

# 1 Anthem

2 by Ayn Rand

3

4

5 Chapter One

6

7 It is a sin to write this. It is a sin to think words no others think and to put them down  
8 upon a paper no others are to see. It is base and evil. It is as if we were speaking  
9 alone to no ears but our own. And we know well that there is no transgression blacker  
10 than to do or think alone. We have broken the laws. The laws say that men may not  
11 write unless the Council of Vocations bid them so. May we be forgiven!

12

13 But this is not the only sin upon us. We have committed a greater crime, and for this  
14 crime there is no name. What punishment awaits us if it be discovered we know not,  
15 for no such crime has come in the memory of men and there are no laws to provide for  
16 it.

17

18 It is dark here. The flame of the candle stands still in the air. Nothing moves in this  
19 tunnel save our hand on the paper. We are alone here under the earth. It is a fearful  
20 word, alone. The laws say that none among men may be alone, ever and at any time,  
21 for this is the great transgression and the root of all evil. But we have broken many  
22 laws. And now there is nothing here save our one body, and it is strange to see only  
23 two legs stretched on the ground, and on the wall before us the shadow of our one  
24 head.

25

26 The walls are cracked and water runs upon them in thin threads without sound, black  
27 and glistening as blood. We stole the candle from the larder of the Home of the Street  
28 Sweepers. We shall be sentenced to ten years in the Palace of Corrective Detention if  
29 it be discovered. But this matters not. It matters only that the light is precious and we  
30 should not waste it to write when we need it for that work which is our crime. Nothing  
31 matters save the work, our secret, our evil, our precious work.

32 Still, we must also write, for--may the Council have mercy upon us!--we wish to speak  
33 for once to no ears but our own. Our name is Equality 7-2521, as it is written on the

34 iron bracelet which all men wear on their left wrists with their names upon it. We are  
35 twenty-one years old. We are six feet tall, and this is a burden, for there are not many  
36 men who are six feet tall. Ever have the Teachers and the Leaders pointed to us and  
37 frowned and said: "There is evil in your bones, Equality 7-2521, for your body has  
38 grown beyond the bodies of your brothers." But we cannot change our bones nor our  
39 body. We were born with a curse. It has always driven us to thoughts which are  
40 forbidden. It has always given us wishes which men may not wish. We know that we  
41 are evil, but there is no will in us and no power to resist it. This is our wonder and our  
42 secret fear, that we know and do not resist. We strive to be like all our brother men,  
43 for all men must be alike. Over the portals of the Palace of the World Council, there  
44 are words cut in the marble, which we are required to repeat to ourselves whenever  
45 we are tempted:

46

47

48 "We are one in all and all in one.

49 There are no men but only the great WE,

50 One, indivisible and forever."--

51

52

53 We repeat this to ourselves, but it helps us not.

54

55 These words were cut long ago. There is green mould in the grooves of the letters and  
56 yellow streaks on the marble, which come from more years than men could count. And  
57 these words are the truth, for they are written on the Palace of the World Council, and  
58 the World Council is the body of all truth. Thus has it been ever since the Great  
59 Rebirth, and farther back than that no memory can reach. But we must never speak of  
60 the times before the Great Rebirth, else we are sentenced to three years in the Palace  
61 of Corrective Detention. It is only the Old Ones who whisper about it in the evenings,  
62 in the Home of the Useless. They whisper many strange things, of the towers which  
63 rose to the sky, in those Unmentionable Times, and of the wagons which moved  
64 without horses, and of the lights which burned without flame.

65 But those times were evil. And those times passed away, when men saw the Great  
66 Truth which is this: that all men are one and that there is no will save the will of all men  
67 together. All men are good and wise. It is only we, Equality 7-2521, we alone who

68 were born with a curse. For we are not like our brothers. And as we look back upon  
69 our life, we see that it has ever been thus and that it has brought us step by step to our  
70 last, supreme transgression, our crime of crimes hidden here under the ground. We  
71 remember the Home of the Infants where we lived till we were five years old, together  
72 with all the children of the City who had been born in the same year. The sleeping  
73 halls there were white and clean and bare of all things save one hundred beds. We  
74 were just like all our brothers then, save for the one transgression: we fought with our  
75 brothers. There are few offenses blacker than to fight with our brothers, at any age  
76 and for any cause whatsoever. The Council of the Home told us so, and of all the  
77 children of that year, we were locked in the cellar most often. When we were five  
78 years old, we were sent to the Home of the Students, where there are ten wards, for  
79 our ten years of learning. Men must learn till they reach their fifteenth year. Then they  
80 go to work. In the Home of the Students we arose when the big bell rang in the tower  
81 and we went to our beds when it rang again. Before we removed our garments, we  
82 stood in the great sleeping hall, and we raised our right arms, and we said all together  
83 with the three Teachers at the head: "We are nothing. Mankind is all. By the grace of  
84 our brothers are we allowed our lives. We exist through, by and for our brothers who  
85 are the State. Amen." Then we slept. The sleeping halls were white and clean and  
86 bare of all things save one hundred beds. We, Equality 7-2521, were not happy in  
87 those years in the Home of the Students. It was not that the learning was too hard for  
88 us. It was that the learning was too easy. This is a great sin, to be born with a head  
89 which is too quick. It is not good to be different from our brothers, but it is evil to be  
90 superior to them. The Teachers told us so, and they frowned when they looked upon  
91 us. So we fought against this curse. We tried to forget our lessons, but we always  
92 remembered. We tried not to understand what the Teachers taught, but we always  
93 understood it before the Teachers had spoken. We looked upon Union 5-3992, who  
94 were a pale boy with only half a brain, and we tried to say and do as they did, that we  
95 might be like them, like Union 5-3992, but somehow the Teachers knew that we were  
96 not. And we were lashed more often than all the other children. The Teachers were  
97 just, for they had been appointed by the Councils, and the Councils are the voice of all  
98 justice, for they are the voice of all men.

99 And if sometimes, in the secret darkness of our heart, we regret that which befell us on  
100 our fifteenth birthday, we know that it was through our own guilt. We had broken a law,  
101 for we had not paid heed to the words of our Teachers. The Teachers had said to us

102 all: "Dare not choose in your minds the work you would like to do when you leave the  
103 Home of the Students. You shall do what the Council of Vocations shall prescribe for  
104 you. For the Council of Vocations knows in its great wisdom where you are needed by  
105 your brother men, better than you can know it in your unworthy little minds. And if you  
106 are not needed by your brother men, there is no reason for you to burden the earth  
107 with your bodies." We knew this well, in the years of our childhood, but our curse  
108 broke our will. We were guilty and we confess it here: we were guilty of the great  
109 Transgression of Preference. We preferred some work and some lessons to the  
110 others. We did not listen well to the history of all the Councils elected since the Great  
111 Rebirth. But we loved the Science of Things. We wished to know. We wished to know  
112 about all the things which make the earth around us. We asked so many questions  
113 that the Teachers forbade it. We think that there are mysteries in the sky and under  
114 the water and in the plants which grow. But the Council of Scholars has said that  
115 there are no mysteries, and the Council of Scholars knows all things. And we learned  
116 much from our Teachers. We learned that the earth is flat and that the sun revolves  
117 around it, which causes the day and night. We learned the names of all the winds  
118 which blow over the seas and push the sails of our great ships. We learned how to  
119 bleed men to cure them of all ailments. We loved the Science of Things. And in the  
120 darkness, in the secret hour, when we awoke in the night and there were no brothers  
121 around us, but only their shapes in the beds and their snores, we closed our eyes, and  
122 we held our lips shut, and we stopped our breath, that no shudder might let our  
123 brothers see or hear or guess, and we thought that we wished to be sent to the Home  
124 of the Scholars when our time would come.

125

126 All of the great modern inventions come from the Home of the Scholars, such as the  
127 newest one, which was found only a hundred years ago, of how to make candles from  
128 wax and string; also, how to make glass, which is put in our windows to protect us  
129 from the rain. To find these things, the Scholars must study the earth and learn from  
130 the rivers, from the sands, from the winds and the rocks. And if we went to the Home  
131 of the Scholars, we could learn from these also. We could ask questions of these, for  
132 they do not forbid questions. And questions give us no rest.

133 We know not why our curse makes us seek we know not what, ever and ever. But we  
134 cannot resist it. It whispers to us that there are great things on this earth of ours, and  
135 that we must know them. We ask, why must we know, but it has no answer to give us.

136 We must know that we may know. So we wished to be sent to the Home of the  
137 Scholars. We wished it so much that our hands trembled under the blankets in the  
138 night, and we bit our arm to stop that other pain which we could not endure. It was evil  
139 and we dared not face our brothers in the morning. For men may wish nothing for  
140 themselves. And we were punished when the Council of Vocations came to give us  
141 our life Mandates which tell those who reach their fifteenth year what their work is to  
142 be for the rest of their days. The Council of Vocations came in on the first day of  
143 spring, and they sat in the great hall. And we who were fifteen and all the Teachers  
144 came into the great hall. And the Council of Vocations sat on a high dais, and they had  
145 but two words to speak to each of the Students. They called the Students' names, and  
146 when the Students stepped before them, one after another, the Council said:  
147 "Carpenter" or "Doctor" or "Cook" or "Leader." Then each Student raised their right  
148 arm and said: "The will of our brothers be done." Now if the Council said "Carpenter"  
149 or "Cook," the Students so assigned go to work and do not study any further. But if the  
150 Council has said "Leader," then those Students go into the Home of the Leaders,  
151 which is the greatest house in the City, for it has three stories. And there they study for  
152 many years, so that they may become candidates and be elected to the City Council  
153 and the State Council and the World Council--by a free and general vote of all men.  
154 But we wished not to be a Leader, even though it is a great honor. We wished to be a  
155 Scholar. So we awaited our turn in the great hall and then we heard the Council of  
156 Vocations call our name: "Equality 7-2521." We walked to the dais, and our legs did  
157 not tremble, and we looked up at the Council. There were five members of the  
158 Council, three of the male gender and two of the female. Their hair was white and their  
159 faces were cracked as the clay of a dry river bed. They were old. They seemed older  
160 than the marble of the Temple of the World Council. They sat before us and they did  
161 not move. And we saw no breath to stir the folds of their white togas. But we knew that  
162 they were alive, for a finger of the hand of the oldest rose, pointed to us, and fell down  
163 again. This was the only thing which moved, for the lips of the oldest did not move as  
164 they said: "Street Sweeper." We felt the cords of our neck grow tight as our head rose  
165 higher to look upon the faces of the Council, and we were happy. We knew we had  
166 been guilty, but now we had a way to atone for it.  
167 We would accept our Life Mandate, and we would work for our brothers, gladly and  
168 willingly, and we would erase our sin against them, which they did not know, but we  
169 knew. So we were happy, and proud of ourselves and of our victory over ourselves.

