

why they needed both our professions; he never understood their interest in mine. He never understood its importance to himself—which, incidentally, is what destroyed him. But in those years he was still alive enough to grasp at these three students. ‘Grasp’ was the word for it. Intelligence being the only value he worshipped, he clutched them as if they were a private treasure of his own. He had always been a very lonely man. I think that in the whole of his life, Francisco and Ragnar were his only love, and John was his only passion. It was John whom he regarded as his particular heir, as his future, as his own immortality. John intended to be an inventor, which meant that he was to be a physicist; he was to take his post-graduate course under Robert Stadler. Francisco intended to leave after graduation and go to work; he was to be the perfect blend of both of us, his two intellectual fathers: an industrialist. And Ragnar—you didn’t know what profession Ragnar had chosen, Miss Taggart? No, it wasn’t stunt pilot, or jungle explorer, or deep-sea diver. It was something much more courageous than these. Ragnar intended to be a philosopher. An abstract, theoretical, academic, cloistered, ivory-tower philosopher. . . . Yes, Robert Stadler loved them. And yet—I have said that I would have killed to protect them, only there was no one to kill. If that were the solution—which, of course, it isn’t—the man to kill was Robert Stadler. Of any one person, of any single guilt for the evil which is now destroying the world—his was the heaviest guilt. *He* had the mind to know better. His was the only name of honor and achievement, used to sanction the rule of the looters. He was the man who delivered science into the power of the looters’ guns. John did not expect it. Neither did I. . . . John came back for his postgraduate course in physics. But he did not finish it. He left, on the day when Robert Stadler endorsed the establishment of a State Science Institute. I met Stadler by chance in a corridor of the university, as he came out of his office after his last conversation with John. He looked changed. I hope that I shall never have to see again a change of that kind in a man’s face. He saw me approaching—and he did not know, but I knew, what made him whirl upon me and cry, ‘I’m so sick of all of you impractical idealists!’ I turned away. I knew that I had heard a man pronounce a death sentence upon himself. . . . Miss Taggart, do you remember the question you asked me about my three pupils?”

“Yes,” she whispered.

“I could gather, from your question, the nature of what Robert Stadler had said to you about them. Tell me, why did he speak of them at all?”

He saw the faint movement of her bitter smile. “He told me their story as a justification for his belief in the futility of human intelligence. He told it to me as an example of his disillusioned hope. ‘Theirs was the kind of ability,’ he said, ‘one expects to see, in the future, changing the course of the world.’ ”

“Well, haven’t they done so?”

She nodded, slowly, holding her head inclined for a long moment in acquiescence and in homage.

“What I want you to understand, Miss Taggart, is the full evil of

those who claim to have become convinced that this earth, by its nature, is a realm of malevolence where the good has no chance to win. Let them check their premises. Let them check their standards of value. Let them check—before they grant themselves the unspeakable license of evil-as-necessity—whether they know what *is* the good and what are the conditions it requires. Robert Stadler now believes that intelligence is futile and that human life can be nothing but irrational. Did he expect John Galt to become a great scientist, willing to work under the orders of Dr. Floyd Ferris? Did he expect Francisco d'Anconia to become a great industrialist, willing to produce under the orders and for the benefit of Wesley Mouch? Did he expect Ragnar Danneskjöld to become a great philosopher, willing to preach, under the orders of Dr. Simon Pritchett, that there is no mind and that might is right? Would that have been a future which Robert Stadler would have considered rational? I want you to observe, Miss Taggart, that those who cry the loudest about their disillusionment, about the failure of virtue, the futility of reason, the impotence of logic—are those who have achieved the full, exact, logical result of the ideas they preached, so mercilessly logical that they dare not identify it. In a world that proclaims the non-existence of the mind, the moral righteousness of rule by brute force, the penalizing of the competent in favor of the incompetent, the sacrifice of the best to the worst—in such a world, the best have to turn against society and have to become its deadliest enemies. In such a world John Galt, the man of incalculable intellectual power, will remain an unskilled laborer—Francisco d'Anconia, the miraculous producer of wealth, will become a wastrel—and Ragnar Danneskjöld, the man of enlightenment, will become the man of violence. Society—and Dr. Robert Stadler—have achieved everything they advocated. What complaint do they now have to make? That the universe is irrational? Is it?"

He smiled; his smile had the pitiless gentleness of certainty.

"Every man builds his world in his own image," he said. "He has the power to choose, but no power to escape the necessity of choice. If he abdicates his power, he abdicates the status of man, and the grinding chaos of the irrational is what he achieves as his sphere of existence—by his own choice. Whoever preserves a single thought uncorrupted by any concession to the will of others, whoever brings into reality a matchstick or a patch of garden made in the image of his thought—he, and to that extent, is a man and that extent is the sole measure of his virtue. They"—he pointed at his pupils—"made no concessions. This"—he pointed at the valley—"is the measure of what they preserved and of what they are. . . . Now I can repeat my answer to the question you asked me, knowing that you will understand it fully. You asked me whether I was proud of the way my three sons had turned out. I am more proud than I had ever hoped to be. I am proud of their every action, of their every goal—and of every *value* they've chosen. And *this*, Dagny, is my full answer."

The sudden sound of her first name was pronounced in the tone of a father; he spoke his last two sentences, looking, not at her, but at Galt. She saw Galt answering him by an open glance held steady