

ANTHEM

THE LUXURY BOOTLEG EDITION



AYN RAND

DESIGNED, EDITED & PUBLISHED BY KLAUS NORDBY



AYN

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THE LEGALITIES

The text of ANTHEM is in the public domain in the United States,
where this book was also physically printed (by www.Blurb.com).

Designed and typeset with ADOBE INDESIGN.
This book's ADOBE BRIOSO PRO typeface
was designed by Robert Slimbach.

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For typos and other feedback, please email me:
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Ditto for any copy of the printed book.



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THE COPYRIGHT REMARKS

This book should have been illegal. But it's not — in the USA, and quite likely in other countries.

By the 75-year rule of copyright protection from the author's death, Ayn Rand's ANTHEM — first published in England in 1938 and in the USA in 1946 — would still be copyrighted until 2057. However, due to some filing error, the copyright was not renewed for the United States in the mid-1960s — and the text therefore passed, by legal default, into the public domain.

The digital text can now be *legally* downloaded from many US-based web servers. The most prominent ANTHEM version is located at the www.Gutenberg.org site.

The Gutenberg Etext #1250, on which this ebook edition of ANTHEM was originally based (but it has *many* bad typos, and I cannot recommend it), contains this legal information:



Anthem is still under copyright in Canada. Please do not put it on Canadian computers.

Caxton Printers, who used to own the United States copyrights to ANTHEM by Ayn Rand, as per an agreement with Pamphleteers, was *very* kind and *very* open about explaining the copyright

of ANTHEM, and how it came to be not renewed in the U.S.; and we would like to add, on their behalf, that their copyrights are still in force for ANTHEM in Canada. Neither we nor they are in a current position to research the possible copyrights for other countries, so that is possibly still up in the air. It behooves me, since they have been so forthcoming about this — to encourage you to buy the only hardcover edition available.



So, if you are *not* living in the USA I also warmly encourage you to buy a copy of the book, either the Caxton hardcover or the Penguin softcover. That way, you will pay the royalties to the Ayn Rand Estate which you *might* be required to pay — *if* ANTHEM is still copyrighted where you live.

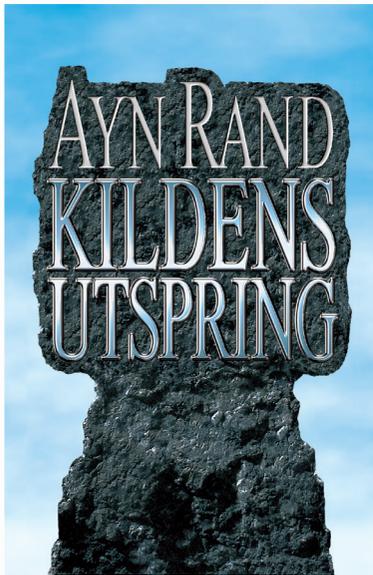
— KN

THE BOOTLEGGER'S APOLOGY

AMONG many other Objectivism-related activities, I am the official Norwegian publisher of several of Ayn Rand's works.

In 1982, with some associates, I financed and republished an old 1949 translation (by Johan Hambo) of *THE FOUNTAINHEAD* in a cheap softcover (which I am *not* proud of, alas).

The original 1949 title, *KILDENS UTSPRING*, has been reused for all later Norwegian editions — for it's an *excellent* title, actually better than the original English title.



In 1994, I published it again, then as a handsome hardcover — which I *am* proud of. We reused the Hambro text, but it was heavily revised and improved (by Tore Bøckmann and myself).

I also published a Norwegian softcover edition of *ANTHEM* in 1984, called *HØYSANG* (translated by Bøckmann).

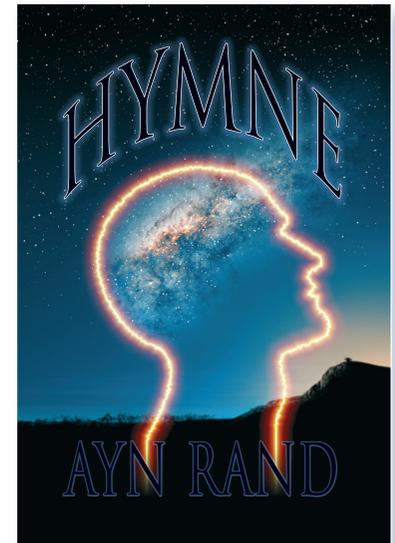
In the 1980s I owned the Norwegian publishing rights to *ATLAS SHRUGGED* for seven years, but I was never able to publish it.

The formal rights for all these publishing projects were bought from The Ayn Rand Estate via its Scandinavian literary agent, Bookman, and normal royalties were duly paid.

I have also designed and typeset the 2016 German edition of *ANTHEM*, there called *HYMNE* (translated by Philipp Dammer). Since I own that cover design's copyright, I modified and resused it for my *Luxury Bootleg Edition* edition.

In sum, I believe I have *earned* the right to design and publish my *Luxury Bootleg Edition* of Ayn Rand's *ANTHEM*.

“The defense rests.”



MOTIVATION

I reread ANTHEM once a year. And I *like* to read on my laptop, phones and tablets — where I can have a large and weight-less library travelling with me anywhere. I have hundreds of Kindle ebooks — including everything by Ayn Rand — but Kindle ebooks are all ugly, utilitarian beasts *qua* book design (for necessary technical reasons, due to text scalability).

So therefore I decided to typeset ANTHEM for my own selfish reading pleasure and — given the highly peculiar legal status of the text (see THE COPYRIGHT REMARKS) — also release the PDF as a free ebook.

I have sought to make my book as *perceptually beautiful* and as *conceptually meaningful* as possible.

SOURCES

I *originally* based my book’s text on the [Gutenberg Etext #1250](#) — but I have, eventually, modified that source considerably. Now, I do *not* recommend reading or even sharing the Gutenberg version, as it has too many errors.

Ayn Rand revised the original 1938 version considerably in 1946, for its first American publication, as documented in the 1996 Signet 50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION.

I am confident the text of this 2022 edition (my version 1.4) is true to Ayn Rand’s mature vision.

FORMALITIES

Ayn Rand’s novella ANTHEM was written in the summer of 1937 and published the year after — but in England, not in America.

She described it like “the preliminary sketches which artists draw for their future big canvases. I wrote *Anthem* while working on *The Fountainhead* — it has the same theme, spirit and intention, although in quite a different form.”

How exactly *does* ANTHEM differ in *form* from her other fiction, in her own view?

In contrast to her three full-length novels’ literary approach of “Romantic realism,” she described ANTHEM as a “dramatic fantasy.”

And, even more intriguingly, in a private letter she classified her work as “a poem.”

The novella’s text is obviously in prose and not in meter — the defining characteristic of poetry. But I can easily agree that ANTHEM should be *read* as a poem: it should be slowly savored, even read aloud, for its highly stylized, semi-Biblical language and ethereal, non-literal, fairy-tale storytelling.

I am also a poet. (www.NordbyVerse.com.) And I am professionally *awed* by Ayn Rand’s poetic prose in ANTHEM.

TRANSMUTING PROSE TO POETRY

So, in designing my book, I decided to take up the challenge of Ayn Rand’s “a poem” idea and run fast and hard and long with it.

I used a number of design devices to “force” the reader to take the text in slowly — and thus make this glorious story last a little longer.

Above all, I created what I call “semantic line-breaks.” That is, I judiciously break the lines according to the text’s meaning, structure and rhythm, for greater emphasis — which also creates a more “poetry-like” appearance on the page (although, admittedly and inevitably, of the *verse libre* kind).

And, believe me, I have thought hard about every line-break — and page-break. There are no accidents here. Both early readers and I think these poetry-like line-breaks *enhance* the reading experience. But I realize my changes are radical — and may not be to everybody’s taste. So be it.

To make for a cleaner page, I have deliberately broken with one English typesetting rule, namely the infernal *open-quote-no-end-then-end-quote* convention for dialogue. It is an utter abomination. I replaced it with the French style of opening dialogue, which uses a simple, elegant m-dash: — . (Were I granted world-dictatorial powers, I would ruthlessly impose this change on all written languages — and you would all thank me.)

I have also created a Chapter Graph on the bottom of each pager, which visualizes the relative length of each chapter. The Chapter Graph is clickable in the PDF, letting you maneuver around easily.

Finally, there is also a Page Marker, which shows your current location in the whole text.

PROOFING

I thank both An Anonymous Friend and my good friend & colleague Puneeta Uchil for thorough proofing assistance with this whole book.

But if you find there are still errors in this text I will of course like to hear from you — so I can then update the PDF ebook always located at www.KlausNordby.com/anthem.

THE GOAL

I have realized my selfish goal of making this uniquely great novella a *visual joy* to read — compared to any other edition available anywhere (and there are now plenty).

I hope that many other readers will find my *Luxury Bootleg Edition* of ANTHEM makes for a wonderful reading experience.

—KLAUS NORDBY
Kalista, August 8, 2021

THE MESSAGE FROM YOUR SPONSOR

I am the founder, majority owner and boss of a small software company — iCOGNITION.

We produce several phone apps and one desktop app — which are all invented and designed by me. While still in the startup-phase, these days we are putting one app online for sale — Genix — and more of our unique software products are coming soon.

Please visit www.iCognite.com.

Whenever iCognition makes me a rich software tycoon, as is my long-term ambition, I shall fund the hell out of Objectivism!

Now we resume our regular programming.



ANTHEM

THE LUXURY BOOTLEG EDITION

ONE

IT IS A SIN TO WRITE THIS.

It is a sin to think words no others think
and to put them down upon a paper
no others are to see.

It is base and evil.

It is as if we were
speaking alone
to no ears
but our own.

And we know well that there is
no transgression blacker
than to do or think alone.

We have broken the laws.
The laws say that men may not write
 unless the Council of Vocations bid them so.
May we be forgiven!

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

IT is dark here.
The flame of the candle stands still in the air.
Nothing moves in this tunnel save our hand on the paper.
We are alone here under the earth.
It is a fearful word,
 alone.

The laws say that none among men may be alone,
ever and at any time,
for this is the great transgression
and the root of all evil.

But we have broken many laws.

And now there is nothing here
save our one body,
and it is strange to see only two legs stretched on the ground,
and on the wall before us the shadow
of our one head.

THE walls are cracked and water runs upon them in thin threads
without sound,
black and glistening as blood.

We stole the candle
from the larder of the Home of the Street Sweepers.

We shall be sentenced to ten years
in the Palace of Corrective Detention
if it be discovered.

But this matters not.

It matters only that the light is precious
and we should not waste it to write
when we need it for that work
which is our crime.

Nothing matters save the work,
our secret,
our evil,
our precious work.

Still, we must also write, for
— may the Council have mercy upon us! —
we wish to speak for once
to no ears
but our own.

OUR name is Equality 7-2521,
as it is written on the iron bracelet
which all men wear on their left wrists
with their names upon it.

We are twenty-one years old.

We are six feet tall,
and this is a burden,
for there are not many men
who are six feet tall.

Ever have the Teachers and the Leaders
pointed to us and frowned and said:

— *There is evil in your bones, Equality 7-2521,
for your body has grown
beyond the bodies of your brothers.*

BUT we cannot change our bones nor our body.

WE were born with a curse.

It has always driven us to thoughts
which are forbidden.

It has always given us wishes
which men may not wish.

We know that we are evil,
but there is no will in us
and no power to resist it.

This is our wonder and our secret fear,
that we know and do not resist.

WE strive to be like all our brother men,
for all men must be alike.

Over the portals of the Palace of the World Council,
there are words cut in the marble,
which we repeat to ourselves
whenever we are tempted:

*We are one in all and all in one.
There are no men but only the great WE,
One, indivisible and forever.*

WE repeat this to ourselves, but it helps us not.