170 We raised our right arm and we spoke, and our voice was the clearest, the steadiest  
171 voice in the hall that day, and we said:  
172  
173 "The will of our brothers be done."  
174  
175 And we looked straight into the eyes of the Council, but their eyes were as cold as  
176 blue glass buttons. So we went into the Home of the Street Sweepers. It is a grey  
177 house on a narrow street. There is a sundial in its courtyard, by which the Council of  
178 the Home can tell the hours of the day and when to ring the bell. When the bell rings,  
179 we all arise from our beds. The sky is green and cold in our windows to the east. The  
180 shadow on the sundial marks off a half-hour while we dress and eat our breakfast in  
181 the dining hall, where there are five long tables with twenty clay plates and twenty clay  
182 cups on each table. Then we go to work in the streets of the City, with our brooms and  
183 our rakes. In five hours, when the sun is high, we return to the Home and we eat our  
184 midday meal, for which one-half hour is allowed. Then we go to work again. In five  
185 hours, the shadows are blue on the pavements, and the sky is blue with a deep  
186 brightness which is not bright. We come back to have our dinner, which lasts one  
187 hour. Then the bell rings and we walk in a straight column to one of the City Halls, for  
188 the Social Meeting. Other columns of men arrive from the Homes of the different  
189 Trades. The candles are lit, and the Councils of the different Homes stand in a pulpit,  
190 and they speak to us of our duties and of our brother men. Then visiting Leaders  
191 mount the pulpit and they read to us the speeches which were made in the City  
192 Council that day, for the City Council represents all men and all men must know. Then  
193 we sing hymns, the Hymn of Brotherhood, and the Hymn of Equality, and the Hymn of  
194 the Collective Spirit. The sky is a soggy purple when we return to the Home. Then the  
195 bell rings and we walk in a straight column to the City Theatre for three hours of Social  
196 Recreation. There a play is shown upon the stage, with two great choruses from the  
197 Home of the Actors, which speak and answer all together, in two great voices. The  
198 plays are about toil and how good it is. Then we walk back to the Home in a straight  
199 column. The sky is like a black sieve pierced by silver drops that tremble, ready to  
200 burst through. The moths beat against the street lanterns.  
201 We go to our beds and we sleep, till the bell rings again. The sleeping halls are white  
202 and clean and bare of all things save one hundred beds. Thus have we lived each  
203 day of four years, until two springs ago when our crime happened. Thus must all men

204 live until they are forty. At forty, they are worn out. At forty, they are sent to the Home  
205 of the Useless, where the Old Ones live. The Old Ones do not work, for the State  
206 takes care of them. They sit in the sun in summer and they sit by the fire in winter.  
207 They do not speak often, for they are weary. The Old Ones know that they are soon to  
208 die. When a miracle happens and some live to be forty-five, they are the Ancient  
209 Ones, and children stare at them when passing by the Home of the Useless. Such is  
210 to be our life, as that of all our brothers and of the brothers who came before us. Such  
211 would have been our life, had we not committed our crime which has changed all  
212 things for us. And it was our curse which drove us to our crime. We had been a good  
213 Street Sweeper and like all our brother Street Sweepers, save for our cursed wish to  
214 know. We looked too long at the stars at night, and at the trees and the earth. And  
215 when we cleaned the yard of the Home of the Scholars, we gathered the glass vials,  
216 the pieces of metal, the dried bones which they had discarded. We wished to keep  
217 these things and to study them, but we had no place to hide them. So we carried them  
218 to the City Cesspool. And then we made the discovery. It was on a day of the spring  
219 before last. We Street Sweepers work in brigades of three, and we were with Union 5-  
220 3992, they of the half-brain, and with International 4-8818. Now Union 5-3992 are a  
221 sickly lad and sometimes they are stricken with convulsions, when their mouth froths  
222 and their eyes turn white. But International 4-8818 are different. They are a tall, strong  
223 youth and their eyes are like fireflies, for there is laughter in their eyes. We cannot look  
224 upon International 4-8818 and not smile in answer. For this they were not liked in the  
225 Home of the Students, as it is not proper to smile without reason. And also they were  
226 not liked because they took pieces of coal and they drew pictures upon the walls, and  
227 they were pictures which made men laugh. But it is only our brothers in the Home of  
228 the Artists who are permitted to draw pictures, so International 4-8818 were sent to the  
229 Home of the Street Sweepers, like ourselves. International 4-8818 and we are friends.  
230 This is an evil thing to say, for it is a great transgression, the great Transgression of  
231 Preference, to love any among men better than the others, since we must love all men  
232 and all men are our friends. So International 4-8818 and we have never spoken of it.  
233  
234 But we know. We know, when we look into each other's eyes. And when we look thus  
235 without words, we both know other things also, strange things for which there are no  
236 words, and these things frighten us. So on that day of the spring before last, Union 5-  
237 3992 were stricken with convulsions on the edge of the City, near the City Theatre.

238 We left them to lie in the shade of the Theatre tent and we went with International 4-  
239 8818 to finish our work. We came together to the great ravine behind the Theatre. It is  
240 empty save for trees and weeds. Beyond the ravine there is a plain, and beyond the  
241 plain there lies the Uncharted Forest, about which men must not think. We were  
242 gathering the papers and the rags which the wind had blown from the Theatre, when  
243 we saw an iron bar among the weeds. It was old and rusted by many rains. We pulled  
244 with all our strength, but we could not move it. So we called International 4-8818, and  
245 together we scraped the earth around the bar. Of a sudden the earth fell in before us,  
246 and we saw an old iron grill over a black hole. International 4-8818 stepped back. But  
247 we pulled at the grill and it gave way. And then we saw iron rings as steps leading  
248 down a shaft into a darkness without bottom. "We shall go down," we said to  
249 International 4-8818. "It is forbidden," they answered. We said: "The Council does not  
250 know of this hole, so it cannot be forbidden." And they answered: "Since the Council  
251 does not know of this hole, there can be no law permitting to enter it. And everything  
252 which is not permitted by law is forbidden." But we said: "We shall go, none the less."  
253 They were frightened, but they stood by and watched us go. We hung on the iron  
254 rings with our hands and our feet. We could see nothing below us. And above us the  
255 hole open upon the sky grew smaller and smaller, till it came to be the size of a button.  
256 But still we went down. Then our foot touched the ground. We rubbed our eyes, for we  
257 could not see. Then our eyes became used to the darkness, and we could not believe  
258 what we saw. No man known to us could have built this place, nor the men known to  
259 our brothers who lived before us, and yet it was built by men. It was a great tunnel. Its  
260 walls were hard and smooth to the touch; it felt like stone, but it was not stone. On the  
261 ground there were long thin tracks of iron, but it was not iron; it felt smooth and cold as  
262 glass. We knelt, and we crawled forward, our hand groping along the iron line to see  
263 where it would lead. But there was an unbroken night ahead. Only the iron tracks  
264 glowed through it, straight and white, calling us to follow. But we could not follow, for  
265 we were losing the puddle of light behind us. So we turned and we crawled back, our  
266 hand on the iron line. And our heart beat in our fingertips, without reason. And then we  
267 knew. We knew suddenly that this place was left from the Unmentionable Times.  
268 So it was true, and those Times had been, and all the wonders of those Times.  
269 Hundreds upon hundreds of years ago men knew secrets which we have lost. And we  
270 thought: "This is a foul place. They are damned who touch the things of the  
271 Unmentionable Times." But our hand which followed the track, as we crawled, clung to

272 the iron as if it would not leave it, as if the skin of our hand were thirsty and begging of  
273 the metal some secret fluid beating in its coldness. We returned to the earth.  
274 International 4-8818 looked upon us and stepped back. "Equality 7-2521," they said,  
275 "your face is white." But we could not speak and we stood looking upon them. They  
276 backed away, as if they dared not touch us. Then they smiled, but it was not a gay  
277 smile; it was lost and pleading. But still we could not speak. Then they said: "We shall  
278 report our find to the City Council and both of us will be rewarded." And then we  
279 spoke. Our voice was hard and there was no mercy in our voice. We said: "We shall  
280 not report our find to the City Council. We shall not report it to any men." They raised  
281 their hands to their ears, for never had they heard such words as these. "International  
282 4-8818," we asked, "will you report us to the Council and see us lashed to death  
283 before your eyes?" They stood straight of a sudden and they answered: "Rather  
284 would we die." "Then," we said, "keep silent. This place is ours. This place belongs to  
285 us, Equality 7-2521, and to no other men on earth. And if ever we surrender it, we  
286 shall surrender our life with it also." Then we saw that the eyes of International 4-8818  
287 were full to the lids with tears they dared not drop, they whispered, and their voice  
288 trembled, so that their words lost all shape: "The will of the Council is above all things,  
289 for it is the will of our brothers, which is holy. But if you wish it so, we shall obey you.  
290 Rather shall we be evil with you than good with all our brothers. May the Council have  
291 mercy upon both our hearts!" Then we walked away together and back to the Home  
292 of the Street Sweepers. And we walked in silence. Thus did it come to pass that each  
293 night, when the stars are high and the Street Sweepers sit in the City Theatre, we,  
294 Equality 7-2521, steal out and run through the darkness to our place. It is easy to  
295 leave the Theatre; when the candles are blown and the Actors come onto the stage,  
296 no eyes can see us as we crawl under our seat and under the cloth of the tent. Later it  
297 is easy to steal through the shadows and fall in line next to International 4-8818, as the  
298 column leaves the Theatre. It is dark in the streets and there are no men about, for no  
299 men may walk through the City when they have no mission to walk there. Each night,  
300 we run to the ravine, and we remove the stones we have piled upon the iron grill to  
301 hide it from men. Each night, for three hours, we are under the earth, alone.  
302 We have stolen candles from the Home of the Street Sweepers, we have stolen flints  
303 and knives and paper, and we have brought them to this place. We have stolen glass  
304 vials and powders and acids from the Home of the Scholars. Now we sit in the tunnel  
305 for three hours each night and we study. We melt strange metals, and we mix acids,

306 and we cut open the bodies of the animals which we find in the City Cesspool. We  
307 have built an oven of the bricks we gathered in the streets. We burn the wood we find  
308 in the ravine. The fire flickers in the oven and blue shadows dance upon the walls, and  
309 there is no sound of men to disturb us. We have stolen manuscripts. This is a great  
310 offense. Manuscripts are precious, for our brothers in the Home of the Clerks spend  
311 one year to copy one single script in their clear handwriting. Manuscripts are rare and  
312 they are kept in the Home of the Scholars. So we sit under the earth and we read the  
313 stolen scripts. Two years have passed since we found this place. And in these two  
314 years we have learned more than we had learned in the ten years of the Home of the  
315 Students. We have learned things which are not in the scripts. We have solved  
316 secrets of which the Scholars have no knowledge. We have come to see how great is  
317 the unexplored, and many lifetimes will not bring us to the end of our quest. We wish  
318 nothing, save to be alone and to learn, and to feel as if with each day our sight were  
319 growing sharper than the hawk's and clearer than rock crystal. Strange are the ways  
320 of evil. We are false in the faces of our brothers. We are defying the will of our  
321 Councils. We alone, of the thousands who walk this earth, we alone in this hour are  
322 doing a work which has no purpose save that we wish to do it. The evil of our crime is  
323 not for the human mind to probe. The nature of our punishment, if it be discovered, is  
324 not free for the human heart to ponder. Never, not in the memory of the Ancient Ones'  
325 Ancients, never have men done what we are doing. And yet there is no shame in us  
326 and no regret. We say to ourselves that we are a wretch and a traitor. But we feel no  
327 burden upon our spirit and no fear in our heart. And it seems to us that our spirit is  
328 clear as a lake troubled by no eyes save those of the sun. And in our heart--strange  
329 are the ways of evil!-- in our heart there is the first peace we have known in twenty  
330 years.  
331

