

I Walked in the Sun

Peggy Prelepa

WHEN I was very young, I walked in the sun. I loved to feel its warm rays tickle my scalp and make my hair become warm and alive. The sun could set my soul on fire. I was always happy in the sun, and everyday was a sunny day—when I was very young. I walked alone.

And I began to grow, as everybody must, and I became older. But still, in my heart and in my mind, I was very young. And everyday dawned and showered me in sunlight and happiness. Nothing could harm me in the shelter of my sun. And still, I walked alone, as I had not yet found anyone worthy of sharing the joy and peace of my sunlight with me. There were no tears as I walked in the sun; only the bright light of childhood and hope.

Finally, after ten years of walking alone, I found a companion worthy of my sun. We became very close—almost as one—and we were very happy together. We loved to feel the sun tickle our scalps and make our hair become alive. Everything was “ours,” not “hers” or “mine.” We shared all: joys, tears, hopes, dreams, laughter, love, lunches. Even a butterfly we found once. We each took half, and then, together, we mourned the destruction of such a thing of beauty. That day, we learned hatred; not for each other, but for ourselves for such an act of stupidity. We even shared our blood one day and became blood sisters. We were very close and very happy. We lived and walked in the sun and shared our childhood. We could not be hurt in the shelter of our sun. It had set our souls afire, and merged them into one. We walked together.

And we began to grow, as children do—not just physically, but intellectually and spiritually. We became very brave and, from time to time, dared to leave the shelter of the sunlight of our childhood. We began to share confidences rather than secrets. We were still very happy together, and after each bold adventure we would retrace our steps and run, giggling, back into our childhood and walk alone, together, in the sun. Nothing could harm us in the shelter of our sunlight. We lived neither for the past nor the future, but took each day as it came, and we were very happy as, each day, we ventured a little further out of our shelter.

Then, one day, we ventured too far, and our sun went out. It tried so hard to come back. I could not understand the suddenness of its disappearance. I could not see her in the darkness, so I stumbled about—alone. I was very sad in the darkness. I wondered why it hurt so to be there, and I hated the cold, stinging dampness wetting my brow. I searched very diligently and waited impatiently for our sun to come back. I knew that when it did, we would be together again and very close—almost as one. And we would walk in the sun. Finally, I saw a flicker of light, and I knew the moment

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.