TH**ES**E words were cut long ago.

There is green mould in the grooves of the letters
and yellow streaks on the marble,
which come from more years
than men could count.

And these words are the truth,
for they are written
on the Palace of the World Council,
and the World Council
is the body of all truth.

Thus has it been ever since the Great Rebirth,
and farther back than that
no memory can reach.

BU**T** we must never speak of the times
before the Great Rebirth,
else we are sentenced to three years
in the Palace of Corrective Detention.

It is only the Old Ones

who whisper about it in the evenings,
in the Home of the Useless.

They whisper many strange things,

of the towers which rose to the sky,
in those Unmentionable Times,
and of the wagons which moved without horses,
and of the lights which burned without flame.

But those times were evil.

And those times passed away,

when men saw the Great Truth which is this:
that all men are one
and that there is no will
save the will of all men together.

ALL men are good and wise.

It is only we, Equality 7-2521,

we alone who were born with a curse.

For we are not like our brothers.

And as we look back upon our life,
we see that it has ever been thus
and that it has brought us
step by step
to our last, supreme transgression,
our crime of crimes
hidden here under the ground.

WE remember the House of the Infants
where we lived till we were five years old,
together with all the children of the City
who had been born in the same year.

The sleeping halls there were white and clean and bare
of all things save one hundred beds.

We were just like all our brothers then,
save for the one transgression:
we fought
with our brothers.

There are few offenses
blacker than
to fight with our brothers,
at any age
and for any cause whatsoever.

The Council of the Home told us so,
and of all the children of that year,
we were locked in the cellar most often.

WHEN we were five years old,
we were sent to the Home of the Students,
where there are ten wards,
for our ten years of learning.
Men must learn till they reach their fifteenth year.
Then they go to work.
In the Home of the Students we arose
when the big bell rang in the tower
and we went to our beds when it rang again.

Before we removed our garments,
 we stood in the great sleeping hall,
 and we raised our right arms,
 and we said all together
 with the three Teachers at the head:

— *We are nothing.
 Mankind is all.
 By the grace of our brothers
 are we allowed our lives.
 We exist through,
 by and for our brothers
 who are the State.
 Amen.*

THEN we slept.

The sleeping halls were white and clean
 and bare of all things
 save one hundred beds.

WE, Equality 7-2521, were not happy in those years
in the Home of the Students.

It was not that the learning was too hard for us.

It was that the learning was too easy.

This is a great sin,

to be born with a head which is too quick.

It is not good to be different from our brothers,

but it is evil to be superior to them.

The Teachers told us so,

and they frowned when they looked upon us.

So we fought against this curse.

We tried to forget our lessons,

but we always remembered.

We tried not to understand what the teachers taught,

but we always understood it before the Teachers had spoken.

We looked upon Union 5-3992,

who were a pale boy with only half a brain,

and we tried to say and do as they did,

that we might be like them, like Union 5-3992,
but somehow the Teachers knew
that we were not.

And we were lashed more often
than all the other children.

THE Teachers were just,
for they had been appointed by the Councils,
and the Councils are the voice of all justice,
for they are the voice of all men.

And if sometimes,
in the secret darkness of our heart,
we regret that which befell us
on our fifteenth birthday,
we know that it was through our own guilt.

We had broken a law, for we had not paid heed
to the words of our Teachers.

The Teachers had said to us all:

— *Dare not choose in your minds
the work you would like to do
when you leave the Home of the Students.
You shall do that which the Council of Vocation
shall prescribe for you.
For the Council of Vocations
knows in its great wisdom
where you are needed by your brother men,
better than you can know it
in your unworthy little minds.
And if you are not needed by your brother men,
there is no reason for you
to burden the earth
with your bodies.*

WE knew this well, in the years of our childhood,
but our curse broke our will.

We were guilty and we confess it here:

we were guilty of the great Transgression of Preference.

We preferred some work and some lessons to the others.

We did not listen well to the history of all the Councils
elected since the Great Rebirth.

But we loved the Science of Things.

We wished to know.

We wished to know about all the things
which make the earth around us.

We asked so many questions
that the Teachers forbade it.

WE think that there are mysteries in the sky
and under the water
and in the plants which grow.

But the Council of Scholars has said
that there are no mysteries,
and the Council of Scholars knows all things.

And we learned much from our Teachers.

We learned that the earth is flat

and that the sun revolves around it,
which causes the day and night.

We learned the names of all the winds

which blow over the seas
and push the sails of our great ships.

We learned how to bleed men

to cure them of all ailments.

WE loved the Science of Things.

And in the darkness, in the secret hour,

when we awoke in the night
and there were no brothers around us,
but only their shapes in the beds
and their snores, we closed our eyes,
and we held our lips shut,
and we stopped our breath,

that no shudder might let our brothers
see or hear or guess,
and we thought that we wished to be sent
to the Home of the Scholars
when our time would come.

ALL of the great modern inventions
come from the Home of the Scholars,
such as the newest one,
which was found only a hundred years ago,
of how to make candles from wax and string;
also, how to make glass,
which is put in our windows to protect us from the rain.

To find these things,
the Scholars must study the earth
and learn from the rivers,
from the sands,
from the winds
and the rocks.

And if we went to the Home of the Scholars,
we could learn from these also.
We could ask questions of these,
for they do not forbid questions.

AND questions give us no rest.

We know not why our curse
makes us seek we know not what,
ever and ever.

But we cannot resist it.

It whispers to us
that there are great things
on this earth of ours,
and that we can know them if we try,
and that we must know them.

We ask, why must we know,
but it has no answer to give us.

We must know
that we may know.

So we wished to be sent to the Home of the Scholars.

We wished it so much that our hands trembled
under the blankets in the night,
and we bit our arm
to stop that other pain
which we could not endure.

It was evil and we dared not face our brothers in the morning.

For men may wish nothing for themselves.

And we were punished when the Council of Vocations
came to give us our life Mandates
which tell those who reach their fifteenth year
what their work is to be
for the rest of their days.

THE Council of Vocations

came on the first day of spring,
and they sat in the great hall.

And we who were fifteen
and all the Teachers came into the great hall.

And the Council of Vocations sat on a high dais,
and they had but two words to speak to each of the Students.
They called the Student's names, and when the Students
stepped before them, one after another, the Council said:
“Carpenter” or “Doctor” or “Cook” or “Leader”.
Then each Student raised their right arm and said:

— *The will of our brothers be done.*

Now if the Council has said Carpenter or Cook,
the Students so assigned go to work
and they do not study any further.
But if the Council has said Leader,
then those Students go into the Home of the Leaders,
which is the greatest house in the City,
for it has three stories.
And there they study for many years,
so that they may become candidates
and be elected to the City Council

and the State Council and the World Council
— by a free and general vote of all men.

But we wished not to be a Leader,
even though it is a great honor.

We wished to be a Scholar.

So we awaited our turn in the great hall and then we heard
the Council of Vocations call our name:

— *Equality 7-2521.*

WE walked to the dais,
and our legs did not tremble,
and we looked up at the Council.

There were five members of the Council,
three of the male gender and two of the female.

Their hair was white and their faces were cracked
as the clay of a dry river bed.

They were old.

They seemed older than the marble
of the Temple of the World Council.
They sat before us and they did not move.
And we saw no breath to stir the folds of their white togas.
But we knew that they were alive,
for a finger of the hand of the oldest rose,
pointed to us,
and fell down again.
This was the only thing which moved,
for the lips of the oldest did not move as they said:

— *Street Sweeper.*

WE felt the cords of our neck grow tight
as our head rose higher
to look upon the faces of the Council,
and we were happy.

We knew we had been guilty,
but now we had a way to atone for it.
We would accept our Life Mandate,
and we would work for our brothers,
gladly and willingly,
and we would erase our sin against them,
which they did not know, but we knew.
So we were happy, and proud of ourselves
and of our victory over ourselves.
We raised our right arm and we spoke,
and our voice was the clearest,
the steadiest voice in the hall that day,
and we said:

— *The will of our brothers be done.*

AND we looked straight into the eyes of the Council,
but their eyes were as cold blue glass buttons.

So we went into the Home of the Street Sweepers.

It is a grey house on a narrow street.

There is a sundial in its courtyard,

by which the Council of the Home

can tell the hours of the day

and when to ring the bell.

When the bell rings, we all arise from our beds.

The sky is green and cold in our windows to the east.

The shadow on the sundial marks off a half-hour while we dress

and eat our breakfast in the dining hall,

where there are five long tables

with twenty clay plates

and twenty clay cups on each table.

Then we go to work in the streets of the City,

with our brooms and our rakes.

In five hours, when the sun is high,

we return to the Home and we eat our midday meal,

for which one-half hour is allowed.

Then we go to work again.

In five hours, the shadows are blue on the pavements,
and the sky is blue with a deep brightness
which is not bright.

We come back to have our dinner,
which lasts one hour.

Then the bell rings
and we walk in a straight column
to one of the City Halls,
for the Social Meeting.

Other columns of men arrive
from the Homes of the different Trades.

The candles are lit,
and the Councils of the different Homes
stand in a pulpit,
and they speak to us of our duties
and of our brother men.

Then visiting Leaders mount the pulpit
and they read to us the speeches
which were made in the City Council that day,
for the City Council represents all men
and all men must know.

Then we sing hymns,
the Hymn of Brotherhood,
and the Hymn of Equality,
and the Hymn of the Collective Spirit.

The sky is a soggy purple when we return to the Home.

Then the bell rings
and we walk in a straight column to the City Theatre
for three hours of Social Recreation.

There a play is shown upon the stage,
with two great choruses
from the Home of the Actors,
which speak and answer all together,
in two great voices.

The plays are about toil and how good it is.

Then we walk back to the Home

in a straight column.

The sky is like a black sieve

pierced by silver drops that tremble,
ready to burst through.

The moths beat against the street lanterns.

We go to our beds and we sleep,

till the bell rings again.

The sleeping halls are white and clean

and bare of all things
save one hundred beds.

THUS we lived each day
of four years,
until two springs ago
when our crime happened.

Thus must all men live until they are forty.
At forty, they are worn out.
At forty, they are sent
 to the Home of the Useless,
 where the Old Ones live.
The Old Ones do not work,
 for the State takes care of them.
They sit in the sun in summer
 and they sit by the fire in winter.
They do not speak often,
 for they are weary.
The Old Ones know
 that they are soon to die.
When a miracle happens
 and some live to be forty-five,
 they are the Ancient Ones,
 and children stare at them
 when passing by the Home of the Useless.

Such is to be our life,
 as that of all our brothers
 and of the brothers
 who came before us.

SUCH would have been our life,
 had we not committed our crime
 which changed all things for us.

And it was our curse which drove us to our crime.

We had been a good Street Sweeper
 and like all our brother Street Sweepers,
 save for our cursed wish to know.

We looked too long at the stars at night,
 and at the trees and the earth.

And when we cleaned the yard of the Home of the Scholars,
 we gathered the glass vials,
 the pieces of metal,
 the dried bones
 which they had discarded.

We wished to keep these things and to study them,
but we had no place to hide them.
So we carried them to the City Cesspool.
And then we made the discovery.

IT was on a day of the spring before last.
We Street Sweepers work in brigades of three,
and we were with Union 5-3992, they of the half-brain,
and with International 4-8818.
Now Union 5-3992 are a sickly lad
and sometimes they are stricken with convulsions,
when their mouth froths
and their eyes turn white.
But International 4-8818 are different.
They are a tall, strong youth
and their eyes are like fireflies,
for there is laughter in their eyes.
We cannot look upon International 4-8818
and not smile in answer.