332 Chapter Two

333

334 Liberty 5-3000 . . . Liberty five-three thousand . . . Liberty 5-3000 . . . .

335

336 We wish to write this name. We wish to speak it, but we dare not speak it above a  
337 whisper. For men are forbidden to take notice of women, and women are forbidden to  
338 take notice of men. But we think of one among women, they whose name is Liberty 5-  
339 3000, and we think of no others. The women who have been assigned to work the soil  
340 live in the Homes of the Peasants beyond the City. Where the City ends there is a  
341 great road winding off to the north, and we Street Sweepers must keep this road clean  
342 to the first milepost. There is a hedge along the road, and beyond the hedge lie the  
343 fields. The fields are black and ploughed, and they lie like a great fan before us, with  
344 their furrows gathered in some hand beyond the sky, spreading forth from that hand,  
345 opening wide apart as they come toward us, like black pleats that sparkle with thin,  
346 green spangles. Women work in the fields, and their white tunics in the wind are like  
347 the wings of sea-gulls beating over the black soil. And there it was that we saw Liberty  
348 5-3000 walking along the furrows. Their body was straight and thin as a blade of iron.  
349 Their eyes were dark and hard and glowing, with no fear in them, no kindness and no  
350 guilt. Their hair was golden as the sun; their hair flew in the wind, shining and wild, as  
351 if it defied men to restrain it. They threw seeds from their hand as if they deigned to  
352 fling a scornful gift, and the earth was a beggar under their feet. We stood still; for the  
353 first time we knew fear, and then pain. And we stood still that we might not spill this  
354 pain more precious than pleasure. Then we heard a voice from the others call their  
355 name: "Liberty 5-3000," and they turned and walked back. Thus we learned their  
356 name, and we stood watching them go, till their white tunic was lost in the blue mist.  
357 And the following day, as we came to the northern road, we kept our eyes upon  
358 Liberty 5-3000 in the field. And each day thereafter we knew the illness of waiting for  
359 our hour on the northern road. And there we looked at Liberty 5-3000 each day. We  
360 know not whether they looked at us also, but we think they did. Then one day they  
361 came close to the hedge, and suddenly they turned to us. They turned in a whirl and  
362 the movement of their body stopped, as if slashed off, as suddenly as it had started.  
363 They stood still as a stone, and they looked straight upon us, straight in our eyes.  
364 There was no smile on their face, and no welcome. But their face was taut, and their  
365 eyes were dark. Then they turned as swiftly, and they walked away from us.

366 But the following day, when we came to the road, they smiled. They smiled to us and  
367 for us. And we smiled in answer. Their head fell back, and their arms fell, as if their  
368 arms and their thin white neck were stricken suddenly with a great lassitude. They  
369 were not looking upon us, but upon the sky. Then they glanced at us over their  
370 shoulder, and we felt as if a hand had touched our body, slipping softly from our lips to  
371 our feet. Every morning thereafter, we greeted each other with our eyes. We dared  
372 not speak. It is a transgression to speak to men of other Trades, save in groups at the  
373 Social Meetings. But once, standing at the hedge, we raised our hand to our forehead  
374 and then moved it slowly, palm down, toward Liberty 5-3000. Had the others seen it,  
375 they could have guessed nothing, for it looked only as if we were shading our eyes  
376 from the sun. But Liberty 5-3000 saw it and understood. They raised their hand to their  
377 forehead and moved it as we had. Thus, each day, we greet Liberty 5-3000, and they  
378 answer, and no men can suspect. We do not wonder at this new sin of ours. It is our  
379 second Transgression of Preference, for we do not think of all our brothers, as we  
380 must, but only of one, and their name is Liberty 5-3000. We do not know why we think  
381 of them. We do not know why, when we think of them, we feel of a sudden that the  
382 earth is good and that it is not a burden to live. We do not think of them as Liberty 5-  
383 3000 any longer. We have given them a name in our thoughts. We call them the  
384 Golden One. But it is a sin to give men other names which distinguish them from other  
385 men. Yet we call them the Golden One, for they are not like the others. The Golden  
386 One are not like the others. And we take no heed of the law which says that men may  
387 not think of women, save at the Time of Mating. This is the time each spring when all  
388 the men older than twenty and all the women older than eighteen are sent for one  
389 night to the City Palace of Mating. And each of the men have one of the women  
390 assigned to them by the Council of Eugenics. Children are born each winter, but  
391 women never see their children and children never know their parents. Twice have we  
392 been sent to the Palace of Mating, but it is an ugly and shameful matter, of which we  
393 do not like to think. We had broken so many laws, and today we have broken one  
394 more. Today we spoke to the Golden One. The other women were far off in the field,  
395 when we stopped at the hedge by the side of the road. The Golden One were kneeling  
396 alone at the moat which runs through the field. And the drops of water falling from their  
397 hands, as they raised the water to their lips, were like sparks of fire in the sun.  
398

399 Then the Golden One saw us, and they did not move, kneeling there, looking at us,  
400 and circles of light played upon their white tunic, from the sun on the water of the  
401 moat, and one sparkling drop fell from a finger of their hand held as frozen in the air.  
402 Then the Golden One rose and walked to the hedge, as if they had heard a command  
403 in our eyes. The two other Street Sweepers of our brigade were a hundred paces  
404 away down the road. And we thought that International 4-8818 would not betray us,  
405 and Union 5-3992 would not understand. So we looked straight upon the Golden One,  
406 and we saw the shadows of their lashes on their white cheeks and the sparks of sun  
407 on their lips. And we said: "You are beautiful, Liberty 5-3000." Their face did not  
408 move and they did not avert their eyes. Only their eyes grew wider, and there was  
409 triumph in their eyes, and it was not triumph over us, but over things we could not  
410 guess. Then they asked: "What is your name?" "Equality 7-2521," we answered.  
411 "You are not one of our brothers, Equality 7-2521, for we do not wish you to be." We  
412 cannot say what they meant, for there are no words for their meaning, but we know it  
413 without words and we knew it then. "No," we answered, "nor are you one of our  
414 sisters." "If you see us among scores of women, will you look upon us?" "We shall  
415 look upon you, Liberty 5-3000, if we see you among all the women of the earth." Then  
416 they asked: "Are Street Sweepers sent to different parts of the City or do they always  
417 work in the same places?" "They always work in the same places," we answered,  
418 "and no one will take this road away from us." "Your eyes," they said, "are not like the  
419 eyes of any among men." And suddenly, without cause for the thought which came to  
420 us, we felt cold, cold to our stomach. "How old are you?" we asked. They understood  
421 our thought, for they lowered their eyes for the first time. "Seventeen," they  
422 whispered. And we sighed, as if a burden had been taken from us, for we had been  
423 thinking without reason of the Palace of Mating. And we thought that we would not let  
424 the Golden One be sent to the Palace. How to prevent it, how to bar the will of the  
425 Councils, we knew not, but we knew suddenly that we would. Only we do not know  
426 why such thought came to us, for these ugly matters bear no relation to us and the  
427 Golden One. What relation can they bear? Still, without reason, as we stood there by  
428 the hedge, we felt our lips drawn tight with hatred, a sudden hatred for all our brother  
429 men. And the Golden One saw it and smiled slowly, and there was in their smile the  
430 first sadness we had seen in them. We think that in the wisdom of women the Golden  
431 One had understood more than we can understand.

432 Then three of the sisters in the field appeared, coming toward the road, so the Golden  
433 One walked away from us. They took the bag of seeds, and they threw the seeds into  
434 the furrows of earth as they walked away. But the seeds flew wildly, for the hand of the  
435 Golden One was trembling. Yet as we walked back to the Home of the Street  
436 Sweepers, we felt that we wanted to sing, without reason. So we were reprimanded  
437 tonight, in the dining hall, for without knowing it we had begun to sing aloud some tune  
438 we had never heard. But it is not proper to sing without reason, save at the Social  
439 Meetings. "We are singing because we are happy," we answered the one of the  
440 Home Council who reprimanded us. "Indeed you are happy," they answered. "How  
441 else can men be when they live for their brothers?" And now, sitting here in our  
442 tunnel, we wonder about these words. It is forbidden, not to be happy. For, as it has  
443 been explained to us, men are free and the earth belongs to them; and all things on  
444 earth belong to all men; and the will of all men together is good for all; and so all men  
445 must be happy. Yet as we stand at night in the great hall, removing our garments for  
446 sleep, we look upon our brothers and we wonder. The heads of our brothers are  
447 bowed. The eyes of our brothers are dull, and never do they look one another in the  
448 eyes. The shoulders of our brothers are hunched, and their muscles are drawn, as if  
449 their bodies were shrinking and wished to shrink out of sight. And a word steals into  
450 our mind, as we look upon our brothers, and that word is fear. There is fear hanging in  
451 the air of the sleeping halls, and in the air of the streets. Fear walks through the City,  
452 fear without name, without shape. All men feel it and none dare to speak. We feel it  
453 also, when we are in the Home of the Street Sweepers. But here, in our tunnel, we feel  
454 it no longer. The air is pure under the ground. There is no odor of men. And these  
455 three hours give us strength for our hours above the ground. Our body is betraying  
456 us, for the Council of the Home looks with suspicion upon us. It is not good to feel too  
457 much joy nor to be glad that our body lives. For we matter not and it must not matter to  
458 us whether we live or die, which is to be as our brothers will it. But we, Equality 7-  
459 2521, are glad to be living. If this is a vice, then we wish no virtue. Yet our brothers  
460 are not like us. All is not well with our brothers. There are Fraternity 2-5503, a quiet  
461 boy with wise, kind eyes, who cry suddenly, without reason, in the midst of day or  
462 night, and their body shakes with sobs so they cannot explain. There are Solidarity 9-  
463 6347, who are a bright youth, without fear in the day; but they scream in their sleep,  
464 and they scream: "Help us! Help us! Help us!" into the night, in a voice which chills our  
465 bones, but the Doctors cannot cure Solidarity 9-6347.

