

Carrie's Odyssey

Carrie's Amanuensis

Carrie had been searching for help for many years, often without fully understanding that she was searching or why. The cause and reason for her search had been lost behind the closed doors in her memory.

She had a lively mind full of questioning and she liked exploring. One day, when she was out walking, she turned a corner and came upon an area of the city which was new to her.

She went into a nearby bookshop and bought a map of the area to guide her. *Guide to the District of Healing*, it said, and it mapped out the areas and streets. As she walked around and looked at the houses and buildings she wondered whether in some strange way she had been led to this area.

She came to a Square called Therapy. It was more oval than square and she wondered why it was called what it wasn't. She sat down on a seat on a patch of grass in the centre and studied the buildings and looked at her map. The map told her that this area was a centre for the helping professions.

'This looks promising,' she thought, and got up to explore the streets and look more closely at the houses. She saw some of the buildings and houses had large brass plates on the doors. Some looked less imposing.

She decided to try one of the doors.

'Professor Moses', said the highly polished plate. Nothing else. Perhaps he was so famous and important he didn't need

to have anything else on his door.

She decided to take the plunge and give it a try. She rang the bell. The door was opened by a secretary. Yes, Professor Moses would see her. He had a vacancy in an hour if she'd like to wait.

The waiting room was imposing and large and a bit old-fashioned. She felt slightly uncomfortable in such surroundings. The hour passed and she was called into Professor Moses' private consulting room and was told to lie on a couch.

Professor Moses sat on a chair, smoking a pipe, and told her to talk. She was confused and a little intimidated by this new experience, but she tried her best. She found the words that came to her tongue were taken apart and interpreted until they sometimes didn't mean what she thought they meant. Her confusion escalated.

Professor Moses was obviously a great man and she felt badly for being unable to fit herself into the framework of his ideas.

As she left, he told her his secretary would send her the bill at the end of the month and that the charges were £75 for each visit.

She decided to try someone else.

Further round the square was a less imposing house. The brass plate was smaller. This was Dr Summercloud's house. Dr Summercloud's plate was also impressive. He had letters after his name. He met her at the door himself and took her into his consulting room, a modern room, white walls and even a white carpet.

This time she was offered a chair whilst he sat behind a desk. He asked her why she had come and she told him about her long search for something to help her understand herself and to discover what was making her so unhappy. She told him about her visit to Professor Moses. Dr Summercloud didn't really approve of Professor Moses. He told her he didn't believe that patients should lie down because it discouraged them from shouldering the burdens of life.

'Sitting is the more modern way of doing things,' he said.

Carrie visited Dr Summercloud a few times, but she found it hard to understand the special language he used and expected her to learn. He believed it was essential if she wanted to be healed, but she couldn't get the hang of it somehow . . . and the big desk always made her feel small. She decided to try someone else.

George Langford lived on the opposite side of the Square. He was on the opposite side in many ways, unconventional and a rebel, very unlike Professor Moses and Dr Summercloud.

George Langford was dynamic and very believable, and she found herself deciding to try his methods without quite knowing how she did it. He *knew* the answer to healing. He believed in lying down, but not to talk. Lying down in his therapy meant recalling the experience of being a baby and knowing the hurt, which he said she'd find in a particular spot near her solar plexus. And he made her cry out 'Mummy' one hundred times at the beginning of every session.

After a few weeks, she tried to tell George that some of the things he was telling her to do felt wrong, but no matter

what she said, he was always able to manipulate her mind until she found herself doing what he told her to do and not what felt right for her.

One day, on leaving George's house, she was exhausted and she went to the seat on the patch of grass at the centre of the square to rest. She was dizzy and confused and it was some time before she noticed someone sitting at the opposite end of the seat. She saw it was a man. A sensitive face that spoke of inner wisdom.

When she had calmed a little, he spoke to her. His words were enquiring and kind and she gradually found herself telling him her doubts and worries about what George was doing to her, yet how she was unable to see why she felt that way.

He talked to her gently and told her to try to listen to herself, to trust her inner promptings and follow them as and when she could.

