

was coming. Light piled upon light to create a dim glow, and I waited and watched for her reappearance. I knew that she must be looking for me, too. I could hardly wait. Our childhood was fleeing. I had to find her so we could go back before it was too late. And then I saw her, not in the luminous glow of childhood and life, but in the dull, cold, shrouded glow of death. And then she was gone away, and I began to weep—adult tears that racked my body and dampened my soul with true grief. I could not understand why it was this way. Our sunlight went with her, as did our childhood, and I was left alone. I was very unhappy, and I tried desperately, but in vain, to beckon my sunlight to return to shelter me from the pains of the world.

From time to time, the sun returns: much dimmer now, as it is far away. It returns, not to shelter me, but to call me, to invite me, to come to it, where, once again, I could walk in the sunlight as it tickled my scalp and made my hair become alive, and I could be very happy. Someday, I will follow the plea of my sunlight. Someday I will go and we will be together in the place of ultimate beauty and happiness that we spoke of so often as children, but until that day, I must walk alone, here, where pleasure is mingled with pain, where I have only fleeting memories of a beautiful childhood; memories of when I used to be very happy as I walked in the sun.

The Search

Marilyn Sladek

RASPING voices grate on the stagnant air. Humanity is a crushing, smothering mob, pushing, hurrying, clutching at an unknown goal. Compassion and human worth are lost, trampled beneath feet that scorn their existence. My heart is filled with terror; I am lost in a surge of movement without direction.

Hundreds of people surround me, yet I am alone; my heart and my God are my only strength. All around me people predict doom and destruction. We are all separate existences, united in nothing save our insignificance and confusion. Faces without features, voices without words—all are engulfed by the whole.

I struggle to free myself from the mob. People push past me, crying desperately, striving to be free. A hand touches my arm, ever so lightly, ever so briefly. It beckons me to follow. My heart stirs strangely; I sense a flicker of warmth.

I turn my collar to the chill wind, and a path seems to part the crowd before me. Resolutely I follow it, past the angry mob, past the terror in the masses. Pausing in the shadow of the glaring street lamp, I can see the whole panorama of human greed and hate, cancerous and ugly.

The air out here is still and clear. I walk, almost as if in a dream, leaving the smoke and the mob far behind me. Auroral streaks have begun to color the sky. All around me are the sounds of silence; only my lonely footsteps can hopefully touch its outer perimeter.

But the silence is broken, broken by a golden dawn. Somewhere a child is crying. As I turn to the sound, it is joined by a gentle voice, soothing it, telling it not to be afraid. In the distance I watch two lovers; no sound passes between them, for a single touch speaks all knowledge, all hope for their tomorrows. I pass a very old man leading a little girl by the hand; a tear glistens on his wrinkled cheek as he watches her. The child's laughter sings forth sweetly, all the joy of morning in a single sound. A little boy catches up his squirming puppy, hugging him close. A man turns away; he goes back to the mob to fight a war he does not understand, in a land he does not know, to preserve an ideal he can not explain.

I look up, and suddenly I see the source of the gentle touch that freed me. It fills me with hope for tomorrow, joy for today, with the miracle and wonder of being a whole person, nevermore fragmented. It demands all I have to give; it asks for nurture by trust and faith and a desire to keep it alive. But it promises all; for it is purpose, beauty, and fullness, the single thing that allows a person to truly live and create. It envelops me gently and silently.

Love comes quietly, but I know that it is there. Suddenly I am not alone any more. . . .

Confessions of a Test-taker

Carol Clay

I AM KNOWN to several worthy organizations as 312125/31181-512/19! This rather staggering numerical nomenclature, combined with my percentile rank and profile, identify me as a not-especially-unique college freshman. In my slightly more than thirteen years of education I have been tested, analyzed, scrutinized, pigeon-holed, and categorized to an absolutely alarming degree of thoroughness. The extent of my intelligence and knowledge, my capacity to learn, and every minute psychological quirk have been ferreted out and exposed by the systematic testing process that is the pride of the modern educational complex. Intellectually naked I stand before the various boards and committees of learned men who compose and administer these examinations.