466 And as we all undress at night, in the dim light of candles, our brothers are silent, for  
467 they dare not speak the thoughts of their minds. For all must agree with all, and they  
468 cannot know if their thoughts are the thoughts of all, and so they fear to speak. And  
469 they are glad when the candles are blown for the night. But we, Equality 7-2521, look  
470 through the window upon the sky, and there is peace in the sky, and cleanliness, and  
471 dignity. And beyond the City there lies the plain, and beyond the plain, black upon the  
472 black sky, there lies the Uncharted Forest. We do not wish to look upon the  
473 Uncharted Forest. We do not wish to think of it. But ever do our eyes return to that  
474 black patch upon the sky. Men never enter the Uncharted Forest, for there is no power  
475 to explore it and no path to lead among its ancient trees which stand as guards of  
476 fearful secrets. It is whispered that once or twice in a hundred years, one among the  
477 men of the City escape alone and run to the Uncharted Forest, without call or reason.  
478 These men do not return. They perish from hunger and from the claws of the wild  
479 beasts which roam the Forest. But our Councils say this is only a legend. We have  
480 heard that there are many Uncharted Forests over the land, among the Cities. And it is  
481 whispered that they have grown over the ruins of many cities of the Unmentionable  
482 Times. The trees have swallowed the ruins, and the bones under the ruins, and all the  
483 things which perished. And as we look upon the Uncharted Forest far in the night, we  
484 think of the secrets of the Unmentionable Times. And we wonder how it came to pass  
485 that these secrets were lost to the world. We have heard the legends of the great  
486 fighting, in which many men fought on one side and only a few on the other. These  
487 few were the Evil Ones and they were conquered. Then great fires raged over the  
488 land. And in these fires the Evil Ones were burned. And the fire which is called the  
489 Dawn of the Great Rebirth, was the Script Fire where all the scripts of the Evil Ones  
490 were burned, and with them all the words of the Evil Ones. Great mountains of flame  
491 stood in the squares of the Cities for three months. Then came the Great Rebirth. The  
492 words of the Evil Ones... The words of the Unmentionable Times... What are the  
493 words which we have lost? May the Council have mercy upon us! We had no wish to  
494 write such a question, and we knew not what we were doing till we had written it. We  
495 shall not ask this question and we shall not think it. We shall not call death upon our  
496 head. And yet... And yet... There is some word, one single word which is not in the  
497 language of men, but which has been. And this is the Unspeakable Word, which no  
498 men may speak nor hear. But sometimes, and it is rare, sometimes, somewhere, one  
499 among men find that word.

500 They find it upon scraps of old manuscripts or cut into the fragments of ancient stones.  
501 But when they speak it they are put to death. There is no crime punished by death in  
502 this world, save this one crime of speaking the Unspeakable Word. We have seen  
503 one of such men burned alive in the square of the City. And it was a sight which has  
504 stayed with us through the years, and it haunts us, and follows us, and it gives us no  
505 rest. We were a child then, ten years old. And we stood in the great square with all the  
506 children and all the men of the City, sent to behold the burning. They brought the  
507 Transgressor out into the square and they led him to the pyre. They had torn out the  
508 tongue of the Transgressor, so that they could speak no longer. The Transgressor  
509 were young and tall. They had hair of gold and eyes blue as morning. They walked to  
510 the pyre, and their step did not falter. And of all the faces on that square, of all the  
511 faces which shrieked and screamed and spat curses upon them, theirs was the  
512 calmest and happiest face. As the chains were wound over their body at the stake,  
513 and a flame set to the pyre, the Transgressor looked upon the City. There was a thin  
514 thread of blood running from the corner of their mouth, but their lips were smiling. And  
515 a monstrous thought came to us then, which has never left us. We had heard of  
516 Saints. There are the Saints of Labor, and the Saints of the Councils, and the Saints of  
517 the Great Rebirth. But we had never seen a Saint nor what the likeness of a Saint  
518 should be. And we thought then, standing in the square, that the likeness of a Saint  
519 was the face we saw before us in the flames, the face of the Transgressor of the  
520 Unspeakable Word. As the flames rose, a thing happened which no eyes saw but  
521 ours, else we would not be living today. Perhaps it had only seemed to us. But it  
522 seemed to us that the eyes of the Transgressor had chosen us from the crowd and  
523 were looking straight upon us. There was no pain in their eyes and no knowledge of  
524 the agony of their body. There was only joy in them, and pride, a pride holier than it is  
525 fit for human pride to be. And it seemed as if these eyes were trying to tell us  
526 something through the flames, to send into our eyes some word without sound. And it  
527 seemed as if these eyes were begging us to gather that word and not to let it go from  
528 us and from the earth. But the flames rose and we could not guess the word.... What--  
529 even if we have to burn for it like the Saint of the pyre --what is the Unspeakable  
530 Word?  
531

532 Chapter Three

533

534 We, Equality 7-2521, have discovered a new power of nature. And we have  
535 discovered it alone, and we are to know it. It is said. Now let us be lashed for it, if we  
536 must. The Council of Scholars has said that we all know the things which exist and  
537 therefore all the things which are not known by all do not exist. But we think that the  
538 Council of Scholars is blind. The secrets of this earth are not for all men to see, but  
539 only for those who will seek them. We know, for we have found a secret unknown to  
540 all our brothers. We know not what this power is nor whence it comes. But we know  
541 its nature, we have watched it and worked with it. We saw it first two years ago. One  
542 night, we were cutting open the body of a dead frog when we saw its leg jerking. It was  
543 dead, yet it moved. Some power unknown to men was making it move. We could not  
544 understand it. Then, after many tests, we found the answer. The frog had been  
545 hanging on a wire of copper; and it had been the metal of our knife which had sent a  
546 strange power to the copper through the brine of the frog's body. We put a piece of  
547 copper and a piece of zinc into a jar of brine, we touched a wire to them, and there,  
548 under our fingers, was a miracle which had never occurred before, a new miracle and  
549 a new power. This discovery haunted us. We followed it in preference to all our  
550 studies. We worked with it, we tested in more ways than we can describe, and each  
551 step was another miracle unveiling before us. We came to know that we had found the  
552 greatest power on earth. For it defies all the laws known to men. It makes the needle  
553 move and turn on the compass which we stole from the Home of the Scholars; but we  
554 had been taught, when still a child, that the loadstone points to the north and this is a  
555 law which nothing can change; yet our new power defies all laws. We found that it  
556 causes lightning, and never have men known what causes lightning. In thunderstorms,  
557 we raised a tall rod of iron by the side of our hole, and we watched it from below. We  
558 have seen the lightning strike it again and again. And now we know that metal draws  
559 the power of the sky, and that metal can be made to give it forth. We have built  
560 strange things with this discovery of ours. We used for it the copper wires which we  
561 found here under the ground. We have walked the length of our tunnel, with a candle  
562 lighting the way. We could go no farther than half a mile, for earth and rock had fallen  
563 at both ends. But we gathered all the things we found and we brought them to our  
564 work place. We found strange boxes with bars of metal inside, with many cords and  
565 strands and coils of metal.

566 We found wires that led to strange little globes of glass on the walls; they contained  
567 threads of metal thinner than a spider's web. These things help us in our work. We do  
568 not understand them, but we think that the men of the Unmentionable Times had  
569 known our power of the sky, and these things had some relation to it. We do not know,  
570 but we shall learn. We cannot stop now, even though it frightens us that we are alone  
571 in our knowledge. No single one can possess greater wisdom than the many Scholars  
572 who are elected by all men for their wisdom. Yet we can. We do. We have fought  
573 against saying it, but now it is said. We do not care. We forget all men, all laws and all  
574 things save our metals and our wires. So much is still to be learned! So long a road  
575 lies before us, and what care we if we must travel it alone!

576 Chapter Four

577

578 Many days passed before we could speak to the Golden One again. But then came  
579 the day when the sky turned white, as if the sun had burst and spread its flame in the  
580 air, and the fields lay still without breath, and the dust of the road was white in the  
581 glow. So the women of the field were weary, and they tarried over their work, and they  
582 were far from the road when we came. But the Golden One stood alone at the hedge,  
583 waiting. We stopped and we saw that their eyes, so hard and scornful to the world,  
584 were looking at us as if they would obey any word we might speak. And we said: "We  
585 have given you a name in our thoughts, Liberty 5-3000." "What is our name?" they  
586 asked. "The Golden One." "Nor do we call you Equality 7-2521 when we think of  
587 you." "What name have you given us?" They looked straight into our eyes and they  
588 held their head high and they answered: "The Unconquered." For a long time we  
589 could not speak. Then we said: "Such thoughts are forbidden, Golden One." "But you  
590 think such thoughts as these and you wish us to think them." We looked into their  
591 eyes and we could not lie. "Yes," we whispered, and they smiled, and then we said:  
592 "Our dearest one, do not obey us." They stepped back, and their eyes were wide and  
593 still. "Speak those words again," they whispered. "Which words?" we asked. But they  
594 did not answer, and we knew it. "Our dearest one," we whispered. Never have men  
595 said this to women. The head of the Golden One bowed slowly, and they stood still  
596 before us, their arms at their sides, the palms of their hands turned to us, as if their  
597 body were delivered in submission to our eyes. And we could not speak. Then they  
598 raised their head, and they spoke simply and gently, as if they wished us to forget  
599 some anxiety of their own. "The day is hot," they said, "and you have worked for many  
600 hours and you must be weary." "No," we answered. "It is cooler in the fields," they  
601 said, "and there is water to drink. Are you thirsty?" "Yes," we answered, "but we  
602 cannot cross the hedge." "We shall bring the water to you," they said. Then they knelt  
603 by the moat, they gathered water in their two hands, they rose and they held the water  
604 out to our lips. We do not know if we drank that water. We only knew suddenly that  
605 their hands were empty, but we were still holding our lips to their hands, and that they  
606 knew it but did not move. We raised our head and stepped back. For we did not  
607 understand what had made us do this, and we were afraid to understand it. And the  
608 Golden One stepped back, and stood looking upon their hands in wonder.