She got into the habit of meeting this man each week after seeing George. He always arrived silently as if his feet were at one with the ground beneath them. One day, as she spoke with him, she felt strong enough to know that she must leave George and try elsewhere.

For a while she lost it. The experience with George seemed to have left her more confused and uncertain, and that expressed itself for a while in her confused search.

She tried Janet Pettyfer, who said that it was all locked in her body and that body touch and massage were the only answer. But Carrie realised Janet was sometimes unable to sense the truth in her body and that sometimes left her feeling mixed up in some way.

She tried Peter Reliant, who knew that

mirroring was the major point of therapy. His room had many mirrors, subtly shaded in different colours. He was kind and she was aware of his trying, but she found that seeing herself in a mirror didn't get much below the surface of things and she couldn't escape the feeling that he was so busy looking at the mirrors that sometimes it was as if he wasn't really there.

She spent a while with Satwah, which wasn't his real name. He had changed his name in order to change himself. He told her that she was perfect and whole and that he practised *Self Realisation* in order to help her realise her perfection. Somehow she never managed to feel whole or perfect.

Next came PYT therapy. She found during the few sessions she had with Conrad that PYT stood for Pull Yourself Together Therapy, and that he believed self-control was the secret of success and happiness. She had been good at self-control all her life and she didn't feel that had made her a success at being herself. Nor did she seem to be a success at doing his particular brand of therapy.

Following that she tried Box of Tricks Therapy. Neville Crusader didn't call it by that name. He had a much more persuasive title for it. Box of Tricks was the one she gave it after a few visits to him. By now, she was becoming a more enlightened consumer and could sometimes see more of what was actually going on than the therapists thought she did. Neville kept this box of tricks beside him. She couldn't see all that it contained but she did see the adjustable set square set at 41° so that he could now and then check his angle of lean to ensure that he was convincing Carrie of his rapport with her.

There was a reframing kit to help him change the picture she presented of herself into one more socially acceptable. There was the 'dial a change instant eye pattern' clock, the 'now you feel it now you don't' sleight of hand series of thought cards. Carrie decided that Neville was not really seeing her or listening to her, no matter how accurate his lean, and decided to try elsewhere.

Then she met Philip Greenstreak who practised Life Art Therapy, which meant drawing out the creative potential within her.

Carrie wasn't sure if she wanted to practise Life Art. She wanted to feel better, to find someone who could listen to her and help her. But she decided to give it a try and she practised Life Art diligently for a while, reciting the Affirmations and creating spontaneous artworks. But the Affirmations so filled her mind that she could hardly hear what her self was trying to say, and the artworks couldn't create the words to tell her how to heal.

One day, on her way to an appointment with Philip, she got off the bus at a different stop and found herself in New Age Terrace, just around the corner from his house.

She looked at the houses. One looked quite inviting. The powerful sign on the door said 'Margarita Straw — Healer'. She went in to make enquiries and discovered that Margarita Straw was very popular and that the waiting room contained many tapes and books by her. She seemed to have quite a thriving business and Carrie found that she would have to wait two weeks for an appointment. She decided that it would be very worth her while to see if Margarita could help her.

Carrie looked forward to her first meeting with Margarita. She found her very self-assured and convincing. But after a few sessions she began to feel depressed and out of sorts with herself and wondered what it was.

Margarita was teaching her that she was 100% responsible for everything that happened in her life, that as a baby she had been responsible for choosing the parents who later abused her, and that she had to forgive them. Margarita told her that she had chosen her life and all the bad that had happened, including the withered arm she had been born with, and that it had all happened to her because she had thought wrongly, and that all she had to do was to work hard at changing her conscious thinking and everything would be all right.

Carrie learned that she was not a victim of abuse, as she had begun to discover before meeting Margarita, but that she was the abuser and her parents were the victims of her choice.

One grey day, on leaving Margarita's house, she went to sit on the seat on the small patch of grass in the centre of the Square that wasn't a square. The wise man was there reading a book.

