

2021 International Essay Contest for Young People

【Children's Category – 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize】

## **My Grandma's Life**

(Original in Japanese)

Riria Yumoto

(Age 12, Japan)

*Joso Gakuin Junior & Senior High School, Ibaraki*

After losing a lot of people in the war, Japan entered the Heisei period (1989-2019). During this period, computer networks expanded, and new conveniences were introduced.

Following this came the Reiwa period. In the second year of the Reiwa period, a pandemic broke out that no one in Japan or anywhere had ever experienced before. It was caused by a new coronavirus. Amidst all this, one young girl overcame the grief of a sad moment in her life.

One day, out of the blue, this girl's mother told her: "Your grandmother has COVID-19." The girl couldn't believe her ears. How could her grandmother, who was so healthy when they saw each other just last month, be infected with the virus? It was unbelievable. The girl asked how her grandma was doing. Her mother said, "It's serious. I don't know if she'll get better. So, we have to be careful, too."

*It's serious. I don't know if she'll get better.* The girl couldn't believe what her mother had just told her. Her grandmother had cared for her since she was very young. She had talked to her about the war, saying, "War is never the way to go. Listen to me. Taking a person's life is easy. But that one life is filled with the spirit of the person's mother, father, friends, and all the lives that person has eaten. Do you understand?" Her grandmother said this so often, the girl was sick of hearing it. *Grandma, are you going to die?* Many times the girl asked herself this question.

The next day, her mother told her, "They said they're running out of ventilators, so they want to take grandma off it and give it to someone younger." The girl thought, *Don't be silly. Why is a young person's life worth more than hers? Is it because young people are of more use to the country and to others? Aren't all lives of equal value?*

Then, the girl found a card. It was her grandmother's organ donor card, and with it was a letter that read: "If I become ill and will not recover, I wish to be allowed to die for the sake of others." *What was my grandma thinking about when she wrote this?* the girl wondered. She wasn't sure, but she had the feeling that her grandma wanted to make use of her life right until the end. She faced the prospect of her grandmother giving up her ventilator. Surely, her grandma would have said that she wanted to do this. Some days later, her grandmother passed away.

The girl was very sad. She missed hearing her grandmother's gentle voice. Because her grandma lived through the war, she must have known from the time she was little what it's like to lose someone. We have only one life. If we lose it, we don't get to live again. Our future is gone. We can no longer eat delicious foods. We can no longer talk with our friends and family. We can no longer laugh or have hopes and dreams.

People may have different values, but life should always be cherished. Whether it's a baby, a young person, an old person, or even an animal, a fish, an insect, or a plant, all lives should be equally precious. That is how the girl felt.

The girl had the idea that she wanted to help people who got sick like her grandmother, so she decided to become a doctor.

Thank you, grandma. I will live well for you, too.