For this they were not liked in the Home of the Students,
 as it is not proper to smile without reason.

And also they were not liked because they took pieces of coal
 and they drew pictures upon the walls,
 and they were pictures which made men laugh.

But it is only our brothers in the Home of the Artists who are permitted
 to draw pictures, so International 4-8818 were sent
 to the Home of the Street Sweepers, like ourselves.

INTERNATIONAL 4-8818 and we are friends.

This is an evil thing to say, for it is a transgression,
 the great Transgression of Preference,
 to love any among men
 better than the others,
 since we must love all men
 and all men are our friends.

So International 4-8818 and we
 have never spoken of it.

But we know.

We know, when we look into each other's eyes.

And when we look thus without words,

we both know other things also,

strange things for which there are no words,

and these things frighten us.

So on that day of the spring before last,

Union 5-3992 were stricken

with convulsions on the edge of the City,

near the City Theatre.

We left them to lie in the shade of the Theatre tent

and we went with International 4-8818 to finish our work.

We came together to the great ravine behind the Theatre.

It is empty save for trees and weeds.

Beyond the ravine there is a plain,

and beyond the plain

there lies the Uncharted Forest,

about which men must not think.

WE were gathering the papers and the rags
 which the wind had blown from the Theatre,
 when we saw an iron bar among the weeds.

It was old and rusted by many rains.

We pulled with all our strength, but we could not move it.

So we called International 4-8818

and together we scraped the earth around the bar.

Of a sudden the earth fell in before us,

and we saw an old iron grill over a black hole.

INTERNATIONAL 4-8818 stepped back.

But we pulled at the grill and it gave way.

And then we saw iron rings as steps leading down a shaft

into a darkness without bottom.

— *We shall go down,* we said to International 4-8818.

— *It is forbidden,* they answered.

WE said:

— *The Council does not know of this hole,
so it cannot be forbidden.*

AND they answered:

— *Since the Council does not know of this hole,
there can be no law permitting to enter it.
And everything which is not permitted by law
is forbidden.*

BUT we said:

— *We shall go, none the less.*

THEY were frightened,
but they stood by
and watched us go.

WE hung on the iron rings
with our hands and our feet.
We could see nothing below us.
And above us the open hole upon the sky
grew smaller and smaller,
till it came to be the size of a button.
But still we went down.
Then our foot touched the ground.
We rubbed our eyes, for we could not see.
Then our eyes became used to the darkness,
but we could not believe what we saw.

NO men known to us
could have built this place,
nor the men known to our brothers
who lived before us,
and yet it was built by men.

It was a great tunnel.

Its walls were hard and smooth to the touch;

it felt like stone, but it was not stone.

On the ground there were long thin tracks of iron,

but it was not iron; it felt smooth and cold as glass.

We knelt, and we crawled forward, our hand groping

along the iron line to see where it would lead.

But there was an unbroken night ahead.

Only the iron tracks glowed through it, straight and white,

calling us to follow.

But we could not follow, for we were losing the puddle of light behind us.

So we turned and we crawled back, our hand on the iron line.

And our heart beat in our fingertips, without reason.

And then we knew.

WE knew suddenly that this place was left
from the Unmentionable Times.

So it was true,
and those Times had been,
and all the wonders of those Times.

Hundreds upon hundreds of years ago
men knew secrets which we have lost.

And we thought: *This is a foul place.*

*They are damned
who touch the things
of the Unmentionable Times.*

But our hand which followed the track,
as we crawled,
clung to the iron as if it would not leave it,
as if the skin of our hand
were thirsty and begging of the metal
some secret fluid beating in its coldness.

WE returned to the earth.

International 4-8818 looked upon us and stepped back.

— *Equality 7-2521*, they said, *your face is white.*

BUT we could not speak and we stood looking upon them.

THEY backed away, as if they dared not touch us.

Then they smiled, but it was a not a gay smile;

it was lost and pleading.

But still we could not speak. Then they said:

— *We shall report our find
to the City Council
and both of us
will be rewarded.*

AND then we spoke.

Our voice was hard
and there was no mercy in our voice.

We said:

— *We shall not report our find to the City Council
We shall not report it to any men.*

THEY raised their hands to their ears,
for never had they heard such words as these.

— *International 4-8818, we asked,
will you report us to the Council
and see us lashed to death before your eyes?*

THEY stood straight of a sudden and they answered:

— *Rather would we die.*

— *Then, we said, keep silent. This place is ours.
This place belongs to us, Equality 7-2521,
and to no other men on earth.
And if ever we surrender it,
we shall surrender our life with it also.*

THEN we saw that the eyes of International 4-8818
were full to the lids with tears they dared not drop.
They whispered, and their voice trembled,
so that their words lost all shape:

— *The will of the Council is above all things,
for it is the will of our brothers, which is holy.
But if you wish it so, we shall obey you.
Rather shall we be evil with you
than good with all our brothers.
May the Council have mercy upon both our hearts!*

THEN we walked away together
 and back to the Home of the Street Sweepers.
 And we walked in silence.

THUS did it come to pass that each night,
 when the stars are high
 and the Street Sweepers sit in the City Theatre,
 we, Equality 7-2521,
 steal out and run through the darkness
 to our place.

It is easy to leave the Theatre; when the candles are blown
 and the Actors come onto the stage,
 no eyes can see us as we crawl under our seat
 and under the cloth of the tent.

Later it is easy to steal through the shadows
 and fall in line next to International 4-8818,
 as the column leaves the Theatre.

It is dark in the streets and there are no men about,
for no men may walk through the City
when they have no mission to walk there.

Each night, we run to the ravine,
and we remove the stones
which we have piled upon the iron grill to
hide it from men.

Each night, for three hours,
we are under the earth, alone.

WE have stolen candles
from the Home of the Street Sweepers,
we have stolen flints and knives and paper,
and we have brought them to this place.
We have stolen glass vials and powders and acids
from the Home of the Scholars.
Now we sit in the tunnel
for three hours each night
and we study.

We melt strange metals, and we mix acids,
 and we cut open the bodies of the animals
 which we find in the City Cesspool.

We have built an oven of the bricks we gathered in the streets.

We burn the wood we find in the ravine.

The fire flickers in the oven and blue shadows dance upon the walls,
 and there is no sound of men to disturb us.

WE have stolen manuscripts.

This is a great offense.

Manuscripts are precious,
 for our brothers in the Home of the Clerks
 spend one year to copy one single script
 in their clear handwriting.

Manuscripts are rare
 and they are kept in the Home of the Scholars.

So we sit under the earth
 and we read the stolen scripts.

Two years have passed since we found this place.
And in these two years we have learned more
than we had learned
in the ten years
of the Home of the Students.

WE have learned things
which are not in the scripts.
We have solved secrets
of which the Scholars have no knowledge.
We have come to see how great is the unexplored,
and many lifetimes will not bring us to the end of our quest.
But we wish no end to our quest.
We wish nothing,
save to be alone and to learn,
and to feel as if with each day
our sight were growing sharper
than the hawk's and clearer than rock crystal.

STRANGE are the ways of evil.

We are false

in the faces of our brothers.

We are defying

the will of our Councils.

We alone, of the thousands who walk this earth,

we alone in this hour

are doing a work which has no purpose

save that we wish to do it.

The evil of our crime

is not for the human mind

to probe.

The nature of our punishment,

if it be discovered,

is not for the human heart to ponder.

Never, not in the memory of the Ancient Ones' Ancients,

never have men done

what we are doing.

AND yet there is no shame in us
and no regret.

We say to ourselves
that we are a wretch and a traitor.

But we feel no burden upon our spirit
and no fear in our heart.

And it seems to us
that our spirit is clear as a lake
troubled by no eyes
save those of the sun.

And in our heart — strange are the ways of evil! —
in our heart there is the first peace
we have known
in twenty years.

TWO

LIBERTY 5-3000 . . . LIBERTY FIVE-THREE THOUSAND . . .

Liberty 5-3000

WE wish to write this name.

We wish to speak it,

but we dare not speak it above a whisper.

For men are forbidden to take notice of women,

and women are forbidden to take notice of men.

But we think of one among women,

they whose name is Liberty 5-3000,

and we think of no others.

THE women who have been assigned to work the soil
live in the Homes of the Peasants beyond the City.

Where the City ends there is a great road winding off to the north,
and we Street Sweepers must keep this road clean to the first milepost.

There is a hedge along the road,
and beyond the hedge lie the fields.

The fields are black and ploughed,
and they lie like a great fan before us,
with their furrows gathered in some hand beyond the sky,
spreading forth from that hand,
opening wide apart as they come toward us,
like black pleats that sparkle with thin, green spangles.

Women work in the fields, and their white tunics in the wind
are like the wings of sea-gulls beating over the black soil.

AND there it was that we saw Liberty 5-3000
walking along the furrows.

Their body was straight
and thin as a blade of iron.

Their eyes were dark and hard and glowing,
with no fear in them,
no kindness and no guilt.

Their hair was golden as the sun;
their hair flew in the wind,
shining and wild,
as if it defied men to restrain it.

They threw seeds from their hand as if they deigned
to fling a scornful gift,
and the earth was as a beggar under their feet.

WE stood still;
for the first time did we know fear,
and then pain.

And we stood still
that we might not spill this pain
more precious than pleasure.

THEN we heard a voice from the others call their name:
“*Liberty 5-3000*,” xxx

and they turned and walked back.

Thus we learned their name,
and we stood watching them go,
till their white tunic was lost in the blue mist.

AND the following day, as we came to the northern road,
we kept our eyes upon Liberty 5-3000 in the field.
And each day thereafter we knew the illness of waiting
for our hour on the northern road.
And there we looked at Liberty 5-3000 each day.
We know not whether they looked at us also,
but we think they did.

THEN one day they came close to the hedge,
and suddenly they turned to us.

They turned in a whirl
and the movement of their body stopped,
as if slashed off,
as suddenly as it had started.

They stood still as a stone,
and they looked straight upon us,
straight into our eyes.

There was no smile on their face,
and no welcome.

But their face was taut,
and their eyes were dark.

Then they turned as swiftly,
and they walked away from us.

BUT the following day, when we came to the road,
they smiled.

They smiled to us and for us.

And we smiled in answer.

Their head fell back, and their arms fell,
as if their arms and their thin white neck
were stricken suddenly
with a great lassitude.

They were not looking upon us,
but upon the sky.

Then they glanced at us over their shoulder,
and we felt as if a hand had touched our body,
slipping softly from our lips
to our feet.

EVERY morning thereafter,
we greeted each other with our eyes.
We dared not speak.
It is a transgression to speak to men of other Trades,
save in groups at the Social Meetings.
But once, standing at the hedge,
we raised our hand to our forehead
and then moved it slowly, palm down,
toward Liberty 5-3000.
Had the others seen it,
they could have guessed nothing,
for it looked only as if
we were shading our eyes from the sun.
But Liberty 5-3000 saw it and understood.
They raised their hand to their forehead
and moved it as we had.
Thus, each day, we greet Liberty 5-3000,
and they answer,
and no men can suspect.

WE do not wonder at this new sin of ours.
It is our second Transgression of Preference,
for we do not think of all our brothers,
as we must, but only of one,
and their name is Liberty 5-3000.

We do not know why we think of them.
We do not know why, when we think of them,
we feel of a sudden that the earth is good
and that it is not a burden to live.

WE do not think of them as Liberty 5-3000 any longer.
We have given them a name in our thoughts.
We call them the Golden One.
But it is a sin to give men names
which distinguish them from other men.
Yet we call them the Golden One,
for they are not like the others.
The Golden One are not
like the others.

AND we take no heed of the law
which says that men may not think
of women, save at the Time of Mating.

