

THE BOOK OF QUALITIES

words and pictures by

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 **HarperPerennial**
A Division of HarperCollinsPublishers

Boredom
Competition

THE QUALITIES

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Competition

Competition is ruthless. He has to have an enemy. Otherwise, he has a "life is meaningless" crisis. For him there is only one right way, and it must be that way always. He has no respect for different colors, different crop varieties, or different points of view. He will divide life down to its smallest particle in his search to find the only best.

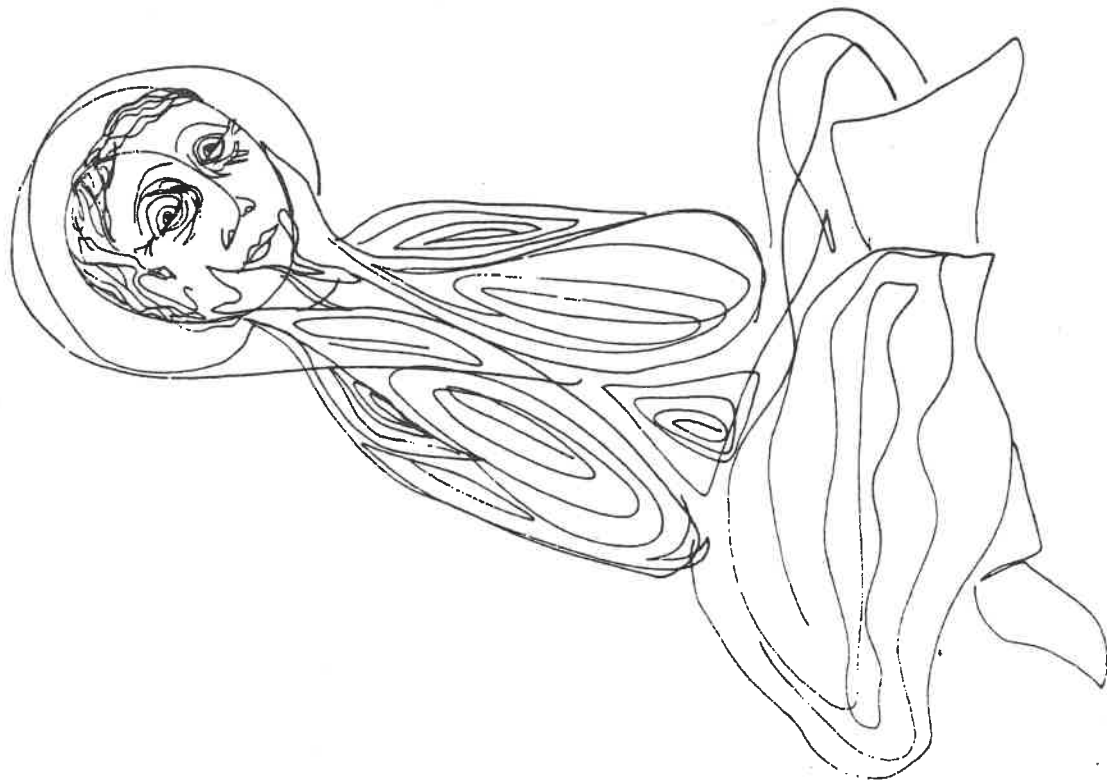
It is hard to say no to Competition. He makes the game sound so inviting until you are caught in the middle and begin to see how he has rigged it. He makes up all the rules and tells us some of them. We tried to change the game, and he kicked us out. Years later I dream I have forgotten to turn in the final assignment, and I am failing his class. His rules still haunt me.

Competition was in love with Creativity, but he married Efficiency. Not that Creativity would have more like allies than lovers. They never shout when they disagree. They settle their differences logically. However, it is not all as rational as it seems on the surface. Efficiency still feels more than a little jealous of her husband's passionate past. She has all kinds of plans and schemes to banish Creativity completely once she is secure in her position and certain of Competition's loyalty.

Luckily for us, no one is ever certain of Competition's loyalty. Considering his short attention span, history of treachery, and inability to ever make a commitment to anyone, we can almost assume Creativity will be safe from Efficiency's snares.

Defeat

Defeat sits in his chair staring at the grey doves on the porch. He holds his hand underneath his heart, fingers curled tightly into themselves, glued together in a paralyzed rage. He is unwilling to go forward and unable to let go. He is not blind or deaf, but it is unclear who he sees or what he hears. He had a stroke six years ago and sleeps most of the day. In response to questions he answers yes or no interchangeably. Speech has lost all meaning.