He looked up and smiled at her. 'Problems again?' He looked at her quizzically.

'Yes. I am seeing this well-known lady. Everyone thinks she is marvellous. But, somehow, I don't feel right. Yet I know I ought to.' And she told him a little about her meetings with Margarita, wondering again why she was opening up to this person she didn't really know and telling him such personal things.

'It's strange — or perhaps it isn't so strange,' he said, 'that the book I am read-

ing has something to say about those ideas. This book shows that parents and society blame and hurt children in ways that are damaging to them and that those children then grow up to do the same. It seems to me that this lady you are seeing has turned this into a therapeutic concept, a sort of spiritual parentalism where the child is responsible for having chosen its parents and the parents are the innocent victims. You know Freud blamed children for wanting sex with their parents and fantasising abuse. Well, I suggest you think out for yourself whether these ideas are not a refinement of that. Remember what I have always told you. Think for yourself and listen to yourself.'

Carrie looked at the cover of the book. She wanted to remember the author's name. She thought she would buy a copy for herself.

'But where now?' she thought, realising that she had outgrown Margarita Straw, somehow.

She decided to look for someone who had this book on their bookshelves. She found Robert Woodward. He was more willing to listen to her than anyone before and she found herself trusting him in a way she had not trusted anyone. She began to take off the emotional masks she had worn all her life and reach into herself and reveal the hurt that had been locked away. It took time, but Robert was mostly patient and told her to trust him.

Then one day, when she had laid many of her masks to one side and was at her most vulnerable, Robert told her he did not like what he saw and informed her that she was to leave that day and not come back.

She was shattered. She hadn't antici-

pated this. She didn't know how she walked out of his house. Blindly, and in a state of shock, she went to the seat on the patch of grass and waited for the wise man to appear. She lost count of time. When he came, she broke down and told him that she could not go on any more. He tried to hold her safe with his voice, drawing on the times they had spent together, discussing and learning. For a time nothing he did or said could reach and help the pain she had become.

For weeks she came to the seat every day, sometimes dragging herself there without knowing where the energy came from. The wise man would let her talk and cry and support her and believe in her and tell her he believed that she would eventually find someone who would be able to be with her and help her in the way that was right for her and that one day she would find herself. She clung to his words, for they were the only hope she had left. What Robert had done had caused such fracturing and pain that there seemed to be no way back to her healing journey.

Sometimes passers-by who saw how hurt she was would talk to her as well and tell her it was not her fault and encourage her to hang on. She was grateful for their support.

One day, which didn't seem any different from any other at the time, someone gave her the address of a woman who helped people and who specialised in Real Listening. She was scared to try anyone else but she knew she couldn't go on as she was, so she found the woman's house and rang the bell.

'Hi. Come in,' the woman said. 'My name is Angela Ware.'

Carrie introduced herself and looked

searchingly at Angela. She was very wary and yet so in need of help. She had lost the ability to trust and feel safe. Not only did she no longer believe in herself, but Robert's telling her it was her fault had made her see herself as totally unacceptable.

Angela understood all that and did everything she could to help Carrie begin to trust and feel safe with someone again, in a natural and unforced way. She gradually encouraged Carrie to listen to and trust herself once more and promised she would never do what Robert had done.

It was hard for Carrie to trust again. She constantly expected Angela to turn on her as Robert had. Months went by and gradually she saw from her experience that Angela was keeping her promises. Carrie remembered the wise man on the seat who had told her she would find a way of continuing her healing journey and thanked him quietly in her mind for his advice and help.

Carrie still visits Angela's house in Silver Birch Way and is slowly beginning to heal. Her odyssey isn't over. Maybe she will always be on some inner journey. But she knows she has been really listened to and that has given her the freedom and space to listen to herself in a real way. There are still days when she becomes afraid and the safety and trust in her mind slip away.

But Angela is herself, straight and trustworthy, and she remains as stable as a well-rooted tree; alive and growing, flexible enough to bend and adapt to nature's changes, sure of the ground that holds it steady.