

ALL SUMMER IN A DAY

By Ray Bradbury

"Ready?"

"Ready?"

"Now?"

"Soon."

"Do the scientists really know? Will it happen today, will it?"

"Look, look; see for yourself!"

The children pressed to each other like so many roses, so many weeds, intermixed, peering out for a look at the hidden sun.

It rained.

"It's stopping, it's stopping!"

"Yes, yes!"

All day yesterday they had read in class about the sun.

About how like a lemon it was, and how hot. And they had written small stories or essays or poems about it:

I think the sun is a flower,

That blooms for just one hour.

That was Margot's poem, read in a quiet voice in the still classroom while the rain was falling outside.

"Aw, you didn't write that!" protested one of the boys.

"I did," said Margot. "I did."

"William!" said the teacher.

But that was yesterday. Now the rain was slackening, and the children were crushed in the great thick windows.

"Where's teacher?"

"She'll be back."

"She'd better hurry, we'll miss it!"

They turned on themselves; like a feverish wheel, all tumbling spokes.

Margot stood alone. She was a very frail girl who looked as if she had been lost in the rain for years and the rain had washed out the blue from her eyes and the red from

her mouth and the yellow from her hair.

She was an old photograph dusted from an album, whitened away, and if she spoke at all her voice would be a ghost. Now she stood, separate, staring at the rain and the loud wet world beyond the huge glass.

"What're you looking at?" said William.

Margot said nothing.

"Speak when you're spoken to." He gave her a shove. But she did not move;

rather she let herself be moved only by him and nothing else.

They edged away from her, they would not look at her. She felt them go away.

The biggest crime of all was that she had come here only five years ago from Earth, and she remembered the sun. And they, they had been on Venus all their lives,

and they had been only two years old when last the sun came out and had long since forgotten the color and heat of it and the way it really was. But Margot remembered.

"It's like a penny," she said once, eyes

closed.

"No it's not!" the children cried.

"It's like a fire, " she said, "in the stove."

"You're lying, you don't remember!" cried the children.

There was talk that her father and mother were taking her back to Earth next year; it seemed vital to her that they do so, though it would mean the loss of thousands of

dollars to her family. And so, the children hated her for all these reasons of big and little

consequence. They hated her pale snow face, her waiting silence, her thinness, and her

possible future.

"Get away!" The boy gave her another push.

"What're you waiting for?"

Then, for the first time, she turned and looked at him. And what she was waiting for was in her eyes.

"Well, don't wait around here!" cried the boy savagely. "You won't see nothing!"

"Oh, but," Margot whispered, her eyes helpless. "But this is the day, the scientists predict, they say, they know, the sun . . ."

"All a joke!" said the boy, and seized her roughly. "Hey, everyone, let's put her in a closet before the teacher comes!"

"No," said Margot, falling back.

They surged about her, caught her up and bore her, protesting, and then pleading, and then crying, back into a tunnel, a room, a closet, where they slammed and locked the

door. They stood looking at the door and saw it tremble from her beating and throwing

herself against it. They heard her muffled cries. Then, smiling, they turned and went out

and back down the tunnel, just as the teacher arrived.

"Ready, children!" She glanced at her watch.

"Yes!" said everyone.

"Are we all here?"

"Yes!"

The rain slackened still more.

They crowded to the huge door.

The rain stopped.

The sun came out.

The children lay out, laughing, on the jungle mattress, and heard it sigh and squeak under them, resilient and alive.

They ran among the trees, they slipped and fell,

they pushed each other, they played hide-and-seek and tag, but most of all they squinted

at the sun until tears ran down their faces, they put their hands up to that yellowness and

that amazing blueness and they breathed of

the fresh, fresh air and listened and
listened to
the silence which suspended them in a
blessed sea of no sound and no motion.
They
looked at everything and savored
everything. Then, wildly, like animals
escaped from
their caves, they ran and ran in shouting
circles. They ran for an hour and did not
stop
running.
And then - - -
In the midst of their running one of the
girls wailed.
Everyone stopped.
The girl, standing in the open, held out
her hand.
"Oh, look, look," she said, trembling.
They came slowly to look at her opened
palm
In the center of it, cupped and huge, was
a single raindrop.
She began to cry, looking at it.
They glanced quietly at the sky.
"Oh. Oh."
A few cold drops fell on their noses and
their cheeks and their mouths. The sun
faded behind a stir of mist. A wind blew
cold around them. They turned and started
to
walk back toward the underground house,
their hands at their sides, their smiles
vanishing away.

"Will it be seven more years?"
"Yes. Seven."
Then one of them gave a little cry.
"Margot!"
"What?"
"She's still in the closet where we locked
her."
They walked over to the closet door slowly
and stood by it.
Behind the closet door was only silence.
They unlocked the door, even more slowly,
and let Margot out.