609 Then the Golden One moved away, even though no others were coming, and they  
610 moved stepping back, as if they could not turn from us, their arms bent before them,  
611 as if they could not lower their hands.  
612

613 Chapter Five

614

615 We made it. We created it. We brought it forth from the night of the ages. We alone.  
616 Our hands. Our mind. Ours alone and only. We know not what we are saying. Our  
617 head is reeling. We look upon the light which we had made. We shall be forgiven for  
618 anything we say tonight . . . Tonight, after more days and trials than we can count,  
619 we finished building a strange thing, from the remains of the Unmentionable Times, a  
620 box of glass, devised to give forth the power of the sky of greater strength than we had  
621 ever achieved before. And when we put our wires to this box, when we closed the  
622 current--the wire glowed! It came to life, it turned red, and a circle of light lay on the  
623 stone before us. We stood, and we held our head in our hands. We could not  
624 conceive of that which we had created. We had touched no flint, made no fire. Yet  
625 here was light, light that came from nowhere, light from the heart of metal. We blew  
626 out the candle. Darkness swallowed us. There was nothing left around us, nothing  
627 save night and a thin thread of flame in it, as a crack in the wall of a prison. We  
628 stretched our hands to the wire, and we saw our fingers in the red glow. We could not  
629 see our body nor feel it, and in that moment nothing existed save our two hands over a  
630 wire glowing in a black abyss. Then we thought of the meaning of that which lay  
631 before us. We can light our tunnel, and the City, and all the Cities of the world with  
632 nothing save metal and wires. We can give our brothers a new light, cleaner and  
633 brighter than any they have ever known. The power of the sky can be made to do  
634 men's bidding. There are no limits to its secrets and its might, and it can be made to  
635 grant us anything if we but choose to ask. Then we knew what we must do. Our  
636 discovery is too great for us to waste our time in sweeping streets. We must not keep  
637 our secret to ourselves, nor buried under the ground. We must bring it into the sight of  
638 all men. We need all our time, we need the work rooms of the Home of the Scholars,  
639 we want the help of our brother Scholars and their wisdom joined to ours. There is so  
640 much work ahead for all of us, for all the Scholars of the world. In a month, the World  
641 Council of Scholars is to meet in our City. It is a great Council, to which the wisest of  
642 all lands are elected, and it meets once a year in the different Cities of the earth. We  
643 shall go to this Council and we shall lay before them, as our gift, the glass box with the  
644 power of the sky. We shall confess everything to them. They will see, understand and  
645 forgive. For our gift is greater than our transgression. They will explain it to the Council  
646 of Vocations, and we shall be assigned to the Home of the Scholars.

647 This has never been done before, but neither has a gift such as ours ever been  
648 offered to men. We must wait. We must guard our tunnel as we had never guarded it  
649 before. For should any men save the Scholars learn of our secret, they would not  
650 understand it, nor would they believe us. They would see nothing, save our crime of  
651 working alone, and they would destroy us and our light. We care not about our body,  
652 but our light is... Yes, we do care. For the first time we do care about our body. For  
653 this wire is a part of our body, as a vein torn from us, glowing with our blood. Are we  
654 proud of this thread of metal, or of our hands which made it, or is there a line to divide  
655 these two? We stretch out our arms. For the first time do we know how strong our  
656 arms are. And a strange thought comes to us: we wonder, for the first time in our life,  
657 what we look like. Men never see their own faces and never ask their brothers about it,  
658 for it is evil to have concern for their own faces or bodies. But tonight, for a reason we  
659 cannot fathom, we wish it were possible to us to know the likeness of our own person.  
660

661 Chapter Six

662

663 We have not written for thirty days. For thirty days we have not been here, in our  
664 tunnel. We had been caught. It happened on that night when we wrote last. We  
665 forgot, that night, to watch the sand in the glass which tells us when three hours have  
666 passed and it is time to return to the City Theatre. When we remembered, the sand  
667 had run out. We hastened to the Theatre. But the big tent stood grey and silent  
668 against the sky. The streets of the City lay before us, dark and empty. If we went back  
669 to hide in our tunnel, we would be found and our light with us. So we walked to the  
670 Home of the Street Sweepers. When the Council of the Home questioned us, we  
671 looked upon the faces of the Council, but there was no curiosity in those faces, and no  
672 anger, and no mercy. So when the oldest of them asked us: "Where have you been?"  
673 we thought of our glass box and of our light, and we forgot all else. And we answered:  
674 "We will not tell you." The oldest did not question us further. They turned to the two  
675 youngest, and said, and their voice was bored: "Take our brother Equality 7-2521 to  
676 the Palace of Corrective Detention. Lash them until they tell." So we were taken to the  
677 Stone Room under the Palace of Corrective Detention. This room has no windows and  
678 it is empty save for an iron post. Two men stood by the post, naked but for leather  
679 aprons and leather hoods over their faces. Those who had brought us departed,  
680 leaving us to the two Judges who stood in a corner of the room. The Judges were  
681 small, thin men, grey and bent. They gave the signal to the two strong hooded ones.  
682 They tore our clothes from our body, they threw us down upon our knees and they tied  
683 our hands to the iron post. The first blow of the lash felt as if our spine had been cut in  
684 two. The second blow stopped the first, and for a second we felt nothing, then pain  
685 struck us in our throat and fire ran in our lungs without air. But we did not cry out. The  
686 lash whistled like a singing wind. We tried to count the blows, but we lost count. We  
687 knew that the blows were falling upon our back. Only we felt nothing upon our back  
688 any longer. A flaming grill kept dancing before our eyes, and we thought of nothing  
689 save that grill, a grill, a grill of red squares, and then we knew that we were looking at  
690 the squares of the iron grill in the door, and there were also the squares of stone on  
691 the walls, and the squares which the lash was cutting upon our back, crossing and re-  
692 crossing itself in our flesh. Then we saw a fist before us. It knocked our chin up, and  
693 we saw the red froth of our mouth on the withered fingers, and the Judge asked:  
694 "Where have you been?"

695 But we jerked our head away, hid our face upon our tied hands, and bit our lips. The  
696 lash whistled again. We wondered who was sprinkling burning coal dust upon the  
697 floor, for we saw drops of red twinkling on the stones around us. Then we knew  
698 nothing, save two voices snarling steadily, one after the other, even though we knew  
699 they were speaking many minutes apart: "Where have you been where have you  
700 been where have you been where have you been? . . ." And our lips moved, but the  
701 sound trickled back into our throat, and the sound was only: "The light . . . The light . .  
702 . The light. . . ." Then we knew nothing. We opened our eyes, lying on our stomach  
703 on the brick floor of a cell. We looked upon two hands lying far before us on the bricks,  
704 and we moved them, and we knew that they were our hands. But we could not move  
705 our body. Then we smiled, for we thought of the light and that we had not betrayed it.  
706 We lay in our cell for many days. The door opened twice each day, once for the men  
707 who brought us bread and water, and once for the Judges. Many Judges came to our  
708 cell, first the humblest and then the most honored Judges of the City. They stood  
709 before us in their white togas, and they asked: "Are you ready to speak?" But we  
710 shook our head, lying before them on the floor. And they departed. We counted each  
711 day and each night as it passed. Then, tonight, we knew that we must escape. For  
712 tomorrow the World Council of Scholars is to meet in our City. It was easy to escape  
713 from the Palace of Corrective Detention. The locks are old on the doors and there are  
714 no guards about. There is no reason to have guards, for men have never defied the  
715 Councils so far as to escape from whatever place they were ordered to be. Our body  
716 is healthy and strength returns to it speedily. We lunged against the door and it gave  
717 way. We stole through the dark passages, and through the dark streets, and down  
718 into our tunnel. We lit the candle and we saw that our place had not been found and  
719 nothing had been touched. And our glass box stood before us on the cold oven, as we  
720 had left it. What matter they now, the scars upon our back! Tomorrow, in the full light  
721 of day, we shall take our box, and leave our tunnel open, and walk through the streets  
722 to the Home of the Scholars. We shall put before them the greatest gift ever offered to  
723 men. We shall tell them the truth. We shall hand to them, as our confession, these  
724 pages we have written. We shall join our hands to theirs, and we shall work together,  
725 with the power of the sky, for the glory of mankind. Our blessing upon you, our  
726 brothers! Tomorrow, you will take us back into your fold and we shall be an outcast no  
727 longer. Tomorrow we shall be one of you again. Tomorrow . . .

728 Chapter Seven

729

730 It is dark here in the forest. The leaves rustle over our head, black against the last gold  
731 of the sky. The moss is soft and warm. We shall sleep on this moss for many nights,  
732 till the beasts of the forest come to tear our body. We have no bed now, save the  
733 moss, and no future, save the beasts. We are old now, yet we were young this  
734 morning, when we carried our glass box through the streets of the City to the Home of  
735 the Scholars. No men stopped us, for there were none about the Palace of Corrective  
736 Detention, and the others knew nothing. No men stopped us at the gate. We walked  
737 through the empty passages and into the great hall where the World Council of  
738 Scholars sat in solemn meeting. We saw nothing as we entered, save the sky in the  
739 great windows, blue and glowing. Then we saw the Scholars who sat around a long  
740 table; they were as shapeless clouds huddled at the rise of a great sky. There were  
741 the men whose famous names we knew, and others from distant lands whose names  
742 we had not heard. We saw a great painting on the wall over their heads, of the twenty  
743 illustrious men who had invented the candle. All the heads of the Council turned to us  
744 as we entered. These great and wise of the earth did not know what to think of us, and  
745 they looked upon us with wonder and curiosity, as if we were a miracle. It is true that  
746 our tunic was torn and stained with brown stains which had been blood. We raised our  
747 right arm and we said: "Our greeting to you, our honored brothers of the World  
748 Council of Scholars!" Then Collective 0-0009, the oldest and wisest of the Council,  
749 spoke and asked: "Who are you, our brother? For you do not look like a Scholar."  
750 "Our name is Equality 7-2521," we answered, "and we are a Street Sweeper of this  
751 City." Then it was as if a great wind had stricken the hall, for all the Scholars spoke at  
752 once, and they were angry and frightened. "A Street Sweeper! A Street Sweeper  
753 walking in upon the World Council of Scholars! It is not to be believed! It is against all  
754 the rules and all the laws!" But we knew how to stop them. "Our brothers!" we said.  
755 "We matter not, nor our transgression. It is only our brother men who matter. Give no  
756 thought to us, for we are nothing, but listen to our words, for we bring you a gift such  
757 as has never been brought to men. Listen to us, for we hold the future of mankind in  
758 our hands." Then they listened. We placed our glass box on the table before them.  
759 We spoke of it, and of our long quest, and of our tunnel, and of our escape from the  
760 Palace of Corrective Detention. Not a hand moved in that hall, as we spoke, nor an  
761 eye.