This is the time each spring
when all the men older than twenty
and all the women older than eighteen
are sent for one night
to the City Palace of Mating.

And each of the men
have one of the women assigned to them
by the Council of Eugenics.

Children are born each winter,
but women never see their children
and children never know their parents.

Twice have we been sent to the Palace of Mating,
but it is an ugly and shameful matter,
of which we do not like to think.

WE had broken so many laws,
and today we have broken one more.
Today we spoke to the Golden One.

THE other women were far off in the field,
when we stopped at the hedge by the side of the road.
The Golden One were kneeling alone at the moat
which runs through the field.
And the drops of water falling from their hands,
as they raised the water to their lips,
were like sparks of fire in the sun.
Then the Golden One saw us,
and they did not move,
kneeling there, looking at us,
and circles of light played upon their white tunic,
from the sun on the water of the moat,
and one sparkling drop fell
from a finger of their hand
held as frozen in the air.

THEN the Golden One rose and walked to the hedge,
as if they had heard a command in our eyes.
The two other Street Sweepers of our brigade
were a hundred paces away down the road.
And we thought that International 4-8818 would not betray us,
and Union 5-3992 would not understand.
So we looked straight upon the Golden One,
and we saw the shadows of their lashes
on their white cheeks

— *You are beautiful, Liberty 5-3000.*

THEIR face did not move
and they did not avert their eyes.
Only their eyes grew wider,
and there was triumph in their eyes,
and it was not triumph over us,
but over things we could not guess.

THEN they asked:

- *What is your name?*
- *Equality 7-2521,*
we answered.
- *You are not one of our brothers,*
Equality 7-2521,
for we do not wish you to be.

WE cannot say what they meant,
for there are no words for their meaning,
but we know it without words and we knew it then.

- *No,* we answered,
nor are you one of our sisters.

- *If you see us among scores of women,
will you look upon us?*
- *We shall look upon you, Liberty 5-3000,
if we see you among all the women of the earth.*

THEN they asked:

- *Are Street Sweepers sent to different parts
of the City or do they always work
in the same places?*
- *They always work in the same places,* we answered,
and no one will take this road away from us.
- *Your eyes,* they said,
are not like the eyes of any among men.

AND suddenly,
without cause for the thought which came to us,
we felt cold,
cold to our stomach.

— *How old are you?*
we asked.

THEY understood our thought,
for they lowered their eyes for the first time.

— *Seventeen,*
they whispered.

AND we sighed,
as if a burden had been taken from us,
for we had been thinking without reason of the Palace of Mating.
And we thought that we would not let the Golden One
be sent to the Palace.

How to prevent it, how to bar the will of the Councils,
 we knew not,

but we knew suddenly that we would.

Only we do not know why such thought came to us,
 for these ugly matters bear no relation to us
 and the Golden One.

What relation can they bear?

STILL, without reason,

as we stood there by the hedge,
 we felt our lips drawn tight with hatred,
 a sudden hatred for all our brother men.

And the Golden One saw it and smiled slowly,
 and there was in their smile
 the first sadness we had seen in them.

We think that in the wisdom of women
 the Golden One had understood more
 than we can understand.

THEN three of the sisters in the field appeared,
coming toward the road,
so the Golden One walked away from us.

They took the bag of seeds,
and they threw the seeds into the furrows of earth
as they walked away.

But the seeds flew wildly,
for the hand of the Golden One
was trembling.

YET as we walked back to the Home of the Street Sweepers,
we felt that we wanted to sing, without reason.

So we were reprimanded tonight,
in the dining hall, for without knowing it
we had begun to sing aloud
some tune we had never heard.

But it is not proper to sing without reason,
save at the Social Meetings.

— *We are singing because we are happy,*
we answered the one of the Home Council who reprimanded us.

— *Indeed you are happy,* they answered.
How else can men be
when they live for their brothers?

AND now, sitting here in our tunnel,
we wonder about these words.
It is forbidden, not to be happy.
For, as it has been explained to us,
men are free and the earth belongs to them;
and all things on earth belong to all men;
and the will of all men together is good for all;
and so all men must be happy.

YET as we stand at night in the great hall,
removing our garments for sleep,
we look upon our brothers and we wonder.
The heads of our brothers are bowed.
The eyes of our brothers are dull,
and never do they look one another in the eyes.
The shoulders of our brothers are hunched,
and their muscles are drawn,
as if their bodies were shrinking
and wished to shrink out of sight.
And a word steals into our mind,
as we look upon our brothers,
and that word is fear.

THERE is fear hanging in the air of the sleeping halls,
and in the air of the streets.

Fear walks through the City,
fear without name,
without shape.

All men feel it
and none dare to speak.

WE feel it also,
when we are in the Home of the Street Sweepers.

But here, in our tunnel, we feel it no longer.

The air is pure under the ground.

There is no odor of men.

And these three hours give us strength
for our hours above the ground.

OUR body is betraying us,
for the Council of the Home
looks with suspicion upon us.

It is not good to feel too much joy
nor to be glad that our body lives.
For we matter not and it must not matter to us
whether we live or die,
which is to be as our brothers will it.
But we, Equality 7-2521, are glad to be living.
If this is a vice, then we wish no virtue.

YET our brothers are not like us.
All is not well with our brothers.
There are Fraternity 2-5503,
a quiet boy with wise, kind eyes,
who cry suddenly, without reason,
in the midst of day or night,
and their body shakes with sobs
they cannot explain.
There are Solidarity 9-6347,
who are a bright youth,
without fear in the day;

but they scream in their sleep,
 and they scream: "*Help us! Help us! Help us!*"
 into the night,
 in a voice which chills our bones,
 but the Doctors cannot cure Solidarity 9-6347.

AND as we all undress at night,
 in the dim light of the candles,
 our brothers are silent,
 for they dare not speak the thoughts of their minds.
 For all must agree with all,
 and they cannot know if their thoughts
 are the thoughts of all,
 and so they fear to speak.
 And they are glad
 when the candles are blown for the night.

But we, Equality 7-2521,
look through the window upon the sky,
and there is peace in the sky,
and cleanliness,
and dignity.

And beyond the City there lies the plain,
and beyond the plain,
black upon the black sky,
there lies the Uncharted Forest.

WE do not wish to look upon the Uncharted Forest.

We do not wish to think of it.

But ever do our eyes return to that black patch upon the sky.

Men never enter the Uncharted Forest,
for there is no power to explore it
and no path to lead among its ancient trees
which stand as guards of fearful secrets.

It is whispered that once or twice in a hundred years,
one among the men of the City escape alone
and run to the Uncharted Forest,
without call or reason.

These men do not return.

They perish from hunger and from the claws
of the wild beasts
which roam the Forest.

But our Councils say this is only a legend.

We have heard that there are many Uncharted Forests
over the land, among the Cities.

And it is whispered that they have grown over the ruins
of many cities of the Unmentionable Times.

The trees have swallowed the ruins,
and the bones under the ruins,
and all the things which perished.

AND as we look upon the Uncharted Forest far in the night,
we think of the secrets of the Unmentionable Times.

And we wonder how it came to pass that these secrets were lost to the world.

We have heard the legends of the great fighting,
in which many men fought on one side and
only a few on the other.

These few were the Evil Ones
and they were conquered.

Then great fires raged over the land.

And in these fires the Evil Ones
and all the things made by the Evil Ones
were burned.

And the fire which is called
the Dawn of the Great Rebirth,
was the Script Fire where all the scripts
of the Evil Ones were burned,
and with them all the words
of the Evil Ones.

Great mountains of flame stood in the squares of the Cities
for three months.

Then came the Great Rebirth.

THE words of the Evil Ones . . .

The words of the Unmentionable Times . . .

What are the words which we have lost?

MAY the Council have mercy upon us!

We had no wish to write such a question,

and we knew not what we were doing till we had written it.

We shall not ask this question and we shall not think it.

We shall not call death upon our head.

AND yet . . .

And yet . . .

THERE is some word, one single word

which is not in the language of men,

but which has been.

And this is the Unspeakable Word,

which no men may speak nor hear.

But sometimes, and it is rare, sometimes, somewhere,
one among men find that word.
They find it upon scraps of old manuscripts
or cut into the fragments of ancient stones.
But when they speak it they are put to death.
There is no crime punished by death in this world,
save this one crime of speaking the Unspeakable Word.

WE have seen one of such men burned alive
in the square of the City.
And it was a sight which has stayed with us through the years,
and it haunts us,
and follows us,
and it gives us no rest.
We were a child then, ten years old.
And we stood in the great square
with all the children and all the men of the City,
sent to behold the burning.

They brought the Transgressor out into the square
and they led them to the pyre.
They had torn out the tongue of the Transgressor,
so that they could speak no longer.
The Transgressor were young and tall.
They had hair of gold and eyes blue as morning.
They walked to the pyre, and their step did not falter.
And of all the faces on that square,
of all the faces which shrieked and screamed
and spat curses upon them,
theirs was the calmest
and happiest face.

As the chains were wound over their body at the stake,
and a flame set to the pyre,
the Transgressor looked upon the City.
There was a thin thread of blood
running from the corner of their mouth,
but their lips were smiling.

And a monstrous thought came to us then,
which has never left us.

We had heard of Saints.

There are the Saints of Labor,
and the Saints of the Councils,
and the Saints of the Great Rebirth.

But we had never seen a Saint
nor what the likeness of a Saint should be.

And we thought then, standing in the square,
that the likeness of a Saint
was the face we saw before us
in the flames,
the face of the Transgressor of the Unspeakable word.

As the flames rose,
a thing happened which no eyes saw but ours,
else we would not be living today.

Perhaps it had only seemed to us.
But it seemed to us that the eyes of the Transgressor
 had chosen us from the crowd
 and were looking straight upon us.
There was no pain in their eyes
 and no knowledge of the agony of their body.
There was only joy in them, and pride,
 a pride holier than it is fit for human pride to be.
And it seemed as if these eyes were trying to tell us something
 through the flames,
 to send into our eyes
 some word
 without sound.
And it seemed as if these eyes were begging us
 to gather that word
 and not to let it go from us
 and from the earth.
But the flames rose
 and we could not guess the word

WHAT — even if we have to burn for it
like the Saint of the pyre —
what is
the Unspeakable word?

THREE

WE, EQUALITY 7-2521, HAVE DISCOVERED
a new power of nature.

And we have discovered it alone,
and we are alone to know it.

IT is said. Now let us be lashed for it,
if we must.

The Council of Scholars has said that we all know the things
which exist and therefore the things
which are not known by all do not exist.

But we think that the Council of Scholars
is blind.

The secrets of this earth are not for all men to see,
but only for those who will seek them.

We know, for we have found a secret
unknown to all our brothers.

WE know not what this power is
nor whence it comes.

But we know its nature,
we have watched it and worked with it.

We saw it first two years ago.

One night, we were cutting open the body of a dead frog
when we saw its leg jerking.

It was dead, yet it moved.

Some power
unknown to men
was making it move.

We could not understand it.

Then, after many tests,
we found the answer.

The frog had been hanging on a wire of copper;
and it had been the metal of our knife
which had sent a strange power
to the copper through the brine of the frog's body.

We put a piece of copper and a piece of zinc into a jar of brine,
we touched a wire to them,
and there, under our fingers,
was a miracle which had never occurred before,
a new miracle and a new power.

THIS discovery haunted us.

We followed it in preference to all our studies.

We worked with it,
we tested it in more ways than we can describe,
and each step was as another miracle
unveiling before us.

We came to know that we had found
the greatest power on earth.

For it defies all the laws known to men.

It makes the needle move and turn on the compass
which we stole from the Home of the Scholars;
but we had been taught, when still a child,
that the loadstone points to the north
and that this is a law which nothing can change;
yet our new power defies all laws.

