

Elysium Of Loneliness

I am driving on George Washington Bridge on my way to home
After a grueling workday.

The traffic is torturous and my nerves are aching
For the relief of my home and the exuberant mood of wine.

Every weekday is a smothering grind of the outer world,
Just saved from a total disaster by the tapestry of my inner world.
Now living in my sixth decade I have seen a lot of life -
A lot of which I would not repeat.

I live 30 miles north of Manhattan,
In a rural mosaic of rivulets and strip-forests.
My sparse solitariness has been further augmented
By my wife's walking away from me on account of our dissimilarity:
We were like opposite-colored bishops on the chessboard of life -
Together but not with each other.
She was interested in cutting costs
While I was interested in cutting ties with the world.

My solitude is reinforced by my unpopularity among people -
Especially among women;
Which has saved me their endless chase through
The tinsel social scenes and happy-hour bars.
The punctuated absences of my two college-age children
Further helped me to create a world of my own.

People aspire for adulation and greasy ties with the world
But I have evolved into a serene loner, an ambitious romantic.
I found that wealth and popularity were shimmering illusions:
They take in more than they give.
For me a single rose can make a garden.

The world is afraid of loneliness
But there is no loneliness
If you give yourself to your inner space.

I often hang around on my deck
To slice my gaze through the profusion of trees
Embroidering the backyard.
Out yonder where the tree-tops mingle with
The diaphanous azure veil of the skies,
I hear footsteps of God walking in eternal silence.

Shakespeare said ripeness is all:
Solitude is ripeness.
We do not want to bounce and scream
Walking on the trampoline of world
But see, think, understand, and absorb
The ever mysterious pulse of life.

I visit Rainrock, a small forest ten miles from home.
I walk through the high-density space
Where light sneaks through trees
And sky is a patchwork mosaic above.
Hours pass and I do not get the fill.
Though bereft of humans there is no loneliness here -
One feels the company of something larger.

Out there in woods
I find the majestic serenity of God.
The elements of nature connect with my elements.
There are no messages but one of absorption
With the mysterious and eternal universe.
Its grandeur surpasses everything.

“Think me not unkind and rude
That I walk alone in grove and glen;
I go to the God of the wood
To fetch His word to men.” *
Hours pass and I find myself immersed in books;
The voyage that never seems to end -
But its thirst never quenches either.

In the beginning - if there was one -

There was no loneliness;
Everything was in God's shadow
But when man created the world
His loneliness was born.

When my energy begins to sag
I put activities on hold
And prepare for the journey of sleep.
Entering its labyrinthine paths
And kaleidoscopic light-patterns
I feel I am touching the feet of eternity.
Between the day and night I do not know
Which is the more life-giving?

I go to shopping malls -
Not to shop but to see women and children
Wrapped in the ribbons of excitement -
Their lust for things unhinged.
I see how temporal happiness enralls people
And sooner or later makes them lonely.

Days end and give way to the majesty of evenings,
And evenings subtly melt into the aura of nights.
Sleep reawakens our soul
And the eternal drama of life continues -
A vast symphony that seems to be conducted
By a consciousness higher than ours.

As I walk on the last few stretches of life
I feel the inherent grandeur in the conception of life.

* R.W. Emerson