed at his words—and then, before she answered, he smiled suddenly, as if he had guessed the answer, she saw some particular, intensely personal quality in his smile, which was almost a quality of insolent intimacy—in contrast to the calmly impersonal, casual manner with which he went on. "You know that this is the month when we all trade the achievements of our real professions. Richard Halley is to give concerts, Kay Ludlow is to appear in two plays written by authors who do not write for the outside world—and I give lectures, reporting on the work I've done during the year."

"Free lectures?"

"Certainly not. It's ten dollars per person for the course."

"I want to hear you."

He shook his head. "No. You'll be allowed to attend the concerts, the plays or any form of presentation for your own enjoyment, but

not my lectures or any other sale of ideas which you might carry out of this valley. Besides, my customers, or students, are only those who have a practical purpose in taking my course: Dwight Sanders, Lawrence Hammond, Dick McNamara, Owen Kellogg, a few others. I've added one beginner this year: Quentin Daniels."

"Really?" she said, almost with a touch of jealousy. "How can *he* afford anything that expensive?"

"On credit. I've given him a time-payment plan. He's worth it."

"Where do you lecture?"

"In the hangar, on Dwight Sanders' farm."

"And where do you work during the year?"

"In my laboratory."

She asked cautiously, "Where is your laboratory? Here, in the valley?"

He held her eyes for a moment, letting her see that his glance was amused and that he knew her purpose, then answered, "No."

"You've lived in the outside world for all of these twelve years?"

"Yes."

"Do you"—the thought seemed unbearable—"do you hold some such job as the others?"

"Oh yes." The amusement in his eyes seemed stressed by some special meaning.

"Don't tell me that you're a second assistant bookkeeper!"

"No, I'm not."

"Then what do you do?"

"I hold the kind of job that the world wishes me to hold."

"Where?"

He shook his head. "No, Miss Taggart. If you decide to leave the valley, this is one of the things that you are not to know."

He smiled again with that insolently personal quality which now seemed to say that he knew the threat contained in his answer and what it meant to her, then he rose from the table.

When he had gone, she felt as if the motion of time were an oppressive weight in the stillness of the house, like a stationary, half-solid mass slithering slowly into some faint elongation by a tempo that left her no measure to know whether minutes had passed or hours. She lay half-stretched in an armchair of the living room, crumpled by that heavy, indifferent lassitude which is not the will to laziness, but the frustration of the will to a secret violence that no lesser action can satisfy.

That special pleasure she had felt in watching him eat the food she had prepared—she thought, lying still, her eyes closed, her mind moving, like time, through some realm of veiled slowness—it had been the pleasure of knowing that she had provided him with a sensual enjoyment, that one form of his body's satisfaction had come from her. . . . There is reason, she thought, why a woman would wish to cook for a man . . . oh, not as a duty, not as a chronic career, only as a rare and special rite in symbol of . . . but what have they made of it, the preachers of woman's duty? . . . The castrated performance of a sickening drudgery was held to be a woman's proper virtue—while that which gave it meaning and sanction was