762 Then we put the wires to the box, and they all bent forward and sat still, watching. And  
763 we stood still, our eyes upon the wire. And slowly, slowly as a flush of blood, a red  
764 flame trembled in the wire. Then the wire glowed. But terror struck the men of the  
765 Council. They leapt to their feet, they ran from the table, and they stood pressed  
766 against the wall, huddled together, seeking the warmth of one another's bodies to give  
767 them courage. We looked upon them and we laughed and said: "Fear nothing, our  
768 brothers. There is a great power in these wires, but this power is tamed. It is yours.  
769 We give it to you." Still they would not move. "We give you the power of the sky!" we  
770 cried. "We give you the key to the earth! Take it, and let us be one of you, the  
771 humblest among you. Let us work together, and harness this power, and make it ease  
772 the toil of men. Let us throw away our candles and our torches. Let us flood our cities  
773 with light. Let us bring a new light to men!" But they looked upon us, and suddenly we  
774 were afraid. For their eyes were still, and small, and evil. "Our brothers!" we cried.  
775 "Have you nothing to say to us?" Then Collective 0-0009 moved forward. They moved  
776 to the table and the others followed. "Yes," spoke Collective 0-0009, "we have much  
777 to say to you." The sound of their voice brought silence to the hall and to the beat of  
778 our heart. "Yes," said Collective 0-0009, "we have much to say to a wretch who have  
779 broken all the laws and who boast of their infamy! How dared you think that your mind  
780 held greater wisdom than the minds of your brothers? And if the Council had decreed  
781 that you be a Street Sweeper, how dared you think that you could be of greater use to  
782 men than in sweeping the streets?" "How dared you, gutter cleaner," spoke Fraternity  
783 9-3452, "to hold yourself as one alone and with the thoughts of one and not of many?"  
784 "You shall be burned at the stake," said Democracy 4-6998. "No, they shall be  
785 lashed," said Unanimity 7-3304, "till there is nothing left under the lashes." "No," said  
786 Collective 0-0009, "we cannot decide upon this, our brothers. No such crime has ever  
787 been committed, and it is not for us to judge. Nor for any small Council. We shall  
788 deliver this creature to the World Council itself and let their will be done." We looked  
789 upon them and we pleaded: "Our brothers! You are right. Let the will of the Council be  
790 done upon our body. We do not care. But the light? What will you do with the light?"  
791 Collective 0-0009 looked upon us, and they smiled. "So you think you have found a  
792 new power," said Collective 0-0009. "Do you think all your brothers think that?" "No,"  
793 we answered. "What is not thought by all men cannot be true," said Collective 0-0009.  
794 "You have worked on this alone?" asked International 1-5537. "Yes," we answered.  
795 "What is not done collectively cannot be good," said International 1-5537.

796 "Many men in the Homes of the Scholars have had strange new ideas in the past,"  
797 said Solidarity 8-1164, "but when the majority of their brother Scholars voted against  
798 them, they abandoned their ideas, as all men must." "This box is useless," said  
799 Alliance 6-7349. "Should it be what they claim of it," said Harmony 9-2642, "then it  
800 would bring ruin to the Department of Candles. The Candle is a great boon to  
801 mankind, as approved by all men. Therefore it cannot be destroyed by the whim of  
802 one." "This would wreck the Plans of the World Council," said Unanimity 2-9913, "and  
803 without the Plans of the World Council the sun cannot rise. It took fifty years to secure  
804 the approval of all the Councils for the Candle, and to decide upon the number  
805 needed, and to re-fit the Plans so as to make candles instead of torches. This touched  
806 upon thousands and thousands of men working in scores of States. We cannot alter  
807 the Plans again so soon." "And if this should lighten the toil of men," said Similarity 5-  
808 0306, "then it is a great evil, for men have no cause to exist save in toiling for other  
809 men." Then Collective 0-0009 rose and pointed at our box. "This thing," they said,  
810 "must be destroyed." And all the others cried as one: "It must be destroyed!" Then  
811 we leapt to the table. We seized our box, we shoved them aside, and we ran to the  
812 window. We turned and we looked at them for the last time, and a rage, such as is not  
813 fit for humans to know, choked our voice in our throat. "You fools!" we cried. "You  
814 fools! You thrice-damned fools!" We swung our fist through the windowpane, and we  
815 leapt out in a ringing rain of glass. We fell, but we never let the box fall from our  
816 hands. Then we ran. We ran blindly, and men and houses streaked past us in a torrent  
817 without shape. And the road seemed not to be flat before us, but as if it were leaping  
818 up to meet us, and we waited for the earth to rise and strike us in the face. But we ran.  
819 We knew not where we were going. We knew only that we must run, run to the end of  
820 the world, to the end of our days. Then we knew suddenly that we were lying on a soft  
821 earth and that we had stopped. Trees taller than we had ever seen before stood over  
822 us in a great silence. Then we knew. We were in the Uncharted Forest. We had not  
823 thought of coming here, but our legs had carried our wisdom, and our legs had  
824 brought us to the Uncharted Forest against our will. Our glass box lay beside us. We  
825 crawled to it, we fell upon it, our face in our arms, and we lay still. We lay thus for a  
826 long time. Then we rose, we took our box, had walked on into the forest. It mattered  
827 not where we went. We knew that men would not follow us, for they never entered the  
828 Uncharted Forest. We had nothing to fear from them. The forest disposes of its own  
829 victims. This gave us no fear either.

830 Only we wished to be away from the City and the air that touches upon the air of the  
831 City. So we walked on, our box in our arms, our heart empty. We are doomed.  
832 Whatever days are left to us, we shall spend them alone. And we have heard of the  
833 corruption to be found in solitude. We have torn ourselves from the truth which is our  
834 brother men, and there is no road back for us, and no redemption. We know these  
835 things, but we do not care. We care for nothing on earth. We are tired. Only the glass  
836 box in our arms is like a living heart that gives us strength. We have lied to ourselves.  
837 We have not built this box for the good of our brothers. We built it for its own sake. It is  
838 above all our brothers to us, and its truth above their truth. Why wonder about this?  
839 We have not many days to live. We are walking to the fangs awaiting us somewhere  
840 among the great, silent trees. There is not a thing behind us to regret. Then a blow of  
841 pain struck us, our first and our only. We thought of the Golden One. We thought of  
842 the Golden One whom we shall never see again. Then the pain passed. It is best. We  
843 are one of the Damned. It is best if the Golden One forget our name and the body  
844 which bore that name.

845 Chapter Eight

846

847 It has been a day of wonder, this, our first day in the forest. We awoke when a ray of  
848 sunlight fell across our face. We wanted to leap to our feet, as we have had to leap to  
849 our feet every morning of our life, but we remembered suddenly that no bell had rung  
850 and that there was no bell to ring anywhere. We lay on our back, we threw our arms  
851 out, and we looked up at the sky. The leaves had edges of silver that trembled and  
852 rippled like a river of green and fire flowing high above us. We did not wish to move.  
853 We thought suddenly that we could lie thus as long as we wished, and we laughed  
854 aloud at the thought. We could also rise, or run, or leap, or fall down again. We were  
855 thinking that these were things without sense, but before we knew it, our body had  
856 risen in one leap. Our arms stretched out of their own will, and our body whirled and  
857 whirled, till it raised a wind to rustle through the leaves of the bushes. Then our hands  
858 seized a branch and swung us high into a tree, with no aim save the wonder of  
859 learning the strength of our body. The branch snapped under us and we fell upon the  
860 moss that was soft as a cushion. Then our body, losing all sense, rolled over and over  
861 on the moss, dry leaves in our tunic, in our hair, in our face. And we heard suddenly  
862 that we were laughing, laughing aloud, laughing as if there were no power left in us  
863 save laughter. Then we took our glass box, and we went into the forest. We went on,  
864 cutting through the branches, and it was as if we were swimming through a sea of  
865 leaves, with the bushes as waves rising and falling and rising around us, and flinging  
866 their green sprays high to the treetops. The trees parted before us, calling us forward.  
867 The forest seemed to welcome us. We went on, without thought, without care, with  
868 nothing to feel save the song of our body. We stopped when we felt hunger. We saw  
869 birds in the tree branches, and flying from under our footsteps. We picked a stone and  
870 we sent it as an arrow at a bird. It fell before us. We made a fire, we cooked the bird,  
871 and we ate it, and no meal had ever tasted better to us. And we thought suddenly that  
872 there was a great satisfaction to be found in the food which we need and obtain by our  
873 own hand. And we wished to be hungry again and soon, that we might know again this  
874 strange new pride in eating. Then we walked on. And we came to a stream which lay  
875 as a streak of glass among the trees. It lay so still that we saw no water but only a cut  
876 in the earth, in which the trees grew down, upturned, and the sky at the bottom. We  
877 knelt by the stream and we bent down to drink. And then we stopped. For, upon the  
878 blue of the sky below us, we saw our own face for the first time.

879 We sat still and we held our breath. For our face and our body were beautiful. Our  
880 face was not like the faces of our brothers, for we felt no pity when we looked upon it.  
881 Our body was not like the bodies of our brothers, for our limbs were straight and thin  
882 and hard and strong. And we thought that we could trust this being who looked upon  
883 us from the stream, and that we had nothing to fear from this being. We walked on till  
884 the sun had set. When the shadows gathered among the trees, we stopped in a hollow  
885 between the roots, where we shall sleep tonight. And suddenly, for the first time this  
886 day, we remembered that we are the Damned. We remembered it, and we laughed.  
887 We are writing this on the paper we had hidden in our tunic together with the written  
888 pages we had brought for the World Council of Scholars, but never given to them. We  
889 have much to speak of to ourselves, and we hope we shall find the words for it in the  
890 days to come. Now, we cannot speak, for we cannot  
891 understand.  
892

893 Chapter Nine

894

895 We have not written for many days. We did not wish to speak. For we needed no  
896 words to remember that which has happened to us. It was on our second day in the  
897 forest that we heard steps behind us. We hid in the bushes, and we waited. The steps  
898 came closer. And then we saw the fold of a white tunic among the trees, and a gleam  
899 of gold. We leapt forward, we ran to them, and we stood looking upon the Golden  
900 One. They saw us, and their hands closed into fists, and the fists pulled their arms  
901 down, as if they wished their arms to hold them, while their body swayed. And they  
902 could not speak. We dared not come too close to them. We asked, and our voice  
903 trembled: "How come you to be here, Golden One?" But they whispered only: "We  
904 have found you. . . ." "How came you to be in the forest?" we asked. They raised  
905 their head, and there was a great pride in their voice; they answered: "We have  
906 followed you." Then we could not speak, and they said: "We heard that you had gone  
907 to the Uncharted Forest, for the whole City is speaking of it. So on the night of the day  
908 when we heard it, we ran away from the Home of the Peasants. We found the marks  
909 of your feet across the plain where no men walk. So we followed them, and we went  
910 into the forest, and we followed the path where the branches were broken by your  
911 body." Their white tunic was torn, and the branches had cut the skin of their arms, but  
912 they spoke as if they had never taken notice of it, nor of weariness, nor of fear. "We  
913 have followed you," they said, "and we shall follow you wherever you go. If danger  
914 threatens you, we shall face it also. If it be death, we shall die with you. You are  
915 damned, and we wish to share your damnation." They looked upon us, and their voice  
916 was low, but there was bitterness and triumph in their voice: "Your eyes are as a  
917 flame, but our brothers have neither hope nor fire. Your mouth is cut of granite, but our  
918 brothers are soft and humble. Your head is high, but our brothers cringe. You walk, but  
919 our brothers crawl. We wish to be damned with you, rather than be blessed with all our  
920 brothers. Do as you please with us, but do not send us away from you." Then they  
921 knelt, and bowed their golden head before us. We had never thought of that which we  
922 did. We bent to raise the Golden One to their feet, but when we touched them, it was  
923 as if madness had stricken us. We seized their body and we pressed our lips to theirs.  
924 The Golden One breathed once, and their breath was a moan, and then their arms  
925 closed around us. We stood together for a long time. And we were frightened that we  
926 had lived for twenty-one years and had never known what joy is possible to men.