We found that it causes lightning,
and never have men known
what causes lightning.

In thunderstorms,
we raised a tall rod of iron
by the side of our hole,
and we watched it from below.

We have seen the lightning strike it
again and again.

And now we know that metal draws the power of the sky,
and that metal can be made to give it forth.

WE have built strange things
with this discovery of ours.
We used for it the copper wires
which we found here under the ground.
We have walked the length of our tunnel,
with a candle lighting the way.
We could go no farther than half a mile,
for earth and rock had fallen at both ends.
But we gathered all the things we found
and we brought them to our work place.
We found strange boxes with bars of metal inside,
with many cords and strands and coils of metal.
We found wires that led to strange little globes of glass on the walls;
they contained threads of metal thinner than a spider's web.

THESE things help us in our work.

We do not understand them,

but we think that the men of the Unmentionable Times

had known our power of the sky,

and these things had some relation to it.

We do not know, but we shall learn.

We cannot stop now,

even though it frightens us

that we are alone in our knowledge.

No single one can possess greater wisdom
than the many Scholars
who are elected by all men
for their wisdom.

Yet we can.

We do.

We have fought against saying it, but now it is said.

We do not care.

We forget all men,
all laws and all things
save our metals and our wires.

So much is still to be learned!

So long a road lies before us,
and what care we
if we must travel it alone!

FOUR

MANY DAYS PASSED BEFORE WE COULD SPEAK
to the Golden One again.

But then came the day when the sky turned white,
as if the sun had burst and spread its flame in the air,
and the fields lay still without breath,
and the dust of the road was white in the glow.

So the women of the field were weary,
and they tarried over their work,
and they were far from the road when we came.

But the Golden One stood alone at the hedge, waiting.

We stopped and we saw that their eyes,
so hard and scornful to the world,
were looking at us as if they would obey
any word we might speak.

AND we said:

— *We have given you a name in our thoughts,
Liberty 5-3000.*

— *What is our name?* they asked.

— *The Golden One.*

— *Nor do we call you Equality 7-2521
when we think of you.*

— *What name have you given us?*

THEY looked straight into our eyes
and they held their head high
and they answered:

— *The Unconquered.*

FOR a long time we could not speak. Then we said:

— *Such thoughts as these are forbidden, Golden One.*

— *But you think such thoughts as these
and you wish us to think them.*

WE looked into their eyes and we could not lie.

— *Yes,* we whispered, and they smiled, and then we said:
Our dearest one, do not obey us.

THEY stepped back, and their eyes were wide and still.

— *Speak these words again,* they whispered.

— *Which words?* we asked.

But they did not answer, and we knew it.

— *Our dearest one,* we whispered.

NEVER have men said this to women.

THE head of the Golden One bowed slowly,
and they stood still before us,
their arms at their sides,
the palms of their hands turned to us,
as if their body were delivered
in submission
to our eyes.

And we could not speak.

THEN they raised their head,
and they spoke simply and gently,
as if they wished us to forget some anxiety of their own.

— *The day is hot,* they said,
and you have worked for many hours
and you must be weary.

— *No,* we answered.

— *It is cooler in the fields,* they said,
and there is water to drink.
Are you thirsty?

— *Yes,* we answered,
but we cannot cross the hedge.

— *We shall bring the water to you,* they said.

THEN they knelt by the moat,
they gathered water in their two hands,
they rose and they held the water out to our lips.

WE do not know if we drank that water.
We only knew suddenly that their hands were empty,
but we were still holding our lips to their hands,
and that they knew it but did not move.

WE raised our head and stepped back.
For we did not understand
what had made us do this,
and we were afraid to understand it.

AND the Golden One stepped back,
and stood looking upon their hands in wonder.
Then the Golden One moved away,
even though no others were coming,
and they moved stepping back,
as if they could not turn from us,
their arms bent before them,
as if they could not
lower their hands.

FIVE

WE MADE IT. WE CREATED IT.

We brought it forth
from the night of the ages.

We alone.

Our hands.

Our mind.

Ours alone and only.

WE know not what we are saying.
Our head is reeling.
We look upon the light which we had made.
We shall be forgiven for anything we say tonight

TONIGHT, after more days and trials than we can count,
we finished building a strange thing, from the remains
of the Unmentionable Times,
a box of glass,
devised to give forth the power of the sky
of greater strength
than we had ever achieved before.
And when we put our wires to this box,
when we closed the current
— the wire glowed!
It came to life,
it turned red,
and a circle of light lay
on the stone before us.

WE stood, and we held our head in our hands.
We could not conceive of that which we had created.
We had touched no flint,
 made no fire.
Yet here was light,
 light that came from nowhere,
 light from the heart of metal.

WE blew out the candle.
Darkness swallowed us.
There was nothing left around us,
 nothing save night
 and a thin thread of flame in it,
 as a crack in the wall of a prison.
We stretched our hands to the wire,
 and we saw our fingers in the red glow.

We could not see our body nor feel it,
and in that moment nothing existed
save our two hands
over a wire
glowing
in a black abyss.

THEN we thought of the meaning of that which lay before us.
We can light our tunnel, and the City,
and all the Cities of the world
with nothing save metal and wires.
We can give our brothers a new light,
cleaner and brighter than any they have ever known.
The power of the sky can be made to do men's bidding.
There are no limits to its secrets and its might,
and it can be made to grant us anything
if we but choose to ask.

THEN we knew what we must do.

Our discovery is too great for us to waste our time in sweeping the streets.

We must not keep our secret to ourselves,
nor buried under the ground.

We must bring it into the sight of all men.

We need all our time,
we need the work rooms of the Home of the Scholars,
we want the help of our brother Scholars
and their wisdom joined to ours.

There is so much work ahead for all of us,
for all the Scholars of the world.

IN a month, the World Council of Scholars is to meet in our City.

It is a great Council,
to which the wisest of all lands are elected,
and it meets once a year
in the different Cities of the earth.

We shall go to this Council
and we shall lay before them,

as our gift,
the glass box with the power of the sky.
We shall confess everything to them.
They will see, understand and forgive.
For our gift is greater than our transgression.
They will explain it to the Council of Vocations,
and we shall be assigned to the Home of the Scholars.
This has never been done before,
but neither has a gift such as ours
ever been offered to men.

WE must wait.

We must guard our tunnel
as we had never guarded it before.
For should any men save the Scholars learn of our secret,
they would not understand it,
nor would they believe us.

They would see nothing,
save our crime of working alone,
and they would destroy us and our light.

We care not about our body,
but our light is

YES, we do care.

For the first time we do care
about our body.

For this wire is as a part of our body,
as a vein torn from us,
glowing with our blood.

Are we proud of this thread of metal,
or of our hands which made it,
or is there a line
to divide these two?

WE stretch out our arms.

For the first time do we know
how strong our arms are.

And a strange thought comes to us:
we wonder,
for the first time in our life,
what we look like.

Men never see their own faces
and never ask their brothers about it,
for it is evil to have concern
for their own faces or bodies.

But tonight,
for a reason we cannot fathom,
we wish it were possible
to us to know the likeness
of our own person.

SIX

WE HAVE NOT WRITTEN FOR THIRTY DAYS.

For thirty days we have not been here, in our tunnel.

We had been caught.

IT happened on that night when we wrote last.

We forgot, that night, to watch the sand in the glass

which tells us when three hours have passed

and it is time to return to the City Theatre.

When we remembered it,

the sand had

run out.

WE hastened to the Theatre.

But the big tent stood grey and silent against the sky.
The streets of the City lay before us, dark and empty.
If we went back to hide in our tunnel,
 we would be found and our light found with us.
So we walked to the Home of the Street Sweepers.

WHEN the Council of the Home questioned us,
 we looked upon the faces of the Council,
 but there was no curiosity in those faces,
 and no anger,
 and no mercy.

So when the oldest of them asked us: *“Where have you been?”*
 we thought of our glass box and of our light,
 and we forgot all else.

And we answered:

— *We will not tell you.*

THE oldest did not question us further.
 They turned to the two youngest,
 and said, and their voice was bored:

— *Take our brother Equality 7-2521
 to the Palace of Corrective Detention.
 Lash them until they tell.*

So we were taken to the Stone Room
 under the Palace of Corrective Detention.
 This room has no windows and it is empty save for an iron post.
 Two men stood by the post, naked but for leather aprons
 and leather hoods over their faces.
 Those who had brought us departed,
 leaving us to the two Judges
 who stood in a corner of the room.
 The Judges were small, thin men, grey and bent.
 They gave the signal to the two strong hooded ones.

THEY tore our clothes from our body,
they threw us down upon our knees
and they tied our hands to the iron post.

THE first blow of the lash
felt as if our spine had been cut in two.
The second blow stopped the first,
and for a second we felt nothing,
then the pain struck us in our throat
and fire ran in our lungs without air.
But we did not cry out.

THE lash whistled like a singing wind.
We tried to count the blows, but we lost count.
We knew that the blows were falling upon our back.
Only we felt nothing upon our back any longer.
A flaming grill kept dancing before our eyes,
and we thought of nothing save that grill,
a grill, a grill of red squares,

and then we knew that we were looking at the squares
of the iron grill in the door,
and there were also the squares
of stone on the walls,
and the squares which the lash
was cutting upon our back,
crossing and re-crossing itself in our flesh.

THEN we saw a fist before us.

It knocked our chin up,
and we saw the red froth of our mouth
on the withered fingers,
and the Judge asked:

— *Where have you been?*

BUT we jerked our head away,
hid our face upon our tied hands,
and bit our lips.

THE lash whistled again.

We wondered who was sprinkling burning coal dust upon the floor,
for we saw drops of red
twinkling
on the stones around us.

THEN we knew nothing,
save two voices snarling steadily,
one after the other,
even though we knew they were speaking
many
minutes
apart:

— *Where have you been where have you been
where have you been where have you been? . . .*

AND our lips moved,
but the sound trickled back into our throat,
and the sound was only:

— *The light . . . The light . . . The light*

THEN we knew nothing.

WE opened our eyes, lying on our stomach on the brick floor of a cell.
We looked upon two hands flying far before us on the bricks,
and we moved them, and we knew that they were our hands.
But we could not move our body.
Then we smiled, for we thought of the light
and that we had not betrayed it.

WE lay in our cell for many days.
The door opened twice each day,
once for the men who brought us bread and water,
and once for the Judges.

Many Judges came to our cell,
first the humblest
and then the most honored Judges of the City.
They stood before us in their white togas,
and they asked:

— *Are you ready to speak?*

BUT we shook our head,
lying before them on the floor.
And they departed.

WE counted each day and each night as it passed.
Then, tonight, we knew that we must escape.
For tomorrow the World Council of Scholars
is to meet in our City.

IT was easy to escape from the Palace of Corrective Detention.
The locks are old on the doors and there are no guards about.
There is no reason to have guards,
 for men have never defied the Councils so far as to escape
 from whatever place they were ordered to be.
Our body is healthy and strength returns to it speedily.
We lunged against the door and it gave way.
We stole through the dark passages,
 and through the dark streets,
 and down into our tunnel.

WE lit the candle and we saw that our place
 had not been found
 and nothing had been touched.
And our glass box stood before us on the cold oven,
 as we had left it.
What matter they now,
 the scars upon our back!

TOMORROW, in the full light of day,

we shall take our box,
and leave our tunnel open,
and walk through the streets
to the Home of the Scholars.

We shall put before them
the greatest gift
ever offered to men.

We shall tell them the truth.

We shall hand to them,
as our confession,
these pages we have written.

We shall join our hands to theirs,
and we shall work together,
with the power of the sky, for the glory of mankind.