Despair

Despair papered her bathroom walls with newspaper articles on acid rain. For years she worked with abused children. She has documented how we all suffer from malnourishment based on insufficient amounts of love. She has investigated how the pain of concentration camp survivors has been transmitted from one generation to the next "through disturbances in the parent child relationship." Not only the children but the grandchildren and their children.

Despair is overworked and overwhelmed. She has a heart condition. In her dreams the war is everywhere. She is not lying or exaggerating. Still, it is difficult to be around her. There is no arguing with her. She is persuasive, eloquent, and undeniably well-informed. If you attempt to change her mind, you will come away agreeing with her. She has stopped listening to music.

Intelligence

Sometimes Intelligence is safe, and sometimes Intelligence is dangerous. When he is in a reassuring mood, you leave his house walking lightly and singing to yourself because everything makes sense. Other days you go to see him, and he tears up your notes or sends you back on the road even though you really want to stay home. If Intelligence is in the mood for facts, he may interrogate you for hours.

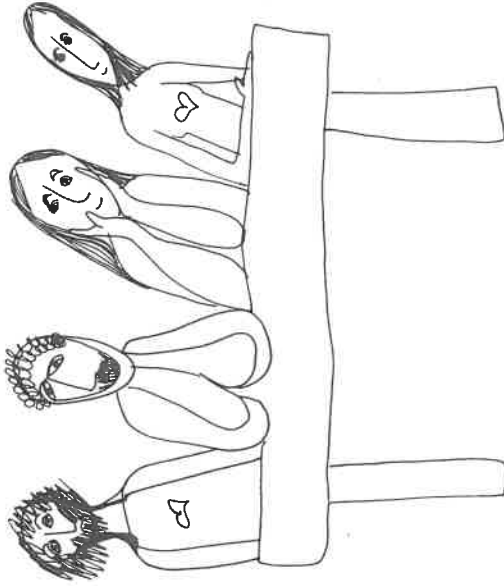
Intelligence does not go to parties much. He is very popular when he does show up. Everyone knows him, but no one knows where he will turn up. You may find him in the upstairs bedroom talking to the children or out on the back porch telling bad jokes. Intelligence listens well. He is no stranger to silence.

Intelligence is Intuition's favorite lover. It is thought that theirs is an attraction of opposites, but they are more similar than they first appear. Other people tried to keep them apart for years by telling each of them vicious stories about the other. When you see them dance, it is clear they have been through the fire. They like to make up stories together.

Intelligence knows how to use words to make music and how to use words to make pictures. He thinks in black and white, but he dreams in color. Intelligence takes photographs with his inner eye. He paints with logic. Intelligence loves surprises, and he is not afraid to change his mind.

Boredom

Does anyone really know what Boredom is like? He rarely goes anywhere without at least one of his friends. He can't stand to be alone. On Sunday afternoons he goes to the bar on the corner and drinks dark beer with Futility, Rage, and Anxiety. They all have such strong personalities. In conversations with that bunch Boredom tends to get lost. It's not that he doesn't say anything. It is just that what he says never sounds as interesting or vivid or memorable. If you listen carefully, you will see that he actually has some very good ideas. He simply lacks the energy to carry them out.



Creativity



Creativity is not efficient. She has a different relationship to time than most of us. A minute can last a day and a day can last an hour. She loves all the seasons. She is on intimate terms with the sun and the moon. It is New Year's all year long at her house, what with celebrations for the Celtic, Hebrew, Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese, and other New Years too numerous to mention. Creativity loves to gossip with the birds and put on her masks and beads and dance with the animals. Although bright colors amuse her, she most often wears neutral tones. She is especially partial to off-white.

Some people consider Creativity selfish because she does what she wants. I have always found her to be gracious and most generous. She is certainly complex. If you have only met her in a serene mood, her flair for drama may offend you. She is not your aunt with the porcelain teapot who plays chamber music. If you are one of those people who only go to see her when she is starring in a major melodrama, you will not hear her rain songs. If you insist she is mad, you will never see how still her face is when she returns from a dream.

Sometimes Creativity disappears completely or wanders around the back alleys for weeks at a time. She has a strong need to be occasionally anonymous. If you run into her at the post office line during one of these periods, you will probably not recognize her. She is in a different place. It is almost as if her blood has slowed down. When the blank period is over, Creativity brings her free self home with her. Her skin is new. She is ready to work. More than anyone else, Creativity understands the secret meanings of the months when nothing seems to get done.