927 Then we said: "Our dearest one. Fear nothing of the forest. There is no danger in  
928 solitude. We have no need of our brothers. Let us forget their good and our evil, let us  
929 forget all things save that we are together and that there is joy between us. Give us  
930 your hand. Look ahead. It is our own world, Golden One, a strange, unknown world,  
931 but our own." Then we walked on into the forest, their hand in ours. And that night we  
932 knew that to hold the body of a woman in our arms is neither ugly nor shameful, but  
933 the one ecstasy granted to the race of men. We have walked for many days. The  
934 forest has no end, and we seek no end. But each day added to the chain of days  
935 between us and the City is like an added blessing. We have made a bow and many  
936 arrows. We can kill more birds than we need for our food; we find water and fruit in the  
937 forest. At night, we choose a clearing, and we build a ring of fires around it. We sleep  
938 in the midst of that ring, and the beasts dare not attack us. We can see their eyes,  
939 green and yellow as coals, watching us from the tree branches beyond. The fires  
940 smolder as a crown of jewels around us, and smoke stands still in the air, in columns  
941 made blue by the moonlight. We sleep together in the midst of the ring, the arms of the  
942 Golden One around us, their head upon our breast. Some day, we shall stop and  
943 build a house, when we shall have gone far enough. But we do not have to hasten.  
944 The days before us are without end, like the forest. We cannot understand this new  
945 life which we have found, yet it seems so clear and so simple. When questions come  
946 to puzzle us, we walk faster, then turn and forget all things as we watch the Golden  
947 One following. The shadows of leaves fall upon their arms, as they spread the  
948 branches apart, but their shoulders are in the sun. The skin of their arms is like a blue  
949 mist, but their shoulders are white and glowing, as if the light fell not from above, but  
950 rose from under their skin. We watch the leaf which has fallen upon their shoulder, and  
951 it lies at the curve of their neck, and a drop of dew glistens upon it like a jewel. They  
952 approach us, and they stop, laughing, knowing what we think, and they wait  
953 obediently, without questions, till it pleases us to turn and go on. We go on and we  
954 bless the earth under our feet. But questions come to us again, as we walk in silence.  
955 If that which we have found is the corruption of solitude, then what can men wish for  
956 save corruption? If this is the great evil of being alone, then what is good and what is  
957 evil? Everything which comes from the many is good. Everything which comes from  
958 one is evil. Thus we have been taught with our first breath. We have broken the law,  
959 but we have never doubted it. Yet now, as we walk the forest, we are learning to  
960 doubt. There is no life for men, save in useful toil for the good of their brothers.

961 But we lived not, when we toiled for our brothers, we were only weary. There is no joy  
962 for men, save the joy shared with all their brothers. But the only things which taught us  
963 joy were the power created in our wires, and the Golden One. And both these joys  
964 belong to us alone, they come from us alone, they bear no relation to our brothers,  
965 and they do not concern our brothers in any way. Thus do we wonder. There is some  
966 error, one frightful error, in the thinking of men. What is that error? We do not know,  
967 but the knowledge struggles within us, struggles to be born. Today, the Golden One  
968 stopped suddenly and said: "We love you." But then they frowned and shook their  
969 head and looked at us helplessly. "No," they whispered, "that is not what we wished to  
970 say." They were silent, then they spoke slowly, and their words were halting, like the  
971 words of a child learning to speak for the first time: "We are one . . . alone . . . and  
972 only . . . and we love you who are one . . . alone . . . and only." We looked into each  
973 other's eyes and we knew that the breath of a miracle had touched us, and fled, and  
974 left us groping vainly. And we felt torn, torn for some word we could not find.

975 Chapter Ten We are sitting at a table and we are writing this upon paper made  
976 thousands of years ago. The light is dim, and we cannot see the Golden One, only one  
977 lock of gold on the pillow of an ancient bed. This is our home. We came upon it today,  
978 at sunrise. For many days we have been crossing a chain of mountains. The forest  
979 rose among cliffs, and whenever we walked out upon a barren stretch of rock we saw  
980 great peaks before us in the west, and to the north of us, and to the south, as far as  
981 our eyes could see. The peaks were red and brown, with the green streaks of forests  
982 as veins upon them, with blue mists as veils over their heads. We had never heard of  
983 these mountains, nor seen them marked on any map. The Uncharted Forest has  
984 protected them from the Cities and from the men of the Cities. We climbed paths  
985 where the wild goat dared not follow. Stones rolled from under our feet, and we heard  
986 them striking the rocks below, farther and farther down, and the mountains rang with  
987 each stroke, and long after the strokes had died. But we went on, for we knew that no  
988 men would ever follow our track nor reach us here. Then today, at sunrise, we saw a  
989 white flame among the trees, high on a sheer peak before us. We thought that it was a  
990 fire and we stopped. But the flame was unmoving, yet blinding as liquid metal. So we  
991 climbed toward it through the rocks. And there, before us, on a broad summit, with the  
992 mountains rising behind it, stood a house such as we had never seen, and the white  
993 fire came from the sun on the glass of its windows. The house had two stories and a  
994 strange roof flat as a floor.

995 There was more window than wall upon its walls, and the windows went on straight  
996 around corners, though how this house kept standing we could not guess. The walls  
997 were hard and smooth, of that stone unlike stone which we had seen in our tunnel.  
998 We both knew it without words: this house was left from the Unmentionable Times.  
999 The trees had protected it from time and weather, and from men who have less pity  
1000 than time and weather. We turned to the Golden One and we asked: "Are you afraid?"  
1001 But they shook their head. So we walked to the door, and we threw it open, and we  
1002 stepped together into the house of the Unmentionable Times. We shall need the days  
1003 and the years ahead, to look, to learn and to understand the things of this house.  
1004 Today, we could only look and try to believe the sight of our eyes. We pulled the heavy  
1005 curtains from the windows and we saw that the rooms were small, and we thought that  
1006 not more than twelve men could have lived here. We thought it strange that man had  
1007 been permitted to build a house for only twelve. Never had we seen rooms so full of  
1008 light. The sunrays danced upon colors, colors, and more colors than we thought  
1009 possible, we who had seen no houses save the white ones, the brown ones and the  
1010 grey. There were great pieces of glass on the walls, but it was not glass, for when we  
1011 looked upon it we saw our own bodies and all the things behind us, as on the face of a  
1012 lake. There were strange things which we had never seen and the use of which we do  
1013 not know. And there were globes of glass everywhere, in each room, the globes with  
1014 the metal cobwebs inside, such as we had seen in our tunnel. We found the sleeping  
1015 hall and we stood in awe upon its threshold. For it was a small room and there were  
1016 only two beds in it. We found no other beds in the house, and then we knew that only  
1017 two had lived here, and this passes understanding. What kind of world did they have,  
1018 the men of the Unmentionable Times? We found garments, and the Golden One  
1019 gasped at the sight of them. For they were not white tunics, nor white togas; they were  
1020 of all colors, no two of them alike. Some crumbled to dust as we touched them, but  
1021 others were of heavier cloth, and they felt soft and new in our fingers. We found a  
1022 room with walls made of shelves, which held rows of manuscripts, from the floor to the  
1023 ceiling. Never had we seen such a number of them, nor of such strange shape. They  
1024 were not soft and rolled, they had hard shells of cloth and leather; and the letters on  
1025 their pages were small and so even that we wondered at the men who had such  
1026 handwriting. We glanced through the pages, and we saw that they were written in our  
1027 language, but we found many words which we could not understand. Tomorrow, we  
1028 shall begin to read these scripts.

1029 When we had seen all the rooms of the house, we looked at the Golden One and we  
1030 both knew the thought in our minds. "We shall never leave this house," we said, "nor  
1031 let it be taken from us. This is our home and the end of our journey. This is your  
1032 house, Golden One, and ours, and it belongs to no other men whatever as far as the  
1033 earth may stretch. We shall not share it with others, as we share not our joy with them,  
1034 nor our love, nor our hunger. So be it to the end of our days." "Your will be done,"  
1035 they said. Then we went out to gather wood for the great hearth of our home. We  
1036 brought water from the stream which runs among the trees under our windows. We  
1037 killed a mountain goat, and we brought its flesh to be cooked in a strange copper pot  
1038 we found in a place of wonders, which must have been the cooking room of the house.  
1039 We did this work alone, for no words of ours could take the Golden One away from the  
1040 big glass which is not glass. They stood before it and they looked and looked upon  
1041 their own body. When the sun sank beyond the mountains, the Golden One fell  
1042 asleep on the floor, amidst jewels, and bottles of crystal, and flowers of silk. We lifted  
1043 the Golden One in our arms and we carried them to a bed, their head falling softly  
1044 upon our shoulder. Then we lit a candle, and we brought paper from the room of the  
1045 manuscripts, and we sat by the window, for we knew that we could not sleep tonight.  
1046 And now we look upon the earth and sky. This spread of naked rock and peaks and  
1047 moonlight is like a world ready to be born, a world that waits. It seems to us it asks a  
1048 sign from us, a spark, a first commandment. We cannot know what word we are to  
1049 give, nor what great deed this earth expects to witness. We know it waits. It seems to  
1050 say it has great gifts to lay before us. We are to speak. We are to give its goal, its  
1051 highest meaning to all this glowing space of rock and sky. We look ahead, we beg our  
1052 heart for guidance in answering this call no voice has spoken, yet we have heard. We  
1053 look upon our hands. We see the dust of centuries, the dust which hid great secrets  
1054 and perhaps great evils. And yet it stirs no fear within our heart, but only silent  
1055 reverence and pity. May knowledge come to us! What is this secret our heart has  
1056 understood and yet will not reveal to us, although it seems to beat as if it were  
1057 endeavoring to tell it?