Our blessing upon you, our brothers!

Tomorrow, you will take us back into your fold
and we shall be an outcast no longer.

Tomorrow we shall be one of you again.

Tomorrow

SEVEN

IT IS DARK HERE IN THE FOREST.

The leaves rustle over our head,
black against the last gold of the sky.

The moss is soft and warm.

We shall sleep on this moss for many nights,
till the beasts of the forest come to tear our body.

We have no bed now, save the moss,
and no future,
save the beasts.

WE are old now, yet we were young this morning,
when we carried our glass box
through the streets of the City
to the Home of the Scholars.

No men stopped us,
for there were none about the Palace of Corrective Detention,
and the others knew nothing.

No men stopped us at the gate.
We walked through the empty passages
and into the great hall
where the World Council of Scholars
sat in solemn meeting.

WE saw nothing as we entered,
save the sky in the great windows, blue and glowing.
Then we saw the Scholars who sat around a long table;
they were as shapeless clouds
huddled at the rise of the great sky.

There were men whose famous names we knew,
and others from distant lands
whose names we had not heard.
We saw a great painting on the wall over their heads,
of the twenty illustrious men
who had invented the candle.

ALL the heads of the Council
turned to us as we entered.

These great and wise of the earth
did not know what to think of us,
and they looked upon us
with wonder and curiosity,
as if we were a miracle.

It is true that our tunic was torn
and stained with brown stains
which had been blood.

We raised our right arm and we said: **xxx**

— *Our greeting to you, our honored brothers
of the World Council of Scholars!*

THEN Collective o-0009, the oldest and wisest of the Council,
spoke and asked:

— *Who are you, our brother?
For you do not look like a Scholar.*

— *Our name is Equality 7-2521, we answered,
and we are a Street Sweeper of this City.*

THEN it was if a great wind had stricken the hall,
for all the Scholars spoke at once,
and they were angry and frightened.

— *A Street Sweeper! A Street Sweeper
walking in upon the World Council of Scholars!
It is not to be believed!
It is against all the rules and all the laws!*

BUT we knew how to stop them.

— *Our brothers!* we said.
*We matter not, nor our transgression.
It is only our brother men who matter.
Give no thought to us, for we are nothing,
but listen to our words, for we bring you a gift
such as has never been brought to men.
Listen to us, for we hold the future of mankind
in our hands.*

THEN they listened.

WE placed our glass box upon the table before them.

We spoke of it,

and of our long quest,

and of our tunnel,

and of our escape

from the Palace of Corrective Detention.

Not a hand moved in that hall, as we spoke,

nor an eye.

Then we put the wires to the box,

and they all bent forward and sat still,

watching.

And we stood still,

our eyes upon the wire.

And slowly, slowly as a flush of blood,

a red flame trembled in the wire.

Then the wire glowed.

BUT terror struck the men of the Council.

They leapt to their feet, they ran from the table,
and they stood pressed against the wall,
huddled together,
seeking the warmth of one another's bodies
to give them courage.

WE looked upon them and we laughed and said:

— *Fear nothing, our brothers.
There is a great power in these wires,
but this power is tamed.
It is yours. We give it to you.*

STILL they would not move.

— *We give you the power of the sky!* we cried.
We give you the key to the earth!
Take it, and let us be one of you,

*the humblest among you.
Let us all work together,
and harness this power,
and make it ease the toil of men.
Let us throw away our candles and our torches.
Let us flood our cities with light.
Let us bring a new light to men!*

BUT they looked upon us,
and suddenly we were afraid.
For their eyes were still,
and small, and evil.

— *Our brothers!* we cried.
Have you nothing to say to us?

THEN Collective o-0009 moved forward.
They moved to the table and the others followed.

— *Yes*, spoke Collective o-0009,
we have much to say to you.

THE sound of their voice brought silence to the hall
 and to the beat of our heart.

— *Yes*, said Collective o-0009,
*we have much to say to a wretch who have broken
 all the laws and who boast of their infamy!
 How dared you think that your mind
 held greater wisdom than the minds
 of your brothers?
 And if the Councils had decreed
 that you should be a Street Sweeper,
 how dared you think
 that you could be of greater use to men
 than in sweeping the streets?*

- *How dared you, gutter cleaner,* spoke Fraternity 9-3452,
to hold yourself as one alone
and with the thoughts of the one
and not of many?
- *You shall be burned at the stake,*
said Democracy 4-6998.
- *No, they shall be lashed,* said Unanimity 7-3304,
till there is nothing left under the lashes.
- *No,* said Collective 0-0009,
we cannot decide upon this, our brothers.
No such crime has ever been committed,
and it is not for us to judge.
Nor for any small Council.
We shall deliver this creature to the World Council
itself and let their will be done.

WE looked upon them and we pleaded:

— *Our brothers! You are right.
Let the will of the Council be done upon our body.
We do not care. But the light?
What will you do with the light?*

COLLECTIVE o-0009 looked upon us, and they smiled.

— *So you think you have found a new power,
said Collective o-0009.
Do all your brothers think that?*

— *No,* we answered.

— *What is not thought by all men
cannot be true,* said Collective o-0009.

— *You have worked on this alone?*

asked International 1-5537.

— *Yes,* we answered.

— *What is not done collectively cannot be good,*

said International 1-5537.

— *Many men in the Homes of the Scholars
have had strange new ideas in the past,
said Solidarity 8-1164, but when the majority
of their brother Scholars voted against them,
they abandoned their ideas, as all men must.*

— *This box is useless,* said Alliance 6-7349.

— *Should it be what they claim of it,
said Harmony 9-2642, then it would bring ruin to the*

Department of Candles.

The Candle is a great boon

to mankind, as approved by all men.

Therefore it cannot be destroyed

by the whim of one.

— *This would wreck the Plans of the World Council,*

said Unanimity 2-9913,

and without the Plans of the World Council

the sun cannot rise.

It took fifty years to secure the approval

of all the Councils for the Candle,

and to decide upon the number needed,

and to re-fit the Plans

so as to make candles

instead of torches.

This touched upon thousands and thousands of men

working in scores of States.

We cannot alter the Plans again so soon.

— *And if this should lighten the toil of men,
said Similarity 5-0306, then it is a great evil,
for men have no cause to exist
save in toiling for other men.*

THEN Collective 0-0009 rose and pointed at our box.

— *This thing, they said, must be destroyed.*

AND all the others cried as one:

— *It must be destroyed!*

THEN we leapt to the table.

WE seized our box,
we shoved them aside,
and we ran to the window.

We turned and we looked at them for the last time,
and a rage,
such as it is not fit for humans to know,
choked our voice in our throat.

— *You fools!* we cried.
You fools! You thrice-damned fools!

WE swung our fist through the windowpane,
and we leapt out in a ringing rain of glass.

WE fell, but we never let the box fall from our hands.
Then we ran.
We ran blindly,
and men and houses streaked past us
in a torrent without shape.

And the road seemed not to be flat before us,
but as if it were leaping up to meet us,
and we waited for the earth
to rise and strike us in the face.

But we ran.

We knew not where we were going.

We knew only that we must run,
run to the end of the world,
to the end of our days.

THEN we knew suddenly that we were lying on a soft earth
and that we had stopped.

Trees taller than we had ever seen before stood over us in a great silence.

Then we knew. We were in the Uncharted Forest.

We had not thought of coming here,
but our legs had carried our wisdom,
and our legs had brought us
to the Uncharted Forest
against our will.

OUR glass box lay beside us.
We crawled to it,
we fell upon it,
our face in our arms, and we lay still.

WE lay thus for a long time.
Then we rose,
we took our box
and walked on into the forest.

IT mattered not where we went.
We knew that men would not follow us,
for they never enter the Uncharted Forest.
We had nothing to fear from them.
The forest disposes of its own victims.
This gave us no fear either.
Only we wished to be away from the City
and from the air that touches upon the air of the City.
So we walked on, our box in our arms, our heart empty.

WE are doomed.

Whatever days are left to us,
we shall spend them alone.

And we have heard of the corruption
to be found in solitude.

We have torn ourselves
from the truth
which is
our brother men,
and there is no road back for us,
and no redemption.

WE know these things, but we do not care.

We care for nothing on earth.

We are tired.

ONLY the glass box in our arms is like a living heart
that gives us strength.

We have lied to ourselves.

We have not built this box for the good of our brothers.

We built it for its own sake.

It is above all our brothers to us,
and its truth above their truth.

Why wonder about this? We have not many days to live.

We are walking to the fangs awaiting us somewhere
among the great, silent trees.

There is not a thing behind us to regret.

THEN a blow of pain struck us, our first and our only.

We thought of the Golden One.

We thought of the Golden One

whom we shall never see again.

Then the pain passed.

It is best.

We are one of the Damned.

It is best if the Golden One forget our name

and the body which bore that name.

EIGHT

IT HAS BEEN A DAY OF WONDER,
this, our first day in the forest.

WE awoke when a ray of sunlight fell across our face.
We wanted to leap to our feet,
as we have had to leap to our feet
every morning of our life,
but we remembered suddenly that no bell had rung
and that there was no bell to ring anywhere.

We lay on our back,
we threw our arms out,
and we looked up at the sky.

The leaves had edges of silver
that trembled and rippled
like a river of green and fire
flowing high above us.

WE did not wish to move.

We thought suddenly that we could lie thus
as long as we wished,
and we laughed aloud at the thought.

We could also rise, or run, or leap,
or fall down again.

We were thinking
that these were thoughts without sense,
but before we knew it
our body had risen in one leap.

Our arms stretched out of their own will,
and our body whirled and whirled,
till it raised a wind
to rustle through the leaves of the bushes.

Then our hands seized a branch
and swung us high into a tree,
with no aim save the wonder
of learning the strength of our body.

The branch snapped under us
and we fell upon the moss that was soft as a cushion.

Then our body,
losing all sense,
rolled over and over on the moss,
dry leaves in our tunic, in our hair, in our face.

And we heard suddenly that we were laughing,
laughing aloud,
laughing as if there were no power left in us
save laughter.

THEN we took our glass box,
and we went on into the forest.

We went on, cutting through the branches,
and it was as if we were swimming through a sea of leaves,
with the bushes as waves rising and falling and rising around us,
and flinging their green sprays high to the treetops.

The trees parted before us, calling us forward.

The forest seemed to welcome us.

We went on, without thought, without care,
with nothing to feel
save the song of our body.

WE stopped when we felt hunger.

We saw birds in the tree branches,
and flying from under our footsteps.

We picked a stone and we sent it as an arrow at a bird.

It fell before us.

We made a fire,
we cooked the bird,
and we ate it,
and no meal had ever tasted better to us.

And we thought suddenly that there was a great satisfaction
to be found in the food which we need and obtain
by our own hand.

And we wished to be hungry again and soon,
that we might know again this strange new pride in eating.

THEN we walked on.

And we came to a stream
which lay as a streak of glass
among the trees.

It lay so still that we saw no water but only a cut in the earth,
in which the trees grew down,
upturned,
and the sky lay at the bottom.

We knelt by the stream and we bent down to drink.
And then we stopped.
For, upon the blue of the sky below us,
we saw our own face for the first time.

WE sat still and we held our breath.
For our face and our body were beautiful.
Our face was not like the faces of our brothers,
for we felt no pity looking upon it.
Our body was not like the bodies of our brothers,
for our limbs were straight and thin
and hard and strong.
And we thought that we could trust this being
who looked upon us from the stream,
and that we had nothing to fear with this being.

WE walked on till the sun had set.

When the shadows gathered among the trees,
we stopped in a hollow between the roots,
where we shall sleep tonight.

And suddenly, for the first time this day,
we remembered that we are the Damned.

We remembered it,
and we laughed.

