

***A Small Free Kiss in the Dark* by Glenda Millard**

“Skip”, his “running away name” taken from the rubbish skips that he shelters in, flees yet another abusive foster home to take his chances on the streets. “A skip is somewhere you can shelter when there's nowhere else, and getting a new name is like being born all over again.” Skip roams the crowded streets of the unnamed city (with the feel of Melbourne) till he befriends Billy, a long term homeless man. When the city is bombed by soldiers from an unknown country, they take shelter in the State Library, and find abandoned six year old Max. Days later, whilst living in an empty fun fair, the ballerina Tia and her baby, join them. Through his ingenuity, Skip is able to scrounge up and create the necessities to support his “family” and keep them alive.

Glenda Millard is a genius at creating rich and complex characters that are out of the ordinary but easily identified with. Through Skip, Millard explores many ideas in her novel . . . are families always made up of people who bear blood ties or is material wealth a prerequisite for happiness amongst others? These don't interfere with the writing which is beautiful and lyrical. *A Small Free Kiss in the Dark* whilst being a quiet, thoughtful novel at times, has plenty of action to absorb, and, in the end, leaves the reader with feelings of hope despite events. This is a book that will have the reader yearning for more.

Pia Butcher, Knox Library, VIC