

The Moth and the Star

A YOUNG and impressionable moth once set his heart on a certain star. He told his mother about this and she counselled him to set his heart on a bridge lamp instead. "Stars aren't the thing to hang around," she said; "lamps are the thing to hang around." "You get somewhere that way," said the moth's father. "You don't get anywhere chasing stars." But the moth would not heed the words of either parent. Every evening at dusk when the star came out he would start flying towards it and every morning at dawn he would crawl back home worn out with his vain endeavour. One day his father said to him, "You haven't burned a wing in months, boy, and it looks to me as if you were never going to. All your brothers have been badly burned flying around street lamps and all your sisters have been terribly singed flying around house lamps. Come on, now, get out of here and get yourself scorched! A big strapping moth like you without a mar on him!"

The moth left his father's house, but he would not fly around street lamps. He went right on trying to reach his star, which was four and one-third light years, or twenty-five trillion miles away. The moth thought it was just caught in the top branches of an elm. He never did reach the star, but he went right on trying, night after night, and when he was a very, very old moth he began to think that he really had reached the star and he went around saying so. This gave him a deep and lasting pleasure, and he lived to a great old age. His parents and his brothers and his sisters had all been burned to death when they were quite young.

20 *Moral: Who flies afar from the sphere of our sorrow is here today and here tomorrow.*

By James Thurber

Vocabulary: impressionable = 'easily influenced'; to counsel = 'to advise'; to heed = 'to pay attention to'; worn out = 'very tired'; vain = 'futile', '*vergeblich*'; endeavour = 'attempt', '*Versuch*'; to singe = 'to burn slightly'; to scorch = 'to burn the surface of', 'to dry up by heat'; strapping = 'big, tall'; elm: '*Ulme*'.

Questions:

1. Summarize the text!
2. What makes the young moth different from his parents? Characterize both positions!
3. Phrase the presented problem and transfer it to the human world!
4. Explain the moral and comment on it!