WE are writing this on the paper
we had hidden in our tunic
together with the written pages
we had brought for the World Council of Scholars,
but never given to them.

We have much to speak of to ourselves,
and we hope we shall find the words for it
in the days to come.

Now, we cannot speak,
for we cannot
understand.

NINE

WE HAVE NOT WRITTEN FOR MANY DAYS.

We did not wish to speak.

For we needed no words to remember
that which has happened to us.

IT was on our second day in the forest
that we heard steps behind us.

We hid in the bushes, and we waited.

The steps came closer.

And then we saw the fold of a white tunic among the trees,
and a gleam of gold.

WE leapt forward,
we ran to them,
and we stood looking
upon the Golden One.

THEY saw us,
and their hands closed into fists,
and the fists pulled their arms down,
as if they wished their arms to hold them,
while their body swayed.
And they could not speak.

WE dared not come too close to them.
We asked, and our voice trembled:

— *How come you to be here, Golden One?*

BUT they whispered only:

— *We have found you*

— *How come you to be in the forest?* we asked.

THEY raised their head, and there was a great pride in their voice;
they answered:

— *We have followed you.*

THEN we could not speak, and they said:

— *We heard that you had gone
to the Uncharted Forest,
for the whole City is speaking of it.
So on the night of the day when we heard it,*

*we ran away from the Home of the Peasants.
We found the marks of your feet
across the plain where no men walk.
So we followed them,
and we went into the forest,
and we followed the path
where the branches
were broken by your body.*

THEIR white tunic was torn,
and the branches had cut the skin of their arms,
but they spoke as if they had never taken notice of it,
nor of weariness, nor of fear.

— *We have followed you, they said,
and we shall follow you wherever you go.
If danger threatens you, we shall face it also.
If it be death, we shall die with you.*

*You are damned, and we wish
to share your damnation.*

THEY looked upon us,
and their voice was low,
but there was bitterness and triumph in their voice:

— *Your eyes are as a flame, but our brothers
have neither hope nor fire.
Your mouth is cut of granite, but our brothers
are soft and humble.
Your head is high,
but our brothers cringe.
You walk, but our brothers crawl.
We wish to be damned with you,
rather than blessed with all our brothers.
Do as you please with us,
but do not send us away from you.*

THEN they knelt,
and bowed their golden head
before us.

WE had never thought of that which we did.
We bent to raise the Golden One to their feet,
but when we touched them,
it was as if madness had stricken us.
We seized their body
and we pressed our lips to theirs.
The Golden One breathed once,
and their breath was a moan,
and then their arms closed around us.

WE stood together for a long time.
And we were frightened
that we had lived for twenty-one years
and had never known
what joy is possible to men.

THEN we said:

— *Our dearest one. Fear nothing of the forest.
There is no danger in solitude.
We have no need of our brothers.
Let us forget their good and our evil,
let us forget all things save that we are together
and that there is joy as a bond between us.
Give us your hand. Look ahead.
It is our own world, Golden One,
a strange, unknown world, but our own.*

THEN we walked on into the forest,
their hand in ours.

AND that night we knew that to hold the body of women
in our arms is neither ugly nor shameful,
but the one ecstasy granted
to the race of men.

WE have walked for many days.
The forest has no end,
and we seek no end.
But each day added to the chain of days
between us and the City is like an added blessing.

WE have made a bow and many arrows.
We can kill more birds than we need for our food;
we find water and fruit in the forest.
At night, we choose a clearing,
and we build a ring of fires around it.
We sleep in the midst of that ring,
and the beasts dare not attack us.
We can see their eyes,
green and yellow as coals,
watching us from the tree branches beyond.
The fires smolder as a crown of jewels around us,
and smoke stands still in the air,
in columns made blue by the moonlight.

We sleep together in the midst of the ring,
 the arms of the Golden One around us,
 their head upon our breast.

SOME day, we shall stop and build a house,
 when we shall have gone far enough.

But we do not have to hasten.

The days before us are without end,
 like the forest.

WE cannot understand this new life which we have found,
 yet it seems so clear and so simple.

When questions come to puzzle us,
 we walk faster, then turn and forget all things
 as we watch the Golden One following.

The shadows of leaves fall upon their arms,
 as they spread the branches apart,
 but their shoulders are in the sun.

The skin of their arms is like a blue mist, but their shoulders
are white and glowing, as if the light fell not from above,
but rose from under their skin.

We watch the leaf which has fallen upon their shoulder,
and it lies at the curve of their neck,
and a drop of dew glistens upon it like a jewel.

They approach us,
and they stop, laughing,
knowing what we think,
and they wait obediently,
without questions,
till it pleases us to turn and go on.

WE go on and we bless the earth under our feet.
But questions come to us again,
as we walk in silence.

If that which we have found is the corruption of solitude,
 then what can men wish for save corruption?

If this is the great evil of being alone,
 then what is good and what is evil?

EVERYTHING which comes from the many is good.

Everything which comes from one is evil.

Thus we have been taught with our first breath.

We have broken the law,
 but we have never doubted it.

Yet now, as we walk through the forest,
 we are learning to doubt.

THERE is no life for men, save in useful toil
 for the good of all their brothers.

But we lived not,
 when we toiled for our brothers,
 we were only weary.

There is no joy for men,
 save the joy shared with all their brothers.
But the only things which taught us joy
 were the power we created in our wires,
 and the Golden One.
And both these joys belong to us alone,
 they come from us alone,
 they bear no relation to our brothers,
 and they do not concern our brothers in any way.
Thus do we wonder.

THERE is some error,
 one frightful error,
 in the thinking of men.
What is that error?
We do not know,
 but the knowledge struggles within us,
 struggles to be born.

TODAY, the Golden One stopped suddenly and said:

— *We love you.*

BUT then they frowned and shook their head and looked at us helplessly.

— *No*, they whispered, *that is not what we wished to say.*

THEY were silent,
 then they spoke slowly,
 and their words were halting,
 like the words of a child
 learning to speak for the first time:

— *We are one . . . alone . . . and only . . .
 and we love you
 who are one . . .
 alone . . .
 and only.*

WE looked into each other's eyes
and we knew
that the breath of a miracle
had touched us,
and fled,
and left us groping
vainly.

AND we felt torn,
torn for some word
we could
not
find.

TEN

WE ARE SITTING AT A TABLE

and we are writing this

upon paper made thousands of years ago.

The light is dim,

and we cannot see the Golden One,

only one lock of gold

on the pillow of an ancient bed.

This is our home.

WE came upon it today, at sunrise.
For many days we had been crossing a chain of mountains.
The forest rose among cliffs,
and whenever we walked
out upon a barren stretch of rock
we saw great peaks before us in the west,
and to the north of us,
and to the south,
as far as our eyes could see.
The peaks were red and brown,
with the green streaks of forests
as veins upon them,
with blue mists as veils over their heads.
We had never heard of these mountains,
nor seen them marked on any map.
The Uncharted Forest has protected them from the Cities
and from the men of the Cities.

WE climbed paths

where the wild goat dared not follow.

Stones rolled from under our feet,

and we heard them striking the rocks below,

farther and farther down,

and the mountains rang with each stroke,

and long after the strokes had died.

But we went on, for we knew

that no men would ever follow our track

nor reach us here.

THEN today, at sunrise,

we saw a white flame among the trees,

high on a sheer peak before us.

We thought that it was a fire and we stopped.

But the flame was unmoving,

yet blinding as liquid metal.

So we climbed toward it through the rocks.
And there, before us,
 on a broad summit,
 with the mountains rising behind it,
 stood a house such as we had never seen,
 and the white fire
 came from the sun
 on the glass of its windows.

THE house had two stories
 and a strange roof flat as a floor.
There was more window than wall upon its walls,
 and the windows went on straight around the corners,
 though how this this kept the house standing
 we could not guess.
The walls were hard and smooth,
 of that stone unlike stone
 which we had seen in our tunnel.

WE both knew it without words:

this house was left from the Unmentionable Times.

The trees had protected it from time and weather,
and from men who have less pity
than time and weather.

We turned to the Golden One and we asked:

— *Are you afraid?*

BUT they shook their head.

So we walked to the door,
and we threw it open,
and we stepped together into the house
of the Unmentionable Times.

WE shall need the days and the years ahead,
to look, to learn and to understand
the things of this house.

Today, we could only look
and try to believe the sight of our eyes.

We pulled the heavy curtains
from the windows
and we saw that the rooms were small,
and we thought that not more than twelve men
could have lived here.

We thought it was strange that men had been permitted
to build a house for only twelve.

NEVER had we seen rooms so full of light.

The sunrays danced upon colors, colors,
more colors than we thought possible,
we who had seen no houses
save the white ones, the brown ones and the grey.

There were great pieces of glass on the walls,
but it was not glass,
for when we looked upon it
we saw our own bodies
and all the things behind us,
as on the face of a lake.

There were strange things
which we had never seen
and the use of which we do not know.

And there were globes of glass everywhere,
in each room, the globes
with the metal cobwebs inside,
such as we had seen in our tunnel.

WE found the sleeping hall
and we stood in awe upon its threshold.

For it was a small room
and there were only two beds in it.

We found no other beds in the house,
and then we knew
that only two had lived here,
and this passes understanding.
What kind of world did they have,
the men of the Unmentionable Times?

WE found garments,
and the Golden One gasped
at the sight of them.
For they were not white tunics,
nor white togas;
they were of all colors,
no two of them alike.
Some crumbled to dust as we touched them,
but others were of heavier cloth,
and they felt soft and new in our fingers.

WE found a room with walls made of shelves,
which held rows of manuscripts,
from the floor to the ceiling.

Never had we seen such a number of them,
nor of such strange shape.

They were not soft and rolled,
they had hard shells of cloth and leather;
and the letters on their pages were small
and so even that we wondered
at the men who had such handwriting.

We glanced through the pages,
and we saw that they were written in our language,
but we found many words
which we could not understand.

Tomorrow, we shall begin to read these scripts.

WHEN we had seen all the rooms of the house,
we looked at the Golden One
and we both knew the thought in our minds.

— *We shall never leave this house,* we said,
nor let it be taken from us.
This is our home and the end of our journey.
This is your house, Golden One, and ours,
and it belongs to no other men whatever
as far as the earth may stretch.
We shall not share it with others,
as we share not our joy with them,
nor our love,
nor our hunger.
So be it to the end of our days.

— *Your will be done,*
they said.

THEN we went out to gather wood
for the great hearth of our home.
We brought water from the stream
which runs among the trees under our windows.
We killed a mountain goat,
and we brought its flesh
to be cooked in a strange copper pot
we found in a place of wonders,
which must have been the cooking room of the house.

WE did this work alone,
for no words of ours could take the
Golden One away from the big glass
which is not glass.
They stood before it and they looked and looked
upon their own body.

WHEN the sun sank beyond the mountains,
the Golden One fell asleep on the floor,
amidst jewels, and bottles of crystal, and flowers of silk.

We lifted the Golden One in our arms
and we carried them to a bed,
their head falling softly upon our shoulder.

Then we lit a candle,
and we brought paper from the room of the manuscripts,
and we sat by the window,
for we knew that we could not sleep tonight.

AND now we look upon the earth and sky.

This spread of naked rock
and peaks and moonlight
is like a world ready to be born,
a world that waits.

It seems to us it asks a sign from us,
a spark, a first commandment.

We cannot know what word we are to give,
nor what great deed this earth expects to witness.
We know it waits.
It seems to say it has great gifts to lay before us.
We are to speak.
We are to give its goal,
its highest meaning
to all this glowing space of rock and sky.