1058 Chapter Eleven

1059

1060 I am. I think. I will. My hands . . . My spirit . . . My sky . . . My forest . . . This earth of  
1061 mine . . . . What must I say besides? These are the words. This is the answer. I stand  
1062 here on the summit of the mountain. I lift my head and I spread my arms. This, my  
1063 body and spirit, this is the end of the quest. I wished to know the meaning of things. I  
1064 am the meaning. I wished to find a warrant for being. I need no warrant for being, and  
1065 no word of sanction upon my being. I am the warrant and the sanction. It is my eyes  
1066 which see, and the sight of my eyes grants beauty to the earth. It is my ears which  
1067 hear, and the hearing of my ears gives its song to the world. It is my mind which  
1068 thinks, and the judgment of my mind is the only searchlight that can find the truth. It is  
1069 my will which chooses, and the choice of my will is the only edict I must respect. Many  
1070 words have been granted me, and some are wise, and some are false, but only three  
1071 are holy: "I will it!" Whatever road I take, the guiding star is within me; the guiding star  
1072 and the loadstone which point the way. They point in but one direction. They point to  
1073 me. I know not if this earth on which I stand is the core of the universe or if it is but a  
1074 speck of dust lost in eternity. I know not and I care not. For I know what happiness is  
1075 possible to me on earth. And my happiness needs no higher aim to vindicate it. My  
1076 happiness is not the means to any end. It is the end. It is its own goal. It is its own  
1077 purpose. Neither am I the means to any end others may wish to accomplish. I am not  
1078 a tool for their use. I am not a servant of their needs. I am not a bandage for their  
1079 wounds. I am not a sacrifice on their altars. I am a man. This miracle of me is mine to  
1080 own and keep, and mine to guard, and mine to use, and mine to kneel before! I do not  
1081 surrender my treasures, nor do I share them. The fortune of my spirit is not to be  
1082 blown into coins of brass and flung to the winds as alms for the poor of the spirit. I  
1083 guard my treasures: my thought, my will, my freedom. And the greatest of these is  
1084 freedom. I owe nothing to my brothers, nor do I gather debts from them. I ask none to  
1085 live for me, nor do I live for any others. I covet no man's soul, nor is my soul theirs to  
1086 covet. I am neither foe nor friend to my brothers, but such as each of them shall  
1087 deserve of me. And to earn my love, my brothers must do more than to have been  
1088 born. I do not grant my love without reason, nor to any chance passer-by who may  
1089 wish to claim it. I honor men with my love. But honor is a thing to be earned. I shall  
1090 choose friends among men, but neither slaves nor masters. And I shall choose only  
1091 such as please me, and them I shall love and respect, but neither command nor obey.

1092 And we shall join our hands when we wish, or walk alone when we so desire. For in  
1093 the temple of his spirit, each man is alone. Let each man keep his temple untouched  
1094 and undefiled. Then let him join hands with others if he wishes, but only beyond his  
1095 holy threshold. For the word "We" must never be spoken, save by one's choice and  
1096 as a second thought. This word must never be placed first within man's soul, else it  
1097 becomes a monster, the root of all the evils on earth, the root of man's torture by men,  
1098 and an unspeakable lie. The word "We" is as lime poured over men, which sets and  
1099 hardens to stone, and crushes all beneath it, and that which is white and that which is  
1100 black are lost equally in the grey of it. It is the word by which the depraved steal the  
1101 virtue of the good, by which the weak steal the might of the strong, by which the fools  
1102 steal the wisdom of the sages. What is my joy if all hands, even the unclean, can  
1103 reach into it? What is my wisdom, if even the fools can dictate to me? What is my  
1104 freedom, if all creatures, even the botched and impotent, are my masters? What is my  
1105 life, if I am but to bow, to agree, and to obey? But I am done with this creed of  
1106 corruption. I am done with the monster of "We," the word of serfdom, of plunder, of  
1107 misery, falsehood and shame. And now I see the face of god, and I raise this god  
1108 over the earth, this god whom men have sought since men came into being, this god  
1109 who will grant them joy and peace and pride. This god, this one word: "I." Chapter  
1110 Twelve It was when I read the first of the books I found in my house that I saw the  
1111 word "I." And when I understood this word, the book fell from my hands, and I wept, I  
1112 who had never known tears. I wept in deliverance and in pity for all mankind. I  
1113 understood the blessed thing which I had called my curse. I understood why the best  
1114 in me had been my sins and my transgressions; and why I had never felt guilt in my  
1115 sins. I understood that centuries of chains and lashes will not kill the spirit of man nor  
1116 the sense of truth within him. I read many books for many days. Then I called the  
1117 Golden One, and I told her what I had read and what I had learned. She looked at me  
1118 and the first words she spoke were: "I love you." Then I said: "My dearest one, it is  
1119 not proper for men to be without names. There was a time when each man had a  
1120 name of his own to distinguish him from all other men. So let us choose our names. I  
1121 have read of a man who lived many thousands of years ago, and of all the names in  
1122 these books, his is the one I wish to bear. He took the light of the gods and brought it  
1123 to men, and he taught men to be gods. And he suffered for his deed as all bearers of  
1124 light must suffer. His name was Prometheus." "It shall be your name," said the Golden  
1125 One.

1126 "And I have read of a goddess," I said, "who was the mother of the earth and of all the  
1127 gods. Her name was Gaea. Let this be your name, my Golden One, for you are to be  
1128 the mother of a new kind of gods." "It shall be my name," said the Golden One. Now I  
1129 look ahead. My future is clear before me. The Saint of the pyre had seen the future  
1130 when he chose me as his heir, as the heir of all the saints and all the martyrs who  
1131 came before him and who died for the same cause, for the same word, no matter what  
1132 name they gave to their cause and their truth. I shall live here, in my own house. I  
1133 shall take my food from the earth by the toil of my own hands. I shall learn many  
1134 secrets from my books. Through the years ahead, I shall rebuild the achievements of  
1135 the past, and open the way to carry them further, the achievements which are open to  
1136 me, but closed forever to my brothers, for their minds are shackled to the weakest and  
1137 dullest among them. I have learned that the power of the sky was known to men long  
1138 ago; they called it Electricity. It was the power that moved their greatest inventions. It  
1139 lit this house with light that came from those globes of glass on the walls. I have found  
1140 the engine which produced this light. I shall learn how to repair it and how to make it  
1141 work again. I shall learn how to use the wires which carry this power. Then I shall build  
1142 a barrier of wires around my home, and across the paths which lead to my home; a  
1143 barrier light as a cobweb, more impassable than a wall of granite; a barrier my  
1144 brothers will never be able to cross. For they have nothing to fight me with, save the  
1145 brute force of their numbers. I have my mind. Then here, on this mountaintop, with the  
1146 world below me and nothing above me but the sun, I shall live my own truth. Gaea is  
1147 pregnant with my child. He will be taught to say "I" and to bear the pride of it. He will  
1148 be taught to walk straight on his own feet. He will be taught reverence for his own  
1149 spirit. When I shall have read all the books and learned my new way, when my home  
1150 will be ready and my earth tilled, I shall steal one day, for the last time, into the cursed  
1151 City of my birth. I shall call to me my friend who has no name save International 4-  
1152 8818, and all those like him, Fraternity 2-5503, who cries without reason, and  
1153 Solidarity 9-6347 who calls for help in the night, and a few others. I shall call to me all  
1154 the men and the women whose spirit has not been killed within them and who suffer  
1155 under the yoke of their brothers. They will follow me and I shall lead them to my  
1156 fortress. And here, in this uncharted wilderness, I and they, my chosen friends, my  
1157 fellow-builders, shall write the first chapter in the new history of man. These are the  
1158 last things before me. And as I stand here at the door of glory, I look behind me for the  
1159 last time.

1160 I look upon the history of men, which I have learned from the books, and I wonder. It  
1161 was a long story, and the spirit which moved it was the spirit of man's freedom. But  
1162 what is freedom? Freedom from what? There is nothing to take a man's freedom away  
1163 from him, save other men. To be free, a man must be free of his brothers. That is  
1164 freedom. That and nothing else. At first, man was enslaved by the gods. But he broke  
1165 their chains. Then he was enslaved by the kings. But he broke their chains. He was  
1166 enslaved by his birth, by his kin, by his race. But he broke their chains. He declared to  
1167 all his brothers that a man has rights which neither god nor king nor other men can  
1168 take away from him, no matter what their number, for his is the right of man, and there  
1169 is no right on earth above this right. And he stood on the threshold of freedom for  
1170 which the blood of the centuries behind him had been spilled. But then he gave up all  
1171 he had won, and fell lower than his savage beginning. What brought it to pass? What  
1172 disaster took their reason away from men? What whip lashed them to their knees in  
1173 shame and submission? The worship of the word "We." When men accepted that  
1174 worship, the structure of centuries collapsed about them, the structure whose every  
1175 beam had come from the thought of some one man, each in his day down the ages,  
1176 from the depth of some one spirit, such as spirit existed but for its own sake. Those  
1177 men who survived- those eager to obey, eager to live for one another, since they had  
1178 nothing else to vindicate them- those men could neither carry on, nor preserve what  
1179 they had received. Thus did all thought, all science, all wisdom perish on earth. Thus  
1180 did men- men with nothing to offer save their great numbers- lose the steel towers, the  
1181 flying ships, the power wires, all the things they had not created and could never keep.  
1182 Perhaps, later, some men had been born with the mind and the courage to recover  
1183 these things which were lost; perhaps these men came before the Councils of  
1184 Scholars. They answered as I have been answered- and for the same reasons. But I  
1185 still wonder how it was possible, in those graceless years of transition, long ago, that  
1186 men did not see whither they were going, and went on, in blindness and cowardice, to  
1187 their fate. I wonder, for it is hard for me to conceive how men who knew the word "I,"  
1188 could give it up and not know what they had lost. But such has been the story, for I  
1189 have lived in the City of the damned, and I know what horror men permitted to be  
1190 brought upon them. Perhaps, in those days, there were a few among men, a few of  
1191 clear sight and clean soul, who refused to surrender that word. What agony must have  
1192 been theirs before that which they saw coming and could not stop! Perhaps they cried  
1193 out in protest and in warning. But men paid no heed to their warning.

1194 And they, those few, fought a hopeless battle, and they perished with their banners  
1195 smeared by their own blood. And they chose to perish, for they knew. To them, I send  
1196 my salute across the centuries, and my pity. Theirs is the banner in my hand. And I  
1197 wish I had the power to tell them that the despair of their hearts was not to be final,  
1198 and their night was not without hope. For the battle they lost can never be lost. For  
1199 that which they died to save can never perish. Through all the darkness, through all  
1200 the shame of which men are capable, the spirit of man will remain alive on this earth. It  
1201 may sleep, but it will awaken. It may wear chains, but it will break through. And man  
1202 will go on. Man, not men. Here, on this mountain, I and my sons and my chosen  
1203 friends shall build our new land and our fort. And it will become as the heart of the  
1204 earth, lost and hidden at first, but beating, beating louder each day. And word of it will  
1205 reach every corner of the earth. And the roads of the world will become as veins which  
1206 will carry the best of the world's blood to my threshold. And all my brothers, and the  
1207 Councils of my brothers, will hear of it, but they will be impotent against me. And the  
1208 day will come when I shall break the chains of the earth, and raze the cities of the  
1209 enslaved, and my home will become the capital of a world where each man will be free  
1210 to exist for his own sake. For the coming of that day I shall fight, I and my sons and  
1211 my chosen friends. For the freedom of Man. For his rights. For his life. For his honor.  
1212 And here, over the portals of my fort, I shall cut in the stone the word which is to be my  
1213 beacon and my banner. The word which will not die, should we all perish in battle. The  
1214 word which can never die on this earth, for it is the heart of it and the meaning and the  
1215 glory.

1216

1217 The sacred word:

1218

1219 EGO

1220

1221