

2021 International Essay Contest for Young People

【Youth Category – 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize】

## **The Gift** (Original)

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*(Age 19, Brazil)*

Dear Death,

I think I finally understood the meaning of all that. I mean, you've been taking many of us, and I tend to believe everything happens for a reason. Then, this is an apology, from me, from all of us.

I always thought life was the only thing in the world completely mine, and for God's sake, Death, how I went wrong. I believed that it was like a secret between the Universe and I and, because of that, it was a solitary thing. After all, life always goes on, and we go through it alone.

I thought I was lonely when I fell madly in love and dove into the shallow water for losing my love. After he was gone, I went on by myself. I had to. I thought I was lonely recalling those Saturday nights filled with laughs with my friends before they went to college, which I didn't do. I stayed and I went on. I thought I was lonely when my grandpa, my companion of Sunday afternoons with movies, died two summers ago and I screamed, Death, like a little gloomy child. However, despite all that, I went on.

But then I got sick, and with half of my lungs taken, I realized that my life is not just mine. Because, although we walk through it alone, life is constantly altered, influenced. Each little piece of it is completed by someone else until it isn't only ours anymore.

Then, I believed that my life also belonged to my mom, who calls me everyday asking me if I feel better, even though she knows I will not get better. It belonged to my father, who holds his tears on the phone, because none of them will be able to enter the hospital to say goodbye before you take me. It belonged to my little cousin, who made me promise to play

hide and seek with him when I leave here. He still doesn't know I won't keep my promise, Death. My life belongs to all of them, just as my grandpa's was mine.

However, life is not something shared, is it, Death? I was so naive, it took me so long to realize that. When I finally thought life was not so solitary, I noticed that it wasn't even mine. Life is yours.

I thought I owned my life, that it was the only thing no one would ever take away from me. But I forgot about you. You lent me life and now you come to claim it back. You've been taking many of us lately, and, honestly, I think I have found out why. I guess it's because we let you down. We are selfish, greedy. We are destroying our homes. But mainly, Death, I think it is because we are taking your role, trying to delegate death, choosing who deserves to live. We are killing daily for food, diseases, weapons, prejudice, money...

We should have fought against that.

And that is why you came, Death, I get it, we don't deserve your gift. Because this is what life is, isn't it? A present. A chance. And we have wasted it. Life is a present because you simply thought we deserved to be happy and cry and love.

Life is a mix of disordered actions and memories. Mine is filled with the memory of my first kiss, of the smile on my friends' faces, of my grandpa sleeping on the couch in the middle of a movie, of the smell I feel in my parents' hug, of losing a game on purpose just to see the shine on my cousin's eyes for winning. But it's also about breakups, distance and death. Life is everything, and life is also death, a gift from Death. You just came to claim mine earlier.

Finally, dear Death, I would like to say that I appreciate your gift and I am sorry I haven't fought as hard as I loved, as I laughed, as I screamed, as I lived. Therefore, I apologize on my behalf, and on everyone's behalf for not having honored our gift. I hope one day you will give us another chance.

Thank you.