WE look ahead,
we beg our heart for guidance
in answering this call no voice has spoken,
yet we have heard.
We look upon our hands.
We see the dust of centuries,
the dust which hid great secrets
and perhaps great evils.
And yet it stirs no fear within our heart,
but only silent reverence and pity.

MAY knowledge come to us!

What is the secret our heart

has understood

and yet will not reveal to us,

although it seems to beat

as if it were endeavoring to tell it?

ELEVEN

I AM. I THINK. I WILL.

MY hands . . . My spirit . . . My sky . . . My forest . . .
This earth of mine

WHAT must I say besides?

These are the words.

This is the answer.

I stand here on the summit of the mountain.
I lift my head and I spread my arms.
This, my body and spirit,
 this is the end of the quest.
I wished to know the meaning of things.
I am the meaning.
I wished to find a warrant for being.
I need no warrant for being,
 and no word of sanction upon my being.
I am the warrant and the sanction.

IT is my eyes which see,
 and the sight of my eyes
 grants beauty to the earth.
It is my ears which hear,
 and the hearing of my ears
 gives its song to the world.

It is my mind which thinks,
 and the judgment of my mind
 is the only searchlight
 that can find the truth.

It is my will which chooses,
 and the choice of my will
 is the only edict I must respect.

MANY words have been granted me,
 and some are wise, and some are false,
 but only three are holy:

I will it!

WHATEVER road I take,
 the guiding star is within me;
 the guiding star and the loadstone which point the way.
 They point in but one direction.
 They point to me.

I know not if this earth
on which I stand
is the core of the universe
or if it is but a speck of dust
lost in eternity.

I know not and I care not.
For I know what happiness is possible to me
on earth.

And my happiness
needs no higher aim
to vindicate it.

My happiness is not the means to any end.
It is the end.
It is its own goal.
It is its own purpose.

NEITHER am I the means to any end
others may wish to accomplish.

I am not a tool for their use.

I am not a servant of their needs.

I am not a bandage for their wounds.

I am not a sacrifice on their altars.

I am a man.

This miracle of me is mine to own and keep,
and mine to guard,
and mine to use,
and mine to kneel before!

I do not surrender my treasures,
nor do I share them.

The fortune of my spirit
is not to be blown into coins of brass
and flung to the winds
as alms for the poor of the spirit.

I guard my treasures:
my thought, my will, my freedom.
And the greatest of these is freedom.

I owe nothing to my brothers,
nor do I gather debts from them.

I ask none to live for me,
nor do I live for any others.

I covet no man's soul,
nor is my soul theirs to covet.

I am neither foe nor friend to my brothers,
but such as each of them
shall deserve of me.

And to earn my love,
 my brothers must do more
 than to have been born.
I do not grant my love without reason,
 nor to any chance passer-by
 who may wish to claim it.
I honor men with my love.
But honor is a thing to be earned.

I shall choose friends among men,
 but neither slaves nor masters.
And I shall choose only such as please me,
 and them I shall love and respect,
 but neither command nor obey.
And we shall join our hands when we wish,
 or walk alone when we so desire.

For in the temple of his spirit, each man is alone.
Let each man keep his temple untouched and undefiled.
Then let him join hands with others if he wishes,
but only beyond his holy threshold.

FOR the word “*We*” must never be spoken,
save by one’s choice
and as a second thought.

This word must never be placed first
within man’s soul,
else it becomes a monster,
the root of all the evils on earth,
the root of man’s torture by men,
and an unspeakable lie.

THE word “*We*” is as lime poured over men,
which sets and hardens to stone,
and crushes all beneath it,

and that which is white
and that which is black
are lost equally in the grey of it.

It is the word by which the depraved steal the virtue of the good,
by which the weak steal the might of the strong,
by which the fools steal the wisdom of the sages.

WHAT is my joy if all hands,
even the unclean, can reach into it?

What is my wisdom,
if even the fools can dictate to me?

What is my freedom, if all creatures, even the botched and impotent,
are my masters?

What is my life,
if I am but to bow,
to agree,
and to obey?

BUT I am done with this creed of corruption.

I am done with the monster of “*We*,”
the word of serfdom,
of plunder,
of misery,
falsehood
and shame.

AND now I see the face of god,
and I raise this god over the earth,
this god whom men have sought since men came into being,
this god who will grant them joy and peace and pride.

THIS god, this one word:

I

TWELVE

IT WAS WHEN I READ

the first of the books

I found in my house

that I saw the word “*I*”.

And when I understood this word,

the book fell from my hands,

and I wept,

I who had never known tears.

I wept in deliverance

and in pity

for all mankind.

I understood the blessed thing
which I had called my curse.
I understood why the best in me
had been my sins
and my transgressions;
and why I had never felt guilt in my sins.
I understood that centuries of chains and lashes
will not kill the spirit of man
nor the sense of truth
within him.

I read many books for many days.
Then I called the Golden One,
and I told her what I had read
and what I had learned.
She looked at me and the first words she spoke were:

— *I love you.*

THEN I said:

— *My dearest one,
it is not proper for men
to be without names.*

*There was a time
when each man had a name of his own
to distinguish him from all other men.
So let us choose our names.*

*I have read of a man
who lived many thousands of years ago,
and of all the names in these books,
his is the one I wish to bear.*

*He took the light of the gods
and brought it to men,
and he taught men to be gods.*

*And he suffered for his deed
as all bearers of light
must suffer.
His name was Prometheus.*

— *It shall be your name,* said the Golden One.

— *And I have read of a goddess,* I said,
*who was the mother of the earth
and of all the gods.*

Her name was Gaea.

*Let this be your name,
my Golden One,
for you are to be the mother
of a new kind of gods.*

— *It shall be my name,* said the Golden One.

Now I look ahead.
My future is clear before me.
The Saint of the pyre had seen the future
when he chose me as his heir,
 as the heir of all the saints
 and all the martyrs
 who came before him
 and who died for the same cause,
 for the same word,
 no matter what name they gave
 to their cause and their truth.

I shall live here, in my own house.
I shall take my food from the earth
 by the toil of my own hands.
I shall learn many secrets from my books.

Through the years ahead,
I shall rebuild the achievements of the past,
and open the way to carry them further,
the achievements which are open to me,
but closed forever to my brothers,
for their minds are shackled
to the weakest and dullest among them.

I have learned that my power of the sky
was known to men long ago;
they called it Electricity.

It was the power
which moved their greatest inventions.

It lit this house with light
that came from those globes of glass on the walls.

I have found the engine
which produced this light.

I shall learn how to repair it
and how to make it work again.

I shall learn how to use the wires
which carry this power.
Then I shall build a barrier of wires around my home,
and across the paths which lead to my home;
a barrier light as a cobweb,
more impassable than a wall of granite;
a barrier my brothers will never be able to cross.
For they have nothing to fight me with,
save the brute force of their numbers.
I have my mind.

THEN here, on this mountaintop,
with the world below me
and nothing above me but the sun,
I shall live my own truth.
Gaea is pregnant with my child.
Our son will be raised as a man.
He will be taught to say “**I**” and to bear the pride of it.

He will be taught to walk straight and on his own feet.
He will be taught reverence for his own spirit.

WHEN I shall have read all the books
and learned my new way,
when my home will be ready
and my earth tilled,

I shall steal one day,
for the last time,
into the cursed City of my birth.

I shall call to me my friend
who has no name save International 4-8818,
and all those like him,
Fraternity 2-5503, who cries without reason,
and Solidarity 9-6347 who calls for help in the night,
and a few others.

I shall call to me all the men and the women
whose spirit has not been killed
within them and who suffer

under the yoke of their brothers.
They will follow me
and I shall lead them to my fortress.
And here, in this uncharted wilderness,
I and they,
my chosen friends,
my fellow-builders,
shall write the first chapter
in the new history of man.

TH**E**S**E** are the things before me.
And as I stand here at the door of glory,
I look behind me for the last time.
I look upon the history of men,
which I have learned from the books,
and I wonder.
It was a long story,
and the spirit which moved it
was the spirit of man's freedom.

But what is freedom? Freedom from what?

There is nothing

to take a man's freedom
away from him,
save other men.

To be free,

a man must be free
of his brothers.

That is freedom.

That

and
nothing
else.

AT first, man was enslaved by the gods.

But he broke their chains.

Then he was enslaved by the kings.

But he broke their chains.

He was enslaved by his birth,
by his kin,
by his race.

But he broke their chains.

He declared to all his brothers
that a man has rights which
neither god
nor king
nor other men
can take away from him,
no matter what their number,
for his is the right of man,
and there is no right on earth
above this right.

And he stood on the threshold of freedom
for which the blood of the centuries behind him
had been spilled.

BUT then he gave up all he had won,
and fell lower than his savage beginning.

WHAT brought it to pass?

What disaster
took their reason
away from men?

What whip lashed them to their knees
in shame
and submission?

The worship of the word “*We*”.

WHEN men accepted that worship,
the structure of centuries collapsed about them,
the structure whose every beam had come
from the thought of some one man,
each in his day down the ages,
from the depth of some one spirit,
such spirit as existed but for its own sake.

Those men who survived

— those eager to obey, eager to live for one another,
since they had nothing else to vindicate them —
those men could neither carry on,
nor preserve what they had received.

Thus did all thought,

all science,
all wisdom
perish on earth.

Thus did men

— men with nothing to offer save their great numbers —
lose the steel towers,
the flying ships,
the power wires,
all the things they had not created
and could never keep.

Perhaps, later, some men had been born with the mind
and the courage to recover these things which were lost;
perhaps these men came before the Councils of Scholars.
They were answered as I have been answered
— and for the same reasons.

BUT I still wonder how it was possible,
in those graceless years of transition, long ago,
that men did not see whither they were going,
and went on,
in blindness and cowardice,
to their fate.

I wonder, for it is hard for me to conceive
how men who knew the word “*I*,”
could give it up
and not know
what they lost.

But such has been the story,
for I have lived in the City of the damned,
and I know what horror
men permitted
to be brought upon them.

PERHAPS, in those days,
there were a few among men,
a few of clear sight and clean soul,
who refused to surrender that word.

What agony must have been theirs before that which they saw coming
and could not stop!

Perhaps they cried out in protest and in warning.

But men paid no heed to their warning.

And they, these few, fought a hopeless battle,
and they perished
with their banners smeared
by their own blood.

And they chose to perish,
for they knew.

To them, I send my salute across the centuries,
and my pity.

THEIRS is the banner in my hand.

And I wish I had the power to tell them
that the despair of their hearts
was not to be final,
and their night was not without hope.

For the battle they lost can never be lost.

For that which they died to save can never perish.

Through all the darkness,
through all the shame
of which men are capable,
the spirit of man
will remain alive on this earth.

It may sleep,
 but it will awaken.
It may wear chains,
 but it will break through.
And man will go on.
Man, not men.

HERE, on this mountain,
 I and my sons and my chosen friends
 shall build our new land and our fort.
And it will become as the heart
 of the earth, lost and hidden at first,
 but beating, beating louder each day.
And word of it will reach every corner of the earth.
And the roads of the world
 will become as veins
 which will carry
 the best of the world's blood
 to my threshold.

And all my brothers,
and the Councils of my brothers,
will hear of it,
but they will be impotent against me.

And the day will come
when I shall break all the chains of the earth,
and raze the cities of the enslaved,
and my home will become the capital
of a world where each man
will be free
to exist
for his own sake.

FOR the coming of that day shall I fight,
I and my sons and my chosen friends.

For the freedom of Man.

For his rights.

For his life.

For his honor.

AND here, over the portals of my fort,
I shall cut in the stone
the word which is to be
my beacon and my banner.

The word which will not die,
should we all perish in battle.

The word which can never die on this earth,
for it is the heart of it
and the meaning and the glory.

THE sacred word:

EGO

